

Branding in Social Media

Branding upcoming designers in social media

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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Företag har börjat inse möjligheterna i marknadsföring via sociala medier. Genom att involvera kunden och vara i direkt kontakt med dem har branding nått en ny nivå. Detta arbete beskriver hur designer kan använda sociala medier för branding.</p> <p>För att ett brand ska bli uppmärksammat är det viktigt att brandet finns och syns på sociala medier. Syftet med studien är att klargöra hur designers kan använda sig av sociala medier och nätverk för att bilda ett starkare brand. Fokuset ligger på unga, finska designers. För att kunna besvara syftet utfördes intervjuer. Urvalet består av fem informanter vilka valdes genom kritiskt- och bekvämlighetsurval. Den teoretiska referensramen är baserad på strategisk brandlednings litteratur av författarna Grönroos och Kapferer. I litteraturgenomgången processeras sambandet mellan branding och marknadsföring på sociala medier.</p>	
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Companies have realized the opportunities of social media as one way of marketing. By involving and being in direct contact with the customer the branding has reached a new level. The thesis describes how designers can use social media in branding.</p> <p>In order for a brand to get noticed the existence and visibility of the brand in social media is important. The aim of this study is to obtain an understanding of how designers can use social media and -networks to create a stronger brand around them. The focus lies on Finnish upcoming designers.</p> <p>In order to answer the purpose interviews were conducted. The sample consists of five respondents, which were collected through critical and convenience sampling.</p> <p>The theoretical framework is based on strategic brand management literature from the authors Grönroos and Kapferer. The literature review processes the correlation between branding and social media marketing.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>Yritykset ovat huomanneet sosiaalisessa mediassa markkinoinnin mahdollisuudet. Ottamalla asiakas mukaan brändiprosessiin sekä olemalla suorassa yhteydessä asiakkaaseen brändäys on saavuttanut uuden tason. Työ kuvaa sitä miten muotoilijat sekä suunnittelijat voivat käyttää sosiaalista mediaa brändäykseen. Jotta brändi tulisi huomatuksi sen olemassaolo sekä näkyvyys sosiaalisessa mediassa on tärkeää. Työn tavoite on saada ymmärrys siitä miten muotoilijat voivat käyttää sosiaalista mediaa sekä –verkostoja kehittääkseen vahvemman brändin ympärilleen. Työssä keskitytään nuoriin, suomalaisiin suunnittelijoihin sekä muotoilijoihin. Vastatakseen työn tavoitteeseen haastatteluja käytiin. Teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu Grönroosin sekä Kapfererin strategisen brändi-johdamisen kirjalliseen aineistoon. Kirjallisuuskatsaus käy läpi yhteyttä brändäyksen ja sosiaalisen median välillä.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the subject of the study is introduced. I will present why I chose to study the connection between branding on the social media and upcoming, Finnish designers. The background, aim of the research, demarcation and methods are described.

1.1 Background

“In the digital age, your name is the only currency” (Schawbel 2011). Consistent tools for building a brand around oneself are provided by the social media. Before the internet-age we had to stand out and make an impression by a firm handshake and professional approach, but with the help of the social media we can stretch the concept (Quick 2011). Instead of spending money on a marketer, the social media has evolved the ways of communication and enabled people to market for free, even with the possibility of putting a personal stamp on it. This is something that upcoming designers can take advantage of.

Lisa Sounio states in her book *Brändikäs* that Finland educates thousands of designers and artists, but permanent jobs are hard to find resulting in designers starting up their own business (Sounio 2010 p. 171). Young designers however face many obstacles when building a reputation for themselves and their products. In order to survive on the tough market the designers need visibility. Sounio states that doing your job well is not enough; nowadays networking is vital in order to advance in your career (Sounio 2010 p. 180). Without proper communication and marketing of the product, the product can fall short and go without notice. The customer can choose any product on the market, and in order for the designer to gain the target markets attention the designer must attract the prospects to see that she or he provides the accurate solution for their need. That can be reached through effective branding.

Building a brand around the designer is as important as the design itself; with the brand you communicate the essence and character of the design (Tischler 2007). A good brand can deliver a clear message and connect to the prospect emotionally while confirming your credibility and create user loyalty (Lake 2012). Tom Peters was the first one to in-

introduce the concept personal branding in 1997. He wrote the article “A Brand Called You” and stated that everyone can be a good brand, and in order to “[...] stand out and prosper in the new world of work” personal branding should be considered (Peters 1997). Upcoming designers can effectively use social media to market and brand themselves, and my purpose is to map out how social media can be applied in the branding process.

1.2 Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to obtain an understanding of how social media can be applied in the branding process and how young designers can use it to create a stronger brand around them. The thesis focuses on Finnish upcoming designers, in the beginning of their career. Questions related to branding and its communication in social media is put to focus.

1.3 Demarcation

The methods used to establish and maintain a personal brand in social media will be determined. The study is limited to include Finnish designers engaged in industrial design, ceramics- and glass design, graphics, clothing design and product design, who have recently started their business or are beginning to establish a name. In order to get a deeper understanding of the subject interviews will be implemented. The interviews consist on the most part of semi-structured questions but also of more open-ended questions. 5 people will be interviewed. The interviewees are students or recent graduates from art schools starting their career, or who have already some experience of working as a designer. Most of the interviewees have either an artist- or designer name or use their name as the brand.

I prefer to use Grönroos’ (2010) definition of branding when explaining the process of creating a brand image. Grönroos believes that the customer is involved in forming a brand image, and therefore, in a social media context I assume that Kapferer’s (2008) and Aaker’s (1995) strategy models where the company creates a brand are less relevant.

1.3.1 Important definitions

In this thesis several concepts demanding further definition will appear. It is important that the reader understands what is meant when using different terms in the field of branding and social media.

Designer is according to the Oxford Dictionary “a person who plans the look or workings of something prior to it being made, by preparing drawings or plans” (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012) In this paper I use the term *designer* for a person who plans and creates something, commercial or noncommercial, in the fields of industrial design, ceramics- and glass design, graphics, clothing design and product design.

Personal branding is how we market ourselves to others (Schawbel 2008). Neale, Hughes & Dann explain that a personal brand is a subset of brand theory and “therefore a human or personal brand would be defined as being a person, name, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller, or group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Neale, Hughes & Dann 2008).

Social media is, in this thesis, principally used for platforms on the Internet where people can communicate ideas and thoughts. *Social media* is defined by Kaplan & Haenlein as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. The term *Web 2.0* describes today’s Internet where users can produce, share, inform, co-operate etc. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

By *social networks* is meant web sites allowing users to create their own information profile and invite friends to have access to the profile in order to send e-mail, chat, share files, pictures and videos. Many companies use social networking services to create groups for the fans of a brand (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

Blogs are personal websites that can be different forms of diaries or short posts, usually appearing in a chronological order (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). The definition microb-

logs comprises blogs where short posts with up to 160 signs appear, one example of which is Twitter.

A *content-community* enables users to share different forms of media. The user does not have to login or create a profile on the site in order to take part of the offered service (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

1.4 Methods

The aim of the thesis is explained through analyzing data from the qualitative research obtained from earlier research made within the fields of branding in social media. Supporting the literature review scientific articles from marketing and branding journals, with focus on branding, personal branding, social media- and networks and communication on the Internet, will be used. Secondary sources will be retrieved from *Service Management and Marketing*, *The New Strategic Brand management*, *Organisation av varumärken* (Grönroos, 2010; Kapferer, 2008; Ugglå, 2003).

In order to get a deeper understanding interviews with young designers are conducted. This will give a more thorough understanding of the situation between the designer and the market and conceptualize what could be done in order to improve the communication of the brand through social media channels.

2 BRANDING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

In this chapter an overview of existing literature is presented and earlier research supporting my thoughts are laid out. The meaning of branding and how it can be communicated in social media is examined and the differences between branding and personal branding are explored.

2.1 Branding

Brands create value; they are intangible assets “[...] that produce added benefits for the business” (Kapferer 2008 p. 9). The American Marketing Association (2012) defines

brands and branding as follows: “A brand is a customer’s experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme.” In branding literature the expressions *brand image* and *brand identity* often occur (Grönroos 2010; Kapferer 2008). The customer’s viewpoint is often referred to as *brand image*, which is a set of associations, impulses, images, observations and reactions that combined form the perception of the brand. The *brand identity* is the image the company wants to create (Grönroos 2010 pp. 301-302; Aaker 1996 p.69) Therefore, branding can be seen as the process of creating an identity for a product, service or firm, encouraging the image that customers identify as a specific brand.

Kapferer (2008) claims that a brand can be built and created, whereas Grönroos (2010) states that it is not relevant to talk about brand building or creating a brand. According to Grönroos (2010 pp. 330-331) the traditional definition for brand excludes the customer and assumes that the company creates the brand, which then equals how customers perceive the brand. Grönroos’ definition of brand includes the customer in the branding process. He claims that when keeping apart brand image and brand identity a wrong impression of brand building has emerged, where the customer experiences and reflects on a readily created brand. According to Grönroos (2010 pp. 330-331) brand messages are continuously received by the customers, which put together form the brand image, or just brand. The American Marketing Association’s approach to the definition correspond to Grönroos’ theory, stating, that “brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary.” According to this definition a brand is the set of experiences and images created in the mind of the customer, which the company can try to influence, but not define or determine for the customer. Barwise and Meehan (2010) declare that great brands share four relevant qualities:

1. *They offer and communicate a clear, relevant customer promise.*
2. *They build trust by delivering on that promise.*
3. *They drive the market by continually improving the promise.*
4. *They seek further advantage by innovating beyond the familiar*

(Barwise & Meehan 2010 p.80-84).

2.2 Personal branding

The term “brand” generally refers to firms, products or services, but can also be applied to persons (Thomson 2006). Personal branding is a relatively recent term and has not received vast academic treatment (Neale 2008), but with the growth of social media and -networks personal branding has become accessible (Schawbel 2009). Neale, Hughes and Dann explain personal branding to be a subset of branding (Neale 2008) and the core sets of brand theory can be adapted also on persons through personal branding (Thomson 2006). According to Tom Peters everyone has the power to be their own brand and market themselves through a personal brand (Peters 1997). In order to further a career personal branding is advisable (Elmore 2010; Schawbel 2009). A key aspect of the continued growth and strength of branding in arts is personal or human branding (Neale 2008; Thomson 2006). Dan Schawbel together with other branding specialists created a definition for personal branding:

“Personal branding describes the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition, whether professional or personal, and then leverage it across platforms with a consistent message and image to achieve a specific goal. In this way, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establish reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence” (Schawbel 2009 p. 4).

This definition affirms that personal branding can be applied on designers in order to raise awareness around the designer as a person. Keller (cited in Neale 2008) stated that personal brands needs to be carefully managed in order to maintain a strong relationship with the market.

2.3 Social media and branding

2.3.1 What is social media and -networks?

Kaplan and Haenlein provide a renowned definition of social media and describe it as a “[...] group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010 p. 61). Web 2.0 is the way software developers and end-users co-operate on different applications; the content is created, published and

managed not only by individuals, but all users. The Web 2.0 has enabled people to contribute with their information and to share content easier than with 1.0. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010) A reduction of technological barriers has enabled anyone to create profiles and web pages, which makes the Web a perfect platform for personal branding (Labrecque, Markos& Milne 2011). The Web 2.0 includes blogs, social networking sites, content communities, collaborative projects (such as Wikipedia), virtual social worlds and virtual game worlds. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) explain the phenomenon as such: “Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.”

If the Internet previously was used to watch, read and buy content, nowadays the social media functions as a platform to discuss, share and modify what can be found on the Internet (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Social networking sites are according to Kaplan and Haenlein “[...] applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010 p.59-68). The profiles can entail any form of information, such as photos, video, audio files and blogs, and one of the most well known social networks is Facebook. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010)

According to Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden “[...] social media is about creating, influencing, and sharing; and, importantly, it can have a powerful impact on performance” (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden 2011 p.271). It seems that these interactive platforms change the ways of marketing enabling us to connect and collaborate around the clock (Hanna et al. 2011).

2.3.2 Developing the image and brand identity

The company’s image is an asset due to its impact on how the customer perceives the company. If a brand image is good, it can protect the company and when minor, as well as more serious problems occur the problems can be overlooked. Often upcoming problems can though affect the brand negatively. Grönroos identifies four effects of image; “image communicates expectations, image is a filter influencing perceptions, image is a

function of expectations as well as of experiences, image has an internal impact on employees as well as an external impact on customers” (Grönroos 2010 p.340). The less clear and distinct the image is, the more this may affect employee attitudes. (Grönroos 2010 pp.340-341) The image management cannot be applied on personal branding (Schawbel 2009), but the layout of websites, advertisement, packages and other visibility can support the company’s image (Grönroos 2010).

As stated earlier Grönroos asserts that it is the customers, not the seller, who builds the brand. The seller can create the right circumstances for the desired brand to develop, but it is through a brand formation process that the brand emerges for the customer. Hence, formation of a brand is complex, but the branding process can be illustrated. (Grönroos, 2010 pp.330-331) The branding process is based on the elements of Grönroos’ service branding process, but can be applied to any sort of branding. Firstly, the brand image that the company, in this case the designer, wants the customers and stakeholders to have should be analyzed (Grönroos 2010 pp.335-337). The story the seller wants to communicate should be clear (Hanna et al. 2011). The outcome of the analysis is the wanted brand identity. (Grönroos 2010 pp.335-337) Looking from the seller’s perspective *identification*, *differentiation* and *coherence* motivate the creation and maintenance of a brand. Differentiation can be attained through brand identity. Basing the differentiation strategy on the marketing theory of price, place, product and impact competitive advantage is accessible. (Uggla 2003)

According to Kapferer everyone belongs to a group or network (Kapferer 2008 p. 215). After having launched the brand, awareness must be created (Kapferer 2008; Grönroos 2010). Brand awareness is generated through planned market communication (Grönroos 2010 pp.335-336). Communicating the symbol, product, personality and the brand creates value. Identification enhances repurchase and can establish loyalty among customers. (Uggla 2003) The segments of possible heavy buyers and involved customers must be reached (Kapferer 2008) through marketing communications efforts (Grönroos 2010). Online sales, specific tips, offers and events are examples of how forerunners can be treated in order to reach and satisfy buyers who are engaged with the brand (Kapferer 2008). Usually a group has a leader which opinions are looked up to and respected. These persons influence the rest of the group and are called opinion leaders. The opinion leaders can be professionals or experts in some field, hobbyists or people most in-

volved in a category, and these pre-organised groups should be targeted through direct contact and virtual intimacy. Branding means getting closer to the mediator of influence (Kapferer 2008 pp.215-216).

The brand fulfilment is formed by customers' experiences with the firm and the services. The brand fulfilment leads to perceived brand image developed in the customers' minds. (Grönroos 2010 pp.335-336) When the brand has established a clear positioning the buyer creates a trustful relation to the brand. If the brand cannot establish coherency the brand identity and –image can be dislodged (Uggla 2003).

2.4 Managing the brand and communication in social media

In social media the communication of a brand finds its perfect platform. “In the age of Web 2.0, selfbranding tactics involve creating and maintaining social and networking profiles, personal Web sites, and blogs, as well as using search engine optimization techniques to encourage access to one's information” (Labrecque et al. 2011). When engaging in social media the designer has to be aware of the culture and rules of the entered networks.

In order to show credibility the information on the different forums and networks where the brand is presented should be continuously updated. Through Web 2.0 anyone has access to add information or content to others profiles, which results in people not having total control of ones own profile. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010) The key element of creating a brand image is through a proper profile, and others contributing to this element can lead to interference with the brand identity (Labrecque et al. 2011).

Managing the brand is “[...] a balance between preservation, renewal, extension and growth of the prototype on the one hand, and on the other the creation of new products and services to capture new circumstances of use and new customers, and to open new segments” (Kapferer 2008 p. 229). This includes both the essentials of maintaining the brand as well as securing the future brand. Innovation is important in order for the brand to survive in the long run. Instead of putting all focus on developing technological competence and creating new products, the brands future, and what values and meaning the brand will symbolize in the future should be emphasized. (Uggla 2003 p. 229) Taking

the customer into account can be of help not only when it comes to branding. If the designer takes the customer into account in the designing process the social media can be a tool for learning about the target market and what the customers preferences are (Barwise & Meehan 2010). This can help preserve the brand's success in the future.

2.4.1 Integrated marketing communications

Rust, Zeithaml and Lemon (cited in Grönroos 2010) explains integrated marketing communications as “[...] a strategy that integrates traditional media marketing, direct marketing, public relations and other distinct marketing communications media as well as communications aspects of the delivery and consumption of goods and services and of customer service and other customer encounters. Thus, integrated marketing communications has a long-term perspective” (Grönroos 2010 p.305). Duncan and Moriarty defines four kinds of communication messages:

1. Planned messages
2. Product messages
3. Service messages
4. Unplanned messages (Grönroos 2010 p.305)

The planned messages can be the result of a message sent online through social media. These messages are the least trustworthy as people know the messages are planned to influence customers. Messages about the company and its offerings, including the physical products design, its functions, materials etc. form the product messages. The communication between customer and seller, the way technology and systems function and the seller's attitude and behavior are the service messages. The most trust worthy of the messages are the unplanned messages. These can be good or bad word-of-mouth communication, which can be spread through social networks. (Grönroos 2010 pp.304-307) The word-of-mouth travels fast in social media and –networks. Word-of-mouth can be positive, neutral or negative, but according to Mazzarol, Sweeney and Soutar word-of-mouth is usually either extremely positive or extremely negative (2007). Total absence of communication, either deliberate or accidental, which can be not communicating with the customers or not answering questions sent through social networking sites, might impact negatively and confuse the total communication effect. Especially in

critical situations if the product is defect the customer needs to be kept well informed about the process. (Grönroos 2010 pp.304-307) Lack of updates on the chosen social media and –networks can reduce interest of the brand and hence also damage the brand. When total communication is mastered properly a powerful market communication impact can be achieved which can lead to positive word-of-mouth, the message with the strongest influence on buyers (Grönroos 2010 pp.307-309).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the literature that the thesis is based on was presented. The meaning and functions of social media branding and online communication was clarified. According to the overview of existing research, what can be retrieved from the literature is that researchers believe in the consumer having the most influence on the branding process. It seems that it is traditionally considered that the seller forms the brand identity, which then is as such transferred to the consumer who perceive it as the brand image. The newer literature tries to prove that it is the consumer that holds the power of forming the brand and the seller should try to form the brand identity according to the consumer's brand image. In the branding process it is preferable that the seller takes this in consideration.

A clear distinction between branding methods in product branding and personal branding was not found, and thus can be assumed that branding can be applied both on products and on persons, using similar methods. The brand can be shared through social media and the channels best suited for ones business should be chosen carefully. According to existing research the seller should update the channels chosen for the branding frequently. Effective branding and maintenance of the preferred brand identity can result in word-of-mouth in social media channels, social networks and content communities. All kind of buzz around the brand is positive, but unplanned messages with a negative tone should try to be avoided, due to the possibility of it harming the brand. The unplanned messages, including word-of-mouth, is what people rely most upon and thus affects the brand most effectively.

3 METHOD

In this chapter the method of research and the interview process is presented. The sample and analyzing of data is explained.

3.1 Research method

The aim of this study is to obtain an understanding of how young designers can use social media to create a stronger brand around them. Quantitative research methods measure data in numbers, while qualitative research attempts to explain and describe data. With qualitative study the researcher implies to give a broad and vast understanding of the subject at hand. (Patton 2002 pp.4-5) In order to grasp how young designers manage the marketing and branding of themselves and their production, and how the designers use social media for that purpose qualitative methods were best suited for this study.

“Qualitative inquiry is especially powerful as a source of *grounded theory*, theory that is inductively generated from fieldwork, that is, theory that emerges from the researcher’s observations and interviews out in the real world rather than in the laboratory or the academy.” (Patton, 2002, p. 11)

3.1.1 Interviews

In order to complement the study, interviews were conducted. Interviews are suitable when the researcher wants to obtain what cannot be observed, such as feelings, thoughts and opinions (Patton 2002 pp.340-341). Since the aim of this study is to clarify the designers’ use of social media for branding the most suitable way to gather data is through interviews. The questions’ were open-ended with the general interview guide approach. The question format in this paper was open-ended and the approach of the interview was designed according to Patton’s (2002 pp.342-344) *Interview guide approach*. The general interview guide approach outlines predetermined subjects or issues that are conversed with the interviewees. By defining the topics in before hand helps to keep the interviews systematic though the interviewer has the freedom to question the inter-

viewee spontaneously and suitably. (Patton 2002 pp.342-344) The open-ended questions enable the interviewee to freely explain and define the situation.

3.1.2 Interview guide

The theoretical framework as well as my pre-understanding of the subject contributes to the building of the themes in the interview guide. The interview guide was broadly based on the following questions:

1. How the interviewees raise awareness of their brand
2. What channels the interviewees use for branding and how they are managed
3. How the interviewees look at branding

3.2 Sample

The sample was conducted through a mix of criterion sampling and convenience sampling (Patton 2002 pp.243-244). I have many friends working as designers, which provided an opportunity to choose suitable candidates for the interview. The criteria for the interviewees were that the designers were young (< 30 years old) and had studied some form of design. The aim was to include designers from different fields of design and in different stages of their career in order to get a broad understanding of the situation.

The sample consists of six individuals with design as profession, but the field of design varies. The interviewees are from different parts of Finland but all live at the moment in Helsinki, Finland. The sample consists of four women and two men in the ages of 21-29. The interviewees are students or recent graduates from art schools starting their career, or who have already some experience of working as a designer. All of the interviewees have sold products that they have designed and most of them have either an artist- or designer name or use their name as the brand.

The interviews were conducted in central Helsinki, Finland, during the time period 20.4.2012 – 29.5.2012. The interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes. (Appendix 1)

Five of the interviews were held in Finnish and one in Swedish. The answers are translated to English in the results chapter. The questionnaire proved after the first interview to be convenient and only one question was stripped away. New questions arose during the different interviews, but these were asked mostly to complement the earlier questions. Present at the interview were only the interviewee and I, the interviewer. The interviews were recorded on a laptop and transcribed afterwards in the extent required.

After having interviewed five designers, I realized that some of the interviewees' answers were not suitable for my study, due to the interviewees' artistic background. It seemed that an artist works more for the sake of the art instead of concentrating on what sells and the commercial side fell therefore short in their answers. A sixth interviewee, a clothing designer, was included to the study in order to add more relevant information concerning designers.

3.2.1 Presentation of interviewees

Interviewee 1 studies glass- and ceramics, but makes also graphics. She has her own company and is active in social media and –networks. *Interviewee 2* is studying industrial design and had already designed chairs and boats for companies. He is not active in social media and feels that he does not need to be due to that he aims to sell his design to companies, not consumers. *Interviewee 3* studied clothing and design, and sold her own designed clothes a couple of years ago. Nowadays she focuses more on painting and visual arts. *Interviewee 4* has a Master in visual arts and focuses on painting and drawing. He is represented by a gallery and has held exhibitions for his work. He has also designed t-shirt prints for a known Finnish clothing brand. He has a web page that he updates, but he is not active in social media. *Interviewee 5* has studied crafts and design, as well as clothing. She focuses now on graphics and drawings and has recently created a Facebook page for her work. *Interviewee 6* is a clothing designer about to start up a clothing line with her designer friend. She has plans to put up a blog and web page and be involved and active in social media.

3.3 Data analysis

The data analyzing process in this paper is inductive, meaning that the empirical part of the study is first based on the theoretical framework, followed by interviews and presentation of new theory. The results are narrowed down into five topics that are discussed based on the theory presented in chapter two: clientele and customer relations, raising awareness, use of social media, branding and personal brand, and marketing and guidance. The results are then discussed with conclusions, implications and suggestions for future studies.

4 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the qualitative research are presented. The research is based on the theory in chapter 2 and is presented according to the method in chapter 3. Differences and similarities between existing literature and my research are underlined and compared with the interviewees' views on branding in social media.

4.1 Clientele and customer relations

The first questions regarded the designers' clientele; what knowledge they had about the customers and what their possible relationship was to them. These questions were asked in order to see if the designers had made research in what their possible clientele consist of. Only one of the interviewees had analyzed what her clientele comprised of and who the customers were. Clear differences in how the designers know their clientele were perceived.

“I have just been figuring out who my products are aimed at. Possibly because I am at the beginning of my career I mostly design for other designers and people in the creative industry. My design products are very visual and multifaceted and therefore demand a creative user. But it is product specific and it depends on the context who I want to reach with the design. I want to design for the widest possible clientele.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“I have approached this process more from the angle of how I want to design and work. I would like to work in a wide range targeting any and all customers and

would prefer to work at a design bureau and design for many types of customers. My design is often based on a problem, for example when I designed a chair I wanted to make it ergonomically good for the back, due to that I had a back problem.”

[Interviewee 2, age 27]

“When I designed clothes I had a clear target group for my products. The hardest thing when trying to design and make it selling was to combine my own preferences and views of the creation process and get it to match with the customers’ preferences. It was hard to combine the artistic side of the creation process and the commercialism. That is why I nowadays want to focus more on painting, due to the fact that the commercialism and the artistic parts can be kept separately.”

[Interviewee 3, age 29]

“We have thought about creating artistic, fun, colorful and spectacular clothing for people who dare to use this kind of garments, but we want to do also “normal” and more accessible clothes.”

[Interviewee 6, age 23]

Like Grönroos states the brand image is created in the customers mind and it is the customer who builds the brand. The image is formed partly by the experiences and the expectations that the customer has for the brand. (Grönroos 2010 p. 331) For some of the designers it was not important how the customers perceived their work as long as they got to design according to their own preferences. If the designer does not know the brand’s clientele it can be difficult to try to work accordingly and consequently without harming the brand.

Keeping up good relations with the customers and keeping them up-to-date was perceived important by most of the interviewees.

“It is absolutely very important to keep the customers up to date with what is going on. It is like involving the customer in the process.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“I believe that if the results of my productions are good and if I do a good job as a designer it is not important to flirt with the customer. If I would do a bad job I do not think the marketing would help. Contacts are good to have, but I would not invest a lot of money or time in the marketing.”

[Interviewee 2, age 27]

“It is in my opinion important to show respect to the clients and be in contact with them. The feedback from the clients is valuable for me also in order to further and keep up the what I am doing.”

[Interviewee 3, age 29]

“Especially if the clothes are expensive and the clients want to invest in these garments it is essential to show that the client and her contribution is important. This is particularly important when trying to get a new brand on the market the customers are everything for the company and the brand. Taking care of the customers also just by showing that you remember them is appreciated.”

[Interviewee 6, age 23]

According to Grönroos customers continuously receive brand messages and these reflections put together form the brand (Grönroos 2010 pp.330-331). All experiences related to the brand, including service and media commentary, affects the customers picture of the brand and keeping up good customer relations can thereby be defined as crucial for maintaining a positive image of the brand. It is important to show appreciation to the customer. Badly managed customer relationships can be perceived as ignorant behavior and result in the brand losing loyal customers.

4.2 Raising awareness

The designers' knowledge about marketing and what they knew about creating awareness around the brand was tested. A question about how and through which channels the designer thinks people would best become aware of the designer's doings was asked.

“I think people would best get to know about my doings through social media. I market through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and then I have my own web site. On a more personal level I send mail with a pdf attached to my contacts and put a link of it on my web page. By sending mail to bloggers the information spreads fast. It annoys me that if one wants to really spread the information one needs money, and scholarships and funds are handed out rarely.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“Facebook is a powerful tool for spreading information, but I have had the fortune to get awareness mostly through contacts.”

[Interviewee 5, age 26]

“For my clothing brand I had a Facebook site, and the shop I sold the clothes in had web pages. For my paintings I currently have a blog.”

[Interviewee 3, age 29]

“I do not appear in social media, yet. I see the use of social media as positive; it is good to show clients what I am up to and what I have designed.”

[Interviewee 4, age 27]

“A lot of the information about clothes comes from blogs. It can be defining for a clothing brand which blog the brand appears on. We have also thought about contacting stylists that work for magazines and get visibility through that channel. A Facebook-profile and a blog and web site for our brand could be effective in order to reach a larger customer base.”

[Interviewee 6, age 23]

Social media is available and free for everyone and is thereby a perfect marketing channel for young designers with a small amount of capital. The target group can be reached through social media and information can be widely spread and shared. The designer needs to find the suited channels for her or his own brand, give them frequent attention, and take the customer into account in the development and maintenance of the social media channels and –networks. The social media can be a tool for learning about the target market and its preferences (Barwise & Meehan 2010). One of the most popular channels to promote their design was through Facebook. It is a logical choice due to that many friends and possible clients have a Facebook profile and can follow, share and like the designers Facebook page.

4.3 Use of social media

How the interviewees handle the social media and –networks their brand appear on varied depending on how purposefully they were involved in their career. Interviewees with a clear aim and career goal were frequently updating the information appearing on the chosen social media.

“I update my profiles as often as I can and every time I have completed a new work. On Twitter and Instagram I can post about what is happening at the moment, just to keep people updated.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“I try to put up something new on the web site as often as I have something new to present. I do not do it probably as often as I would like to, partly because when posting a picture of a painting, it does not reflect the reality in the same way as seeing the work live with own eyes.”

[Interviewee 4, age 29]

“I put up sneak peeks of my work on my Facebook page and use those to keep the clients informed and interested.”

[Interviewee 5, age 26]

The key element for the creation of brand image is to maintain a proper profile (Labreque et al. 2011). Managing the brand in social media is about preserving and extending the information at hand. It is important to show that the work is continuous and that something is happening all the time. The customer should be constantly surprised instead of bored when it comes to the content on the social media. Total absence of communication, either deliberate or accidental, can be not communicating with the customers or not answering questions sent through social networking sites, can impact negatively and confuse the total communication effect (Grönroos 2010).

The interviewees found that the feedback on their productions and doings were mostly positive in social media. Advice and constructive criticism was usually obtained from friends, colleagues or teachers.

“I usually ask friends or people I trust to say their honest opinion of my work.”

[Interviewee 3, age 27]

“When posting something on Facebook the feedback is almost always positive, people very seldom criticize each others design on the Internet. The best constructive criticism I get from my school, where professional designers and professors can say exactly what they think about my work. I have been wondering who can review my work after I graduate, and then I will have to ask my friends and everyone who knows anything about it to criticize my work. Critique is always good for a designer because it is sometimes hard to see what is wrong with my own work. The moment where a product is revealed for the customer is crucial. You do not want to show a badly made product, because the image is fast ruined and the reputation is hard to earn back.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“My boyfriend usually gives his honest opinion to my work. It is hard to see when a picture is ready and I tend to need someone else’s opinion in telling me when the work is good enough. When it comes to a commissioned work the client tells you how they want the result to be like.”

[Interviewee 5, age 26]

“Usually the feedback is positive, not constructive. I get feedback from my colleagues, former teachers that I am friends with nowadays.”

[Interviewee 4, age 29]

4.4 Branding and personal brand

The concept of branding seemed to be unfamiliar to the designers, even though most of them knew how to manage the image and maintain the interest among the clientele in practice. When asked if the designers wanted to be known by their name or if they preferred that their doings spoke for themselves the interviewees answered as follows:

“For me the products I design are in focus and not me as a designer, it is not important for me that the end consumer is familiar to as a designer. When I present my design ideas to my customers, i.e. companies, it would be great if I could show a good portfolio of earlier work and impress them that way. I want to be experienced as a designer who makes good products and as one who has a clear image and thought behind the product before I start producing it.”

[Interviewee 3, age 27]

“My brand is my name, but me as a persona and the designer brand I want to keep separate. It is the combination of the products and me as a designer that forms the brand. I do not want to be too personal, but rather have a more professional approach to it.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“When I had the clothing brand it was more important that the brand was in focus, because people learn in the long run what kind of clothing is made by that specific brand.”

[Interviewee 3, age 29]

As mentioned in the theory in order to further a career personal branding is advisable (Schawbel 2009; Elmore 2010) especially when it comes to branding in arts (Neale 2008; Thomson 2006). A clear difference between branding the designer’s business and branding the designer as a person was not detected as a result of the interviews, but all of the interviewees create a personal brand around them, even unintentionally or unaware of it.

4.5 Marketing and guidance

The knowledge of how to market their work appeared to be self-taught by the interviewees. When the interviewees were asked if they got any business education from their school the answer was mostly unanimous.

“We got no business education what so ever in our school. I studied on a business-oriented program, but the education was worthless. One course in how to make web pages was given, but that was about it.”

[Interviewee 2, age 29]

“There is no business education usually in design schools, but I think you can learn from older students which channels you should use to succeed. It is assumed that the designer should do everything themselves, like design, make web pages and market the brand. My task is to design, and someone else can sell it.”

[Interviewee 4, age 29]

It seems that some of the designers underestimate the power of the marketing channels free of charge, in this case the social media and –networks. The design schools apparently do not advice the designers to grasp the possibilities of promoting their work using social media either. The business orientation deriving from the design schools actually seem nonexistent.

Most of the interviewees used only a few social media channels to promote their work or themselves, and many found that when wanting to market more and develop their marketing they would need financial assistance. In the beginning of their career most of the designers do not have the opportunity to invest in the marketing and they found that it was hard to obtain funding from other parties also.

“This marketing thing irritates me, because if you really want to spread the word of your doings you need money to do it, but financial support is hard to get. You can get a scholarship for the starting-up of your activity or business, but for marketing it is nearly impossible. It is weird that you get money for carrying out a project, but what then when you have finished the project and you want to get it out internationally, or even just nationally, how do you do that?”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“There are a lot of people needing funding or scholarships and there are different ways to reach the panels that give financial aid. It is though not easy to be given the money. If you have received one scholarship it is easier to obtain them in the

future. But you have to be active and show that the money does not go to waist. Financial aid is rarely received from the private sector. When the population gets older I think the financing of creative industry increases.”

[Interviewee 4, age 29]

The creative industry seems very dependent on outsiders’ financial aid. It is clear that the collaboration between the market and its experts, and the design industry is not developed in the needed extent. These answers gave an indication of the possible need for future research.

The interviewees were asked if they would be willing to use outside help in the form of experts in for example marketing.

“I could definitely see myself using the help of experts if I found it necessary. There is enough work with the designing due to that the competition within the business is hard and I would like to focus on what I do best. I would therefore be glad to get help from marketing experts. If I would come up with a good idea for an industrial design product I would probably want to contact a company who could realize the project instead of starting my own business.”

[Interviewee 2, age 27]

“I would like to use the help of experts when it comes to marketing and product development. It can though be expensive and I do not have the possibility at the moment for this kind of service.”

[Interviewee 1, age 21]

“If I had the money, I don’t see why I would not use experts’ help in some field. At the moment I have no need for it though.”

[Interviewee 5, age 26]

“Marketing is a very essential part of the whole business and if the marketing and financial side is not your strongest capability I think it would be of great importance to let someone who knows about it help you. It is also good to get a third parties view on the business. Someone who could give an experts opinion, go through the situation and give advice like twice a year for example would be helpful.”

[Interviewee 6, age 23]

The aim with this question was not specifically to answer the research question but it was relevant in order to understand the designers’ ability and needs to work independ-

ently and by their own means. The results were of interest for future research and shed light on the designer's need for consultation.

5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the results of the qualitative research are discussed. Conclusions of data presented in earlier chapters are laid out and the results obtained in order to answer the aim are introduced. Strengths and weaknesses of the research, and suggestions on future research are presented.

5.1 Summary and discussion of results

The aim of this study was to obtain an understanding of how young designers can use the social media to create a stronger brand around them. Young designers' use of social media in branding was investigated. The interview entailed questions about the designers' knowledge of branding and marketing and how it affects the brand.

According to earlier research personal branding can be applied on young designers, but is up to the designer what methods of branding that serve their purpose best. Depending on if the designer target selling to companies through freelancing, or if the designer aims to sell directly to the market and to normal customers, the method of branding changes. When targeting firms the personal brand proved to be less important and the products were the ones driving the brand forward. If the designer sold directly to the market and the end customer, the personal brand was brought to higher attention, and it seemed to be a good personal brand that brings positive attention to the products.

In order to better the designers understanding about the importance of branding action should be taken already on the educational level. The schools could emphasize the effects of marketing and branding and prepare the designer to her or his career. The designer should at an early stage ponder what she or he wants to bring forward with their design, what elements are important and what message they want to send. The brand is formed out of these questions and becomes clear to the designer where after it can be communicated to the customer. If the message is unclear the brand is unstable which can lead to a diffuse brand image. What is relevant is the designer's ability to communicate convenient elements through every action taken in the branding process. Through

involving the customer in the designer's doings and through proper communication a trustworthy brand is born and sustained.

A controversy in this thesis and an interesting result was the mismatch of creativity and commercialism. For some of the designers it was very difficult to take the customers preferences in consideration while designing and creating, which reflected directly on the designers use of social media. For these designers who wanted to design what they wanted also felt that the branding and marketing of their doings was less important. These designers' wanted their work to speak for themselves without having to put a big effort on raising awareness around the products or them as designers.

5.2 Strengths and weaknesses

This thesis gives a broad review of existing knowledge in both social media and branding. It maps out the alternative ways for branding using social media. It is an explicit overview of young designers' current situation and outlines future possibilities to market and raise awareness of the brand. The study gives guidelines also for personal branding.

A weakness with this thesis is that it is virtually impossible to draw any definite conclusions of the overall situation of young, upcoming designers based on six interviewees answers. Research in the field was made in order to get a deeper understanding of the current situation of designers' efforts made in branding in social media. The results drawn from this thesis can be received as guidelines and as a small scale mapping of the present situation of young designers in Finland. Another weakness concerns the information retrieved from the young designers. Most of the interviewees being in the beginning of their career their real life experience and not being so far in their career were not vast. The question of how upcoming designers use the social media for branding could be answered as such only by a few of the interviewees.

5.3 Implications for designers

The results in this research can be used as guidelines for how to develop and maintain a brand. The theory intends to highlight the main findings in how to best take advantage of social media in creating awareness and marketing the brand. Designers with little

knowledge in the field can gain from the research through theoretical examples of how to proceed after graduation and when starting a career as designer.

5.4 Suggestions on future research

During the investigation and making of this thesis interesting questions requiring answers were raised. The impending question was the non-existing business education the designers receive from the art schools. It would be interesting to see how an amendment on the educational level regarding business knowledge would affect the designers' ability to prosper in their career and with their design.

The lack of investments made in designers businesses is overhanging. The start-up occasionally provided by the state can be enough to get a business rolling, and the appearance in social media can help create awareness around the designer's business, but in order to survive and prosper on the market the help of private investors and business angels would be of great importance. An interesting research object would be the reason for lack of investments made in upcoming design companies and what could be done in order to encourage private investors to believe in these businesses. Possible is also that the designers are reluctant to receiving capital fearing that the investors might want to be involved in the decision making and that the influence would be overwhelming. This would be an interesting and valuable subject to research in order for design to become an even bigger contributor to Finland's economy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interviewees

Informant nr.	Name	Age	Field of design	Date	Length
1	Man	21	Glass- and ceramics, graphics	20.4	22 min.
2	Alexander	27	Industrial design	7.5	21 min.
3	Hanna P.	29	Vestonom, visual arts	22.5	22 min.
4	Sami	29	Visual arts	28.5	40 min.
5	Hanna L.	26	Vestonom	29.5	20 min.
6	Riikka	23	Clothing designer	30.5	19 min.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

General questions about the designer and his or her work

1. To who are your products aimed, what is your clientele? Describe.
2. How did you find the right target market and clientele? / How do you think the target market could be reached?
3. How do you think people could best become aware of your doings as a designer?

Social media

4. What kind of marketing efforts have you used so far? Which channels and why these?
 - a. What social media channels do you use or appear on?
 - b. For what purpose and how do you use the social media?
5. How do you use the Web for marketing efforts?
 - a. Are you active on the Web? Do you update often?
 - b. What kind of feedback do you receive from people? How do they react or comment your work or other?

Customer relations

6. Are you in contact with your customers?
7. What do you feel about the relations to the customers, in what ways does it affect your work?

Importance of the product

8. Is it the product or you as a designer in focus?
9. What elements are the most important to communicate? Logotype, appearance, layout...?
10. Do you / how do you take the customer into account in the designing process?

Brand

11. In which ways can a designer impact the consumer's image of the brand?
12. How do you want people to experience your design? What do you want to bring forward in your brand?

Future

14. What do you think about the opportunity to collaborate with others, or be part of an association? Could it help you in your career? Is it profitable?
16. Have you thought about using the help of experts or consultants? What kind of help or assistance would you need?
17. What do you think the future is going to look like for your brand?