

THE BACKSTAGE OF BRAND-ARTIST MARKETING COLLABORATIONS: THE ARTIST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Although companies have collaborated with celebrities for decades and celebrity endorsements have been proven to be an effective marketing method by both scholars and practitioners, the celebrity perspective on such collaborations has remained understudied. This study addresses this gap by investigating marketing collaborations between celebrities and corporate brands from the celebrity perspective. The focus is on a specific group of celebrities who have been increasingly utilized in such collaborations due to their rising popularity, and who are able to provide a large scope of marketing opportunities for companies: rap artists.</p> <p>The topic is explored from a co-branding perspective where celebrity endorsements are considered as co-branding strategies between two equal brands: a human brand and a corporate brand. The aim is to empirically explore artists' experiences of brand-artist marketing collaborations and thus gain a better understanding and more knowledge about the topic for both artists and companies. This is attained by exploring how rap artists consider brand collaborations in terms of their artist brand and by identifying what kind of motives they have for participating in such collaborations. This study adopts a qualitative research strategy with semi-structured interviews with six rap artists and analyses the data with thematic analysis.</p> <p>The findings suggest that today's rap artists should be considered as human brands, which is in line with previous research. This underlines the importance of considering and managing brand-artist collaborations as co-branding strategies between a human brand and a corporate brand in today's marketing practices. Furthermore, five categories of motives were identified to be significant in terms of the artist decision-making regarding marketing collaborations: financial, value based, personal, human brand-based and company related motives. This creates a better understanding on what motivates rap artists to collaborate, and thus helps companies to develop their collaboration offers in the future. This study contributes to existing research on celebrity marketing.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Vaikka yritykset ovat tehneet yhteistyötä julkisuuden henkilöiden kanssa vuosikymmenien ajan ja julkisuuden henkilön käyttäminen suosittelijana on sekä tutkijoiden että ammattilaisten mukaan todistetusti tehokas markkinointikeino, on julkisuuden henkilön näkökulma kyseisiin yhteistöihin tuntemattomampi. Tämä tutkimus tarttuu tähän aiheeseen tarkastelemalla julkisuuden henkilöiden ja yritysbrändien välisiä markkinointiyhteistöitä julkisuuden henkilön näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksessa keskitytään rap-artisteihin, sillä he ovat lisääntyneen suosionsa vuoksi yhä käytetympiä tämän kaltaisissa yhteistöissä ja pystyvät tarjoamaan yrityksille monipuolisia markkinointimahdollisuuksia.</p> <p>Aihetta tarkastellaan yhteisbrändäyksen näkökulmasta, jossa julkisuuden henkilön käyttämistä suosittelijana pidetään kahden yhdenvertaisen brändin, henkilöbrändin ja yritysbrändin, välisenä yhteisbrändäysstrategiana. Tässä tutkimuksessa selvitetään artistien kokemuksia heidän ja brändien välisistä markkinointiyhteistöistä, ja tavoitteena on lisätä ymmärrystä ja tietoa aiheesta sekä artistien että yritysten käyttöön. Tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten artistit näkevät brändiyhteistyöt heidän oman artistibrändinsä kannalta, ja tunnistaa, millaisia motiiveja artisteilla on osallistua yhteistöihin. Tutkimus on laadullinen, ja aineiston muodostavat kuudelle rap-artistille tehdyt puolistrukturoidut haastattelut, jotka analysoitiin temaattisella analyysillä.</p> <p>Tulosten mukaan nykyajan rap-artisteja tulisi pitää henkilöbrändeinä, mikä on linjassa aikaisemman tutkimuksen kanssa. Tämä vahvistaa käsitystä siitä, että markkinointiyhteistöitä olisi nykypäivän markkinoinnissa tärkeää tarkastella ja hallinnoida henkilöbrändin ja yritysbrändin välisinä yhteisbrändäysstrategioina. Lisäksi tämä tutkimus tunnistaa viisi motiivikategoriaa, jotka ovat merkityksellisiä artistien päätöksenteossa liittyen markkinointiyhteistöihin: taloudelliset, arvoihin perustuvat, henkilökohtaiset, henkilöbrändiin perustuvat ja yritykseen liittyvät motiivit. Tämä lisää ymmärrystä siitä, mikä motivoi artisteja osallistumaan markkinointiyhteistöihin ja auttaa siten yrityksiä kehittämään yhteistyötarojouksiaan tulevaisuudessa. Tämä tutkimus tuo oman lisänsä jo olemassa olevaan tutkimukseen julkisuuden henkilöitä hyödyntävästä markkinoinnista.</p>	
Asiasanat yhteisbrändäys, suosittelumarkkinointi, henkilöbrändit, brändin rakentaminen, musiikkiala	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the topic

The digitalization and the development of new technologies has shaped the field of marketing and communications. As a result, companies have gained new opportunities to reach and address consumers and other stakeholders. At the same time the field of advertising has become even more saturated and the competition between companies has increased leaving less room for product differentiation (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). In addition, the usage of AdBlockers on web pages has been growing, due to the fact that consumers experience an abundance of irrelevant, annoying, and intrusive ads that effect their browsing experience, that also raise concerns over privacy issues (Jatain, 2020).

One way for companies to respond to these changes is to utilize celebrities or social media influencers who can help companies to reach bigger audiences more authentically and to stand out from the advertising clutter. In addition, these are people who the consumer has chosen to follow. For example, eMarketer published the survey results from GlobalWebIndex which showed that in 2019, 20 percent of Millennials (ages 23-36) and 22 percent of Gen Z (ages 16-22) participants from the US and UK have made a purchase based on a social media post by a celebrity or an influencer compared to 16 percent of Gen X (ages 37-55) participants and 6 percent of Baby boomers (ages 56-64) (Droesch, 2020). Companies have clearly embraced this as they are increasingly investing a lot of money on celebrity endorsements (Albert, Ambroise & Valette-Florence, 2017) and influencer marketing. This can be derived e.g., from the estimation by Business Insider Intelligence that the worth of the influencer marketing industry will increase from 8 billion US dollars (2019) up to 15 billion dollars by 2022 (Schomer, 2019).

Companies are obviously not the only ones to benefit from this type of collaborations because as mentioned, collaboration deals can be very lucrative and hence a major source of additional income for celebrities/influencers. One of the most common groups of celebrities that brands have collaborated with are music artists, whose importance to brands has significantly grown during the last decade (Sisario, 2012). The technological developments have also shaped the music industry where it has meant e.g., the emergence of music streaming services, such as Spotify, which have more or less disrupted the entire business model of record sales, leaving music artists financially more dependent on gigs and concerts. When we add the decreasing record company budgets (Sisario, 2012) and the Covid-19 pandemic to the mix, the role of brand collaborations might become an even more important source of income for artists than ever before as gigs and concerts have almost disappeared for a relatively long period of time due to the pandemic (Riihinen, 2020). Hence, even though signing a deal with a company is always a risk for an artist that might result in fan disapproval (Sisario, 2012) or lack of authenticity, being an artist is a profession that needs to provide a living

(Riihinen, 2020). These developments have been noticed in the corporate world as companies such as Pepsi have detected these changes in the music industry as opportunities for collaborations and has described its music projects as follows: *“we believe all that transfers into brand equity for Pepsi, and, ultimately, sales”* (Sisario, 2012).

Some of the brand-artist collaborations have, in fact, developed beyond the traditional form of a celebrity appearing in an advertisement more into an actual collaboration. For example, Pepsi signed a collaboration deal with Beyoncé and stated that they want to get into the Beyoncé business instead of having another pop star appearing in a commercial (Sisario, 2012). Instead, in addition to standard advertising they included a multimillion-dollar fund to support creative projects chosen by Beyoncé (Sisario, 2012). Beyoncé commented on the collaboration on her behalf and stated that *“Pepsi embraces creativity and understands that artists evolve”* and *“as a businesswoman, this allows me to work with a lifestyle brand with no compromise and without sacrificing my creativity”* (Sisario, 2012). With the collaboration Pepsi pursued to enhance its reputation by appearing as an artist patron instead of purely paying for a celebrity to endorse the brand/product and described the changing environment by stating that *“consumers are seeking a much greater authenticity in marketing from the brands they love”* and that *“it’s caused a shift in the way we think about deals with artists, from a transactional deal to a mutually beneficial collaboration”* (Sisario, 2012). The same shift in thinking has been suggested by the co-branding literature which argues that celebrities and brands should be considered as two independent and equal brands in the collaboration process which is jointly managed by brand managers and the celebrity (Seno & Lukas, 2007) instead of one-way employment.

Finally, when discussing the collaboration opportunities between companies and music artists there is yet one more phenomenon that deserves attention and provides unique opportunities for companies: the rising popularity of hip hop and rap music. Hip hop and rap music represented the highest share of the total music consumption in the United States in 2018 by genre with 21.7 percent (Statista, 2021). Globally the rapper Post Malone was the most-streamed artist in Spotify in 2019 with over 6.5 billion streams and the top five of the most-streamed artists of the decade 2010-2019 included three rappers (Spotify, 2019). In addition to being defined as a music genre hip hop has become a lifestyle that according to Taylor and Taylor (2004) influences also several other industries from fashion to marketing and has developed into a multi-billion-dollar industry (as cited in Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014) that is able to reach wide audiences (Kelly, 2020). Brands are also a visible part of the rapper lifestyle, lyrics, and music videos i.e., rap artists can provide a large scope of services for marketing purposes. These services have also converted to sales and increased stock prices which is why it is no wonder that brands have been eager to capitalize on the rising trend of hip hop and rap (Kelly, 2020). The trend is likely to continue as hip-hop dominates the pop culture and because hip hop and marketing have one increasingly crucial factor in common: authenticity (Kelly, 2020). The fact that the new generation of marketers, who grew up with hip hop, consider rappers as authentic and understand the value that they can bring to the collaborations might also offer an extra

boost for hip hop focused marketing and brand collaborations in the future which have been predicted to skyrocket after the Covid-19 pandemic subsides (Kelly, 2020).

1.2 Research gap

Celebrity endorsement is a widely studied topic in the field of marketing. Lots of research has been done concerning the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements and what factors and celebrity characteristics companies should consider in the selection to reach the highest endorsement effectiveness. However, most of the prior research has been conducted by using consumer samples, the few practitioner-based studies available have been done by interviewing marketing professionals from advertising agencies and the majority of the research observes collaborations as a one-way employment instead of a mutually beneficial alliance.

These approaches are rather one-sided as they exclude the celebrity perspective completely even though the celebrity is a massive part of the collaboration. Hence, there is, first of all a need for more research on collaborations from the co-branding perspective and especially on what is the impact and benefit of celebrity endorsements on the celebrity and celebrity equity (Keel & Nataraajan, 2012; Seno & Lukas, 2007). Second, a discussion about what are the celebrity/influencer motives for marketing collaborations and how they evaluate the gained value, could help brands find better matches for collaborations. Could there be other motives besides money? This is important because consumers have a habit of forming interpretations of why someone is endorsing something either consciously or subconsciously (Bergkvist, Hjalmarsson & Mägi, 2016) which then impacts their own behavior, affect and expectancy (Kelley & Michela, 1980). This in turn can have an impact on endorsement effectiveness (Bergkvist et al., 2016). Moreover, in the changing environment it is important for companies and their brand management to gain information on how to develop, manage and leverage brand collaborations (Motion, Leitch & Brodie, 2003). Especially when the other side of the coin is that using celebrities or influencers for marketing purposes is already a big cost (e.g., Bergkvist et al., 2016; Choi & Rifon, 2012) and is likely to keep rising especially with rappers as they continue to top the charts (Kelly, 2020).

This study takes the trends regarding hip hop and rap music into account by narrowing down the sample to rap artists and more specifically to Finnish rap artists because the global trends can be detected also from Finland. The popularity of domestic rap music has increased and become mainstream during the past decade (Haili, 2019). In fact, Finnish rap artists were among the first domestic artists who started to sell out the biggest domestic concert venues (Merikallio, 2020) which had usually been typical only for international artists. In 2020 the top five of the most-streamed artists in Spotify in Finland were all rap artists and more specifically four out of the top five were Finnish rap artists (Määttänen, 2020) which implicates that Finnish rap artists are popular, and they can reach

large audiences which can provide interesting opportunities for brand collaborations.

1.3 Objectives and research questions

This study aims to empirically explore artists' experiences of brand-artist marketing collaborations and thus gain a better understanding and more knowledge about the topic for both artists and companies. The results of this study provide practical implications for both parties on how to effectively develop, manage and leverage their collaborations. In addition, the results provide important information for companies on how to create more tempting collaboration offers for artists in the future.

This study addresses the identified research gap by interviewing Finnish rap artists and approaches the topic from a co-branding perspective to observe how artists experience and consider these collaborations for their own human brand and what kind of motives they have for participating in marketing collaborations with brands.

Hence, the research questions are:

1. How do Finnish rap artists consider brand collaborations in terms of their own artist brand?
2. What kind of motives do Finnish rap artists have for brand collaborations?

1.4 Structure of the study

This study is structured as follows: the introduction chapter presents the background and justification for this study and identifies the research gap that this study aims to fill. In the next chapter the study continues with a literature review where prior research is presented, the identified gap in current research as well as the importance of this study are supported. The literature review will be followed by the methodology chapter which presents how this study was conducted, including sampling, data collection and data analysis methods. The final chapters will then present the results that were gained and the conclusions that could be drawn from the data analysis. Theoretical contributions, managerial implications, possible limitations, and the need for further research are also included in the final chapter.

The literature review is organized thematically and draws on co-branding, human brand, and celebrity endorsement research. Focus is also given to the prior research and academic suggestions on how these collaborations should be

managed and more specifically on what kind of factors should be considered when selecting collaboration partners.

1.5 Key concepts

Before proceeding to the literature review, it is useful to describe the key concepts of this study: co-branding, human brands and celebrity endorsements accompanied with few other key definitions related to these main themes. The concepts of celebrities and influencers are also discussed because often times these definitions seem to be overlapping.

Prior research has used numerous terms to describe co-branding where the core idea is the collaboration of two brands (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). Strategic alliances, joint marketing, joint branding, joint promotion, composite brand extension, ingredient branding (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014), brand alliance and brand bundling (Seno & Lukas, 2007) to name a few. This study uses the term co-branding which can be defined as *“the pairing of two or more brands”* where a public relationship between the independent brands is highlighted (Seno & Lukas, 2007, p. 123).

The branding of people has also been described by numerous terms such as human branding, celebrity branding, personal branding, and person-branding (Osorio, Centeno & Cambra-Fierro, 2020). This study uses the term human brand which can be defined as *“any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts”* (Thomson, 2006, p. 104) and considers celebrity brands as one form of human brands (Osorio, Centeno & Cambra-Fierro, 2020).

When defining a celebrity endorser, most scholars (e.g., Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Yang, 2018) are citing McCracken (1989, p. 310), who defined a celebrity endorser as *“any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement”*. Traditionally movie stars, musicians, athletes, models, politicians, and business folks are the groups of people that have been perceived as celebrities (Hsu & McDonald, 2002). However, reality tv shows and social media have shaped the definition of a celebrity, given anyone the chance to be famous (Yang, 2018) and the field of influencer marketing has emerged. Hence, the definition of celebrities has been divided to traditional celebrities which include the former groups and to non-traditional online celebrities which include the latter such as bloggers and *“Instafamous”* personalities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) also called as influencers (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020). The line between traditional celebrities and influencers is becoming quite blurry in reality as it is common that a famous social media influencer has started to match the traditional celebrity definition by working e.g., as a model and vice versa, many traditional celebrities such as musicians have a strong and influential presence in social media and could be considered also as social media influencers (Schouten et al., 2020). As mentioned before this study is focused on rap artists who will be considered as traditional celebrities.

Brand image is defined as *“the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”* (Keller, 1993, p. 3). Celebrity image is defined as *“the perceptions about an individual who enjoys public recognition as reflected by the celebrity associations held in consumer memory”* (Seno & Lukas, 2007, p. 122). Brand equity as a concept has been observed and defined from various perspectives but generally refers to *“the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand”* (Keller, 1993, p. 1). Brand equity has usually been studied because of two reasons: to estimate the financial value of the brand or to strategically improve the productivity of marketing (Keller, 1993). Seno and Lukas (2007, p. 122) who also studied celebrity endorsements from the co-branding perspective defined both brand equity and celebrity equity as *“both a financial asset and a set of favorable associations and behaviors”*, following the definition of the Marketing Science Institute (1989).

In addition to defining the celebrity, celebrity endorsement and the endorsement process have also been conceptualized by academics. Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) argued in their literature review that McCracken’s definition on a celebrity endorser is starting to be outdated. This was justified e.g., with the rise of social media which provides new marketing methods in addition to only appearing on an advertisement (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). Furthermore, companies are also utilizing celebrity endorsements for other purposes than only consumer goods such as their business-to-business marketing strategies (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). They highlighted that endorsements always require an agreement between the parties and hence defined a celebrity endorsement as *“an agreement between an individual who enjoys public recognition (a celebrity) and an entity (e.g., a brand) to use the celebrity for the purpose of promoting the entity”* (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016, p. 644). Seno & Lukas (2007) conceptualized the endorsement process, deriving from the prior study by McCracken (1989), to include all different endorsement types and roles. The roles can vary from an expert or a spokesperson to performing simply as an inspiration with no deeper knowledge of the product or service (Seno & Lukas, 2007). The endorsement itself can explicit (I endorse these sneakers), implicit (I use these sneakers), imperative (You should use these sneakers) or co-presentational (making only an appearance wearing the sneakers) (Seno & Lukas, 2007).

Finally, as high endorsement effectiveness is one of the main objectives for all celebrity endorsement marketing and a widely researched topic it is important to specify what is meant by that. Endorsement effectiveness can be defined as *“an endorsements positive influence on consumer perceptions, attitudes and behaviors toward the endorsed brand”* (Albert et al., 2017, p. 96).

2 CELEBRITY MARKETING STRATEGIES

Collaboration between brands and celebrities has been a popular marketing and communications method and a widely researched topic for decades. Collaboration with celebrities can help companies to humanize their brand and to build brand identity by highlighting specific values or symbols which further on help to trigger emotional links with consumers and that way effect their purchase behavior (Ambroise, Pantin-Sohier, Valette-Florence & Albert, 2014). Celebrity collaborations can also contribute to the strategic communication efforts of brands. The literature has at least identified social media influencers as useful actors for various roles such as intermediaries, content creators and distributors etc. which has been considered to open new opportunities for strategic communication (Borchers, 2019).

This chapter discusses and reviews co-branding, human brand and celebrity endorsement literature and reflects on the approach that celebrity endorsements should be considered and managed as co-branding strategies between two equal brands, i.e., in this case between a corporate brand and a human brand (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007).

2.1 Co-branding

The idea of corporate branding has originally been to differentiate products and make them recognizable (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2011) but has later developed and expanded to cover also branding of services, people, sports, organizations etc. (Motion et al., 2003). Hence, because today, celebrities can be considered as human brands (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Thomson, 2006) the celebrity endorsement literature alone is not comprehensive enough to cover the strategies behind the marketing collaborations between brands and celebrities (Ambroise et al., 2014; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). The co-branding approach allows celebrity endorsements to develop more into strategies where the attributes of two brands are linked and integrated to leverage existing brand associations and to improve the brand image and reputation of both partners (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Celebrity co-branding collaborations usually take the form of one of the following: 1) the celebrity takes part in the design process, 2) the celebrity appears in the public advertising, 3) the celebrity is involved in promoting the brand as part of public relations, e.g., appearing in events wearing products from the partner brand or 4) a mix of all of these (Keel & Natarajan, 2012).

Theory-wise there is a lot of common ground between co-branding and celebrity endorsements even though most co-branding research does not study especially celebrities. Co-branding and celebrity endorsements are both based on the meaning transfer process and associative learning theory and they both produce associative networks as a result (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Most of these theories focus on a one-way process where a celebrity endorses a product and contributes meanings and associations to the brand and gets financially compensated (Ambroise et al., 2014). Shortly put, the brand gains a positive image from the celebrity and the celebrity gains financial compensation. In the co-branding context this relationship is considered more strategically as a partnership that benefits both individual brands mutually, generates equity (Motion et al., 2003) and involves continuous exchange of image attributes or meanings (Seno & Lukas, 2007) where meanings and values can transfer also from the brand to the endorsing celebrity (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). When the collaboration is created based on co-branding theories it may result in a better fit between the participants, lead to more successful outcomes and protect better from negative publicity of the celebrity (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Co-branding partnerships also enable brands to utilize the brand strategy of the partner brand which e.g., can offer new strategy opportunities and guidance for brands with less experience and provide access e.g., to the stakeholder relationships and media of the co-branding partner (Motion et al., 2003).

The studies that have investigated celebrity endorsements from the co-branding perspective argue that celebrity endorsement is an interactive and reciprocal process where the brand also effects the brand equity of the celebrity, not only vice versa (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007). For example, brand related negative publicity can similarly damage the celebrity (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). This was identified e.g., from a collaboration between the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver and Sainsbury's Supermarkets where negative publicity emerged from the actions of Sainsbury but the negative meanings were associated also with Jamie Oliver (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

The co-branding approach widens the role of a celebrity in the endorsement process by lifting the participants to the same level and this way enables a more comprehensive research framework (Seno & Lukas, 2007). The essence of the co-branding perspective is, as mentioned already, based on the assumption that celebrities can also be considered as individual brands (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Thomson, 2006) because they possess brand properties and should therefore be considered as equals in the collaboration process (Seno & Lukas, 2007). Hence, celebrity-brand collaborations should be considered as sharing of core competencies from both perspectives which could further shape the concept of celebrity endorsements into more strategic alliances (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Seno & Lukas (2007) provided a conceptual framework to describe how source-based and management-based factors impact brand equity via brand image effects and celebrity equity via celebrity image. They also proposed that image is the key mediator of the equity-creation in celebrity endorsement. Celebrity credibility and attractiveness are considered as source-based factors that are purely controlled by the celebrity alone. Celebrity-product match-up, celebrity multiplicity and celebrity activation however are considered as management-based factors that are usually controlled by the brand managers. The integration of a celebrity into a promotion program, especially the format and placement,

was outlined as an important contingency factor based on prior literature as it has an impact on how strongly the association between the celebrity and the brand/product is recognized. (Seno & Lukas, 2007.)

Oeppen and Jamal (2014) studied co-branding by interviewing brand managers in the fashion industry where co-branding has been a rising strategy as many luxury brands such as Jimmy Choo or Versace have produced exclusive collections in collaboration with mass-market retailers such as H&M. Their results indicate that brand managers see co-branding as a value creation tool and as an opportunity to improve brand image (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). Co-branding allows one brand to borrow brand value and positive brand associations from another brand which naturally requires a partner who can positively impact perceptions and create brand equity which sets partner selection to the spotlight (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). Managing brand image and brand identity are the key focus areas for brand managers and a common motive for co-branding relationships is to stay relevant and borrow image value from the co-branding partner (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). In the competitive environment, protection and growth of brand equity and strong brand perceptions are seen as the key competitive advantage for companies (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). The management literature has also approached strategic alliances in the light of resource-based theory and suggests that companies have two motives for such alliances: 1) to utilize resources from the partner company and 2) to retain and develop the company's existing resources by combining them with the resources of the partner company (Das & Teng, 2000). Here the main factor is that the realized value of the resources that are contributed to the alliance should be higher than the value that would be gained from selling or from utilizing the resources in-house (Das & Teng, 2000). Even though this management based researched has not focused directly on celebrities it still offers useful insights for this study as the celebrity co-branding strategies are considered as jointly managed processes between brand managers and celebrities (Seno & Lukas, 2007).

Most of the co-branding studies have focused on consumer perceptions, fast-moving consumer goods and electronics markets where ingredient branding (e.g., Intel Inside) has been common and in general on co-branding alliances between two corporate brands (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). The academic research regarding celebrity endorsements from the co-branding perspective is more limited and the existing research has been equivocal and the need for further research has been pointed out (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007). As the co-branding strategies are organized and jointly managed by brand managers and celebrities (Seno & Lukas, 2007) there is a need for more knowledge on how celebrities consider and manage these strategies. The interest of this study is to observe how celebrities perceive these collaborations. As co-branding alliances or as traditional one-way employment where they agree to endorse and get financially compensated? And also, how or if they evaluate the effects of their collaborations on their own brand image and equity?

2.2 Human brands

Celebrities can be considered as brands because like corporate brands, they can be professionally managed, they possess additional associations and features (Thomson, 2006) and they utilize branding strategies to promote themselves e.g., by launching their own product lines, licensing their name, or endorsing other brands or products to gain more visibility (Keel & Natarajan, 2012). Celebrities also manage and protect their public images in a similar way to corporate brands e.g., George Clooney has paid attention to his image for authenticity and has agreed to endorse Nespresso in Europe but has refused to do the same in the United States (Ambroise et al., 2014).

Thomson (2006) studied why consumers become strongly attached to human brands and found that human brands can improve individuals' feelings of autonomy and relatedness which results in stronger attachment: Feelings of autonomy emerge when human brands succeed in making consumers feel appreciated, empowered, and understood and feelings of relatedness when human brands encourage acceptance, openness and belonging. The study proposes that attachment strength can be an indicator of the consumer-brand relationship strength or quality. Hence it suggests that 1) companies could benefit from building direct and routine interaction between human brands and consumers, 2) human brands possess significant endorser potential and 3) companies should pay attention to the authenticity of the human brands they manage. Attachment strength is defined here as *"the intensity of a person's target specific emotional bond with a human brand"* (Thomson, 2006, p. 105). (Thomson, 2006.)

Thomson (2006) also outlined interaction as an important factor for human brands. When consumers can interact directly with the human brand, they will probably perceive them as more accessible which encourages the feelings of autonomy and relatedness to arise (Thomson, 2006). The study suggests that companies should pay attention on how to make their human brands approachable by utilizing channels that expand the reach and exposure of the human brand (Thomson, 2006). This has been the development in the recent past as new digital channels and social media have progressed these developments rapidly and made celebrities more approachable. Today social media is a powerful platform that enables celebrities to create relationships with their fans and give them an opportunity to see behind the scenes and address them directly (Kupfer, Pähler vor der Holte, Kübler & Henning-Thurau, 2018). By enabling such personal bonds between celebrities and consumers, social media helps celebrities to increase their identification potential and the power of their human brand (Kupfer et al., 2018). For example, celebrities like Kim Kardashian are influential not necessarily due to their expertise but due to that people identify with them and want to be like them (Kupfer et al., 2018). That is why it is not a surprise that celebrity endorsements have become common in various online platforms (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Or that social media has been highlighted as an important trend in the field of celebrity endorsement based on to the rising amount of research about the topic and the increase in usage in marketing (Rocha et al., 2019).

2.3 Celebrity endorsements

As already mentioned, celebrity endorsement is not a new tool in the marketing communications toolbox, quite the opposite. For example, Advertising Age International reported already in 1997 that Pepsi evaluated that its 2 percent increase in global market share was due to its collaboration with Spice Girls (as cited in Erdogan, 1999).

The research on celebrity marketing seems to have focused mostly on celebrity endorsements and academics have researched the topic widely from various perspectives for decades (e.g., Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Roy, 2016; Yang, 2018). It has also been a popular marketing and communications tactic for companies and both camps have found it to be an effective method for marketing purposes (e.g., Erdogan, 1999; Roy, 2016; Schouten et al., 2020; Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011; Yang, 2018). This explains why companies have been increasingly investing large amounts of money in collaborations with celebrities (Albert et al., 2017; Chung, Derdenger & Srinivasan, 2013; Erdogan, 1999; Tripp, Jensen & Carlson, 1994). For example, Pepsi's campaign deal with Beyoncé was worth 50 million dollars which was roughly 34 percent of its total six-month advertising spend in the US in 2012 (Sisario, 2012).

The emergence of new digital technologies and especially social media have shaped the field and provided several new forms, online platforms, and channels for companies to utilize in their marketing and communications strategies (Rocha et al., 2019). The amount of celebrity endorsement in different digital environments has also increased accordingly (Wood & Burkhalter, 2014). The developing technologies and increasing competition have also created challenges for product differentiation and communication which has increased the importance of different marketing communication tools as a strategy to stand out from the crowd and influence market shares (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Erdogan & Baker, 2000). That is why this traditional field of marketing via celebrity endorsement remains more current than ever.

Most of the literature from the field of celebrity endorsement has focused on studying the impact of the endorsements, which will be reviewed next, and different selection strategies (Yang, 2018) regarding especially endorser characteristics and meaning transfer between the celebrity and the endorsed product/brand (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). The theory regarding selection strategies has been focused around four models: The Source Credibility Model, The Source Attractiveness Model, The Match-Up Hypotheses and The Meaning Transfer Model (Roy, 2016). These are all presented more detailed in the third chapter.

2.3.1 The impact: benefits and risks

Due to the rising costs, endorsement effectiveness in terms of return on investment becomes more crucial. Academics have studied celebrity endorsement effectiveness extensively but with mixed results (Amos et al., 2008; Yang, 2018).

However, the research does suggest that by utilizing celebrity endorsements, companies are able to e.g., reach consumers, create brand loyalty (Roy, 2016; Spry et al., 2011), gain financial returns (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Chung et al., 2013; Erdogan, Baker & Tagg, 2001; Rocha, Caldeira de Oliveira & Giraldo, 2019; Yang, 2018), increase attention and advertising effectiveness, generate positive attitudes towards brands, effect purchase intentions (Spry et al., 2011; Yang, 2018) and even improve corporate reputation (Van Norel, Kommers, Van Hoof & Verhoeven, 2014). For example, Chung et al. (2013) studied the economic worth of celebrity endorsements by observing the correlation between Tiger Woods' endorsements and Nike's golf ball sales and found that endorsements increase sales and acquire new customers from other brands. Their results show that between 2000-2010 Nike's golf ball division made an additional profit of \$103 million from an additional sale of 9.9 million from the collaboration with Tiger Woods and commanded a 2.5 percent price premium (Chung et al., 2013). Nike had invested \$181 million in the collaboration and around 57 percent was recovered from golf ball sales in the United States alone (Chung et al., 2013).

Consumers tend to have an image or a perception about a celebrity beforehand which according to the associative learning theory can transfer to the endorsed brand/product by occupying nodes in consumers memory which eventually become connected through repeated exposure (Yang, 2018). As a result, a thought of a celebrity automatically activates thoughts of the endorsed brand/product and vice versa (Spry et al., 2011). This means that working with a well-known celebrity instead of e.g., an expert or an unknown model could be a more effective method to reach consumers through the increasingly saturated advertising environment and to generate positive attitudes and behavior because celebrities are often recognized by big audiences (Erdogan et al., 2001; Yang, 2018). This suggests that even though some studies have outlined that consumers find social media influencers more credible and relatable than traditional celebrities such as actors and singers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020) companies might still need traditional celebrities to reach consumers through the advertising clutter and to gain wider attention also outside social media.

Alongside with various proven benefits of utilizing celebrity endorsements as a marketing communications strategy there is also empirical documentation about the risks (Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001; Yang, 2018) that should not be overlooked. While new digital technologies and social media have provided several new marketing opportunities, they have also brought along new risks. In the era of the internet word travels fast which creates a more fatal environment for failed marketing actions and might speed up possible changes in celebrity-fan relationships (Rocha et al., 2019). Hence, it could be beneficial to include risk evaluation to the marketing strategy.

Negative information related to an endorsing celebrity contains a risk that might also transfer to the endorsed brand (Amos et al., 2008; Till & Shimp, 1998). This can further lead to negative perceptions and even decrease sales or market value of the brand because consumer perceptions of brands are responsive towards negative publicity (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Yang, 2018).

For example, if we look at Tiger Woods again, his scandal had financial consequences for the companies that sponsored him (Chung et al., 2013; Knittel & Stango, 2013). Another study concluded that some celebrities e.g., Britney Spears and Paris Hilton have had negative effects on the buying intentions of some consumers (Yang, 2018). In addition to evaluating the risk of negative information, companies could benefit from preplanned response strategies which could be easily activated in case of any negative information emerges during the collaboration (Amos et al., 2008). This is not limited to brands which is why risk evaluation could be equally beneficial for celebrity endorsers and human brands. As mentioned in the co-branding context, brand related negative information can equally damage the celebrity endorser, not only vice versa (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Academics have also researched the “vampire effect” risk which activates when the consumers' image of a celebrity does not match with the endorsed product or brand (Erdogan, 1999). In this case, if the consumer cannot find the meaning between the endorser and the product their attention usually shifts to the endorsing celebrity which undermines brand recall (Yang, 2018). The image related risks are noteworthy also for celebrity endorsers and human brands when pairing with a negatively imaged corporate brand, not only the other way around. This has been researched e.g., in sports marketing where it was discovered that a negatively imaged sponsor brand can have a negative impact on consumer attitudes towards the sponsored sports team (Kelly, Ireland, Mangan & Williamson, 2016). For example, if a sports team which is usually positively associated around images of health and healthy lifestyle etc. pairs up with an alcohol brand which is usually associated to have a negative effect on health (Kelly et al., 2016).

A third angle is overexposure which emerges when a celebrity is endorsing several brands or products from different categories which might impact endorsement effectiveness if a consumer cannot find a clear connection between the endorser and the brand or a product (Mowen & Brown, 1981). Overexposure contains risks also from the celebrity perspective. It might impact the likeability and credibility of the endorser as well as damage the perception of the endorsement and effect purchase intentions as the attention might shift from the product or brand and lead to the perception that the only motivation behind the collaboration is compensation (Tripp et al., 1994). This suggests that celebrities should also evaluate how many collaborations they accept and from how many product categories.

2.4 Hip hop artists in marketing

In addition to being defined purely as a music genre, hip hop is a form of self-expression, a form of art, social commentary, philosophy, and a lifestyle (Wilson, 2011). During the last decades, hip hop has become mainstream (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014; Wilson, 2011) and not to mention an influential multi-billion-dollar business industry (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014). This on the other hand has

led to rappers balancing between two typical features: openly displaying their economic success and “keeping it real”, i.e., staying authentic and true to the values of their culture and community which often means harsh conditions from where hip hop has originally emerged (Sköld & Rehn, 2007). Branding is a major part of the creative processes of hip hop (Wilson, 2007) and it allows rappers to communicate who they are (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014). This part of the hip hop culture can offer beneficial insights for brand professionals on how to create brands in general (Wilson, 2007).

From the marketing perspective some developments regarding rap music and rappers are of special interest. First, as mentioned, rappers are known to show their success, which is usually done, through excess spending habits (Sköld & Rehn, 2007) and eagerness to highlight and present the brands they endorse and love (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014; Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004; Wilson, 2011). Hence, they have become beneficial partners for marketers and corporate brands (Wilson, 2011).

Second, brands and products are increasingly presented in rap music videos (Schemer, Matthes, Wirth & Textor, 2008) and brand references have been spotted most often from rap lyrics compared to other music genres (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014). This is based on the results from the American Brandstand study by Agenda Inc. that has observed brand references in the lyrics of Billboard top 20 charts since 2003. To offer an example, in 2003 the luxury brand Mercedes was mentioned 112 times (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). Burkhalter & Thornton (2014) on the other hand observed brand placements in music videos and found that over 90 percent of the music videos they observed contained brand placements and references to branded products and that hip hop provides several brand placement opportunities for brand managers. These developments offer unique collaboration opportunities for companies that other groups of celebrities simply cannot offer.

The third and especially interesting observation is that brand references in rap lyrics or music videos are not always previously agreed with the corporate brands (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004; Schemer et al., 2008). Is this then a threat or a possibility? For example, without any agreement, rappers Busta Rhymes and Puff Daddy released a song and a video called “Pass the Courvoisier Part Two” which resulted in 20 percent increase in sales for the company that distributes the Courvoisier cognac (Schemer et al., 2008). This is obviously the ideal situation for marketers, free publicity that results in increase in sales i.e., nice return without any investment (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). But this development also contains a risk that the brand is embedded in a negative context or behavior where potential losses might exceed the gains (Schemer et al., 2008). The current strategy seems to have developed more into a proactive direction where brand managers are pursuing rappers to include their brands into their lyrics (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004).

Due to the benefits that rap artists can offer, brands and marketing professionals have started utilizing them in different collaborations to reach their target audiences (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014). For example, Reebok produced an entire hip hop music video to dress the artists, McDonalds offered to pay millions for a rapper to rap about Big Mac (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014) and Adidas paid

Run D.M.C. 1.5 million dollars for the right to use their song “My Adidas” in their promotions (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). These rather new and unobtrusive types of marketing efforts have been considered possibly more effective particularly to reach Millennials who have become harder to reach with traditional advertising methods (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014).

3 PARTNER SELECTION STRATEGIES

The main challenge and one of the most important factors of the co-branding and celebrity endorsement strategies seems to be how to choose the most effective celebrity (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). As the compensation costs are high (Albert et al., 2017; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Yang, 2018) it is understandable that brands want value for their money. In addition to who to select, brands also need to consider what is their possibility to sign a deal with the preferred celebrity especially if their marketing strategy is specifically depending on it (Miciak & Shanklin, 1994). The research on how these collaborations should be managed is rather limited compared to the number of studies on the endorsement results which in fact seems to take for granted that companies can unilaterally choose the celebrities and ignores the preferences of the celebrity (Zamudio, 2016).

Several academics, starting from the 50s, have tried to develop models to help practitioners to select the right celebrities for collaborations which has proven to be a difficult task (Erdogan, 1999). The celebrity endorsement literature on this topic is extensive and focused mainly around four selection models without reaching a conclusion on which of these four models is the most effective (Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Yang, 2018). On the other hand, existing literature is quite limited on how this mutual choice process should be managed (Zamudio, 2016) from both perspectives. This study seeks to investigate what kind of motives celebrities have for brand collaborations and whether those match the drivers suggested for corporate brands in the literature as both the celebrity and the company are considered as equal brands in the co-branding process.

This chapter is divided into three sections which all represent different viewpoints. The first section reviews the four selection models on celebrity endorsement strategy, accompanied with suggestions from the co-branding literature on how collaboration partners should be selected. These studies represent the academic viewpoint on what kind of partners companies should select for collaborations based on consumer understanding. The second section reviews how marketing professionals select collaboration partners in practice according to existing literature. These studies represent the practitioner's viewpoint on what kind of partners companies actually select when executing these collaborations. The third and final section reviews what kind of recommendations existing literature provides for celebrities on how to select collaboration partners. These studies represent the celebrity viewpoint on what kind of factors they should consider when selecting collaboration partners. The final section ends with a review on what kind of celebrity motives for collaborations existing research has identified so far. This way the recommendations from existing research on how partner selection should be managed is covered in this chapter from three different angles.

3.1 Academic selection models

3.1.1 The Source Models

The Source Credibility Model and the Source Attractiveness Model are bundled as Source Models in the literature as they both reflect on the Social Influence Theory/Source Effect Theory which suggests that communicator characteristics might have a positive impact on message receptivity (Erdogan, 1999).

The Source Credibility Model by Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) is one of the earliest models and suggests that companies can affect consumer attitudes, beliefs and behavior with a promotional message if it comes from a source that they perceive as credible (Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell, 2000; Yang, 2018). Spry et al., 2011 also added that when the endorser is perceived as credible it has an influence on brand credibility as well. In this context credibility is defined as *“the extent to which the source is perceived as possessing expertise relevant to the communication topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject”* (Goldsmith et al., 2000, p. 43).

According to the literature there are two indicators for an endorser to be regarded as credible: trustworthiness and expertise (Yang, 2018). In order to be perceived as trustworthy by the target audience an endorser needs to be believable, honest and have integrity (Erdogan, 1999). Expertise on the other hand is depended on the target audiences' perceptions of knowledge, experience, or skills of the endorser (Erdogan, 1999). This means that the endorser does not need to be an actual expert on the subject, only perceived as a valid source of information (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008; Yang, 2018). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) also added the importance of relevance regarding Instagram posts meaning e.g., that followers might find the celebrity more relevant and credible if the endorsed product or service is related to personal experiences. For example, a celebrity who has lost weight endorsing weight loss products (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Several studies around the Source Attractiveness Model suggest that consumers have a more positive attitude towards receiving messages if they perceive the source as attractive because they desire to identify with attractive people (Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan et al., 2001; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Yang, 2018). In this context attractiveness also includes similarity, familiarity, likeability (Amos et al., 2008) and virtuous characteristics such as intellectual skills, personalities, lifestyles, and athletic prowess in addition to physical attractiveness (Erdogan, 1999).

Even though extensive research has been conducted on the source models, the consensus of effectiveness remains ambiguous among both scholars and practitioners (Yang, 2018). For example, Amos et al. (2008) argued that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness have the biggest influence on purchase intentions and attitudes towards brands and advertisements. Spry et al. (2011) also concluded that companies should choose endorsers who are perceived as credible based on attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness and found out that a celebrity endorser can build the brand even with low credibility. Erdogan and

Baker (2000) on the other hand interviewed 12 marketing professionals and concluded that practitioners put very little emphasis on credibility and attractiveness during the selection process.

3.1.2 The Match-Up Hypothesis

The theory of the Match-Up Hypothesis suggests that a congruent relationship between the celebrity and the brand/product needs to exist in order for the endorsement to be effective (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Erdogan, 1999). In case of a mismatch a consumer is more likely to recall only the celebrity instead of the brand/product, also called as the “vampire effect” (Yang, 2018), and perceive that the only motivation behind the endorsement is compensation (Erdogan, 1999). According to prior studies a good match-up results in higher advertisement believability which further leads to more favorable attitudes, increased purchase intentions and willingness to pay higher prices (Yang, 2018). Same applies to the co-branding partners, if they are a good fit in terms of their relevant brand attributes, the perceived match-up results in positive consumer perceptions and purchase intent and vice versa (Ilicic & Webster, 2013). This could justify e.g., the usage of attractive celebrities when promoting beauty products (Erdogan et al., 2001; Seno & Lukas, 2007).

Similarly, to the Source Models, the results from research on various angles are mixed especially regarding which brand/product attributes and celebrity characteristics should be matched (Amos et al., 2008; Yang, 2018). Most scholars have focused on the match between the brand/product and the physical attractiveness of the endorser (Erdogan et al., 2001; Yang, 2018). However, Erdogan (1999) outlines that even though the Match-up Hypothesis completes some of the shortcomings of the Source Models it overlooks cultural meanings of an endorser. Instead, it should rather focus on matching the entire image of the celebrity endorser with the brand/product and the target audience instead of focusing on individual characteristics such as attractiveness and credibility (Erdogan, 1999). In addition, Thomson (2006) suggested that when the celebrity endorser is considered as a human brand the fit between the endorser and the brand does not have to be strong if the target market is strongly attached to the human brand. Even though the results are mixed, prior research is commonly focused on consumer attitudes, excluding the preferences of the celebrity and the company which is why e.g., Zamudio (2016) has called for further investigation on how the brand personality congruence drives celebrities to participate.

3.1.3 The Meaning Transfer Model

According to prior studies consumers regard also symbolic meanings, which enhance their self-esteem and create a certain image of their selves and their social status to the public, when buying a product instead of purely focusing on the product qualities (Yang, 2018). McCracken (1989) observed this meaning transfer in celebrity endorsement through the lenses of the Associative Learning Theory and argued that when a celebrity endorser is repeatedly associated with a brand

it is possible that an identity or an image is transferred from the celebrity to the brand/product and further on to the consumer.

McCracken (1989) proposed a three-stage model to describe the meaning transfer process and the effect of celebrity endorsement on each stage. In the first stage celebrities possess unique symbolic properties based on e.g., status, class, roles, lifestyle, or athletic achievements which are not related to the endorsement. For example, actors gain meanings from their acting roles and might be later rehired to another part purely because they already possess certain meanings instead of new actors, who have not had time yet to gain as many meanings as an actor who has been in the industry longer. According to McCracken (1989) the same pattern applies to marketing where a celebrity can offer a wider range of already gained meanings compared to an unknown model. The second stage is the endorsement process where these symbolic meanings of the endorser become associated with a brand/product through advertising which should contain elements that reflect the same meanings as the endorser. At this stage the properties of the celebrity are transferred into the brand/product and the goal is that the consumer catches the similarity and can acknowledge that the brand/product possesses the same meanings as the endorsing celebrity. In the final stage the symbolic meanings are transferred from the product/brand to the lives of the consumer. McCracken (1989) contributes to selection process by suggesting that ideally a company should first evaluate what kind of symbolic properties they want their brand/product to represent. After that they should investigate what kind of meanings are available among different celebrities and finally choose a celebrity who best represents these properties. (McCracken, 1989.)

The meaning transfer model by McCracken (1989) has focused on the one-way nature of meanings transfer where a celebrity endorses a product/brand for financial compensation and the symbolic meanings the celebrity possesses are transferred to the product/brand and further on to the consumer. As mentioned in the previous chapter the co-branding studies have added to this by suggesting that this phenomenon could be seen rather as a partnership between two individual brands instead of only a financial transaction (Seno & Lukas, 2007) and as a two-way model where meanings and values could transfer also from the brand to the endorsing celebrity (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) proposed a model for a reciprocal meaning transfer process and suggest that celebrity endorsements should be conducted as brand alliances where both parties are equal throughout the collaboration and the selection process.

3.1.4 Co-branding partner selection

The co-branding perspective has also contributed to the partner selection research by outlining that because celebrities can also be considered as brands (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007) the traditional selection models behind celebrity endorsements do not apply anymore and instead they should include also other factors besides credibility and attractiveness (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Seno and Lukas (2007) suggested that the selection process should start by evaluating the match-up between the brand and the celebrity to identify possible endorsers followed by evaluation of credibility and attractiveness of the identified celebrities (the source-based factors). After the selection, management should choose which activities or achievements of the celebrity they want to outline and communicate to their target groups and how they want to integrate the celebrity into their chosen promotion activities (Seno & Lukas, 2007). Motion et al. (2003) proposed that the process should start with securing that the values of the partner brands match and that there is an identified common ground for a co-branded identity to develop which form the foundation for the joint marketing communications campaign.

As a conclusion, the co-branding literature suggests that the selection process should start with a match-up analysis, continue with a source credibility and attractiveness evaluation and end with a meaning transfer consideration which consists of the management deciding which properties of the celebrity they want to outline and communicate. Hence, in a way the co-branding literature actually ties the previous selection models together.

3.2 Practitioner-based selection models

As already mentioned, the majority of celebrity endorsement literature has focused on the strategy and effective/non-effective characteristics of a celebrity, using mainly consumer samples. However, there are also some studies that have investigated the practitioner's perspective on the matter. Miciak and Shanklin (1994) studied what kind of factors do practitioners consider when choosing celebrities for collaborations and Erdogan and Baker (2000) studied how the selection process is conducted in practice. Erdogan et al., (2001) studied the importance of endorser characteristics for different products from the practitioner's perspective and continued the work by Miciak and Shanklin with a bigger sample. Most practitioner-based studies have approached this topic by interviewing advertising agencies (Erdogan & Baker 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001; Miciak & Shanklin, 1994).

Erdogan and Baker (2000) argued that the selection process in advertising agencies is unwritten and informal and the final decision is based on several factors (Erdogan et al., 2001), where the client has the final power whereas the only decision given to the celebrity is whether they want to accept the deal or not. In their results Erdogan and Baker (2000) referred to the selection process as an organizational buying-process for the agencies where the biggest part of the process is conducted. This is a logical result given that their interviews were limited to advertising agencies.

Erdogan and Baker (2000) identified that celebrities can be utilized as either the central feature of a campaign or an advertisement or as an added interest which effects on the selection criteria. When a celebrity is considered as the central feature it means that the whole campaign is built around her/him and cannot

be conducted with a different person whereas the added interest approach does not depend on any specific individual (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). In the former approach the possibility to sign a specific celebrity becomes more crucial.

Erdogan and Baker (2000) summed up the most common selection criteria mentioned by the advertising professionals. The selection process starts with the advertising idea and continues with a search of a celebrity that matches this idea (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). The process continues with criteria such as: what is the target groups perception of the celebrity, what the celebrity stands for, what is her/his compensation rate and is there a match between the celebrity image and the product characteristics (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). The findings regarding especially match-up are similar to the academic literature presented before but both Erdogan and Baker (2000) and Erdogan et al. (2001) discovered that professionals emphasize credibility and attractiveness of a celebrity much less than scholars. One possible justification, from a professional, was that when a celebrity is famous everyone knows how they look like and do not concentrate on whether they perceive her/him as attractive or ugly (Erdogan et al., 2001). However, they did add that different product types might benefit from different celebrity characteristics (Erdogan et al., 2001). Also, according to professionals the importance of credibility (i.e., trustworthiness and expertise) is higher in technical products whereas the importance of physical attractiveness is higher in attractiveness-related products such as clothing (Erdogan et al., 2001). This also goes in line with the Match-Up Hypothesis from the academic literature (Erdogan, 1999). Erdogan et al. (2001) concluded five factors that most professionals consider important when selecting celebrity endorsers: 1) Does the celebrity match the product/brand and the target audience? 2) Is the celebrity perceived as credible 3) What is her/his profession? 4) The level of popularity and 5) Availability. These latter results are very similar to the former by Erdogan and Baker (2000), but it is important to notice that the importance of different factors might also vary depending on whether the celebrity is used as the main feature or an added interest of the campaign as mentioned before (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). As a conclusion the considered criteria is large, but one explanation might be that celebrities usually have already several meaning associations, drawn from their profession, e.g., acting or singing which makes them multidimensional (Erdogan et al., 2001). Table 1. lists all the selection factors that were mentioned by professionals in the studies by Erdogan and Baker (2000) and Erdogan et al. (2001).

TABLE 1 The factors that practitioners consider when selecting celebrity endorsers.

Selection factors	References
Compensation rate	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001
Probability of collaboration	Erdogan et al., 2001
Risk of controversy	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001
Endorsement history	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001
Familiarity	Erdogan et al., 2001
Likeability	Erdogan et al., 2001
Risk of overshadowing	Erdogan et al., 2001
Stage of celebrity life cycle	Erdogan et al., 2001
Physical attractiveness	Erdogan & Baker; Erdogan et al., 2001
Profession	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001

Match with the target audience	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001
Match with the product/brand	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001
Match with the campaign idea	Erdogan & Baker, 2000
Overall celebrity image	Erdogan et al., 2001
Is the celebrity a brand user?	Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001
What kind of things they advocate?	Erdogan & Baker, 2000
Popularity	Erdogan & Baker, 2000
Availability	Erdogan & Baker, 2000
Credibility	Erdogan & Baker, 2000
Trustworthiness	Erdogan et al., 2001
Expertise	Erdogan et al., 2001

After the selection has been made it is usually followed by a research on the celebrity to make sure that the set criteria will be delivered which is important from the return-on-investment perspective (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). Even so, according to advertising professionals, managers do also make decisions based on pure intuition as part of the profession is to stay alert on e.g., who is winning awards, how many people are attending concerts etc. (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). In general, celebrities with well-defined brand images and abilities to stay current and successful are the ones who land the endorsement deals (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). Amos et al. (2008) also argued that celebrity performance has an impact on endorsement effectiveness. This refers to how successful the celebrity is in his/her profession e.g., in producing popular music (Amos et al., 2008). When the research is finished agencies usually contact the celebrity or an agent, before proposing the campaign idea to the client, to inquire whether he/she would be interested, how much would the cost be and would the campaign fit their timetable (Erdogan & Baker, 2000).

When the client has approved the proposal, the next step is to negotiate the deal with the celebrity or an agent. According to the professionals there are two options: an exclusive deal or a flexible deal. An exclusive deal means that the celebrity is not allowed to endorse any other brands during the negotiated period. This is meant to reduce the risk of overexposure and the vampire effect. These types of deals usually require a bigger investment because from the celebrity perspective it prevents them from gaining extra income from other brands. Flexible deals on the other hand usually allow celebrities to endorse other brands during the contract period, still excluding competitors and are less expensive. From the brand perspective it is also important to negotiate the duration and the cost of the deal right from the beginning. This is because if the duration is extended later, the deal might be prone to increased compensation. (Erdogan & Baker, 2000.)

Risk evaluation is also a part of the selection and decision-making process in practice. In addition to overexposure and the vampire effect, professionals seem to also evaluate the risk of negative information (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). One way to take this into consideration is to negotiate the payment based on the advertisement views instead of the entire contract period (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). This way brands could reduce their risk and cost if the campaign does not reach expectations or if negative information about the celebrity appears (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). From the celebrity perspective this way would naturally be more unfavorable (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). Another option to prepare for negative information is to include a morality clause into the contract which works

both preventively and enables brands to terminate the contract without penalty fees (Erdogan & Baker, 2000).

3.3 Towards celebrity-based selection models

As already outlined, current research is strongly focused on studying co-branding, human brands, and celebrity endorsement from the corporate brand perspective. Hence there is much less academic knowledge about how celebrities perceive, experience, and manage these collaborations even though they play a crucial role in terms of the success of the collaboration.

The co-branding literature does however touch the celebrity perspective but only by pointing out that it is also important for celebrities to manage their own brand image which is why deciding which products/brands to endorse is equally important for celebrities as it is for brands (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). The existing research suggests that celebrities should evaluate the possible positive and negative effects that a collaboration might have on their own brand image and equity and consider the collaborations more as linking their own brand to a company brand (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Here the biggest risk for the celebrity is identified to be perceived as if money was their only motive for participating in marketing collaborations with brands (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Erdogan and Baker (2000) also outlined few points from the celebrity perspective and about their possible criteria for the forms of collaboration even though they interviewed only advertising agencies. The exposure seems to be a mutual concern for both parties as celebrities are also evaluating this when negotiating how many different media and what type of media they want to include to the contract (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). In addition, according to Erdogan and Baker (2000) celebrities are also considering how closely do they want to be associated with an individual brand or a product.

3.3.1 Celebrity motives

Regarding celebrity motives Bergkvist et al. (2016) studied the perceived motive of celebrity endorsements as an endorsement factor. They found that if the endorsing celebrity is seen to be motivated by other factors besides financial compensation that has a significant positive impact on brand attitude. For example, genuinely liking or using the product/brand. This seems to apply also vice versa, if money is seen as the only motivator, it might impact the brand negatively. (Bergkvist et al., 2016.)

In addition, few studies that review the partner selection from the actual celebrity perspective were discovered in the fields of athlete sponsorships and fashion blogging. These studies investigated the motivations of the sponsored athletes and fashion bloggers. As athletes and fashion bloggers can also match today's definition of a celebrity in line with music artists these studies can provide important background information for this study.

Dumont (2016) investigated the sponsorship experiences of professional rock-climbers and found three different motivational factors for entering sponsorships with companies: 1) financial compensation, 2) demonstration of interest and 3) perceived congruence between brand personalities and values. So, the decision-making is based on rational and non-rational factors and contain tangible and intangible as well as direct and indirect benefits. Even though financial compensation and gifted gear is obviously mentioned and plays a big role, the interviewed athletes had also declined lucrative sponsorship deals from Adidas due to their perception that Adidas as a brand does not best represent their sport. Income-wise the financial compensation seems to be more important at the start of the career when the athletes cannot afford to decline deals. The second factor that was important to the athletes was whether the athletes felt that the sponsoring company showed interest and valued them and the collaboration. Low interest was experienced e.g., as low financial compensation or inconsistent or even lacking communication from the company. The importance of having a relationship with the sponsors was also highlighted in the expectations that the athletes had for the sponsoring companies. They wished for information and feedback about their work and value in the collaboration, clear guidelines, and objectives on what is expected from them and lastly the results of the collaboration. The results were considered as important in order for them to price and value their own contribution for future or current collaborations. According to these findings Dumont (2016) provided three recommendations for companies: 1) build dialogue and engage, 2) be proactive and increase the involvement of athletes and 3) provide guidance. (Dumont, 2016.)

Similar results were found by Noppari & Hautakangas (2012) who investigated the phenomenon of fashion blogging and found that when it comes to collaborations with companies, bloggers are also considering ethic principals in their decision-making. This means that genuinely liking the corporate brand is an important selection factor for them when entering collaborations (Noppari & Hautakangas, 2012).

These results imply that similarly to corporate brands and previous academic suggestions (e.g., Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001; Motion et al., 2003; Seno & Lukas, 2007) also athletes and bloggers consider that the match between the corporate brand and their human brand is an important factor that guides their decision making at least up to some level.

4 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological process of this study and justifies the chosen research methods. The research strategy and methods were chosen to support the aim of this study which was to empirically explore artists' experiences of brand-artist marketing collaborations and thus gain a better understanding and more knowledge about the topic for both artists and companies. Hence, the research focus was on personal experiences and experiential knowledge of the artists. Figure 1 represents the methodological process of this study.

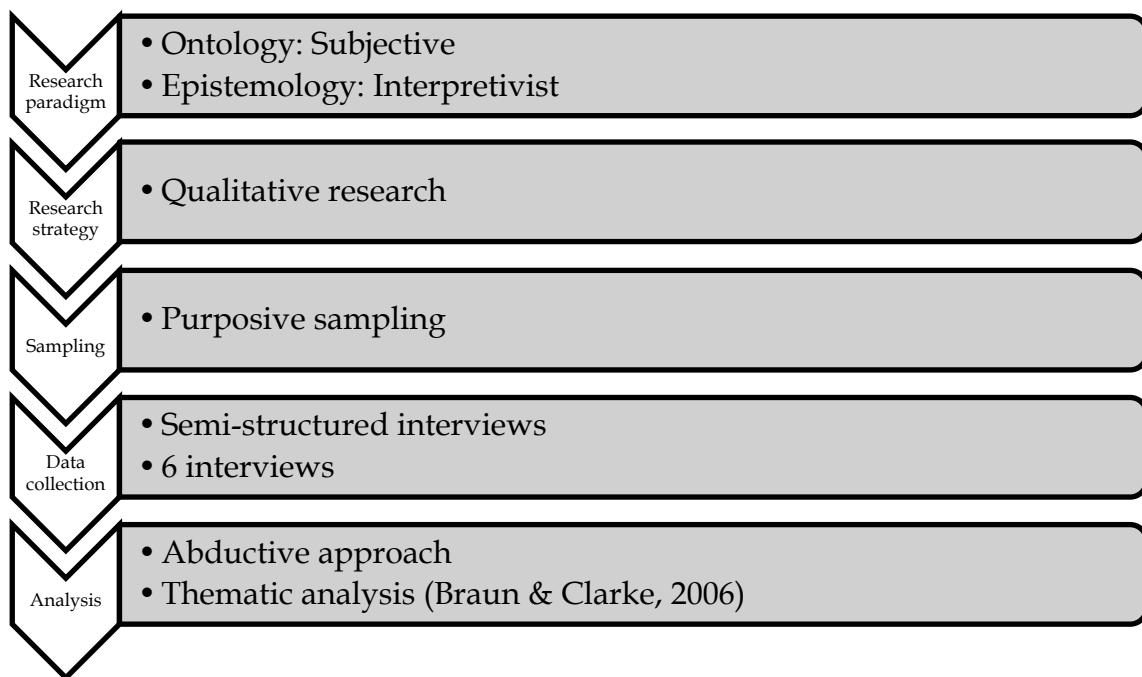


FIGURE 1 The methodological process

4.1 Research paradigm

The research design started by articulating the research philosophy of this study and locating it within a research paradigm which formed the framework for further method selection (see O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014). The first step was to determine the ontological position i.e., whether the reality is seen as objective or subjective. Due to the focus on human experiences, this study adopted a subjective ontology which means that reality is shaped by perceptions and interactions of living subjects not solid objects. The second step was to determine the epistemology i.e., the way valid knowledge is obtained. This study adopted an interpretivist epistemology which commonly aligns with a subjective ontology and

means interpreting and understanding relationships. The interpretivist paradigm is focused on exploring meanings instead of facts and seeks to understand why something is happening instead of seeking causality or laws.

4.2 Research strategy: Qualitative research

In order to explore and understand brand-artist marketing collaborations based on artists' perceptions and experiences, qualitative research was chosen as the research strategy for this study. A qualitative methodology is also a common choice for research with a subjective ontology and interpretivist approach (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014).

Qualitative research uses non-quantitative data collection and analysis methods and aims to explore social relations and how the participants experience reality (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). In business context it can produce new knowledge about how certain things work in practice (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Qualitative data helps the researcher to understand in-depth motivations that can explain certain behavior or feelings (Adams et al., 2014). In qualitative research, the literature review guides the researcher in forming open-ended questions and possible conceptual frameworks usually emerge from the data and analysis, not from the literature review itself (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samouel & Page, 2015). In addition, the purpose of qualitative research is not to seek wide representativeness or structure, compared to quantitative research, but to probe deeper into an issue which allows the emergence of hidden topics as well (Hair et al., 2015).

4.3 Sampling

Sampling is a part of business research which often aims to collect information to support decision making which requires engaging with people who know about the topic (Hair et al., 2015). A sample is a small subset of the people that possess the wanted information and when chosen properly, a sample can provide accurate enough information to support the decision making (Hair et al., 2015).

The sample for this study was chosen based on purposive sampling which is a nonprobability sampling technique that allows the researcher to choose the participants by utilizing subjective methods such as personal experience (Hair et al., 2015). Purposive sampling can be defined as "*selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions*" (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 77). In this case the group of people who possess the wanted information and knowledge was identified already when forming the research questions i.e., Finnish rap artists. More specifically the participants were chosen based on criteria of being recording rap artists and known to the public in Finland and within this group the final selection was

based on personal accessibility. In total, six artists were contacted, and they all agreed to participate.

It is also important to mention that even though in purposive sampling the sample size is usually small and focused on the depth of information instead of making generalizations (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) the amount of well-known Finnish rap artists was already limited to begin with. Hence the sample size of six was considered to be adequate considering the nature of this study.

4.4 Data collection

Interviews were chosen as the data collection method in order to explore and understand the artists' perceptions and experiences i.e., unique information that only the participants possess and thus cannot be found anywhere else or only by observing (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Moreover, interviews have been considered as a useful method to study experiences (Arsel, 2017), to understand why something is happening (Hair et al., 2015) and commonly used in business research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Interviews as a research method can be either highly structured where the researcher controls the interview consistently and similarly with each participant or unstructured where the approach is relatively flexible and the interview is more of an open discussion (Hair et al., 2015). Highly unstructured interviews always contain a risk that the data is too fragmented if there is very little or no theoretical or methodological preparation even if the research is interpretive (Arsel, 2017). In this case semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method. This was due the advantages of keeping the interviews structured and systematic by covering a prepared outline of topics but still allowing the tone to stay conversational and giving the researcher the flexibility to make changes such as vary the wording, change the order of the questions, or add new ones and to probe (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This type of approach allows also unexpected information to emerge (Hair et al., 2015) which was considered important as the amount of research from this perspective was limited.

The interviews were designed and executed by following the guideline by Arsel (2017). The interview questions were designed based on existing theory and themes that were presented in the literature review: co-branding and motivational factors. Each interview question was set beforehand with an intention to evoke a certain theme and few probing opportunities were also predicted beforehand to support some of the questions. Each interview was ended with a question "Is there anything regarding the topic that you would like to add?" in order to provide an opportunity for additional issues to arise. The interview protocol (see Appendix 1) was revised after each interview to evaluate if changes need to be made or if new questions should be added due to unexpected issues but there was no need for major changes during the data collection phase.

In total, six interviews were arranged between the last week of January and the first week of March 2021. All interviews were conducted one by one using

Zoom meetings to secure safe participation during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews lasted between 25-60 minutes each and were conducted in Finnish to secure the highest quality of data because all the participants were native Finnish speakers. All the interviews were video, and audio recorded and transcribed straight after each interview which produced 54 pages of text in total. These interviews formed the empirical data for this study and no secondary data was collected.

4.5 Analysis

Qualitative data is usually analyzed with an inductive approach instead of deductive approach (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014.). This means that it is more about theory building based on the data instead of current theory testing which is more typical for quantitative studies (Perry, 1998). However, in practice inductive and deductive approaches are the opposite ends of a continuum and hard to separate completely (Perry, 1998). Positioning far at the inductive end might prevent the researcher from utilizing existing theory which is why theory development should rather be continuous interaction of both approaches (Perry, 1998). Hence an abductive approach was selected for this study as it is focused on theory development and discovering new things instead of generating new theory (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). With an abductive approach the theoretical framework can be modified due to new empirical findings and theoretical insights and this way it allows new combinations to develop (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The abductive approach describes this study well because the literature view was revised based on the data. It also allowed a comparison and discussion between the results from the artist perspective and existing theory which relies more on company or consumer perspectives.

The interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this context a theme was considered to capture something important in the light of the research questions of this study as well as to show somewhat of a consistency or meaning across the responses. Even so, in qualitative analysis there is no specific number of times that a theme needs to appear within the data in order to be considered as a theme. Hence, this study gave a bigger emphasis on whether a theme captured something important in relation to the aim and research questions of this study. The thematic analysis was conducted by following the six-step guideline by Braun & Clarke (2006).

In the first phase the data was familiarized simply by reading the interview transcriptions repeatedly and actively while searching, underlining, and taking notes of emerging themes and ideas for codes. This phase started partly already when transcribing the interview audio recordings which was done carefully to capture the needed information and meanings in their original nature. Every transcript was re-checked against the audio recording to secure accuracy.

In the second phase initial codes were created manually by underlining interesting findings and potential themes across the data set. In terms of coding some of the themes were already set beforehand based on the literature review and research questions when forming the interview questions as mentioned earlier: co-branding and motivational factors. These broader themes served as somewhat initial guidelines for organizing the data into meaningful groups but did not restrict the coding process from equally identifying other interesting aspects through the entire data set. Hence the coding phase was somewhat more theory-driven than data-driven. Lastly after all data extracts were coded, they were collated, and a list of initial codes was created.

In the third phase potential themes were searched by combining and collating the identified codes and relevant data extracts into potential themes in an Excel table. After that relationships between codes and themes were searched which led to the formation of potential main and sub-themes as well as discarding of some initial codes. The codes that did not seem to fit any of the themes were collated under a theme "unknown" at this point. This phase ended with a list of potential themes and all data extracts were coded based on that. At this point themes: co-branding and motivational factors were supported by the collected data and identified as potential themes.

In the fourth phase all the potential themes were reviewed to check whether they work with the codes and the entire data set by creating a thematic map. In this phase some themes were also discarded due to e.g., lack of data support or diversity, some were combined under one theme and some were divided into separate themes. The themes were revised based on a guideline that data within a theme should fit together meaningfully and there should be a clear difference between separate themes. This phase included two stages: reviewing the themes at the data extract level and at the entire data set level. At the first level all collated data extracts under each theme were read to secure that they form a consistent pattern. If not, the theme was revised and the data extracts that did not fit were relocated or discarded. At the second level the entire data set was re-read to secure that the themes actually work in the light of the entire data set as well as to code any possible data that was missed in the second phase. Lastly a thematic map was created to highlight the revised themes.

In the fifth phase the identified themes were further analyzed and specified as well as defined and named. This phase was about analyzing the data on the data extract level within each theme and identifying what is the essence, aspect and what kind of story do they tell. The themes were also re-checked for possible overlaps and sub-themes to make sure that the structure is clear and coherent. Lastly all themes were given their final names.

In the final phase the results of the analysis were reported with data extract examples which will be presented in the next chapter. The research findings are mirrored back to the literature review in the discussion chapter of this study.

5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the empirical findings of this study and is organized based on the research questions and the theoretical framework. Hence, the chapter is divided to two sections which also reflect the main themes that were identified in the thematic analysis: the artist perspective on brand collaborations and the motivational factors. First, the results regarding the artist brand and the collaboration relationship between the artist and corporate brands are reported. This will illustrate how artists consider these collaborations which will create a better understanding on how collaborations with artists should be managed. Second, the identified motivational factors that were found significant in terms of the artist decision-making process regarding brand collaborations are reported. This will illustrate why artists are participating in marketing collaborations with companies which will create a better understanding on what motivates them. In total, six interviews and 54 pages of text were coded and analyzed.

5.1 Brand collaborations from the artist perspective

The first research question aimed to find out how Finnish rap artists consider brand collaborations in terms of their own artist brand. One identified development was that marketing collaborations have become a part of the artist job description which has been affected by the changes in the music industry in general. In other words, the income from making music has decreased due to the digitalization as well as the Covid-19 pandemic which has put all the gigs on hold and created major financial losses for artists. These developments have been noticed in the record companies as well which has resulted in creation and growth of brand departments whose job is to find marketing collaborations for their listed artists or support the artist in negotiating with the companies. These developments were described e.g., as follows:

“In music, the market for the main product is quite small due to digitalization [...] And our brand department in the record company has clearly grown all the time and it is such win-win activity that actually it is hard for me to imagine... it would be kind of similar to if an artist thought that well I will make music, but I won't do gigs, so it would be like an exception. That you should rather justify why you don't do gigs. So, with collaborations it's kind of the same that nowadays I would rather think it this way that it's such an integral part of the palette because that way you also get promotion [...]. That in my opinion, it's like an integral part of this and you should rather justify why not.” Artist 1

“I believe anyway that this is still in some kind of transition period that somehow this will like, this whole collaboration thing will somehow expand. And this will change somehow which is interesting and I’m looking forward to what can happen here.” Artist 4

5.1.1 Artist brands

The results indicate that due to the new developments and the growing number of collaborations artists have also become more strategic:

“Now it has grown all the time, that collaboration thing and then there are artists that already have their own company, which has like clients to whom they get those collaborations that it like grows all the time.” Artist 4

“You didn’t have to think about it a few years ago, that this has like become, it is like a big part of the artist job nowadays, those collaborations and all such. And of course, you also have to think about the brand a little bit differently when it becomes your profession. [...] you also think about the business, that you have to think about it nowadays. When like five years, ten years ago you could pretty much go with the flow and didn’t have to think about it. On the other hand, the money that is involved wasn’t as big either.” Artist 6

In fact, all of the interviewed artists considered themselves as human brands, they also possess brand properties such as logos and the data suggests that they have either a conscious or unconscious brand strategy:

“Yeah, especially our band is clearly a brand. [...] surely it is conscious, but it is not written down anywhere that we, while companies do these kind of brand strategies and visual identities a bit more accurately, we have a logo and we [...] have here sort of an unspoken band strategy, brand strategy.” Artist 3

“Yeah, [the strategy] has come like afterwards. That like now when things are like, somehow like really grown big [...]. When the brand grows bigger, then you can start choosing and then there comes like, that now we are silent for a year so that when our album comes out then the face would be a bit fresher [...] and like these sorts of things and. We think about it a lot that like we don’t do that much at the same time anymore [...]. That now we have started thinking about that and like that at times you also need to be away. And like time those things well. [...] so that you can fit everything [albums, gigs, collaborations etc.] just right so that it’s not too much for people [...].” Artist 2

In addition, the data suggests that artists are more or less professionally managed when it comes to marketing collaborations, either by themselves, by a

record company or another middleman such as a management agency. In terms of marketing collaborations this means e.g., evaluating risks and the match-up, weighting of pros and cons, follow up, pricing, etc. This was described e.g., as follows:

“We have kind of a sincere chatting approach that we just chat that does this [collaboration] make sense. But that’s what it is exactly, risk evaluation and we do think about the brand as well, the brand match so to speak so yeah we do think about those things.” Artist 6

“We get a query from the record company that would you be interested in let’s say [some brand] and like this. They survey possible collaborations that match our brand. Then after that they ask if we would be interested [...].” Artist 3

“Well, I evaluate everything quite like based on how it feels, but that is why there is that third party which is either a management agency or then the record company. And the record company follows those through data. That is a really good thing because I’m bad at evaluating the benefits of the other party which then again affects the pricing of future collaborations and like selling in general.” Artist 1

5.1.2 Collaboration relations

The results indicate that the power dynamics between artists and companies vary depending on the collaboration and the company. The data suggests that a common perception is that most of the time in practice everything can usually be discussed and negotiated. It was described that at its best there is mutual respect, and the collaboration is an actual collaboration with an opportunity to influence which is perceived to result in mutual benefits which reflects the benefits of a co-branding relationship quite well. The relationships were described e.g., as follows:

“Of course, both parties are listened to that like. I would see that [...] both have respected each other. And of course, I like, if we make a deal, we always want to [...] do our best that it goes well.” Artist 4

“I would see that they like brand each other [...] at its best like we are wearing [the merch of the collaboration brand] out there and like working for [the collaboration brand] but [the collaboration brand] is also [...] working for us at the same time. That they are like planning marketing videos for us and working for us as well so. At its best it’s like, win-win.” Artist 3

Another common perception seems to be that companies do hold the certain main power which in a way also seems to be obvious due to that it is their campaign. This means that they have the final power e.g., on how the collaboration will look like. The power dynamics were described e.g., as follows:

“It’s kind of like a matter between a company and a person, so, it does go so that the company decides in the end and I have only like veto power on what do I agree but that is only the technical power relationship. That in practice through negotiating, when you discuss and communicate about things then those will not turn into conflicts [...]. But that’s how I see it that I have the decision power always only to my own action and role and in a way the company of course has the power to their thing. That this applies in any collaboration that if I’m visiting somewhere then it’s not about me [...]. That in my opinion marketing collaborations are first so that I’m visiting their company and kind of like bringing some kind of added value as consult from the outside.” Artist 1

“But to [how it looks] you can’t influence personally, that to some extent you can go behind the camera and look at the shots, but the result is anyway in the hands of the companies and advertisers at that point when you have agreed to collaborate.” Artist 6

Also in the contract phase, which is perceived as important in terms of the artist rights, companies are perceived to be much more organized which is why artists are usually supported by e.g., the record company lawyers or again another middleman. Of course, artists always retain the power to decline from a collaboration and to negotiate in the contract phase so that both parties can agree on what the deal contains:

“Well, it depends totally on the artist that does she/he hold her/his own and knows what she/he is doing [...], if it comes from the record company and there are experts on our side making the contract so then [...] everyone gets what has been agreed. Unless you make contracts with big companies and you don’t know what you are signing on.” Artist 3

Some of the artists also made a distinction between domestic brands and international brands when it comes to the power dynamics. They felt that with domestic companies the dialogue is easier and their opportunities to influence is better compared to international companies where in a way orders come from somewhere far and from above and the collaboration is more about only selling your face than contributing to the collaboration:

“Especially with [global brands] where the final order on whether the ad is good comes from somewhere like China, so in that case you only give the face [...]. You are only the face, you know, and you have been even dressed for the set and words come from there and.” Artist 2

“At times it is pretty much so that you dance to the tune of a big company because it might be that something has been said somewhere in the Europe office or somewhere further away in China or in The

United States so like. [...] at times it feels like you are just a marionette doll there, who does an international campaign which is ordered from somewhere from a distance." Artist 6

The results indicate that these sorts of factors are also important overall in terms of what kind of collaboration relationship with a company is considered as good. Many of the artists mentioned the importance of an open dialogue, the chemistry with the company staff and that the relationship is personal:

"That first of all the collaboration, that the CEO or the boss person comes to meet with you and that already creates a good feeling and that they get us as people and how we are like and, that then you really have to work with those people [...]. That the energy must work there, that it is easy to do and that then you also have the courage to bring out your own points of view." Artist 2

The data suggests that this way, when the relationship becomes direct and personal the opportunity to influence is perceived to grow and as a good foundation to challenge the brands in creating something new and different which is seen as inspiring:

"It is the like smallness, smallness of Finland, then it becomes personal and then if we talk about something like that hey let's do like this, then you can challenge the boundary and you can do different things." Artist 1

"At its best it is like that it brings like positive brand thoughts and effects both ways and like at its best it's like that both go a bit outside the box and something a bit new emerges from that, say something fun. [...] But certain naturalness and the kind that it like doesn't feel superimposed, that is the kind of marketing that I like personally [...]." Artist 6

Lastly, the results implicate that in fact many of the artists wish to be more involved in the collaborations already from an earlier stage and be a part of brainstorming and creating the campaigns instead of only contributing visibility or a face. The data suggests that artists consider that they would have more to offer in terms of creativity and they wish that companies would utilize that. They also perceive themselves as people who throw themselves easily into doing things and wish that companies would adopt a more similar approach to some extent, instead of strict rules, which could result in better collaborations. This was described e.g., as follows:

"I wish that companies would learn from each other and notice that this kind of agile, more flexible companies that challenge their brand, like collaborations with those are often more successful. That in a way the kind of Kill your darlings- kind of thought that if you have created some sort of an image with huge effort then in fact breaking that image only makes it stronger. It like underlines it. [...] that if something

has always been done in a certain way and is now done differently you would be open to that it doesn't destroy all the work [...]. And that way I believe that then these collaborations from the artist side could be more the kind that they would inspire [...]. Artists are creative and that creativity should be utilized. [...] the result could be a bit more creative than a plan created by their internal marketing." Artist 1

"[I wish that] an artist collaboration would be seen as a bigger opportunity than just as a collaboration with a celebrity. It would be understood that there is that underlying creativity which is why this person has become known to the public in the first place." Artist 1

"Well, from companies I would wish maybe a bit more willingness to experiment and flexibility in these things. That artists often, maybe it is a bit part of our job description, we are often ready to try things and like throw ourselves and put ourselves on the line but then it feels like companies don't have the same attitude there then. [...] Often [...] they have pretty rigid like, might have like a certain line in those marketing collaborations [...]." Artist 6

5.1.3 Social media

Social media was a theme that emerged in every interview in some form and was seen as both a valuable opportunity for the artist brand but also somewhat as a risk in terms of marketing collaborations with companies. The data suggests that artists personally separate themselves from social media influencers, that the artist social media account might not always be the preferred channel for third party advertising and that overexposure is seen as a potential risk for the artist brand.

Even though the data suggests that marketing collaborations are seen as a part of the artists' job description, some of the artists underlined that music is still their main job:

"And especially those social media collaborations... that I'm trying that like I'm a musician, I'm not like you know... [an influencer?] Yes, an influencer, exactly." Artist 2

Another artist also pointed out that it should be noted when evaluating social media collaborations that there might be a difference in quality of different social media accounts, that a quantitatively large follower base does not necessarily mean high quality:

"This is the kind of theory that I have talked about a lot in the record company regarding social media, that how misleading it is to count the quantitative number of contacts, that is the number of followers as we don't know what [kind of] contact it is. That we can follow some celebrity only because like what the hell is she/he doing but it doesn't necessarily mean that we would want to share any of her/his messages in any way. Then someone can have much less like contacts but those

can be much more positive, so the multiplicative effect is much bigger.” Artist 1

The data also suggests that some of the artists do not prefer their social media artist account as the channel for third party advertising but rather to promote their own brand and music:

“This is kind of a small thing but somehow, I feel that the kind of like, especially with artists like, that I don’t feel that the like advertising in social media is a win for anyone anymore. That, it says in the deal that now you have to add like to your band account, like because those who follow our band are interested in our music and like this, and then they have to watch our [...] ad videos so that is like... I feel like nothing else than negative comes from that.” Artist 2

Overexposure was mentioned as a risk for the artist brand regarding marketing collaborations and more specifically marketing collaborations in social media. The data suggests that too many social media collaborations could have a negative effect on the artist brand:

“But it is nowadays kind of like you know that what rappers do is similar to what vacuum cleaner merchants do, that you kind of do what [...] vacuum cleaner merchants did 10 years ago. [...] That before it was more like salesmen stuff that you kind of tried to talk people into buying something but now it has become like kind of that all those social media influencers and rap artists are doing it a lot.” Artist 5

“I personally see it like that if you do too much [collaborations], it decreases the like for example followability of your social media. [...] That’s how you know personally that you know how to kind of put yourself into the shoes of your like followers and friends that what they are expecting and what they want to see from there. [...] Paid content is not usually as nice to follow as the kind of normal where a person brings out her/his own values and thoughts [...].” Artist 6

5.2 Motivational factors in artist decision-making

The second research question aimed to find out what kind of motives Finnish rap artists have for brand collaborations. Five categories of motives were identified to be significant in terms of the artist decision-making regarding marketing collaborations: financial, value based, personal, human brand-based and company related. The data suggests that money indeed is not the only motive for entering marketing collaborations:

“The consumer does understand that with visibility, money has moved and like surely often thinks why. It is like common that why do you get involved, so you need to have a justification for yourself even though you don’t like get to say that to everyone, but like you understand that there needs to be another reason than because I got money.” Artist 1

“Somehow just like, it is like just so important that you are able to stand behind it, that it is such a big mistake to do like basically anything for money. Like because after all you need to live with it through time and we have tried like that those would be long-term collaborations, so we do think carefully.” Artist 2

Figure 2 illustrates the identified categories and disaggregates the content of each category as well as their interrelation.

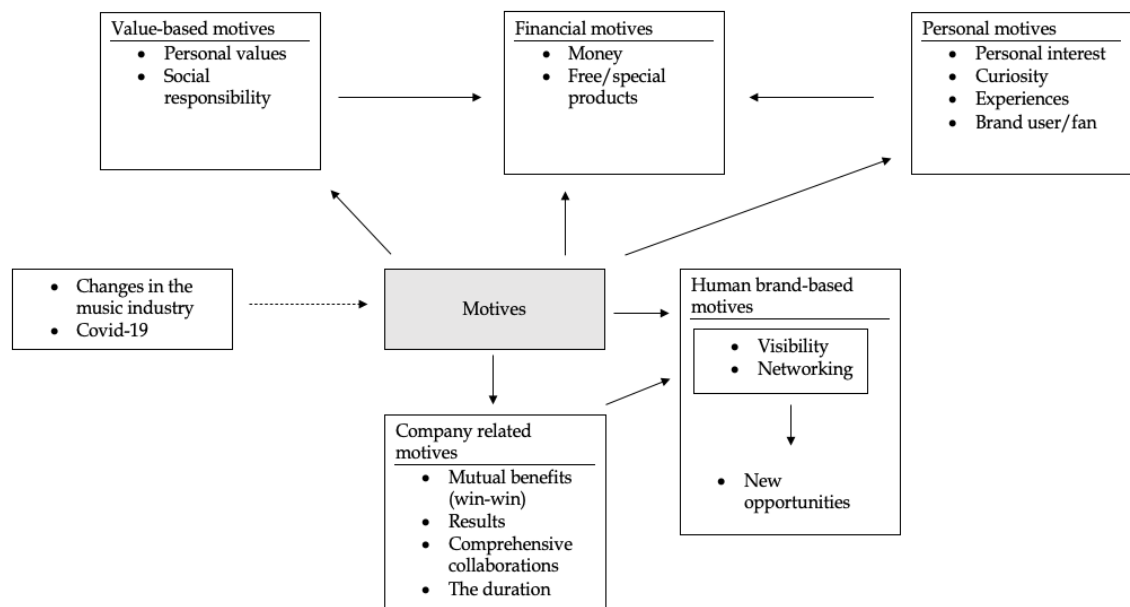


FIGURE 2 Integrative framework of motivational factors in artist decision-making regarding marketing collaborations

5.2.1 Financial motives

The financial motives in this context refer to money and free products. Most of the artists considered marketing collaborations as a part of their job description and all of them considered the financial compensation as an obvious and important motive which has also been further affected by the changes in the music industry as well as the Covid-19 pandemic as mentioned earlier:

“Those pay very good hour-based compensation, compared to gigs, which pay relatively good compensation or to making music which pays like very small compensation, if you would only make music.” Artist 1

“Especially with an exceptional year like this, there has of course been a financial side that you want to do some work that also pays. Like when an artist makes a record and an artist makes promotion, there is not much money involved, so it is the gigs and of course radio play and streams where the money comes from. But doing gigs is such a big part that now when those have been gone, I have been like maybe a bit more open to those collaborations and such, like the pure income and such has motivated more.” Artist 6

“Of course, these belong to the collaborations, but I haven’t like, you know haven’t needed to buy clothing for 10 years or a car for 10 years.” Artist 2

5.2.2 Value-based motives

The value-based motives refer to the personal values of the artists as well as social responsibility. This means that artists are motivated to collaborate when they feel that it reflects their values or offers them a chance to contribute to the society. This seems to apply also both ways, meaning that it might also lead to declining a collaboration:

“And of course, there needs to be the values that, we don’t necessarily want like [...] is it so cool to try to advertise sodas to young people or candy or like, that you rather try something that like, doesn’t harm people so to speak.” Artist 2

The data suggests that the value-based motives can also affect the financial compensation, meaning that the importance of it might diminish or even disappear:

“But then there might be that I do something for free if there is, let’s say that [...] [someone is doing an event] for young boys who want to do sports and then I am like, I am in and you know we don’t even talk about money there.” Artist 2

5.2.3 Personal motives

The personal motives refer to factors such as personal interest, curiosity, fun, new or unique experiences or that the artist is a brand user/fan:

“Maybe overall just curiosity, that when you only have one life and then you would want to do all jobs and industries in the world so here you can see also something else than your own like livelihood. So, it is just personal interest.” Artist 1

“Well, the starting point has probably been that I have always wanted to get to know lot of people and to do interesting things. That because the starting point has after all been that basically the education for making music is zero and then kind of like it has been cool to notice

that it has made so much possible that you have been able to do all sorts of that kind of things. That suddenly you are in a commercial for [a well-known brand] when you shouldn't be to start with. Probably maybe it is like the interest, I'm guessing that is it." Artist 5

"I have personally at least always liked collaborations which have somehow been very natural. That maybe some, some service or brand that I use anyway, so then when we have got a collaboration with such it always feels very natural and not hard in any way." Artist 6

The data also suggests that when an artist is a brand user or a fan the collaboration might also begin so that the artist approaches the brand, and this can also affect the financial compensation similarly to the value-based motives:

"Then again like with [some brand] it is like, fuck [this product] is the coolest ever, you know I'm so hyped about it. That I don't care what you pay as long as I like, get [the product]." Artist 2

5.2.4 Human brand-based motives

The human brand-based motives refer to factors that benefit the artist brand such as visibility, networking and new opportunities.

Visibility from a marketing collaboration was seen as a beneficial factor because it can lead to e.g., increased music consumption or provide new opportunities:

"Consumer can't really evaluate the effect that visibility has. Consumer usually reacts when she/he starts to get annoyed and then the feedback from visibility is usually negative. That rarely anyone says that hey how nice that you are at our bus stops. But then again it does increase the quantitative consumption and again those, again more opportunities arise overall to act on the music field." Artist 1

One of the artists also described that visibility as a motive changes depending on the phase of the career. This means that in the beginning you accept more collaborations because it results in visibility. Then when the popularity grows it becomes more about selecting the best ones from all the offered collaborations as well as avoiding overexposure:

"It requires hell of a lot of work [...] even after 10 years there are moments when people are like what is this thing. And that like motivates you, that you want to bring out the brand and the band. [...] But when the brand begins to be bigger, then you can start choosing the spots more." Artist 2

Networking was seen as an important result of doing marketing collaborations and the quality of it is perceived to be linked to the reputation of the artist:

“Finland is a very small country, and you don’t need to do many... whether it is a gig or a television job or a brand collaboration so then on that field... usually, similarly to to producers, also marketing managers know each other [...] and when you do few times you already have a reputation on that field. And the reputation can be good or bad and [...] in my opinion it’s related to kind of your personal performance in life in general that you want to do them well. That you want to have a good reputation there [...] It felt good [in a collaboration] to give a bit more than what they expect to get. And that is how the networking happens and then the opportunities arise.” Artist 1

New opportunities such as new songs, gigs, collaborations etc. were also seen as one of the benefits of marketing collaborations and as a result of increased visibility and successful networking:

“The collaborations have made it possible for us to make songs that like, if we have wanted to use some producers, composers, something... sample some things, those couldn’t have been done without the collaboration. That it has also given us kind of a broader palette to like try everything.” Artist 3

“Well in general I think it’s good for artists to work with these collaboration partners as much as possible and network and all these like collaborations or collaboration beginnings are always the kind that can later result in a gig or something so... That like knowing people is really important on this industry, that you have big circles and you like give everyone a chance to discuss collaborations among other things.” Artist 3

5.2.5 Company related motives

The company related motives refer to the relationship between the artist and the company: mutual benefits (win-win), results, comprehensive collaborations, and the duration. The data suggests that in fact the benefits of a co-branding relationship can be a motive for artists to participate and can affect their decision-making when considering collaborations because then the collaborations are found more inspiring and beneficial for the artist brand as well.

One of the found main reasons for artists to do marketing collaborations was mutual benefits, meaning that artists consider such collaborations as win-win for both their artist brand and corporate brand:

“At its best they like lift each other, that those brands both gain from it. That kind of if we think hypothetically on an example level that a sneaker brand collaborates with a band then in the best-case scenario it is just like for the band it is seen like wow, they are collaborating with them that it serves them and maybe even lifts the bands brand value that they have been seen as a big significant band by this kind of

player [...] And then kind of at its best it works the other way as well that the sneaker brand gets the street credibility and that sort of approval from the culture creators and such. That at its best it works just like this that it works both ways.” Artist 6

“With these collaborations you can somehow like build the album thing as well, that you know when our album comes out then we put out [a collaboration ad that also promotes the music] [...] at the same time or you know something. With those you can like build them both [...].” Artist 2

The data suggests that the results of the collaborations can also be identified as a motive which further supports the win-win type of relationship. This means that artists are motivated by good results and most of them underlined that in order for them to consider a collaboration as successful it needs to benefit the company. This also reflects a high work ethic when it comes to marketing collaborations:

“[That collaboration] was fun to do plus that it like hit the target very well. Like sales wise, the sales of the product, so the sales curves went up big time after the collaboration that we did [...]. And just that you could tell that both won which is usually the object in those, that both feel good afterwards.” Artist 4

“Even though you would get money, in my opinion it is still a bad collaboration that if it doesn’t really kind of benefit the company on any level or if the only benefit is that you get money then I think it is pretty pointless.” Artist 5

Most of the artists mentioned that they are more motivated when the collaboration is comprehensive, and they have the opportunity to be a part of creating the campaigns and the power to discuss and influence the outcome instead of only giving a face to an advertisement:

“It would be nice to do the kind of collaboration things where you can also influence, that it is not just that you go somewhere, and someone just tells you what to do. That it would be, you want to do the kind where you can also influence and be a part of let’s say brainstorming how it could be done.” Artist 5

“At its best it is like that there is good dialogue, and the things are really almost done together and even brainstormed together.” Artist 6

The long duration of the collaborations was also mentioned as an important factor as well as a way for an artist to avoid overexposure:

“Our opinion has always been that we would rather do long-term collaborations, that would continue let’s say for a year or else or then with some brand, year after year which we have had a couple like more

long-term ones which have been very nice in that sense that it has been consistent, that the hat in your head doesn't change every year or the car you drive or else." Artist 6

6 DISCUSSION

This final chapter recaps what has been done and why, discusses the main empirical findings of this study and mirrors them back to the literature review. Managerial implications, possible limitations, and avenues for further research are also included in this chapter.

The main reason for choosing this topic was twofold. First, the topic was perceived as extremely current due to companies investing increasingly more money on marketing collaborations with celebrities or influencers, changes in the music industry, further affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and on the field of marketing where more efficient ways to reach consumers are needed if companies want to stand out less intrusively from the advertising clutter. Second, to extend the research on celebrity marketing by investigating the celebrity perspective on marketing collaborations with companies which remains rather unexplored.

The aim of this study was to empirically explore artists' experiences of brand-artist marketing collaborations and thus gain a better understanding and more knowledge about the topic for both artists and companies. This was attained by answering the research questions: 1) How do Finnish rap artists consider brand collaborations in terms of their own artist brand? and 2) What kind of motives do Finnish rap artists have for brand collaborations? This was done by interviewing six Finnish rap artists who shared their thoughts on the topic. This study extends the consumer and company focused research on co-branding and celebrity endorsements by exploring these collaborations from the celebrity perspective and as a mutually beneficial co-branding alliance between a corporate brand and a human brand where the gap in existing research was identified. This improves the understanding of the management and formation of such collaborations.

The findings indicate first of all that the importance of marketing collaborations for artists has grown and become an integral part of the artist job. This is mainly due to the changes in the music industry but also due to Covid-19 that has created major financial losses for artists. Second, the findings suggest that brand-artist brand collaborations should indeed be perceived and conducted as equal co-branding relationships between two brands. This is because artists consider themselves as human brands, they possess brand properties and are increasingly more strategically and professionally managed. This is also reinforced by the findings that artists value a relationship that is personal, includes dialogue and where they have the power to influence the outcomes and be included in creating the campaigns instead of only selling their face or visibility. Third, this study offers interesting findings regarding social media which was perceived as both a valuable opportunity for an artist brand and marketing but also somewhat as a risk when it comes to collaborations with companies. The results suggest that artists separate themselves from social media influencers, that the artist social media account might not be the preferred channel for third party advertising for all artists and that overexposure in social media is seen as a potential risk for the

artist brand. Finally, this study identified five categories of motives to be significant in terms of the artist decision-making when it comes to marketing collaborations: financial, value-based, personal, human brand-based and company related. These findings imply that money indeed is not the only motive for artists to collaborate even though it is an important source of income.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the consumer and company focused research on co-branding, human brands, celebrity endorsements, social media, and influencer marketing.

This study supports the earlier findings that today's rap artists can be considered as human brands because they possess brand properties, they can be professionally managed (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Thomson, 2006) and they utilize branding strategies to promote themselves (Keel & Natarajan, 2012). The findings indicate that artists are increasingly managing their artist brand image e.g., by evaluating which brands/products they should choose to endorse, the positive and negative effects that collaborations might have on their artist brands and how to avoid overexposure which is in line with the existing literature (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Hence the suggestion that brand-artist collaborations should be considered and managed as co-branding strategies between two equal brands i.e., a corporate brand and a human brand whereas the former unilateral approach on celebrity endorsements may be outdated (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno & Lukas, 2007) is also supported. These findings naturally reinforce the argument that celebrity endorsement literature is not comprehensive enough to cover all strategies behind celebrity marketing (Ambroise et al., 2014; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Differences can be identified between the findings of this study and the previous literature on celebrity endorsement and similarities between the findings of this study and the co-branding strategies that support the co-branding approach. As mentioned, the existing celebrity endorsement literature is mainly focused on the impact of the endorsements and different selection strategies (Yang, 2018). In other words, how brands should seek to find and select the most effective celebrity endorser for their marketing purposes (Yang, 2018). Most of the celebrity endorsement theories also review celebrity endorsement as a one-way process where a celebrity endorses a product, contributes positive meanings and associations to the brand and gets financially compensated (Ambroise et al., 2014). However, the results of this study indicate quite the opposite as the artists would rather be more involved and call for also other reasons to collaborate than money. This is more in line with the co-branding approach which suggests that the relationship is instead considered as a strategic partnership that is jointly managed, benefits both individual brands mutually, generates equity (Motion et

al., 2003), results in a better fit between the participants and leads to more successful outcomes (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). As the results of this study show, mutual benefits and the possibility to influence were both identified as motives to collaborate as well as considered as a part of a successful relationship. In fact, the artists' descriptions of a good relationship with a company matches the description of a co-branding alliance quite well. In this context it could be argued that the benefits that emerge from considering and managing marketing collaborations as co-branding strategies serve also as a motive for artists to participate and that they prefer this type of alliances instead of the traditional one-way employment where they contribute their face and get financially compensated.

This study also draws attention to some interesting findings regarding celebrity related social media and influencer marketing literature which has been highlighted as an important trend in celebrity marketing (Rocha et al., 2019). This study supports the grouping of celebrities to traditional celebrities and non-traditional online celebrities such as social media influencers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020) as artists who are considered as a part of the former group seem to personally separate themselves from influencers. But as mentioned, the line between traditional celebrities and influencers has constantly become quite blurry (Schouten et al., 2020) and it is often left quite unclear whether the term influencer refers to traditional celebrities as well or only social media influencers. Hence this study suggests that keeping these groups clearly separated could be more beneficial. In addition, according to previous research consumers seem to perceive social media influencers as a more credible source of information in social media compared to traditional celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). At the same time the results of this study suggest that not all artists consider their social media accounts as the preferred channel for third party marketing but rather for promoting their own music. Should celebrity related social media marketing focus more on the match between the type of a celebrity, i.e., a traditional celebrity or a social media influencer, and the channel? Do different types of celebrities have different levels of credibility and authenticity on different channels?

Regarding the partner selection strategies, the results indicate that there is one common selection factor that scholars, practitioners, and celebrities agree on: the brand match. From the four selection models, artists seem to give much attention to the Match-Up Hypothesis which recommends that a congruent relationship between the celebrity and the brand/product needs to exist in order for the endorsement to be effective and that the celebrity is perceived to have also other motives besides money (Erdogan, 1999). The co-branding perspective also suggests that the collaboration process should start by securing that the values of the partner brands match (Motion et al., 2003) and the practitioner-based studies also indicate that the process in advertising agencies starts by evaluating which celebrity would match the campaign idea, the product characteristics (Erdogan & Baker, 2001), the brand and the target audience (Erdogan et al., 2001). As the results show artists seem to evaluate the brand match as a part of managing their artist brand and their personal values were also identified as one of the motives

for collaborations. Similarities between the results and the Source Models were not identified in this study. This is understandable given the fact that the Source Models have been researched strongly from the brand perspective based on consumer perceptions. The results suggest the artists are more focused on evaluating the big picture when considering collaborations with brands. This is more in line with the previous suggestion, regarding the Match-up Hypotheses, that it should rather focus on matching the entire image between the celebrity, brand, and the target audience instead of individual characteristics like attractiveness and credibility (Erdogan, 1999).

One of the main theoretical contributions of this study is to provide information on the motives that artists have for brand collaborations where the existing research is more limited. Brand managers have outlined that a common motive for entering co-branding relationships with another corporate brand is to stay relevant and borrow image value from the co-branding partner (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). The management literature has suggested that companies attend collaborations to utilize the resources of the partner company or to retain and develop the existing resources by combining them with the partner company resources (Das & Teng, 2000). Here some similarities can be detected regarding the human brand-based motives which referred to the factors that benefit the artist brand such as visibility, networking, and new opportunities.

The previous literature also touches the celebrity motives but only from the angle of perceived motives. It suggests that if the endorsing celebrity is perceived to be motivated by other factors besides money such as genuinely liking or using the brand/product that has a significant positive impact on brand attitude and vice versa; if money is perceived as the only motive the impact might be negative (Bergkvist et al., 2016; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Here the results support the previous findings as artists seem to agree that endorsing a brand purely because of money is not ideal and that it feels natural to endorse a product that they already use or like.

Many similarities were also identified between the artist motives and the previous research on motives from the fields of athlete sponsorship and fashion blogging. The results of this study support the previous findings that the decision-making is based on rational and non-rational factors and contain tangible and intangible as well as direct and indirect benefits (Dumont, 2016). Similarly, to athletes, artists mentioned that the financial compensation and free products are an obvious reason to collaborate, that they value a direct and personal relationship with companies and that it is important that their values match with the company values. Also, fashion bloggers mentioned that they consider ethic principals and that genuinely liking the brand is an important factor when selecting a collaboration partner (Noppari & Hautakangas, 2012). The main difference thus seems to be the human-brand related motives which implies that the benefits that marketing collaborations might offer to human brands seems to be a new finding.

6.2 Managerial implications

The managerial purpose of this study was to provide information on how to develop, manage and leverage brand-artist marketing collaborations which are a big cost for companies. Especially regarding what is the artist perspective on collaborations with brands and what are the artist motives for entering collaborations which could result in a better match and help companies to develop their collaboration offers in the future. The findings of this study also help to answer the question what the possibility for a company is to sign the preferred celebrity (Miciak & Shanklin, 1994; Zamudio, 2016) by providing information about the motives that were identified to be significant in terms of the artist decision-making. Hence, this study provides several practical implications for companies and brand managers.

Starting with how to develop. Drawing from the conclusion that celebrities should be considered as human brands and celebrity endorsements as equal co-branding relationships, brand-artist marketing collaborations should be developed more into an equal collaboration between two brands and sharing of core competencies instead of one-way employment. This could result in better matches and the artists would be more motivated to collaborate if they have more freedom to be involved, influence and share their ideas from the start.

The results of this study provide several implications on how these collaborations could be managed. First, one of the key findings is that artists consider themselves as musicians, not as influencers. As already mentioned, these concepts seem to overlap in many contexts but here the same applies for practice that brand managers should separate artists and influencers as well as manage and evaluate them differently. For example, the results imply that unlike social media influencers, artists might not prefer their artist social media account as the main channel for third party advertising but more for content related to their own music. Here brand managers could e.g., rather focus their artist featured social media content on their own brand account or on other channels. The results also imply that in the context of social media, other ways to evaluate the quality of an account is needed instead of focusing purely on the number of followers. Second, as the results indicate, artists indeed have other motives for collaborations besides money even though financial compensation is a big and an important factor as the collaborations are considered as a part of the job which is how an artist makes a living. What can be drawn from this to practice is that there are other motives as well e.g., that the collaboration benefits the artist brand mutually and motives which might even affect the compensation such as personal values, social responsibility or an artist being a brand user or a fan. As the results show, there needs to be also other reasons behind the collaboration besides money. This could be taken into consideration when designing collaboration offers for artists. For example, by proposing joint advertising where the campaign advertises both the brand and the music of the artist or by identifying potential artists among the brand users or fans. Third, the results suggests that artists are more motivated to collaborate for longer periods of time which helps them to avoid overexposure.

This suggests that brand managers could consider long-term collaborations instead of short term which could result in mutual benefits and help to commit artists to collaborations. Fourth, the results indicate that artists value a personal and direct relationship with collaboration companies. This suggests that brand managers should encourage dialogue and maintain personal relationships with artists.

Finally finishing with how to leverage. The results imply that artists are more inspired when companies are more flexible and willing to also challenge their brand and operations to create something new and different. Hence, brand managers should increasingly adopt the mentioned “Kill your darlings”- kind of approach and leverage the creativity, that the artists already possess, more instead of only buying visibility from a celebrity. Including artists in the design process and giving them more freedom could result in more an authentic and natural way of marketing for the target group that the brand is trying to reach by collaborating with a specific artist. Leveraging the creativity of artists could result in completely new outcomes and opportunities for companies.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study is not without limitations but provides a good starting point for future research. The qualitative nature of this study and the rather small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. A first step could be a stronger focus on a certain area of this study. For example, one direction could be to use quantitative research to test the identified motives and their interrelations (see Figure 2, p. 42) to discover the generalizability and whether e.g., different motive profiles can be identified. A qualitative research also allows the researcher to be subjective which means that the study is inevitably affected by the researcher up to some extent. In this study the researcher tried to remain as objective as possible by describing the research process as detailed and transparently as possible and by providing comprehensive citations to support the results that were drawn from the collected data.

Some of the limitations arise from the narrow nature of the sample and the country specific context. This study had a rather narrow focus on rap artists as celebrities. It could also be worthwhile to include artists from other music genres to gain more information specifically about the music industry or to include other types of traditional celebrities as well such as actors etc. In this context future research could also notice that there might be a need for a clearer separation between artists or even all traditional celebrities and social media influencers when conducting studies on celebrities and influencer marketing as these two seem to overlap in the existing academic literature especially regarding social media collaborations. The future research could e.g., investigate the brand collaborations in social media focused on music artists or other traditional celebrities. The findings are also limited to the Finnish context which gives the study a culturally

specific nature. Future research could conduct this study in other countries which would allow cross-cultural comparisons.

Finally, as this study identified that value-based motives such as personal values and social responsibility could be significant in terms of the amount of financial compensation of marketing collaborations, whether it also works the other way around remained unexplored. Hence an interesting avenue for future research could be to explore whether a bigger financial compensation could affect the personal values i.e., are celebrities willing to compromise their values for a bigger compensation.

It is also necessary to add that this study was conducted during the global Covid-19 pandemic which inevitably affected the results as it has already been outlined. It could provide interesting opportunities for comparison if this study was duplicated after the pandemic to see whether the changes are permanent or not.

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APPENDIX 1 Interview protocol

- 1) Minkälaisia markkinointiyhteistöitä olet tehnyt? Mainitse muutama esimerkki, jotka ovat innostaneet tai motivoineet eniten. (What kind of marketing collaborations have you done? Mention few examples which have been the most exciting or motivating for you?)
- 2) Koetko että olet artistina henkilöbrändi? (Do you consider yourself as a human brand as an artist?)
 - a. Onko sinulla tietoinen brändistrategia? (Do you have a conscious brand strategy?)
 - b. Minkälaisia arvoja tai mielikuvia uskot, että sinuun yhdistetään artistina tai musiikkisi kautta? (What kind of values or meanings do you believe are associated with you as an artist or with your music?)
- 3) Miksi teet markkinointiyhteistöitä? (Why do you participate in marketing collaborations?)
- 4) Minkälaisia riskejä yhteistöihin sisältyy sinulle tai omalle artistibrändillesi? (What kind of risks do marketing collaborations contain for you or for your artist brand?)
 - a. Millä tavalla arvioit niitä etukäteen? (How do you evaluate them beforehand?)
 - b. Vaikuttavatko ne jotenkin päätöksentekooosi? (Do they somehow affect your decision-making?)
- 5) Minkälaisia toteutuneita hyötyjä yhteistöistä on ollut sinulle tai omalle artistibrändillesi? (What kind of actual benefits have you or your artist brand gained from collaborations?)
 - a. Mitä näistä pidät tärkeimpinä? (Which one of these do you consider as most important?)
- 6) Entä minkälaisia toteutuneita haittoja yhteistöistä on ollut sinulle tai omalle artistibrändillesi? (How about what kind of actual disadvantages have followed you or your artist brand from collaborations?)
- 7) Millä tavalla arvioit yhteistöiden mahdollisia hyötyjä ja haittoja yhteistyön aikana tai sen jälkeen? (How do you evaluate the actual benefits and disadvantages during the collaborations or after?)
- 8) Miten valitset yritykset/brändit, joiden kanssa teet yhteistöitä? (How do you choose the companies/brands you collaborate with?)
- 9) Oletko koskaan kieltäytynyt markkinointiyhteistyöstä? (Have you ever refused from a marketing collaboration?)

a. Miksi? (Why?)

- 10) Millainen on mielestäsi hyvä yhteistyösuhde? Entä huono? (What kind of relationship with a company/brand would you describe as good? How about bad?)
- 11) Millä tavalla koet että päätös- ja vaikutusvalta on jakautunut yhteistyösuhhteissa sinun ja yritysten kesken? (How do you consider that the decision-making power and influence is divided between you and companies?)
- 12) Toivoisitko yrityksiltä yhteistöiden suhteen jotain, mikä ei nyt mielestäsi toteudu? (Is there something that you would wish from companies regarding collaborations that is not happening now?)
- 13) Oletko maininnut brändejä omissa sanoituksissasi tai sisällyttänyt niitä musiikkivideoihisi? (Have you mentioned brands in your lyrics or have those been included in your music videos?)
 - a. Oliko kyseessä sovittu yhteistyö? (Has that been an agreed collaboration?)
 - b. Jos ei, niin minkälaisia motiiveja taustalla on ollut? (If not, what motivated you to mention them?)
- 14) Onko koronapandemia jollain tavalla muuttanut suhtautumistasi markkinointiyhteistöihin? (Has the current Covid-19 pandemic somehow changed your thoughts or attitude towards marketing collaborations?)
- 15) Tuleeko lopuksi mieleen vielä jotain aiheeseen liittyvää mitä haluaisit lisätä? (Is there anything else regarding the topic that you would like to add?)