



# **How to promote a female rapper in the Finnish music scene**

Case Study

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EXAMENSARBETE	
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Handledare (Arcada):	Tove Kietz
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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Detta examensarbete är en kvalitativ undersökning som behandlar marknadsföringsplanen för en kvinnlig rappare i Finland. Syftet med detta arbete är att utarbeta en guidebok för nya artister och marknadsförare, som är intresserade av hur man bygger upp ett starkt varumärke för en ny rapartist på den finländska musikscenen. Arbetet går inte bara igenom marknadsföringsplaner utan visar även konkreta exempel på hur man bygger upp en framgångsrik karriär. Genom temaintervjuer och tidigare insamlad information om ämnet ger man en uppfattning om hur en ny artist lanseras i Finland, vilka steg processen innehåller och hur man bygger en brand för en artist. Examensarbetet behandlar speciellt kvinnliga rappare, eftersom denna genre är ny i Finland och inga tidigare undersökningar har gjorts. Undersökningen inspirerades av skribentens yrke inom musikbranschen, och fastän arbetet inte är ett uppdrag, görs studien som ett självständigt arbete för det företag som skribenten arbetar för. I den teoretiska delen presenteras den finska musikbranschen, hur skivbolag är uppbyggda och bakgrunden till rapmusik både utomlands och i Finland. Den teoretiska delen går sedan in på marknadsföringens grunder och hur man bygger upp varumärken. Därefter kommer man vidare in på artistpromotion och hur man bygger upp ett starkt varumärke. Till sist går den teoretiska delen in på artistpromotion och vad det går ut på. Med hjälp av en fallstudie och teori ger man en helhetsbild av lanseringsprocessen. De använda forskningsmetoderna omfattar egna erfarenheter inom musikbranschen, en fallstudie samt intervjuer med nyckelpersoner inom fältet. Bland respondenterna finns både artister, manager och marknadsförare. Även litteratur och artiklar som behandlar musik och marknadsföring används för att bygga upp en stark teori. I den empiriska delen görs det en marknadsföringsplan för en kvinnlig rappare, och besvaras de frågor som uppstått i målsättningen och syftet. För att avsluta detta arbete poängteras vikten av en väl fungerande marknadsföringsplan genom att hela processen går igenom och fortsättningen för kvinnliga rappare i Finland analyseras.</p>	
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<p><b>Abstract:</b></p> <p>This thesis is a qualitative study that focuses on the marketing plan for a female rapper in Finland. The purpose of this work is to prepare a guidebook for new artists and marketers, who are interested in building a strong brand for a new rap artist on the Finnish music scene. The work not only goes through ground management plans but also shows concrete examples of how to build a successful career. Through theme interviews and previously collected information on the subject, the writer gives an idea of how a new artist is launched in Finland, which steps the process. The thesis deals specifically with female rappers, as this genre is new in Finland and no previous studies have been done. The study was inspired by the writer's profession in the music industry, and although the work is not an assignment, the study is done as an independent work for the company for which the writer works. The theoretical part presents the Finnish music industry, how record companies are built and the background to rap music both abroad and in Finland. The theoretical part then goes into the marketing bases and how brands are built. Then it goes in to artist promotion. Finally, the theoretical part goes into artist promotion and what it is all about. Using a case study and theory, the writer gives an overall picture of the launch process. The research methods used include own experiences in the music industry, a case study and interviews with key persons in the field. The respondents include both artists, managers and marketers. Literature and articles about music and marketing are also used to build a strong theory. In the empirical part, a marketing plan is made for a female rapper, and the questions raised in the objective and purpose are answered. In order to complete this work, the emphasis of a well-functioning marketing plan by reviewing the entire process and analyzing the continuation of female rappers in Finland.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Lauryn Hill, Nicki Minaj, Missy Elliot, ETTA, Mariska, Sofa and many more quick-witted women have something in common. All of them have the dream of becoming the biggest, most known rappers in the world. No, not female rappers – just rappers.

What Nicki, Lauryn and Missy have accomplished in their careers is magnificent, but what about the rappers in Finland. Where have they come, and how have they gotten there. As there's a small segment for rappers in the music scene in Finland, how can you get a female performer to succeed and make it? In this thesis a case study will be conducted where readers will get more acquainted with the RnB & Hip Hop- scene in Finland, as well as focusing on the promotion of artists in Finland.

As the case study works around promotion, there will be interviews with promoters, rappers and managers, representing both genders, to get more acquainted with the issue's rappers are faced with today. This thesis will take readers deeper into the inside circle and explain the rules that have been set in the rap-game.

## 1.1 Problem definition

Why do our Spotify charts show growth in this genre of music, but no women are invited to fight for the top positions? When the research for the thesis started it was difficult to find any prior written text about this subject. Not one to give up easily, this gave an extra motivation to want to study more about the different treatment artist get, depending on their genre. Promotion is a crucial moment that could make or break someone's carrier.

As women are underdogs in this scene, what factors are taken in consideration when launching a new leading lady. Who makes the decision whether she makes it or not? Why haven't we seen as many female performers as for example in the US, why did the biggest Hip-Hop festival in Finland had one female headliner last year? Is it the lack of promotion, proper branding or just conservative consumers?

## **1.2 Aim**

The aim of this thesis is to provide a guidebook for future artists and marketers to utilize, when planning a long-lasting successful career. This thesis focuses on promotion, and especially on promoting a new artist. What steps need to be taken into consideration when launching a new artist or building a new brand.

To get a clear understanding from a professional point of view, game changers in the industry are being interviewed and questioned about personal experiences as well as professional opinions of how different promotion is with different genre artists.

## **1.3 Limitations**

Firstly, this thesis is based on theme interviews as a main research method. It's truly important to limit the questions and subjects that are studied.

Secondly, it's focusing solely on the promotion of female rappers in Finland, not the global effect, even if it leans on foreign studies and articles.

And finally, as the material that I can use from Finland is mainly ready interviews from journalists it's important to be critical and to not lean too much on the material as fact-based, and more an opinion.

## **1.4 Definition**

This case study will solely focus on the promotion part, it will not cover the whole music industry from a female point of view, even if it's noted in the interviews. This is not a study about gender roles, but purely how promotion should be modified to fit a new genre and introduce it the audience. Theme methods are used in interviews to keep a clear thread, even if all opinions are taken into consideration.

## **1.5 Definition of terms**

As promoters and managers work with artists it's essential to define the difference with these two. A promotor works for the label, therefore as they work with the label's artist, they in fact represent the label. A promoters takes care of media relations regarding their

artist. It is naturally in the label's best interest that the artists have a successful career. (Weissman)

As for the manager, they represent the artists. Their core focus is on making sure the artists' rights are being taken care of and all their needs met. It is also crucial for the manager that their artist makes it, as their salary is based on how much their artists make. Even if the manager does have a say, or sometimes even plan what goes into the marketing plan, it's the promoter's responsibility to execute the final marketing plan.

A&R, Artist and Repertoire department, scouts talented people and develops new artists. The A&R has a strong opinion when new music is being released and are usually consulted prior to the release of new music or albums (Weissman, 2001).

## **2 THEORY SECTION**

In this section I will present the theoretical background of the music industry in general and how it's structured. I'll introduce the full process all the way from the basics of marketing to promotion, branding, personal branding and of course artist branding. As this business has a wide colorful history, the background of where it all started is thoroughly presented. Demonstrating who the pioneers in rap music are as well as introducing trail blazers in Finnish music.

However, it is important to inform, that as there aren't that many previous studies or valid articles written about this subject it eliminates resources where I can gather my information.

### **2.1 Marketing**

"The central idea of marketing is to match the organization's capabilities with the needs of customers in order to achieve the objectives of both parties." (Frow, Payne and McDonald, 2011)



The major part of a successful company is the marketing. This also applies in marketing an artist. Authors have through the years defined marketing in various ways, however, one common factor is highlighting the product or service in the eyes of the consumer. No matter how it is served, it should always aim to create a positive visual feel.

In today's competitive market, differentiating yourself from others, helps you succeed. By starting off with the basics, one is on a good path in building a strong and long-lasting brand. By having the option of renewing oneself and choosing the path in which to market, companies as well as artists have the luxury of keeping themselves relevant for longer periods (Kotler,2004).

Marketing can be tricky but by following provided guidelines, like the 4 P's, it's easier to perceive the whole marketing concept. The original marketing mix, consisting the 4 P's, was introduced by E. Jerome McCarthy. This mix has been the most used framework for the decision-making within marketing. Traditionally the 4 P's stand for:

- Product
- Price
- Place
- Promotion

The P's above support marketers. With product, it simply means the product or service a company is providing. In this case the product is the entertainment value an artist gives. Price can vary all from performance fees to costs in visual marketing. Place meaning where the marketing will happen or be showed. And last but not least, promotion stands for the different communication channels that are used while communicating with consumers.

However, as this only gets one so far, an additional 3 P's have been added, to create a more comprehensive marketing mix.

- Physical evidence
- People
- Process

These additions give more in-depth content for marketers. With physical evidence marketers plan the environment where the service occurs. People stands simply for the people whom participate in delivering the service. Process, all the way from the start to the finished result (Blythe,2009).

*Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.*” (American Marketing Association AMA, 2014)

### **2.1.1. Music Marketing**

Music marketing has gained during the previous years, as both marketeers and consumers have more knowledge of the subject than ever before. Back in the days it was an unwritten rule that if an album was good, it would sell, meaning no additional promotion was needed. Nowadays we all know better that the game is fierce, and the release of any product or service needs marketing to help pump up the sales (Barrow et al., 1994).

As physical record sales have vanished due to the modern digital era, the importance of being visible and accessible to consumers is bigger than ever. All money is now evolving around concerts and collaborations. Therefore, artists are now dependent on social media, as it's the fastest way to interact with listeners and promote upcoming shows and collaborations. As the figure below demonstrates, a well-organized promotion needs proper planning alongside thoughtful execution.

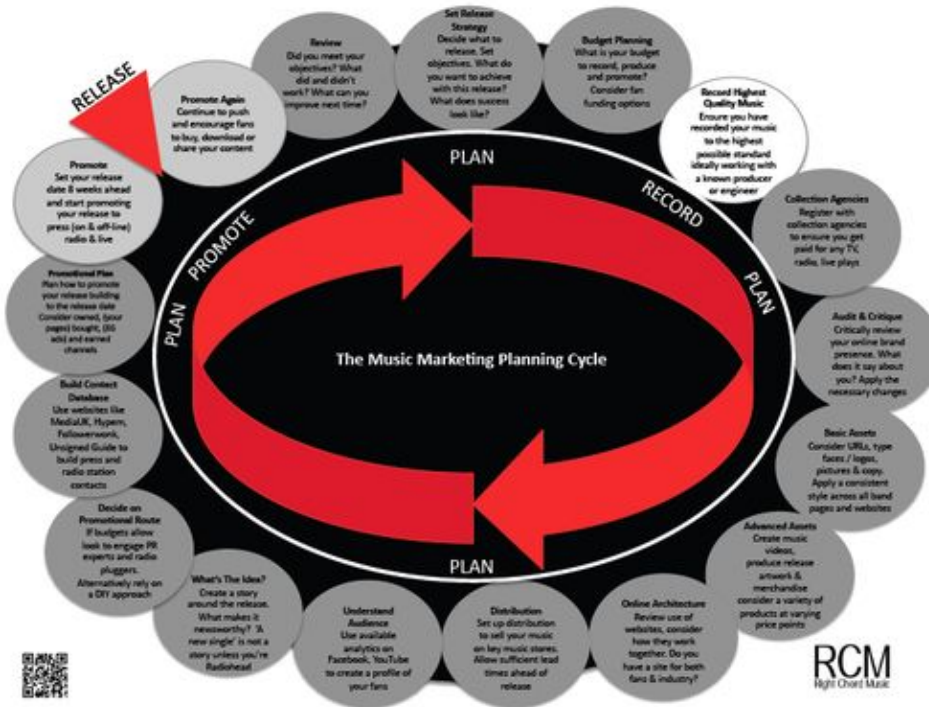


Figure 1. The Music Marketing Planning Cycle (RCM,2019)

Typically, a promotional plan starts a good 12-18 months prior to the release. Scouting potential platforms where the artist in question can be portrayed (television, radio, live performances, brand partnerships and so on). After this, the artist is given good time to reevaluate their music, and further work on it is made.

This then helps mold the artists brand. If you have for example an artist with a very urban sound, like rappers do, you'd preferably be advised to promote your music in more organic media platforms.

All this culminates in proper branding. Having a strong brand helps consumers in identifying the artist in question (RCM,2019).

## 2.2 Branding

The word "brand" originates back to the days when cowboys would mark their cattle with a poker. This way they could differentiate their cattle from others (Kapferer, 2004).

In modern times brand is defined as “a name, term, sign, symbol, 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” (Kotler, 2004).

Both Kotler and Kapferer state that the point of a brand is to add value to a product by a warranty of quality. However, brand can also mean people, services, places not just a product. The key is that it differentiates one service from another (Keller,2008).

### **2.3 Artist Branding**

The most valued skill of a marketer is their ability to produce, maintain, shield and improve brands for their products. A brand is a name, design, term, symbol or all these put together, giving a specific identification to a product or service (Kotler,2004).

This also applies when branding an artist, by creating a distinctive brand consumer find it easier to adapt and remember. This is the start of a long-term procedure where promoters build up brand equity, as it should bring more value to the actual product, the artist. (Allen,2012).

Record labels want to create as versatile brands as simply possible for their artist, so they can stand out in the ever-growing competitive business. However, this is where promoters, manager and the artist themselves need to co-operate so the brand will stay credible and remains relevant (Macy et al.,2015).

### **2.4 Promotion**

When planning the release of a single or an album, there must be a clear plan for execution. You can't simply write songs, record them, edit them and then release them as soon as they're done. This is where careful planning takes place (see figure 1).

Traditionally the model for promotion was with the help of newspapers, radio stations, television and flyers to reach consumers.

However, with the constant growth of social medias, marketers have gained access to tons of information about followers the artist has, not only gender and age, but geographical location, time they enter your social media page and how many individual social media users you can reach during a certain time period. Basically, what you find out is who your audience is, the biggest companies to use behavioral targeting are Google, Facebook & Instagram, Twitter and Amazon. This gives marketers the opportunity of target marketing, this way you don't spend money nor time on audiences that won't give you the wanted reaction, meaning listening to the music or purchasing a ticket for a show (Warner,2018).

Finland follows very traditional marketing even in music promotion, radio plays play a big part of the visibility and success of a song, therefore a promotional "tour" is done prior to the release. This is when the artist will visit all the biggest radio stations and gives interviews regarding their new art. The more airtime you get, the bigger your audience gets.

Compared to traditional global promotion, Finland has more limited sources and budgets. No millions are made by single performances. That is why promoters work hard in booking appearances that give large visibility, for example charity concerts or shows for minors.

Even if the promoter is hired by the record label to make sure the artist gets visibility and streams, it's as much up to the artist to show activity on social media and to communicate with their audience. By being active in social media, you gain a fan base and visibility. This is especially important for newcomers trying to make it in the industry (Warner,2018).

### **3 MUSIC INDUSTRY**

The music industry is a key player within the entertainment industry alongside other entertainment industries such as television, radio and movies. All parties involved have a common goal to benefit financially from music, one way or another.

The Finnish music industry is dominated by three big labels, all sister companies from abroad: Universal Music Group, Warner Music and Sony Music (Rajala,2018).

In addition to the labels there's music associations such as Teosto and Gramex, whom represent singers, songwriters and composers in an attempt to create a safe and reliable work environment by financially supporting and reassuring that the rights of authors is obeyed.

Naturally there has been an increase in artists own labels that have joint ventures with the bigger labels, such as PME, Liiga Music, Kråklund Records and so on. This gives newcomers an excellent platform to make it in the music industry (Kolhi,2018).

As the Finnish music industry evolves, so does the constant growth of trends traveling from abroad, therefore it has been a pleasant surprise that the Finnish rap music has dominated the streaming services, such like Spotify, for the past few years (Pesonen,2018).

As consumers have a say of who makes it in the music industry, what all needs to be taken into consideration, also what are the steps taken for a successful launch of a new artist?

### **3.1.1 Record Label**

A record label, more commonly called label, is a company that markets recorded music and music videos. Not only is a label in charge of new artist recruitment and their development, also known as A&R, but also music publishing as well as copyright enforcement. Apart of scouting new fresh sounds, labels most important function is marketing their artists and their music, as this is where they make their money.

Not only do labels organize the distribution of music, but they also oversee licensing. Major labels dominate worldwide, therefore even in Finland there's three major labels, Warner, Universal Music Group and Sony, small indie-labels collaborate with them, as under labels. Indie-labels often represent a certain genre, hip hop, jazz, rock etc. This allows major labels to concentrate on distribution (Allen,2012).

In the figure underneath shows the hierarchy of a record label.

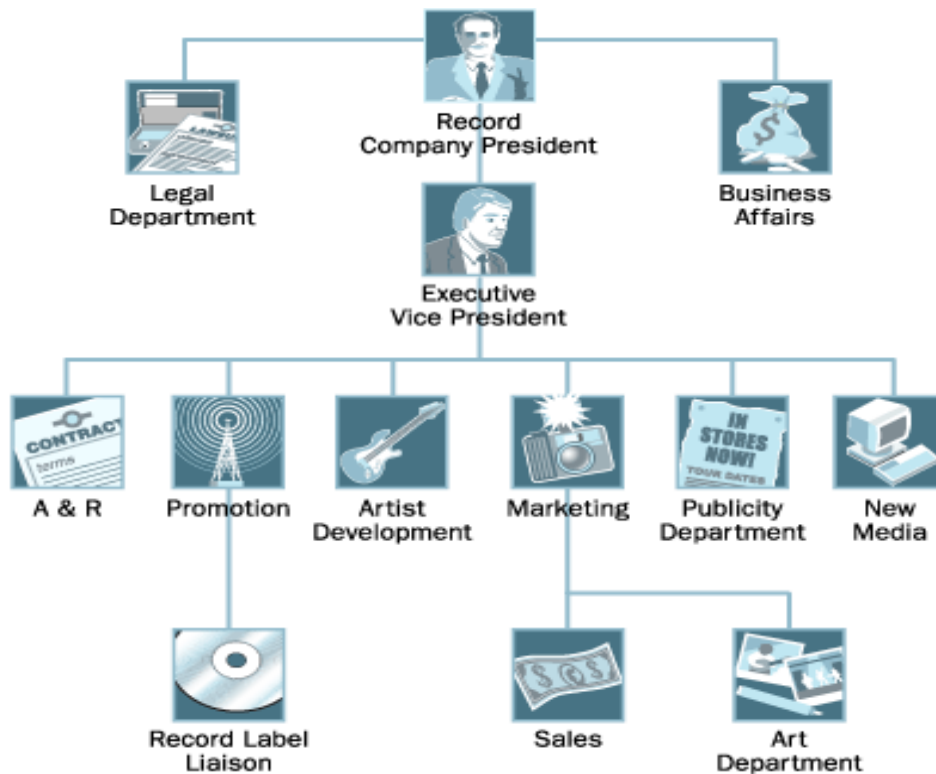


Figure 2. "The Hierarchy of a Record Company" (Klein, 2011)

### 3.1.2 Rap Music in Finland from the 80's to this day

Hip hop first arrived to Finland in the beginning of the 1980's as first performed in native English it took a change in the late 80's to Finnish. As this genre was not a folk favorite, smaller clubs hosted events where beginners could perform, one of these notorious clubs is the now closed bar, Lepakko.

The first Finnish rap album was provided by the first native rap group, The Master Brothers back in 1983, they performed in English before breaking up.

As the years went on and the language changed to Finnish, dialects and slang words from hometowns worked as slogans for rappers. As rap music wasn't taken too seriously by consumers, a more humoristic twist was given to ease the change from pop music to rap. One of the trendsetters for this type of rap was *Raptori*. This didn't sit so well with the underground performers who saw that rap is a serious form of art and isn't supposed to be funny. Naturally this brought up conflicts within the small circle of rappers (Mikkonen, 2004).

The rap genre stayed underground all the way to the late 90's, until *Fintelligens* was formed, becoming the first mainstream rap group in Finland. This was also the beginning of more American-styled rapping that would continue to evolve in Finland through the years. Now the tone was more serious, subjects more topical than ever and rhymes more evolved.

The 2000's Finnish rap music grow popularity amongst consumers and the first Finnish hip hop- festival was organized 2001, Pipefest. That same year rap music broke on the official single charts with *MC Taakibörsta*, even if they made it to the charts, they were never able to release an album.

As the major record labels weren't confident in the Finnish Hip Hop scene, and the growth of the genre, a lot of rappers had to release music independently or by small record labels, hence not getting the financial nor the professional support artist from bigger labels get. One of these independent labels is now infamous Rähinä Records.

So, when did rap music become popular in Finland, what is the reason for the popularity of this genre? This can be a combination of many things, but one thing that's certain is that the determination of these underground rappers has played the biggest part. These rappers who paid for studios, recordings, producers, walked around radio stations trying to get their music heard. These rappers are the backbones of this whole genre, such as Asa, Ezkimo, Notkea Rotta and believe it or not even Cheek. (Mikkonen, 2004)

Eventually hard work paid off, as rap music became a part of radio stations playlists, Hip Hop stations were developed, and rappers became more mainstream. One may also thank the promoters whom eventually got big rap artists to perform in Finland. As the years go on so grew the popularity, these days rappers emerge from left and right, but will these artists ever face the same issues as their pioneers (Barrow et al., 1994)?

### **3.1.3 Women in the Finnish music industry through the years**

The first ladies to enter the musical scene, dates back to movie music's from the 40's starring Ansa Ikonen. This was the first-time women were allowed to headline in a male



dominated industry, and thankfully this was just the beginning. As the years went by, women became more of a household name. Stepping into the 60's, women had grown popularity within popular music, starting to headline in dance halls, as so called "Schlager performers".

As trends continued to reach Finland, so did pop music. Icons like Madonna, Diana Ross and Aretha Franklin brought new sounds with them that Finnish songstresses started to imitate. Women became more visible in rock music as well, not just as ornaments, leading the way Vicky Rosti and "Finland's Janis Joplin" Marjo Leinonen (Pomus).

Let's take a leap forward to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the teen pop wave had passed through the whole world, it also landed to Finland. Girl pop groups were formed, and women started touring more and more. As the years pass by, girl power is cool, and soulful singers arise worldwide. Hip hop and Rnb become daily radio music with the likes of Eminem, Jay-Z and Diddy (Muikku, 2001).

The very next year a breath of fresh air enters as Mariska, the first commercially successful female rap artist in Finland, debuts her first album "Toisin sanoen". The album was critically acclaimed and hit in the radios (ifpi).

Today, 2018, pop music still dominates the radio waves as well as the Spotify charts. A positive increase was seen this year in the annual "Spotify top list", where rap music dominated. Abroad rappers like Drake, Post Malone and Xxxtentacion topped the most listened artist list, as well as most streamed albums, only one female rapper made the top 10 list, Cardi B, as number 9.

In Finland no female rappers made the top 5 list, all women represented pop music or popular music. When again the top 5 list with men featured only rappers, giving the genre a nice visibility, but yet again showing that rappers of another gender doesn't seem to interest Finnish music consumers (Konttinen,2018).

## 4 METHODOLOGY

In the method section, a clear approach to the subject is presented. Why the chosen method will give the results I'm after and why it will give the reader a clear understanding of what artist promotion is.

### 4.1 Method approach

With the research method, one will demonstrate how one will implement the search and solve the problems that has been addressed in the research problem introduction and presentation of this thesis. There are two ways of methods that you can choose from when carrying out a case study, quantitative and qualitative methods (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

**Quantitative methods** offer results on values that can be easily measured in the form of e.g. numeric data, percentages, events (when and how often), and answers like gender and age. Researchers analyze gathered data and build statistics. This way of research hopefully will build unbiased statistics, meaning it will be highly trustworthy.

**Qualitative methods** are more an in-depth method where data collection is more focused on words than on quantification. Fact-finding researches are implemented to better understand consumers' attitudes, behavior as well as motivations. Qualitative methods mainly use oral sources, getting more into the theme, such as interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

As Ronkainen, Pehkonen, Lindblom-Ylänne and Paavilainen (2013, p. 46-47.) have written, it's truly important to first know what you want to understand and what your problem is before selecting a method, you should allow the journey to decide it for you, instead of forcing it. As you can mix the methods, you have the option to get versatile data. However, conducting a questionnaire does not seem relevant in this case study, it would more likely pull away time and focus from the actual task.

“Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individual’s attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire” (Byrne, 2004).

## **4.2 Selection of survey method**

The choice of method was easy for this thesis, as it is based on human opinions and behaviour, it naturally had to be a qualitative research. A survey wouldn’t give a wide enough response rate I wished for as interviews give a more in-depth answers from respondents.

In this thesis I have chosen to execute a case study where I will perform method interviews where professionals in the music field will be interviewed. The point is to get down to the bottom of the issue, how to promote a newcomer in a foreign field. Is it truly due to Finns being so conservative that they find female rappers unconvincing or is it simply due to the lack of female representatives?

It’s key to keep a strict line what you will ask, so you won’t wonder off and loose the thread of the whole study. However, all participants are encouraged to speak freely and not stress if they follow questions and guidelines, this is how I get the most out of the interview. Therefore, planning the questions is crucial, and it will take time to execute properly (Yin, 2007).

## **4.3 Theme interviews**

Theme interviews, or semi-structured interviews, contain well thought out questions that are meant lead the interviewee to really sink in the moment and explore their thoughts about the given subject. You may end up provoking your interviewee intentionally as this will give a raw, realistic answer. Naturally the goal of these interviews is to get answers to not only “what” and “how” but also a more in-depth answer to “why” (see appendix). All of these will give guidance to your research problem; therefore, the questions must be related to the case study (Tuomi et.al ,2009).

In this thesis six professionals in the rap music field were interviewed. One manager, a young rapper, two musicians, one PR-manager as well as a radio host, who focuses on promoting new talents on a popular radio show.

I saw this mix of people as the perfect representatives for the interviews. Interviews are held in Finnish, but later on properly translated to English, after transcribing them (see appendix).

#### **4.4 Objectivity**

Writing this thesis, it's important to inform that I currently work with music management and am involved in artist promotion on a daily basis, even if it's not my main task. However, I will keep my personal feelings out of this thesis and stay objective about the subject, so I may properly execute my study about promotion of female rappers'. All written text is based on facts and not influenced by personal beliefs (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

#### **4.5 Participants**

While planning this thesis I had a thought in the back of my mind of what the results could be, however, the decision was made in the beginning that no personal feelings or opinions were not allowed to interfere the questions or results of this thesis. After interviewing six (6) people within the industry, the results were surprisingly coherent. Everyone had the same questions, however, if the conversations were flowing and the participant kept on going I would not stop them, but instead ask further in-depth questions. Not all of the further conversations we had led to any results regarding this thesis, but they were in lighting.

As two of the participants wished to be anonymous due to their position in the industry, I made the decision of keeping all participants anonymous. However, I was allowed to

introduce them by their profession, so readers get a better understanding of their answers. All participants had the option of not answer a question, if they felt uncomfortable or if they felt the question was irrelevant to the interview. However, no one chose to not answer any question.

It happened by accident that all participants were female, as my seventh participant , male, had to back out at the last minute due to schedule issues.

All interviews were held one on one, taped and later on transcript. As all participants are native Finns, questions and interviews were in Finnish and later on translated, this was approved by all participants.

## **5 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION**

Promotion, being one of the most important parts of marketing's 7 P's, was the core of this whole thesis. Without ever mentioning the rest of the P's, to not guide the conversations in the interviews, all other parts were mentioned by the participants.

This demonstrated that not only did I have professional a part of this thesis, but that they also found these points provided by McCarthy as worthy guidelines for a successful artist promotion.

As the goal was to get the tools for promoting a rapper in Finland, I felt like all participants gave good, constructive ideas and opinions that helped me to sum up a coherent guide-book for future rappers whom wish to make a successful long-lasting career in Finland.

As learned from Kottler (2004), branding helps identify services and products, this was also the opinion of all participants. When asked "what is the most important part in introducing a new artist/band" all answered that doing something different, bringing a new vibe or simply separating oneself from the mass was the first thing to focus on. Also, by further asking actual next step advice the following steps came up, supporting the 7P-guidelines.

- Having the right people around you. Manager, A&R, Promoters (people)
- Knowing what your genre/style is. Sound as well as visual side (product)
- Whom your audience is, target audience (place)
- Where you should be advertised, promoted. Social Media, traditional platforms, magazines, TV. (promotion)
- Understanding the financial side, both in advertisement as well as pricing oneself. If you don't have a manager who guides you, study and question when you aren't sure. (price)
- Where you are presented. Meaning are you doing small shows, big arenas, identify the actual place where you wish to be displayed. Do you have a certain signature style or sound that makes you differentiate, and people remember you by? (Physical evidence)
- The whole process from introducing you to the audience as well as the next steps to further help assist your career.

First and foremost, there must be a person behind it all. Artificial brands are noticed very fast and fakeness isn't appreciated. Therefore, having someone with a "message or opinion" gives the base for the whole process. After this, mood boards, visual effects are gathered to build up the brand. Here many saw that is the "make or break"- phase. If you are to a very extreme audiences might find you intimidating.

Traditionally a new single or album is hinted of in the media, either by the artist themselves, or by giving out a release telling so. There might be a teaser that is released in advance to "hype" the upcoming song, or simply a post on social media where you reveal the album cover. This generates buzz around the artists and improves visibility when the release is due.

As the market here are much smaller, there aren't as much over lapses when it comes to releasing music. All the bigger releases are known in advance by music executives, as it benefits all to be onboard. Also, TV-slots are booked in good time, which gives indication that some new music is on the way.

In addition, two participants pointed out that if the artist in question doesn't have a burning desire for this profession it would show and give the audience a false feeling, and therefore would hinder their success. This sparked further conversation on how to keep

the fire burning even if immediate success isn't reached right away. Both agreed that this profession is truly a calling, and not all talented singers or rappers are made for it. Unfortunately, as the business is much smaller in Finland compared to other countries, it can take time to make the right connections and finding the right people around you.

One participant, a singer/rapper, stated that she felt pushed to follow a certain brand guideline, and that she didn't feel it suited her at all. However, she has had a manager before ever signing a contract to a label. This allowed her to concentrate on her music and the manager supported her to stay true to her own style. Staying true to herself has proven to be successful as she is one of the most hyped about artists of this year. Having the right people around the artist proves the one of the 7 P's, people, does play a major factor in success (Blythe, 2009).

One participant, former promotion manager at a record label and now a successful manager, described the promotion plan as a "never-ending process that keeps on evolving everyday". When asked a more specific answer, I got a long list of pointers one needs to take into consideration.

"It all starts when you first meet the artist, look at them for a good while. Let them lead the conversation and study body language and behavior. After letting them set into the meeting, start asking brand related questions. Who's your biggest inspiration, what do you wish to achieve, what do you think your brand is and so on. Usually the artist has a vision in their mind, this however is influenced by outside factors, and therefore it's your responsibility to form it further from there." – Participant 5

Participant 2, singer and songwriter told me about her experience at a similar meeting. As she has never met participant 5, she did refer to her a few times.

"I was told to come in for a meeting where we would create a promotion plan for me. As my genre is country/pop I was told they would make me the Taylor Swift of Finland. Even if I was a fan, I don't want to be compared to someone else, I want to be known for my own accomplishments. When I told them my feelings, I felt a bit pushed by the record label people as I got the feeling my opinion didn't matter". - Participant 2

When asked if there are double standards within the business, it could be noticed that some participants felt at unease, when asked if they wished to skip this question, all decided not to. Participant 3, a female rapper, pointed out how she felt she got some shade from men as they saw her being to “out there” and having a “in your face” -attitude. However, after releasing her first single, she has gotten much more support and feels like she is seen as a worthy opponent.

“Who do you think you are?”. This is the answer a now seasoned performer got when she first stepped into label meeting. Participant 1 has had an over 10-year long career and has experimented different sounds and genres. Starting off as a rapper, one of the first in Finland, she says she wasn’t appreciated when starting out, and that drove her into changing genre later on. As a new genre enters the market, it can take a while for people to adapt to it. “I wasn’t thought of seriously, and people thought me, and my music is a joke. I jumped around with different producers as I felt no one understood the sound I wanted to represent”. Now, 10 years later, she has finally gotten a good team behind her and feels like her current label actually supports her musical choices. Rap changed into schlager/pop, but she’s pleased about female rappers emerging into the scene. “I wish I would be in my 20’s now. Imagine to be able to rap and express yourself as freely as they (female rappers) can”.

All in all, the results gotten in the theme interviews were at times sad and uncomfortable for the participants to tell. However, I am thankful for all of them for giving me honest opinions and stories. My own understanding regarding promotion and all the work that goes to building a brand have grown. Building a career is never easy or fast, neither is it in this case. Seeing success amongst female rappers abroad gives hope that this will happen here in Finland as well.



## 5.1 Building up a brand

“So how can you build a brand? How can you become more successful or keep yourself relative?”. This is the exact question asked as a result of figuring out different brands in the Finnish music scene. Not long until all my participants gave their opinions and tips.

“Know what you want to achieve”. In all its simplicity this made perfect sense, don’t try to push an image out there if you can’t stand behind it or support the message it’s giving. Naturally taking inspiration from around the world is understandable, however, avoid to the max copying, you will be called out on it.

*“Imitation is the sincerest [form] of flattery”* (Charles Caleb Colton, 1820).

Yes, imitation can be portrayed in a flattering and respectful way, so please do. What Nicki Minaj, Cardi B, Eve and so many others have built abroad shouldn’t be implemented here without full knowledge of the consequences that might follow. Knowing your audience and understanding that unfortunately we still live in a very conservative country and pushing people to their extreme might, in fact, harm you and your brand.

Continuous evolving and renewing yourself, helps to keep you fresh to the audience. Hence, the interest towards you and your brand will stay strong, giving you the possibility of trying out new styles, while staying true to the base you started off. Must be noted that taking risks is always, well risky, but sometimes it really is the push one needs to get to the next level.

Participant 4, a radio host who presents new comers in music, explained the importance of bringing something new to music. Even if you’re representing a familiar genre, you should be able to differentiate yourself, so you can gather audience and gain interest (Aaker, 1996).

In the figure underneath, I have taken the answers I got from the interviews and combined them with the theoretic background to build the “Circle of success” (Ritala, 2019).

All culminates in knowing WHO you are? What is your style not only in music but visually as well. By knowing what you want to present and what type of music speaks to you, you're on the path of identifying yourself. This is the start of your brand. Now you need to set goals you wish to achieve, either a radio hit, big arena concert or simply just music that you feel that reflects your inner thoughts.

A part of the strategy is knowing your competition, this plays a big role in both the promotional plan as well as one's success. Now to achieve all these steps so far, build the force that helps you get you to your goal, this meaning the army. Either with the help of a manager, promoter, stylist or simply all these together.

These people will help you create a plan to succeed, typically planning starts a good 12-18 months ahead, to be able to properly finish all steps needed. A promotional plan is the key to a successful career, as a promoter is in charge of all media connections an artist has, it takes time to create the perfect surroundings to do so. Get your money together, this might seem as a weird part of the circle, however, no one works for free. Therefore, funding needs to come from somewhere, this is where record labels step in. Record labels provide financial support for marketing, production, promotion and distribution.

To sum it all up, put all this knowledge and force into action and you are set to go.



Figure 3. "Circle of success" (Nea Ritala, 2019)

## **6 DISCUSSION**

What made this thesis happened was irritation. I was browsing online and noticed an article about the lack of female representatives at one of the biggest Hip-Hop festivals in Finland. Out of the many hundred performers, only a handful were women. No female headliners, nothing. What irritated me was that I had been at an all-female rap groups show the previous day. Why couldn't they perform at this festival? The article stirred a lot of conversation within the business. However, no major changes were made to the lineup of the festival.

So, what causes this lack of female representation within this certain genre. Following the conversation regarding a major festival not having women in their lineup inspired known journalist Anni Gullichsen to write an article about it.

Reading Gullichsen's article (2018), gives good understanding where all of this has gone wrong. "Female rappers aren't seen on Finnish Hip Hop festivals even if there's presentation". To sum up the article the reason for lack of female representation is due to "the demand given by the audience". However, the producer for the festival in question does admit that Hip-Hop still is a very male dominated field, but a wind of change is just around the corner.

This year's lineup was released during the spring, and indeed a change is noticeable. Newcomers as well as younger acts (both male and female) are shown more in all festivals. This seems to be the beginning for the new generation.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

To sum up this whole project, where it all started from a through presentation of theory and method was provided. By presenting the industry and all the different parts of it helps reader to better understand who is responsible of what. This also allows readers to better select why certain decision, such like release schedules as well as promotion schedules play such an important role.

In addition to presenting the music industry also marketing and branding is described more in-depth. What are the basics in marketing that helps readers better understand this thesis and its purpose. All presented facts shown in the theory section are later explained and demonstrated in action. This gives more value to their original meaning as well as holds a thread in this whole process.

All in all, this thesis was meant as a guidebook for future industry professionals as well as new coming artists to utilize. In my opinion this thesis manages to live up to its purpose. With the help of outside participants giving their opinions and tips a whole rounded piece is executed.

No major differences between promoting a rapper or a pop artist were discovered, the major difference was seen between the sexes as women seem to still have to prove themselves more than men do.

As the whole industry is definitely in a “change mode”, this is the perfect time to experiment new fun projects, and to boost participants opinions I myself see there’s more risk taking than ever before. A new generation of singers, songwriters, producers and promoters has entered and now we get to sit back and enjoy what the future has to offer.

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## 8 APPENDICES

### Theme interviews (FINNISH)

1. Mitä musiikki tarkoittaa sinulle?
2. Miten päädyit itse musiikkialalle?
3. Mikä oli ensi kosketuksesi musiikista?
4. Miten sinut otettiin vastaan alalla?
5. Koetko epätasa-arvoa työssäsi?
6. Millaista musiikkia kuuntelet?
7. Mitä artistibrändäys tarkoittaa sinun mielestäsi?
8. Miksi se on sinusta tärkeätä?
9. Miten brändäys tukee artistisin uraa?
10. Mitä promoaminen tarkoittaa sinulle?
11. Eroaako räppäriin promoaminen popparista?
12. Eroaako naisen promoaminen miehestä?
13. Keskitytäänkö nais artisteissa enemmän ulkonäköön kuin musiikkiin?
14. Mitä kaipaavat Suomen musiikkikentästä?
15. Mitä en ole kysynyt sinulta?

### Theme interviews (ENGLISH)

1. What does music mean to you?
2. How did you end up working in the music industry?
3. What was your first experience in music?
4. How were you received in the music industry?
5. Do you ever experience inequality in your profession?
6. What type of music do you listen to?

7. What does artist branding mean to you?
8. Why do you think it's important?
9. How does branding support an artist's career?
10. What does promotion mean to you?
11. Does promotion differ between a rapper and a pop artist?
12. Does promotion differ between a man and a woman?
13. Do you think the focus with female artist (in general) is more on the visual side than the music?
14. What do you miss in the Finnish music scene?
15. What haven't I asked you?