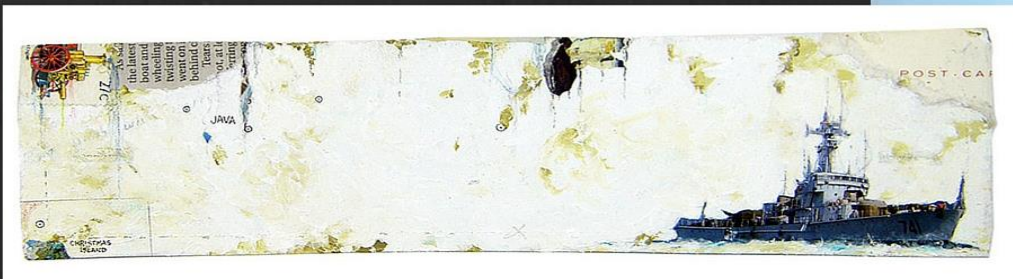


Self- Presentation of Visual Artists & New Media



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Are the visual artists enabled to become more autonomous in their representation in the new media age?

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Abstract

The current thesis explores the extent to which visual artists are enabled to become more autonomous in their representation and recognition in the new media environment. Traditionally, visual artists are bounded to galleries, art museums, dealers or curators to sell and represent their work. However, the web has transformed arts world processes and practices in terms of trading, valuation and consumption and has enabled the public to be more active in discovering and engaging with the arts. Analyzing the practices of ten international visual artists on the web, the current study aims to bring new reading of the transformations that occur in the arts system with the technological advancement. A conceptual framework aims to reveal artists' strategies in constructing and positioning their brand identities online utilizing the new media tools. Their self-presentation, self-marketing, direct selling and/or networking approaches will be analyzed in order to define how the market opportunities and market positioning of the individual artists are modifying. The study uses mixed-method qualitative approach, based on content analysis and in-depth interviews. The purpose of this methodology is to reveal incentives of the artists to be online, to show their attitudes and approaches in building and managing their online presence, to investigate their efforts to present their capabilities and talents, and to reveal trends in building relationships with the public and other professionals on the web. Previous research has suggested that artists have powerful tools and resources for self-marketing and audience engagement. Thus, current research will investigate how individual artists' self-branding strategies and the new media tools can be utilized by the artists to become more autonomous in the art system.

Key words: Arts; Visual Artist; Arts Market; Self-branding; Self-presentation; New Media; Social Media; Arts Marketing;

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Traditionally, visual artists who want to sell their work need to be curated, to be discovered by a gallery, museum or an art dealer, in order to get their artwork traded, promoted and presented to the public. Nowadays, with the advance of digital technology, Web 2.0 and new media communities, the art world is undergoing tremendous transformations and the conventional practices are changing in terms of product creation, trading, valuation and consumption (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013; Pfahl, 2001). Through the web spaces, the actual distance between consumers, traders and producers is fading (Velthuis, 2013). The Internet era has facilitated people's interaction and self-expression opportunities, removing communication barriers that had previously existed in the off-line world. Nowadays, everyone who wants to showcase work, values or beliefs can reach out to a broad audience at virtually no cost. Moreover, new types of niche and global communities have appeared, engaging the people in easy communication and networking.

The web space can be seen as a unique social environment in that it enables artists to address a potential audience that is much larger than individuals would have access to by any other means. With the advance of technology, personal interaction via individual webpages and social networking platforms has become a suitable way for people to manage an online persona, creating a new space for strategic self-expression and self-presentation. The web environment has given a new meaning to identity creation, as people shape their own social profiles, but all participants in the online dialogue co-construct the virtual environment through community building and appraisal of others' virtual personalities (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). When engaging on social networking sites, users make efforts to present themselves in a favorable way in accordance to their intentions. Such deliberate maintaining of their social appearance can be seen as self-branding actions aiming at relationship building. Being part of certain virtual communities, individuals declare who they want to be; how they want the others to perceive them; and what values they share (Uski & Lampinen, 2014). Finding other individuals with similar views and values turn the few into a group of people, which evolves into a community established around a particular idea or beliefs.

In the art world, artists seek to add value to the society and make an impact through the creation of their artwork. Therefore, the audience is an essential part of their work appreciation, validation and existence. Conventionally, for decades artists have been

trapped with limited choices in marketing and publicizing themselves to the wide audience, as the curators and gallerists have been the ones to manage performers' publicity, presentation and exhibits. However, as the online space liberates the exposition and communication opportunities, a current issue is how the new medium modifies the art market structures. In search of public, digital spaces allow creative people to mobilize their expressive resources, to build a continuous strategic expression of their professional selves and artistic brand identity. The majority of creative artists are engaging themselves in portfolio careers, which imply self-presentation and self-branding of their work. Nonetheless, the social web with its countless ways to harness a unique personal brand gives different notions to the self-marketing concept than a simple portfolio presentation, and allows for artistic brand personality creation. Being conscious about their art identity, artists can get creative not only in their production, but also in their representational, promotional and communication tactics in order to establish their own community, followers and public. The possibility to choose independently in what facet to present who they are and what the value of their work is, may lead the individual artists to the decision not to hook up with conventional art intermediaries. Although specific skills are needed to manage a brand identity, one can argue that using the Web 2.0 as a major marketing tool, artists are enabled to become autonomous in various aspects of their work.

At the same time, the ease of audience reach, and in the same manner ease of access to arts from the masses, has blurred the lines between high-end art and amateur works. The networking platforms have set new trends for connectivity, which creates a new digital space for social communities' establishment where group approval, appreciation and recognition have become crucial for social acceptance. In the new media age, everyone is enabled to showcase an oeuvre and as long as there are people who relate to it and acknowledge it as an art, this person becomes an artist for this particular audience. With this in mind, the participatory nature of the social web crowd brings new challenges in defining who is an artist and what are the criteria to name oneself an artist (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeylen, 2012). What is being considered as high or low quality art in the past, now struggles of re-definition as it is unclear whether the traditional gatekeepers are the ones in charge to determine what 'art' is, or if the crowds appreciation is replacing the curator selection (Arora & Vermeylen, 2012). Such transformations on the arts marketplace would mean that the social web may become a new player in the arts world, having a large

audience, few barriers to entry and suitable for artistic expression nature. The pressing question is whether these social venues could be an opportunity for the artists to become more autonomous in their representation strategies and market positioning. The conventional art institutions withhold 50% of the artists' profit and have monopolistic practices in setting entry and validation criteria. Is the new medium a potential game-changer and to what extent can it influence, or modify, these traditional circumstances? Furthermore, could an artist be seen as a remarkable painter, illustrator, or professional owning it to a crafted identity on the web?

With these concepts in mind, the current research proposes an investigation on the research question *'To what extent are visual artists enabled to circumvent the conventional art intermediaries in their representation and to promote themselves independently in the new media age?'*

Sub-questions to be examined are:

- 1) *What are the self-presentational approaches of the artists online?*
- 2) *What connections and relationships do they build with the virtual audience?*
- 3) *What opportunities does the digital technology provide to the artists for autonomous marketing and trading?*

In order to define how visual artists capitalize on new media opportunities for self-branding and market positioning, the research analyzes the practices of ten international visual artists (painters and sculptors). The researched artists were randomly selected and the criteria of selection were to maintain active webpage and social media spaces, to have recent publicity online and to have displayed sufficient information that can be analyzed. The purpose of the criterion of choosing international artists derives from the fact that in such a manner the trends globally can be researched and the transformation processes on larger scale can be estimated as international artists are not limited to a particular local marketplace or closed art community. Furthermore, as the web is an open space without borders, the current research tries to outline the new possibilities and opportunities for the artists, which inevitably involves the globalization implications of the Internet over the arts world that scholars have studied (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). Thus, analyzing the actions of the international authors will broaden the scope, the significance of the results and it will build upon the previous research. The study sample

consists of artists located in North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia, all of them operating locally and internationally. Also, they were selected to be of different age and career level in order to detect if specific trends and behavior for particular artists' groups are observed, who are the artists that promote online more actively and what are the different objectives for the different groups.

The study method comprises of two components: firstly, content analysis of the artists' personal webpages and social media presence is conducted, aiming to identify the strategic utilization of new media and their practices; secondly, personal interviews are included, in order to capture artists' motivations, objectives, personal perceptions and challenges in the new media realm to be outlined.

Previous research concerning the art market and new media environment has focused on the digital technologies adoption from art institutions, alterations in the art curating, critic processes and art creation (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeylen, 2012; Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). Although a number of scholars have studied the individual artist's self-marketing and branding practices (Boorsma, 2006; Fillis, 2004; O'Reilly, 2005; Schroeder, 2005; Lehman, 2009), they have barely discussed the Web 2.0 possibilities for self-exposure and self-presentation. Addressing this research gap, the current study provides an overview of the general studies about individuals' self-presentation practices on the web space, observed through the lenses of the art world hierarchy and specific art market processes in order to outline a comprehensive theoretical and analytical framework that will be used to define the individual artist's branding strategies.

A brief outline of existing studies regarding arts market is needed to give a background and foundational ground for the current study. Arora and Vermeylen (2012) claimed that the democratized interaction and information spreading in the digital age have challenged the role of the art connoisseur, as the crowd wisdom is nowadays seen as a new foundation of art valuation. Alexander and Bowler (2014) observed the changes of the art market, stating that the rapid expansion of the market on an international level, the restrictions in public art funding, and the changes in the definition of artistic work, have brought an erosion of the arts definition. Moreover, the art quality, audience and production have been questioned due to these transformations. According to the scholars, the contemporary art world attracts many customers who appear to be more interested in the investment potential than in the art itself. Such processes potentially cause

commercialization and quality lowering on the fine arts markets (Alexander and Bowler, 2014). The scholars claimed that, nowadays, the cultural producers do not know what audiences would enjoy and pay for, thus, producers are unable to judge the potential for success of individual products (Alexander & Bowler, 2014).

Further, most of the scholars who study the self-marketing practices of the individual artist focus on the conventional marketing theories about product branding and creation, and how they can be applied to the artists' marketing strategies. Schroeder (2005) sought to reveal insights into the interconnections between art, branding, and consumption, and claimed that visual arts have great potential for self-expression to brand their work. He suggests that marketing strategies, such as the creation of distinctive products or the brand extensions into other media, can foster exclusivity of artistic production. According to his views, artists often animate brand reflexivity by taking the brands out of the marketing context and bringing them into the gallery, where the competitive arena is, and where they attempt to identify and highlight the essence of their brand. Building upon this theory, the current study will investigate such conceptualization in terms of the social web and its potential development there.

Similarly, Lehman (2009) and Boorsma (2006) explored the traditional marketing models with a customer-driven focus and they found a suitable applicability of the general theory for the individual visual artist presentation. Both scholars developed conceptual frameworks, studying the theories of Kotler and Scheff (1997), in order to identify who the art customer is, what the art customer values and how more value can be added to the product. Although the latter listed studies are comparatively recent, they do not observe social media as a self-branding tool used by artists. Therefore, the individual artist's efforts and self-marketing performance, as driven by the digital environment and the new media platforms, have potential to be further explored.

However, in the general literature many have studied social media as an overwhelming tool for self-branding performance, identity creation and engagement with the audience (Hogan, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkhan, 2008; Miller, 1995; Uski & Lampinen, 2014). Besides, a cross-reference to the music industry can be made, where vast research over the artists' brand creation strategies on the social web has been done (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Nobel, 2011). The scholars observe the celebrity identity creation as akin to product

branding and explain the essence of successful brand persona presentation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Nobel, 2011). Examples of web brand creation of Lady Gaga and Britney Spears' image reinforcement strategies could be used to support the theory over online artistic personal building and promotion strategy.

Before presenting the theoretical framework, it should be noted that the researched sample consists of artists diverse in their art style nature, media utilization and digital approaches. However, the common core is online identity building intentions and active participation on the web space. Most of the researched artists have over 4,000 followers on their leading social media, which makes them an appropriate sample for the current investigation. The focus will be on exploring their self-branding strategies both on their webpage and two of their leading social media channels. The research observes their presentation and promotion design to position themselves on the market via the web spaces and analyzes the findings based on the interview responses.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Currently, the studies that examine artists' self-marketing practices are not particularly dedicated to the web platforms and social networking channels as marketing tools.

Therefore, the current literature overview will look at the self-presentation concept of the artists from various aspects that have already been studied in the general literature, mapping a theoretical framework that can be used as a basis for the current research.

Firstly, an extensive overview of the arts market processes and its particularities has to be outlined in order for a thorough analysis and theory construction to be further developed. Aspects such as digitalization, globalization, democratization and commercialization processes of the arts will be presented to give better understanding of the contemporary arts market environment and what is the role of new media in it. Such general conceptualization is needed as the changing environment has an impact over participants' behavior and artists' decisions in particular. The arts world introduction will present the industry transformations with the advent of the new media spaces; arts validation as an important part of the conventional art system; and arts marketing as bond to artists' commercial approaches and academic debates about the arts as a business. These topics are important for the current study as they give insights and provide better understanding of the different opinions and perceptions about the arts market transformations, which determine the behavior of the market participants – both consumers and producers of art. With these conventions in mind, the first part of the theoretical overview is more conceptual than the following ones.

The second section explains self-presentation principles and extensively discusses the classic theory of Goffman (1959) for individuals' self-presentation approaches, and continues with exploration of more recent theoreticians researching self-presentation on the web and social media. This section also explains the self-branding incentives, strategies and challenges when individuals are building their online persona and brand identity. The insights from this theoretical overview will provide the study with understanding of artists' actions and promotion building on the web space.

The final part of the literature framework links back to the arts industry and the individual artists, aiming to bind the first two sections and to narrow the research focus. Theories about the individual artist as entrepreneur and self-employer are outlined in order

to conceptualize what can be considered autonomy of the artists, what are the branding specifics and marketing essentials for the individual artist.

2.1. Arts Market in the New Media Era

Technology has transformed many traditional processes in our society, shifting the nature of communication, relationships, management and employment. In the arts world, digitalization has influenced the way people create, appreciate, trade and consume arts (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013).

The public, museums, galleries and artists are using technology in ways that would have seemed impossible a few decades ago. Museums keep large art collections online, host virtual galleries of their facilities, distribute special exhibit media digitally and market their events to Internet audiences (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). Digitization has manifested itself through the creation of databases containing information regarding prices, the type and characteristics of artworks, authorship and provenance (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). All these changes alter the way art institutions and artists are enabled to engage and communicate with their public. In the Web 2.0 environment, the audience has access to tremendous number of art pieces on global scale and is using technology to become more connected with art (Alexander & Bowler, 2014). The arts market is no longer limited to a certain space or studio, but it is open for the international public (Alexander & Bowler, 2014). Realizing the vast possibilities of the web, many art dealers have developed dealing-orientated web platforms, including mobile apps, digital collections and interactive projects, in order to market and sell artworks through the web (Alexander & Bowler, 2014). These processes and the eased access to arts through the adaptation of digital technologies for marketing and trading purposes have increased the democratization of the contemporary art society, bringing possibilities for the general public to freely interact, consume and distribute information on global level (O'reilly, 2007). As a result, the arts market experienced a fundamental transformation from a closed cycle of art lovers to a globally expanding industry. One of the major transformations in the Web 2.0 era is the fading actual distance between consumers, traders and producers of art, which accelerated the commercial practices and commercial competitiveness of the arts market (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Velthuis, 2013). All the above mentioned industry alterations have to be taken into account

when analyzing artists' perceptions about being present online and showcasing their artworks on the web as their performance is likely to be influenced by the guild fluctuations.

In the academic world, the economic impact that digital technology is having on arts is perceived as both positive and negative. Indeed, digitalization is making art more accessible to the public in terms of education, but it is also bringing the culture closer to those who do not necessarily understand it (Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). What is more, it approaches the people who cannot afford either the time or the money to visit galleries or museums, which can be seen as a good mechanism to enrich people's knowledge, but also as weakening the real bond between arts public and creators (Boorsma, 2006). There are various projects such as Google Art Project, Artsy, Amazon Art, and others, that help art reach the masses. The Google Art project, for instance, has worked with museums around the world in an effort to put great works of art at the fingertips "of people who might otherwise never get to see the real thing up close" (Sood, 2011). These databases are sometimes exclusive, with access limited to subscribers, while often they are created with commercial purposes in mind as they adhere to the principle of open access, where the available information is made free for all to use (Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). Thus, such developments broaden the arts audience, and although this does not necessarily mean increase in the artworks sales or long-term engagement, it definitely means increased interest and eased access to art shows and works. In the context of the current study, this is an important note as arts demand and large public might influence artists' performance decisions and actions online.

Another important innovation worth mentioning is the niche art spaces that have emerged in the recent years. With the progress of the social web, new specialized professional networking platforms have appeared to shape novel forms of community intermediaries and individuals' participation (Qualman, 2013). In the arts world, online spaces playing the role of digital dealers, online curators and virtual galleries such as *Saatchi Art Gallery*, *Artsy* and *Behance* have appeared. These platforms claim to provide exhibition and discovery of art work from vast online portfolios by artists across the world, at little or no cost and allow users to browse through images of thousands of different individual pieces, styles, and mediums of art and to curate a selection of their favorite pieces. Such spaces are intent on enabling artists to show their work at large audience, to connect with other artists and people from the art community that enables them to sell, cooperate and

develop their careers autonomously. Some of these platforms have few barriers for entry and eased selection process, which modifies the conventional roles of the art market participants and raise questions among the academics about the role of the audience in the art valuation (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). By networking all stakeholders, these spaces may appear to be a new type of art intermediary, giving vast opportunities for artists to self-proclaim as artists, to take control over their art promotion and to be evaluated by the crowd (Alexander & Bowler, 2014).

In addition to these new art spaces, mainstream social platforms and their features for establishing dedicated communities provide to the arts actors various forms of venues where the connectedness and audience relationships can evolve (Qualman, 2013). With the upsurge of the social media and the opportunities for dedicated community building around following and fan pages growing (Castells, 2011), everyone, considering themselves as an artist, is enabled to exhibit work. Although art galleries seldom engage in an online dialogue with their clientele via social media (Arora & Vermeylen, 2013), having intentions to autonomously represent individual artists might take advantage of both the art orientated platforms and the mainstream social media in marketing their art. Migration of the individual artists to the web spaces may cause significant transformations in the conventional art market structure, nurturing new type of artists raised from the crowd who stay apart from the traditional art institutions and earn their livings from the web (Pfahl, 2001).

2.1.1. Professional and Amateur Artists

In order to better understand the researched artists' strategies in building their identity, the recent theories about the transformations in art valuation and validation have to be discussed as they change the art system in its core. What is more, scholars define art as "a work being made and appreciated" (Becker, 1982, in Alexander & Bowler, 2014; p. 4). Such a classification highlights the importance of recognition of the work and the producer from the public in order to exist, but the recent debates among scholars are who is in charge to appreciate and validate work, which inevitably would influence actors' behavior on the market.

In the traditional art system, by definition, art dealers have the responsibility of facilitating the trade, connecting the artists with the audience and adding value through

their expertise. Inevitably, with the online communities development and networking platforms the role of the curator is also being modified and scholars are observing how community wisdom alters the functions of the curators (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeulen, 2012). Generally, arts evaluation has been important for defining quality of artworks, artists' class and status, which constitutes arts market hierarchy and distinguishes the high-end artists from amateurs.

Currently, scholars argue whether or not the traditional expertise has been replaced by the new media platforms and masses (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeulen, 2012). Arora and Vermeulen (2012) claim that "the traditional elite expertise by theorists and critics has not necessarily been replaced by new players, but rather that new voices have been added to the chorus" (p. 16). In the same time, Alexander and Bowler (2014) state that "the 'hive mind' (or the crowd wisdom) as rankings and popularity replace curated selections and popular blogs replace reviews written by experts on the art form" (p.12).

Although, galleries and auction houses have been playing the role of gatekeepers of what is considered quality art work for a long time, with the crowd power reinforcement, the knowledge of the experts has been belittled (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). What is more, nowadays, the lines between audience, institutions and producers are blurred as they all share the power within the web space and contribute in a similar manner. If in the past, the objectivity and transparency of defining quality art was questioned due to the complex and unclear process of art valuation, in the new democratized web environment this lack of objectivity potentially can find its end with the involvement of the online community (Arora & Vermeulen, 2012).

For the individual artist, the liberated criteria for entering on the art market and the new media possibilities can be seen as an opportunity to self-proclaim as an artist and position on the marketplace bypassing the conventional validation system, and entirely relying on the public popularization and audience engagement. Currently, the arts market has shifted "from an object-based and supply-side oriented market to a more consumer-driven market" (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013, p. 328). In such environment, artists might face a need for self-presentation and self-marketing more diligently in order to get public and commissions.

2.3. Self-Presentation Theoretical Overview

As the focus of the current research proposal is the individual artist and their self-presenting capabilities, broader overview of the existing literature over self-presentation and online identity construction should be outlined followed by definitions of self-marketing and self-branding in the arts field. The insights from this theoretical overview will provide the study with understanding of artists' actions and promotion building on the web space.

One of the first scholars to observe the self-presentation efforts of the individuals in organic societies is Goffman (1959). More recently, academics, such as Miller (1995), Manago, Graham, Greenfield and Salimkhan (2008), and Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011), build upon Goffman's theories and explain how his pattern of self-presentation is reflecting and transferring to the web spaces and social media.

2.3.1 Self-presentation Concept

Traditional theory about self-presentation defines it as a mechanism that allows people to create and maintain a personal brand identity, spurring social interaction and acceptance from others (Goffman 1959). Goffman (1959) argued that individuals can mobilize their expressive resources to build an appearance and presence in the society that are pleasant, unexceptionable and allow people to establish relationships. Similar to product branding, personal branding entails capturing and promoting people's glossy self, strengths and uniqueness to a target audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Marshall, 2010). Goffman (1959) portrayed a framework of the personal identity and observed that people negotiate and validate their personality in the society trying to convey information about themselves to the others. According to his observations, individuals calculate their activities, consciously and unconsciously, moved by the desire to create impressions and appearance that are likely to foster understanding, given definitions, and present them in a favorable light. He notes that self-presentation, as a way for identity creation, can be compared to a theatre where within each scene of life the central actor chooses the appropriate wardrobe, props, and backdrops to project a desired identity to an audience. Through complex self-negotiations and making adjustments, the actor makes efforts to maintain personality and identity creation. In the real life, individuals also sometimes act in a strategic way when expressing themselves in order to evoke a specific response from others, or an interaction they are concerned to obtain (Goffman, 1959).

In face-to-face encounters, much information about the self is communicated in purposeful ways in the context of the encounter. In real conversations, if one person offers a product or a service to another, that would usually be identified during the conversation, but the actual product or service would not be presented as a proof simultaneously. Therefore, the individuals that are presenting this product would have to act and intentionally express themselves, and the others have to be impressed for the interaction to be meaningful (Hogan, 2010). Goffman (1959) argued that some information is communicated involuntarily and two kinds of expression can be distinguished - information 'given', that is intended and managed in some way, and information 'given off' which is provided without any intention. The latter type is information that lies beyond the time and place of the interaction, gives notion attitudes, beliefs, incentives, and emotions that can be ascertained only indirectly (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) stressed how intentional presentation is a very basic persona building approach, and even if unaware identity is displayed it is also a part of the self-expression.

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about each other and are interested in their identities as the information about the individual helps to define the situation, the interaction and enables the others to know what to expect and how to act in order to receive the desired response (Hogan, 2010). Social scientists have long believed that a sense of self derives from individuals' reflections from others in social interactions (Cooley, 1902). Our 'selves' are developed and maintained with the cooperation of others through the social interaction (Goffman, 1959). Harter (2003), acknowledged by Manago et al. (2008), argued that before reaching adulthood individuals possess abstract notions of the self, shaped by the social approval they receive from the others for their self-expression. This self-presentation is created within social interaction where the emerging adults reflect common behavior, share similar goals and values, and help each another consolidate identities (Nurmi, 2004, in Manago et al., 2008). In adulthood, the autobiographical expressions and stories individuals set for themselves are used to develop and maintain the appearance of the self to the others (McLean, Pasupathi & Pals, 2007). What's more, they use these selves to brand themselves in a career or social personality. Referring it to the art world and self-proclaimed artists, these concepts are of great importance because, as it was previously discussed, the crowd appreciation and general public validation are transforming the hierarchy of the traditional art career.

Generally, realizing their brand identity, constructed to fit the desired vision of themselves, people present their best capabilities and strengths in order to eradicate the possibility of social exclusion. Humans are highly dependent on the social support of others and being in belonging to a social group impacts one's self-esteem and sense of belonging, emotional well-being, sense of life meaning, purpose, self-efficacy, and self-worth (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It has been proposed that self-esteem may act as a sociometer – a determinant of one's acceptability to the social group (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Furthermore, social acceptability, as measured by others' liking, was found from the scholars to be a causal determinant of self-esteem and self-fulfillment (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

In the digital age, social communities and the expressiveness of the individual have built upon the traditional communication and interaction processes as everyone has become a part of global society and the individuals are armed with new tools for self-presentation in the face of technology. The emerging of global web communities reinforced the meaning to the concept that individuals' memberships in certain social groups define who one is, what is their social positioning and community presence (Hogan, 2010).

2.3.2. Self-presentation in Digital Space

The social mechanisms described by the traditional scholars remain relevant in the digital age and new media communities. The academics observed how the sophisticated technology, Web 2.0 applications, and accessible personal information offer new opportunities and challenges for controlling an online persona (Hogan, 2010; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkhan, 2008; Miller, 1995; Uski & Lampinen, 2014). Generally, in the new interactive environment, where engagement, content generating and collaboration are underlying, the Internet connections and relations have grown increasingly complex. Thus, presenting the general transformations in the self-presenting techniques and information flow on the web, such as personal page display, social media identity building and digital branding (Labrecque et al., 2011), the current section aims to build a framework that will serve for insightful analysis of the content and approaches the artists' have on the web. The section is divided in two parts – self-presentation on Personal Home Pages (PHP) and self-presentation on social media, with the purpose to explain the different particularities and opportunities that each channel provides. Since the two major digital platforms have different dimensions, their utilization and

implications may differ, and it is important that the theoretical and results analysis are presented in separate sections.

With the utilization of social networking profiles and personal web pages the self-expression techniques have become increasingly important as people consciously build their presence moved by desires such as to gain employment and self-realization (Gershon, 2014). Professional adults manifest themselves online to emphasize their skills and proficiency, hence attracting contacts, contracts, customers, or employers (Labrecque et al., 2011). For the individuals, the new medium provides a tool to display information and make claims about themselves, controlling the disclosed content, managing their appearance in various ways and using strategic implementation (Miller, 1995). Thus, based on the individuals' incentives, they make decisions where and how to shape their online identity, what connections and relationships to establish and how to position their online persona. Enabled to co-construct and operate their own virtual environment, people have extensive audience to interact with (Manago et al., 2008). However, this audience is also enabled to produce content and generate information, thus presenting to the global audience would mean also receiving large evaluation from other individuals and communities (Hemetsberger, 2005). According to Manago (2008), these new social interactions follow the real conversation pattern and web spaces like chat rooms, profile pages and online networks are becoming the new place where self-identity is socially constructed and displayed.

One of the major differences between real communication and digital spaces is that the latter enable open interaction through anonymity and eradication of real world boundaries, such as appearance, demographic characteristics, physical ability, and socioeconomic status, which may constrain the perceptions of one's identity (Manago et al., 2008; Labrecque et al., 2011). As Dominick (1999) pointed out, prior to web pages, only the privileged individuals such as celebrities, politicians, media tycoons, advertisers, had access to the mass audience, but with the raise of the web everyone is enabled to communicate. Such concept, in the arts world would mean that within the new media all authors have access to large audience, regardless their popularity or status on the market. Thus, artists might see an opportunity to escape from the selective environment of the traditional arts system and to bypass the intervention of third parties in their artistic persona building and artworks marketing. In order for better understanding of the self-presentation opportunities on the web to be obtained, the following sections will present a conceptual framework

starting with persona building on personal webpage, where the information is organized as a portfolio and have more one-sided communication specifics. Further, building upon these theories, the interactive and open for conversation environment of the social profiles and identity building will be explained with an attempt artists' approach for potential audience engagement to be explored in the analysis.

2.3.2.1. Presentation of Self & Personal Home Pages

Even before the rise of social media, the presentation of the 'self' took place in the rapidly embraced personal web pages. Miller (1995) is one of the first to observe how the self-presentation efforts of the individuals that Goffman (1959) describes in the offline world conveyed to the web 1.0 virtual setting. According to the scholar, electronic communication established a new range of frames of interaction with a developing etiquette. Although apparently different than interactions in which the participants are physically present, web pages are intended to be read by others, to be part of an interactive system and to invite relationship establishment (Miller, 1995).

Miller's (1995) observations are based on the dawn of the developing interactive environment, thus his conclusions over the electronic selves are developed in a different social context that does not reflect the thriving interactive environment that we observe nowadays. More recent scholars studying the personal home pages utilization in the 21st century, such as Papacharissi (2002), designate that the web tools allow people to present a multi-mediated self, using audiovisual components and text to communicate to their potential mass audiences. They define the personal home pages as both informative and expressive tools that enable individuals to transcend from just consumers of media content to media producers (Dominick, 1999). According to the scholars, the potential outcomes of the digital interaction is divided, predicting either expanded social circles and increased social activity, or reduced communication in the smaller social circles (Papacharissi, 2002). Researching the individuals' incentives to create personal home pages, Papacharissi (2002) defines as a starting point that persons' own social and psychological characteristics, together with individual motivation, could affect the social consequences of their online presentation intents.

Besides, scholars defined that depending on the set goals, the individuals shape the strategies employed in their personal home pages. Eleanor (1997) defined personal home

pages as autobiographical windows offering the random viewer a glimpse of a construction of self. Building upon such concept, Dominick (1999) described the personal webpage as a web platform maintained by an individual who may not be affiliated with a larger institution, and containing information that the author has chosen to display there. The latter found that most of the web strategies are similar to the interpersonal strategies of self-presentation in real life. For example, individuals use links on their personal home pages as a means of social association and seek positive reinforcement by inviting visitors to e-mail them, comment or evaluate them. There are various strategies for self-presentation that academics have identified. For instance, Smith (1998), in Papacharissi (2002), outlined a similar taxonomy of web-based invitational strategies, classifying the following items: *personality (identity building)*, *personal expertise*, *external validation* (e.g. awards and distinctions listing upon the site), *vertical hierarchies* (the position of items on the page from top to bottom), *feedback mechanisms* (e-mail, comments, guestbook, and others) and *direct address* (accessibility to the individual). All these components are part of the presentational tactics on the personal home pages.

Similarly, the absence of such non-verbal, or supporting, information on the personal home pages limits the exchanged expressions that the web page creator wants to communicate to the audience (Papacharissi, 2002). Individuals, who lack media richness and social presence, when encountered online, restrain the non-verbal communication and the expressions 'given off', that Goffman (1959) talks about. Personal web platforms are supposed to convey both verbal (textual) information and to utilize additional tools and approaches for interactivity and vividness. Nevertheless, Papacharissi (2002) noted that it is possible to communicate nonverbal signals online even without vivid media mechanisms, through the use of hyperlinks, emoticons, animations, and other technological conventions. According to Dominick (1999), the technical skills, such as individuals' competences in manipulating interactive technology, largely determines how successful the online positioning is.

2.3.2.2. Presentation of Self & Social Media

Even though, Miller (1995) developed his theory concepts before the rise of the social media, the academic accurately suggested that with the development of the culture of electronic communication, people will construct expressive resources out of whatever

facilities are available. Recent scholars observe that the image creation process on the social web is organized around tailored 'profile' expressions, giving number of ways for design and building according to people's aspirations (Manago et al., 2008). Davis (2010) studied these tools as *personal interactive homepages (PIH)* which can be compared to the basic personal homepage, where identities are created as a bricolage of personal biographical information, including photographs, stories and various other symbolic markers (Chandler, 1998, in Davis, 2010). According to Ellison (2007), by definition, social media is a space that gives individuals three major capabilities: 1) the ability to construct a public or semi-public profile; 2) the ability to identify and create relationships to other users with shared connections or interests; 3) the ability to track participants' connectedness. Observing these particularities and the interactive nature of the social web, Qualman (2013) defined it as a prominent branding tool used by the individuals to fulfill two basic social needs: a need to belong and a need for self-presentation (self-branding) (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Labrecque et al., 2011). Strategically leveraging on the opportunities that this interactive environment provides for connections, networking, visibility and recognition building, for artists might be beneficial in their attempts to reach potential audiences and engage to them. The current analysis will aim to explore the extent to which artists put efforts and smartly leverage on the social networking processes to build their public profile and own community.

Since the profile is the 'face' of the individuals on the web, Silfverberg, Liikkanen, and Lampinen (2011) developed a concept of '*profile work*', to illustrate users' experience and action on social media and their efforts to maintain and manage an online persona. Profile work concept emphasizes that while possibilities for strategic self-presentation are multifold online, the possibility to choose what to reveal, omit, or underplay forces individuals to make many choices to manage how they are perceived on the web. The scholars frame four dimensions of profile work:

- *Profiles as product*: comparable to business cards, curriculum vitae (CVs), or to a bookshelf that describes its owner through the literature collection it showcases;
- *Cycle of interpretation*: people direct their own behavior through expectations of how others will interpret the content they share and equally, interpret and evaluate the actions of others through their profiles;

- *Conflicting goals*: the tension between maintaining a self-presentation that is in line with the contextually relevant social norms and taking action that meets personal desires;
- *Profile regulation*: the particular actions that people take to manage their profiles considering both the actions suggested by the technology and the actions that require efforts that take place beyond the technology (privacy settings, content monitoring, etc.);

When we look at social media platforms, Goffman's multiple levels of identity display come to mind and all these different expressions of 'profile work' imply in the self-presentation efforts of the individuals online. Recent scholars, have termed the ecosystem of various networked personal interactions as 'mass self-communication', which definition suggests a system where platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, GooglePlus and Twitter offer crucial tools to shape the individuals performance online (Castells, 2011). In addition, recently, Van Dijck (2013) researched how public identities are shaped through various platform interfaces and claimed that individuals have one identity. The scholar argued that the time of having different online identity for colleagues, partners or co-workers, and for the other people, is coming to an end. What is more, Van Dijck (2013) claimed that having two web identities means lack of integrity.

For most users, there used to be a distinct difference between one's professional persona, addressed mainly to co-workers and employers, and one's self-communication towards closer community. Van Dijck (2013) defined that users deploy social media for various purposes depending on their particularities and networking features. Initially, platforms like Facebook were commonly regarded as a space for (personal) self-expression and for making connections between friends. According to the scholar, gradually, users have come to understand the importance of online self-presentation and the convenience of the social profile as a tool for (professional) self-promotion. As people have started adapting online approaches for self-presentation, the platforms also changed their functionalities and utilization. Currently, the social platforms became interactive and engaging tools for storytelling and narrative self-presentation, rather than being databases of personal information and autobiography display.

Overall, scholars tend to agree that through strategic leveraging of images, video, status updates, profiles, friend lists, visible conversations, interests, and comments that

appear within their profiles, social media participants present a highly curated version of themselves (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2014). In addition, the features of the different mediums for connectedness and relationship building that incorporate the category of social networking sites provide distinctive opportunities, values and identity building tools that individuals recognize as suitable or not for their self-expression approaches (Davis, 2010). Davis (2010) suggested that the different types of social platforms can be sub-categorized according to their specifics and feature differences. For instance, mediums such as Facebook and Twitter can be considered to fall into the category of 'mixed-use social networks' as these platforms employ a variety of modes of communication and often combine photography, video, text, links, graphics, and location-announcement within individual profiles (Schwartz & Halegoua (2014). Other social networks, such as YouTube or Instagram, rely on primary type of functionality, such as video or photographic representation, in order to operate. They bring different benefits and functionalities for the individuals in their efforts for online presentation (Labrecque et al., 2011). For instance, on YouTube the ability to share videos with other users offers self-expression and self-presentation tools that may contribute to self-marketing and personal branding of the individuals (Labrecque et al., 2011). Chen (2014) defines YouTube as a consumer narrative where multiple digital selves and parasocial relationships are made comprehensible.

Furthermore, fitting in the definition of personal interactive page, the Facebook fan pages act as a specific model for personal interactive homepage. Such online platforms are key elements in identity formation as they are public, allow for complex forms of self-presentation, expand the social profile definition and users can make indirect connections through existing social ties (Ellison, 2007).

Analyzing more in-depth the topic of personal branding strategies and social media opportunities, Schwartz and Halegoua (2014) developed a concept for the 'spatial self' referring it to the variety of occurrences (both online and offline) where individuals document, archive and display their experience and/or mobility within space and place in order to represent or perform aspects of their identity to the others. In other words, the scholars argue that the way individuals present themselves to the online audiences has evolved to from only textual and visual features to geocoded digital traces, geographical data visualizations, and maps of individual patterns of mobility, which can be observed on social networks such as Instagram, Facebook and Foursquare (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2014).

Besides, noteworthy is that even people have some control over the brand they portray, the peer interaction and individuals' participation in the social community and its groups help to define who one is (Tajfel, 1982). Labrecque et al. (2011) found that in developing their brands some people aimed to be authentic and criticized others whom they believe were not. On one hand, the scholars explained it with the desire of the people to have positive feelings toward their group and fake personalities do not bring the desired interaction. On the other hand, similar to offline social interactions, the individuals are using the social profiles for comparison to others, in the business aspect to compete with the rivals. Manago et al. (2008) defined these intentions as a social comparison element of the online profile. In their view, the social comparison may be intensified on the social media because the profiles are easily accessible on the network and their social appearance is open for observation. Moreover, public approval and acceptance may be from higher importance for the self-display online as on the social web the feedback provides social verification (Manago et al., 2008). The individuals' personal identity is intensively determined by the comments, likes and interaction they receive. The viral effect that social spaces have and the ability to receive appreciation of the content the individuals post also are part of the virtual identity construction. As users become engaged, the different facets of the virtual self-identity may become just as real and important as the roles played in the physical world (Labrecque et al., 2011). The individuals are expected to construct an ingenuous brand image rooted in their personal and unique set of attributes and attitudes. For Arruda (2003), for example, personal branding "is permission to be your authentic self" (p. 10).

The Internet has a capability for many-to-many communications, connecting large audiences that create various interactions (Van Dijk, 1997). In the last two decades, the rise of the Internet as a communications medium has enabled geographically-dispersed individuals with shared interests to gather online (Thomsen, Straubhaar & Bolyard, 1998) culminating in radically new forms of audience interactions. Virtual communities exist together with the organic communities and are built from the social, cultural and personal material of organic communities (Van Dijk, 1997). Van Dijk (1997) argues that in itself the virtual community is unstable, restricted in partial cultures and identities creation and aiming to create a strong sense of membership and belonging. The new type of communities emerging from the network communication is establishing new forms of language,

interaction and identity creation (Van Dijk, 1997). Erickson (1997) analyses the implications of the term 'community' and suggested that it implies the following:

- *Membership*: central to the notion of community are issues of membership and exclusion. Communities range from being open to anyone who shares particular ideas or interests to communities accessible only to those who meet certain criteria of geography, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- *Relationships*: Community members form personal relationships with one another. These relationships can run the gamut from casual acquaintance, to friendships, to deep emotional bonds. Yet, communities as generally conceived are too large for everyone to know one another well; instead, a community is best viewed as partially overlapping networks of relationships.
- *Commitment and generalized reciprocity*: community implies a sense of mutual commitment to the community: one member may help another simply because they belong to the same community, not because of a personal relationship.
- *Shared values and practices*: community members may share a common set of concerns, values, goals, practices, procedures and symbols.
- *Collective goods*: Communities participate in the creation, control, and distribution of various collective goods.
- *Duration*: the aforementioned characteristics take on importance only because the community as a collectivity is expected to have a long existence.

Erickson (1997) noted that indeed 'community' definition seem to be a suitable frame for some sites of online discourse, whilst for others they seem to apply weakly. Nonetheless, in the social media environment most of the organic community features are replicated and to great extent the definitions can be applied for the networking society. Virtual communities appear to be a perfect compromise between individuality and sociability in network society (Van Dijk, 1997). They offer opportunities for information and communication, private and public discussion all at the same time. According to the scholar, they build on the organic communities, strengthen them and are in an addition to them.

Goffman (1959) pointed out that one of the difficulties in real life interaction lies in establishing contact. One of the premises of the digital channels is the opportunity for everyone to put themselves up for interaction, displaying their desired selves through their

profiles (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). The *parasocial interaction* (Horton & Wohl, 1956, in Chen, 2014) likewise the interpersonal interaction can lead to numerous sorts of interpersonal responses and relationships. Still, it is “grounded in interpersonal notions of attraction, perceived similarity or homophily, and empathy” (Rubin and Rubin, 2001: 326). Nevertheless, what’s different in some way from the real conversations is that any relationship obligations are eliminated through the web, allowing individuals to ‘try you out’ without risking being involved further than they would wish (Miller, 1995). Papacharissi (2002) further develops the conception of web connectedness and observes that net-based communities carry the premise of resurrecting and recreating lost communities and lost ties, of actually learning how to live in time and space without severing our social ties. What’s more, ‘*Friending*’ no longer refers to acquaintances, but more to people one may or should know, according to the social media algorithms (Ellison et al., 2007). Similarly, ‘liking’ and ‘following’ refer to people’s interests, detecting trends, setting new ones and creating connections. The more connections users make, the more audience they have and the more social capital they accumulate (Ellison et al., 2007).

Recently, scholars studied the large utilization of social media from celebrity personas, such as Lady Gaga and Britney Spears, to promote and present their artistic brand, and to promote their work (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Marshall, 2010; Nobel, 2011). The academics observed their career building processes on the social web and defined that the popular artists have caught the trends in the digital societies that the web audience is inclined to pursue, construct and sustain their cultural preferences through participatory digital platforms. Following these trends, the pop artists have instantly set promotion management and branding practices of their identities on the web (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Lady Gaga got popular and turned herself into one of the most recognized brands worldwide owing it to the social media communities (Nobel, 2011). Realizing the social web opportunities, the Lady positioned herself on the marketplace through defining key attributes and unique brand values different from the other celebrities (Nobel, 2011). Building extraordinary vision, extravagant presence and self-empowering messages, she established strong marketing approach that was leveraged of avenues such as Facebook and Twitter, creating outré style, large following and setting new trends on the artists’ scene (Nobel, 2011). According to the scholars, one of the most engaging activities of the pop lady that generates loyal fans is her approach to maintain close interaction to her fans, building

strong relationship, commitment and engagement to them through the web spaces (Nobel, 2011). Shaker and Hafiz (2014) defined that consumers become attracted to a brand because of certain attributes a brand develops through its personality. Likewise, in personal branding approach, individuals are expected to carry certain meaning with their brand personality portrayal in order to associate with group of people or a group of people to associate with them. Back to the Lady Gaga example, the personal brand she has portrayed as dynamic and extraordinary artist would seek to associate with someone who possess or would like to possess similar personal values and feel a certain level of attachment and engagement with her persona. According to the scholars, “the initial motives behind objectifying a personality in an online personal brand profile is to find an association with other personal brands which has similar connections so that both can complement the ultimate objective of getting connected to each other” (Shaker & Hafiz, 2014: p. 10).

This example provides insights that aiming to increase their social capital, individual artists may take actions to market their self-brand and position their online persona higher in the web community hierarchy. The particularities of the web spaces may enable them to build visibility for their art, talents and artistic competences, which would lead to recognition, networking and own community building. Having online presence both on personal homepage and social media might allow them to get popularity and approval through their own marketing efforts. Furthermore, virtual communities appear to be a perfect compromise between individuality and sociability in network society (Van Dijk, 1997), which offer opportunities for both private and public discussions, which for the artists might appear important for closer relationship building with their collectors.

2.3.3 Strategies for Self-marketing and Brand Building

Nowadays, the premise for personal branding is not only that everyone is enabled to construct their own identity, but also that an onus for the individuals is to be their own brand and market (Peters 1997, in Labrecque et al., 2011). As defined by the general literature, self-marketing consists of “those varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace, usually, (though not exclusively) for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment” (Shepherd, 2005: p. 590). According to Marshall (2010), the foundation of personal branding is that it may be associated with personal selling, which needs strategic planning and implementation. In the current section, more

practical and with focus on actual strategies explanation of the self-branding approaches will be presented. Offering an overview of the scholars' rules and branding techniques, will allow adequate analysis of artists' branding efforts and content online. What is more, delving into the actual techniques for self-presentation will enrich the study with concrete and more exponential explications of the self-branding concept, and will provide better understanding of the artists' approaches in their identity building and audience engagement.

Arruda (2003), who supported the claims that the personal branding process mirrors the corporate branding, defined three broad stages of self-presentation: extract, express, and exude. By 'Extract' Arruda (2003) defined the first stage of branding when individuals realize their brand values. Further, individuals have to construct a compelling personal brand statement around this attribute set, or the message that they spread; and lastly, individuals have to create a strategy for making the brand visible to the outside world. In such manner, the participants attempt to achieve their goals, engaging the public in different strategies or combination of strategies designed to promote their unique views, skills, or talents, as it was reflected in the Lady Gaga's example.

Among the first academics to outline not only the self-presentation, but also the communication approach of the brands online were Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011). The scholars observed the alteration processes in corporate communication that came with the advancement of the digital technologies and found that many brand executives are reluctant or unable to develop strategies and allocate resources to engage effectively with social media. In order to help address this gap, the academics developed and illustrated a honeycomb framework that will be used in the current study to evaluate artists' leveraging on their social media presence, their approaches and strategic marketing. In this section the theoretical concept of the honeycomb will be presented and in the Methods section its adaptation to the research design will be explained as it was used for the content analysis configuration.

The framework of Kietzmann et al. (2011) consists of seven social media building blocks that utilized individually and together, aim to help managers make sense of the social media ecology: *Identity, Conversations, Sharing, Presence, Relationships, Reputation, and Groups* (Figure 1). Each block is dedicated to specific facets of social media user experience and its implications for strategic online presence building for brands and individuals.

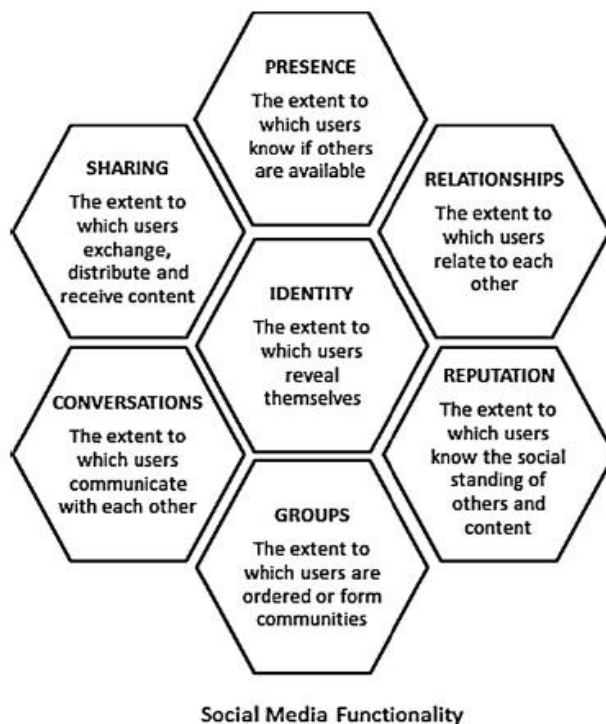


Figure 1. Classical Honeycomb Framework by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011): The seven functional blocks of social media

1) *Identity*

The identity functional block is a segment representing the extent to which users reveal their identities in a social media setting. It includes disclosing information such as name, age, gender, profession, location, and also information that portrays users in certain ways. In addition, when talking about the presentation of a user’s identity, it can often happen through the conscious or unconscious ‘self-disclosure’ of subjective information such as thoughts, feelings, likes, and dislikes. Thus, Kietzmann et al. (2011), similarly to what was previously mentioned, suggested that users and social media sites have different discourse preferences and aims, which determine their identity building strategies.

2) *Conversation*

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), the conversations block of the framework represents the extent to which users communicate with other users in a social media setting. The scholars defined that many social media sites are designed primarily to facilitate conversations among individuals and groups, and these conversations happen for all sorts of reasons. The enormous number and diversity of conversations that can take place in a social media setting enables the individuals to host and track these conversations in different

formats and implication. Depending on the social media particularities, real-time status updates, video presentation and messages of different nature are used as tools to establish meaningful dialogues. Kietzmann et al. (2011) argued that differences in the frequency and content of a conversation can have major implications for how firms monitor and make sense of the 'conversation velocity': the rate and direction of change in a conversation.

Another fundamental implication of conversation is the issue of firms starting or manipulating a conversation. This component implies topic setting, direction of the dialogue and which conversations to be followed, stimulated or derelict.

3) Sharing

Kietzmann et al. (2011) defined sharing as the extent to which users exchange, distribute, and receive content, or the extent of interaction of the users. According to the academics, the term 'social' often implies that exchanges between people are crucial and 'sociality' refers to the objects that mediate these ties between people. These objects define the reasons why people meet online and associate with each other. Kietzmann et al. (2011) suggested that there are at least two fundamental implications that the sharing block of the honeycomb comprises: the first one is the need to define what objects of sociality their users have in common; and the second is the degree to which the object is shared, or it is sharable. The academics argued that without these objects, no community and interaction can be built.

4) Presence

As defined by Kietzmann et al. (2011) this framework building block represents the extent to which users can know if other users are accessible. It includes knowing where others are, in the virtual world and/or in the real world, and whether they are available. In the classical honeycomb framework this segment defines user availability and location that have to be considered by the brand managers.

5) Relationship

Defined by Kietzmann et al. (2011) the relationships block represents the extent to which users can be related to other users. By 'relate,' the academics explained that two or more users have some form of association that leads them to converse, share objects of sociality, meet up, or simply just list each other as a friend or fan. Consequently, how users of a social media platform are connected often determines the what-and-how of information

exchange (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In some cases, these relationships are fairly formal, regulated, and structured. The academics explained that Facebook for example allows monitoring who is following who which reveals additional information. Meanwhile, on other platforms, relationships are informal and without structure, such as on Instagram no direct information about relationships is displayed.

6) Reputation

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), the reputation segment represents the extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves, in a social media setting. On social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, the components that build the reputation of one individual are based on endorsements from others, e.g. likes, shares, comments, and posts to page. The academics explained that as with the other blocks in the honeycomb framework, reputation has significant implications for how firms should effectively engage social media and build trust in the audience.

7) Groups

The seventh segment Kietzmann et al. (2011) call it 'Groups' as it represents the extent to which users can form communities and subcommunities. According to the scholars, the more 'social' a network becomes, the bigger the group of friends, followers, and contacts. Social media platforms have recognized that many communities grow well beyond the possible number in the organic communities, and offer tools that allow users to manage large membership. Kietzmann et al. (2011) defined two major types of groups: 1) individuals can sort through their contacts and place their buddies, friends, followers, or fans into different self-created groups (e.g., Twitter hashtag lists, etc.); 2) the second groups online can be analogous to clubs in the offline world: open to anyone, closed (approval required), or secret (by invitation only). This concept is important to understand the vast opportunities that the social web provides to the individuals to create their own community.

It should be noted that the huge success of the celebrity icons such as Britney Spears and Lady Gaga that were previously explained, often is due to hard work of large and savvy teams of professionals, who manage their social appearance based on similar to the honeycomb fundamental approaches and brand identity strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Marshall, 2010; Nobel, 2011). However, the non-celebrities or individuals who personally leverage their online persona building experience different challenges and

obstacles compared to the one that the companies do. In the following section, the particular challenges for individuals' self-presentation will be presented.

2.4.3. Challenges and Particularities of Self-branding

In the first place, a key challenge is attracting and keeping the audience interest in the vast social web information flow. According to Shepherd (2005), the individuals looking to achieve success and visibility on particular market are competing for attention together with hundreds of thousands of organizational brands and millions of other individuals seeking to carve out a personal business niche in the marketplace. Such competition in the Web 2.0 era is severe as the information flow is colossal due to the fact that all participants are enabled to generate loads of their own content. The scholar emphasized that a tiny fraction of the population (the celebrities) benefit from a majority of public awareness and the other individuals who aim to position their personal brand must be aware of these distribution processes when shaping their strategies (Shepherd, 2005).

Second key challenge, according to the scholars, is the difficulties that appear when segmenting the presented information (Labrecque et al., 2011; Shepherd, 2005). The academics defined that a personal branding message should be made clear and consistent, creating an air of authenticity (Labrecque et al., 2011; Shepherd, 2005). Some people lack strategy when building their content, sometimes due to unclear brand integrity. Moreover, this indicates vague targeting which might lead to ineffective personal brand management (Shepherd, 2005). In order to have efficient personal branding construction individuals need to focus on one area of achievement or ability in order to be able to develop a coherent brand image, as having several brand identities run the risk of having them contaminate or undermine one another in the marketplace (Shepherd, 2005).

2.5. Self-branding & Visual Artists

Visual artists can be seen as specific artistic brands as they offer unique type of image creation, incorporating variety of expressions, sentiments and messages in their oeuvre. The final part of the literature framework links back to the arts world and more precisely to the individual artists, who can be seen as brand persona, entrepreneur and autonomous business. This section aims to outline and conceptualize what can be considered autonomy of the artists, what are the branding specifics and marketing essentials for the individual artist and their products promotion.

As it was previously stated in the theoretical overview, arts market has shifted to a more consumer-driven market (Arora & Vermeyleylen, 2013), which scholars see it as an accelerator of the processes of commercialization and liberation of the arts trading. Thus, competition also increases and art producers can decide to make strategic efforts to position themselves on the market in order to reach broader audience. In the broader branding definitions of artistic persona creation, the so called 'studio model' of creating an artwork is well-known, where the name of a renowned artist stands behind many visual art productions, but the actual work has been created by contracted, often nameless artists (Alexander & Bowler, 2014). Thus, one artist name is spread to a large number of artworks, increasing the income of the brand and enlarging the supply of the artist's product (Alexander & Bowler, 2014). Such practices bring up the question to what extent artists' success and quality valuation is dependent on the intermediaries' validation or on the marketing strategies and efforts for positioning on the marketplace (Alexander & Bowler, 2014) In the current research, such concept will be observed from the perspective of the artists' self-branding efforts and whether building identity via new media tools can be seen as enough powerful instrument for marketing success and autonomous artwork trading in the new media realm.

According to Schroeder (2005), every visual artist is a brand as they intend to build a recognizable look, name, and style through their art, which fulfill the brand concepts. Although, the scholar examined how contemporary artists can contribute to the brands advertising creation, in his argumentation he defined that the conventional visual artworks are symbols assembled around visual brand with specific style or look. According to him, art branding is a "powerful representation system that produces knowledge through discursive practice and emotional connections" (Schroeder, 2005, p. 1293). These features stay in the core of an artistic production. For such reasons, not only the market-orientated artists that strategically promote themselves as 'recognizable products' in search of popularity and commercial success, but also the one that do not undertake strategic branding, can be interpreted as brands, since the creation of images and potentially recognizable style are intrinsic to the art production.

Scholars that research how the concept of self-marketing can be potentially useful for the individual visual artists to build their audience suggested that authors should strategically make use of their individuality (Lehman, 2009; Schroeder, 2005). Lehman (2009)

identified two key theoretical models that can be applied for the purposes of self-marketing. The first one, imply a model where the self-presentation includes marketing activities undertaken by professionals conducting the business as *sole traders*. The second one, which Lehman (2009) recognized as more relevant to the arts world, is where self-branding is perceived as a *career objective*. The latter, concerns an environment where people are marketing themselves and their career as a brand (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). Lehman (2009) suggested that artists such as Salvador Dali, and more recently, Damien Hirst, are seen as masters of self-marketing, and as global artist brands. Being natural self-promoters, these examples demonstrate that it is possible for visual artists to possess a distinctive and valuable brand (Lehman, 2009). Indeed, as Schroeder (2005) observed, art marketing strategies, such as creation of distinctive products, cross-media brand expansion, and exclusivity presentation, can be successfully utilized by the individual artists.

Besides, the opportunity to create a strong autonomous artistic identity can be seen as immensely attractive for those artists who operate outside of the representative structures of the traditional art world, such as street or self-employed artists. Barbour (2013) examined the self-presentation strategies of the street artists and explored that they function without gatekeepers, through the use of free platforms, mobile technologies and comparatively low cost data connections. Since the street art has its differences with the conventional art in terms of validation and legality, the artists represent themselves through creating to some extent a 'fake persona', keeping distance from their physical/legal selves (Barbour, 2013). They construct an off-line and online persona that functions to validate their self-identification as 'artist' and to present their art to a geographically, culturally and socially diverse audience (Barbour, 2013). According to Barbour (2013), street artists have managed to create, control and distribute their online persona in various ways, utilizing it mainly for self-protection, reputation and documentation. For the street artist, the identities created through Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, blogs and forums are deliberate creations that work as tools to demonstrate that the artist is real artist, and allow them to maintain their brand (Barbour, 2013).

However, a topic that should not be neglected is the controversial opinions in the literature about the business sides of the artists and to what extent they are compatible to the fine arts essentials. According to Abbing (2004) differences in the understanding of the artistic profile as a brand appear from the romantic, intellectual, disciplinary, and semiotic

conceptualization of the arts market. The scholars observe that such contradictions build separation of the arts and business, or brand. Over the last decades, alteration and weakening of the romantic order in the arts is seen, along with the commercialization of the arts caused by the changing behavior of some of the big art institutions such as museums and intermediaries that started using conventional marketing techniques for art promotion (Abbing, 2004). Further, such commercial processes were also observed for individual artists (Abbing, 2004). According to Abbing (2004), even when particular artists or galleries show off their anti-commercial attitude, they still use rational strategies and communicate messages to the broad audience to express their irrationality. Thus, deliberately or not, when participating on the marketplace, each contributor has its own brand identity and brand message. Abbing (2004) claimed that the use of rational strategies by artists and art companies is not incompatible with romantic order since artists with anti-commercial attitudes often reap greater financial gains. Even so, the scholar stated that the use of deliberate rational techniques in the arts is still not widely accepted. Moreover, as other academics also observed, the art world joined the process of professional rationalization with a delay compared to the other business areas (Abbing, 2004; Alexander & Bowler, 2014).

The given examples of brand persona creation both from the music and art world that were given so far in the theoretical overview show the power of the Internet to transform the culture and the creative world. Undoubtedly, as Panay (2011) noted, one of the most fascinating things in the artists participation online is “the way that the performer community has adjusted to all of these changes both by seizing opportunities that did not exist a few years ago as well as by adapting to the new landscape of the industry— and by adopting and co-opting revenue generating ideas from other industries and applying them to their trade” (p. 59). For instance, scholars assumed that the customer-value approach, which has proved to be successful in commercial business, is also the best approach for marketing the arts as long as it is applied within the constraints of the artistic mission (Boorsma, 2006). According to Boorsma (2006), who studied the strategic logic for arts marketing through the lens of the arts organizations, during the past 25 years, arts marketing has developed into a mature academic discipline, where the marketing approaches have adopted ‘customer-centered’ mechanisms. This requires that the arts entities systematically study consumers’ needs and wants, perceptions and attitudes, as well as their preferences and levels of

satisfaction, and acts on this information to improve what is offered (Kotler & Scheff 1997, in Boorsma, 2006). However, Boorsma (2006) noted that there are some limitations of the customer approach when talking about arts and creative industries and the performance can also decline when arts organizations are too customer focused. Caust (2003) and Nielsen (2003) argued that the adoption of businesslike language and philosophies in the arts scene may increase the risk of making artistic sacrifices. Caust (2003) suggested that a businesslike approach “will lead to the production of safe, consumer-oriented arts products which, in the end, may not be what the audience either wants or needs” (p. 58). According to the scholars, this unintended effect can be called the ‘arts marketing pitfall’ and it is important to bear in mind when analyzing artists’ marketing approaches online. As Colbert (2003) stated: “The artistic product does not exist to fulfil a market need ... Instead of seeking to meet consumers’ needs by offering them a product they desire, the arts manager seeks consumers who are attracted to the product” (p. 31). Thus, the customer-centred approach should not be applied to the artwork itself, but instead applied to the way the work is described, priced, packaged, enhanced and delivered in order the marketing pitfall to be evaded (Boorsma, 2006).

These concepts are important to be mentioned when investigating artists’ marketing approaches as individuals can also face difficulties and challenges in their desire to engage larger audience and create their own market space. Boorsma (2006) explained that the cases for and against the customer-value approach are both well thought out and according to her, both views contain important truths. Therefore, the bipolar concepts should not be rejected as most artists and arts organizations need an audience to exist and that audience building is one of the main tasks of arts management.

2.5.2. Artists as Entrepreneurs

With the assumption of autonomy, artistic creation and arts marketing can be defined as independent tasks, each maintaining its own logic and responsibilities. According to Boorsma (2006), this ultimately presupposes that the arts marketing task of finding and building audiences can be undertaken without affecting or changing the artistic results. From a self-managerial point of view, some scholars defined the successful artists as the one that “manage to have their work widely exhibited, bought, and collected” (Schroeder, 2005: p. 1293). Others see success for the authors that can be thought of as brand managers with

entrepreneurial sense - actively engaged in developing, nurturing, and promoting themselves in the competitive cultural sphere (Sjöholm & Pasquinelli, 2014). According to Bridgstock (2007), artists who want to make a livable income based solely on their own abilities to manage and produce quality art, need to learn a new set of skills including entrepreneurship and advertising. Colbert (2003) noted that when referring to entrepreneurship and leadership in arts marketing, these concepts must be congruent with the targeted market as well as with the organization's (artists') mission. Scholars suggest that although, art creation is a self-contained phenomenon, it is also presumed that art production and consumption are essentially communicative acts, which imply interference of the art consumer in the final stage of arts marketing, valuation and even production (Boorsma, 2006). Nowadays the arts are seen as a culturally and socially embedded phenomenon and considered the product of social interaction (Boorsma, 2006). As Boorsma (2006) argued "This relational view has implications for the concept of artistic value. The assumption that artistic value can be realized autonomously, independently of the patronage of arts consumers, is no longer valid." (p. 75). However, the topic of the autonomy of art and the role of the art consumer as a co-producer of art performance is large itself. For the current study, it is important only to be given the frame that indeed as entrepreneurs artists have to be conscious of the consequences of the customer-orientated approaches when creating their marketing and self-promotion activities online. In today's world, the relational view of art implies that the art consumer has changed from a passive recipient into an active participant and arts consumers provide a valuable contribution to the achievement of the artistic objectives. They complete the work of art by giving meaning to the new metaphor and by acknowledging its artistic value (Boorsma, 2006) and being entrepreneurial, artists have to consider the alterations on the market in order to be able to self-promote and be successful.

Bridgstock (2012) examined the concept of art entrepreneurship and she outlined the benefits it brings for the individual artists to create their career as self-employed and self-managed entities. Comprising in the definition of art entrepreneurship the processes of application, sharing and distribution of creative work, the scholar emphasized the importance for the artists to create their business model, marketing strategy and social network. According to Bridgstock (2012), the onus of creating a career is on the individual artist and the professional artists need to be entrepreneurial (Bridgstock, 2012). Combined

with the concepts of perceiving ones' personality as a strategically constructed brand on the web, the artists are enabled to manage their brand, adapting to the changing environment and sizing new opportunities for market positioning.

The various ways that the individuals can create, control and distribute their online personas provide different understanding of how artists can implement digital technologies for the purposes of identity construction, work validation and introduction. Benefiting from the ability to engage in self-presentation and impression management (Goffman, 1959), and to create the desired identity on the web spaces (Hogan, 2010; Labrecque et al.,2011; Manago et al., 2008; Miller, 1995; Uski & Lampinen, 2014), the artists are one of the social groups which can imply these mechanisms in their labor practices and to label their expertise. In an environment where the work and the classification are highly dependent on the intermediary institutions, the artists are left with limited options for self-definition of their career. However, the social spaces may appear to be an alternative to escape from the selective nature of the conventional art world.

2.5.3. Autonomy of the Artists

Abbing (2004) explored the profile of the autonomous artist from the Renaissance time till nowadays in order to make the claim that the prediction that the autonomous artist would disappear in the modern world is groundless. According to the scholar, the creativity of the artists brings far more autonomy than the average performing artist and stated that there are areas in the arts where this might appear as a challenge, but looking at the wide art market such transformations is unlikely to happen. Furthermore, the academic concluded that the actual autonomy of the successful artists that operate with the arts industry tends to grow with the career establishment. Thus, the established artists are more likely to build autonomous careers as some have started their own galleries and art spaces in order to be liberated from the third parties (Abbing, 2004). For debutant and emerging artists self-employment can sometimes be a sign of autonomy. However, when they join the art institutions, or start to explore the market for independent creative artists, their autonomy is reduced as they are influenced by the industry environment (Abbing, 2004). Abbing (2004) explained that later on in their career successful artists, both in and outside the cultural industries, manage to increase their autonomy once again because of their name recognition.

Many are the possible interpretation levels of what an autonomy concept can imply. It can consist of notions such as community, authenticity, production, distribution, and distinction from the conventional system. Therefore, all conscious activities of the artists aiming at self-exposure and self-realization, setting control over the dialogue around their art by themselves, can be considered as attempts to be autonomous and to some extent to circumvent the intermediaries. However, noteworthy is that 'circumventing the intermediaries' does not necessarily mean entirely abandonment of all kinds of networks and relationships with intermediaries on the arts market. Rather, it would mean searching for self-realization relying on own skills. In the current study, the focus is more on the new ways that artists are enabled to represent themselves and their work to various audiences through the Internet opportunities and to find realization opportunities.

Having these justifications considered, the research design that follows the same conceptualization will be presented.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Rationale

3.1 Qualitative Research Methods

In order to observe the processes related to the set research question and sub-questions, mixed qualitative method including content analysis and in-depth interviews was used. An inductive approach based on the investigation of ten artists was applied to examine their practices, strategies and incentives for self-presentation on the social networking platforms. According to Snape and Spencer (2003), qualitative approaches “provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of the researched participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories” (p. 3). Furthermore, qualitative study is “richer in the meanings, concepts, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (Berg, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, for the purposes of the current research, the qualitative approach was found appropriate to examine the appearance of the individual artists on the web space, how they utilize the new media opportunities for self-branding and identity creation, and what the new opportunities for audience engagement are. The research design aimed at identifying models, aspects and trends in the personal perceptions about the artwork promotion strategies, artistic identity building and work processes alternations.

According to Snape and Spencer (2003), the strengths of qualitative data are recognized in terms of realism, richness and longitudinal perspective, locating the meaning of the researched phenomena within its context. As the context and process components are the most significant for the qualitative research approach (Berg, 2004), the outlined theoretical overview will serve as a basis for the research process. The context of the investigation is important in order to understand the social behavior, the social choices that the researched artists have decided to make and to analyze the consequences of their activities. The contextual processes are essential for the relevance and accuracy of the final findings (Berg, 2004).

The examined individual cases for the current study will be used to frame an analytical concept answering the set research topics. According to Yin (2009), the multiple-case study research, chosen for the current master thesis, provides more robust, extensive and independent research that will serve for wide-ranging data gathering and will provide the study with broad aspects for analysis. These positives of the multiple investigations will

sustain the studied propositions with relevant information and larger scope that will allow various perspectives to be obtained and various trends to be detected, strengthening the theory grounding (Eisenhardt, 1989).

For the purposes of the content analysis, existing theories concerning the application of social media in general business operation and general theories about strategies for online persona building through personal homepages were used. These elements of the research design will be further clarified in the Data Collection section.

3.2 Units of analysis

The unit of analysis selected for the current study is a random sampling of ten international visual artists, active in their self-presentation approaches on the web, maintaining an active webpage and at least two social media channels for artistic persona building. The criteria for the selected artists were: to be international; to have already built following base (+1,000 followers); to have had presentational and promotional activity on their pages within the last month; and to be accessible. As previously explained, the reason for observing international artists was that the limitations of researching local marketplace or closed art communities, which have their own specifics and inner processes, were avoided. Thus, the trends on global scale can be studied, broadening the significance of the results and adding value to previous research, which study the globalization implications of the Internet over the arts world. Certainly, one of the major premises of the Internet is its international and global reach.

The study sample consists of artists located in North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia, all of them operating locally and internationally. Also, they were selected to be at different age and career advancement in order to detect if specific trends and behavior for particular artists' groups are observed, who are the artists that more actively promote online and what are the different objectives for the different groups.

Unfortunately, no single source of information, such as artists ranking, was found appropriate as there is lack of variety of such classifications online. Besides, the one that were found available, list very famous artists that are hard to be reached and the probability that their online presence is leveraged by themselves was not found high. Their online presence was exclusive and not appropriate for the purposes of the research. Therefore, the researched artists were found mostly through snowball effect, tracking artists' profiles through art communities, various artists' followers and followings.

Over 50 international artists that correspond to these criteria were contacted in March 2015. However, few responded, and ten were willing to participate in the research. The study sample consists of painters, illustrators, sculptors and figurative artists. In Appendix 1 detailed information about the artists' considered status (Emerging / Established; Signed / Unsigned) according to their interviews declaration, nationality, age, utilized social media and web platforms, and followings are presented. The artists sampling selection was aimed to be rich in diversity and to consist of both emerging and established artists in order for trends in the two groups to be identified; also, the nationality was a leading factor in order to explore processes worldwide, not only in some areas with advanced technological development.

3.3 Time period & particulars

The data was collected in March and April, 2015. The artists were contacted via e-mail, Facebook message or contact form on their website. Firstly, content analysis of the webpages was conducted in order to obtain more information about the artist's personality. Secondly, the most active social media channel/s were analyzed and after that interviews with all artists were conducted. The purpose of such research structure was to have thorough understanding and adequate reflection over the artists' identities and accurate insights to be drawn during the interviews.

3.4 Data collection

In order to provide the study with coherent and relevant data for analysis a clear concept about the aim of the sought information and its process of analysis should be determined (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt, 1989). For the purposes of the study, mixed qualitative research method was adopted consisting of three parts: content analysis of webpages; content analysis of two social media profiles; and in-depth interviews. It should be noted that for the two content analysis pre-defined sections and categories of research were set; however, open-coding approach was applied in order for the most relevant results to be outlined.

3.3.1. Content Analysis of Personal Home Page

The content analysis of the artists' webpages was conducted in order to observe how the researched artists are presenting themselves to the audience, what online personality they have built, what their communicational approach is and how accessible they are. The coding

criteria were developed based on Smith's (1998) taxonomy of web-based invitational strategies concept that was presented in the theoretical overview. The scholar's model was found appropriate as it covers the general presentational strategies online and allows integrate analysis to be made. Yet, the theoretical base was further developed and adjusted to meet the particular needs of the current research, thus, additional criteria were included. To refer it another time, Smith (1998) conceptualized the following strategies in online persona building: *personality building* (identity), *personal expertise*, *external validation* (e.g. awards and distinctions listing upon the site), *vertical hierarchies* (the position of items on the page from top to bottom), *feedback mechanisms* (e-mail, comments, guestbook, and others) and *direct address* (accessibility to the individual).

Based on Smith's (1998) classification and its modification for the study, five sections of observation were developed for the coding book:

- 1) *Personality*: consisting of observations over the content type and message; external validations presentation and outlining of the identity building approach;
- 2) *Competence*: consisting of analysis of the qualifications, abilities, skills and talents presented;
- 3) *Vertical Hierarchies*: whereby the different section and categories on the website were observed and their positioning on the home page was analyzed;
- 4) *Profile Integrity*: whereby the accessibility of the artists was estimated and their approach to build a complete online identity, associating their social media profiles and other online presence to their main identity building resource;
- 5) *Communication & Marketing Strategy*: whereby the promotional content, the integrated communication channels, feedback mechanisms and direct selling approaches were analyzed.

Such category separation provided the research with thorough database for analysis and helped in identifying similarities and differences in the artists' approaches.

3.3.2. Content Analysis of Social Media Profile

Based on the preparatory research and artists' interview responses the two most utilized social media channels by each artist were identified and content analysis over the displayed information there was conducted. The content analysis observed what strategies the researched artists use in building their promotional and presentational campaigns, what

messages they use to interact to the audience, what relationship and connections they make on the social web. In order to construct the self-branding analysis as close as possible to the corporate brand identity building, the coding criteria were drawn on existing theories concerning the application of social media in general business operation. The aforementioned in the literature review honeycomb framework by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) was used as a leading configuration of the research design as it will allow structured analysis to be conducted and the strategies that the artists utilize to be better conceptualized. The segments of each block are adjusted for the specific needs of the current research and following their theoretical explanation and implication for the artists brand analysis was outlined. The framework was modified as follows:

- 1) *Identity*: the extent to which artists reveal their identities in the social media setting. For the purposes of the current study, the self-disclosing information displayed in the section 'About' was coded; the presented profile and cover picture were identified; exploited and unexploited links of other online profiles were detected; and other subjective information about the artists was analyzed in this segment.
- 2) *Conversation*: artists' activities such as messages, posting frequency, content diversity and manipulation of the conversation were analyzed in this segment.
- 3) *Sharing*: in this segment the interactivity of the artists' content was evaluated; interactions from the audience (comments, likes, shares, etc.) and their participation was observed. Furthermore, the utilization of special tools and social web features, such as hashtagging and special apps, was observed.
- 4) *Presence*: for the purposes of the current study, this conception was generally modified and was used to observe how reachable the artists are and to what extent their presence online is tied to their real persona. More precisely, the displayed contacts, to whom the messages are addressed and what tone of voice the artists use to communicate, such as more intimate or more natural informative, was analyzed. These features were found appropriate to evaluate the artists' online presence.
- 5) *Relationship (Audience Relationship)*: in the context of the current research, this segment is used to identify the relationship that the artists establish to their online audience. What connections they have established, their commitment and association to the audience and their engagement (responding to the audience, participating in the dialogue, etc.) were analyzed.

6) *Reputation*: hereby the comments content, made by the audience, the posts to the artists' pages and other users' participation on the artists' pages were observed.

Further the marketing approach and features of the artists themselves were evaluated in this section.

7) *Groups (Community & Networking)*: in the current study, observations over built community, followers base and contacts (where possible) were made.

In order to obtain a holistic picture about the artists' activities on the social web, additional tools were used to contribute and provide more information to the content analysis. In particular, in analyzing the Facebook pages the web research analytical tool LikeAlyzer was used for data systematization and general evaluation of the artists' performance. It was used to estimate the engagement rate of their fan pages, posting frequency, number of likes, shares and comments from users. The obtained rates were integrated in the content analysis findings. For the other social media platforms, such tools are not available for general usage and it was not possible to make use of them.

3.3.3. Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with all artists from the sample in order to examine the way they leverage the social networks for self-presentation, the extent to which they have adopted the social web in their practices, what their incentives to be online are and what transformations the new virtual realm has inculcated in their artistic world.

Scholars described several types of interview design as a research method. As Ritchie and Lewis (2003) state, the in-depth interviews are an appropriate investigation tool to reveal information about decisions, motivations and behavior insights. Moreover, the personal focus allows comprehensive, thorough and methodical observations to be made, facilitating the outcomes, implications and exploration. Some of the interviews were conducted on Skype, others via e-mail. These two different options were made possible for the artists to choose as the time zone differences, their workload and the language were obstacles for some of them to lead a live conversation.

For both the live conversations and the e-mail interviews, the interviewing model was designed based on Patton (2002) categorization, applying the type described as *the interview guide*, or the *topical approach* (Patton, 1975, in Marshall and Rossman, 2010). This type of interview implies preliminarily set topics for conversation along with freedom of the

interviewees way of answering the questions and unfolding their individual perspective and perceptions (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The set topics (themes) were *Building Identity Online, Audience Relationship, Networking and Fundraising, Changes and Opportunities, and Challenges* on the web. For each segment there were guiding and directing questions, which the artists had the opportunity to respond directly to, to interpret, ignore or to further develop the question.

Firstly, the key respondents were inquired general information about their considered status (Emerging/Established; Signed/Self-employed), who is their prime audience and who manages their publicity. The information obtained of these questions revealed more about the environment and the profile of each artist.

Secondly, questions about their incentives to maintain an artistic online presence and their perceptions about the social media as a self-presentation tool were inquired. Questions about their online strategy in building their web identity, the leading social media channels they utilize and self-branding approaches were discussed. Furthermore, their participation in the niche art platforms, such as Saatchi Art, Artsy, etc., was conversed.

Next, the artists were inquired about the relations they have managed to build or seek with the audience online. The alterations in the communication and the way the artists reach their audience now and 5 years ago were discussed, and also their current strategies for engaging potential audiences were discussed.

The next block of questions aimed to obtain information about the extent to which artists apply social media for networking with other professionals and/or art intermediaries. Such question was important in order to understand the processes online and to be able to evaluate artists' profile managing more accurately. Furthermore, this question gave more insights and diverse aspect of analysis about the new media transforming effect over the different facet of the art system, yet part of the traditional hierarchy in arts.

The last two blocks of inquiry were dedicated to the challenges that the artists have in maintaining an online personality and the changes they observe in the arts market and art world due to the new media invasion. The most significant outcomes sought in these sections were to identify the extent to which the online community is influencing the artists' work, how the arts hierarchies are transforming and what are artist' future plans for their online presence construction.

The interviews were recorded and the answers were coded (typed on transcripts) in order for the data to be analyzed. The two content analyses were open-coded and in the results chapter the three datasets were analyzed and reported in parallel.

3.5 Data Analysis

For the data analysis, an inductive approach, as described by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), was applied. The inductive content analysis allows the data to be organized by re-structuring and content re-ordering with the purpose common patterns, trends and possible categorization to be outlined. The collected data was analyzed in a descriptive way through observations and categorization or classification, where applicable. Since there is no standard for interview data analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989), the process of data studying was developed in the course of the interviews designing and based on the content analysis. A driving factor for the data analysis was the objective and unbiased observation of the findings.

According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), the report design should be structured around categories and core themes in order for better understanding, knowledge and phenomenon descriptions to be provided. After all relevant findings and important information were grouped into categories, core themes emerged and the analysis was organized following their logic.

3.6 Limitations

Among the qualitative researchers there is a dispute about the relevancy of the case study research design for generalization and building a robust and objective theory through qualitative research methods (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). The problems appear because of the quantity of the collected data as qualitative research methods often apply much smaller samples than quantitative research design. However, as Yin (2009) suggests, the individual case studies can be generalized to theoretical propositions and to keep relevance to the studied concepts. In addition, the qualitative approach is difficult to replicate in different circumstances as its unstructured nature does not facilitate such reproduction.

In addition, the subjective interpretation of the data due to the researcher background knowledge, own expectations, experience or perspectives, have to be taken as a limitation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Nonetheless, qualitative research design is the most appropriate for the aims and objectives of the current study as it allows obtaining in-depth information about the particular activities of the studied artists. The mentioned above

limitations are part of the nature of the qualitative methods and should not be neglected. However, a quantitative methodology will not provide sufficient information for the set research topics, as it is not suitable for inductive analysis and the current study.

Noteworthy is that some of the research results are also very subjective, such as considered status. Some of the artists were not able to clearly respond to this question and they were considered as 'in-between' (two out of the ten artists – Appendix 1). Furthermore, sometimes mismatch of what were the impressions from the web research and the interviewee consideration about their status were found. However, the statements of the artists themselves were accepted as relevant and accurate as through web research not all the necessary information is disclosed and assumptions about career progress cannot be made. Thus, no pure claims and statements about the trends or differences among established/emerging artists can be made and the collected data have to be reported consciously.

At last, two out of the ten artists wished to remain anonymous and their names are changed. For the other eight artists their real names (artistic alias) are used in the results report.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

In presenting the current qualitative results, the analysis chapter is organized in a narrative way conceptualizing the findings in a logical order that describes the incentives of the researched artists to be online, what opportunities provides the web space, how they construct identity, and what anxieties they have in maintaining a virtual persona. Further, artists' reflections about the changing audience and environment in the digital age are discussed. In the current chapter the findings of the collected data will be presented and in the discussion section further debate and important concepts will be expounded.

One of the first things to be outlined is the fact that all the ten artists have come to realize the advantages of an online presence for marketing purposes. All of them manage their publicity autonomously via Internet and have both physical and online performances. They all maintain an active personal webpage and leverage more than one social media platform, part of their artistic persona construction and talent presentation. As Bridgstock (2012) suggested, the onus of creating a career and recognition is on the individual artist. The various actors that were investigated have embraced self-presentation on the web in its many forms, though at different speeds and with different intensity. Noteworthy is that the analysis did not provide evidences to argue that established artists put less efforts in their digital representation than the emerging ones or vice versa. Artists from both groups were found to maintain strong presence and strategic promotion tactics, digitalizing their art and showcasing it. In addition, the age or nationality differences also did not appear to be pivotal for the artists' promotional activity on the web and no evidences for interrelations between these elements can be asserted. All artists were found to attempt to make the most of the web, based on their personal skills, capabilities and objectives. As Colbert (2003) noted, the concept of arts marketing is supposed to be congruent with the artists' mission and their art itself. With this in mind, the different cases and attitudes of the artists will be presented and the relations or contradictions of their actions will be explained.

According to the theoretical framework, individuals have various motivations and goals when building their personal branding online (Gershon, 2014). Likewise, artists' incentives also were found to vary. To great extent what Labrecque et al. (2011) suggested for the incentives of the professional adults, the artists also claimed to be online for presenting their skills and proficiency, intending to attract audience, contacts, commissions and self-realization. Most of the artists are on the web to make their art popular, to build

international brand, to stay autonomous of third parties in their representation and career development or to set control over their online image.

In Table 1 the major incentives that each artist gave as leading motivations are presented. The table also reveals general personal and career details (up to March 2015) about the studied artists as an introduction to their persona, which is important for better understanding of the current analysis. The presented motives in the table are the ones that the artists listed from their subjective perspective, and are based on the interviews.

Artist	Status	Nationality	Age	Main Incentive	Social Media	Followers
<i>Maya Bee</i>	Established	Armenian	31	To share work	Facebook Instagram	268,830 13,3K
<i>Jonty Hurwitz</i>	Emerging	British	45	To build a brand; Sales	Facebook Twitter	170,064 2,153
<i>Aaron Nagel</i>	In-between*	American	35	Control over his online presence; To be independent in his art promotion	Instagram Facebook *Private Profile	30,1K 5,600+
<i>Ashley Longshore</i>	Established	American	39	To be independent in her art promotion	Instagram Facebook	14,2K 2,220
<i>Kathy Ostman-Magnusen</i>	In-between*	Scandinavian	66	Recognition; Sales	Twitter	6,450
<i>Rossina Bossio</i>	Emerging	Colombian	29	To reach international audience; To receive feedback; For motivation; Sales	Facebook Instagram	4,217 1,173
<i>Masato Shigemori</i>	Emerging	Japanese	35	Recognition	Facebook	3,921
<i>Andre Woolery</i>	Emerging	Jamaica (*residing	33	Awareness; Engagement;	Facebook Instagram	2,163 2,229

		both in U.S. and Jamaica)		Distribution		
<i>William C.</i>	Emerging	American (*residing in Germany)	26	Share work; Receive feedback; Awareness	Instagram Tumblr	1,262
<i>Robert Lee Davis</i>	Established	American (*residing in Australia)	52	To maintain an artistic presence; To inform his clients about his current activities	Flickr Instagram	190

**'In-between' is the response of the artist. The content analysis inclined to suggest status of established artist based on the presented experience and artistic background. However, both assumptions are subjective.*

Table 1: Artists' profile and main incentives

Consequently, three main topics of discussion can be outlined for setting the current results report: 1) *Self-presentation of the artists on the Internet*; 2) *Virtual audiences and arts public on the web*; and 3) *Autonomy of the artists in the new media realm*. The findings showed that regardless the career advancement (i.e. both emerging and established), the artists are on the web for self-marketing, visibility and engaging larger audiences. In alliance to these, the artists also discussed the objective to sell online and distribute their work through social media.

4.1. Self-presentation of the Artists on the Web

One of the first things to be outlined is the fact that most of the researched artists have developed to a certain extent branding strategies and they manage their online presence deliberately. Since they were chosen based on their following and online popularity, such results were expected. However, it was observed that regardless of the number of the followers, some of the less famous on the web artists had more focused self-marketing approaches than some that had become very popular. The data analysis showed that these paradoxes are due to the initial time difference of starting their online persona building and community establishment. Thus, the analysis showed that in long term, it is important the time span of the self-brand on the web for of the community width and following popularity.

With this convention, the further analysis will focus and emphasize primarily on the artists' activities, rather than on their following and community base.

As Arruda (2003) and Papacharissi (2002) suggested, individuals mobilize their social and psychological characteristics as a starting point for their self-presentation, realizing their brand values and defining the intents of their online self-disclosure. The content analysis showed that each artist has chosen different approach in his/her presentational strategy. Some artists were found to rely more on artworks presentation, while others represent through self-disclosing information such as philosophy, emotions and ideology, according to the values of their art and personalities. As explained in the theoretical overview, realizing their brand identity, people present what they consider their best capabilities and strengths in order to construct the desired vision of themselves (Goffman, 1959). Deciding their representational approach online, the majority of artists were found to build their identity through artworks, talent attributes and/or artistic inspirations. As Goffman (1959) defined, individuals calculate their self-presentation activities to foster understanding, given definitions and to validate their personality in the society. Artists' expressive resources are their competences, talents, philosophy, views and perceptions about the world encompassed in their art. The artists aim to communicate their message and to reveal more about their art and personality through the web channels. However, even the self-disclosing information and approaches differed. On one hand, some artists had very immersive texts, philosophical, spiritual and emotional revelations, leading the audience to their inner world and showing where their art come from. On the other hand, some artists maintained minimalistic personal information revelations and their line was to present their personality solely through the image of the artworks, adding simple technical information or painting particularities, but not too much explanations. Both tactics were found appropriate and successful as for instance Aaron Nagel and Jonty Hurwitz, who are one of the most popular online artists from the sample, had these two distinctive approaches and they both received good engagement rates and audience interaction. Hence, it can be argued that the outcome of the self-marketing depends not only on the content, but also on the way it is presented.

Few artists explained that new media allows them to create a story, dialogue and background for a piece of artwork that further contextualizes it for a viewer. Andre Woolery, digital savvy artist, shared that his social media followers get to know more about a piece of artwork compared to just seeing it on his website. He is sharing work in progress

in order for his audience to know when an art piece started, how it progressed, when it was completed, where it has traveled, potentially who bought it, what it means to him, and much more. Revealing these processes to the audience, the artists seek engagement to the community. Many of the artists had similar to this approaches and they have come to realize the importance of growing their community online, trying to achieve it through various strategies and touch points that will be further discussed. However, firstly the identity building on the personal homepages and the self-presentation tactics on the social media will be reported and building upon this information the audience relationships will be analyzed.

4.1.1. Identity Building on the Personal Webpage

Commonly, on their personal webpages the researched artists built identity through biographical presentations, personal ideology and texts about the philosophy behind their art. Based on which side artists want to emphasize - personal qualifications or art style and inspirations, the information on the website was configured in a different manner.

According to Hogan (2010), when an individual enters the presence of others, they seek to acquire information about each other and are interested in their identities. Online, this presence is the personal homepage from where one can find information about the other person. Realizing this self-presentation rule, the majority of the artists exposed detailed information about themselves on their webpage through sections such as 'About', 'Bio', or similar. These sections displayed personal information such as the artist's background, education, exhibitions and other activities that matter to the accurate portray of their personality. Similarly to what was presented in the literature review, the artists created autobiographical windows (Eleanor, 1997) offering the random viewer a glimpse of a construction of their self. Some artists used CV style with background information and competences to build their identity, which Silfverberg et al. (2011) defined as '*Profiles as product*' approach; others preferred autobiographical approach, while third only revealed information around their artworks and ideas behind, without presenting extensive information of their personality. The latter can be seen as '*Cycle of interpretation*' profiles as defined by Silfverberg et al. (2011), where the artists direct their own behavior through expectations of how the audience will interpret the content they share, in this situation – the artworks and concept ideas.

Most of the researched artists presented along with the personal information external validations such as press publications, awards and distinctions. Although, generally no relation between the career status and the type of displayed presentational information was found, an interesting finding was that the youngest artist from the sample – William C. (26 years old emerging artist), displayed information about his work mostly by utilizing external sources such as interviews and publications, instead of self-presentation texts. Apart of his CV, the content analysis of his webpage revealed that he presents his competences through commissions, projects and awards. It can be suggested that he has adopted such approach in order to declare his proficiency and competences. As the theorists defined, depending on the set goals, the individuals shape the strategies employed in their personal home pages (Papacharissi, 2002). For the emerging artists, it might be seen as important for professional credits to be demonstrated. In the interview, William C. explained that yet his website does not have an identity and yet he is not very consistent in his self-marketing strategy online, but he has a vision to modify his online persona with his career advancement. Therefore, it can be argued that with the experience, the artists are better building their brand identity and are more likely to engage in brand names. This concept can be linked to the brand model ('studio model') explained by Alexander and Bowler (2014), suggesting that when an artist become a renowned one he can create a brand name and the quality production that stands for this name is not doubted, no matter who has created the work. Understanding that the name and recognition in the arts is important, artists try to present their uniqueness and exclusiveness.

Many artists were found to explain in details their technique, most commonly when they have unconventional approach such as Jonty Hurwitz, anamorphic art sculptor, or Robert Lee Davis, who combines formal painting techniques with newsprint and images from journals and magazines. Both of them have decided to create multimedia audiovisual presentational approach to present their art. Since the web tools allow presentation of multi-mediated self, using audiovisual components and text to communicate both informative and expressive information (Dominick, 1999), artists were found to largely rely on such presentational approaches. The video as a self-expression tool was used from eight out of ten artists for identity building. They published videos for work presentation, to explain arts, to show their lifestyle and other activities around their private or artistic persona. In such manner, a real identity is built, linking the art, with the creator, the concept

and the ideology of the artist. It was seen as a good approach to personalize the artworks and bring additional value to their image.

According to the scholars, the absence of such supporting multimedia information on the personal home pages limits the exchanged expressions that the web page creator wants to communicate to the audience and the expressions 'given off', that Goffman (1959) talks about (Papacharissi, 2002). Even so, the two artists that did not utilize multimedia richness appeared to be two of the most followed in the sample – Maya Bee and Aaron Nagel. Analyzing their profiles, the research showed that they found another way to convey the desired information through vivid blog sections, sharing thoughts, inspirations and news in a less formal way. These 'Blog' sections were the major place where the two artists presented both promotional content - new works, announces, exhibitions and events, and inspirations revelations. Thus, where there was lack of diverse multimedia, it was compensated with use of hyperlinks, emoticons, and other technological conventions, or what Papacharissi (2002) defined as 'nonverbal signals online', that also convey information 'given-off'.

At last, only two of the researched artists – Jonty Hurwitz, emerging artist, and Ashley Longshore, established independent artist, were found to not have a specific section 'About' on their webpages. Nevertheless, both of them did not undervalue the importance of having such presentational information and while Ashley Longshore used *MediaKit* document, available to download on her webpage, presenting information about her personality, notable collectors (mostly celebrities), and portfolio of her work series, Jonty Hurwitz was found to utilize social media (and videos) as a tool for his broader self-exposure. Thus, it was observed that all of the artists sought for a way to show their professionalism, competences and a kind of validation and approval from publics and external parties. No matter whether they are emerging or established artists, part of the conventional system or independent ones.

4.1.2 Self-presentation on Social Media

According to Dominick (1999), individuals' technical skills, such as competences in manipulating interactive technology, and their social presence are determinants of the online positioning success. Andre Woolery, self-employed emerging artist with background in digital media and advertising, explained that having the foundational understanding how to create an online presence through developing presentational ecosystem online has

enabled him to elevate in his career as an artist beyond the reach of solely his website traffic. The artist has an interlinked web ecosystem consisting of a website, e-commerce platform and social media. Hence, it can be argued that the technical skills for marketing, advertising and brand management online are important if artists want to make a livable income based solely on their own abilities to manage their art. Similarly to what Bridgstock (2007) suggested, according to many of the artists, having determined marketing strategy, when building their social media presence, is in the core of their career success.

Since the identity creation process on the social web is organized around tailored 'profile' expressions, giving number of ways for design and building according to people's aspirations (Manago et al., 2008), the artists were found to leverage few social media profiles for distinctive purposes. Some of the artists have developed large social media ecosystems, having profiles in most of the mainstream social media platforms. For instance, Andre Woolery maintains profiles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Wordpress and Pinterest. Jonty Hurwitz and many of the others also have presence on most of these platforms. Often they disclosed different information and different pieces of personal information on the various web channels, taking advantage of the platforms' particularities. However, it was found that they actually utilize one or two as leading channels with updated content and the others are left with outdated content or are entirely abandoned. Jonty Hurwitz stated that the objective to have them is for online portfolio completion, search optimization and higher reach online, as he believes that having more profiles increases the search visibility. This approach was found to some extent purposeless as none of the artists actually exploited the links to these supportive social media profiles, for instance linking them to their leading channels or website; they were not communicated and not present as part of the social media profile integrity. Turning to the theoretical overview, the self-presentation theory suggested that the social media identity have to be internal, strategically maintained and to have integrity between the different profiles. Lack of consistency creates distraction and might contaminate the self-identity building in the marketplace (Shepherd, 2005). Thus, the lack of maintenance of existing profiles was found distractive rather than helpful.

Except of this, all of the artists maintained one profile identity on the social web and no inconsistencies were found (Van Dijck, 2013). The content analysis showed tendency for choosing the prime mediums based on the specific personal characteristics and art style

specifications, which shaped their marketing approach. As it was presented in the Kietzmann et al.'s (2011) honeycomb, depending on the social media particularities, the conversations that can take place in a social media setting differ and enable the individuals to host and track these conversations in different formats and implication. Thus, artists had chosen their leading social media both according to the platforms specifics and feature differences, and according to their needs.

Although, the literature review suggested that it is important for the social spaces to be used as interactive and engaging tools for storytelling and narrative self-presentation, rather than being databases of personal information and autobiography display (Van Dijck, 2013), some artists were leveraging all of the channels in the same manner, posting one and the same presentational content. Yet, others were providing different content on the different platforms, keeping consistency of the profile and revealing new information to each site. The artists that have chosen to communicate diverse content to the different platforms mentioned that the content selection is based not only on the channel particularities, but also on the audience of the particular platform.

Many of the artists were found to use one of the two leading social media profiles as more promotional channel and the second one to reveal more personal information. To illustrate, the content analysis of Rossina Bossio's Facebook and Instagram profiles showed that she reveals more about her personality and private life on Instagram, where she has fewer followers, and the content she generates on Facebook, which is her leading platform, is more promotional related. In her interview, Rossina stated that on Facebook she filters her posts a lot more than on Instagram and publishes only work related content, often only what she considers a quality work. On Instagram she admitted to being „less careful”, which makes her post more often there, but without particular strategy, as it was defined by the content analysis.

Among the most preferred platforms for artistic persona building are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr. Seven out of ten artists have pointed Facebook and Instagram as one of their leading channels. Aaron Nagel, who prefers to not publish too personal and extensive information on the web, but keeps simple online conversation, claimed that Instagram is most effective and appropriate for his self-marketing as it is image centric, with little to no text, and he prefers this type of presentation. Aaron explained that he used to be active on Facebook, but currently he considers Twitter and Instagram as more

effective than Facebook as those two platforms allow much less interaction with their abbreviated content and allow people to better censor their own content, and post what they find more relevant and important. Other artists such as Ashley Longshore and Andre Woolery also have chosen Instagram because of similar issues and convenience. According to them, its mobile led nature allows instant photos and videos sharing and eases the communication.

By contrast, Kathy Ostman-Magnusen – a painter, sculptor and poet, in her social media palette had turned to blog presentations and Twitter to present her work series as these platforms fit better her needs:

“I do believe that my best effort should be in article writing, and posting them to my own blog, and then circulating those efforts. It is all a circle.” (Kathy Ostman-Magnusen, 2015)

Researching her communication approach and page ecosystem, she was found to publish very detailed information, presented in narratives and broad descriptions, organized in various blogs and platforms. Also, she possessed two web platforms that entail and comprise of many fragmented sections with long descriptions. Thus, her social media choice was found relevant to her personal intentions and characteristics, as the academics suggest.

Besides, Jonty Hurwitz, who in his art re-creates the perceptions of reality through algorithms and physics, has chosen YouTube videos as a tool to elucidate his art ideas and technique as it provides him the freedom to better express the scientific approach in his artworks. However, his major communication is happening on Facebook as the artist found it a powerful instrument to generate viral media and get attention. By contrast, William C., emerging artist, finds Tumblr as an appropriate and viral platform for his artwork presentation and found the audience there more dedicated, emphasizing on the importance of the public to which the art is presented. For instance, Pinterest and Flickr – mostly visual orientated platforms, were not among the choices of the researched artists. This might be explained by the theory that individuals aim to increase their social capital and take actions to position their self-brand higher in the web community hierarchy (Ellison et al., 2007). Thus, the goal of the artists is to be where most of the people are and where they can interact with potential audience. Herein, an interesting finding appears to be that most of the artists rely on the mainstream social media to find their public, but not to the niche art

platforms such as Saatchi Art, Artsy or Behance. Most of the artists tend to neglect those platforms and none of them claimed purposeful or active use of these platforms. Many of them were found to have profiles, but as Kathy Ostman-Magnusen explained, they keep those profiles because it is part of the self-presenting circle and their web presence, but do not consider them important. Rossina Bossio even stated that she has not found the use of them and she sees them more as a distraction.

As these niche sites are positioned as 'network for artists' and claim to bring together artists with collectors and art professionals, some of the theorists saw them as a game changer that would modify the conventional roles of the art market participants, blurring the lines between professional and amateur artists even more, and disrupting the art quality (Alexander & Bowler, 2014). However, it can be argued that the findings of the study significantly contradict such a theory and surpass what the theoreticians have thought about the transformation role of the new media platforms. What is meant here is that the current findings demonstrate that greater transformation can be triggered due to the mainstream social media, rather than the art platforms, as the academics tend to believe.

4.1.2.1. Social Media Presentation of the Artists

While researching the whole integrity of the artists' online identities, the findings showed that some artists managed to create complete brand personality, while others did not manage to strategically link and combine the various profiles they maintain. As previously mentioned, no contradictions and inconsistencies were found; however, lack of transmedia strategy was observed.

Similarly to the webpages, most of the artists on Facebook presented short descriptions and bio information in the 'About' section of their Fan Pages in order to convey information about their artistic persona. Most were found repetitive of the ones found on the webpages, or their shorter versions. However, some artists, such as Jonty Hurwitz, have utilized the social media profile to expand their brand personality information. Jonty Hurwitz's approach was to not display any personal information about himself on his website, only artworks and inspirations, but on Facebook he presented short description of his background and identity. Such approach allows the people interested in his profile to explore more about his brand following him on different media and revealing different parts of his personality on various mediums. However, not all networking platforms allow such

utilization. For the sites with limited presentational text such as Instagram and Twitter the artists managed to show their artistic persona through displaying links to their webpages. Thus, the non-verbal approach (Papacharissi, 2002) was found effective to build the desired profile and to direct the audience where to learn more.

According to the theory, the 'profile work' concept that is in the core of the self-presentation on the social web, emphasizes that the individuals have the possibility to choose what to reveal, omit, or underplay when managing their social media presence (Silfverberg et al., 2011). When running their personal branding strategies, the artists were found to document, archive and display their experience and/or mobility within various spaces and locations, such as events and gallery exhibitions, travels, studio work, etc., in order to represent or perform aspects of their identity to the audience. This approach reflected the Schwartz and Halegoua (2014) theory about the 'spatial self' and the opportunity of the individuals to present themselves not only through textual and visual features, but through digital traces, geocoded individual patterns of mobility and personal space disclosing. Most of the artists published on their social media pages content that reveals more about their personality, work activities or inspirations. Compared to the information on the webpages, the social media profiles provided more information and different facets of the artists' virtual self-identities. An example can be given with Maya Bee's profile building approach. She had simply organized webpage with limited content, short descriptions and simple writing without too explicit information. Through social media the artist revealed more about her personality and her art, posting pictures of places that have inspired her, pictures from her private life and other projects work. Both her Facebook and Instagram channels were found to consist mainly of promotional content, but yet she managed to make balance between commercial posts and personality building content.

Generally, the most published content on the social web was artworks – new releases and old works with new messages (recycled content), news, announcements, gallery exhibitions and other crafts showcasing. Other type of posts was presenting work in progress, sharing inspirations around particular works or in general, and interesting non-art related content. Less often information about artists' private lives and other artists' works were found. Depending on the strategy, these were the general categories of communicated content and messages. Indeed, what Lehman (2009) and the other scholars researching the artist as a brand suggested - crafts people have expressive resources that makes them

brands themselves and bring meaning to their marketing strategies. Artists were found to be enabled by the social web to create their virtual galleries, where they reveal more personal side of their art, along with their personal style and artworks concept. Hereby, few examples that will give a notion about the general trends that were found will be presented.

As previously mentioned, Jonty Hurwitz, anamorphic art sculptor, has chosen to invite the visitors to immerse in his brand logics, through messages revealing different aspects of his technique and world philosophy. His content consisted mostly of catchy scientific explanations of his art and less direct promotional content. For each work presented on Jonty's website or social media timeline there was a video explaining its particularities, technique, inspiration and idea behind. However, the artist is not focusing only on his artworks, but also has video presentations about relevant to the society, to the art world in general and contemporary processes topics. For instance, he created podcast 'Series by Jonty Hurwitz' studying and explaining how art can be valued in the new era of big data, going beyond the general presentation strategies.

By contrast, the artists, who discussed their intentional choice to not disclose much information from their personal ideology and private life, such as Rossina Bossio and Aaron Nagel, published mostly work-related content on their profiles – different aspects and stages of their work processes, events, artwork details, etc. These artists did not post about their personality, but still the person behind the artworks was revealed through pictures from events, press and other career-related activities (Figure 2). Thus, still individuality and identity disclosure were present.



Figure 2. The artist behind the art

An engaging content strategy that Aaron Nagel and other artists applied is to publish various stages of the process of an artwork creation. Beginning with publishing pictures of the posing model, continuing with posting of the work over the different parts, and finally showing the completed work and its exhibit in the gallery (Figure 3). According to Andre Woolery, who also uses similar approach as previously mentioned, such content creates interest in the public and engages them to the creation process of the artworks. The content analysis supported this statement and indeed found this type of posts as spurring interaction and interest in the public and people actively respond to it.



Stage 1: Model photo



Stage 2: Work in progress 1



Stage 3: Work in progress 2



Stage 4: Exhibit in a gallery (next to the real model of the portrait)

Figure 3. Work in progress posts - Aaron Nagel

Since the artists are not simply traders, but creators of artistic products and emotions, Kathy Ostman-Magnusen, the oldest artist in the sample (66 years old), explained that her experience taught her that *“only posting what you are selling it would be obnoxious”*. Also, as only artworks and promotional content is not sufficient to present oneself, some artists have more personal and self-revealing approaches, creating friendship rather than customer-trader relationships. Kathy Ostman-Magnusen tries to present many sides of her personal emotional world and feelings, relating them to her art and her core inspiration. Kathy is making very intimate and open self-presentations, directing her messages to the audience and the reader. She uses storytelling to present her oeuvre, thus, her content is created around many personal stories and inspirations.

Likewise, Ashley Longshore also has chosen to build her brand around emotions, but has distinctive approach that was found unique in the researched sample. Her branding strategy is to not oversaturate herself in the marketplace, but to have a very big presence online. To achieve this goal, she posts not only art related images, but random entertaining content that makes her and her community laugh. Her marketing approach is to build community around humor and fun. In defining her audience, she said that these are *“people that have a sense of humor, they are in a desperate need of laughter in their life, they don’t take themselves too seriously, they want to have fun, they are colorful, they see the color in life and they are far from pretentious”* (Ashley Longshore, 2015). Therefore, her social media content is built around entertaining posts both related and not-related to her personality

(Figure 4 and Figure 5). Unquestionably, there are a lot of publications showing her art and also short video shots in her studio are relatively often published; thus, her artistic persona is not buried under the general content.



Figure 4. The artist in a collage



Figure 5. Humorous content from the web

These self-presentation approaches show how the artists aim to create and maintain their personal brand identity, spurring social interaction and acceptance from others that Goffman (1959) explained as the essential of self-presentation. The artists mobilize their expressive resources to build an appearance and presence in the society that are pleasant, unexceptionable and allow them to establish relationships, being through artworks, philosophy or attitude. The differences between the webpages and social media profiles are

in the interactive content, the dynamics of the self-presentation and the spread messages. The webpages were seen mostly as passive virtual galleries and virtual portfolio presentations, while the social media profiles were seen as the active voice of the artists speaking to the audience and communicating with the public. Clearly, the content on the two spaces was overlapping, but the social media has enabled the artists to reveal more of themselves and their daily activities, bringing the public closer to their individuality and personality.

4.2.3. Challenges in Building Online Persona

Some of the artists such as Maya Bee, who has been growing her artistic social media presence since the early days in school, claimed: *"Being myself is no challenge"*. Though, some artists expressed difficulties concerning content, information saturation and policy issues while maintaining their persona online.

The academics defined that in order to be effective the personal branding messages should be made clear and consistent (Labrecque et al., 2011; Shepherd, 2005). Some artists expressed obstacles concerning this issue and were found to follow unclear strategy to some of their platforms. According to Shepherd (2005), unclear brand integrity and vague targeting cause ineffective personal brand management. Thus, it can be argued that the uncertainties in the content building on some platforms were due to lack of clear definition which is the target and what the goal when publishing content to these venues is.

Besides, other issues appeared to be time and distraction:

"The main challenge in maintaining an online personality is the amount of time and effort it requires. As an artist there is a limited amount of original material that one can produce and push out into the social sphere." (Jonty Hurwitz, 2015)

Thus, the challenges for the artists also come from the different perceptions about what content is considered relevant to post. According to Jonty Hurwitz, this have to be original materials, Ashley Longshore considered it as anything that can relate to her personality, Aaron Nagel and Rossina Bossio perceived it as a content that is enough to keep the interaction, but to not oversaturate their presence.

Nonetheless, there were artists that have found solutions to these challenges. Ahsley Longshore stated that for her there are not much challenges about maintaining an online presence as long as artists manage to make the maintenance part of their daily routine.

However, some artists such as Aaron Nagel, who have slightly more provocative content, face obstacles being themselves and posting all their works, because their content is not always accepted by the social media policies. The art of Aaron Nagel is often mistaken as erotica as there is nudity. He explained that he had numerous posts pulled with threatening messages about ‘violation of community standards’ as both Facebook and Instagram policies recognized his content as not appropriate to be online (Figure 6). Aaron stated in the interview that he is not free to post all of his art on any of the social networking platforms he uses and added:

“Having to censor fine art is very insulting, so I am constantly frustrated by the need to pixelate or otherwise obscure breasts, despite the fact the paintings aren’t sexual or suggestive in any way.” (Aaron Nagel, 2015)



Figure 6. Facebook promo with obscured breasts.

However, showcasing on the mainstream web and not on special art venue causes such inconveniences and disadvantages as the policies of the network are not created for

the specific needs of the arts market. Thus, if delving more into this topic, the question whether or not the mainstream mediums are the finest place to present art and to express artist creativity, or yet is an alternative due to the inexistence of better option.

Next, some artists mentioned as a challenge finding the balance between marketing and producing, and the balance between their private and public persona. According to them, the self-presentation efforts may turn into disadvantage. Andre Woolery shared that he tries to post 1-2 times per day and respond whenever it does not disrupt his normal work activity. He also explained that it is important to him to make as much of a connection to followers as possible, but sometimes experience difficulties to walk the line of personal privacy and public persona. In similar manner, Aaron Nagel noted the importance to find the right mediums:

“It’s important to find the one(s) social profiles that work for you and covering all mediums is not necessary as they are a great resource, but they can also be a distraction.” (Aaron Nagel, 2015)

Another fact is that as realizing their brand identity constructed to fit the desired vision of themselves, the artists present their best capabilities and strengths in order to be well accepted by the audience. Some artists feel unconfident to communicate all of their art. This was observed in the responses both from some of the emerging and established artists. William C., emerging artist, stated that currently he tries to limit his presence online and ‘keep the process under wraps’ until he feels the artworks are ready to be released. Rossina Bossio, established artist, also stated that she tries to post what she thinks are her best works on her leading profile. Jonty Hurwitz called the artworks that he mostly pushes online as ‘blog-worthy’ one, as they can generate viral media and worth to be shared. Thus, despite the career advancement, artists self-curate their content before releasing it to the public.

Another major challenge on the web spaces is the competition for attention. The researched artists explained that they face competition both from other artists, but also from the general online environment and its saturated information flow. The scholars emphasized that in general, a tiny fraction of the population (the celebrities) benefit from a majority of public awareness and the other individuals, who aim to position their personal brand must be aware of these distribution processes when shaping their strategies (Shepherd, 2005). This increased commercial competitiveness with players from the broader

web space raise-up questions whether there has appeared new art market sector that aims at mainstream recognition online or the traditional one is modifying.

Technology has blurred the lines between commercial entertainment and noncommercial art, forcing artists to more directly compete with all other forms of entertainment:

'We live in an age where you are only as good as your last posting' (Jonty Hurwitz, 2015)

Jonty stated that, in many senses, social media is a very powerful platform for the artist as long as they manage to keep delivering viral excellence. It can be considered that basically, artists are competing for the 'entertainment slot' in people's schedules, and the more entertainment they can get via the social channels. Realizing the competition online, Rossina Bossio noted that nowadays she finds it harder to reach new audience, although there are more people who consume art online. Jonty Hurwitz stated that one of the obstacles is to compete with the huge amounts of content that some 'large social players' are posting. Jonty Hurwitz explained that he faced with the dilemma of whether to post only his own content (which he believes would be with low frequency and efficiency as according to him artists have limited content that can post) or whether to build a profile by posting other artists' works. He explained that his strategy is to build his following community by posting other works and then 'mingling' it with his own work.

In order to get noticed on the web space, the artists undertake various marketing tricks. Marketing and promotional techniques such as newsletter sending, hashtag approach, teasing and additional platforms integrating are part of the artists' online tools. Special apps developing and social media tricks also were present on the artists' pages. With intentions to interact and communicate with more people, the artists set conversations around particular topics, and organize their content around specific themes such as artwork series, campaign or art style. These practices will be discussed in details in the following sections.

Some of the artists that largely utilize Instagram, such as Ashley Longshore, have set their brand hashtags ('#ashleylongshore' and '#popart') that are used in most of their posts. Other artists, such as Aaron Nagel, use hashtags related to the techniques they are presenting; for instance '#oilonpanel', '#oiloncanvas', etc. Through this approach their works become more visible for other people interested in these topics, artists are enabled to pick up new followers and to build new relationships. For instance, as on Instagram there are no

walls that people can post content to the artists, if promoted by enough individuals artists can set trends and attract more individual users to discussion using their hashtag. For instance, on hashtag '#ashleymlongshore' on Instagram, 2,146 posts were found with big majority posted from the artist; however, few posts were found from other people that have mentioned the artist. All these actions aimed to gain visibility and recognition.

4.3. Virtual Audiences and Arts Public on the Web

The theoretical overview suggested that even if the individuals have some control over the brand they portray the peer interaction and participation in the social community define their identity (Tajfel, 1982). Individuals' 'selves' are developed and maintained with the cooperation of others through the social interaction (Goffman, 1959), which in the web community context includes determination from the comments, likes and interaction people receive (Manago et al., 2008). The artists were found to actively seek interaction and engagement with the online audience, communicating and building visibility and recognition among more people. The artists claimed that through such activities they seek to reach new audiences and directly connect to people, who are likely to relate to their art. As branding is a representation system that produces knowledge through emotional connections (Schroeder, 2005), the audience that the artists perceived as their public and compile their community are the one that emotionally relate to their artwork.

Only one artist – Robert Lee Davis, who has his own studio in Australia, was found to be more orientated to his current clients and to leverage his online presence in order to support his offline relationships. He stated that part of his prime audience is the visitors to his studio and through the relationship he maintains online he can invite them to his shows. He stated: *“I am mainly online to maintain an artistic presence and to inform my more savvy clients what I am up to”*, which reveals that his intentions are not to exclusively target new audiences, but to be visible and be present online. Nonetheless, he also stated that he has seen the potential of the social web to help him increase his recognition and art sales. Thus, it can be perceived as a personal intention to not be exceptionally focused on chasing new audiences.

In their responses, the other artists mentioned international and local art lovers, art collectors, buyers, fans and followers as their prime audience. Some of the artists also mentioned galleries, curators and art dealers as their target. However, the content analysis

revealed that the communicated messages are often directed to the general public or to buyers and collectors in particular, and less often to galleries, art dealers or other art institutions. Many described their prime audience as ‘the people on the web’, or “whoever will listen or see, touch or feel emotion” (Kathy Ostman-Magnusen, 2015), which showed a non-selective criteria of public, but general audience. Thus, again it can be concluded that the artists are online for the mass and mainstream public, rather than for curated (filtered) one.

Furthermore, it was observed that aiming at broader audience reach the artists try to gain global attention and engagement, without making much distinction whether their online target is collectors or art institutions.

The community they have managed to build was combination between general public, fans, actual collectors and buyers, other artists and sometimes galleries. This can be seen as a change in the perceptions as in the conventional way to exhibit arts, the creators showed their works to a selected audience, often in front of curators and/or collectors. In the web space, the artwork is for everyone. As Arora and Vermeyleen (2013) defined observing the actions of the art museums on the web, in the recent years art institutions also have changed the way they engage with the public, making their exhibits available for the global audience and for anyone who might be interested to see. Thus, it can be argued that both art institutions and artists have modified the ways they spread their messages and target their viewers, allowing free access to their exhibits and intellectual work. Taking further, artists were found to not seek preliminary appreciation by an institution or a connoisseur, and to not rely on their legitimation to showcase what they believe is a good work and deserves to be exhibited.

The scholars defined that humans are highly dependent on the social support of others and being in belonging to a social group impacts one’s self-esteem and sense of belonging, emotional well-being, sense of life meaning, purpose, self-efficacy, and self-worth (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The artists explained that receiving appreciations and audience interaction in their online space motivates them to continue working on their art and to feel valued. Few of them pointed out also their intention to inspire and motivate their followers and to bring positive content to them. Given these points, it can be argued that the artists respect the online audience validation and seek more engagement and broader audiences to show their talents.

Maya Bee, the most followed artists in the sample, has come to the conclusion that in order to take the most of what the web offers one has to socialize. Keep being active and to relate to the people is her strategy to continue growing her international audience and to stay on the web market. Furthermore, keeping the conversation vivid and regularly responding was found also important to maintain the relationship with the audience. The content analysis of Maya Bee's profile revealed that she regularly answers to the posts and comments on her page. Most of the comments that she receives are words of appreciation, discussions about her style and people sharing her inspirations or inspired by her. The people that post to her page are satisfied buyers, fans and followers that repost her content and tag her, also people that want to share their excitement of her work. The content analysis revealed that the community she has managed to build in her social media consists mostly of fans and followers, buyers, art lovers and other artists – the one that she stated important to her. Thus, her branding strategies were found successful to engage her target and to reach out to the people she wants to. Although, for some artists was hard to be analyzed due to profile restrictions and limited access for the majority the claimed target and the engaged audience on the web was also in accordance.

According to Nobel (2011), who investigated the persona building strategy of Lady Gaga, building strong relationship, commitment and engagement to the audience through participation in the online dialogue is a key element for successful relationship establishing and strong connections. For instance, Jonty Hurwitz has managed to build special connections and community around his art. Since his artistic approach is combining arts and science, it was found that many scientists and professionals from various fields are following him on both of his leading social networking pages (Facebook and Twitter). Thus, his online efforts and communicated messages have helped him to attract people that are truly interested in his content, that are able to appreciate his artworks and are not random audience on the web. According to Shaker and Hafiz (2014), consumers become attracted to a brand because of certain attributes a brand develops through its personality. Jonty Hurwitz's brand identity has attracted potential consumers through the association of his personal characteristics.

Another advantage that artists saw of seeking out relationships via online space is that it is a low risk situation. According to Ashley Longshore, when you are using social media to reveal and share your world, it is up to the person to decide that they want to follow you

or to reject and move to another destination. As the theorists defined, just like the people form positive or negative attitudes toward other people in 'real life,' media viewers develop positive or negative attitudes about the characters they encounter on the web. Likewise the interpersonal interaction that can lead to numerous sorts of interpersonal responses and relationships, parasocial interaction can also lead to many parasocial responses and relationships. Ashley Longshore has come to realize the different relationship with the web audience where any relationship obligations are eliminated, allowing individuals to 'try you out' and not involve further if they do not wish (Miller, 1995).

4.3.1. Global Audience & Community Building

Andre Woolery, an emerging artist, gave a comprehensive reflection that can be used as an illustration of what many of the artists shared in their interviews:

"My main incentive to be online is to create awareness, engagement and distribution for my artwork. Without being online, I would have to create a physical space that congregated people to view the artwork. By having a website and social media I am able to reach people at any time of the day. The value is having a virtual gallery that is constantly open to all visitors that are invited or discover it on their own." (Andre Woolery, 2015)

Being originally from Jamaica, but residing both in U.S. and his own country, where he currently has his own studio¹, Andre Woolery has realized the power of the Internet in removing the actual distances and stated that he is trying to leverage this technology the best way he can. The artist's concept can be seen in alliance with what Alexander and Bowler (2014) suggested that with the digital development, the arts market is no longer limited to a certain space or studio, but it is open for the broad public and global reach. To illustrate the boundless reach of the Internet communication and artists' opportunities, Jonty Hurwitz provided demographic statistics (Figure 7 and Figure 8) of his webpage and Facebook following that showed to where his brand persona has spread online. In March, they looked like this:

¹ 'About', Andre Wooley's official webpage

Country ?	Acquisition
	Sessions ? ↓
1.  United States	(37.45%)
2.  United Kingdom	(7.90%)
3.  Germany	(4.64%)
4.  Spain	(3.41%)
5.  Mexico	(3.26%)
6.  Canada	(3.25%)
7.  France	(3.21%)
8.  Japan	(2.69%)
9.  Brazil	(2.20%)
10.  Australia	(1.75%)

Figure 7: Webpage following (statistics by Google Analytics)

Facebook	Following
India	16.91%
USA	10.81%
Pakistan	5.48%
Iran	3.91%
Italy	3.16%
UK	3.05%
Brazil	2.95%
Mexico	2.94%
Bulgaria	2.41%
Egypt	2.34%

Figure 8: Facebook following

Based on this statistic information, it can be seen that the people who visited Jonty's website and followed him on social media were different. These findings visually illustrate that artists can reach out to audiences on a global scale and are no longer bounded to their physical location. Jonty Hurwitz is U.K. artist and currently resides there, but 37.4% of his webpage acquisitions are from U.S., only 7.9% from U.K., which means the other 55% are from countries around the world. What is even more fascinating is the fact that U.K. was not listed in the top 5 countries of reach of his Facebook Fan page. The audience that Jonty Hurwitz reached out through Facebook significantly differed from the visitors of his website, with people from India as most interested – location that was not listed in the top 10 of his website acquisitions. Such findings show the significance and logic behind leveraging diverse online profiles when building an international brand. The scholars also observed these major transformations in the Web 2.0 era and the fading actual distance between consumers, traders and producers of art, and defined it as accelerator of the liberation of the arts market and its democratization (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013; Velthuis, 2013).

Aaron Nagel and Andre Woolery also expressed such observations that social media helps to gain notoriety and reaching new and potential collectors on global scale is much easier through the Web 2.0 opportunities. Andre Woolery explained:

“Art lovers and collectors have no geography because I offer prints and other products that can be shipped internationally. If they appreciate the work I can do, it can reach them as long as there is an Internet connection. Your visual communication can travel as far as an online connection can go.” (Andre Woolery, 2015)

According to the scholars, the self-marketing activities can be seen as actions to position the online persona higher in the web community hierarchy and to create, or participate in, a social community and groups, which for the artists mean to create their marketplace (Marshall, 2010). As

Ashley Longshore acknowledged, the internet technologies have narrowed down the amount of efforts that is taking her to reach people directly, no matter if they are in Jamaica or London. It turned out that artists who aim to build international brand are enabled through the digital technology to easily establish a marketplace without physical bound.

What is more, the artists themselves become more easily accessible. To give an illustration, Ashley shared a story that she was contacted by kids from a school in Jamaica

that followed her online and they had the opportunity to meet with her owing it to the Internet and the digital technologies. Most of the researched artists have come to realize that the world has become a very small place with the vast opportunities for connectedness and relationship building and they try to capitalize on these transformations. The people interested in arts are enabled to directly get in touch with the artists themselves and this motivates the international artists to maintain their online persona in a way that can attract and get in touch with more people to who their message can reach out.

Realizing these opportunities some artists such as Rossina Bossio decided to target both local and international audience. The content analysis of Rossina Bossio (Colombian – Appendix 1) revealed that she is addressing both Spanish and English-speaking audience as her messages are bilingual – in Spanish and English (Figure 9). In the theoretical framework was explained that the emerging of global web communities reinforced the meaning to the concept that individuals' memberships in certain social groups define who one is, what is their social positioning and community presence (Hogan, 2010). Through such approach Rossina has strategically positioned herself on both the English and Spanish speaking markets and has made an attempt to enlarge her social community group.

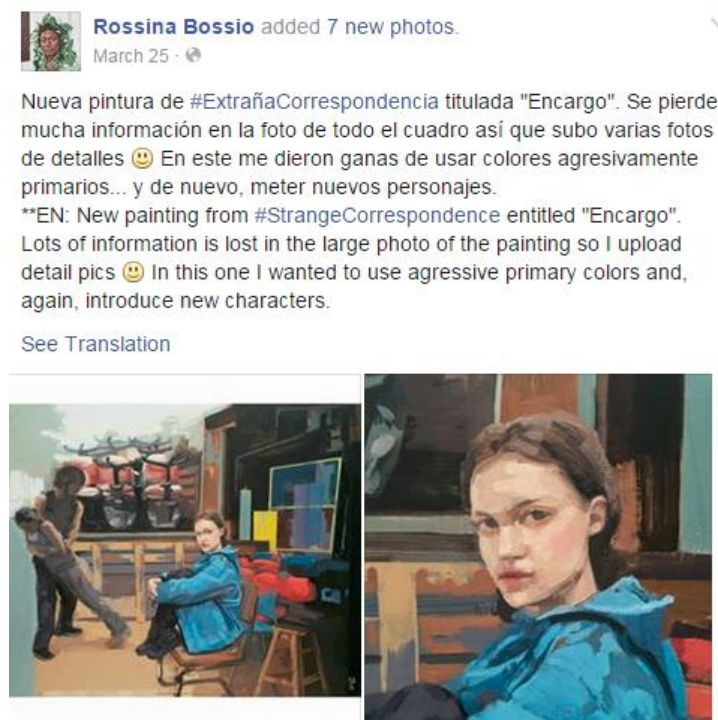


Figure 9. Bilingual posting – Rossina Bossio

In order to keep the audience, most of the artists are trying to post shareable content that provokes the audience to comment, re-post, tag and mention other people. As the scholars defined, such activities enlarge individuals' community, support their popularization online and help them build relationships (Ellison et al., 2007). The artists were found to use their acceptability to the social community as a sociometer (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012), in order to determine the extent to which people are willing to engage to them. Thus, they try to be more attractive. As (Lehman, 2009) suggest, the individual visual artists build their audience that through strategically making use of their individuality. Most of the artists defined their artworks as a form of self-expression and acknowledged that social media enables them to have the people to whom they can share it with, through which they create their community and build their relationships.

Deriving from all these concepts, it can be suggested that even if the artists who are not particularly focusing on the international market, but are posting their content on the web, and in widespread language, automatically can become international artists as the web is open for everyone and as long as the people can find someone on the web, they can get in touch and contact. Thus, being online, the artists establish their virtual marketplace where anyone can become part of the public. However, to become a buyer or collector depends on the set relationships of the artists with the online audience.

4.3.4. Audience Challenges: The Impact of the Community

Referring to the major incentives for the artists to be online that were found, among the most responded was the opportunity to receive feedback from the audience. As Rossina Bossio said *"Since the artistic life is so unstable and you spend so much time alone in the studio, it's nice to see people still see and like your work"* (Rossina Bossio, 2015). As revealed in the literature review, presenting to global audience would mean also receiving large evaluation from other individuals and communities (Hemetsberger, 2005). Having broad public online, many of the artists find it as an opportunity to receive data if their art is accepted, liked and people appreciate it. Having the opportunity to freely interact and share their opinion, the role of the audience in the art valuation has increased (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). The current analysis showed that some artists tend to listen to the online audience and realize the influence of the masses over their art production.

Inquired if they feel influenced by the online audience, most of the artists responded that they consider themselves influenced. Some artists responded with uncertainty and doubts if it has changed somehow their work process, others, such as Jonty Hurwitz, were clearly aware about the impact of the community over their art creation:

“I am heavily influenced by the online community. I use the online engagement with my pieces to get a sense of which work is resonating with society. In general when I get huge engagement on a work online, I will develop that concept further. A good example is my anamorphic pieces. After I got the initial viral “explosion” from my early anamorphic works, I was inspired to produce more of the smiles.” (Jonty Hurwitz, 2015)

Andre Woolery also shared that he uses such strategy. As it was discussed previously, he uses the data analytics to track which artworks receive the most likes, traffic and shares and from that to develop his promotional campaigns according to the audience preferences.

Based on the gathered data, few areas of influence were identified:

- *Get feedback.* As previously mentioned, many of the artists find valuable the opportunity to receive feedback and comments from the broad web audience. Besides the social media comments, some artists were found to have integrated comments section on their websites in their gallery sections, which showed the importance of the community evaluation to them. Having large audience online, many of the artists find it as an opportunity to receive data if their art is accepted, liked and people appreciate it.
- *Inspiration and motivation.* Some of the artists reported that they find inspiration and motivation when the crowd appreciates their work. Besides, the interrelation and connection to other artists also was found as influential to some artists. Rossina Bossio shared that she has been inspired creatively and professionally by fellow artists that she found online.
- *Community contribution as an engaging tool.* Andre Woolery shared that he had presented artwork and products to his social media followers to help name them. Other artists were found also to have similar approach looking to be more interactive and engaging in their online strategies.

- *To know what is marketable.* Two of the artists - Jonty Hurwitz and Andre Woolery, shared their strategy to track and observe the analytics information around the artworks in order to define which are best accepted from the audience. Andre Woolery explained that based on the information which artworks receive the most likes, traffic and shares he decides to push certain pieces more than others. Further he explained: *“I’ll create campaigns, sales and other content with those pieces over others based on data.”* (Andre Woolery)

Although, according to the general literature, these new social interactions follow the real conversation pattern (Manago, 2008), for the arts world system such influences can be perceived as disrupting, lowering the quality and art autonomy in terms of creation. Some artists such as Aaron Nagel and William C. stated that they try to not be influenced by the online community as much as possible. Aaron also gave as an argument about this decision that the community can be very fickle. He explained that the online community’s commitment has diminished as with the new technology users have to do very little to participate and it often creates an atmosphere of trends and criticism. On the Internet, users are anonymous and have to take very little responsibility for their comments and opinions, thus sometimes they are easily confronting on the Internet. Furthermore, on Aaron views, in the competitive social media bubble people do not spend much time with the images and rarely seek out larger information to research the artist, to look for upcoming shows or see larger image. On the other hand, he added: *“Making the effort to go to a gallery opening or a museum, takes a certain amount of effort and commitment, which I think makes the experience different. One has a better chance of enjoying the experience because they already have gone to the effort to seek it out.”* Expressing similar observations, Jonty Hurwitz explained that as people are enabled to be more active online, they also have become more capricious about the content they see and consume, noting that *“the social media audience is extremely fickle and in many ways less interested in the artists and more in the “quick fix” that the artist is able to deliver”*. As Kotler and Scheff 1997, in Boorsma (2006), suggested, the customer-value approach is successful in commercial business, and it is also good approach for marketing the arts as long as it is applied within the constraints of the artistic mission. However, when applied for art organization this concept makes sense,

yet, when it comes to the creator, it is debatable whether the artists manage to stay unbiased to the audience opinion and to keep their art authentic.

Another story was shared by William C., emerging artist, who explained that he had already been influenced, but currently tries to not 'get into boxes'. The artist did not revealed more about why he had decided not to keep much attention to the audience, but in one of his responses he explained: *"I started so heavy with internet promotion that I boxed myself into a style and a personality. I'm protecting myself now, keeping the process under wraps until I really feel it's ready to release"*. Thus, it can be assumed that this was one of the reasons to reject the community impact.

Such processes show the alterations of the way in which the arts market operates, of the participants roles and intervention in traditionally-established processes, which the academics have observed. It can be argued that the audience indirectly becomes part of the creation process. Even though they are not the actual creators, the mass consumer is enabled to set the trends of one's art process, to give name of his/her work and to encourage or discourage the artists to continue creating their art. According to Becker (1982) art is "a work being made and appreciated". However, the debate around the conventional art system is by whom the appreciation can be considered valid and valuable (Arora & Vermeylen, 2012). The artists realized that the viral nature of the virtual space and its 'hyper distribution', which turns to "never-ending story of distribution of your link" (Andre Woolery, 2015), when people like content on the web. Thus, the artists see it as great opportunity for their market establishment.

What Andre Woolery observed is that if a visitor enjoys what they see, they can immediately invite their friends through the social media tools. Ashley Longshore explained similar processes on her Instagram wall:

"The beautiful thing about social media is that I can put myself out there with my content and when people do relate to it, then they are tagging their friends, they are tagging other people that are seeing what I am doing and then they relate to it as well." (Ashley Longshore, 2015)

This features of the web spaces empowers the artists to build their own marketplaces, it eases the activities undertaken by the artists to make their 'selves' known and recognized. Such alterations in the established relationships online suggest that the

online community modifies not only the art validation, but also the way artists attract commissions, customers, or contacts. In the theoretical framework it was argued that the self-branding and self-marketing activities lead to opportunities for obtaining employment (Shepherd, 2005), but it was questioned what is the weight of these appreciations from the crowd. Robert Lee Davis, although more dedicated on his offline audience, noted that *“looking online is becoming more and more respectable”*. The current study cannot provide reliable evidences to claim that the hive mind has replaced the expert validations, but according to these findings, the appreciation from the masses is intervening in the art validation processes and is becoming accepted and sought from more artists.

4.4. Autonomy of the Artists & the New Media

The latter findings will analyze in which areas of their promotional and self-presentational activities artists are empowered through the new medium. Going back to the incentives of the artists to be online, many claimed that it allows them to stay autonomous of third parties and to set control over their identity, to directly sell their work and to create connections and networking (Table 1). These areas are all directly related to the art intermediaries' functionalities in the conventional art system and their modification is at the heart of the art business transformation. In the literature review, it was suggested that the market has shifted *“from an object-based and supply-side oriented market to a more consumer-driven market”* (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013, p. 328), and the artists have to position themselves strategically on the market in order to engage audience. All of the researched artists felt the need for self-employment and control over their market positioning. As the art intermediaries have put efforts to benefit of the web opportunities for marketing and selling (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013), the artists also have realized similar possibilities that enable them to build independent representation of their work.

4.4.1. Connections and Networking

To begin with, the results showed that the artists have become independent in their connections and networking establishment. One of the difficulties in the interpersonal relationship in real life interaction lies in establishing contact (Goffman, 1959) due to factors such as location, attitudes, empathy, etc. However, the scholars found that the net communities carry the premise of resurrecting lost communities and creating new ties, learning how to live in time and space without severing our social ties (Papacharissi, 2002).

The artists were found to utilize social media for establishing professional connections and networking in order to create ties with other professionals, producers, galleries and media around the globe.

Artists such as Rossina Bossio and Jonty Hurwitz work in collaboration to other professionals and they make purposeful use of the social networks to get in touch with their co-workers. Andre Woolery also explained that through social media curators and gallery professionals can discover his work for partnership or upcoming exhibition opportunities. Both Andre Woolery and Jonty Hurwitz reported that they have been able to reach out to organizations, companies and key influencers through LinkedIn and Twitter.

Another aspect was revealed from Aaron Nagel, who tightly collaborates with galleries and has found social media networking as valuable resource to contact artists and to exchange working experiences about galleries. He explained that also other artists have contacted him interested to obtain the same information. He stated in his interview that he has established contacts with other artists, but mostly it was about complements exchange. Nevertheless, the content analysis revealed that under some his posts there are artists asking about collaboration with him, debates about his technique and even fans, who want to be his models. Thus, the connectedness around his posted content is larger than he explained in the interview.

4.4.2. Art Marketing & Sales on Social Media

Most of the artists claimed that they have success in selling prints and originals directly through their website or social media. However, a controversial topic among the artists appeared to be if high-end art and more expensive works can be sold online. According to Aaron Nagel and Jonty Hurwitz, who both work in cooperation with galleries, but also aim to sell online, the traditional art establishment is still critical to the high end of the market and the conventional artists still have to go through the gallery or art dealer structure to sell more expensive work. Even though, Aaron Nagel firmly stated that the web spaces have eased the art selling and all his print sales happen online, he keeps selling most of his paintings through galleries. In his opinion, people are reluctant to make expensive purchases based on images they see online, but not in person. Furthermore, according to him, the collectors are used to the gallery system and it is more reliable for more expensive purchases as it is an established business system.

Controversially, Ashley Longshore, a pop artist, explained that she sells paintings for thousands of dollars through the social web and with her own efforts she sold over a million dollars of art on her own in one year, relying on social media. Evidence for that is that last year she managed to sell a piece for \$ 30,000 throughout Instagram (Vogue, 2014) and among her collectors are celebrities and wealthy people (according to her MediaKit, 2015). The experience of Ashley Longshore with selling works made her confidently defending the idea that artists can circumvent the art galleries with their own efforts.

Such debate provides evidences of the alterations of the way in which conventional arts market operates. It also supports scholars' claims that the role of the curator is modifying (Arora & Vermeulen, 2012). Such alterations are making the lines between the 'official' art market decisions and what people want even more blurred. In the new art environment the artists are finding their niche and getting what they want where they would not do so before and the decisions of the institutionalized art world are minored. What is more, the changes are caused not only due to the opportunity for selling online, but also due to the easy commercial approaches for marketing and audience engagement on the web.

Arts Marketing

In the attempt of self-marketing and promotional content creations, the artists were found to lead marketing campaigns and approaches similar to the corporate brand communication. The academics that observed the self-marketing approaches of the artists argue that artists have to obtain particular skills and knowledge, in order to be effective in leveraging their campaigns (Bridgstock, 2012). Among the researched artists there were people that have mastered social media and web self-marketing techniques, using promotional strategies and commercial messages. Figure 10 represents a visual ad of Andre Woolery, not directly related to his art, but having 'call for action' and promo buying message.



Figure 10. Promotional message: *“If your place has empty walls, it’s time to make that change. 20% off for the next 48 hours! Code: ART20 on shop*** #sale #art”*

The content analysis of Andre Woolery’s media also showed that he sells works using promo codes, discounts and ‘early bird’ tickets for events as purchase incentives. Also, he has released videos with direct promotional messages as commercials of his works. His branding and marketing approach was found exceptionally commercialized. Another commercial and trade-orientated promotional approach had Maya Bee, who is publishing her artworks with displayed prices both on the website and social media. Having that, she has very well developed e-commerce system the link to her store is often posted. She uses simple promotion content such as: *“Dodo” New drawing added to my shop: *link to her store**. Such promotional activities, messages and advertising calls again the claims that the arts market has become commercialized and the lines between what is high-end art and how it should be traded are blurred.

The theoretical overview demonstrated that many of the art dealers and gallerists have developed dealing-orientated web platforms, including mobile apps, digital collections and interactive projects, in order to market and sell artworks through the web (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). Likewise, many of the researched artists were found to have integrated e-commerce services on their websites and have conduct interactive promotional campaigns to market and sell to the online customers.

Having different approaches to make sales, some of the artists found effective the utilization of e-commerce systems integrated on their pages or linking to external e-

commerce services to ship their work. Andre Woolery explained that most of his funds are through driving commerce on his site. His strategy is developing a special 'Shop' section on his website where his items for sale can be browsed and add to cart. Many of the researched artists followed similar approach and have section 'Buy Art' or 'Store' on their webpage. Regardless the type of art – prints, paintings or sculptures, the artists were found to have sections for buying art. Thus, nowadays, not only the art dealers have developed dealing-orientated web platforms in order to market and sell artworks through the web, but also the artists started benefiting of such opportunities.

Furthermore, two out of seven artists, who use Facebook actively, utilize special app button 'Shop Now' on their Facebook profile (Figure 11). Andre Woolery has linked his integrated website shop and Maya Bee has linked her Rageon profile. The others were not found to have benefited of such e-commerce option.

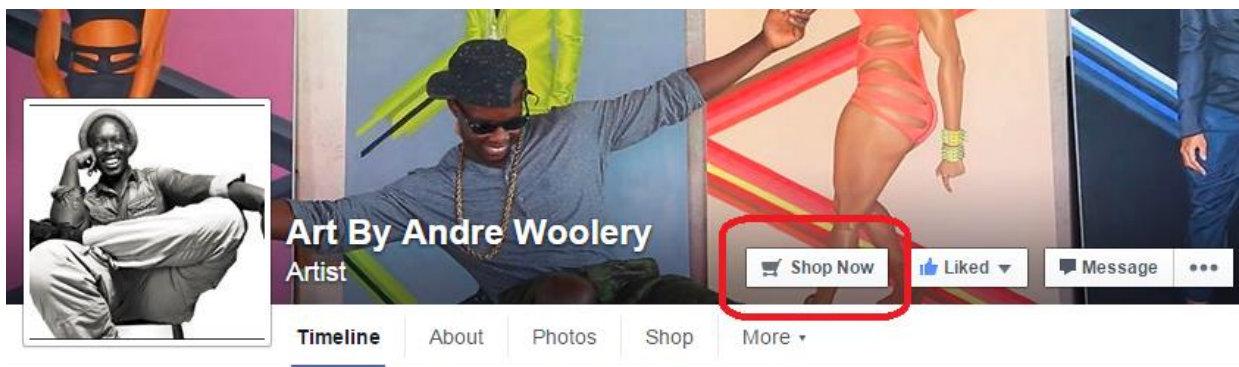


Figure 11. 'Shop Now' button

According to the artists, the opportunities for art distribution are changing and audiences are more open to purchasing art online. All these results give a notion of acceleration of the processes that Arora and Vermeylen (2013) observed that the arts market has shifted from an object-based and supply-side oriented to a more consumer-driven market.

Two other artists were found to have conducted entire promotional and marketing campaigns, aiming at larger audience or profit increasing. Jonty Hurwitz launched an art competition for emerging artists on Facebook in 2013. One of the goals was to engaged a lot of people and increase his following. The artist stated that the campaign was hugely successful many new people became part of his community. Here it should be noted that he

managed to develop a fan base of over 170,000 followers within two years and according to him this campaign was hugely instrumental in building up his social media following.

The separation between fine art and commercial art seems hard to be made on the web. On one side, the collectors are present and willing to give their money for art marketed online. On the other side, it seems there are no validation, industry structure and hierarchy on the web different than the marketing approach and active promotion. The example Ashley Longshore's advertising approach and presentation strategy proves such statement. The artist explained that her marketing strategy is to build community around the entertaining content and in the moment that she has a product to release, she conducts a buying campaign that usually creates a "buying frenzy". According to her, creating a bigger online presence and having a strong following is a key to potentially sell more. Thus, the built audience is generalized, and there is no criteria for the consumers of art online.

Ashley's last campaign projects – Artgasm, can be presented in order to illustrate how this her approach works. *Artgasm* is a promotional campaign – an exclusive art membership for limited edition 'ASHLEY LONGSHORE', targeting collectors. According to the website, Ashley will create four products a year that are hand-signed and will be available only to subscribers of Artgasm. Each item will be hand-embellished, designed and personalized as the members number will be limited to 250 per year. In the interview Ashley further explained that the idea is creating a personalized relationship with fans that maybe are not in the financial place to purchase an artwork that costs thousands of dollars.

Ashley explained that she has managed to do a huge marketing with this project and also that so far it has been successful. Although, it is not extensively promoted on the web, after her last post that just mentioned the project, 25 new members subscribed within an hour. This finding represents how the transforming power of the Internet has turned the general public into art collectors. Although, Ashley's audience might seek commercial art and she cannot be considered as part of the high-end arts market, having persistent community, collectors that would buy her art for thousands of dollars and publicity as an established and successful artists, the evidences are that she did not need other art intermediary than social media to become an artist and grow in her career.

During the interview, Ashley Longshore shared that when she first started, galleries did not want to represent her with the argument that she was not marketable. Rejected from the institutions, Ashley decided to self-present to the wide audience through the

opportunities that the Internet provides and to create her own way to make it in the business. She explained:

"I do these things, because I have to. I have to make a living. I have the brain in my head, so I will make it in whatever way I can. And it's easy to me to use social media to promote myself. The reason why I do it, it is the nature of absolute necessity".
(Ashley Longshore, 2015).

Nowadays, Ashley has her own studio and manages her career entirely separated from the conventional art system. She believes that artists have to represent themselves, to talk about their art themselves and, and all this has become possible through the new media.

4.4.3. Control over the representation

The artists were found to seek independency and control over their representation through creating an artistic persona online. Two of the artists that stated it as their major incentive to be on the web were Ashley Longshore and Aaron Nagel. Although, they are representatives of two different groups of artists - Aaron Nagel is working in collaboration with galleries, while Ashley Longshore never has been part of the conventional system, they both realized the opportunity to be able to choose and manage the content that people first see about them when they search in the virtual space. The artists' statement is in alliance to Miller's (1995) theory that the new medium is a tool for the individuals to display information and make claims about themselves; to control the disclosed content, managing appearance in various ways and utilizing it strategically. According to Aaron Nagel, *"...without a personal site, you are at the mercy of third parties to promote you and your art"*. Supporting these believes, Ashley Longshore, established artist, explained:

"My goal is to get press, to get my name up there and through the press and through my marketing to draw the attention of a lot of people. By realizing the Internet and social media I no longer depend on a second party or someone for representation."
(Ashley Longshore, 2015)

Most of the researched artists realize their art as their own business about which they should take care and run consciously - concept that Bridgstock (2012) suggested in her study about the street artists. Thus, it can be argued that not only the artists that by default are out of the traditional market, but also the ones on the fine arts market attempt to be

more independent. Some scholars defined the successful artists as the one that manage to have their work exhibited, bought, and collected (Schroeder, 2005). Others defined successful authors the one that can be thought of as brand managers, developing, nurturing, and promoting themselves in the competitive cultural sphere (Sjöholm & Pasquinelli, 2014). Or the artists that managed to create their business model and to establish their following. Deriving from all these theoretical concepts, Ashley Longhore can be seen as a very successful artist as she managed to well develop her business approach. However, proclaimed from the online crowd, her story provides evidences for the potential shift of the traditions on the arts market. This findings can be referred to the changes Pfahl (2001) observed for the music industry, that migration of the individual artists to the web spaces may nurture new type of artists raised from the crowd who stay apart of the traditional art institutions and earn their livings from the web. It can be argued that nowadays the importance of this debate for the visual arts is increasing and the transformations have to be closely observed in order potentially new trends to be timely identified.

Furthermore, the study revealed trends among the artists to manage their self-presentation and online persona, adapting it to the changing environment and sizing new opportunities. Artists' entrepreneurial flair was mostly revealed in their ability to follow the audience and changing their leading communication channels with the audience changing preferences. The artists explained that they have to keep track of the latest trends in order to be reachable and online present. What was seen from the previous findings, most of the artists try to follow the crowd and be where most of the people are, which means changing the medium, if people change their location, and change the way they interact, if the new medium has a different communication concept. For instance, Jonty Hurwitz recently went to Instagram, as having already 170,000 followers on Facebook he stated: *"I imagine that if you have something to sell online, a large online following may be interesting"*. Or as Ashley Lognshore, who mostly leverages her Instagram profile now, explained:

"5 year ago no one was on Instagram. 5 years ago, I was using YouTube, Facebook and I have been a big fan of using all these things to market myself; It will be very foolish of me if I do not stay on top of all of the current trends and social media, what the younger generation is doing and follow how people are connecting. I will use all of these things and I will use them to promote myself, my business and to put my personality out there." (Ashley Longshore, 2015)

These findings highlight one more time the commercialization and mainstream processes that are undergoing on the arts market. In their efforts for autonomous representation, the artists have chosen to adapt to the changing environment and to the community, instead to set their own trends and movements. There are not enough evidences and representative sample to argue whether these processes can be referred to all arts fields; however, it can be argued that it concerns the autonomous visual artist on the web.

4.4.4. Who can be an Artist?

In response to one of major questions scholars are concerned with - the definition who can be considered an artist and who is in charge to legitimate art, Andre Woolery explained the following:

“The art market system is closed off as an insider world. You have to go to art school, be within a wealthy network, connected to the right people or reside in a major city. Social web has opened up the world to more creators and engaged a diversity of art lovers. There does not need to be a middle man like a dealer, gallery, or auction house.” (Andre Woolery, 2015)

One of the premises of the digital channels is the opportunity for everyone to put themselves up for interaction, displaying their desired, rather than accurate, selves through their profiles (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Digital spaces enable open interaction through anonymity and eradication of real world boundaries, which can be seen as an appropriate environment for emerging of more self-taught and amateur artists. Since any individual can marketing his/her personality in the desired way, using social media as a marketing tool, it seems that as any artist can participate to the arts market.

Some of the artists pointed out the fact that in the traditional market the process of criteria setting and the objectivity can be questioned and that the online space has made the arts more accessible for participation. However, it can be raised the question whether the crowd wisdom can objectively judge and what are the competences and understanding of the arts from the mass public. As Jonty Hurwitz and Aaron Nagel stated, the online community could be fickle and it is not necessarily interested in the artists themselves, or their concept and idea behind their art. Thus, what would make their choice more objective than the curating from an art dealer?

Although at first glance it might look democratic and transparent way to name oneself an artist, the quality and the value of such choice was questioned by some artists. According to some authors, the real relationship and the real connection is built when people walk the way from the virtual (distance) connection to the gallery where they can experience the art in a more real way. Thus, appreciating online does not have the same value. Indeed, the study revealed that the artists are enabled to connect autonomously to potential public; however, the question still is what would be the additional value to the not curated work and also who can define who are the amateurs or professionals also is still missing classification.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

In the new media age, personal and behavioral data is not only a byproduct of connectedness and online sociality, but has become a key resource in exploitation of profile presentation and individuals' self-branding. Visual artists are a specific unit that has exceptional expressive resources. These resources allow the artists to build identity and presence in the society that creates community and establishes relationships around their art. By the virtue of social media and virtual communities, artists can walk the line from unknown or nameless artist to known one as the web mechanisms suggests that the more connections users make the more audience they have and the more social capital they accumulate, increasing their positioning in the community hierarchy (Ellison et al., 2007). Particularly in the arts world, it seems that these social and recognition opportunities for the artists are reinforced also by the fundamental transformation processes of democratization and globalization of the arts market that remove the market boundaries and ease the access both to art creation, art valuation and art consumption. As the finding showed, both art organizations and artists have eased the accessibility to art through creating various virtual venues for exhibit and extensively presenting collections online. The velocity of these processes seems to increase with the artists' marketing actions for broadening their own public, bring their artworks closer to the masses and engaging general public, different in nature of the arts collectors and critics on the traditional marketplace.

Seeking appreciation from the online public, relevant questions to be raised are what their career level is and where they are positioned in the conventional arts system hierarchy; also what is the value of their artwork and who has the final word to approve their artistic persona. In the past, the artwork and artist recognition was predominantly dependent on art connoisseurs and art intermediaries. Although, there are no evidences to claim that the contemporary artists have abandoned the traditional system or do not respect it, but the current research provided evidences that nowadays the artists that self-present on the web are also concerned where in the web ranking they are and how visible is their profile among the content competition on the web.

All artists were found to attempt to make the most of the web to deliberately take control over their representation, to gain notoriety and to be able to manage their career

not relying on third parties to establish or grow it. What is more, the artists manage their self-presentation activities online not only to foster understanding and build their image, but also to validate their art persona in the society. Thus, it was observed that all of the artists sought for a way to show their professionalism, competences and a kind of validation, feedback or approval from publics and external parties. Enabled to trade online, the public validation and recognition becomes even more important as it can translate to financial success, in particular for the ones that have developed e-commerce platforms. Even though, there was a discussion whether more expensive work can be sold out online or not, the research showed that selling art online through mainstream social media platforms and webpages is possible, and it is fact. Also, what the analysis showed is that regardless of the artists' career and status, the online promotion is well-adopted and is beneficial from the perspective of the artists. Thus, it can be argued that artists have modified the ways they spread their messages and target their viewers. Furthermore, allowing free access to their intellectual work they no longer seeking preliminary appreciation by an institution or a connoisseur, and no longer rely on their legitimation to showcase what they believe is a good work and deserves to be exhibited.

With all presented concepts so far, let's track out one of the first transformations in the arts history in terms of art presentation and validation. In 18th and 19th century, in France, artists' artworks had to be accepted and appreciated from the official *Paris Salon*, in order an artist to be approved and validated as a professional artist. The Salon was a place where specialized jury (curators) was selecting authors who represent classical works in line with the established by that time social norms. If certain work was not perceived as 'quality art' by the jury or it was conflicting to the rules, its author had no chance for recognition and appreciation. In 1863 the Salon jury refused two thirds of the paintings presented and various artists (mostly impressionists) decided to try to change this monopolized traditional system (Biome, n/a). The rejected artists took actions to seek another way to present their art to the audience and their protests reached Emperor Napoleon III, who was sensitive to public opinion (Biome, n/a). He decided to let the public judge the legitimacy of these complaints and suggested that the works of art which were refused should be displayed in another part of the *Palace of Industry*. This action gave birth of the *Salon des Refusés*, and also gave birth to the impressionism as a legitimate art genre, where the public was the judge and the curator of quality works. The Impressionists successfully exhibited their works

outside the traditional Salon beginning in 1874. Subsequent Salons des Refusés were mounted in Paris in 1874, 1875, and 1886, by which time the popularity of the Paris Salon had declined for those who were more interested in Impressionism (Biome, n/a). Thus, although some artists, such as Manet, still wanted to be acclaimed by the original Salon, the elusion and rejection from the conventional system of other artists led to establishment of new movement, exhibiting autonomously, and developed into new genre of the arts scene.

One of the first subjects to be discussed in this line of reasoning is the historical shifts in the innate hierarchical character of the art world. The complexity of the art market historically has been growing with the raising of new voices to the old understandings of the art processes. The arts market definitions have transformed over the years, following the transformations in the societies and people's perceptions. This reference to the shifts on the arts market in the Romantic era is significant for the current study as it can bring different reading of the concept who is an artist and how the decision of some authors to escape from the traditional system can change the entire structure and classification of the market, which is important when defining the autonomy of the artists.

From the research analysis, it can be concluded that some artists see new media as supplementary to the traditional system. These artists see it as an opportunity to find a way to identify their content with the creators, and not simply to rely on local representation or third party control. However, the one that are rejected from the conventional system or do not want to stick with it, see it as a tool to create independent name, business and success.

Having evidences for new process in the autonomous representation of the artists and art exhibit, and having indications for transition of the traditional system from hierarchical to more democratic, and from homegrown to international art market, a discussion whether new type of independent artists, migrating to the web and entirely abandoning the conventional art system – establishing the contemporary *Salon des Refusés*, can be born empowered by the new media, is current. What's more, when art producers are enabled to build their own communities, to set their promotion and to equally compete for audience, recognition and awareness, no matter if they are validated by third parties or not, few questions can be raised:

- *Does a separation exist between the online and offline art market?*

If it is assumed that such division of markets exists, who are the participants on the offline and online market? The theoretical overview showed that both art intermediaries and the art audiences are moving to the web, and the research results revealed that also the artists are present there, no matter if they are gallery commissioned or out of the conventional system. Thus, it can be argued that the market lines between online and offline marketplace and trading are unclear. Such ambiguity situates both acknowledged and non-accredited artists on the same market. As long as they both are present online and build their communities and followers there, they equally compete for audience and visibility. Furthermore, what the analysis showed is that on the web the prime criteria of getting noticed and popularized is not if an artist is legitimated by an art institution or not, but how interactive and engaging is the content one post.

Deriving from these conclusions, the second question can be raised:

- *Are the art intermediaries likely to discover and contact self-taught or non-professional artists who get notoriety in the virtual space?*

What the research revealed, is that artists raised or popularized from the social media masses are enabled to become part of the broader market definition. By being present on the web, artists show their talents without having to be part of the official art system, leaving to the audience to judge and validate their art, and in that sense to define their artistic status and recognition. Therefore, a pressing question is if gallerists and art dealers are likely to use the social web to discover talents and contract with emerging or established, but out of the system, artists and potentially with non-professionals. If such trends are present, this would mean that social web not only enables artists to be autonomous in their representation, but also that from not officially acknowledged they might become accepted owing it to marketing actions online and their web community, or the online crowd. Moreover, such processes question the art quality and the value of an artwork as traditionally, there is supposed to be distinction between commercial and high-end art creation and presentation.

This leads to the third question that can be raised in the current discussion:

- *What is the value of the art when the public is enabled to interfere and has an impact over the artists' creation process?*

The artists were found to make use of the massive marketplace. By leveraging on the opportunities of the mainstream social media and relying on branding and advertising

tactics, inherent for the commercial-oriented markets, the artists were found to chase new opportunities and online audiences that seek for art. As a result of the democratization of the arts market, the public is enabled to interfere in the arts processes through the technology, which might be seen both as empowering and limiting for the artists. Since arts marketing has adopted 'customer-centered' mechanisms, the adoption of businesslike language in the arts may increase the risk of making artistic sacrifices, may lead to the production of consumer-oriented arts products which to bounds the value of an artwork and to influence artists' performance. The current research showed that the artists that self-present on the web face such obstacles and challenges. In their attempt to be recognized by the audience they are threatened to lose their uniqueness and exclusiveness, which according to scholars may also lead to lose of the value of their art (Caust, 2003).

Although to some extent remotely from the general research question of the study, this question is important to be raised in the current discussion as it refers to the previous two. Its deeper analysis may give possible answer to the questions of market definition, who is part of and who is out of the conventional system. If art institutions and the authorities that are in charge to give definitions on low and high quality art, assert that the artists who exhibit on the web and present their art for the masses are not professionals and are not representatives of the high-end art division, the question whether there is a distinction between the online and offline market will become more clear. Such concept will also allow definition and separation of the audiences and the trading processes in the arts. However, to what extent such concept is conceivable in an era where businesses and societies are not only present online, but they live online, is the fundamental question. To delve a bit more into this topic, what the analysis showed is that the audience of the artists is not limited only to the people who physically visit their premises, and all of them feel satisfied that they are enabled to extend their impact far beyond their local area and audience. Enabled to get in touch with people around the world both for artwork presentation, career advancement and for cooperation over art production, it seems unrealistic to claim that being online disrupts the proficiency and quality of their work.

Deriving from the unveiled questions and discussion, it can be suggested that it sounds idealistic to claim that the online and offline arts market can be separated. Therefore, in the new media age both validated and non-validated by the conventional art system artists are competing along each other for recognition online. Who is gaining more

popularity, respectively appreciation from the crowd, and possibility to be discovered by galleries, art dealers or art collectors, depends on the artists' personal efforts in self-marketing and self-promotion. For the contemporary artists that still want to be acclaimed by the official institutions, as Manet who did not join the Salon des Refuses but also was refused by the French Salon, they can choose to stay with the galleries. However, having next to them on the market the liberated artists, who sell their work autonomously and get 100% of their profit, without having to pay to the galleries, the trading process and contracts between art intermediaries and artists are likely to get to new dimensions and to modify the current practices. To that end, it can be argued that artists are not only enabled to self-present by the virtue of new media, but they are enabled to change the current arts market structure through effectively capitalizing on the web opportunities and its vast opportunities for networking, connection, engagement and presentation.

5.2. Conclusion

Recently, academics have researched the alteration process on the arts market, and the changing practices in terms of product creation, trading, valuation and consumption (Alexander & Bowler, 2014; Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). Even so, the scholars have focused their research on the changing processes in the communication of the arts institutions, their interaction with the arts public and art valuation transformations. All these processes inevitably influence the arts market environment. However, thus far academics have not studied the impact and influence of the interactive web 2.0 channels over the individual artists' representation and self-branding. The current research proposed a theoretical overview and qualitative data analysis based on the responses of ten international visual artists with an attempt to reveal to what extent visual artists are enabled to become more independent in their promotion and representation through the new media tools.

The research revealed three major areas in which artists in the new media age are enabled to become more autonomous and to circumvent the conventional art system through the utilization of new media tools: *1) self-marketing and self-presentation strategies; 2) audience relationship building and networking; 3) autonomously trading and artworks sale.* The levels to which artists have adopted and have benefited of these opportunities depend to the personal incentives, business strategy and sought relatedness to the traditional gallery system or the objective to avoid it. The research showed that some

artists sought to completely circumvent the art institutions, while others were utilizing the web spaces as a support to their identity building, but have not evade the galleries.

Conscious about the opportunities of the web, artists are enabled to develop branding strategies to manage their web presence, to show their identity, and to present what they consider their best capabilities and talents, constructing marketable and tradable version of themselves online. The study argued that artists from various levels of career advancement and status tend to be active online and to build strong presence and strategic promotion tactics. They capitalize on the opportunities of the new media tools and mainstream social media to attract audience, to proof professionalism, to get commissions and self-realization. Both the artists who collaborate with galleries and the ones out of the conventional system built their identities using the same approaches - revealing personal information, showcasing work and presenting external validations. They attempt to create a brand that brings value to the public – emotive, expressive or aesthetic, and have found mainstream media as an appropriate and beneficial place to do it.

Furthermore, the research results showed that nowadays artists are enabled to reach international audiences and people who cannot physically visit their exhibits. Through the Internet possibilities, artists can connect and trade with people who otherwise would never be their target, collectors or buyers. Thus, digital technology eases the access to public and trading possibilities for the individual artist, empowering them to be autonomous in their distribution, marketing and community building. Benefiting of the web opportunities, artists can independently create a dedicated following for their work, sell their pieces online without the benefit, or hindrance, of a middleman agent or gallery owner.

Given these points, the transformations that the arts market experience with the advent of the new media adoption consist of changing supply and demand circumstances, channels for distribution, changing target audience, increased competition and accelerated rhythm for production and delivery. These alterations re-organize the arts market and make possible the evolving of self-proclaimed artists nurturing their existence from the virtual masses. Question that can be suggested for future research is exploration if the artists that are not curated by art intermediaries, being self-taught or just decided to elude of the conventional system, spoil the quality of the art industry, and if they are validated by the masses what is their considered status.

Besides, the research revealed that it is disputable what type of art is tradable online and if collectors are willing to purchase more expensive works online. Future research can also focus on collectors' perceptions and willingness to buy art on the web in order the alterations in the art buyers' behavior to be studied. Such a research will bond and complete the existing literature through presenting the views of the arts consumers and art collectors, who are a significant part of the trading process and determine the existence of the market itself.

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Appendix 1 – Study sample

Artist	Status	Nationality	Gender	Age	Art	Employment	Social Media	Followers
<i>Maya Bee</i>	Established	Armenian	Female	31	Painter and Illustrator	Freelance	Facebook Instagram	268,830 13,3K
<i>Jonty Hurwitz</i>	Emerging	British	Male	45	Sculptor	Freelance	Facebook Twitter	170,064 2,153
<i>Aaron Nagel</i>	In-between	American	Male	35	Painter	-	Instagram Facebook *Private Profile	30,1K 5,600+
<i>Ashley Longshore</i>	Established	American	Female	39	Painter Pop Culture	Self-employed	Instagram Facebook	14,2K 2,220
<i>Kathy Ostman-Magnuson</i>	In-between	Scandinavian	Female	66	Figurative art, painter and illustrator	Freelance	Twitter	6,450
<i>Rossina Bossio</i>	Emerging	Colombian	Female	29	Painter	Self-employed	Facebook Instagram	4,217 1,173
<i>Masato Shigemori</i>	Emerging	Japanese	Male	35	Painter	Self-employed	Facebook	3,921
<i>Andre Woolery</i>	Emerging	Jamaica (*residing both in U.S. and Jamaica)	Male	33	Painter	Self-employed	Facebook Instagram	2,163 2,229
<i>William C.</i>	Emerging	American (*residing in	Male	26	Painter	-	Instagram Tumblr	1,262

		Germany)							
		American							
<i>Robert</i>	Established	(*residing	Male	52	Painter	Self-	Flickr		
<i>Lee Davis</i>		in				employed	Instagram	190	
		Australia)							