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## Developing Brand Identity:

### Case Ruin City Rollers



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## **Abstract**

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Branding is an important part of organizations' marketing efforts and holds the key to successful differentiation from competitors and effective value communication.

The objective of this thesis was to discover how to brand a marginal sports' team, and to develop a campaign plan the commissioner of this thesis can use to strengthen its brand. The developmental work includes suggestions for branding and brand communication as well as a brand communication calendar for events the commissioner could attend to promote their brand.

The commissioner was Roller Derby Kajaani RY, a roller derby association in Kainuu established in 2012. The small association needed help with branding themselves and implementing their brand through marketing communications and hope to use the brand elements to gain more visibility in Kajaani and Kainuu.

This developmental thesis consists of the theory of branding and sports marketing, branding ideation workshop and as the developmental work branding elements for the commissioner. The purpose of the branding workshop was to gain insights from the association members into the purpose, value and vision of the association and the sport itself. The brand elements created relied heavily on the results of the workshop.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The objective for this thesis is to investigate how marginal sports teams can use branding effectively to gain more members. Based on the research brand elements will be created for the commissioner that can be used to gain visibility for the sport and promote the team in hopes of attracting new members.

The research problems of this thesis are: how can branding be used in gaining new memberships, and how to create brand elements to strengthen branding. These research problems will be used to help with the clarification of new brand elements that could help the commissioner with their branding communication.

The theories on branding, brand communication, sports marketing, and campaign planning form the theoretical base of this thesis. In branding, theories from David A. Aaker, Jennifer Aaker and Petri Uusitalo among others are reviewed, while sports marketing focuses on Kirk L. Wakefield's theory on how sports marketing differs from the marketing of goods and services.

When commissioning this thesis, the association's requests were practice oriented. Roller Derby Kajaani (RDK) is expecting a clear branding plan they can use to gain visibility and more members for the association. The branding plan will include

- suggestions for the branding strategy,
- a branding communication calendar featuring annual and bi-annual events the team can attend to gain visibility and promote the sport.

The brand communication calendar will be for a full calendar year, instead of the season that roller derby follows, which starts in September and ends in May or June. The calendar is displayed on a weekly basis, as many of these events are annual or bi-annual events and happen roughly around the same time each year. Events are marked as annual, bi-annual or one-off events.

These events are external events, organized by the city of Kajaani, Kainuun Liikunta, which is a regional sports organization, as well as internal events organized by RDK itself. The association can make changes they deem necessary to the calendar, and the calendar can be reused by the association in the following years by updating the information. The association can add other

events to the calendar as well, ones that are only for internal use and not meant as brand communication events.

The next chapter of this thesis introduces the commissioner and their sport, which is followed by the theory chosen for this development work. The theoretical part is followed by methodology, findings and analysis, the campaign plan and finally the conclusion.

## 2 COMMISSIONER

Roller Derby Kajaani Ry is a roller derby association that was established in September 2012. Since the beginning, membership numbers have varied from 8 to 18 members, and currently the association has 11 members.

Roller Derby Kajaani Ry and its representative team Ruin City Rollers, respectively referred to as RDK and RCR from here on, are looking to grow their numbers with not only new players but also officials such as referees and non-skating officials. They are hoping to receive methods they can use to gain visibility for the sport and the team in Kajaani and Kainuu.

Flat track roller derby is a contact sport played on quad roller skates, and it is played by two teams, each having 5 players skating on an oval shaped track at once. One skater from each team is the jammer, who scores the points by passing opposing team's blockers, the players who play both defense and offense at the same time. The jammers are indicated with a star on their helmet cover.

Both teams' blockers skate in a close group called the pack. The jammers skate around the track and try to pass the pack as many times as they can. Each lap, they score one point for each opposing blocker they pass, and the final scores of bouts can climb up to hundreds of points.

Roller derby games are called bouts, and each bout has two half an hour periods, which are divided into two-minute periods called jams. Each two-minute jam is preceded by a 30 second break, during which the team can change their lineup for the next jam. Each team has 5 players on track: one jammer and 4 blockers. The first jammer to pass the pack legally during the jam is called the lead jammer, and they can call off the jam before the two minutes are up. (Jam in the Box n.d.)

Each bout has a total of 7 skating referees situated on the in- and outfields of the track. Each referee has a defined role, and each can call penalties, which result in the offending skater spending 30 seconds in the penalty box. A sanctioned bout also requires at least 12 non-skating officials, whose jobs are to time the jams, track scores and time penalties, as well as tracking the skaters on track in each jam.

Currently, RDK has no marketing nor branding plans, and their social media presence and marketing is merely ad hoc. Due to the small size of the association, both monetary and human resources are limited, which affects RDK's capabilities of coming up with successful branding and a marketing campaign. The association does not have a marketing team and their social media feeds are updated irregularly.

The association currently has 11 members, but only about 7 are actively attending practices at the moment. 6 of these players are a part of a mixed team called Ruined River Rollers, which consists of members in three cities; Kajaani, Joensuu and Seinäjoki. The team plays in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division league and was formed due to a lack of active members in each city, preventing each of these teams from forming a team of their own. This season is the first season in RDK history when players on their membership list attend 1<sup>st</sup> Division league.

RDK wishes to see the sport gain more visibility in Kainuu and Kajaani, and they hope to bring in more active members in the next few years to be able to send their representative team, RCR to play in 1<sup>st</sup> Division. To be able to play, the team wishes to have a full player roster of 14 players, which means doubling their current active members.

### 3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the key concepts used in this thesis are explained. For the theoretical background, literature from multiple different sources are used, from books to articles to studies. This provides different views on the topic and helps widen the theoretical base of this thesis.

#### 3.1 Branding

Brand and branding are tools used by companies, organizations, associations and even by nations and people to differentiate themselves and their products from competition. While they are widely used marketing tools, defining brand and branding is not an easy task: there have been many different definitions of both, by various authors and organizations. American Marketing Association (n.d.) defines the word *brand* as

*name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers*

while Uusitalo (2014) says that brand is the customer's view of the value the company is creating for them. Slade-Brooking (2016) states that brand is much more than what identifies it, such as the name or the logo, but a set of values that promises to deliver consistent quality. Common themes associated in brands and branding are straightforwardness, differentiation, inspirational and goal-orientation (Uusitalo 2014).

In this thesis it will be considered that *brands* are used to differentiate products and services from competitors and to generate positive associations in the minds of customers and other stakeholders, while *branding* means creating or re-creating the brand.

#### Brand equity

Aaker (1996, 8) defines brand equity as a set of assets that add value to the brand name. The asset categories are:



1. Brand awareness
2. Brand loyalty
3. Perceived quality
4. Brand associations.

Brand awareness indicates the level of recognition for the brand in consumers' minds. It has been studied by Hoyer and Brown (1990) that consumers tend to choose products of brands they recognize, rather than unknown brands, which makes creating awareness an important task. This can be achieved by using media channels outside the norm, for example event promotions and sponsorship as well as other methods that bring attention to the brand (Aaker 1996, 10-17).

Loyal customers are an important part of brand value, as they might be willing to pay more for products of a brand they see value in (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001), and retaining existing customers is less expensive than trying to attract new customers. Loyalty can be increased with not only frequent buyer programs, but with customer clubs and database marketing (Aaker 1996, 21-24).

Perceived quality can be defined as the level of quality a consumer attaches to a brand in their mind. This quality can be affected by brand awareness and in relation to awareness, the pricing of products (Jacoby, Olson & Haddock 1971.) Creating perception of quality can be a challenging task, as customers might not care or are aware of the quality the brand actually offers, if it is not something they can observe as a benefit for themselves (Aaker 1996, 19-20).

Consumers' associations to the brand can include product characteristics, celebrity spokesperson or symbols. These associations are influenced by brand identity, which represents what the organization wants the customer to see in the brand. (Aaker 1996, 25.)

#### Brand identity

Brand identity reflects on how the organization wishes consumers to see the brand and developing a clear brand identity helps create a strong brand (Aaker 1996, 78). Having a clear, consistent and well communicated brand identity may help differentiate organization's brand from competitors as consumers trust brands they understand (Ghodeswar 2008).

Slade-Brooking (2016) states that the strength of the brand identity depends on how well it manages to express the desired meaning of the brand, and how fast the target audience recognizes the brand. A successful brand identity is built from interlinked elements that all communicate the brand values such as a logo and perhaps a slogan. According to Slade-Brooking (2016), a logo is meaningless unless it means something to the consumers, and a perfect logo is distinctive from competitors. It is simple, flexible, practical, unforgettable, and avoids clichés. The logo must also be functional as it may be used in different promotional material in different sizes. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 27.)

#### Value proposition

Aaker (1996, 95) stated that

*A brand's value proposition is a statement of the functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer. An effective value proposition should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive purchase decisions.*

Functional benefits are the product attributes that provide the consumer with practical advantage, relating to the functions of the product or the service. These benefits affect consumer decisions and experiences directly, and if a brand is able to bring such functional benefits to consumers that no competitor can compete with, then the brand can dominate the product or service category it is a part of. (Aaker 1996, 95.) An example of functional benefit can be the sweat wicking capability of Nike's sports clothing, or a sports team offering a unique way of exercising that no other sports team in the area offers.

Emotional benefits are the positive feelings consumer has about a brand, which add depth to the experience of using or owning the brand (Aaker 1996, 96). For example, feeling athletic when wearing Nike sneakers, feeling energetic while drinking Gatorade or feeling strong and belonging to a community when practicing and playing with a sports team.

Combining both functional and emotional benefits may make brand stronger (Aaker 1996, 97), for example having the sweat wicking capability and feeling athletic in Nike's sports clothing, or

having a unique way of exercising and feeling like a part of a community when belonging to a sports team.

Brands can offer self-expressive benefits by supporting consumer's ability to communicate their self-image. When the brand is able to provide the self-expressive benefit to the consumer, their connection to the brand may be heightened. (Aaker 1996, 98.) The consumer can express their masculinity by driving a Harley-Davidson, their luxuriousness by carrying a Louis Vuitton purse or their strength, athleticism and daringness by belonging to a particular sports team.

Constructing an effective value proposition statement is an important part of brand identity, because with it, the brand can differentiate from competitors, and show the consumers the value the brand brings them. If value proposition is not in line with what consumers need or want, or what they actually get when purchasing the brand, it is nearly impossible to receive loyalty from them.

#### Brand position

Brand position involves both brand identity and value proposition and depicts how the brand differentiates from competitors, as well as the way consumers see the brand. While brand identity and value proposition can be broad statements, brand position is usually more concise statement of what will be communicated to the consumers. The position statement takes elements from brand identity and value proposition that are relevant to the target audience, and states how they will be communicated. (Aaker 1996, 177.)

Deciding which elements from brand identity to take can be difficult, and focus should be on the core identity of the brand, which can be then strengthened with leverage the brand has that competitors might lack. Adding a benefit of the brand from the value proposition will make the brand position stronger. (Aaker 1996, 178.)

Hart (1998, 145) states that brand position is a promise of the functional and psychological values it offers to consumers, and that the elements that build brand position are product attributes, product benefits, the relationship customers have with the brand, brand personality, the core promise of the brand and the unique selling point of the brand. Brand position depends on the

brand's reputation, and retaining the position means the brand needs to ensure customers' expectations are fulfilled (Slade-Brooking 2016, 14).

### Brand personality

Brand personalities are typically human characteristics that are associated with the brand and the characteristics may range from athletic to macho to young and fun. These characteristics can help consumers to identify with the brand better.

Aaker (1997) produced the brand personality framework for defining brand personality.

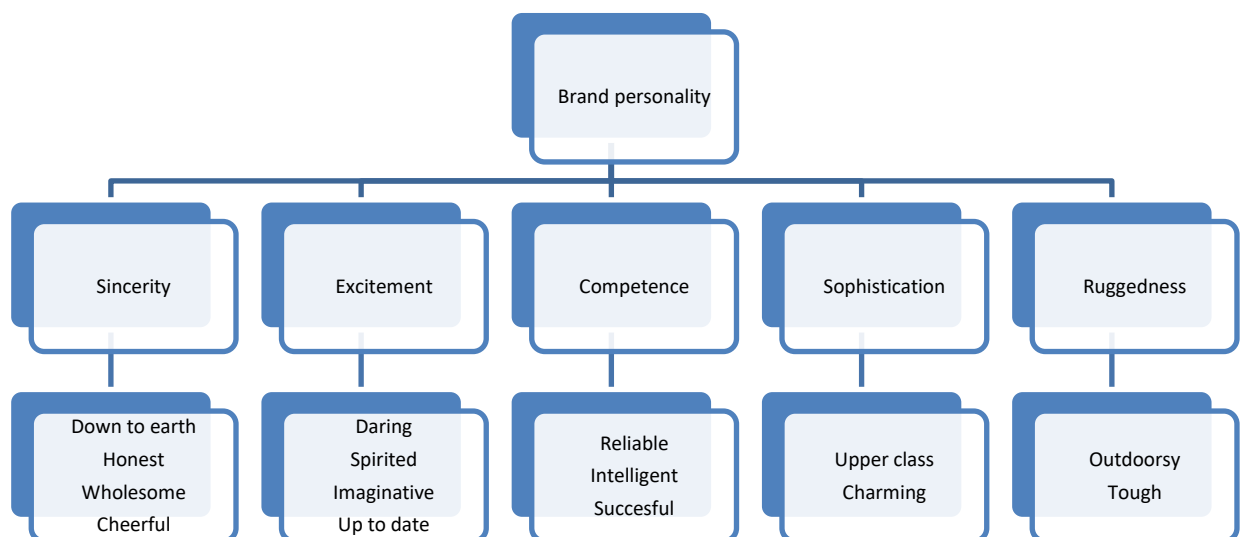


Figure 1. Aaker's brand personality framework (Aaker 1997, 352).

The brand personality framework consists of five core dimensions, sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, which then include a total of 15 facets. Each of these facets are measured with a set of traits listed below, which are measured with a five-point scale (1 = Not at all descriptive, 5 = extremely descriptive), which helps understand the brand and its' personality.

The traits for the facets in Aaker's (1997, 354) brand personality framework are the following:

- Down-to-earth (down-to-earth, family-oriented, small-town)
- Honest (honest, sincere, real)
- Wholesome (wholesome, original)
- Cheerful (cheerful, sentimental, friendly)
- Daring (daring, trendy, exciting)
- Spirited (spirited, cool, young)
- Imaginative (imaginative, unique)
- Up to date (up-to-date, independent, contemporary)
- Reliable (reliable, hardworking, secure)
- Intelligent (intelligent, technical, corporate)
- Successful (successful, leader, confident)
- Upper class (upper class, glamorous, good looking)
- Charming (charming, feminine, smooth)
- Outdoorsy (outdoorsy, masculine, Western)
- Tough (tough, rugged)

Measuring these traits on the five-point scale regarding the brand in question will help determine the personality of the brand.

The framework can be used to find the personality of a brand. Although trying to change or develop the brand personality might be difficult, as consumers may adhere to the old brand personality, according to Ang, Dubelaar and Kamakura (2019) it may be possible to change it with celebrity endorsement. Ang et al. (2019) suggest, that if the brand and product fit well with the celebrity endorsing them, it is possible to change the brand personality for the better, but with the wrong celebrity, it might not be able to develop the brand or it might change for the worse.

### 3.2 Brand communication

Everything that is done in the name of the brand, communicates something about the brand (Uusitalo 2014, 73.) Once a brand has been established, it needs to be communicated to the target audience efficiently and consistently. Every time a consumer comes into a contact with a brand, they are either positively or negatively affected by it. Uusitalo (2014) listed several contact points

for a brand and a consumer, each of which need to be constructed well for them to impact the consumer positively.

Table 1. Contact points for brand and a consumer (Uusitalo 2014, 74).

<b>Contact points for brand and a consumer</b>	<b>How brand communication is affected</b>
<b>Product / Service</b>	It is infinitely easier to communicate a good product or a service positively, than a product that does not offer value that differs from competition.
<b>Experience</b>	The experience a customer has when doing business with the company (e.g. buying a product or using a service) affects their view of the brand considerably stronger than what the brand communicates through advertisement.
<b>Brand infrastructure</b>	Along the product or the service a brand offers, brand infrastructure includes, but is not limited to the packaging and instructions of use, as well as customer feedback channels, invoicing, company's own place of operation, logistics service and company webpage. Consistent design in all aspects of brand infrastructure communicates a level of trust to the consumers.
<b>Name</b>	Brand name can be one of the strongest communicative elements a brand can have. A descriptive, memorable name is infinitely better than a name the customer cannot attach to the brand.
<b>Stakeholders and context</b>	Brand's sales channels, the context the brand is seen in and associations with other brands or products can affect customers' view of the brand. Great way of influencing these elements are choosing who and what to sponsor and which kind of events the brand attends.

<b>Marketing communication</b>	Most obvious method of communication is marketing communication the brand consciously does. Marketing communication should not take precedence over other aspects such as the product or the service, customer experience and context, which should all be perfected. It is easy to fill the gaps of other aspects with marketing communication, but that will only lead to customers realizing the brand does not deliver the value it promised.
<b>Earned media</b>	Earned media is visibility the brand does not pay for, such as being on the news and having customers and other consumers talk about the brand for example on social media. The brand does not usually have the power to control earned media, other than to try and inspire it positively with other actions. Good examples of this are by creating unique and touching advertisement that speaks to consumers. These can become phenomena in social media, as users share them on their own platforms.
<b>Customer relationship marketing and other communication with the consumer</b>	It is dangerously easy to think existing customers are there to stay, and that they can be kept happy with minimal up-keep. But retaining existing customers is a great deal less expensive than getting new ones, which is why customer relationships need to be valued.

The table above has been adapted from Uusitalo (2014) and outlines the importance of unintentional brand communication. Each of these contact points should therefore be considered and adapted depending on the brand itself, the products or services offered and of course the customers and target groups.

The product or the service itself is a part of communication, and Uusitalo (2014, 74) reminds that even a great product does not sell itself, but marketing a good product is easier than one with no advantages over competing products or services. On the other hand, no amount of marketing will make a bad product or a service better, and so when designing the product or a service, it is important to think about the value the product or a service will bring to consumers. Consumers' own experience of the product or the service creates stronger view of the brand

than the brand marketing ever could, which is why the customer experience is worth investing in.

Together with the product or a service and the customer experience, brand infrastructure includes, but is not limited to the packaging and instructions of use, as well as customer feedback channels, invoicing, company's own place of operation, logistics service and company webpage. Each of these aspects are designed either intentionally or unintentionally, and focus should be on intentional design. Consistent design in all aspects of brand infrastructure communicates a level of trust to the consumers as well as the organization itself. Inconsistencies in the brand infrastructure design communicates indifference and lack of control from the organization, which might cause consumers to not trust the products or services of the organization. (Uusitalo 2014, 76.)

The name of the brand can be one of the strongest communicative elements a brand can have. Choosing a descriptive, memorable name for the brand will be better than a name the customer cannot attach to the brand, or does not give the consumers any ideas on the industry the brand works in. Sometimes when brands and organizations expand to other industries, the names they have originally chosen might not represent what the brand offers to the consumers and choosing a new name can be a good way to re-brand. (Uusitalo 2014, 78.)

The context the brand is seen in and the stakeholders the brand is associated with communicate the brand's values to the consumers. This can mean the sales channels used to sell the brand's products or services, but also what kind of other products or services they are sold amongst. Associations with stakeholders can be influenced by choosing who and what to sponsor, and what kind of events the brand is present at. A key stakeholder group the brand cannot choose but might be able to influence are the users of the brand. (Uusitalo 2014, 82.)

Even though marketing communication paid by the brand can be the most obvious method of communicating with consumers, it should not take precedence over the previously mentioned aspects. These aspects should be perfected before marketing communication is used in a larger scale, since it can be tempting to fill the gaps in the product or the service, customer experience and context with marketing communication, but doing so will only lead to customers realizing the brand does not deliver the value it promised. Once the product or the service and their



attributes are developed to satisfaction, marketing communication can become easier to accomplish. (Uusitalo 2014, 85.)

Earned media is visibility the brand can gain from news media or from the brand users discussing the brand on social media, which the brand does not pay for. The brand does not usually have the power to control earned media, other than to try and inspire it positively with other actions. Good examples of this are by creating unique and touching advertisement that speaks to consumers as these can become phenomena in social media when users share them on their own platforms. The most sought out form of earned media could be recommendations that users make out of their own free will. Having the word of the product or service's excellence spread from users to other users and non-users, the brand has succeeded in their efforts to bring value to the customers, which results in free and credible marketing. (Uusitalo 2014, 91.)

Customer relationships need near constant up-keep, and brands should understand that retaining existing customers is a great deal less expensive than getting new ones. Simple actions for making the customer feel noticed can be thanking the customer for their purchase or a visit afterwards via email, text message or any other channel that suits the brand and the customer. But just making the customer feel noticed is not enough, they need to be rewarded for their loyalty. This can be done with bonus point systems or with rewards that feel more personal, such as letting a small group of loyal customers get the first pick of new products or campaigns. Taking care of customers and customer relationships can turn loyal customers into spokespeople of the brand who recommend the brand and its' products to other people out of their own free will. (Uusitalo 2014, 93.)

It is important to remember, that every time a consumer comes into contact with a brand, some kind of brand communication takes place. Brands should strive to make these contact points influence consumers positively to be able to gain not only new customers but turn new customers into loyal customers. The more these contact points are developed, the easier it will be for the brand to have a positive image in the customers and target audiences' minds.

#### Viral marketing and word of mouth

In the era of Internet and social media, anyone can share their experiences and opinions to anywhere in the world. This needs to be taken into account by brands; everything they do can

become a story that has the chance to spread all across social media, be it good or bad. Viral marketing exploits this by using existing social networks by encouraging people to share the marketing message to others (Wilson 2000). The name viral marketing refers to the information transferring from one person to their social network like a virus.

One element of viral marketing is word of mouth marketing, which can be generated by the brand and can have very positive results. Godes and Mayzlin (2009) stated that by generating a WOM campaign among less loyal consumers, opposed to loyal consumers, the impact can be far greater. This is due to the fact that loyal consumers are already avid users, and their networks are also loyal consumers, or consumers who know about the brand but are not interested in it, whereas less loyal users can have networks with no knowledge of the brand, thus spreading information of it to consumers who previously had not heard of it.

Word of mouth is an important tool that can be harnessed for brand communication and should be well strategized.

#### Brand communication strategy

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (1995) defines strategy as

*a careful plan or method especially for achieving an end.*

The end or an objective of a strategy can be to give the organization advantage over their competitors, and the strategies are planned for the current time and the future. A key to forming an effective strategy is to integrate all activities, ideas and executions and direct them towards a common goal. (Parente 2004.) The unique selling point, USP, is an important part of brand communication strategy; without the USP, differentiating from other brands can be difficult. Having a clear USP makes brand communication strategy easier to form. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 42.)

Williams (2005) states that brand strategy is how, what, where, when and to whom the brand is communicated to. Deciding where the brand is advertised on, possible distribution channels and all visual and verbal communication are part of the strategy.

### 3.3 Sports marketing

Sports marketing differs from typical goods and services marketing in that goods and services are marketed to consumers, and sports to fans. Consumers buying goods might be loyal to a certain brand but can switch to a similar brand or buy their preferred brand from different stores depending on the discounts they can achieve. Fans of sport teams on the other hand are likely to behave in a predictable way, which can be seen in the way they identify with teams and individual players, purchase merchandise, travel to see games outside their local market and more. (Wakefield 2007).

Table 2. Top 9 Differences Between Goods/Services Marketing and Sports Marketing. Modified. (Wakefield 2007, 4.)

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Goods/services</b>	<b>Sports &amp; Entertainment</b>
<b>Purchasers</b>	Customers	Fanatics
<b>Adoption</b>	Loyalty—repeat purchasers of the same brand (viz., lack of switching behavior)	Psychological identification with individuals and teams that goes beyond mere loyalty
<b>Promotion &amp; Media</b>	Owner pays media for promotion	Fans, sponsors, and media pay to promote team/event
<b>Distribution Channel</b>	Static; More site-limited	Mobile; more flexible
<b>Product</b>	Adapted	Global
<b>Price</b>	Customer pays a given price for good/service	Two-part: Fans frequently pay for the <i>right</i> to pay for tickets
<b>Facilities</b>	Corporate owner buys/builds own facilities	Government (taxpayer) typically pays for facilities
<b>Exchange</b>	Principally economic exchange	Principally social exchange
<b>Employees</b>	Contractual power favors owners	Contractual power favors employees (players)

Wakefield (2007, 4) identified 9 aspects in which sports marketing differs from goods and services marketing, which can be seen in Table 2.

First, and possibly the most important aspect is customers vs. fans. Typically, consumers of goods and services are referred to as customers, while sport has fans rather than customers. When facing a bad experience, customers will likely buy a different product or a service the next time, while fans will usually still be fans of a team even after a loss. (Wakefield 2007, 3.) This is usually due to the level the fans identify with the teams.

While customers can be loyal to a brand or a company, fans identify with teams and individual players. When a fan highly identifies with the team or its players, they might start to feel like a part of the team, which will lead to the fan promoting the team to others. This leads to the next aspect, promotion and media. (Wakefield 2007, 5.)

As stated in table 2 (page 16), with goods and services, the owner pays for advertisement, while in sports, the advertisement is paid by fans, sponsors and media. Fans buy and wear licensed merchandise, sponsors promote the team directly, and media, for example networks, pay for the right to broadcast sport events, while the goods and service owners pay the media to broadcast the advertisement. (Wakefield 2007, 5.)

Goods and services have typically static distribution channels; customers buy the products at their local outlets, or online where it will be shipped from a warehouse. Sport events and teams on the other hand are very mobile; along their home venue, teams travel to other cities and countries to play, and events can be broadcast on TV and online, which are electronic distribution channels and can make the product, the event itself, available anytime, anywhere in the world. Some fans routinely travel to watch their favorite teams play. (Wakefield 2007, 6.)

Compared to traditional products and services, which are frequently adapted to fit local markets, sport remains mostly the same all around the world. Most, if not all, products and services adapt to local markets by altering their labeling, packaging, content and price, while in sports the content stays the same. The broadcasted content of the hockey world championship games is the same in each country, even if the language of the announcers or other promotion can be adapted to the market. (Wakefield 2007, 7.)

Customers pay a one-time price for goods and services, but for sports, two-part pricing is quite common. For example, fans pay membership fees to a sports team and are given the opportunity then to purchase tickets to the sport event, or they purchase the ticket to enter the event, and then purchase products such as merchandise and food and drinks while at the event. The two-part prices can be bundled, for example as season tickets or smaller bundles like offering a food item and a drink with the ticket. (Wakefield 2007, 8.)

Sport teams rarely own their own facilities, but they are owned and paid by the city and its taxpayers, while goods manufacturers usually pay to build their own facilities, or buy existing ones. Sport teams can bring the city a social identity the city can identify with, which represents who they are to others. This will provide social meaning and value to those living in the city. (Wakefield 2007, 8.)

While goods and services purchased are based on economic price, sport fans make a social investment in the transaction. Customers exchange money for a good or a service, with little to no social exchange, while in sports attendance is almost every time with at least one other person. Fans are paying the ticket price to enjoy and share the experience with someone else. In sport events, large crowds have a positive effect on sport fans, while a full grocery store can be a nightmare for customers. (Wakefield 2007, 10.)

In goods and services, owners of the companies have power over their employees and can control salaries and benefits, as letting go of employees, especially if they do not have a permanent contract, and hiring new employees to replace them is relatively easy. Especially in professional sports, the players can have power over the team owner, and can decide which team offers them the best benefits. (Wakefield 2007, 11.)

Based on these aspects, sports marketing differs from goods and services marketing notably. In sports marketing, it is not enough to build a highly identified fan base, but the fans, sponsors, media and government need to support the team financially in different ways. This can only happen if the team offers them something in return, such as personal, group and community identity. (Wakefield 2007.)

### 3.4 Marketing communications and campaign planning

Dictionary of Marketing communications (Govoni 2003, 30) defines campaign plan as the model for the design and implementation of full-scale marketing communications program, which identifies each task and step of the campaign. The campaign plan includes, but is not limited to, situation analysis, product review and competition review, strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities (SWOT), marketing goals, target market, promotion objectives and strategies, positioning and campaign theme, media plan, measurement and evaluation, budget and timetable (Govoni 2003).

Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2012, 218) state that strategic planning is the process for identifying problems, determining objectives, deciding on strategies and implementing tactics, in a given period of time. The objective of planning marketing communications is to produce successful processes, and marketing communication planning should be based on the organizational strategy. This means that the organizations vision, mission and values should be ever-present in their marketing and marketing communications. Marketing communications planning can be approached from the perspective of campaign planning among other perspectives. (Vuokko 2003, 131-133.)

## 4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology used in this research oriented developmental thesis is explained. The development work, the development task and methodology for gathering the theoretical background information that supports the development task are defined and clarified.

### 4.1 Development work

Research oriented development work strives to solve practical problems or to reconstruct practices and ways of working. To support the development work, information is gathered systematically and analyzed critically, with the key objectives of development being to share expertise and transfer new knowledge to workplaces and professional networks, or in the case of this thesis, to the members of the commissioning association. Development work can originate from the need of developing or changing the organization, and involves problem solving and producing and implementing new ideas, practices, products or services. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2014.)

Ojasalo et al., (2014) produced a figure for the process of development work.



Figure 2. Process of research-oriented development work (Adapted from Ojasalo et al. 2014, 24).

This figure shows the steps in research-oriented development work. In practice, the development process steps are not always as clear, and during the process going back and forth between steps before moving on is normal. Nonetheless, the steps of each process are more or less the same as shown above. (Ojasalo et al. 2014.)

The first step of development process is to recognize the development area and understanding it and the factors affecting it or affected by it. Usually development projects are about developing organizations and making changes to them, and the objectives can be a new business model, product or service, or expansion; developing or reconstructing processes; creating new models or methods; developing a new work culture. When designing the development process, taking into account the expectations are for the project, as this will lead to setting the initial goals. (Ojasalo et al. 2014.)

Second step is to gather information relating to the development project. The information should be gathered from practice as well as the theoretical and other literature. This step



requires critical thinking and analyzing the information to be able to formulate the right perspective for the development task. (Ojasalo et al. 2014.)

After the information has been gathered, the third step is to define the development task and set limits to the development area. This leads to the fourth step, which is developing the literature base and designing the approach and methods of the process. In this case the approach means the perspective through which the development task is approached from and the methods used in the research and development process. (Ojasalo et al. 2014.)

Fifth step, the implementation of and publishing the development project can be the most time-consuming step of the process, and time and resources should be directed to this step. It is important to report the progress of the project to everyone involved, and that reporting is not only describing the development work but to also develop the project further. (Ojasalo et al. 2014.)

Sixth and final step is to analyze the process and the results. This should be done in every step of the process, to make sure the project is heading in the right direction and the course of the project can be changed if deemed necessary. (Ojasalo et al. 2014.)

In this thesis, the process of development follows mostly the same steps. 1) The commissioner states their needs and the problems they are facing, and what they are expecting from the thesis. 2) Getting to know the commissioner and the sport, and 3) defining the development task and setting limits to development area.

4) The literature base, the framework, for this thesis is built from existing literature and designing the methods for gathering the literature as well as other information. This is followed by choosing the right approach for the development task, which in this case is constructive research. Constructive research is solving a practical problem by producing something concrete, such as a new guide, a handbook or a plan, and constructive research is characterized by intense dialogue between practice and theory.

5) The project is implemented into a concrete campaign plan and published for the commissioner. 6) Analyzing the process is going to be done at the end of the development process, once the campaign plan is produced and ready to be published.

#### 4.2 Branding workshop – collecting data from the field

The purpose for this thesis is to develop a branding campaign for the commissioner by researching how branding can be used to gain more members for a sports team. For the commissioner, a small association for a marginal sport, gaining new members has mostly been through luck in the past. The high turnover of members and difficulties in reaching new, potential members has been something the team has struggled with for the past few years. Through proper branding and social media marketing, the team is hoping to gain visibility and find new members.

The theoretical background for this thesis was collected using literature related to how can branding help with the growth of an association, and the focus was on literature on branding and sports marketing. The literature used ranged from books to studies to articles to websites, and the variety of the sources helped create a base for the theoretical part of this thesis. This literature was then used to find themes and factors that can be implemented in the practical part of this thesis.

Primary data collection was used to gather information on the association members' views on their current brand. The data was collected through three exercises at a branding workshop.

The branding workshop exercises conducted were chosen because they could help understand the brand's purpose and the possible value it brings to members and potential members, the association's vision and what the association cares about and delivers to its members (6 fun branding workshop exercises 2017.) As the workshop was attended by 6 members of the association, the members were not divided into smaller groups, but brainstormed ideas together according to the structured principles. The researcher operated as a moderator and did not participate into the brainstorming itself.

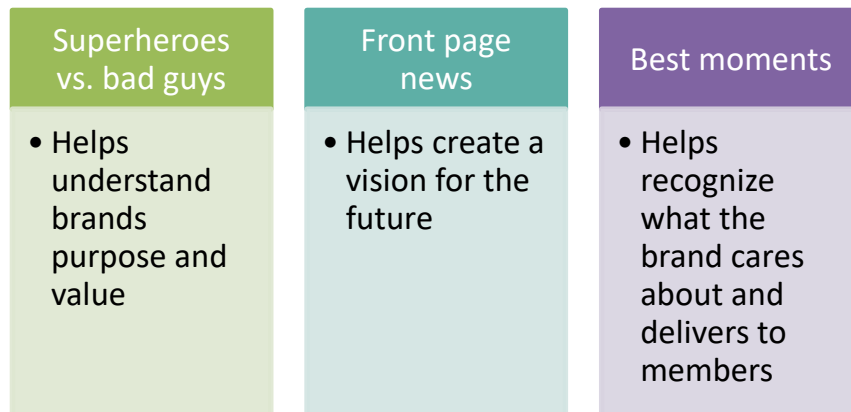


Figure 3. Branding workshop for Roller Derby Kajaani Ry, modified from (6 fun branding workshop exercises 2017).

Each exercise had different goals, but each contributed towards finding out the deeper meaning of the association's brand, and especially what the members thought the brand was like. First exercise was used to help the members of the association realize the purpose and the value of the brand by imagining their brand as a superhero, and to come up with the "bad guys" the brand fought against. This exercise was called "superheroes vs. bad guys".

Second exercise was "front page news", where the participants could envision what would be the headline, if the brand was on the front page of the local newspaper in 10 years. This exercise helped to create the vision for the future. Third exercise was "best moments", where participants were encouraged to talk about the times the brand was at its best, and which helped them recognize what the brand truly cares about and delivers to its members.

## 5 IMPLEMENTATION, FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE WORKSHOP

In this chapter the results of the branding workshop are presented and analyzed. The analyzed results will be used for the development of the branding strategies for the commissioner.

### 5.1 Implementation and reporting the findings

The branding workshop included three exercises, which each helped understand the brand of the association and the members' view on the brand. In this chapter, the results from those exercises are looked over and analyzed.

For the first exercise, "superheroes vs. bad guys", where the participants listed the "enemies" their brand is fighting against, the goal was to understand the purpose and value the brand creates for their current members, but also potential members, and other consumers it comes into contact with. Their answers are explained in the table below.

Table 3. Results from branding workshop exercise "superheroes vs. bad guys".

<b>"Bad guy"</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Loneliness</b>	Roller derby is undeniably a team sport, and the members of the association emphasized that the team is a team even off-track; they get together to do activities unrelated to roller derby, and they enjoy each other's company, which makes it easy to make new friends, thus eliminating loneliness.
<b>Inactivity</b>	For some, roller derby might be the only way to exercise. If exercising is not enjoyable, you are bound to not do it. Roller derby is an exciting and active sport suited even for people who do not enjoy exercising.
<b>Lack of commitment</b>	Having a team of people counting on you to be at practices or team meetings creates a certain level of pressure to be committed. This

	can help in other aspects of an individual's life, especially if the other team members are aware of these and help you with commitment.
<b>Discrimination</b>	Roller derby in its current form has always been a sport that welcomes everyone regardless of their gender, sexuality, race, body type or other characteristics. The members of the associations especially emphasized this.
<b>Stereotypes</b>	Stereotypes can sometimes be harmful, which is why the association wants to fight against them. Women's sports are not always taken seriously, and roller derby can still be viewed as women roller skating around a track and punching each other. It is important to the association, that they are viewed as legitimate athletes, and that their sport is viewed as a real sport.
<b>Lack of creativity</b>	Creativity in roller derby can come in the form of coming up with a fun player name or figuring out tactics as a jammer to pass the blockers.
<b>Lack of communication</b>	Communication is a key in roller derby. Bouts are filled with players giving instructions to their teammates, letting them know where the opposing jammer is or where the opposing team's offence will be directed at. This can help not only on track, but in work life and personal life, too.
<b>Lack of self-esteem</b>	Because roller derby is a welcoming sport, everyone is accepted regardless of their flaws. This and supportive teammates can help fight low self-esteem.
<b>Lack of teamwork</b>	Roller derby cannot be played without teamwork. Trying to work alone on the track, whether you are a jammer or a blocker, will not result in success. Learning teamwork is beneficial in all aspects of ones' life.

<b>Invisibility of the sport</b>	Roller derby is still a relatively unknown sport. The association wants to rectify this.
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With the second exercise, “front page news”, participants shared their vision for the brand by envisioning what kind of headlines the brand could have on the front page of a local newspaper in 10 years. The front lines ranged from “Ruin City Rollers representing Kajaani at a roller derby tournament in Stockholm”, to “Roller Derby Kajaani Ry’s membership numbers have exceeded 200”, to “First time ever: roller derby’s Finnish Championship bout organized in Kajaani”. These headlines helped them see where they hope the association is in 10 years, and it is possible to start thinking of the ways to reach these goals.

In the third exercise, “best moments”, the participants listed all the best moments that being part of the association has given them.

Table 4. Results from branding workshop exercise “best moments”.

<b>Moment</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>YLE Kajaani news story</b>	In 2017, a reporter and a photographer attended RDK’s practice, and wrote a story of the sport.
<b>Playing as a team</b>	Being able to play as a team has not happened often for RDK as usually there have not been enough players for a full roster, so the few times it has happened, even with a few extra players from other teams, has been a great moment for the participants.
<b>Having many people at the practice</b>	Practices for RDK usually only include 3-4 people, so having more than 5 people at a practice is a great feeling for everyone involved.
<b>Learning new things, recognizing new skills, personal development, learning tactics</b>	Recognizing your own development, being able to use these new skills brings joy to most, if not all, members of the association.

<b>Adrenaline spikes</b>	Playing and having that rush of adrenaline during a scrimmage or a bout.
<b>Finding the right sport, liking a sport</b>	For some, exercising and sports have never been fun or felt good, but with roller derby they feel like they found the right sport for themselves and they feel like they belong.
<b>Friends</b>	Finding new friends from the team.
<b>Diversity of players and friends</b>	Meeting and befriending people from all over the country and all around the world at roller derby events brings diversity in the members' lives.

The answers to the last exercise were about the personal experience the members of the association have had along the years.

## 5.2 Analysis of the workshop findings

Based on the answers from the first exercise, the value the brand offers to members is not only the value exercise brings, it also brings a different kind of community that the members have been part of before. Roller derby as a sport is for anyone and that was something the current members emphasized; they had all felt welcome when they joined, even when they all had different backgrounds in sports and other aspects of their lives. The members also said that they are learning things they can use outside of roller derby too, such as communication and teamwork skills, and their self-esteem has improved since they joined the association.

Simply, the value RDK delivers to members are bringing them together into a tight knit community, where everyone is accepted regardless of their background or body type, they learn skills that are useful outside of the activities of the association and their self-esteem has improved. Along all these, they have found a sport they enjoy, some for the first time in their lives.

The second exercise helped the association look into the future and create goals for themselves. Some envisioned that in 10 years, the association would have over 200 members, while some thought that for the first time, a bout from the Finnish championship tournament would be organized in Kajaani. Each of these headlines are ambitious but can be reached with the right tools and hard work. The common theme with these headlines is that the association wants to grow and move forward to playing in leagues with bigger and better teams.

The third exercise had the participants thinking about themselves and what they have got out of being part of the association. Many of them mentioned being part of the team and playing as their favorite aspects, as well as the learning and personal development they have been able to achieve while playing roller derby. Because to many players roller derby is not just a sport, it is a lifestyle, the members of the association feel like they have not just learned new skills and techniques when it comes to skating, they have also learned from each other and the whole roller derby community to be more open and accepting.



## 6 BRAND ELEMENTS FOR ROLLER DERBY KAJAANI RY

In this chapter, the development work for this thesis is described. The brand elements that the commissioner will receive, includes suggestions for designing new brand elements for the association, strategies for communicating designed brand vision and an operative branding communication calendar of events. These elements will help the association make their marketing efforts more consistent and guide the planning and practical execution of the marketing activities.

### 6.1 Roller Derby Kajaani Ry's brand

The brand for the commissioner is built from elements, that together form a cohesive and simple brand, which can be effectively communicated to the target audience. These elements are brand identity, value proposition and brand personality.

#### 6.1.1 Brand identity

From the results of the workshop (chapter 5), it can be seen that the association wants to be seen as a legitimate sports team with a vision for growth, and the players themselves identify as athletes. They also want to be seen as welcoming and inclusive, as everyone over the age of 16 is welcome in the team, regardless of their background.

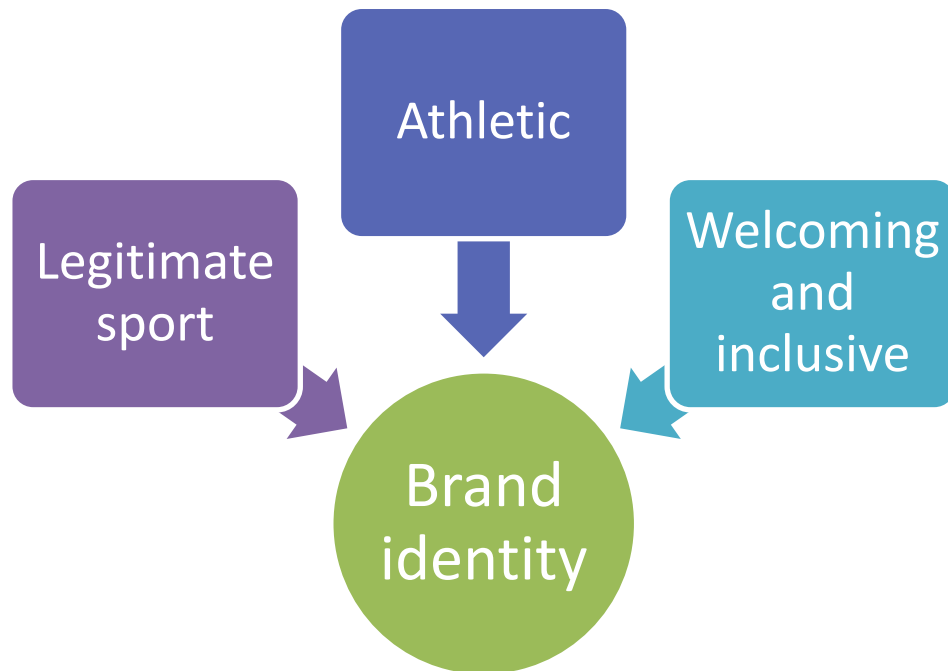


Figure 4. Brand identity of RDK.

To build a strong brand identity, these aspects need to be clearly communicated to the target audience, which can be done with a slogan that embodies these aspects, as well as with marketing that shows the reality of what roller derby is and the diversity of players in RDK. In practice this can be done by sharing stories from current members as well as pictures and video clips from the games the team attends, or their practices.

A part of a brand identity is the logo. As the association is set on rebranding themselves, they have created a new logo and plan on publishing it to the public in December. The association wanted to step away from the mainstream logos roller derby teams and associations usually have; the old logo of the team was a roller skate with a forest background, which is quite common in roller derby.



Figure 5. Left: Coat of arms of the city of Kajaani (Heraldry-wiki). Right: the logo of Ruin City Rollers (Ruin City Rollers 2019).

The new logo reflects the name of the representative team of the association, Ruin City Rollers, and their origins in Kajaani, as the logo is based on the official coat of arms of the city of Kajaani. The logo also presents the official colors, blue and green, of the association. The association plans on using this logo in all their marketing materials starting in December once the logo is officially published.

### 6.1.2 Value proposition

The functional benefits of RDK's value proposition statement could be the fact that they offer a unique sport no one else in the area offers, as RDK is the first and so far, only roller derby team in Kainuu. This can be an advantage that should be considered. Emotional benefits that the members of the association stated in the workshop, are that they are wholly welcomed and accepted as they are.

The self-expressive benefit of the brand could be being able to demonstrate their strength, athleticism and toughness by playing this contact sport. As the sport is inclusive and accepts everyone, this could also be expressed.

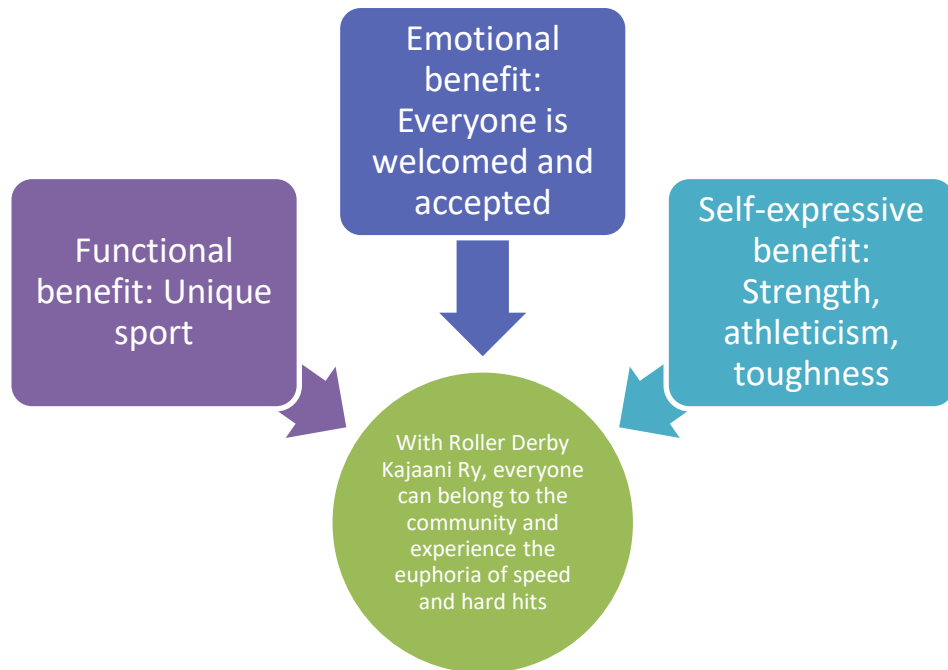


Figure 6. Value proposition statements of RDK.

By combining these benefits, RDK's value proposition statement could be:

*With Roller Derby Kajaani Ry, everyone can belong to the community and experience the euphoria of speed and hard hits.*

The statement identifies the basic element of roller derby, which is that it is a fast-paced contact sport, and that the association welcomes everyone into their community. These were aspects that the members of the association mentioned at the workshop, which they wanted emphasized in their brand.

### 6.1.3 Brand personality

The brand personality is identified by using Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework. Based on the results from the workshop, the facets that correlate with RDK's personality are

- honest
- wholesome
- daring

- spirited
- tough.

These personality facets correlate with the sincerity, excitement and ruggedness core dimensions, which fit well with what the association and roller derby itself are all about.

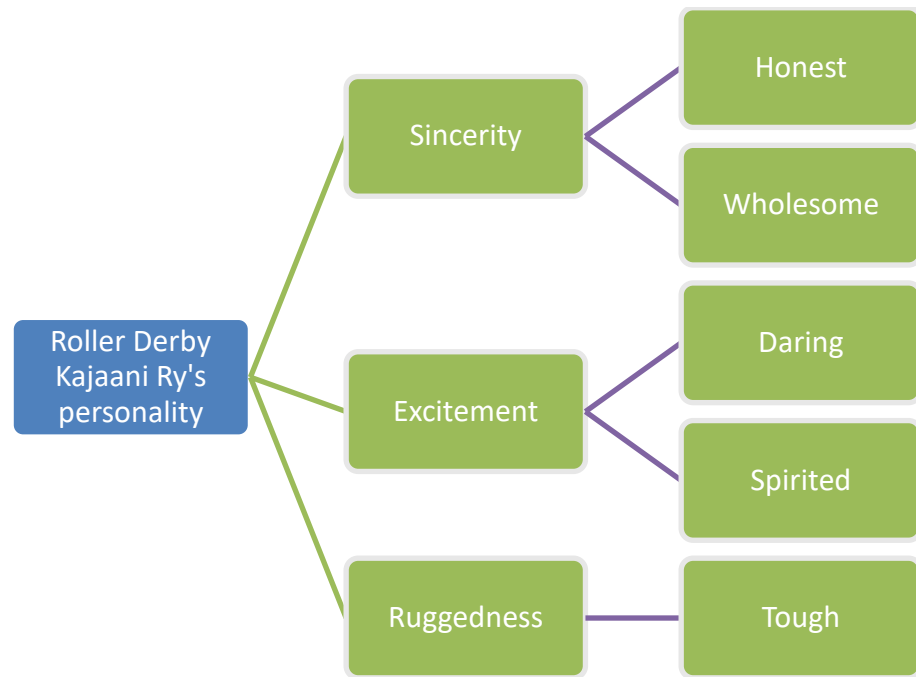
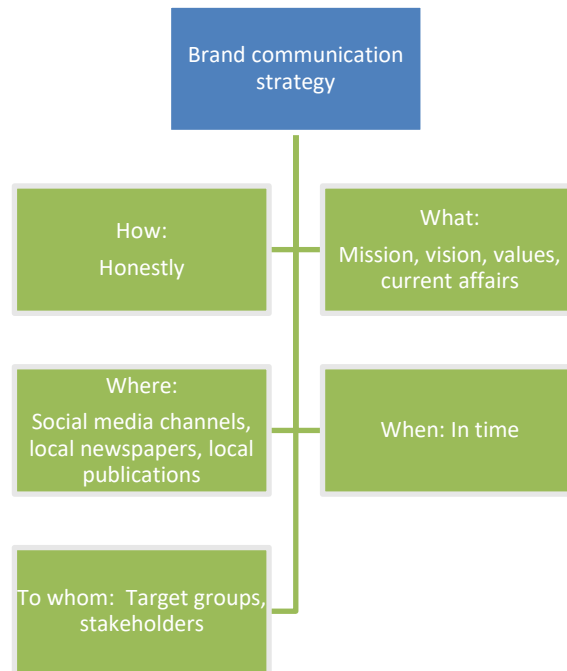


Figure 7. Personality of RDK.

The association is sincere in its efforts to include everyone, communicates openly with each other and strives to resolve any conflict quickly and thoroughly. The sport itself is a fast-paced contact sport, which brings excitement and spiritedness to the association and requires a certain level of daringness from the players. This can also be seen in other parts of the association: since it is a small association, each member is expected to contribute in the actions of the association and to take on a certain amount of responsibility, which for some people does take courage. The association works on supporting these members, so that everyone can handle their responsibility. While the association is small and sometimes struggles with a lack of active members, the association stays tough and faces their issues and problems to try and move onwards.

## 6.2 Brand communication strategy

Brand communication strategy helps the commissioner to communicate the new brand efficiently to the target audience. The purpose of this strategy is to make sure that all marketing actions are united and happen on time, without overworking the members of the association.



Framework for the future brand communication strategy for RDK.

The brand of the association should be communicated honestly and in an active manner, and the association should communicate their mission, vision and values to the target audience. This should include their vision for growth and specific targets they have for the near future, such as having Ruin City Rollers represent Kajaani in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division league as its' own team. The association should also communicate the value they bring to their members, as well as what the sport is about. This could include video clips and explanations from their games or practices, rules of the sport as well as anything else relevant.

As the association mostly uses social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram, this is where their communication should take place. But as brand communication is not just marketing communication that the association itself produces, the association needs to consider other aspects too, such as the infrastructure of the brand, the experience, stakeholders, and customer

relationships. By ensuring the brand infrastructure is unified, the brand communication taking place is cohesive in the customers' and target groups' mind.

The association is already working on unifying their brand infrastructure by creating their own marketing communication instructions that helps everyone working on the marketing of the association to produce cohesive posts, and by creating the new logo. The association is doing the same with customer experiences, as they are planning their open skate events to make them run smoothly. An important part of the infrastructure are stakeholders, which for the association include other sports teams the association could be working with as well as sponsors and event organizers they visit. At the moment, the association's only sponsor is Jam in the Box, a roller derby and skating store based in Helsinki, but the association should think about a criteria for when they start arranging for other sponsorships. What kind of companies do they want to be associated with? Same criteria could be used for the events the association attends.

Customer relationship management is important for the association, as they want to attract new members who stay and are active. This issue could be fixed with active communication and making sure each member knows what is expected from them from the start.

Communication should be conducted actively and on time. Events of the association should be communicated well in advance, to make sure they reach as many people as possible. Current matters should be communicated when they are relevant, for example the final outcomes of the games the team attends should be communicated as soon as possible.

The association and their brand communication strategy would benefit greatly from having a marketing team in charge of all marketing communication. This could make planning and executing marketing communication easier, as the marketing team could decide who is in charge of communicating what.

### 6.3 Brand communication calendar

The brand of the association should be communicated consistently and regularly on social media and other marketing channels, but also at events the association attends. The event calendar can be seen below.

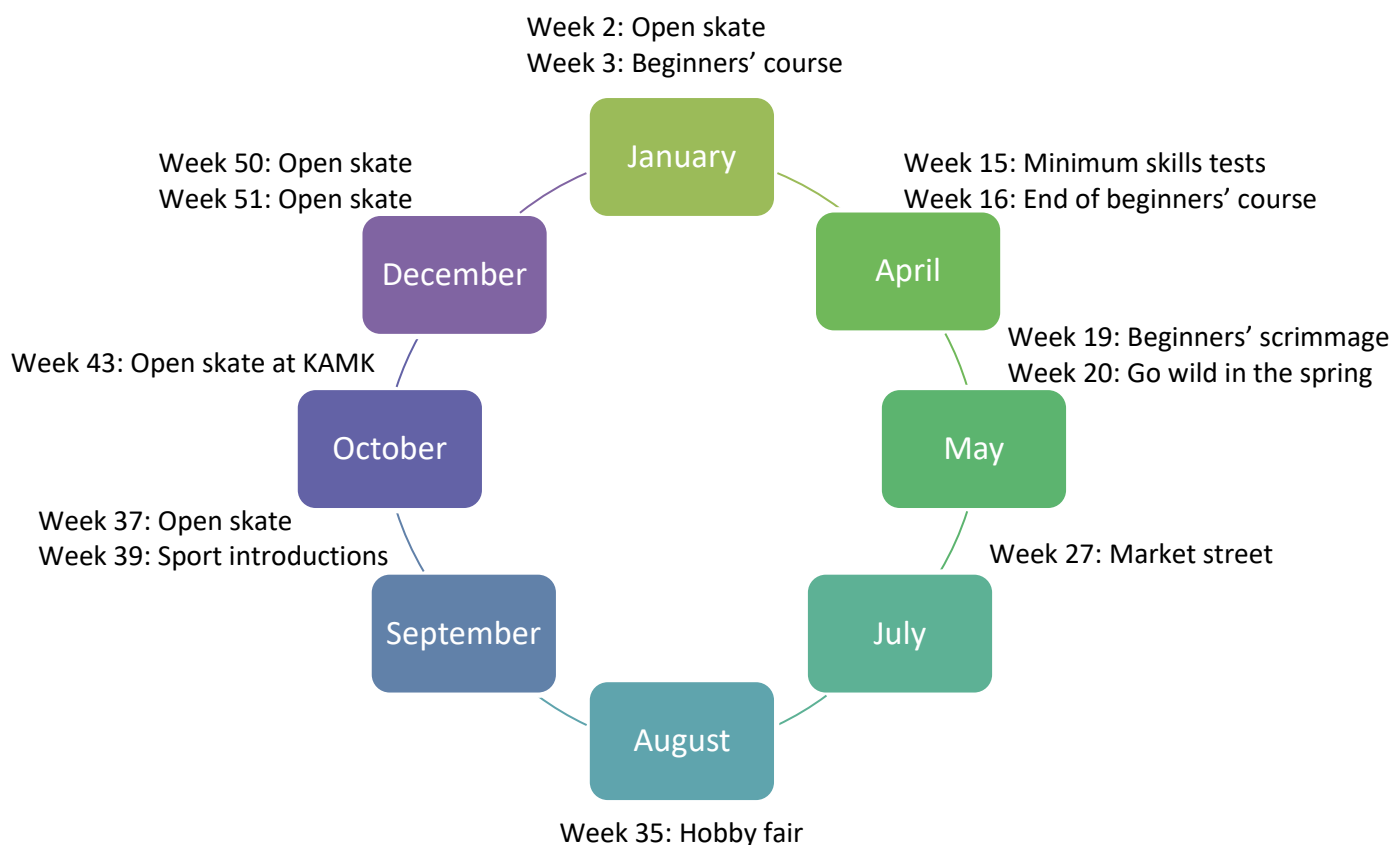


Figure 8. Event calendar for RDK.

The association should host an open skate events, which are open practice events where interested people can come try on skates, regularly throughout the year, but especially just before the planned beginners' course. As the association currently does not have much resources, the beginners' course is only planned to happen once a year. The beginners' course ends after the participants have completed their minimum skills testing, which helps instructors of the course to determine if the beginners can skate and play safely. The minimum skills tests include a written test, that focuses on the rules of the sport, and a practical part, where the skaters demonstrate their ability to skate alone and as a group and perform different skills.

In May, after the minimum skills tests have been passed by each beginner, the association could organize a beginners' scrimmage together with another association close to Kajaani. Kainuun Liikunta organizes an annual event called Villiiny keväästä (Go wild in the spring) where local sports associations have a chance to hold game demonstrations and have people try out the sports. This is a great opportunity to reach people who are unfamiliar with roller derby.

In July, the city of Kajaani organizes the market street event, where vendors can sell their goods and promote their services in the city center of Kajaani. The event includes live music and dance



shows among other things and holding a game demonstration would be a way to bring awareness to roller derby for the locals. For this to happen, it needs to be researched if there is a place where skating is possible, as the city center is mostly covered in cobblestones. For example, the stage on Raatihuoneentori could be a possibility, if the stage is big enough. If not, laying down removable floor in front of the stage is another possibility, but the possible costs and availability of this kind of arraignment needs to be found out beforehand.

Kainuun Liikunta organizes another hobby event at the end of August, called Harrastusmessut (Hobby fair). The hobby fair is a similar event as go wild in the spring, and a great way to promote the sport. In September, the association could host another open skate, as new students start their school year and might be interested to find new hobbies in Kajaani. The association could also contact local schools, like the upper secondary school and vocational colleges, to visit their sports classes and demonstrate the sport to the youth.

In October, the association has traditionally held an open skate event exclusively to the university students and staff at the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. In December, before the next year's beginners' course starts in January, the association could host 2 open skate events, to try and maximize their participant rate.

The event calendar on page 35 shows the recurring events the association could attend or organize to support their branding activities. Each of these events need to be marketed well in advance, and the target audience needs to be informed of what kind of an event it is, if they can try roller derby themselves, or if it is just the association briefing audience on their activities. For each event, a responsible person for marketing and communication with the organizers should be chosen to make sure these happen on time.

The calendar features events organized by the association itself, such as open skate events, where people can try skating with the help of current members of the association, as well as a beginners' course for training new members. Other events on the calendar are organized by other organizations such as Kainuun Liikunta, who organizes events where people from Kajaani can discover local sports and hobby associations, like Villiinny Keväästä (get wild in the spring) and Harrastemessut (hobby fair). These events are organized each year and having a booth at the events is a great way to bring visibility for the sport.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to research how a small sports team can use branding to gain visibility and new members, and to build a campaign plan for the commissioner. To be effective, the brand needs to differentiate from competition, be cohesive, answer target groups' needs and create value for them.

Branding as a marketing tool is widely used by companies, cities, nations, and people to differentiate from their competitors, and an effective brand can be the deciding factor for consumers when they choose their products, services or their next vacation destination. However even the greatest brand is not enough if it is not communicated to the target groups actively, directly, and efficiently.

Brand communication is much more than just marketing communication created by the organization. Every time a customer comes into contact with the brand, communication is taking place. Because of this, every part of the brand needs to be well thought out and implemented, not just for the benefit of the customer but also for the people working with the brand. This helps the brand stay united, as everyone knows the goal they are working towards.

To build a brand and a brand communication strategy for a sports team, it is not enough to just know the association behind the team. The sport itself plays a great part in what kind of a brand is suited for the association, and extensive research or previous insider knowledge is needed to really understand the values of the sport community as a whole. This can help with building the brand for the team, but if the focus is too much on the sport and not the actual team, it can also hinder the process of branding.

The use of a workshop in the collection of data for this thesis worked well in this case, as only 6 people were present. Everyone present was able to voice their view and thoughts on the subject, and the data received was relevant and helpful when building the brand for the association. More time could have been allocated for the literature review to be able to have a more extensive theoretical background for this thesis.

The theoretical background and the workshop helped with the creation of brand elements for the commissioning association. These brand elements included brand identity, a value proposition

statement, brand personality, a brand communication strategy and a brand communication calendar. These elements, especially the communication calendar, can be easily utilized by the association, and act as a base the association can start building their marketing strategy on.

Scheduling, planning and becoming familiar with the literature base were possibly the most important aspects of this thesis writing process. Time should be invested in the research on the topic of the thesis, as it can easily be the most time-consuming stage of the writing process. Personally, improving time management skills and understanding branding and its aspects and elements better, were the key learning points of the process.

Branding is a subject that is constantly evolving with the times, and therefore it is important to keep up with the current trends and to adapt accordingly. To continue building on these brand elements, the commissioner can discuss their view on the association's brand and their vision and mission in more detail. This will help implementing a functioning brand that serves the commissioner. To understand how to brand sports teams, especially those of marginal sports, better, further research is needed on the sport itself. Understanding the members and athletes of these sports teams better can be the key to finding the right target groups and the right channels and ways to communicate with them.

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