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COOPERATION BETWEEN BRANDS AND THE FILM INDUSTRY
Case: HelsinkiFilmi



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ABSTRACT

This thesis was written for the film production company Helsinki Filmi. The research aimed at finding out about cooperation strategies between brands and the film industry in Germany. In addition, the findings were used to make suggestions about Helsinki Filmi's future options of cooperating with Finnish brands. The research was conducted by making interviews with advertising agencies and film production companies in Germany. Secondary data from different film markets around the world was also used to create a theoretical background.

The theory covered in the first part of the thesis includes different forms of film industry's cooperation with brands: product placements, sponsorships and interactions.

Helsinki Filmi has already a background with brand cooperation. But in general, brand cooperation with the film industry is not yet spread widely in Finland. Therefore it was the goal of the thesis to find out about different cooperation opportunities and strategies by analyzing the German film market and adapting the results to the Finnish film market. Helsinki Filmi's background situation and the whole research process are explained in the thesis.

The final part of the thesis provides conclusions and suggestions for strengthening the brand cooperation approach for future productions of the company.

Key words: entertainment marketing branded entertainment sponsorship
product placement film cooperation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Company profile: Helsinki Filmi

Helsinki Filmi is the most active Finnish film production company with emphasis on feature film production. The highly innovative films have won several awards and had a great selling potential also abroad. Emphasizing on original ideas which are leading to contemporary stories and the budget for each film aiming at a low to medium range are the key success factors of the company.

Besides the six permanent employees, including chief executive producer Aleksi Bardy, a total of over one hundred freelancers is working for Helsinki Filmi each year. Aleksi Bardy founded the company in 2002 after he had sold already some scripts for box office success films and a number of TV series. He still functions as a writer besides his producer's position.

Helsinki Filmi is one of the five companies belonging to a film network called Filmiteollisuus. In 2003, their first feature film, *Hymypoika* (Young Gods), was released and in 2007 they had the most successful DVD publication in Finnish film history this far with their biographic film *Ganes* about the Finnish cult band Hurriganes (Helsinki Filmi, 2008).

Helsinki Filmi has cooperated with brands already. These brand companies were exceptionally Finnish brand companies and most of these brands were utilized by product placements in the film *Ganes*. The participating and visibly or audibly placed brands were Koff, Camping, Suosikki and DNA (*Ganes*, 2005).

1.2. Thesis Objectives

The thesis focuses on analyzing the German market on how cooperation between brands and the film industry is done and which are the most successful cooperation methods. Both, secondary and primary data are used for that purpose. Primary data in form of interviews with industry professionals from the advertising business, brand companies as well as from the film industry is collected. Secondary data in form of previously conducted case studies is used additionally to fully understand the range of cooperation possibilities.

Since the German-speaking entertainment market, including Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein, is the biggest within Europe it is most likely to assume previously to conducting the research that brand cooperation is already a well-known and well-used feature for German film and brand companies. Prior to the thesis author's personal experience from working for an US film production company there should be two options of how the cooperation could be established. Either major advertising agencies bring together brands with the film industry as one of their business units or then specialized agencies act as the middlemen between film production and brand companies. Goal of the thesis is to find out how this exactly works in Germany since this would be more comparable to Finland than the knowledge acquired in the United States.

After the research process is completed, the results will be compared with the expectations and Helsinki Filmi's experience with own cooperation methods. This should lead to conclusions and suggestions on how the company could strengthen brand partnerships in the future and as well how new types of cooperation should be approached. According to the interviews with German advertising agencies conclusions will be drawn on how efficient brand cooperation is for advertising agencies. This should help Helsinki Filmi in deciding whether it is efficient to contact Finnish advertising agencies and ask them to offer film partnerships to their clients as part of their services or not.

1.3. Research Methods

Exploratory research is used in order to gather as much information as possible in the field of brand cooperation with the film industry in Germany and other German speaking countries. Also secondary data from the United States and other markets will be used to find interesting and not so well known ways of cooperation. Exploratory research is usually used when a specific problem is not yet well known and/or the available knowledge not absolute. The aim of exploratory research is to provide guidance that allows finding procedures on how to act during the next stage (Stebbins, 2001: 2). The research should be as flexible as possible.

During the research process primary and secondary data will be used. The primary data collection is based on interviews conducted with industry professionals from the following business areas: film production companies, advertising agencies and brand companies. The target interview group is specified by certain criteria. The interview partners have to be from German speaking companies. For film production companies it is appreciated to find similar ones to Helsinki Filmi in terms of size, experience and focus. Advertising agencies are selected by size and hints from their websites that identify whether they are involved in film related advertising activities. Brand companies should be well-established brands that clearly have enough advertising budget to be interested in film sponsorship and/or other cooperation activities.

A questionnaire was designed for all three company types including similar questions aiming at finding out how popular brand cooperation with the film industry is within the German speaking market, what kind of cooperation is used and what are the future development expectations in this area. The answers were used to find out about the popularity of brand cooperation with the film industry and to be able to compare the situation to Finland.

To deepen the knowledge case studies from Germany were reviewed to find special cases and the most interesting forms of brand cooperation with the film industry that might lead to idea generation for Helsinki Filmi's cooperation activities.

2. Forms of Brand Cooperation with the Film Industry

2.1. Product Placement

2.1.1. Definition of product placement

There still exists no exact definition of the term product placement. This far it is defined as the integration of a certain brand into a film, TV series, a video game, a song or into printed media such as novels and comic books. This integration takes place via embedding the logo, brand name, product or its packaging to the plot of the chosen media (Lehu, 2007: 1).

Product placements, also called brand placements, are grouped together under the marketing term of branded entertainment (Lehu, 2007: 1). The main focus of product placements is to add value and not to be an inconvenience. Product placements are known since the 1950's and are most popular in US entertainment with a constantly increasing trend also in the European entertainment industry.

Usually brand companies work together with advertising agencies. Nowadays there are more and more advertising agencies specializing in product placements. The brand company pays monthly fees to its advertising agency in order to get their products placed onscreen. The advertising agencies work closely together with so-called prop masters of film productions. The prop master is the responsible for arranging all props required for the film or TV series about to be produced. They give out lists about the products that are needed for the production and then the advertising agencies can suggest a deal with their client brand companies that have one or more of the required products under their label.

It is also very common that film production companies contact brand companies straight without the use of an advertising agency acting as middleman.

2.1.2. Trends

The use of product placements in the film industry has been increasing over the past few years and a continuous trend is expected. That trend came up due to the fact that consumers felt increasingly flooded by brands, advertisements and TV commercials. For advertisers and brand companies this meant that it became increasingly harder to communicate their brands and brand messages because consumers began to avoid advertisements and commercials (Otker, 1988: 77-86; Meenaghan, 1991: 3-28). That is why product placements were introduced as an opportunity to make consumers watch their brand messages.

Since the early 2000's product placements began to grow also within the European entertainment industry. First of all, it was mainly the TV business that encountered product placements. In 2005, the German TV soap opera *Marienhof* was involved in a small scandal when it was found out that a carpet seller paid Bavaria Film, *Marienhof's* production company, to have their brand mentioned during one episode (Gellner, 2005). That was when the public first realized the topic of product placements. Of course, placements were used much longer and in many different TV series but no one seemed to notice or care yet earlier.

Because of a bit of a bad reputation, product placements are used in films more carefully. Product placements can harm the film's success dramatically when viewers feel too annoyed by placements. It is important not to flood a film with brands and only to use them when necessary. Meaning: a car has to be used in the film, a telephone used or somehow else a special product is necessary for the whole story. Then it is smart to use an existing brand. First of all, it would be too expensive to build an own fictive car brand and secondly because it helps viewers to adopt the film's plot as part of their reality. Known brands here and there give a feeling of familiarity and that again helps the viewer to develop a connection with the film.

2.1.3. Attractiveness for film production companies

However, looking at product placements through the eyes of a film production company, they are not too inviting in terms of financial benefits. They bring in not a lot of

money even so they are necessary and a good way of advertising for the brand companies. But still it is good to develop some sort of long-term partnership with certain brand companies since you might end up using their product again in your next film.

A study conducted by Simmons Market Research Bureau in August 2005 revealed that 46 percent of the questioned consumers said that they do not pay attention to product placements in films, 33 percent said they notice them and only 20 percent said they remember the products afterwards (Simmons, 2005).

Product placement contracts are usually worth of 30.000 – 100.000 Euros (Lehu, 2007: 8). Or mostly, they are just agreements that allow the film to use the product for free and in return the brand company gets the product placement. So for film production companies product placements are not a good source for income when working together with brand companies. But at least those agreements reduce the overall production costs and costs for provision of services.

2.2. Sponsorship

2.2.1. Definition of sponsorship

Brand companies aim with sponsorships at better brand recognition. They financially support a film production and in return are able to use the sponsorship for their corporate advertisements. This is called cause-related. Sponsorships work best for companies that already have a well-established brand and the necessary financial assets because sponsorship does not unlike product placements or other direct advertising set up the product, brand or brand message in an obvious way. Sponsorship is a rather indirect advertising tool that is not as visible as other advertising methods. That is why sponsorship is not used to promote a brand. It is rather used to build, re-build or further strengthen a good image which requires a suitable knowledge of the consumers about the sponsoring company (Sandler & Shani, 1998: 305).

Even so sponsorships may not look too profitable for brand companies they are still very eager to participate in those since they are good for the image and that is again very important for brand companies in the long run.

Sponsorships require full transparency whereby a creator of media is perfectly paired with a sponsor. Usually in film the sponsors are mentioned in the end credits, sometimes even in the opening credits. They come along with a “special thanks” note to emphasize the sponsor’s help. Other ways of making sponsorships visible is making them public by press releases and on other advertising spaces of the brand companies such as their websites. The partnership may also involve product placements and/or post-production merchandising support. When executed in the right way, sponsorship partnerships create synergy. A successful sponsorship results in a marketing relationship that is beneficial for both parties with the film company receiving funding and the brand company the right to associate itself with the sponsored film (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998: 11).

Same as for the product placements, a sponsorship can work through intermediate advertising agents or direct contacts between the film production and the brand company.

2.2.2. Trends

Examples of sponsorships vary more and more widely since they are a likable way of brand cooperation with the film industry. The topic of sponsorships is very interesting and advertisers seek permanently for new ways of widening sponsorship efforts. The point of sponsorships is to establish a more unique advertising opportunity than typical advertisements. Fixed ad placements, advertorials and co-branded content sections are only a few examples of sponsorship varieties.

Especially bigger and already well-known companies are spending a huge budget on film sponsorship and the number is still increasing. New technologies make sponsorships also more visible and accessible.

2.2.3. Attractiveness for film production companies

Whereas the brand company is seeking for establishing credibility in its target market, the advantage for film production companies lies clearly in the financial support a sponsorship agreement carries along. But sponsorships do not only consist of financial support. There are also other sponsorship agreements that help reducing production costs. Locations can be sponsored or the use of a product provided without charging for it. Most of the time, a bit of all of those sponsorship opportunities goes along within one sponsorship agreement.

In 1951 MGM had a famous early sponsorship agreement with American Airlines for the production of "Three guys named Mike". There was not only a visible product placement of the airline company throughout the movie but also in return free usage of the aircraft and help with the overall logistical coordination throughout the production period. Additionally, advertising support was provided once the film was ready to enter cinemas (Lehu, 2007: 40).

2.3. Interaction

2.3.1. Definition of interaction

Regarding the film industry interaction aims at partnering with online media and services. The development of digital technology makes interaction more and more interesting to the masses. Consumers get thereby a direct connection to a film's content or even it's making of. Interaction is a cultural trend that will be increasingly important for film productions and brand companies in the future (Weiler, 2006).

Interaction was already quite common for film distributors in the last couple of years but film production companies throughout the production process to trigger interest increasingly use it as well. Online production diaries on websites or in form of video clips on online platforms such as *YouTube* are examples of interaction. The film production company earns advertising space way in advance to releasing their film and the online service provider receives a fee and free exciting content it can promote to its users.

For feature films it is recommended to use online partnerships not only for promotion and also not to tell too much about the film in production process in advance. Something like an outtakes section, online production diary or similar forms in the style of making of clips are easy to put online and very successful marketing tools that do not damage the surprise of finally watching the film in full length after its release.

In general, the passive audience is shifting towards being a more active audience. If an Internet user goes to a website, he/she goes there because of own interest and he/she is free to leave whenever he/she feels like it. That is why Internet content has to be as attractive as possible in order to keep visitors longer on the page. There is also a difference for the film industry. Providing content on the Internet that is interesting for the future viewer of the whole film is a better advertising tool than just beginning to advertise the film after it is produced. Then the marketing process shifts to the film distribution company. But already in production a lot of interest can be tackled, a lot more than by just broadcasting trailers on TV hoping that the targeted audi-

ence sees them. Nowadays the audience wants to be involved more. They need more time to get interested in a certain movie but if they do, they are willing to spend a lot of time with it. Not only when watching it in cinema but also following the production process and later on, watching the making of section on the DVD.

As a matter of fact, the earlier you start promoting the coming up film, the more audience you will reach and you have much more time to build interest.

2.3.2. Trends

Not too much is known yet about using online providers as a source for funding a film project but a lot of talk and speculation about it is going on. Sources like *Google Video* and *YouTube* have enough money available to support film productions and in return they would be allowed to show as much as possible of the making of process on their platforms.

Of course it depends on how this model will develop in the future because right now film production companies and film distributors just add their pieces for free to *YouTube* and the alike for the promotional benefit. But it would be interesting if unique content would go there in return for funding provided by the online channel or platform.

In the suggestion part provided for Helsinki Filmi at the end of this thesis there will be a more detailed example about utilizing a Finnish Internet platform for more effective cooperation.

The motion picture industry adopts e-marketing strategies as well as all other kinds of industries. The immense creativity of this industry even created new and innovative ways using the web resources for marketing movies that are highly interesting also for other industries. They take examples that will work also for their products and field of industry. This also shifted the image of movie marketers to a more respected side.

A lot is running through using the Internet. Video specials are only one example. Cooperation of online video platforms with the film industry usually works through direct contact without an advertising agency being the middle man because online video platforms are already well-known and chosen by most film producers and distributors to create marketing buzz.

2.3.3. Attractiveness for film production companies

Since it is not new that the Internet is having a large impact on the way the movie business will develop in the near future, it is interesting to keep an eye on the latest developments and think about partnering with online platforms. A large audience can be reached with those and it is an interesting deal for both parties. The film production company gains money for production support and can in the same time use this as a promotional tool or to find other sponsors. It also makes it easier to reach out internationally.

Also the latest web 2.0 developments will have an impact on the film industry sooner or later. So-called crowdsourcing is already a famous term. It means that a group of filmmakers creates an online platform to promote there their film idea (O'Hear, 2007). Then interested people can become members of that film production by donating money for the film project. In return, they will be mentioned in the film's credits and get certain rights to influence the film production. For example, they can help writing the script that the filmmakers will put online. Also soundtrack, merchandise material etc. can be created by the members. That takes a lot of cost from the filmmakers and additionally the membership fees will be used for financing the production. The membership fees vary on how much impact on the creation process the member wants to have. It starts out with a few Euros that gives the right to vote on certain decisions and goes up to a few hundred or thousand Euros that will make the member rather a partner than just a member with a lot more influence and decision right.

If this model will be developed further in the future and a real success can be seen, this might become also interesting for feature film production companies. If there are interested people willing to spend money for a film project why not using that money and giving them some credit?

But since interaction with crowds is not well known yet, this part served only as a future outlook and will not be taken too much into consideration later on in this thesis.

3. Analyzing the Market

3.1. Comparing the Finnish market with the German speaking market

Since it is a worldwide trend that more and more brand cooperation is used to finance films because of the willingness of brand companies to spend their advertising budgets for exactly those it is natural to assume that brand cooperation will also become a more important topic for Finnish film productions in the future. Another important fact is that Finnish cinema grew internationally in the past few years and international co-productions also increased their number. That means that Finnish films got and still get also more interesting for foreign investors, including international brand companies.

The popularity of homemade films is comparable in Finland and in Germany. In 2007, both countries had one film produced in their own country in the top 10 list of most watched films in cinema. That is an important figure since Finland has also competition coming from other EU countries whereas Germany hardly shows other European films in major cinemas and only serves the viewers with German speaking and US releases. But for example in Finland it is common to show also bigger German productions in cinema, for example in recent years *Der Untergang (2004)*, *Das Parfüm (2006)* and *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex (2008)*. Additionally, big hits from other EU countries will run normally in Finnish cinemas as well, whereby Swedish films are of big interest due to country agreements and relations and of course the Swedish speaking population in Finland.

While German audiences are mainly looking forward to see US or German films in cinema, Finnish audiences are also interested in other European releases. That again highlights the fact that co-productions with other countries should be interesting for Finnish production companies.

Secondly, while having a look at the market share of national releases in 2007, Finnish films in Finland have a 1% higher share than German films in Germany (Figures 1 and 2).

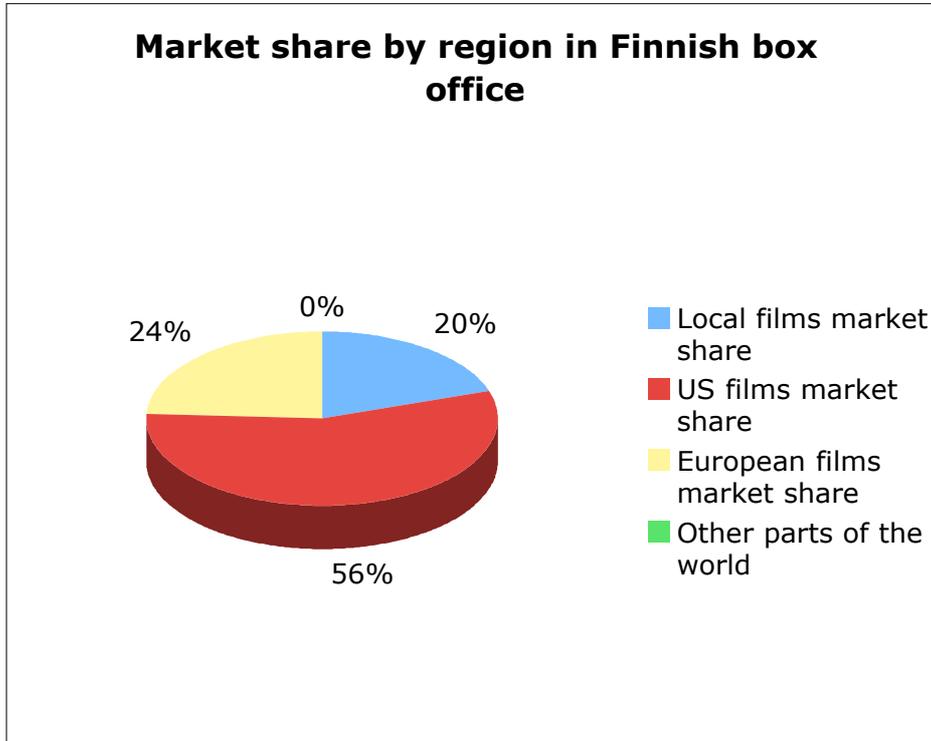


Figure 1. Market share by region in Finnish box office (Cineuropa, 2007).

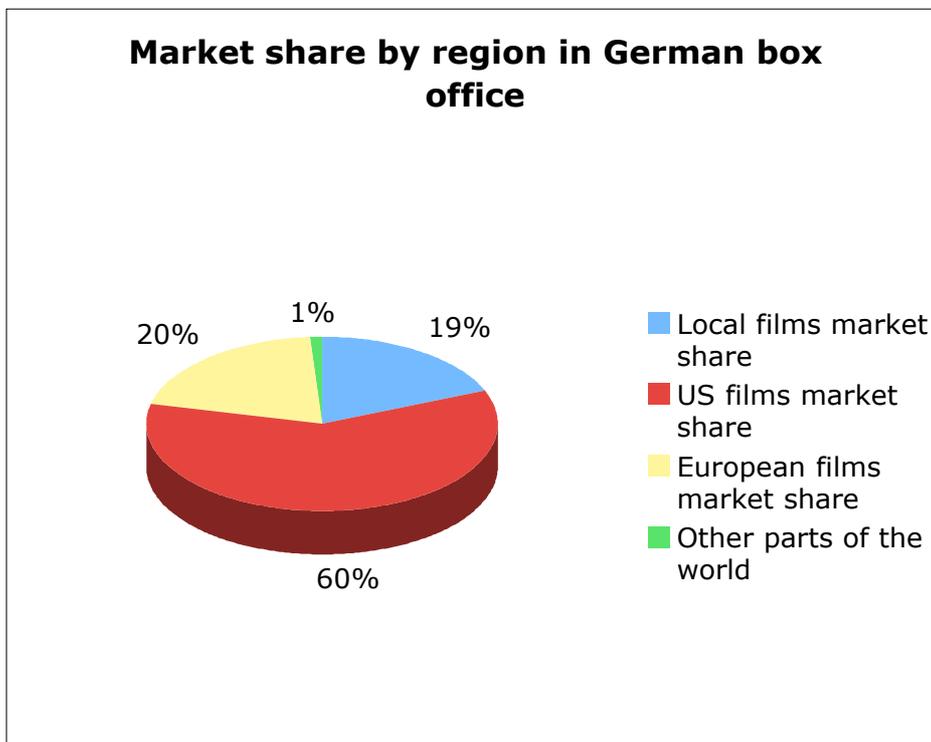


Figure 2. Market share by region in German box office (Cineuropa, 2007).

Even so more international films are shown and fewer national films are produced per year (Germany produces on average about 12 times more films per year than Finland), national releases are stronger in Finland than in Germany.

That gives a good standpoint for Finnish films and it goes along with the international success Finnish films have gained in recent years. The international success pushed also the national success and that all strengthened Finnish film productions (Cineuropa, 2007).

3.2. Why brand cooperation?

The most important reason for brand cooperation from the viewpoint of film production companies is of course the financial aspect. Especially in Finland film productions do not receive a lot of state funding. Comparing the 14 most active film markets in Europe in Figure 3, the state funding in Finland is the fourth lowest. Only 10.78 million Euros per year are provided for filmmaking. The Swedish government provides twice the money per year whereby number and quality of films produced in Sweden and Finland per year are not of great difference.

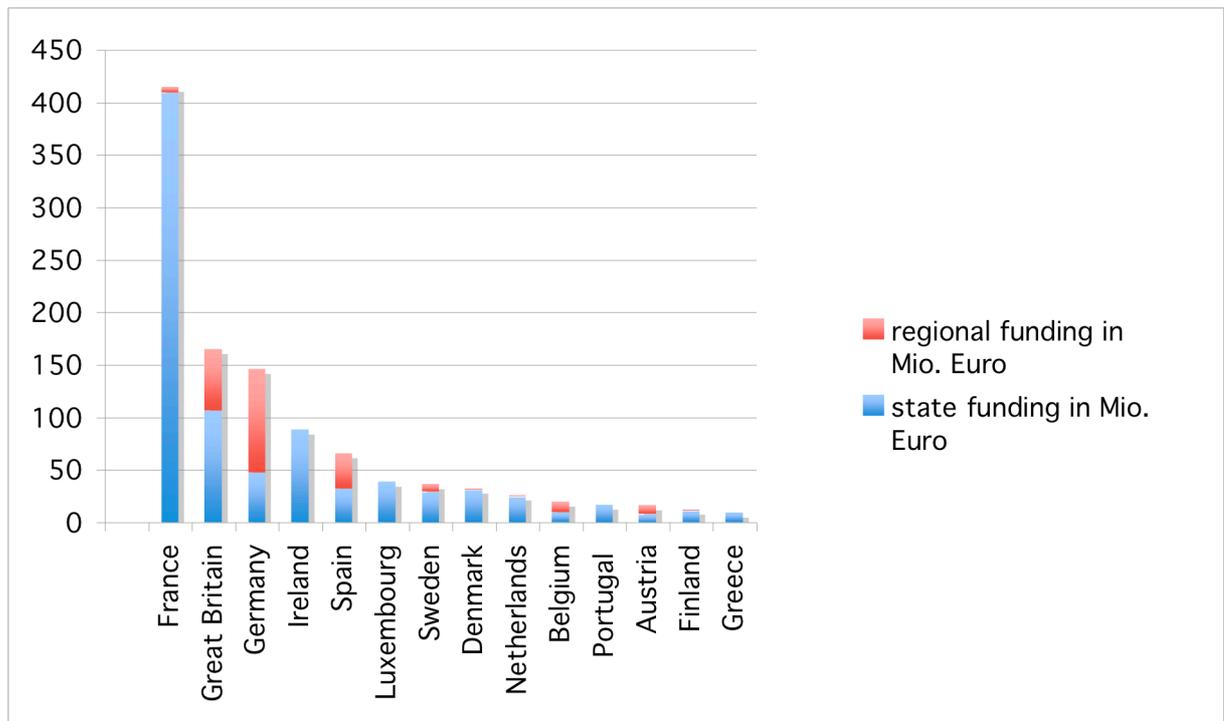


Figure 3. Film Funding Sources in Europe (Daten zum Österreichischen Film, 2002).

Another 1.51 million Euros film funding per year comes from regional funding in Finland. From the only three countries that get even less state funding per year, Greece, Austria and Belgium, Austria and Belgium get enough funding through regional associations to overtake Finland when it comes to total funding capacity. In total, including both state and regional funding, Finland reaches 12.29 million Euros per year whereas Austria reaches 16.78 million Euros and Belgium even 20.02 million Euros (Daten zum Österreichischen Film, 2002). That means that Finland has the second worst overall funding capacity for films within the 14 major European film markets. That again means that film production companies have to have other sources of funding their productions than the government and regional funding sources. That is when brand companies become interesting.

On the other hand, Finnish film productions are interesting for brand companies because Finnish cinema is growing internationally interesting very fast at the moment. Recent successes of Finnish films in international festivals provided the basis for attracting international sponsors and interest in co-producing with Finnish film production companies.

Then there is the international trend for brand cooperation with the entertainment industry. Advertisers seek this option to make their brands seen since other marketing tools are not working too well anymore.

This all leads to the conclusion that cooperating with brand companies provides great funding opportunities for Finnish film, nationally and internationally. Sponsors should be rather easily found and partnerships should be appreciated since they would be profitable for both parties.

3.3. Why is the film business so interesting for brands?

For brand companies as well as brand cooperation the motion picture industry is interesting for several reasons. The motion picture industry has been growing rapidly almost constantly since new developments to improve the quality of films have been made on a steady basis. Watching films is one of the most entertaining activities and it connects people with each other. Films also grew more and more international in the past few years. International cooperation happens all the time and those international co-productions again reach an even bigger in number and more diverse audience.

In terms of selling a product this is exactly the feature a brand company is looking for: a large international audience. Additionally, this audience can be reached over and over again. First the film enters cinemas and festivals, then it is released on DVD and then a number of re-runs on TV channels are ahead. This offers a long-term marketing tool for brand companies and they only have to pay once for their advertising effort. After that they get their advertising whenever the partnering movie is played.

The film industry is also a fascinating subject to investigate and research. Unlike other products, every movie is unique and not mass-produced in series. It is significantly easy to analyze the market for every single movie release with high accuracy – other than for other products. Fresh data through the weekly box office statistics is always available. Additionally, the production budget is also well known for each film. That also helps investors to estimate whether an investment into the film industry will be successful or not. It is easy to follow genre developments and trends and accordingly, the filmmakers and stars are public figures whose trends and the public mood towards them are also easy to follow.

Cooperating with a film project may also help in terms of really reaching the right target audience (Sandler & Shani, 1993: 305-322). For films it is very easy to estimate what the targeted viewers will be like. For a brand company it is usually more time consuming and expensive to figure out how they can reach their target market. When partnering with the right movie this happens a lot easier and more cost effective.

Another plus in cooperating with film productions for brand companies is the positive image shift. Films are so popular that supporting their production is regarded as something positive. Films also set trends very easily and that means if the product is placed in the right frame it will boost its sales figures dramatically.

As stated before, it is difficult to reach target segments nowadays by using the common advertising techniques. Too many products are on the market that also the advertising market is flooded. Viewers feel disturbed by commercial breaks and rather zap to another channel in the meantime or pre-record their favourite programs to watch them afterwards with skipping the commercial breaks. Advertisers cannot promote their product like that. Alternative ways that are less annoying for the viewer have to be taken in order to spread the brand message.

4. The Research

4.1. The Research Process

The first step of the research process was creating three different questionnaires for the three to be interviewed groups: Film Production Companies, Advertising Agencies and Brand Companies. The questionnaires have then been sent out to a total of 261 participants, most of them being advertising agencies. The questionnaire was distributed by email during late August 2008. The purpose was to find out whether there is an intensive cooperation between brands and the film industry going on in Germany and if so, what kind of cooperation is preferred.

The second part of the research process consisted of studying case studies about cooperation between brands and films in Germany, the United States and other countries. After conducting the survey, Helsinki Filmi asked for including the topic of sponsorship as well in the focus of the thesis. Thus mainly case studies were used as well as expert interviews with two German advertising agencies specializing in Sponsorship partnerships.

As a last step the findings were compared to Helsinki Filmi's experience with brand cooperation and conclusions were drafted on how they could improve their relations with brand companies in order to generate more funding for future productions.

4.2. Questionnaire Findings

The conducted survey lead to 137 respondents out of 261 sent questionnaires. Out of these 137 the most responses came from advertising agencies (125) as Figure 4 illustrates. 12 film production companies replied. It was not possible to receive answers from brand companies.

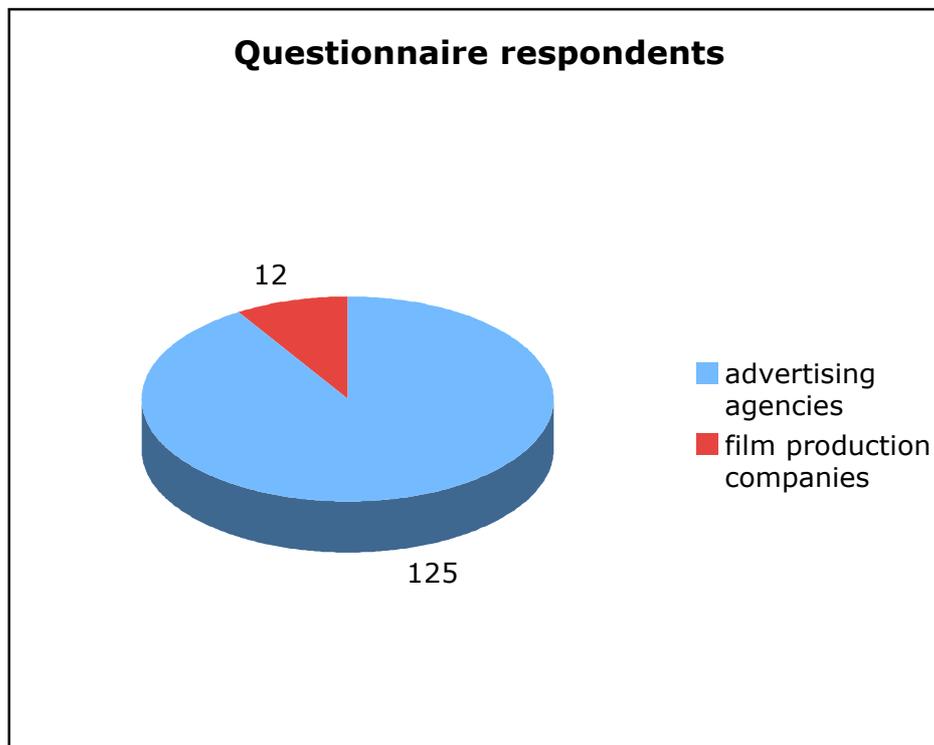


Figure 4. Questionnaire respondents

A very surprising result was that most of the advertising agencies stated that they do not offer cooperation with the film industry as an advertising tool to their clients even so almost all the agencies also replied that their clients were asking about this opportunity.

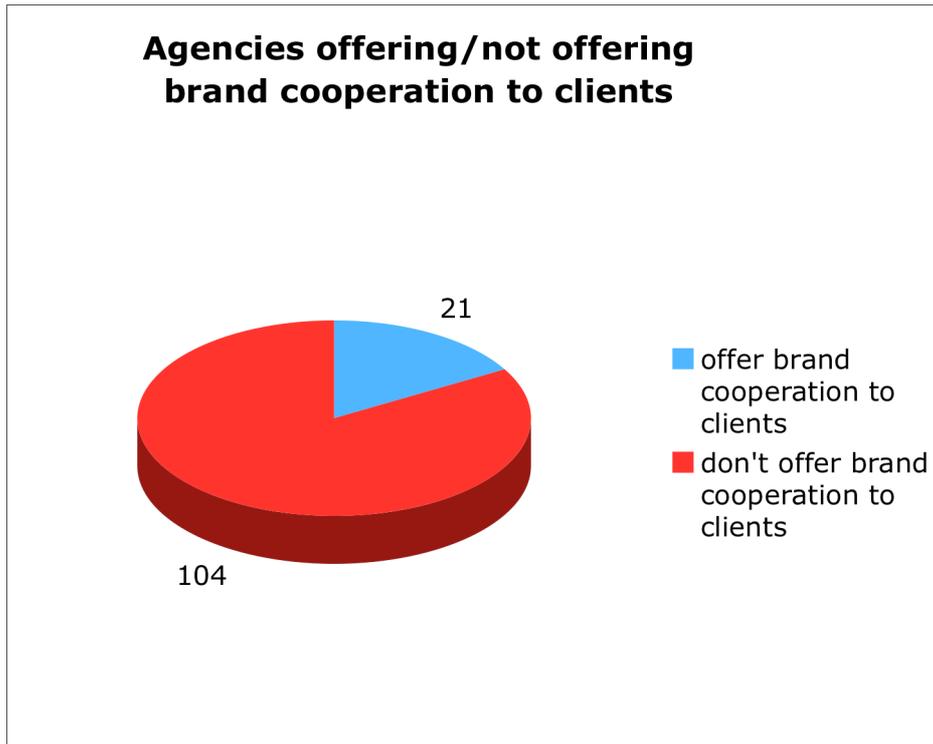


Figure 5. Brand cooperation ratio within questioned advertising agencies

Out of the 21 advertising agencies that have participated in brand cooperation or offer this on a regular basis to their clients, 17 stated that it is usually product placements that their clients are asking for. The four other advertising agencies said that also sponsorship is done a lot. Those were also the biggest agencies on the German market that were interviewed and they naturally have more successful and well-known brand companies as their clients.

All these 21 agencies replied as well that their brand cooperation is continuous and that their clients came back to those on an on-going basis. Nevertheless, according to the agency's statements most brand cooperation is done with TV programs and TV channels in Germany. Film production companies rather seem to contact brand companies directly or through other agencies specialized in product placements or cultural sponsorship.

Almost all advertising agencies answered as well that they expect the trend of brand cooperation with films and TV to increase in the future because of general difficulties

of promoting a brand and brand message nowadays. Choosing a more indirect way by using a popular entertainment media seems the only way out at the moment.

In Germany usually general advertising agencies help with brand cooperation with the film business although more and more agencies specialized in product placements come to the market. It is still unclear whether normal advertising agencies will begin to do more in the field of brand cooperation with film or if there will be specialized advertising companies in that field dominating the market.

Another unexpected outcome from the interviews was that even though advertising agencies can see clear advantages for their clients, the brand companies, in cooperating with the film business, they are not willing at the moment to plan expanding their activities and offers in this area.

Advantages for brand cooperation with the film industry was seen in a way to enrich the media spectrum within the marketing mix.

The 12 film production companies that were interviewed are all less active in feature film production than Helsinki Filmi is. They usually produce TV films and had only a few feature films for cinema in their production history. They have all worked with sponsors before and see this kind of cooperation as a necessary input to their production budgets. Usually sponsorships come along with product placements if applicable.

Three film production companies stated that besides funding working with brand companies also helps building their own image. They usually mention their partners on their websites or throughout the promotion process of their film. That helped in a few cases to catch attention of other brand companies, which contacted them, then asking about cooperating on one of their next projects.

Film production companies share the opinion of advertising agencies that brand cooperation will be increasing in the future also on the European market. They said that they follow the success stories and trends from the US film market that regularly demonstrates that it is worth working together with brands in order to generate fund-

ing for the film production. They also realized that over the past three to four years the interest of brand companies in cooperating with the film industry in Germany has increased.

Asking for special successes reached by using brand cooperation in the past, a total of only two companies, both advertising agencies, stated that they experienced that kind of success that makes them want to continue offering brand cooperation to their clients. The other 19 advertising agencies that have experience with brand cooperation with the film industry are not effectively seeking for further opportunities to bring their clients together with film projects even though they were pleased with the results of previous cooperation. They also do not specifically communicate this option to their clients. Only when either one of their clients or a film production company contacts them directly with this issue they might be willing to help partnership developments again. One advertising agency stated that they have won an award through brand cooperation.

The questioned advertising agencies stated as well that consumer goods companies are the most likely ones to participate in cooperation with the film industry. Other industry areas are in their eyes not eligible or not willing to participate in entertainment partnerships. The reason is that consumer goods companies have a very visible product that also has a practical usage that can be emphasized, explained and/or demonstrated within a film's context. It has occurred in the past that also service providing companies became film sponsors (for example the later described cooperation between insurance company Mobiliar with the Swiss film *Mein Name ist Eugen*) but it is in general more difficult to make service providers agree on film industry cooperation. That is explained with the fact that they are not able to literally show their product to the audience in order to promote it. That makes it more difficult to create product placements for that kind of companies. The development of a win-win situation for both parties is in this case more time consuming and due to lacking examples of success stories it is harder to estimate how well such a cooperation would work for the participating companies.

Out of the 104 advertising agencies not providing cooperation options for film production companies and brand companies the most given answer to explain that situation was that they do not see advantages for their clients in working together with the film industry. They rather think that this would harm their clients' individuality and quality. As a matter of fact, this is to explain by the lacking experience of consumers with product placements and visible sponsorships within German speaking Europe. The phenomenon is relatively new and due to US cases in which films and TV series were over-flooded by product placements not a very positive opinion emerged within the advertising industry.

Due to the negative image of brand cooperation with the motion picture industry one advertising agency denied identifying its future development plans into this direction. The agency only stated that plans exist to further develop brand-film-partnerships among their existing clients but how exactly these plans look like was not stated. First of all because the advertising agency has quite a lot of clients and some of them are bigger brand companies and only positive results will be presented to them. That is why this is not promoted in advance and only later on, if successful, case studies will be presented to other clients. Secondly, even though advertising agencies are critical towards brand cooperation with the film industry it is a trend with increasing tendency and that is why competition will grow stronger in that field in the near future. That is why the mentioned advertising agency does not yet want to make their plans anyhow public.

4.3.2. Types of cooperation in German speaking Europe

Product placements are at least in Germany still the most used types of cooperation because the whole advertising moves towards this rather indirect but very effective marketing tool. Consumers are annoyed by TV commercials and tend to change the channel when commercials are on. In the US it is already very popular to use smart devices to record selected TV programs where commercials are automatically not recorded. Then they can be watched without disturbing commercials. It is thereby harder to reach consumers with your brand nowadays when people are flooded by commercials and advertisements everywhere.

Brand companies are also often used as sponsors for film productions and film distributions in Germany. In the distribution phase this mainly means merchandise material that is created by using the partnering product(s), for example when a telecommunications provider offers mobile phone ring tones from the film's soundtrack. In the production phase it means general sponsorship in terms of money or other ways to help realizing the film project. This works best when the message displayed in the film is somewhat related to the brand or the brand company's mission or operations. The companies are mentioned usually in the "thank you" section of the end credits and the cooperation is published in press releases. So there really is a profit for both parties involved which is regarded important on the German speaking market.

Advantages of cooperation include outsourcing and reduced costs for both parties. Advertising costs of brand companies can be reduced dramatically when partnering with the film industry. For the film production company it means funding and also the free usage of brands if necessary for the film's plot.

In Germany the most cooperation of brand companies with film companies handled by advertising agencies is reduced to the production of TV films and commercials. That addresses then only smaller film production companies specialized in commercial productions. Only a few major general advertising agencies deal with product placements and/or sponsorship addressing feature film production companies. Product casting is a word that is used a lot within the German advertising industry to describe those brand cooperation types.

4.3.3. Examples of brand cooperation in German speaking Europe

4.3.3.1. The Travelling Birds (Germany)

The Travelling Birds (international title) was a German-French cooperation that was nominated for an Oscar as best documentary in 2003. That was also the biggest success a German brand cooperation with the film industry has had until now and it opened gates for a new direction of so-called cultural sponsoring. The film did not only cooperate but rather partnered with the brand company *Lufthansa AG*. The cooperation showed that movies can be indeed well-connected to brands and internal communication with brand companies.

It took three years to finish the movie, travelling together with the travelling birds worldwide and filming them. With more than 900 000 viewers *The Travelling Birds* was the most successful documentary running in movie theatres up to date in Germany.

Since not only a movie itself is interesting, the making of process is interesting as well and can already be used for promotional methods for a sponsoring company. That is exactly what *Lufthansa AG* has done with *The Travelling Birds*. Throughout the three years of production it was a strong partner for the film and got in return over a long period of time international attention, a positive impact on the company's image and an interesting way of marketing that helped a lot to promote the company and the company image. The partnership worked that well because consumers were able to connect the film with the brand. Travelling birds fly to reach their distance. *Lufthansa* does the exactly same. Travelling birds have done so for a very long time, *Lufthansa* is also a long time in the aviation business with a well-known brand name. "The dream of flying" was one of the themes used in *Lufthansa's* marketing campaigns in connection with the production of *The Travelling birds*.

For *Lufthansa* the marketing looked like this: Besides presenting their logo on the film posters and in the film's credits it used the film for its own communication purposes. *Lufthansa* worked closely together with the French production company *Galatée*

Films, the German production company *Pandora Films*, the book publisher *Gerstenberg*, *Virgin Records* and the German film distributor *Kinowelt*. All involved partners worked closely together and with the goal to push each other's success.

Press releases were published throughout the production process informing about the production process, *Lufthansa's* website showed continuous information and updates about the production process and aboard the planes passengers were able to read about it in the printed on-board-magazines and to watch little reports on the on-plane-entertainment-program. *Lufthansa* also put articles about the film into the internal newspaper for employees and into their intranet. A quiz for employees to win tickets for the pre-premiere of the film was also organized. That was important for the employees since they could associate better with the new partnership of their employer.

The film also used nature protection organizations as partners and therefore helped *Lufthansa* to promote their environment friendly image.

The German cultural sponsoring agency *SCRIPT* was the helping hand concerning the successful partnership coming up with new ideas constantly to create a win-win-situation for the film and *Lufthansa AG*. Due to the enormous success of this project *Lufthansa AG* remained a customer of *SCRIPT* and involved the specialized advertising agency in other projects continuously (SCRIPT, 2003).

4.3.3.2. Mein Name ist Eugen (Switzerland)

Also in 2003, a film production of a feature film in Switzerland began. The film's title is *Mein Name ist Eugen* and it is based on a children's book. When the film began the pre-production process the makers were also looking for sponsors and got in touch with the first Swiss Entertainment Marketing agency *Creative Assets*. The agency then studied the film idea carefully and chose then to contact a Swiss insurance company they thought would fit perfectly as the main sponsor. Since the film is about a gang of boys creating a lot of chaos, an insurance company seemed perfect and not only that, *Mobilias*, the chosen sponsor was known for humorous campaigns that fit even better to the film's plot. The insurance company was in at once as the sponsor and the partnership became Switzerland's most successful brand cooperation with the film industry up to date.

The partnership was special because no product placements in the film were used. Instead *Mobilias* published press releases stating its sponsorship with the film and a TV commercial spot for *Mobilias* was produced, directed by the film's director.

Mobilias sent mails to its employees tackling their interest in the upcoming production. Because the book the film is based on is from 1955 it was also interesting to get men and woman to the cinema that read the book in their youth. Since different generations were the target group of the film it also influenced the sponsors that were used. *Mobilias* did a great deal with its TV spot to reach the young audience but by publishing press releases and making the sponsorship visible in its offices also the older target audience could be reached.

Mobilias invested a lot of money to sponsor this film and in return its marketing campaign was a full success. Both film and *Mobilias* were also awarded with a bronze Effie-award, a marketing award that awards ideas that work (Die Mobilias, 2005).

4.3.4. Worldwide trends of brand cooperation with the film industry

Networking is getting in general more important for the film business because networking is known as an effective source to reduce costs of film productions. That is why creating on-going partnerships with brand companies is also on the run. Brand companies have discovered their own advantages in this cooperation. To highlight some new ideas regarding brand-film-cooperation the next paragraph will summarize some examples collected from other parts of the world and some thoughts will be stated to prove that these cooperation methods could also work in Europe.

In 2006, the Chinese travel agency *Mango* began cooperation with Chinese director Feng Xiaogang and *Brother Film Company* with the common mission to help develop tourism in China and to attract more visitors. They organized a film trip together including different film locations throughout the Chinese province Zhejiang to which winners of an online competition could win tickets. The travel agency provided also tickets for the trip that could be purchased through their website for a reasonable price. The film production company sponsored the rights to travel to the shooting locations and in return the travel agency started promoting those and by that also the film production company and its films itself on its website. *The Hong Kong Tourism Company* was also involved in this project by sponsoring *Mango* in order to develop trips of new quality that would attract a new tourist group (Xinhua, 2006).

Another trend is to help product launches before there even is talk about the product or to utilize a new technology via cooperation strategies. As for the product launch assistance, the US film *Flightplan* (2005) was an interesting example. The film takes place onboard an Airplane. To be more exactly, it was an airplane with two floors, which was by then not yet available on the passenger aviation market. There was no cooperation agreement between the film's director and *Airbus Company*. It was a rather unique coincidence that *Airbus* launched its two-floor airplane A380 as the largest airplane in the airline industry shortly after the film's release. The advertising profit through *Flightplan* indeed was huge for Airbus (Graser, 2005).

But there has been also a series of pre-launch partnerships that were created just for the purpose to boost the advertising for the product soon to enter the market. Usually, this kind of cooperation has been very successful for the brand company and as well for the film company since brand companies are willing to pay a lot for creating some hype about their new product. When the audience sees a demonstration about the new product in the film, they wonder why they do not know the product yet and get interested what this is about and begin researching about it.

When it comes to utilizing a new technology, the market booms for many technology sectors. Especially interesting for film companies are hereby producers of devices that allow watching films, e.g. TVs, laptops and mobile phones. In 2005, high definition entered the market place. In order to promote this new quality of film watching, *Pioneer Electronics* partnered with *Miller's Higher Ground Film Tour* to sponsor screenings throughout the US in high definition. This was the first high definition film tour ever and it addressed winter sport fans by showing clips from that sector. (Business Wire, 2005).

5. Summary and Conclusions

The changing environment in both the brand advertising in general as well as the still steadily growing interest in motion pictures and the film industry seem to provide a solid ground for seeking new cooperation opportunities for film production companies in order to finance a film production. Even though there are a few negative aspects to product placements, the development from the US market shows that they are still used and still productive. Marketers constantly learn how to place brands more discrete but on the other hand also more effective to a film or TV series. Quite a few creative ideas have involved already in using cooperation to gain successes for the film production and the brand company. Movie advertising specialists state that there is still a lot of room for new innovative ideas that will thrive advertising success stories in the near future. Awards given by advertising committees to outstanding advertising successes have already shown that likely winners come from cooperation with the film industry and that this cooperation can be very successful when done right. A lot of money was already earned through sponsorship and product placement activities, especially in the USA, and the trend is estimated to continue and reach also more interest within Europe.

Regarding the European film market an upward development within brand-film-cooperation can be seen. Finland is in a good strategic position to develop its activities in this area since there is first of all the constant need to find more financing for film projects due to still lacking government funding and secondly, recent successes in film releases made Finnish films more interesting for the international market. Another important point is that Finland is a rather small country and not a lot of film production companies are active here. That means there is not a lot of competition when it comes to winning brand companies for film production partnerships. Since the marketing tool of sponsorship and product placement is rather new to the Finnish market, there should be also a higher interest within Finnish brand companies to try out this new advertising source. The fact that brand-film-cooperation gives still a lot of room for new innovative ideas to drive success for both parties and to outsource each other the most effective, provides the opportunity to create well-working cooperation.

The interest in Finnish films internationally helps with finding co-production partners. Co-productions are often more likely to find a larger audience than completely domestic productions. That also offers a larger spectrum of brands that can be contacted for cooperation – already in the production period. That leads to further growing opportunities for the Finnish motion picture industry and that again will attract even more brand companies and co-producers from abroad. International reach will also make cooperation more interesting for Finnish brands.

Last but not least, it is to highlight that Helsinki Filmi is the most active Finnish film production company and the only one so far that has been involved in brand cooperation. That does not only mean that there are some existing partners that were pleased with the results from the previous cooperation which could be contacted for future projects again, it means as well that Helsinki Filmi has a peak position to develop its brand cooperation activities in Finland further before its competing production companies do so.

At this point, Helsinki Filmi is also involved in its first international co-production with a German film production company. That will provide the company with experience in this field as well. The resulting data in terms of box-office success from both countries will be easily available and analyzable. In case of a success, Helsinki Filmi will strengthen its name on the international market, which could be important for future co-producing and international funding opportunities.

Another advantage of Helsinki Filmi is that the production budget is always kept rather low compared to competing production companies. Helsinki Filmi uses scripts that can be produced without expensive stunts and CGI technologies. That is a fact that should attract investors of all kinds since it communicates lower financial expectations than films with higher production costs would do. A lower budget also makes it easier in general to be reached.

All these details plus the fact that Helsinki Filmi has reached already a few successes, also internationally, should create a portfolio which's presentation to prospect sponsors and partners is likely to win financial support.

6. Suggestions for Helsinki Filmi

Even so I might not be able to suggest a winning method of increasing Helsinki Filmi's brand cooperation activities, I would like to present some ideas that naturally came to my mind when getting deeper and deeper into the topic. I also take my experience as a marketing and business development assistant for a New Yorker film production company into consideration to create my list of suggestions.

First of all, Helsinki Filmi should continue seeking for more international funding opportunities. Assumedly, it should be easy to agree upon more co-operations with Germany since the first milestone is set. Also other neighbouring countries could be co-production partners since it is not very costly to travel there and outsourcing some of their services is cheaper than creating a home-made production. A few Finnish directors have done so already and used for example government funding from Sweden, which is higher than government funding from Finland.

Another criteria for brand cooperation is to create lasting partnerships that might work for more than one film production. To keep partnering companies up to date and interested a cost and time efficient way is to send newsletters about planned productions to them. That helps showing them whether they can connect to the film's message and gives them the opportunity to begin planning their marketing efforts at a very early stage. That again helps them to get the most out of this opportunity. It is important for Helsinki Filmi to take responsibility also for the sponsor's wellbeing and to serve a perfect relationship. That is why cooperation-willing companies, once found, should be kept in touch with for further cooperation. Especially for Finnish companies it is important since Finland is a small market and does not have a lot of own brand companies and out of those again not all are willing to participate in entertainment cooperation.

Then it is important to find the right companies to contact for planned productions. As mentioned previously it helps to spend some time figuring out which companies would fit best to the message of the planned production. When Helsinki Filmi found

this out it is easier to create a selling pitch for the required brand company. If Helsinki Filmi understands the message of its film and which companies go conform to it, the companies will understand this as well.

Regarding the fact that Helsinki Filmi is the early bird in trying out different brand cooperation in Finland, it gives the advantage that everything is still new to the audience. They are not yet fed up or too annoyed by any kinds of brand cooperation. That is why some ideas can be adopted from the international market and changed in a way that they fit Finnish needs.

One example for a new interesting kind of brand cooperation would be to work together with a sponsoring company on creating a quiz or quest when releasing the movie. The quiz can only be solved when watching the entire movie. That makes audiences go to cinema and try their luck. At the end of the film they are able to submit their answers via a text message. The price to win could be a product of the sponsoring company. This might especially work well for premier evenings. The fact that the audience will be participating in some way tackles their interest even more and just the chance to win something might also attract an audience that would normally not have gone to see the film in cinema. Of course, the quiz or quest question should not be too complicated in detail or too complex so that the audience can still enjoy watching the film and not having to concentrate too much to solve the quest, quiz or riddle.

Such a cooperation would work especially well when cooperation with a telecommunications company. The price could be a mobile phone and the brand company would profit from the text message costs and the marketing impact. Their product, the price, would be shown in advance and additionally, the participation rate in the quiz gives as well interesting data that helps to identify the consumers' interest in this product.

When it comes to interaction as a brand cooperation method, Helsinki Filmi has already used the Finnish Internet platform *IRC-Galleria*. Users of the platform were able to join a community for the film *Ganes* and by doing some quizzes they were

able to win tickets for the film's premiere (IRC Galleria, 2005). The cooperation with *IRC-Galleria* could be still further utilized in order to win sponsors for the film. For example, a competition could be set out there for users to create merchandise material, e.g. a logo for the film, and the competition's winner's idea would be used for real. That saves Helsinki Filmi's film distributor which is responsible for the marketing of the ready made film some costs since merchandise ideas are created for free and by the general public – exactly these people they want the merchandise material to like and to purchase.

Another method of utilizing *IRC-Galleria* would be to agree on membership fees for the users for joining the film's community when the film is still in pre-production or production phase. Then a winner could be picked out of the members that would gain something special, e.g. his name in the end credits of the ready film or a pass to visit the set for one day or to appear as an extra in the film. The membership fees would go to Helsinki Filmi as direct profit. If every member has to pay one Euro, then reaching something like 3000 members creates already a solid award without giving a lot in return. The fees could be also separated as basic fees and then higher fees that give more benefits to the members. The community for the film *Ganes* of Helsinki Filmi is still available in *IRC-Galleria* and has at the moment 1590 members. Assumedly, there have been more members in the beginning around the release date of the film. That demonstrates that *IRC-Galleria* users are active in film communities for Finnish films and that again should be further utilized by *IRC-Galleria* by providing something new to its users so that they keep being active and interested in film communities and do not get bored joining new communities. So *IRC-Galleria* as the other party would promote the community to its users and in return receive interesting context their users will enjoy and most likely also an increase in members since the interesting opportunity is only available through *IRC-Galleria*'s network. This cooperation would be one way to crowdsource for a film production's funding.

Another way to get together with brand companies more easily in the future would be also to contact Finnish advertising agencies and interview them about their opinion of offering that kind of service to their clients when planning new marketing campaigns. Since the topic is evolving throughout Europe within the advertising industry at the

very moment, it is worth trying to involve Finnish advertising agencies. They might be willing to try out something new that could give them competitive advantage and to enter a new niche market. If they then again offer this opportunity to their clients they might feel the same way; that it is worth trying since not too many other companies here in Finland have tried it yet. The success figures of Helsinki Filmi's previous brand cooperation should also help to win advertising agencies and brand companies as willing cooperation partners.

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8. Appendices

Appendix I: Research Questionnaire for German speaking advertising agencies (translated to English)

Dear ... Team,

Regarding the creation of my Bachelor thesis “Cooperation between brands and the film industry” for the University of Applied Sciences in Tampere, Finland I would like to ask your help by filling in the following questionnaire. The goal of the survey is to research the German market and to draw conclusions for the Finnish market accordingly. The data will be naturally treated as confidential. I thank you in advance for your time and effort to help realizing my thesis about this interesting topic.

1. Do you cooperate with film production companies and/or film distributors?
2. How does the cooperation look like?
3. Is there a high demand for cooperation with the film industry among your clients?
4. Have you had special successes with that cooperation in the past?
5. Do you have any development plans for that cooperation in the future?
6. Have film production companies and/or film distributors contacted you about brand cooperation in the past?
7. Do you see benefits in cooperation with them for your clients? Which?
8. What is your opinion about the future of brand cooperation with the film industry?

Appendix II: Research Questionnaire for German film production companies (translated to English)

Dear ... Team,

Regarding the creation of my Bachelor thesis “Cooperation between brands and the film industry” for the University of Applied Sciences in Tampere, Finland I would like to ask your help by filling in the following questionnaire. The goal of the survey is to research the German market and to draw conclusions for the Finnish market accordingly. The data will be naturally treated as confidential. I thank you in advance for your time and effort to help realizing my thesis about this interesting topic.

1. Do you cooperate with brand companies?
2. How does the cooperation look like?
3. Is there a high demand for cooperation with brands from your side?
4. Have you had special successes with that cooperation in the past?
5. Do you have any development plans for that cooperation in the future?
6. Have brand companies and/or advertising companies contacted you about cooperation opportunities in the past?
7. Do you see benefits in cooperation with brands? Which?
8. What is your opinion about the future of brand cooperation with the film industry?