

The Brand Captain of the Theatre

A research on the branding of theatres by using the director as an endorser

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ABSTRACT

This study researches the implications of using the theatre's director as an endorser of the brand. A brand captain is the face of the theatre that represents the brand. Creating a brand captain can give an identity to the theatre, which prevents the organization from being anonymous. Attention should be paid for vanity and bad publicity, as the personification of the brand carries risks. Professionals in the field give their opinion of the pros and cons of the implementation of the brand captain in a theatre.

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This report is a result of a research on the branding of theatres conducted as a project in completion of the Master's programme. This research is done as part of the Master Cultural Economics & Cultural Entrepreneurship at the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, part of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Dr. F.J.C. Brouwer has been my supervisor.

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Summary

This study researches the implications of using the theatre's director as an endorser of the brand. To create a relationship with the audience, the audience should have faith in the continuous quality offered by the theatre. Shaping an identity and building on the trust of the audience in supplying a decent quality is a real challenge. As receptive theatres do not have a steady company to build their brand on, they have to look for alternatives. The personnel of the theatre, especially the director, can offer the faith the audience will have in the quality of a programme. The director is the face of the organisation, and communicates through the brand to the outside world.

In this study we focus on the influence of the director of the organisation in the marketing of this brand. The director will function as an endorser, someone the public can relate to, but will come from the organisation itself. Endorsers are normally famous people from outside the organisation who attach their names to the organisation for a period of time. The director comes from within. During this research the term brand captain is developed to address the issue. A brand captain is the face of the theatre that represents the brand. Creating a brand captain can give an identity to the theatre, which prevents the organisation from being anonymous.

Besides a data analysis of theatre's websites to create an image of the role of the director in current social media usage, I conduct interviews with four theatre professionals. They give their view on the role of the director in the branding process. By combining the theory, online analysis and the interviews I can conclude that attention should be paid for vanity and bad publicity, as the personification of the brand carries risks. To build a brand, the theatre will gain from implementing a brand captain, as this will give the audience an image to hold on to. This study is based on analysis and interviews; therefore one should take into account the subjectivity of the research.

For further research I recommend the extension of the study on brand captains. The term is new, but promising in the cultural world.

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Introduction

When thinking of theatre, we think of the art that creates performances in front of a live audience. Theatre incorporates not only 'general acting' but also dance, stand up comedy, musicals, and so on. But theatres in the sense of this research focuses on the building in which the performance takes place. Theatre buildings have played a large role over time, as even the Greeks and Romans used theatres to come together to enjoy art. The theatres did not only invite for an artistic experience, but also a social gathering. People came to spend time experiencing the building, the people and the atmosphere. Going to the theatre was seen as a night out, an experience, rather than service one can buy.

A few big players we are all familiar with dominate the theatre world in the Netherlands. When you would ask a Dutch person who incorporates the image of Dutch theatre the expected responds will be "Joop van den Ende" or the name of their local city theatre. The large Dutch theatre companies as the Ro Theater, Toneelgroep Amsterdam and Toneelgroep De Appel accumulate some fame and recognition. Names of famous actors and actresses, as Pierre Bokma, Huub Stapel, Pia Douwes and Carice van Houten ring a bell to most of the Dutch people. Striking is that people either associate theatre with the name of the building, the director, a company or a famous actor, but hardly with dance and location theatre.

Interesting to see is that in the Netherlands, the theatre culture differs from the culture in other countries when it comes to the buildings and companies.

Outside the Netherlands, theatres incorporate their own theatre group, the company. For us, a theatre is the building, the place that hosts the external groups. Dutch theatres are mostly receptive. This means that Dutch theatres do not have their own actors and plays, but they stage a new group every night. In this way, the theatres accommodate for groups the way cinemas cater for movies.

From a theatre's perspective, not having your own theatre group asks for a different approach than theatres in other countries. The group, the producer if we continue the parallel of the cinema, creates a play, and the theatre, the buyer, decides whether this play will be showed. The theatre, as an organisation, determines the

program, and therefore the 'colour' of the offer. This means that the theatre can decide whether or not to program musicals, dance, famous plays or relatively unknown groups. The program forms a large part of the message the theatre sends towards the audience.

What does it mean for your identity as a theatre when you do not have your own plays and group? Hosting a different group, and maybe a different genre, every night, means a different quality. The taste of the audience needs to be adjusted to the various groups that enter the theatre. Shaping an identity and building on the trust of the audience in supplying a decent quality is a real challenge. The Ro Theater in Rotterdam took this challenge as a reason to incorporate its own group into the theatre. Instead of staging the company's plays in the Schouwburg Rotterdam only, the Ro Theater choose to perform some of their plays in their own theatre. By doing so, the Ro Theater attaches the quality of the theatre company to the theatre as a building.

Receptive theatres cannot simply build up a reputation by the actors, actresses and writers they employed, as the Ro theatre did. The program, which is part of their identity, is changing and flexible. The theatre needs to look for a stable factor they can build their identity on. For a building, a host of performances, this needs to be found somewhere in the experience the audience receives when attending a performance. The theatre receives visitors before, during and after they watch a play, performed by an external company. During the time the visitors are inside, the theatre can establish its own identity towards the audience.

Experiencing the identity

Let's see what a night in a theatre actually mean for the audience. Imagine that you are planning to go to the theatre, as the preparation is the first step of the experience. The name of the theatre is your first clue: what do you associate this name with? A theatre that is called the '*Stadsschouwburg Utrecht*' (city theatre Utrecht) brings about a different feeling than the '*DeLaMar*' theatre. The Stadsschouwburg Utrecht will be associated with the city of Utrecht, while the DeLaMar theatre remains 'free' from correlations with a location. Without making a

value judgement, we can state that these names raise various ideas on the identity of the theatre.

Beside their name, an impression is made by the way the theatre sells its tickets. Most, large, theatres send out free playbills to give you an impression of the season's program. Take for our example the playbill of the Luxor theatre in Rotterdam, which produces a small guide called '*Luxor op zak*', meaning the Luxor in your pocket. Six famous Dutch artists, singers, stand up comedians and so on, smile to you on the cover of the booklet. The playbill is colourful, full of photos of celebrities performing at the Luxor, and neatly organised by date and genre. The director of the Luxor, Rob Wiegman, writes an introduction on what his theatre has to offer this season. Wiegman himself is featured in the same manner as the artists throughout the booklet. The playbill can be the first introduction to the theatre for prospective visitors. Once you have made your choice on the performance to visit, it is time for the night of the performance.

So, on the night of the performance, what can a theatre offer to build on the continuousness of the experience the audience is given? First, the building itself is a steady factor in the identity of the theatre. Is it a modern building, or does it have a more classical look? What are the facilities the theatre offers? Is the building spacious or more intimate? The visitors spend time in the foyer and the café before the performance, during the break and after the performance. What this space looks like influences the image the theatre expels.

Although the name of the theatre, the playbill and the building do determine a part of the identity of the theatre, these are all material features. For the public to be able to identify with the theatre, they look for the persons related to the theatre. In the case of a receptive theatre, there are no artists to relate to. Other people might be people related to the theatre, as the public, patrons or employees. A theatre has a certain public, or target group, to which new audiences have to relate before they connect to the brand. Also the patrons, people giving financial support to the theatre, could be a subject to relate to. For this study on branding, the focus lays on the factors within the theatre itself, which narrows to search for a stable factor down to the employees. The people representing the employees, the director,

is the most useful for the research, as this person leads the theatre and therefore the brand.

The public can identify with the director, who is featured in the playbill and in the news. Interviews on the theatre and articles written about the theatre often feature the director as spokesperson. As a theatre needs to build an identity on a changeable program, the director can function as the 'face and body' of the company. Identities have to do with selling a product, so before investigating the director as a face of the theatre, we have to specify what makes a theatre different than other products when it comes to its marketing.

Economics of theatres

The economics of the theatre work differently than other goods and products. For regular products the supply is adjusted to the demand. You cater what is asked for. In case of receptive theatres the supply differs each season according to the program the theatre has composed. Well before the start of a new theatre season, the theatre groups, musicals, dance groups, magicians and so on present themselves to the theatre directors and programmers. They have in mind what they want to produce, but sell it to the theatres first. The theatres obtain a concept, which they believe is valuable and suitable for their program. The concept has to match the identity of the theatre, and fit the audience they would like to reach. Even when the playbill is made, and the tickets are up to sales, the production might not be finished yet. The theatre purchases an idea, a concept of a performance, and thereupon sells this to its audience.

As selling something that is hardly finished sounds risky, selling the theatre performance always comes with a high uncertainty. A theatre performance is an *experience good*, which means you cannot judge the quality until you have consumed the good. This implies that you cannot rely on previous experiences, as the performance is unique every night, and we have to experience before appointing a value. Whether you like something or not has to do with personal taste and the formation of your taste. The theatre sells you a concept in which you have to believe you will enjoy. We can even state that the theatre sells the audience a promise of

quality. They have chosen this performance as suitable and qualified for their theatre, and the visitor should trust this value judgement.

The most important feature in which the theatres differ from regular goods is this quality uncertainty. You cannot search for information on the quality as you can for other goods, as vacuum cleaners and watches. There are intermediaries who tackle some of this lack of information by writing reviews. Journalists write their reviews on theatre performances *after* having experienced one single or a series of performances, which never will be experienced in the same way again. The theatre itself does a large part of the judgement of quality. The audience acquires a certain taste and gathers experiences in a theatre. He or she might find the various performances seen at this theatre of high value and acknowledges the theatre as a good indicator of quality performances. Although each performance is different, as we speak of a receptive theatre, the visitors grow to trust the theatre's reputation.

For the identity of a theatre, the reputation as a well functioning judge of quality is highly important. Theatres sell a promise of quality, and their reputation is the only benchmark the audience has (if we believe intermediaries have a minor influence). A theatre will benefit greatly from a trustworthy identity to give the audience a promise they will only host quality performances. The reputation of a theatre is the main marketing tool they have to offer.

Coming back to the factors that can contribute to the formation of the theatre's identity, people can feel the need to identify themselves with a theatre, or a brand. As the continuous matters within a receptive theatre are mostly material, we tend to reach to the persons to build an identity on. Continuousness is also important in the feeling and programme that is offered, which is hard to direct by the theatre. In building a brand, the theatre will focus on the material features to guide the immaterial values. If we need to trust a theatre to make proper quality judgements, we might feel the urge to know more about this theatre than the name and the building. Even though some people generate a lot of value from the purely material features, as the building, the identification happens mostly with people. A person is someone you could relate to, and identify yourself with. Therefore this study focuses on the person to identify the brand with. The theatre, in the sense of marketing, is a brand that needs to build up a relationship of trust with the

customers, the audience. Theatres can use their director to make the brand personalised.

By using a person as the identity of the theatre, the theatre turns to a stable factor within their organisation. This does not mean the director will stay with the organisation in definite, but for the time being the director will work hard to become a leading part of a stable brand. The theatre hosts various performances from artists that are not attached to their organisation, but who work on a project base. As the audience needs to find their way to the theatre, the marketing needs to focus on one steady part of the organization that resembles continuous quality. Even though the program changes, the quality remains the same. The theatre wants the audience to know that they can trust them and their value judgements when it comes to taste. Not the individual performances determine the quality, but the fact that it is accepted within the program of this certain theatre offers a pre selection that reassures the audience that the product will be of high quality.

We also see this happening on a smaller scale. When it comes to small cultural organisations, as pop stages, the program differs every night, but the person behind the program, the programmer, remains the same. The person is the steady factor behind a notion of quality where he or she has access to a certain level of knowledge. When the organisation is small, people will get to know the person in charge of the program they love. They trust his or her judgement on artists to stage.

Quality formation

An organisation wants the audience to have faith in their offered quality without examining every single product they bring to the market. If we look at the economic market, we see this happening with the consumers' faith in brands. If you tend to be pleased about the quality of Nike shoes, you are less reluctant to purchase their shorts. When you always shop at Albert Heijn, and you are pleased about the quality you offer, you will have more faith in their products than in the ones of every other supermarket. When we think about the supermarket, we almost have the same trust in quality as theatres. The supermarket offers different products from different brands in one store, whereas the theatre offers different plays from different groups on one stage. The brand, the supermarket or theatre, determines the choices made

by the consumer. A brand implies loyalty from the consumer towards their products, even if they change the composition of the supply.

When it comes to brand loyalty, a lot of brands use a person to be the face of the company. The Joop van den Ende Theater Producties is directly related to Joop van den Ende and Apple is associated with Steve Jobs. People know the brand, and associate a person with this brand. Although not all organizations have a spokesperson we all know, it seems to be an ongoing trend that they do. How does this branding of a person work? Is it a coincidence that we know the person behind the company, or is it a well-considered marketing strategy? The reception of a brand, which is a trademark, is closely related to the reputation of an organization. A reputation is the “estimation in which a person or thing is held” (dictionary.com). The brand and the person representing this brand can be of great value for the reputation of the organization.

The reputations among the various theatres in the Netherlands differ greatly. Some are viewed as traditional, others contemporary, and some as easy to access, while others aim for a small niche market. How does brand of the theatre influence the reputation of the organization as a whole? I will consider the theatre’s continuous divisions – the building, the name and the director – as the theatre’s trademark, its brand. The ‘taste’ of a theatre in having a consistent programme is a non-material feature influencing the trust of the public. For measuring the manipulability of the brand, the theatre has the ability to stabilise the building, name and director, but the public judges the continuousness of the programme. Although the term ‘brand’ is not often used within the cultural world, it is a valuable contribution to our understanding of different reputations, different audiences and different atmospheres within the theatres. Receptive theatres cope with a changing program and only a few stable factors to build their identity on. How is the director used as a brand to give an identity to the theatre?

Implementing theories from outside the field will help to gain knowledge and understanding on building a brand. Theatres may implement the strategy of relating the director to the brand. How does the audience respond to this movement? Do they recognise the value the theatre wants to exude? As the quality uncertainty is an issue receptive theatres are dealing with even more than theatres with their own

artists, the director as a brand can form a solution. Is it possible to stabilise the quality of a receptive theatre?

To generate a stable identity to the audience, the theatres build up a brand. This brand means a level of trust of the audience in the capability of the theatre to value quality and program plays to suit the audience's preferences. As receptive theatres do not have an own company, the director is one of the continuous factors within the organisation. Building a brand on a stable factor makes generating an identity approachable. How can a receptive theatre build a brand by using the director as an endorser?

1. Theoretical framework

To study the impact of using the director of a theatre as the brand for the organisation, economic theories are needed to gather an understanding. Although the idea of applying standard economic theory into the cultural world is not the most beloved activity, theories related to this subject cannot be found in cultural economics (yet). We therefore have to go beyond one's depths by finding the right economic theories to apply within the field of theatres. By doing so, we might be able to find a valuable relation between the branding of theatres and the economic theory behind branding. Theories on the specificity of the marker for theatres will also be addressed, to gather an understanding in the case we are dealing with.

The economic world in which the theatres are functioning is one with a large amount of competitors. People have a lot to choose from, which asks of the theatre that it finds its unique selling point. The theatre will form its own identity within the organisation, often led by the management. The organisational identity is related to the organisational culture, the internal view of the employees and management on the organisation's vision (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). As Hatch and Schultz (1997) state: "who we are is reflected in what we are doing and how others interpret who we are and what we are doing" (p: 361). Besides the organisational identity, which is internally, the organisation relies on the reception by others, "how others interpret" (p: 361). This is what Hatch and Schultz (1997) call the organisational image.

1.1 Image and reputation

The organisational image shapes the message the organisation is showing to the outside world. The image is actually just a part of the communication, which leads to the reputation of the organisation. The reputation incorporates the beliefs and values of an organisation (Dowling, 2006). For the cultural field, reputations have a large value. Firstly, the environment in which the theatre market is based suffers from incomplete information. The visit to the theatre is an experience good, which implies that you cannot judge the value on beforehand. You can do research in the shape of reviews and advices, but a play is an experience that only happens once. No

performance is ever the same, and cannot be rated until it is experienced. When you do not know the pay-offs previous to the purchase the firm's reputation becomes important (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988). You cannot test the product, so you will have to rely on the reputation.

Besides the problem of incomplete information, the judgement of value of theatre performances are difficult due to the fact that the performance is not a product, but a service. An experience is the actual term for the performance, but it is a service in the case that is not tangible. In a service market, reputation-building is important (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988). The values and beliefs that you have, need to be in accordance to the reputation of the theatre hosting the performance. In this market the value of a good reputation should not be underestimated (Lewis, 2001). It determines mostly the competitive advantage one organisation could have over the other. As we will see when talking about the reputation story, a mix of behaviour, communication and expectation shapes the reputation.

1.1.1 Reputation story

From the points of view of the organisation's stakeholders, the reputation of a company can either be good or bad, or trustworthy or untrustworthy (Dowling, 2006). To build a sustainable and stable reputation, Dowling (2006) argues that an organisation needs to have a corporate reputation story which displays the organisation's mission and morality. The figure below shows how the corporate story is built up and related to the reputations.



Figure 1.1 The Components of a Reputation Story (based on Dowling, 2006)

Figure 1.1 shows the elements of which a reputation story is built according to Dowling (2006). The core of the story is the relationship between the mission,

morality and modes of behaviour. The company might state certain values but if they do not practice what they preach, the story is worthless. The stakeholders judge the story with their value and beliefs, and if these correspond with the story, the corporate reputation is formed.

1.2 Reputations or brands?

So far, we have described the use of economic theories on reputations. A reputation is the extent to which we can identify with and appreciate an organization, based on common values (based on Dowling, 2006). The trust of the quality is an important feature for receptive theatres, as a changing program means a changing quality. A reputation can generate an assurance in the capacity of the director and the theatre to judge performances. According to Hetrick (2006) it is more accepted to use the term reputation within the non-profit world. Although this might be true, we are not doing this research to make friends within the non-profit world, but to find a useful theoretical framework to build our research on. Therefore, the question remains, whether the term reputation is better than brand or the other way around. As Hetrick (2006) indicates, the difference between reputations and brand often remain unclear. The terms are used in the same context and meaning, while they actually differ.

Dowling (2001) sets out a cause-and-effect model for reputation and brand.

The simplified model looks like shown below:

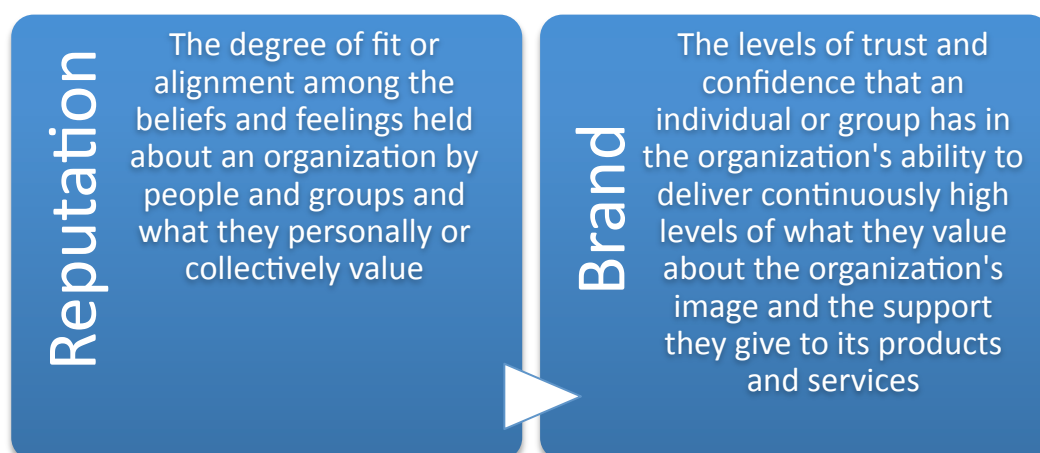


Figure 1.2 The relationship between reputations and brands (based on Dowling, 2001 and Hetrick, 2006)

A reputation focuses on the degree an organization suits to your beliefs and emotions. By studying the reputation of a theatre, we look at the feeling this theatre generates and if we can identify with what is given. Can we relate to the image the theatre is projecting? A brand is described as the level of trust people have in the quality the organisation delivers. This trust is based on the actions and services the organisation has offered before and whether this corresponds with the quality it is claiming to offer. The public decides for a brand to what extent they trust the organisation in doing what they promise. The confidence the customer has in the organisation to meet their commitments builds the brand. An organisation works for an identity, which may or may not suit the consumers' preferences. This is the reputation of the organisation. Taking it a step further, building on the organisation's reputation, lays the brand. The trust the customer has in the continuity of qualitative performances, and the ongoing compatibility with the values they share, creates a brand.

So why does economic theory mix up these two phenomena? Reputation and brand are often used in the same denotation. As we see in the use of reputation in for example Weigelt & Camerer (1988), the term reputation is used to describe the assets of trust and quality, which can generate future rents. The distinction between reputation and brand that Dowling (2001) however makes is the reputation as a premature stage of a brand. A reputation is the intended identity with certain values, and the brand the trust the customers have, based on this reputation, in a later stage. Hetrick (2006) speaks of the model of Dowling (figure 1.1) as a 'cause-and-effect' model. The reputation is what the organisation intends and sets up, the brand is what follows when they gather trust from the customer.

Hallawell (1999) mentioned the distinction between reputation and brand before Dowling did. He argues that reputation management is done from the firm's perspective and brand building happens from an audience perspective. This meaning that a reputation is given and made from the organisation to the public and the brand is how the public receives and values that what is given. A brand, Hallawell (1999) claims, is a set of associations in the mind of the consumer. The reputation is what is intended by the organisation, the brand is the trust the consumers have in

the continuous quality offered by the organisation. Building the brand, the trust, is therefore a major and important task for organisations. A brand gives the organisation the opportunity to generate various services or goods with one label, and having the same quality trusts of consumers in all of these offers. With one brand, more services have a quality 'stamp'.

For this research, we focus on the audience perspective on the theatre. Receptive theatres build on the trust of the audience in their knowledge to stage quality plays. The theatre might have a great set of values that correspond with those of the audience (the reputation), but the belief in quality (brand) is the important asset to commit the audience to the theatre. As mentioned earlier, the receptive theatres are dependent on some stable factors to build their identity on. How can they build a strong brand with the assets they have?

1.3 Use of branding

Different organisations require different forms of branding. Balmer (2003) identifies six corporate / transcorporate categorisations in the branding architecture. The final category he mentions, the supra category, is interesting for the branding of receptive theatres. This implies a brand that is incorporating products (or services) from another organisation into their brand. This is what receptive theatres do, when they stage plays from other organisations, companies, in their theatre and their program. The organisation itself is focusing its competences on the design, marketing, sales and branding; instead of the production. We see this happening outside the cultural world as well. As Olins (2000) states in the example of Ford and its long-term perspective: "Ford will not make, but will brand" (p:51). This means that Ford will outsource the production activities, but remains the 'arch' of the brand and products.

Balmer (2003) states that due to the outsourcing activities, in which the organisation is not producing, but branding, the organisations are grounded on a promise. They promise that the quality they purchase is good, and suitable to their image. As mentioned earlier, a brand is the trust of the consumer in the continuous quality of products and services (Dowling, 2001). By using goods that have been

produced by others, an organisation is simply lodging the goods into their brand, which is eventually sold. The basis of the organisation will be “more of a church than a business” (Balmer, 2003: 250). It is a house that makes a promise, not a place where goods are produced.

1.4 Brand building

Hallawell (1999) argues that building a strong brand is more important than a focus on the reputation. The audience needs to build on a positive set of associations related to the theatre. A brand has several features, according to Hallawell:

- Creating a strong sense of identity for staff / customers;
- Creating consistency across diverse products and services;
- Building a deposit account of goodwill to help it weather crises;
- Enabling credible extensions into new products, areas and sectors.

(Hallawell, 1999: 382)

For receptive theatres, the first and second assets of brands are very important. The theatre gives a whole package of an experience to the audience, such as the other visitors, the related services, and others involved. The identity tells a story, which the consumer can relate to. The brand is a junction of services and images that together form a whole the visitor identifies him or herself with. Although this is an important feature, for this study the importance of the brand also lies in the second asset: creating consistency across diverse products and services.

For brands that include a diverse range of products, as Nike, Unilever and Virgin, the consumer needs to have faith in the consistency of the quality of the products and services. Although music and flights do not require the same knowledge or skills to be produced, the consumer expects the same level of quality of goods sold by the same brand name. Various plays in the same theatre need to generate the same expectations and trust. No matter what theatre company is hosted in the theatre, they go by the same brand name, and thus the same level of quality.

Building a deposit account of goodwill is also important in running a successful receptive theatre. The theatre cannot program the same performances over and over, so it needs to extend its vision into programming new plays. Also, when the theatre books a play, the play is often not even finished yet. The theatre buys a concept that will stage in the coming season. The theatre is buying a promise of a quality play, and at the same time selling this promise. The theatre acts as an intermediary. As the risk of a failure exists, building a brand, which gives the audience the faith that one failure performance does not torn the quality judgement of the theatre, will help them keeping its audience.

1.5 Successful corporate brands

Building a strong brand is a complex, but important task. A brand gives the organisation a stable basis to work on and to build a clientele on. Balmer and Greyser (2003) identify three virtues that can be assigned to successful corporate brands. When an organisation incorporates these three values, the solidity of the brand can be assured.

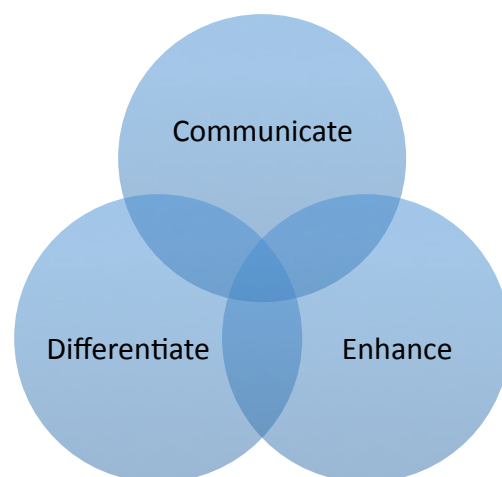


Figure 1.3 Corporate Brand Virtues. (Based on Balmer and Greyser, 2003)

The corporate brand needs to incorporate these virtues to be successful. According to the model of Balmer and Greyser (2003) the brand needs to *communicate* “clearly and consistently the promise which is intrinsic to the corporate brand” (p: 313), to *differentiate* “the corporate brand from that of its competitors” (p: 313), and to

enhance “the esteem and loyalty in which the organization is held by its customers as well as by stakeholder groups and networks” (p: 313). When the organisation functions well on all these virtues, the corporate brand can be constructed successfully.

Balmer and Greyser (2003) argue that corporate brands cannot be contrived; they need to be build up in good faith. They point out the importance of the personnel and the organisation’s ‘culture’ to carry out this brand. Also the culture and the personnel are needed to understand the brand and the values attached to it. The people working for the company know the brand and their values, which makes them able to communicate them. From this perspective, we can move on to the role of the person in the organisation. As Balmer and Greyser point out the importance of the personnel for the branding, what does this actually imply? This brings us to the influence of people on branding.

1.6 Personalities and endorsers

In their article ‘Do Brand Personality Scales Really Measure Brand Personality?’ Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) mention the development of the personification of brands. They argue that this strategy has started since celebrities are used to endorse brands. “The use of famous people and their personalities helps marketers position their brands, and can even seduce consumers who identify themselves with these stars” (p: 143). As we have seen before, a brand gives the consumer faith in the offering of constant high quality. By making the link with a celebrity, the marketers can give the brand a clear identity, with whom the consumer can associate.

In this article Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) take the concept a step further by referring to Séguela’s idea that to be successful, all brands should have three stories: the physical one, the style and the character. This will turn the brand into a personality in itself. For this study, taking the concept into the brands as a person, or as having a specific character is too far out of the focus. We are interested in the identification of the consumer with the face of the organisation, the director. The brand does not have to be a personality, but has to be led by a personality. A study

on a brand as a person pays attention to human characteristics of brands, while this study aims to connect a person to a brand, as an endorser.

Theories that focus on the use of 'people' to build an identity around a brand are theories about endorsers. (Celebrity) endorsers are used to affect consumers' intentions and attitudes (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995). The response on the use of celebrity endorsers has been studied before. Agrawal & Kamakura (1995) use the research done by others to show the possible results of the endorsers: "(...) celebrities make advertisements believable (Kamins et. al, 1989) (...) they aid in the recognition of brand names (Petty et. al, 1983) and create a positive attitude towards the brand (Kamins et. al, 1989) (...)" (p: 56). The recognition of the brand by the consumers places an important role in selecting an endorser.

What are the results of implementing an endorser in your organisation? We mentioned some of the possible and expected results. The research done by Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995) shows that the implementation of celebrity endorsers would often lead to more future profits. But, compared to recent years, the effect of celebrity endorsers seems to diminish. As the demand is rising, some celebrities endorse several (rival) brands, or more from one to the other, leaving the abandoned organisation with nothing. Also, the risk of negative impact due to negative publicity around some celebrities is high. If 'your' celebrity is projected negatively in the media, this will affect your organisation. It is difficult to control the endorsers behaviour, as they do not solely work for you. They are free to continue doing their jobs besides their endorsement, even though they represent your company 24/7. The consumer keeps relating this person to your brand, no matter if the person is at a charity fund raiser, or gets caught driving too fast. An endorser cannot be switched off at once, but will remain connected to your organisation for a long time.

In this study we focus not on the brand itself, but on the influence of the director of the organisation in the marketing of this brand. The director will function as an endorser, someone the public can relate to, but will come from the organisation itself. Endorsers are normally famous people from outside the organisation who attach their names to the organisation for a period of time. The director comes from within. This makes the theory of endorsers useful, but not

sufficient. We aim for the director to have the same influence as the endorser has, but instead of hiring someone from outside the organisation to represent the brand temporarily, the director will be part of the organisation.

1.6.1 Brand Champion

The first term I found that closely captures what this study is aiming for is 'Brand Champion' (McNamara, 2011). He starts his texts with mentioning Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, who, according to him, embodies the Apple brand. McNamara (2011) states that brand champions are those who become the main representatives of the brand. A person that embodies the brand by having a feeling for the brand and pointing out the positive features. Or as Roach (2008) states: "Brand Champions are advocates who promote and or refer your business to others" (Small Business Branding). They share a passion for the organisation and tell this to others.

In this case the brand champion could be anyone within, and even people from outside the organisation. As McNamara (2011) states, even someone who is wildly enthusiastic about his or her Apple Macbook, could be a brand champion while exposing this appreciation. But, to stick to the example, we are interested in what Steve Jobs role is in the branding of Apple. He, as the head of the company, does not only pull the ropes, but also represents the brand image Apple would like to carry out. As there does not seem to be a term that captures exactly what we are aiming for, a term will be developed throughout this study.

1.7 Applications within the cultural field

This study directs the attention to the branding theory from the marketing field and applies it in the cultural field. Before we can do this we have to keep in mind that the market for theatres functions differently than the 'regular' market. As Baumol and Bowen (1966) already described, the performing arts have to bear in mind that their supply and demand functions deviant, and that improvements in efficiency are not easy to actuate. Also, the competition is structured incomparably. For the receptive theatres we are focusing on in this study, it is likely that the performances staged,

are also shown in other theatres. The unique selling point does not lay in the performance, but in the 'experience' the audience is given.

This implies that the branding of (receptive) theatres requires other tools and knowledge than the branding of other brands within the regular market. How can you brand a product that 'borrows' performances? The focus of the theatre lays not on the performance, but on the building and other services around the visit. The visitors can see the performance elsewhere (except from performances that only stage once, which is highly unlikely) and thus need to choose which theatre to visit. How does a theatre make the visitors come to see the performance in their house? The branding requires the organisation to think about these matters. Even within the cultural field (or maybe 'especially') the importance of marketing is rising (Rentschler, 2002). With the appropriate care, we will apply the branding terms into the research on theatres.

1.7.1 Attention economy and storytelling

With the extensive developments of the Internet, digital media and so on, consumers have more and more to choose from. Where we used to have one local theatre or cinema to choice from, we now have unlimited access to movies, music, books, theatre and dance. Not only digitally, but also in 'real life' our options are enormous. If you live in a big city, you will recognise this for sure. A city as Rotterdam, for example, has 14 theatres, 16 museums and 5 cinemas (CBS). All these cultural organisations also compete with a large amount of restaurants and cafes, which people can visit. There are so many options to choose from that it takes a great effort for a single organisation to find its share of consumers. In the current attention economy, it takes great effort from organisations to stand out and receive the attention from the consumers. Branding would be a tool to make yourself known in a world full of cultural offers.

To receive enough consumers to keep your organisation up and running, you need to be able to capture people's attention. One of the marketing strategies implemented to do so, is the concept of storytelling. What makes your organisation unique? We will take the concept of storytelling and use it in the research on

branding. A brand requires a story to find a novel selling point. Whilst building a brand, the organisation keeps certain values in mind that they want the audience to know, and what will make the visitors trust the organisation's quality. Many scholars have written about the importance of a story in the marketing. We will not go too deep into this concept, but we will use interviews to discover the stories underlying the branding of theatres.

1.7.2 Storytelling

Storytelling is not simply a matter of creating a tale around the product of service you try to sell. Storytelling is an important branding strategy and a known marketing strategy in the cultural field. As mentioned before, within the cultural field, products are not regular goods as we know them in everyday life, but they are experience goods, that only last in memories. A theatre performance is consumed at a certain time, at a certain place, and is after an hour or two gone forever. Before purchasing the good, the visitor does not know which quality the good will have, as he or she has not seen the play before, and even if they did, the performance will be different each time.

Besides the fact that the theatre requires a story to build its marketing on, it also helps to sell the products. As Robert McKee (2003), a screenwriter lecturer, states that the most powerful way to persuade people is by telling a compelling story. This captures both the idea of the product and the emotion related to it. It is easier to reach people with stories, and also stories are remembered more than lists and bullet points (McKee, 2003). By using a story in selling and branding, you guide visitors into understand your product. People are interested in the story behind the product as this makes the product more likeable and personal.

1.8 Conclusion & link research

As we mentioned before, it is tricky to use the term branding in the cultural sector (Hetrick, 2006). But for this research, this term is most suitable. Branding focuses on the reception of the brand by the public, which gives a promise of continuous quality. The consumer trusts the organisation to deliver an ongoing high quality in its

goods and services. In case of the theatre field, we see an exceptional quality in the way the performance should be marketed. The performance is not a search good, but an experience good. You do not know the quality before you 'consume' the performance. This implies that the issue of trust, which is built up by the brand, is an even more important factor for theatres.

Also the receptive theatres, as often known in the Netherlands, do not have a company or group to build their brand on. The company could form an indicator of the quality the theatre is offering. Without this company, the theatre needs to build up trust by using other parts of the organisation, for example the name, logo and so on. Within the marketing, the theatre needs a story to build its brand on. The public is looking for something to identify themselves with and give them the faith in the theatre's capability to program quality performances. The theatre's director could take on this role in the form of an endorser. The theories on endorsers are appointed to commercial organisations implementing celebrities, and do not mention cultural institutions and their director. These directors might be forgotten when looking for a steady basis to build the theatre's brand on. The director could give a face to the organisation, to make it personal, to generate trust. The term Brand Champion is rather closely related, but does not capture the full meaning of what this study is aiming at. A new term needs to be formulated at the end of this study.

2. Glossary of key terms

Brand: a promise made and kept in every strategic, marketing and human resource activity (...) and every customer and employee interaction intended to deliver strategic value to an organisation (Hetrick, 2006: 47). This level of trust in quality is appointed at all services and goods produced in the name of the brand.

Brand building: creating emotional associations between a firm and its audience to achieve sustainable competitive edge (Hallawell, 1998: 386)

Brand Champions: advocates who promote and or refer a brand to others (Roach, 2008)

Brand personality: the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands (Azoulay et al, 2003: 151)

Cultural branding: the set of axioms and strategic principles that guide the building of brands into cultural icons (Holt, 2004: 11)

Endorsers: endorsers are (famous) people representing a brand / organisation to affect consumers' intentions and attitudes (based on Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995).

Image: the way the public interprets the organisation's identity and its behaviour (external reception) (based on Hatch & Schultz, 1997)

Identity value: the aspect of a brand's value that derives from the brand's contributions to self-expression (internal reception) (Holt, 2004: 11)

Reputation: the extent to which we can identify with and appreciate an organization, based on common values

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to implement economic theory on branding within the field of theatre. Receptive theatres rely heavily on the trust the consumer has in the theatre's ability to program quality performances. This trust does not arise out of nothing. Great marketing efforts need to be made to prove to the audience that the theatre knows how to judge theatre and suite the values and expectations of the public. Receptive theatres do not have a continuous company to build their identity on, and may need to turn to another asset in building a brand. The director, the head of the theatre, is a stable factor in the organisation. He or she is often the spokesperson of the organisation, and can therefore give the organisation an identity. Research on a person as an identity to build a brand within the receptive theatre has never been done before. The term 'brand' or a step further 'brand building' is not commonly used within the non-profit world. This study shows that economic (marketing) theory can be of great use in the non-profit world. Theatres should not be afraid of implementing this theory, but should acknowledge the value of these strategies. Besides this, the study tries to develop the theory about the use of the theatre's director as an endorser.

3.2 Outline of the study

3.2.1 Overview and aim

Within the receptive theatres there are several stable factors to conduct research on, as the building, the name, the location and the personnel. For this research the focus lies on the influence of the director in stabilizing the branding of the theatre. How is the director, as a name, a face and a person, used as a marketing asset to build on the identity of the theatre? The receptive theatre is relying on stable inputs to form a reputation and therefore a brand.

As we focus on the theatre as a brand, the research aims at the receiving side of the organisation, the theatre's audience. The brand is measured by the way it is received not per se by the policy side of the marketing. However, during the

development of this study I discovered that the knowledge of the public on the name and identity of the theatre's director is really small. Even regular visitors and art students (of the Master's programme Cultural Economics & Cultural Entrepreneurship, Erasmus University Rotterdam) were not able to name the directors of the theatres in Rotterdam. The changes of receiving interesting results by asking people in Rotterdam if they could indicate the 'face' of the theatre is unlikely. This is why the initiated study on the reception of director's role in branding by the audience has changed. The study focuses on the intentions of the director in the marketing policy and the outcome of these efforts in the playbill, website and social media.

I will conduct qualitative research by doing both desk research and interviews with theatre's directors. Qualitative research will be appropriate, as it offers the possibility to conduct relatively long open interviews. This study focuses on opinions and possibilities within the application of the theatre's director as the endorser of the brand. The reasoning behind the theatre's marketing strategy and their ideas about branding form the ground of the study. Qualitative research will support the exploration of opinions in the field of theatres. The desk research will exist of analyses of online content. Branding happens by the use of online content more and more often, with the development of the Internet and social media. This study focuses on the theatres' websites, social media and playbills. The playbill is the printed content as a supportive tool for the desk research. The media chosen exists of content the theatre has produced itself. As mentioned before, this study aims at the reasoning behind certain branding strategies, which come from the organisation itself, and not from opinions from third parties about the organisation.

3.2.2 Research model

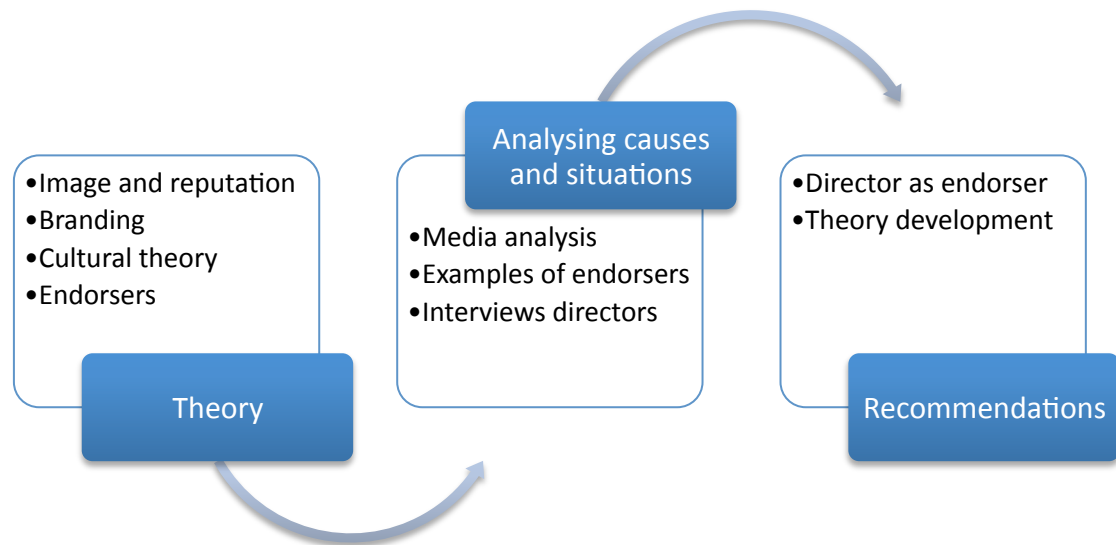


Figure 3.1 Research Model (based on Doorewaard)

This study aims to give recommendation about the use of the director as an endorser of the branding of a theatre. With the use of a framework, theories on images and reputations, branding, cultural theory and endorsers a case will be developed. As there is no theory addressing the term of the director of a theatre as endorser, this study will gradually develop one. Analysing media from the theatres will study the role of the director, to overview the current situation of media usage in branding strategies. With the examples of endorsers of theatres in mind, interviews will be conducted amongst directors in the theatre field. These case studies give both an idea on the use of branding and the role of the director, and the advice the interviewees have for other theatres.

3.2.3 Sample

The intention of this study was to conduct research on four important theatres in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I have chosen two theatres central in the city around the Schouwburgplein, namely De Doelen and the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, and two theatres in the Southern part of the city, the (Nieuwe) Luxor Theater and Theater

Zuidplein. These are all receptive theatres without their own company. De Doelen is a concert hall, but we use this organisation in this study as it being a stage for performances from external companies. Compared to other cities in the Netherlands Rotterdam, as Amsterdam, has quite a large number of theatres. Compared to Amsterdam, Rotterdam welcomes fewer tourists than Amsterdam, which means that the marketing strategy is more focused on inhabitants of the city. By choosing relatively large theatres in one city, the theatres aim for the same group of people in their marketing. Interesting is how they differentiate from each other to find their own group of audience who is loyal to their theatre.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints and the holiday season, not all directors of these theatres could find time to work on an interview. This is why other directors / people involved in the theatre business are asked to participate. To make the study as valid as possible, all four theatres have been used in the research on (social) media. As the aim was to see the differentiation amongst the theatres in the same area, this comparison still exists. For the interviews, only the director of De Doelen, Gabriël Oostvogel, and Rob Wiegman, director of the Luxor Theater, are participating in this study. To compensate the loss of valuable information, the director of the Chassé Theater in Breda, Cees Langeveld, and the Manager Corporate Communication from Stage Entertainment have shared their knowledge on the subject. Stage Entertainment is an organisation that accommodates several theatres worldwide, with one strong brand. For the study on branding, this organisation is a very interesting and valuable case.

To set off the missing interviews, compensation was required to make the research useful. As only the online media study can make the comparison between the four theatres in Rotterdam, the interviews will explore the field a bit further. This study aims to be an exploratory research, trying to identify opinions and ideas about the use of the theatre's director as an endorser of the brand. What makes the case of the Chassé Theater in Breda interesting is that it is a large theatre in an area that has fewer large theatres than Rotterdam. Does this change the branding strategy and the use of the director? Stage Entertainment, in the Netherlands also known as Joop van den Ende Theaterproducties, is famous for their leading man, Joop van den Ende. Now Henk Kivits is taking over as being the CEO of the organisation, the

organisation gradually tries to direct the attention away from the former boss. Internationally, the company is known as Stage Entertainment, and not as Joop van den Ende Theaterproducties, which is directly related to Van den Ende. As they are a main example of the use of the front man in the field of theatres, I believe they will be a valuable addition to this research.

During this research the news of the departure of Rob Wiegman, director of the Luxor Theater, was made public. As shown on the theatre's Twitter account Rob Wiegman will leave the theatre at its tenth anniversary. The theatre states:

Vandaag is de dag! Het nieuwe Luxor bestaat 10 jaar en we nemen afscheid van directeur Rob Wiegman met een heel bijzondere voorstelling. (09-05-2011, <http://twitter.com/Luxortheater>)

Even though there is a change in the management of the theatre, the research continues to focus the attention on the branding of Rob Wiegman and his theatre. This implies that the data has to focus on the period before May 9th 2011, and directs to the marketing policy during the time the theatre was led by Rob Wiegman.

3.2.4 Previous Research

The research on the strengths of brands in the cultural sector in the Netherlands (*Cultuursector Merkenonderzoek Rotterdam 2011*) studies the reception of brands. Hendrik Beerda, a consultant in branding, uses the BrandAlchemyTM research model to study the cultural brands in Rotterdam and the surrounding area. In this brand research on the cultural sector, both 'creators' and 'suppliers' are taken into account. Creators are for example actors and dancers, where suppliers are festivals or museums. Also, receptive theatres, as studied in our research, are categorised as suppliers. When looking at the top 50 of strong cultural brands in the Rotterdam region (found in the appendix), we find our theatres in the top 15. The Luxor Theater Rotterdam is situated at place 4, De Doelen at place 8, the Rotterdamse Schouwburg

at 13 and finally the Theater Zuidplein at place 15 of the top 50. This emphasises the choice for the four large theatres, which all have a large branding value.

The theoretical foundation Beerda (2011) is using addresses the development of a brand in three phases. First the *name* is settled, than the phase of *appreciation* arises and finally the consumers feel *attached* to the brand. Beerda concentrates on the degree of developments of brands. The stronger the brand, the closer it is to the last phase, in which the consumers relate to the brand. When consumers only know the brand by name, the brand is not as strong as it could be.

To measure the strength of the brand, and therefore the phase in its development, Beerda (2011) divides his research in two parts. First, he measures the spontaneous acquaintance (*spontane bekendheid*) with the brand. This focuses on the 'top-of-mind acquaintance', the percentage of the respondents who spontaneously name the brand first, and the 'total spontaneous acquaintance', the percentage of the respondents who name the brand spontaneously (no matter in what order). The question asked related to my study is 'Which theatres in Rotterdam are you familiar with?'. By asking this question, we can measure the percentage of people who know the theatre by name, without giving a list. The more people associate 'theatre in Rotterdam' with the Rotterdamse Schouwburg instantly, the stronger this brand is. In the second part of his research, Breeda looks at the brands with strong results in more depth. For my study, this part is not of great value, as this moves away from the topic of the director as an endorser.

Breeda's (2001) study is interesting in the light of what we call our attention to the strength of the brand, the theatre. The research shows an insight of the measurements we can use to determine the credibility of a brand. It does not tell us the importance of the specific elements of the theatre yet. This implies further research.

3.3 Analysing Media

3.3.1 Website and Playbill

To measure the importance of the director for the public, the research starts with a phase of desk research. The marketing of a theatre is done through various channels,

as the website, playbill, social media and, sometimes unintentionally, through other forms of media. The role of the director in the branding of the theatre might be shown with her or his presence in these promotional activities. This does not mean that a director cannot be a successful endorser if he or she is not featured on the website or social media. This research simply indicates the present day situation in the use of media for branding strategies. Therefore the study starts with an exploration of the theatre's website and playbill, to see to what extent the theatre director's role is expressed in the branding. Interesting to see is whether the director is present in these media and whether the mission and marketing policy is published. Does the mission show any signs of the importance of the director in the marketing process?

This study only focuses on the statements made in the media by the theatre employees themselves. This meaning that reviews and opinions of a third party are left aside. In the branding process, the theatre chooses a strategy according to their values. What they show on their website and in their playbill indicates the message they want to exude. A brand is a matter of trust in the shared values and the quality offered by the organisation. For this study, we aim for the intentions of the theatres. Their marketing policy will be the centre of attention. What is written in other media or is said by the public, calls for a whole other research. Note that the part of the study aiming at the social media includes a small part of opinions from people from outside the theatre.

3.3.2 Social Media

Social media are taking on a very important role in current marketing activities. With the developments in the extensive use of Smartphones (the usage of Smartphones in the Netherlands has risen with 34% in the end of 2010, *Seeking Alpha 05-2011*) the accessibility of the Internet has grown. Social media is used to reach costumers easily, as the barriers remain low. Twitter and Facebook give companies the possibility to reach people with their news, updates and offers. It is easier to access your target group through social media than to bring them to your own website. For

this research, the investigation of the social media use of the theatres in Rotterdam is an important asset.

To research to what extent theatres use their director as their identity, the usage of Facebook and Twitter can generate some insights. Are the Facebook and Twitter accounts anonymous or can we identify the theatre's director? Does the director have his or her own account on which he or her identifies as the director of the theatre? This information can show insight on the prominent or hidden place the director takes on in the marketing strategy of the theatre.

This part of the research will be done by analysing the Twitter accounts of both the theatres as the directors of the four theatres in Rotterdam. It is assumed that the Twitter account is more valuable as a marketing tool than Facebook, because it has a more formal connotation to it. Facebook is often used for personal relations, by sharing photos and leisure updates. Twitter lays the focus on sharing news facts, events and discussions. Although companies seem to use both for their promotion, this study is limited to time constraints what calls for selection. The social media is believed to have a large and upcoming influence as a marketing tool, so is important as part of this research.

3.4 Examples of directors in branding

Even though there is no theory naming the issue this study is dealing with, there are examples of directors giving a face to the theatre outside the academic world. While talking to various people in the preparatory study, I found out that everyone seems to know examples of people giving a face to a brand. Steve Jobs of Apple is often mentioned, and in case of theatres, Joop van den Ende. But on the other hand, who knows the face of organisations as Accenture, the founder of Target or the director of the Pathé Cinemas? Before asking people from the field about their opinion of brand representatives, I will first look into some examples of known directors in the cultural world who succeeded or failed in their attempted to create a strong brand by using the director as an endorser.

3.5 Interviews Theatre Directors

Finally, this study pays attention to the ideas behind the marketing strategy of the theatres. In the earlier stages of the study we have paid attention to the results of the marketing, in the playbill, on the theatre's website and in the use of social media. But what are the intentions of the theatre itself? The internal structure of the theatre shows the first influence of the director in the branding activities. Who is responsible for the marketing tasks: the director or a specific marketing department?

By conducting interviews with the theatre's director, he or she can explain the reasoning behind the chosen strategy. The way he or she positions him- or herself is illustrative of the extent in which the director is used as an endorser. The interviews might also show a possible dissimilarity between the intentions and the outcome of the branding. The directors are also asked about their opinion on the German cultural system, where the political body, instead of their own organisation, chooses the theatre's director. Above all these interviews show the degree of attributed value of the director as an endorser for the theatre. How important do the directors value their task in the branding of the theatre?

In contrast with the previous desk research on branding through media, this part of the study aims to discover the reasoning behind branding strategies of theatres. The directors involved can give information about the importance of the branding, the reasoning why and to give examples of (non) successful branding of directors. The directors interviewed in this study all have an important position in this field, as they all represent a different theatre, organisation and culture.

3.6 Development theory and profile

With this study I want to develop a term for the director as an endorser for the brand, in this case the theatre. We have seen diverse terms as endorsers and brand champions, but none of these capture what we are talking about. In the recent days, when the marketing of theatres becomes more important to cope with financial cut backs, the director can play a large role. Research on this new phenomenon asks for

an appropriate term. This study aims to develop the term useful in further research on this matter.

By talking to various people involved in the theatre field, I want to discover the positive and negative effects of the use of the director as an endorser. Is it possible for every director to function as the face of the brand? I want to create a certain profile of characteristics the director has to own to be able to function as a brand representative. By figuring as the face of an organisation, the director takes on a large responsibility for the organisation. Whatever he or she does, in his or her work, personal life and media, will reflect on the organisation. For the organisation, the important task remains of choosing the right representative. To what profile does a person need to live up to function as a good endorser? Does the director need to be well known in the arts world, come from a marketing background, and a certain type of personality? With the interviews among several players in the field, I will try to create a profile for this function.

The personalisation of the brand by using the director as the face of the organisation could have negative effects as well. What if the person commits an offence? This will reflect on the organisation he or she is representing. When the term of the director ends, who will take over? It will take a lot of time and effort to turn a new director into the same 'face' as the previous director was. What comes to play when deciding on the branding of a director?

3.7 Validity, reliability and replicability

3.7.1 Validity

This thesis is written as an observatory report of the marketing of Dutch theatres in comparison with the German field. The German cultural policy shows us an alternative way in which the theatre director is used as a marketing tool. Besides the German perspective, this study focuses on the ideas and opinions Dutch theatre directors have on marketing strategies. Showing them what the marketing solutions could offer might implement a change in the Dutch theatre field. This study tries to generate a range of options a (receptive) theatre has in marketing.

This study is by no means an all-inclusive study. Due to time constraints, it offers an introduction on the application of the characterising of the theatre director. Further research should be done to grasp a full understanding of the role a theatre director can play.

This study can be seen as an orientation towards Dutch, and other, directors of receptive theatres. As they are coping with the difficult task of marketing a stage, without its own continuous content, their marketing strategy is highly demanding. By making notice of the attainable use this way of branding could have, the theatres give themselves a great advantage. By engaging economic theory in the cultural field, new strategies arise. This study shows that the cultural world should not have to be too reluctant towards these theories, as they could be of great value.

3.7.2 Reliability and replicability

This study exists of qualitative research based on desk research and interviews. The data is gathered with accurate attention and care. By asking the opinions of several theatre directors, the image of the Dutch theatre field should be reasonably precise. Even so, the interpretation of the results is done by one person, which might lead to a certain focus. During this study, personal opinions and values have been of influence as little as possible.

It is also important to keep in mind that (social) media are transitory. What is done on social media websites, as Twitter, today might change tomorrow. This study uses several transitory media to conduct research on the branding of theatres. When this same study is done in a few years, the results may differ. We live in a time of large digital developments, which makes this study interesting, but also dated. The data are a measure on a certain moment of time, which might lead to different results in the next study. Further research on this matter can make the results more valuable and useful for the cultural field.

The use of transitory (social) media and the opinions originated from the interviews do not imply that the study on this matter is not replicable. The theatres are continuously developing their marketing strategy and therefore their ideas about branding. This study offers an orientation of the ideas and opportunities within the

present-day theatre world, and the focus on branding in this perspective. The outline of the study is thought-through and therefore useful for further research in the same field. The larger and more extensive this study is carried out, the more value it will have.

4. Findings

4.1 Analysing Media

4.1.1 Website and Playbill

The first part of the study aims at the website and the playbill of the theatres. For the public these are the first 'showpieces' the theatre can launch to attract the audience's attention. In forming a brand, the theatre needs to expose its values on which the audience can build their trust relationship. People that visit the theatre regularly receive the playbill at home while others can collect it themselves. The website is accessible to everyone, which can therefore attract a larger public than the playbill, if the public is referred to it. For both the question remains: how does the theatre use the director as a person to create a strong brand? As mentioned before, the study on the media exposure will be done by looking at the four important theatres in Rotterdam: De Doelen, de Rotterdamse Schouwburg, the Luxor Theater and Theater Zuidplein. Only the striking features of the branding will be used in the study, like clear influences of the director, to prevent from simply describing the websites and playbills. Attention will also be paid on the availability of the mission statements on the website, as these are used to display the values of the organisation. The mission statements that were available on the theatre's websites are to be found in the attachment.

De Doelen (<http://www.dedoelen.nl/concertgebouw/index.php>)

De Doelen is both a concert hall as a conference hall. We focus on the part of the website dedicated to their function as a concert hall.

The website of De Doelen is pretty formal, with white colours and a neatly arranged homepage. The main focus lays on the calendar with upcoming performances. The photos of the performances stand out more than the logo of De Doelen itself. Besides the calendar, the visitor navigates easily through the website to find information about subscriptions, information to order tickets, and news about current and upcoming performances.

Interesting to see is that the website of De Doelen contains a lot of information about the organisation itself. You can find information about the history of the organisation (and building), the sponsors, the way the organisation is structured (including the hours of work every function requires), and the vision. Besides the mission statement, the visitor of the website also has access to the policy plan. The mission states that De Doelen offers the opportunity for personal encounters between musicians and the audiences, and for visitors amongst each other. By doing so they create the possibility to acquire high-level knowledge and experiences. (De Doelen, 2011). De Doelen wants to make the visit to the performance to be more than just a night out. They want people to be educated and share their knowledge among each other.

The director Gabriël Oostvogel is besides featured in the organisation chart also found in a video about the renovation in 2009. He is not explicitly featured, as there is no photo or personal note found on the website.

The website of De Doelen offers a transparent view on the organisation. The visitors are given a good insight in the programme, values, aims and policy of the theatre. Even though the website shows a lot of information, a clear-cut image or personality is not found. The brand De Doelen is pretty transparent and not modifying in the hosting of performances, by judging the website. The director is not used as a face, or a guide, through the organisation's website. The emphasis lays on the performances, and thus other organisations, shown in De Doelen.

Rotterdamse Schouwburg (<http://www.rotterdamseschouwburg.nl/>)

The website of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg looks flashy and colourful. It could not be more of a different look than the website of De Doelen. The homepage features images of current performances, the production house related to the theatre, ticket sales, a calendar, and links to social network sites as Facebook. The information tab of the website is mainly focused on visitors and possible issues they might run into. The last option in the information page is the one mentioning the Rotterdamse Schouwburg itself.

The mission of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg is rather extensive. Shortly it mentions that 'the theatre aims to be a vigorous city theatre with an (inter-)national

appeal, which focuses on strengthening the social and public basis for quality performing arts in Rotterdam, by staging and (co) producing inspired and inspirational quality performances for a broad and diverse audience' (Rotterdamse Schouwburg, 2011). They try to distinguish themselves by focusing on their international orientation and the production organisation they house. Quality is important, but the performances need to address a diverse audience.

Besides on a few photos of the renovation of the lobby and a little note in the 'Who is Who' list, the theatre's director, Jan Zoet, is not presented on the website. There is no personal note of the director to be found.

The website of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg offers a lot of information about performances and tickets, but less on the people involved in the organisation. The website does not offer such a transparent view as De Doelen, as the Rotterdamse Schouwburg does not present their policy plan online. The director does not play a major role in the construction of the website.

Luxor Theater (<http://www.luxortheater.nl/>)

The theme of the website of the Luxor Theater is the tenth anniversary of the theatre. Besides this, the colourful homepage shows links to the programme and news items. The social media links are also represented, as you can easily connect to the Luxor Theater accounts of e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Hyves and Youtube. The visitor can easily navigate through the calendar with search options as what is in the theatre now, for each other day, by looking at the genre or at alphabetical order. The Luxor Theater's website is focused on the visitor and their needs for information.

The part about the Luxor Theater itself is rather small, as it only mentions the history of the building and the staff employed at the theatre. Rob Wiegman is only mentioned as being the director of the theatre. He was featured on the website more often around the time that he announced to leave the theatre. This was presented together with a special performance in his honour. On the website, no personal note from the director is found.

As many theatre's directors do, Rob Wiegman wrote the introduction for this year's playbill. In this introduction he quickly describes some highlights of the

upcoming programme of this season. Although his photo is featured, he does not say anything about himself. He introduces the programme, and names the actors and groups performing. He is representing the theatre, but does not reveal anything personal. Both the website as the playbill are mainly focused on the ease of the visitor to find performances of interest, either by searching the date of genre. The Luxor Theater has clearly thought about the visitor and how they search for performances. The performances are found easily by different search methods, as various people use various methods to come up with an interesting performance. The theatre's Marketing department seems to have thought this through. The website does not offer access to a mission statement or the policy plan.

Theater Zuidplein (<http://www.theaterzuidplein.nl/>)

The use of colours of the website of Theater Zuidplein is different than from the other websites. The basis is black and the different genres on which the visitor can search for performances are made in bright colours. The homepage is filled with an overview of the programme and links to the full programme, information about the theatre itself and ticket sales. Compared to the website of the Luxor Theater, it is fairly easy to find the link to the information of the theatre, as this is placed central on the homepage and not found underneath in small font. Although the first attention goes to the programme, the theatre itself is positioned quite central in the way the website is structured.

The information about the theatre features the house rules, information about jobs, the mission statement, and information on people working for the theatre. The history of the theatre is found in the mission statement, which is also available in English. The mission states that "Theater Zuidplein: the colourful, innovative and trend-setting public theatre for all the people of TODAY's Rotterdam! We focus our activities primarily on people in Rotterdam who have been educated to MBO (intermediate vocation) level – that is, 70% of the total population of the city. Our theatre programme, which aims mostly to promote social engagement, our pricing and our high level of service are adapted to this very heterogeneous group of people from a broad spectrum of cultural backgrounds" (Theater Zuidplein, 2011). Theater Zuidplein is the only one of the theatres that focuses on a specific target

group, in this case people educated to MBO level. They want to be accessible for this public, whom may not find a connection with other theatres in the city, even though this group consists of 70% of the population. This group is not the wealthiest group of people in the city, what makes their aim interesting from a social point of view.

The most remarkable thing in relation to this research is the position of the director, Doro Siepel. In the list of directors and employees, she is featured last. The head of the Catering is names first, and even the technical service is listed before her. It is hard to tell whether this is done on purpose or by accident, as I could not find a structure in the way the occupations are listed. A possible explanation might be who is first to be called by the public, but we cannot be sure.

4.1.2 Social Media

The research on the use of social media in the marketing strategy of the theatres will be done by looking at the Twitter accounts of the theatre and of the director. As Social Media are rapidly changing and developing, please note that the observations made date from May 2011. The data found might differ from the data shown on the social media pages at the publishing date of this study. The results are used as an indicator of the positioning of the director in the theatre's marketing strategy. To make the overview clear and structured, I will remain using the, randomly chosen, order of theatres: De Doelen, Rotterdamse Schouwburg, Luxor Theater and Theater Zuidplein.

For the Twitter accounts, attention will be paid on the photo, the name, the style and content of the tweets (the messages) and the numbers of the followers, following and tweets. Also, who or what the theatre or director is following can give insight on the 'personalisation' of the Twitter account. All the tweets of the theatres posted between January first, 2011 and May 2011 have been studied. The amounts of tweets for each account differ in the activity the account performed itself. For each theatre, the rough amount of tweets studied in this period of time are indicated behind the website.

@Twitter

We will look at the Twitter accounts of the theatres and their directors.

De Doelen (<http://twitter.com/dedoelen>). 115 tweets

The Twitter account of De Doelen is assigned with a image of the theatre, which is also used on their website. In the introduction of the account is written:

*Concert- en congresgebouw de Doelen. Wie twitteren hier? FM:
Femke Meeuwissen, marketing GO: Gabriël Oostvogel, directeur
MB: Mathijs Bouwman, marketing (<http://twitter.com/dedoelen>)*

This note says that Femke Meeuwissen (Marketing), Gabriël Oostvogel (Director) and Mathijs Bouwman (Marketing) all three are using the account to post messages. They all have their own initials to show whether a message is theirs, as the account itself does not show. Although this seems to be a clear structure to indicate the origin of the messages when several people are using one account, for De Doelen this does not work as expected. We only see messages with the initials of Femke Meeuwissen (FM) and Mathijs Bouwman (MB), the two Marketing employees. There are very little posts that show GO, of the director Gabriël Oostvogel, and some messages are left initial-less. It is therefore difficult to be sure from whom the posts without an initial have been. We might expect the messages without an initial to be of Gabriël Oostvogel's hand, as there are so little with his initials, but we cannot be sure.

The tweets exist of promotional messages, personal interaction with visitors, information on projects De Doelen is participating in, and tweets on other cultural initiatives. The messages are rather informal, as they also express personal opinions. Two of the hand of the director are:

*Bermuda Band als slot van RedEar festival knarst, schreeuwt,
groove't! Gedurfd en prachtig! GO (27-02-2011)*

Heerlijk publiek op sfeervol Celtic Festival! GO (25-02-2011)

Striking is that these posts, the only recent (in the year 2011) ones on the page, are posted nearby each other and both relating to a festival Gabriël Oostvogel was visiting. With the messages, Oostvogel expresses his excitement on the 'Bermuda Band' on the RedEar Festival and the audience on the Celtic Festival. These posts are, as others on the account, rather personal, and show the appreciation of Oostvogel towards events he visited. Whether De Doelen, as an organization, was present at the festivals, or Oostvogel in his spare time, is not indicated.

As the origin of many posts remain unclear, it is impossible to say anything about the other tweets made. De Doelen is using one Twitter account for the two Marketing representatives and the director. Who is in charge of posting which messages remains unclear.

The numbers show that since the establishing of the Twitter account, De Doelen posted 243 Tweets, has 234 people/organizations it follows and 885 people/organizations following them. The 234 accounts De Doelen is following exist of a large amount of cultural institutions and people related to culture. De Doelen is also following journalists, and people relating to the shaping of opinions. These all seem to have a professional value for De Doelen to follow.

Gabriël Oostvogel

Gabriël Oostvogel does not have his own Twitter account.

Rotterdamse Schouwburg (<http://twitter.com/rdamschouwburg>) : 205 tweets

What stands out when looking at the Twitter account of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, is that Jan Zoet's name is set as profile name. The Rotterdamse Schouwburg choose to use the theatre's director's name as the leading name of the messages posted on Twitter. This in contrast with the Twitter account from De Doelen, which showed the name of the theatre. Besides using the director's name, the photo is not a photo of the theatre or a logo, but a photo of Jan Zoet. As shown below, the director's name and photo are used prominently in the Twitter account.



Jan Zoet

*@rdamschouwburg Rotterdam
Rotterdamse Schouwburg presenteert en
produceert theater, dans, opera en
festivals uit de hele wereld*

(<http://twitter.com/rdamschouwburg>, 11-05-2011)

The Rotterdamse Schouwburg is using the name of the theatre as the URL of the Twitter account, but the photo and name of the director as a personalization of the account.

Remarkable is that the photo of the director, used as the profile photo of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg's Twitter account is a rather personal photo of Jan Zoet. It seems to be made in a private environment, a kitchen, maybe in his house. We can only guess what the reasoning behind the use of this photo is, but it does generate the feeling of an insight in Zoet's personal life. As we are looking at the Rotterdamse Schouwburg's Twitter account this is rather notable. The messages that he is posting are sent from the theatre, but the public is aware that he is in fact the person writing them.

The messages the Rotterdamse Schouwburg is posting, often relate to performances showed in their theatre. The Twitter account is used to inform the public about the amount of tickets left for performances and recommendations. The messages also address performances outside the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, as for example with this tweet:

*Op 23 april speelt KCOV Halleluja de Johannes Passion om 14 uur
in de Prinsekerk in Rotterdam. (12-04-2011)*

This message does not relate to a performance in their theatre, but is apparently considered relevant to the audience. It is not meant to be marketing for their own good. This might imply that some cultural institutions cooperate in promoting their performances by the use of social media.

Remarkable are the messages the Rotterdamse Schouwburg is 're-tweeting'. Re-tweeting is copying a message post by someone else to be shown on your own profile. The audience can see whom the message is from, so you forward a message to your own followers. The Rotterdamse Schouwburg uses this re-tweeting not only for messages related to their program or other cultural events. The tweets are regularly of political nature, stating clearly the political preferences. A theatre showing their political preferences is not something that can be found in a playbill or marketing plan. The new use of social media might give room to profile the theatre not only with a certain program, but also other interests and preferences. Two examples of political messages that the Rotterdamse Schouwburg has re-tweeted are:

Rene Mioch

Tegen de PVV? Stem voor 1 keer niet op CDA of VVD. Kijk op <http://voor1keerniet.nl> voor een TegenStem advies op maat #TegenStemWijzer (01-03-2011)

wouke van scherrenburg

Wat #tegenlicht vooral leert is dat Europa bange club is die hele generaties Arabische jongeren in de steek laat (02-05-2011)

Rene Mioch, who is a producer in the film industry, originally posted the first message. It addresses the Dutch elections and an online program that is used to advise the indecisive voter on the political party to vote for. This 'vote match' Mioch is mentioning advises the public about which parties to vote for if you are against the PVV, the *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, a right wing party in the Netherlands. The Rotterdamse Schouwburg makes a political statement by forwarding this message to their followers. The other re-tweet of Wouke van Scherrenburg, a political commentator, addresses a television show and a statement on the European policy towards Arabic youngsters. Both these messages do not related in any way to the promotion of performances of a theatre.

The Rotterdamse Schouwburg might be using the social media website Twitter as a platform for Jan Zoet's idea, interests and opinions. It is rather difficult

to distinguish the messages made by the theatre, as an organisation, or by Jan Zoet, as a person. By looking at the numbers, we find that the Rotterdamse Schouwburg has posted 1340 tweets, has 1669 followers and is following 948 persons / organisations. The political preference seems also to be expressed through the Twitter accounts that are being followed. The newspapers and newsmagazines the theatre is following are left wing focuses (*Vrij Nederland, NRC*). Besides this, the people and organizations followed are mostly related to culture.

Jan Zoet

Jan Zoet does not have his own Twitter account.

Luxor Theater (<http://twitter.com/Luxortheater>) 500 tweets

The Luxor Theater has a Twitter account that posts messages from the name of the theatre itself. The profile photo is a picture of the Luxor Theater. The description of the account states:

*Oude Luxor en nieuwe Luxor Theater. Op Facebook:
<http://www.facebook.com/LuxorTheaters> Theater van het jaar!*

The description does not show who within the organization is responsible for the Twitter messages. It shows that this account is used for both the Oude Luxor (old Luxor) as the Nieuwe Luxor Theater (the New Luxor theatre). For this research we are focusing on the Luxor Theater as one organisation.

The major part of the (recent) post by the Luxor Theater consists of responds to tweets posted by other, which we cannot see. Two examples are:

*@lommerde Like!
(07-05-2011)*

*@Mootjeisonline Yep, hij staat open!
(03-05-2011)*

A person with a Twitter account named 'lommerde' posted something that the Luxor Theater likes. What that is remains unclear. We cannot see whether this 'like'

relates to a post on the theatre's program, an artist, the building, or something unrelated to the Luxor Theater. The message addressed to 'Mootjeisonline' (Yes, it is open!) could be an answer to a question related to ticket sales or a bridge that is open. We cannot tell by reading these messages what the theatre wants to state.

Another large amount of tweets serve a promotional purpose. When there are only a few tickets left or the theatre has a promotion, for example on Mother's Day, a message is posted on Twitter. When someone is asking for another person to join to visit a performance or writes a positive review, the theatre re-tweets this message for their followers to view.

The Luxor Theater's director, Rob Wiegman, is present in this Twitter account. We cannot tell who is posting the messages, but he is sometimes mentioned.

Gister werd de 3.333.333e bezoeker v/h nieuwe Luxor geridderd door cast Spamalot & directeur Rob Wiegman (22-04-2011)

Vandaag is de dag! Het nieuwe Luxor bestaat 10 jaar en we nemen afscheid van directeur Rob Wiegman met een heel bijzondere voorstelling. (09-05-2011)

The first post states that Rob Wiegman and the cast of Spamalot (a current musical) welcome the 3.333.333rd visitor of the new Luxor Theater. The performance in honor of the tenth anniversary of the theatre and the farewell of Rob Wiegman is mentioned in the other tweet.

The Luxor Theater has posted 1315 messages, has 3388 followers and is following 3400 persons/ organizations. Remarkable is that the Luxor Theater is following a large amount of Twitter accounts. Besides cultural institutions and media organizations, the Luxor Theater follows a lot of individuals who, on first sight, do not seem to be related to cultural institutions in any manner. As the number of followers and following is rather close, it is possible that the Luxor Theater follows everyone who starts following them. Making people feel welcome by paying mutual interest could be a well-considered strategy.

Rob Wiegman does not have his own Twitter account.

Theater Zuidplein does not have its own Twitter account.

Doro Siepel does not have her own Twitter account.

4.2 Examples of directors in branding

When talking about theatre directors who represent their brands, people will often mention Joop van den Ende. Being a theatre producer and theatre owner, he is known by a broad audience. But also Melle Daamen, the director of the Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam, comes to mind. He is often seen in newspapers, magazines and so on. He seems to represent the theatre in person, even outside his working life. Other examples are Martijn Sanders, former director of the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Bart van Mossel of the Leidse Schouwburg and Pierre Audi of the Muziektheater Amsterdam. These are only Dutch examples in the field of theatre. By also looking into other cultural organisations, more examples are to be found.

As mentioned earlier, it is common in the Netherlands that theatres do not have their own company, which means they are receptive. For the marketing, this implies that the theatre cannot rely on its own company (dancers, actors, musicians and so on) to build its brand on. Before asking the professionals in the theatre field about their opinions on the use of the director in branding, I will briefly explore some examples of directors as endorsers to introduce the topic with real life examples.

In Germany the producing theatre is called “Gastspielhaus” (Langeveld, 2006). Theatres that do have their own company are called “Produzierende Theater”. It is important that we keep this distinction when we talk about the marketing strategies of theatres, as it implicates greatly how the theatre depends on its director as an endorser. The cultural policy towards the appointment of theatre

directors in Germany is different than the policy in the Netherlands. In Germany, directors are appointed by the political leaders. People from outside the theatre choose the director, as a political decision. This leads to discussion on the capability of the conceivable candidates and their qualities. The director is better known and would therefore possibly play a different role in the marketing process than Dutch theatre directors. As for now this study is not focusing on this comparison, but it is a topic that requires further research.

A striking case that is related to both the Dutch theatres studies as the German theatre policy is the Ro Theater in Rotterdam. The Ro Theater, a theatre company, used to be the company of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, founded by Franz Marijnen in 1977. Nowadays, the Ro Theater is a theatre company that travels, but also has its own theatre, the Ro Theater. Productions have their premiere in their own theatre or in the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, where they are now one of the regular groups. They are no longer part of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, but build their own independent theatre.

The Ro Theater company started as a company as part of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, and turned autonomous later on. They created their own theatre, which they are company of. They are not exclusively owned by their theatre, as they travel to the Rotterdamse Schouwburg and other theatres. As we study the Dutch receptive theatres and German theatres with a company, the Ro Theater seems to be a case in between the two. Unfortunately we have not been able to conduct an interview with the director of the Ro Theater, due to personal circumstances.

Examples of strong endorsers in the field of theatre are hard to make without making subjective judgements. But by giving some examples of brand captains in the cultural world, and the exceptional cases of German Theatres, where the director is chosen politically, and the Ro Theater, with their own company, I want to create an image of the possibilities. Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to interview all of these examples, but it is important to keep in mind that there are examples of brand captains to be found.

To fully grasp an idea whether someone is a brand captain, the public should be involved too. Directors themselves can indicate to what extent they feel it is important to be the representative of the organisation, and how they profile

themselves in the media. Whether this starts up is up to the audience to judge. Do they know this person and do they feel they could trust him or her in offering high quality performances? This study focuses on the intention of the directors to be or become a brand captain.

4.3 Interviews Theatre's Directors

4.3.1 The professionals

Theory and desk research alone will not enable us to find answers to the possibilities the director has in the branding of a theatre. As a researcher it is not possible to fully grasp the implications of the positioning of the director as a leader of the brand.

Why are certain strategies used and why are others left untouched? Given the fact that the theatre is a brand, what role could the director play in creating and safeguarding this brand? This question can best be answered by professionals in the theatre field who deal with the branding issue on an everyday basis. I have chosen to conduct interviews with four players in the theatre field, who all have their specialities when it comes to marketing. Firstly I talked to two directors of cultural organisations in Rotterdam: Oostvogel of De Doelen and Wiegman of the Luxor Theater. Both organisations are large and play a big role in the cultural sector in Rotterdam. The brands are strong, which means that a large part of the inhabitants of Rotterdam are familiar with these brands (Beerda, 2011). As mentioned before, most Dutch theatres are receptive theatres, which means they do not have their own company. The branding of these theatres is particularly interesting, because they have to build their reputation on something else than their company. The Luxor Theater is a receptive theatre, with a broad range of theatre performances, from musical to ballet, from stand up comedy to classical music. De Doelen on the other hand, is also receptive, but does not stage plays, only music. They programme a broad range, from world music to classical music. Both De Doelen as the Luxor Theater are strong brands, with a large diversity of performances to offer. As they are both positioned in Rotterdam and have a different cultural focus (music and theatre) they will be a valuable source of information. From both De Doelen and the

Luxor Theater I have conducted an interview with the director, respectively Oostvogel and Wiegman.

Besides the two theatres (or stages, as De Doelen is a concert hall) in Rotterdam, I am interested to see how the branding in a large theatre outside the 'Randstad', the urban agglomeration of Western Holland, works. I chose to conduct an interview with the director of the Chassé Theater in Breda, Langeveld. The Chassé Theater is one of the largest theatres outside this agglomeration, and houses a theatre and a cinema. The theatre, which I focus on for this study, programmes dance, stand up comedy, opera, musicals and so on. Name it, and they will programme it. As the Chassé Theater does not have its own company and offers a broad range of genres, building a brand is a challenging task. The Chassé Theater functions as a comparison with the Luxor Theater, as they both offer diverse performances, but are located in different regions.

As mentioned in the introduction, when we think of strong personalities in the theatre field, we think of Joop van den Ende and his theatre company. Stage Entertainment, the official name of the company (also known as Joop van den Ende Theater Producties), produces musicals, but also have their own theatres, as for example the Circustheater in Scheveningen. As the study focuses on the role of the director in the branding, Stage Entertainment is the outstanding example. I conducted an interview with Maarten van Nispen, Manager Corporate Communication, who could inform me about the national and international branding strategy of Stage Entertainment. These four professionals offer a diverse but in-depth view on the opportunities and possibilities the theatre has in using the director as an endorser of the brand.

4.3.2 Structure

The interviews are structured into five different parts: the profile and identity of the theatre, the marketing strategy, the role of the director, the possibilities of the director in the branding, and finally an advice for the use of the director in the branding strategy. The first part focuses on the image the theatre wants to display and how they use this image to differentiate from other theatres. What does the

theatre want the audience to think of their theatre? The marketing part of the interviews distinguishes the task appointed to the director himself or the marketing director. Also, the branding strategy will come up for discussion. After grasping an idea of the branding strategy, the position of the director will be discussed. How do the name, reputation and image of the director play a role in positioning the brand? By indicating the present role of the director in the branding, the professional will go into the possibilities the director as an endorser could have. The pros and cons of linking the director to the theatre will be discussed to fill in the gaps in the literature on this topic. Finally I have asked the professionals to form an advise on the use of the director as an endorser in the branding of the theatre.

Note that the interviews have been done in Dutch, and afterwards with the consolidation translated into English. This could have a small effect on the content of the interviews, as certain Dutch expressions do not exist in English. Great care is given to be very precise with the translation. Not everything said in the interviews is used for the study, but the contexts in which things are said are respected.

4.3.3 The Interviewees

	<p>Gabriël Oostvogel Managing Director De Doelen, Rotterdam</p>
	<p>Cees Langeveld Managing Director Chassé Theater, Breda</p>
	<p>Rob Wiegman (Former) Managing Director Luxor Theater, Rotterdam</p>
	<p>Maarten van Nispen Manager Corporate Communication / Spokesman Stage Entertainment</p>

4.3.4 Profile and identity

When asked about the image the theatres want the audience to see, the notion of a theatre that offers high quality performances comes up first. They try to distinguish themselves from other theatres by offering the best quality performances. The audience has to see their theatre as the better one of the range. Not only the quality of the performances matter to Langeveld (2011) of the Chassé theater, as the distinction is for him also important in the offer of related services. Langeveld aims for an image of a theatre with a broad offer of related services of high quality. He uses the related services as a tool outside the programme to attract visitors.

According to Oostvogel (2011) and Langeveld, people have a limited distance in mind they wish to travel to see a performance. People are used to travel a certain distance to work, school, for groceries, and also for a theatre visit. The power of a strong marketing strategy is to convince people to travel a bit further to come to your theatre, instead of one on your way. This problem is different for the interviewees spoken. As Oostvogel says about De Doelen: “We want the public to know that we are the music stage in Rotterdam and for miles around”. He can count on a large amount of visitors from Rotterdam itself, but will try to serve to a larger area if possible. Langeveld’s theatre is situated outside the city conglomeration, and appoints his attention to visitor in the Brabant (province) region. Whereas Oostvogel could rely on the inhabitants of the Rotterdam area to fill up the house, the Chassé Theater is too large for the Breda’s population and works hard on the willingness to travel of the audience.

Where Oostvogel mentions a clear distinction between his theatre and others, Wiegman (2011) sees his theatre as part of a national collection, the ‘big five’. The Luxor theatre is part of a group of theatres in Breda, Amsterdam, Groningen and Apeldoorn who for a large part stage the same programme: amusement theatre, as Wiegman states. Besides the ‘shared’ programme, there is additional programming, which is specific to the needs of the city. Within Rotterdam, Wiegman says the theatres all have their own identity, related to the programme. In his city, the Luxor Theatre focuses on the free (commercial) theatre sector.

The profile and identity of Stage Entertainment, as being both a theatre organisation and an organisation that owns theatres, is constructed differently than

the theatres. We can, more easily than for the others, speak of a strong brand that contains many smaller organisations in one. The focus in marketing is therefore different. According to Van Nispen (2011), the various theatres, as the Circustheater in Scheveningen, are related to the same brand name. If external companies want to attach their name to it, it must be a strong brand, according to Van Nispen. Stage Entertainment does not operate locally, as the other theatres in this study do, but internationally. And, the most known name of the organisation – Joop van den Ende Theaterproducties – refers to the founder of the organisation. Joop van den Ende is well-known, and often appreciated, by the Dutch public, which has its advantages on the organisation. I will come back to the implications of having this famous name attached to the organisation later on.

Related to the image and profile of the theatre, people, the audience, are receiving this image. Stage Entertainment arises strength in their brand from the reputation of the founder, Joop van den Ende. The audience judged the quality of the organisation by earlier achievements Van den Ende might have done. When asked to describe the image the audience has of his theatre, Langeveld answers: “Large, Beautiful, Good”. Oostvogel lays the focus on the fact that the audiences they attract are diverse. De Doelen wants to offer the best music for all kind of “Rotterdammers” (people from the city of Rotterdam), and thus programmes classical music, jazz music, world music and music activities. The image the audience has of De Doelen, is diverse, according to Oostvogel. He says that people that are only visiting the Sunday morning concerts, are differently than the Turkish community visiting the concert of a Turkish artist, or than people only thinking of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra when imagining De Doelen. Their aim is to find an image of quality, no matter if this is derived from Jazz music or classical music.

Overall all the theatres aim for an image in which they offer high quality performances and related services, which distinguishes them from theatres in the area. As the willingness to travel of the audience to visit a performance is relatively small, the theatre needs to be the better one out of the theatres aiming for the same public. As Langeveld states: “I need to convince the audience to come to our theatre, instead of others. They have to be convinced that we are better”.

4.3.5 Marketing

The directors all state that they have a separate marketing department for the marketing strategy, but that they do keep a close eye on the choices made. They trust the professionals in charge, but do like to know what is going on. As Oostvogel states: “If the marketing department asks me to take a photo for in the playbill, I will do it. If they believe it will lead to more ticket sales, who am I to argue?”. He says that the key to a good marketing strategy is to hire professionals, who will together with the director and programmer make the programme. The programmer cannot just make a programme and tell the marketer to sell this product, but they process in a cooperative form. The team of professionals decides the strategy in the marketing process. Even though Wiegman has full trust in his marketing department, he realises the importance of the role of the director. “The director is the face of the theatre. You’re the one who communicates the image of the theatre”.

One of the strategies Langeveld is implementing in the marketing of his theatre is the personal approach towards the visitors. When purchasing a ticket at the Chassé Theater, you need to register with your name and address. With this data, Langeveld can see how often people visit and where they travel from. Regular visitors are rewarded with the possibility to come together in a small group to give suggestions. Also, the ‘real’ regular, are known by name. Langeveld mentioned a couple that visits the theatre often, and is recognised by the employees. He also invites them to come to premieres and special events. “The visitor feels like he or she is a friend of the theatre”, Langeveld says.

Committing people to your theatre is important, as the competition may take them away. Besides personal attention, Langeveld directs the attention to the related services. You need to offer quality on all levels, performances and, maybe even more, related services. He mentions the two restaurants, a shop, visual arts in the lobby and the parking service. The parking service for example, is available for everyone: “Even those old rattletraps with twenty empty orange juice cartons on the back seats. We park those too.” Langeveld wants people to feel like his theatre offers a more welcoming space, where the “coffee is also the best”.

Receptive theatres might have a stronger focus on their related services than other theatres, where the influence on the performance is smaller. As Oostvogel

describes the difference, programming for a theatre is more a case of purchasing performances, whereas in the music, it is about initiating and influencing the content. Almost nothing staged at De Doelen is simply purchased, but designed to suite to its own competences and preferences. Compared to receptive theatres, De Doelen is able to construct a programme that bears its personality. For the organisation this means that the brand is influenced by the musical composition. You can find this in the marketing strategy to give options in buying packages of performances. De Doelen for example, works with themes. A package of performances is composed around one theme that is sold as a subscription, with a “bow around the whole”. These series are easy to assemble, because of the influence the organisation has on the content of the performances.

Another marketing tool used is knowing your audience. Van Nispen states that Stage Entertainment makes use of three brands in their marketing: the product brand, the company name Joop van den Ende Theaterproducties, and the company name Stage Entertainment. The product brand is the name of the performance, that is what people visit the theatre for, according to Van Nispen. As the Dutch are familiar with the name Joop van den Ende, Joop van den Ende Theaterproducties is the name of the brand used in the Netherlands. The official business name Stage Entertainment is used internationally and for business contacts. In the marketing strategy these different brands and names need to be considered when composing a marketing plan.

In line with the distinction Van Nispen makes lays the focus on the diversity of the audience in choosing a marketing strategy. Oostvogel already said that the image the audience has of De Doelen relies on the performances they visit, which means that this image can diversify. For these different groups, De Doelen uses different marketing approaches. For example for certain cultural backgrounds, they know people within the community to help to find out what is interesting for them to programme and how they are to be reached. The different approach in marketing for these groups works through to the operational management, in for example the ticket sales. Oostvogel gives an example that the Moroccan girls go shopping on Friday night and purchase tickets for a performance. During the first part of the show, they send text messages to their friends, who buy a ticket for the second part.

The ticket sales remains open until after the break on these Friday nights, what would not happen otherwise. The most important thing in approaching different groups is to keep your structure, Oostvogel argues. On the one hand you want to have low barriers to enter, to reach a large group. But on the other hand, this accessibility can be disastrous if the quality is not high. You want the audience to look up to you in the way that they value your organisation to be of high quality, which will lead to a low barrier to enter. If they trust the theatre to program high quality only, they will visit more easily.

4.3.6 Role and Position of the director

For this study, the position of the director in the branding is researched. Interesting to see is what the current role of the director is within the organisation, and what the interviewees believe are possibilities and threats of placing the director in a central position within the brand. For Stage Entertainment, that has the most known person attached to their brand, the current situation has two sides to it. Van Nispen explains that the brand becomes stronger if the name of the brand is often used in the media. The fact that Joop van den Ende founded the Joop van den Ende Foundation, has a positive effect on the brand, as Van den Ende is not only seen as a theatre producer, but also as a Maecenas. For other organisations it becomes more valuable to be associated with Stage Entertainment. On the other hand, since 2007 Kivits has taken on the role of CEO of Stage Entertainment. Joop van den Ende is still President of the Supervisory Board, but Kivits is the CEO of the Board of Directors. According to Van Nispen, Kivits is well known among the business contacts, but it is difficult to give his name the same value as Van den Ende's. Van den Ende founded the organisation, what makes him always connected.

What about receptive theatres, which change directors every few years? Does the director take on the effort to profile him or herself as the face of the brand? Langeveld stresses the importance of a face for the theatre. As his theatre uses personal attention as an important marketing strategy, recognising the head of the organisation in the news and in the organisation has a positive effect. Besides this Langeveld states: "I find it important that a theatre does not only have a face, but also that this face corresponds to the soul of the organisation". The director does

not only represent the organisation, but also influence the content of the programme. Langeveld himself sets the guidelines for the programme, which he and his programmer fill in.

The Luxor theatre is currently experiencing the change of directors, as Wiegman is leaving the theatre from September 2011. Wiegman himself is in charge of the main part of the programming, which makes him defining for the artistic content. When asked about the possible changes after his departure, he says that the new director used to be the director of the Orpheus theatre in Apeldoorn, one of the big five he mentioned earlier on. The profile of the theatre within the city remains the same, and the programme in Apeldoorn is broadly the same as in the Luxor theatre. With the new identification by the public Wiegman does not expect too many problems, as the new director is introduced to the press and public during a big event around his leaving.

Oostvogel thinks it is not suitable to just display him as the director as the face of the organisation. He is featured with a photo in the playbill, but so are the programmers. They all go to performances and make sure they do not only visit the artists in the break, but also walk around the lobby to talk with the audience. Also in the media, he and the programmer are featured. After all, the programmer is the real professional, so in some cases Oostvogel believes it is better to let him do the talking. As he says "(...) it is not just me. We are a large organisation". Oostvogel does believe it is a good thing that they associate him with De Doelen, but having several faces representing the organisation is working for him. He notices that people appreciate knowing a face, but as it is such a large organisation, it will be more representative if more people hold this position.

Where Oostvogel is afraid that the team might be subordinated when appointing a large role to the director, Wiegman believes that there is always one person who leads an organisation. "I believe that whatever job you do, selling cars or performances, there is always a leader". He mentions the story about the foundation of the new Luxor Theatre, where it took him ten years before the building could start. The director is the one communicating to the press, and the city council, to convince them of the importance for a new building. Attention is paid in the way you work with your team, Wiegman says. Even though you might be the one who

receives the credits in public, they should now you are treating them well, and they are part of the success.

When talking about the possibilities the director has in representing the brand, Langeveld emphasises the risk of organisations becoming anonymous. He gives the example of merges, where the face, and therefore soul, disappears out of the organisation. He states that the face is not alone the reason why people visit certain theatres. The quality, date, performance itself, price, distance and service all play a role in the decision to visit a theatre. The face, the director, can contribute in evolving the sympathy.

Even though the influence of the face of the director in the branding of the theatre is seen as minor compared to all the other considerations come about when deciding to visit a theatre, the negative effects seem to have a large impact. The worse case would be when the director is involved in some sort of crime, whether guilty or not. The reputation of the director is related to the theatre, so when the director is put into disrepute, the theatre will suffer from this too. Langeveld tells the story about hangars he was subletting through a real-estate office. It turned out to be occupied by a group of criminals, without him even knowing. He took action in time, before the story hit the newspapers. Having the image of the director dealing in drugs would surely damage the reputation of the theatre. It could have enormous effects without him even being able to do anything about it. But as Wiegman states, this happens in every organisation, and comes with the job. As a theatre's director, you live in a "glass house", meaning that if you are a public figure you are always subject to criticism.

On a less radical scale, Van Nispen also experiences negative effects of the reputation of Joop van den Ende. The business world knows Van den Ende as a prosperous man. "When an organisation come to deliver something and they see Joop's name, they instantly add 15% to the price", Van Nispen says. When a person has earned a large amount of money, it does not mean that the organisation has the same funds. People assume Stage Entertainment to have a lot of money, as they believe Van den Ende personally does, but forget the fact that these two function separately.

Langeveld also notices the difference in people recognising him on the streets now he is living in the same city as his theatre. In shops, the hairdresser or the bank: he is recognised throughout Breda as being the theatre's director. This means that even in his spare time, he is 'working' as the director. Oostvogel recognises this same problem, when he thinks about colleagues in small communities. Rotterdam is a big city, so the chances of him being recognised as much as Langeveld are possibly smaller. Finally, Oostvogel addresses the issue of being interchangeable. He thinks of himself as a transient. De Doelen exists for over 50 years, so he as the director is a temporary face of the organisation. You do not have to hide from the connotation with the organisation, but it would not be right to say "De Doelen, c'est moi". The limits between representing the organisation in giving the brand an identity, and taking on too much credits seem hard to make clear.

4.3.7 Advise for other theatres

As Van Nispen states, branding the director of the theatre needs careful consideration. The personal touch is important; people appreciate it when the management is known by the public. Attention should be paid in branding the name of the theatre, instead of paying too much attention to the name of the director. These two are related to each other, but if the name is too well known, it becomes difficult to pass on the position to a new director, according to Van Nispen. He advises the use of the director to show personal commitment, but the focus lays mainly on the theatre's name as the brand. When the director is replaced, it has the positive outcome that the former director takes on the name of the organisation, but the brand will stay strong.

Langeveld believes that creating the relation between the director and the theatre is important to prevent the theatre of becoming anonymous. On the other hand, he states, it will not be right if the theatre director functions as a representative of the theatre, but does not leave a mark on the programme of the theatre. Wiegman agrees when he claims that you have to have a passion for theatre to become a well-functioning director. "You need to tell a story from the content of your programme", believes Oostvogel on this matter. Representing a theatre cannot

be done without being able to tell a story that corresponds with the performance you are staging. Oostvogel explains that De Doelen functions as a “musical travel guide” for the public. You have to tell stories to make people engage with the music and to make them understand the choices the musicians (and programmers) have made. His advice is to tell stories, from out the organisation, about the programme you are offering.

Personal affiliation is the quality the director has to have to be able to function as an endorser. Melle Daamen is a name that came up in a couple of interviews, as he creates a distinct profile of himself in the media. In discussions and interviews he is mister Daamen, but also the director of the Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam. This combination works according to the interviewees, as it is strengthen the brand. Again, the personal influence on the content of the theatre comes to mind, where directors who have a large influence on the organisation can carry the task of an endorser more convincing. By having a strong person as a director, who displays him of herself in the media, the brand becomes stronger, as more people know the brand. This endorsing needs to be done with care, to keep the brand the main focus.

4.4 Development Theory

4.4.1 Theory

Coming back to the theory, we might want to mention the concept of the brand champion again (McNamara, 2011). McNamara states that the brand champion is a person within the organization who has a passion for the organization and promotes this to others. In other words, the brand champion ‘sells’ the brand to others from their own appreciation of the brand. This study expands this term by appointing the skill to promote the brand, solely to the theatre’s director. Not just anyone with a heart for the organization can be the promoter, but only the director.

Besides making the term more specifically focused on the director, the term this study aims for has a stronger role. Not only does the director function as the only promoter, he or she also functions as the ‘identity’ of the brand. The director is the representative of the brand, the head of the organization. Where others use an

endorser to represent the brand in the marketing, this study lays the attention on the director's capability to be an endorser for the brand, the theatre.

No term we have found so far captures this happening perfectly. We found a theoretical frame, some examples and the acknowledgements of the importance of this role by the theatre's directors interviewed. As a brand champion is someone in the organization representing the brand, I believe a *brand captain* should be the appropriate term for the director as the face of the organization. The captain is the one leading the ship, and in this case leading the brand. The captain is the spokesperson, the figurehead of the organization, who communicates with the media as the 'personalization' of the brand. This implies that when the captain leaves the ship, the organisation is in trouble and needs to find a new captain to take over.

This study shows the importance of the brand captain for the theatre's marketing. The theatres are stages on which other companies, with their own identities, perform. By building a strong brand, the theatre receives the faith of the public in their ability to program quality performances. The director, the brand captain, gives the theatre a face. He or she is the one we go and visit while planning a trip to the theatre, he or she is the person with knowledge in the artistic field. The brand captain leaves one's mark on the program and character of the brand.

According to the results of the interviews the brand captain should not only be the person with knowledge in the artistic field. It is also important that he or she knows how to implement organisational matters, as related services and the overall quality of the theatre. By making yourself known in the media, the audience gets the opportunity to see you as the brand captain. The result of representing a brand will be that you are never 'done working'. This meaning that you will always be the director, even when you are on a holiday. The brand captain should be careful with this connotation by not being in contact with criminal organisations and not being in financial problems. Overall he or she carries the role along, which asks for certain behaviour.

5. Reflection

Before moving on to the conclusion, I would like to reflect on the theory, website analysis and the conducted interviews. The theory on branding states that a brand is the level of trust people have in the quality the organisation delivers. This trust is based on the actions and services the organisation has offered before and whether this corresponds with the quality it is claiming to offer. When building a brand is easier to reach people with stories, and also stories are remembered more than lists and bullet points (McKee, 2003). Based on these theories I arrived at the issue of the brand captain. How can a director function as an endorser for the brand? As this term was not developed yet, there is no theory around this topic. Overall I can say that branding theory within the cultural field is hardly applied. A study on this topic thus seemed like a necessary thing to do.

Firstly I choose to conduct a website analysis. The theatres I choose were the four main (receptive) theatres in Rotterdam. By analysing the websites and social media use, I found large differences. As the usage of social media is not extensive for these theatres, it was hard to create a well-founded analysis. I paid attention to the presence of the director and the personalisation of the social media, but I could not detect a common ground to build research categories on. Even though I found some interesting remarks, a well-structured analysis was difficult due to the uneven usage of online media. I believe that in a few years this analysis will lead to more groundbreaking results, as the usage of social media will be more broadly adopted.

The interviews are conducted with four professionals in the theatre field, two of theatres in Rotterdam (one music, one plays), one in Breda, and one national theatre production company. This is, due to time constraints, a limited number of interviews. Even so, I had the chance to talk to three theatre directors, which is a valuable contribution to this study. One could argue that the director him or herself is not able to evaluate the role the director has in communication to the audience. As I focus on the intentions, the strategy, I disagree with that statement. This study pays attention to the branding strategy and the intentions of the directors themselves. The answers given in the interviews are opinions. Even though they

contain valuable information, and come from professionals, they have to be treated as subjective.

Another point of discussion is the origin of the interviewees. All are connected to relatively large organisations in big cities. The opinion of brand captains of a director of a small local theatre would probably differ. I am aware of these limitations, but choose theatres in main cities on purpose. I expect the theatres in small towns could rely more on the fact that people know the director in person, which makes them a brand captain straight away. In a less personal environment this is a branding strategy that implies an effort.

Finally I want to pay some attention to the implication of the study of a brand captain. When talking about a brand captain, we talk about a person. What is been said and how the brand captain works is strongly depending on his or her character. Being a spokesperson and presenting yourself in the media suits one person better than the other. A brand captain is highly depending on personalities. The personality, city and the kind of theatre influence the characterisation of the brand captain. It is difficult to give a profile of the 'best brand captain'. What works in one theatre, and for one person might not work for the other.

When starting this study, I expected to be able to formulate a clear answer on whom a brand captain should be and how this theory should be implemented. It turns out that I cannot give this answer. But I would not say this study is therefore useless, because it reveals some interesting issues. I would like to point them out briefly, before evaluating them in the conclusion. Firstly, this study indicates the fact that a brand captain gives a grip to the employees and the external players, as funds, sponsors and the government. One person is responsible for the image to the organisation itself and other players. Also organisations outside the cultural world (like Apple) have shown that a strong brand needs a strong leader and a brand captain. Again, this affects the internal and external structure. Finally, this study addresses the value of implementing marketing theory in the cultural field. It should be handled with care, but I am sure it would make a valuable contribution in conserving a flourishing cultural world.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Analyzing media

During the analyzing of the media the study has focused on both the theatre's website, as the social media they use. The social media research concentrates on the use of a Twitter account by both the theatre and the director personally. Is the director of the theatre deployed as the face of the organisation? The mission and the director's presence on the website and in the use of social media will indicate the importance of this person in the branding strategy.

Both De Doelen and the Rotterdamse Schouwburg focus on the quality of their performances and knowledge. From a point of view of branding, this is a good starting point for the mission and marketing strategy of the theatres. After all, a brand is the trust of the audience in the continuousness of quality offered by the organisation. Besides on high-level knowledge and experiences, De Doelen wants to offer the opportunity for personal encounters, which addresses the experience value of theatre. The brand itself, the theatre, is quite transparent, as it keeps its website neutral and gives the information there is about the theatre as an organisation, not so much as an identity. The Luxor Theater does not give a clear brand either, as there is no mission statement to be found and the attention goes directly to the performances. Easy search methods are the main characteristic of the website, which means the identity is only formed by the programme they offer. This is rather strange, as the theatre is a stage without its own company. The Luxor Theater tries to build its brand on what they programme, more than on who they are.

The Rotterdamse Schouwburg tries to profit from its relationship with the production company they house. Not only do they focus on accessible quality, they distinguish themselves by their production function and their international focus. The Zuidplein Theater seems to be the odd one out in their approach of the website and the mission they express. The theatre does not mainly try to programme high quality performances, but states social engagement to be their goal. They are the only theatre in this sample that has a clear target group in mind, to which they direct

their attention. Accessibility and high service are their tools to reach everyone up to the MBO level, which they state is 70% of the population of Rotterdam.

Theater Zuidplein is also unique in the way they display its director. None of the theatres in this study appoint a large role to the director in the set up of their website, but Theater Zuidplein goes a step further by listing her last on the page with the overview of the employees. The websites do not seem to be a place for the director to present him- or herself as the face of the organisation (yet).

Social media seems to give more space to the manifestation of personalities within the theatres. Twitter offers the users the possibility to make statement, direct attention to events, reply to others and create an identity by 'following' certain accounts. Besides Theater Zuidplein, all theatres have a Twitter account, but none of the directors do. Interesting in this aspect is the characterisation of Jan Zoet, as the director of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg, and also the profile name and photo of the theatre's Twitter account. Beside the fact that it is clearly Jan Zoet who is in charge of the account, he also states messages that are regularly of political nature. Compared to the others, he is the only director who gives such a personal note and preference to the theatre's Twitter account.

De Doelen and the Luxor Theater seem to use their account mostly for performance announcements and questions of visitors. Especially the Luxor Theater replies to the visitors in person when they have questions about remaining tickets, or make a compliment about one of the performances. Overall, the use of Twitter as a tool for the director to profile him- or herself is only used by Jan Zoet and the Rotterdamse Schouwburg.

Concluding from analyzing the media it is to say that the use of the director as a face of the theatre by making him or her known in the media, is hardly used. Only the Rotterdamse Schouwburg starts to use the Twitter account as a tool of Jan Zoet. Some theatres do take the opportunity to use the media for consumer relations, where Twitter gives the opportunity to have a conversation. Where the website only gives information to the visitor, Twitter starts a dialogue, a discussion between the theatre and the public. This makes it more personal than before. (Social) media is still developing, so the use of the director as a person in the branding could be more expanded in the coming years.

Interviews with the professionals

To grasp an idea of the real life implications of branding in theatres, I have conducted interviews with four professionals from the theatre world. To create an interesting and diverse image of the branding job in practice, I choose to interview four professionals from different organisations. As the media study focuses on Rotterdam, a director of a large theatre and a director of a large concert hall are featured. Respectively Wiegman and Oostvogel have a lot of experience with the branding of a 'stage' in a large city as Rotterdam. Langeveld of the Chassé Theater represents a large theatre from a city outside the Western city conglomeration. When talking about prominent directors in the field of theatres, Dutch people often think about Joop van den Ende. As the company Stage Entertainment has a prominent endorser, the last interview is conducted with the Manager Corporate Communication, Van Nispen.

When asked about the profile the theatres want to portrait, they mention the distinguishing from other theatres by offering high quality performances. Also the related services become more important, as a theatre visit is a night out and people appreciate hospitality. According to Oostvogel and Langeveld, people have a limited distance in mind they wish to travel to see a performance. People are used to travel a certain distance to work, school, for groceries, and also for a theatre visit. The power of a strong marketing strategy is to convince people to travel a bit further to come to your theatre, instead of one on your way. As Langeveld states: "I need to convince the audience to come to our theatre, instead of others. They have to be convinced that we are better".

Although the marketing tasks are appointed to the marketing professionals within the organisation, the interviewees are aware of the usage of the director in the branding process. The personal attention that is considered important is also a task of the director. Interviewees state that in most theatres, the director is often present at the performances to walk to the foyer to talk to the performers and visitors. But as Oostvogel states, the marketing professionals create the branding strategy, and the director carries out what they prescribe.

The use of the director as an endorser of the theatre is received with mixed feelings by the interviewees. Where some express the importance of giving the theatre a face and identity, others move towards the idea that one face is not representative for the whole team that works in the organisation. Langeveld states: "I find it important that a theatre does not only have a face, but also that this face corresponds to the soul of the organisation". Besides a passion for theatre, Wiegman also addresses the role of a leader. "I believe that whatever job you do, selling cars or performances, there is always a leader". Oostvogel thinks it is not suitable to just display him as the director as the face of the organisation: "It would not be right to say 'De Doelen, c'est moi' ".

When a person is known as the director of a theatre it is sometimes hard to replace this person. Van Nispen mentions this implication with Joop van den Ende and the new CEO of the organisation, Henk Kivits. Kivits is known in the business world, but the broad public still associates Van den Ende with Stage Entertainment. Receptive theatres are subject to change of directors, as every other company. This could lead to problems of adopting the new director, but also has a positive effect when the former director 'carries the brand with him or her' to new jobs and positions. This person will always be associated with the theatre, which is free publicity.

This publicity has a down side in the fact that the director is still the theatre's director in his or her free time. They might be recognised on the streets, which means they have to pay attention to what they do or how they dress. Publicity can also be bad publicity when the director is associated with a crime or violation. Even though he or she might be innocent, the connection with the violation and theatre is made, which has a negative effect on the reputation.

By talking to these professionals I can conclude with saying there are great possibilities in using the director of the theatre as an endorser of the brand. There seems to be demand of an identity of the theatre to guide people in their visit. The marketing department uses this movement to guide the visitor with the creation of packages of performances, but also to give a face to the theatre. The director can be used as a face to communicate with the public, instead of keeping the organisation anonymous. In personalising the theatre visit, the audience feels connected and

special when they know the director. The more the director is visible in the media, the stronger the brand becomes. But, caution is required because vanity waits in ambush. The director is not the only one responsible for creating the product, so the team cannot be ignored. Also, bad press is disastrous for a theatre relying on the loyalty of its visitors. Using the director as an endorser has possible benefits, but can only work if caution is paid in putting the right person in the right position.

So, what does it take to be a good brand captain? A brand captain should be able to represent the theatre during his or her presence at the theatre, but also in everyday life. The brand captain embodies the theatre. He or she is present in the media, takes a lead in promotional activities and is known by the audience. This implies being visible to the audience, during nights of performances but also in promotional material. The brand captain's personal life should not be in the media negatively. A brand captain functions as a role model, a guide to quality.

What I have found in this study is that the Dutch theatre field is reluctant towards this personalisation. This might be explained by the Dutch down to earth mentality by saying 'Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je al gek genoeg' (Act normal, that's already crazy enough). But, should we not move beyond this point of view and look towards the future? We enter an area of large financial cutbacks in the cultural field. Our traditional way of financing and marketing might turn out not to be sufficient any more. Applying new branding strategies could possibly help the cultural field to manage on its own. Should we therefore turn to a non-Dutch system with private funders and branding theories? We should surely give it a try. Brand captains will give the audience the trust they need to spend financial resources on culture.

Advise for other theatres

When implementing the director as an endorser of the brand, attention should be paid in branding the name of the theatre, instead of paying too much attention to the name of the director. These two are related to each other, but if the name is too well known, it becomes difficult to pass on the position to a new director. The use of the director is to show personal commitment, but the focus lays mainly on the theatre's name as the brand. As Langeveld states: "A theatre without a face, is a

theatre without a soul". People do like the personal attention, but it is important to remain from vanity and focus on the marketing outcomes.

This study shows the importance of the brand captain for the theatre's marketing. The theatres are stages on which other companies, with their own identities, perform. By building a strong brand, the theatre receives the faith of the public in their ability to program quality performances. The director, the brand captain, gives the theatre a face, or in other words gives the brand an identity. He or she makes the brand personalised with his or her knowledge and passion for the performances. The brand captain is the one who communicates with the public, but also puts his or her stamp on the artistic content.

6.2 Recommendations

As this study is an exploratory study on the use of the theatre's director as a brand captain, it forms the basis for other research on this topic. I would like to make a few recommendations where other scholars can build further research on to add important insights to the cultural economics. Firstly I would encourage research on the use of social media in the branding of cultural products. Social media is becoming more and more important in the communication of organisation to the customer. Organisations in the 'regular' market adopt this new phenomenon quicker than cultural organisations do. Further research can give an overview of the possibilities social media can have in the branding of cultural products. I believe that in the cultural economics all new strategies of branding should be taken into account in the time where financial cutbacks make it difficult for cultural organisation to survive. Social media is an upcoming phenomenon and offers great possibilities that are relatively cheap to implement.

Dutch theatres are often receptive theatres, without an own company. This requires different strategies in branding, of which the director as a brand captain can be one. Further research can be done on the possibilities of receptive theatres to survive without their own company, on the importance of an icon in the cultural field, and a comparison with the German system of choosing theatre directors.

Finally I would recommend a study that takes on this study in researching the reception by the public. In this study the focus lays on the branding strategies of the theatres. The professionals are asked about their ideas on branding. It would be interesting to see research done on how these branding strategies are received by the audience. I have studied the aims and intentions of the theatres, but I hope someone else takes on the research on how the public responds on the receiving side.

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Attachments

Interview guidelines

Internal structure of the theatre. Which tasks are assigned to the director and which to the marketing representative?

Does the theatre make use of the director, as an image, in its marketing strategy? If not, why?

Does the director see him/herself as the 'face' or the image of the organisation?

What about the system in Germany: pros and cons?

What is the most suitable role for a director in the marketing process?

Interview used (in Dutch)

Onderzoek: Gegeven dat het theater een merk is. Waarborgen van kwaliteit. Welke rol speelt de directeur in het creëren en het waarborgen van het merk (identiteit)?

Profiel en identiteit theater

Wat voor een beeld wil het theater uitstralen? (doelgroepen)

Op welke manier proberen jullie dit te doen?

Hoe denkt u dat het publiek het theater zou omschrijven in drie kernwoorden?

Hoe onderscheidt het theater zich van andere theaters in de omgeving?

Op welke manier voegt het theater waarde toe op het gebied van kwaliteit, service en prijs? (differentiëren van een merk)

Marketing

Interne structuur. Welke marketing taken liggen bij de directeur?

Wie treedt als gezicht naar buiten? Zijn hier afspraken over gemaakt, en zo ja welke?

Programmaboekje: wie schrijft en welke boodschap?

Op welke doelgroep richt u zich?

Hoe kijkt u aan tegen het concept van het theater als een merk? (Merk is een kwaliteitskenmerk voor een overkoepelende organisatie met meerdere activiteiten/producten)

Eigen rol

Hoe maakt het theater nu gebruik van de naam/reputatie van de directeur in de marketing?

Ziet u zichzelf als het gezicht/boegbeeld van de organisatie?

Wat vindt u van het Duitse systeem waarin de directeur wordt gekozen vanuit de politiek? Discussie rondom persoon, individu gekoppeld aan theater.

Mogelijkheden rol directeur in marketing

Moet de persoon van de directeur van een theater sterker geprofileerd worden?

Is het van belang dat het publiek weet wie de directeur van het theater is?

Moet het theater meer moeite doen zich in de media te tonen? (relaties en samenwerkingen met tv en organisaties etc) Neem bijvoorbeeld Joop en 'op zoek naar..' gebruik media als marketing.

Hoe situatie in ideale wereld in programmering, klanten etc?

Is het profileren van de directeur een waardevolle marketing-tool of een vorm van ijdelheid?

Mission statement

De Doelen

De Doelen is het hoofdpodium van het Rotterdamse muziekleven en de centrale arena voor informatieoverdracht. De Doelen biedt plaats aan persoonlijke ontmoetingen tussen musici en toehoorders, tussen deelnemers aan congressen en symposia, tussen bezoekers onderling, en schept daarmee de gelegenheid om op het hoogste niveau kennis en betekenisvolle ervaringen op te doen en hierover van gedachten te wisselen.

Rotterdamse Schouwburg

De Rotterdamse Schouwburg is een vitaal stadstheater met een (inter)nationale uitstraling dat zich richt op het versterken van het maatschappelijke en publieke draagvlak voor kwaliteitspodiumkunsten in Rotterdam door het tonen en (co)produceren van geïnspireerde en inspirerende kwaliteitsvoorstellingen en projecten voor een breed en divers publiek.

Ongeveer 85 mensen werken jaarlijks aan 500 voorstellingen, die kunnen variëren van klassiek ballet tot experimenteel multimediatheater. De schouwburg beschikt over 3 verschillende zalen, de Grote Zaal, Kleine Zaal en de Krijn Boon Studio. Alle belangrijke Nederlandse toneel-, dans-, en operagezelschappen zijn hier te zien. Rotterdamse gezelschappen zoals het Ro Theater, Scapino Ballet Rotterdam en Dance Works Rotterdam hebben hier vaak hun première.

Verder is de Rotterdamse Schouwburg één van de weinige schouwburgen in Nederland met een structurele internationale programmering. Regelmatig zijn belangwekkende buitenlandse gezelschappen te gast. Traditioneel staat de maand september in het teken van De Internationale Keuze van de Rotterdamse Schouwburg, een mooi festival om het seizoen te openen. Naast de Internationale Keuze biedt de Rotterdamse Schouwburg ook onderdak aan andere festivals zoals: GDMW, het Internationale Film Festival Rotterdam en Poetry International.

De Rotterdamse Schouwburg is ook actief als producent. Onder de noemer Productiehuis Rotterdam steunt de Rotterdamse Schouwburg theatermakers die grenzen verleggen en zich laten voeden door andere kunstdisciplines.

Theater Zuidplein

Current position of the Zuidplein Theatre

At the end of the 1990s the Municipality of Rotterdam instructed the Zuidplein Theatre to put theatre productions and concerts for the 'new Rotterdammers' on its programme. After a few years of pioneering work, the Zuidplein Theatre can now truly call itself a theatre for all Rotterdammers of today, deeply rooted in Rotterdam society, and in particular that of Rotterdam-Zuid.

Around 350 performances are held each year in the two auditoriums, the larger of which has a seating capacity of 570 and the smaller 162. The programme consists mainly of cabaret, drama, theatre concerts, children's and youth theatre, senior citizens' matinees, community theatre and performances by guest actors (amateurs/semi-professionals/professionals). The theatre provides plenty of scope for theatre makers who put on socially engaged productions that speak to the ordinary man or woman in the city.

In 2009, 87,000 visitors attended performances in the Zuidplein Theatre. Of these, half had a double cultural background (mainly Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam, Antillean, and Cape Verdean) and the other half single cultural roots (mainly traditional Dutch). A large proportion of The Zuidplein Theatre's audience is under 28 years old. This means that visitors to the Zuidplein Theatre are a good reflection of the population of Rotterdam today.

The Zuidplein Theatre is renowned in the Dutch theatre world as a leading pioneering and socially engaged company that promotes theatrical diversity. In 2008 this earned it the KoplopersTop award which was presented by Minister of Culture Ronald Plasterk.

The organisation has a permanent paid staff of 45 people, a pool of 40 volunteers and a pool of 25 temporary agency staff. Its work/study placement company provides around 70 traineeships annually for students at (preparatory) secondary vocational education and higher professional educational level. Each year a total of nearly 160 people work together to realise the ambitious aims of the Zuidplein Theatre. The Zuidplein Theatre is a foundation subsidised by the Municipality of Rotterdam.

The Zuidplein Theatre: the innovative theatre in Rotterdam-Zuid. For, by and through all today's Rotterdammers.

BrandAlchemy™, Cultuursector Merkenonderzoek Rotterdam 2011 (Brand Research Cultural Sector Rotterdam 2011)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Ahoy Rotterdam | 26. Parade |
| 2. Euromast | 27. Cinerama Filmtheater |
| 3. Pathé | 28. Jenevermuseum |
| 4. Luxor Theater Rotterdam | 29. Wereldmuseum |
| 5. Wereldhavendagen | 30. Rotown Rotterdam |
| 6. Maritiem Museum Rotterdam | 31. Nederlands Fotomuseum |
| 7. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen | 32. NAI Nederlands Architectuurinstituut |
| 8. De Doelen Rotterdam | 33. Nationaal Onderwijsmuseum |
| 9. North Sea Jazz Festival | 34. Stedelijk Museum Schiedam |
| 10. Kunsthal Rotterdam | 35. Ro Theater |
| 11. Zomercarnaval | 36. Museum Het Prinsenhof |
| 12. International Film Festival Rotterdam | 37. Stadsgehoorzaal Vlaardingen |
| 13. Rotterdamse Schouwburg | 38. Theater de Veste |
| 14. Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest | 39. Theater aan de Schie |
| 15. Theater Zuidplein | 40. Stadstheater Zoetermeer |
| 16. The Amazing Stroopwafels | 41. Isala Theater |
| 17. Scapino Ballet Rotterdam | 42. Theater de Stoep |
| 18. Nieuwe Kerk Delft | 43. Dag van de Romantische Muziek |
| 19. Hofplein Rotterdam | 44. Metropolis Festival |
| 20. Natuurhistorisch Museum Rotterdam | 45. Arcaplex |
| 21. Legermuseum | 46. Museum Vlaardingen |
| 22. (Historisch) Museum Rotterdam | 47. Utopolis |
| 23. LantarenVenster | 48. Conny Janssen Danst |
| 24. Dunya Festival | 49. Theater het Kruispunt |
| 25. Belasting & Douane Museum | 50. O.T. Theater & Opera O.T. |