

The impact of Instagram on pre-digital visual artists



"Nobody likes me" Banksy, 2005



Masters Thesis

Gloria Agostini

Student Number: 545571

Supervisor: Dr. H. Abbing

Master Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship
Erasmus School of History Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract

There was a time when art only adorned the walls of palaces, buildings and public spaces. A time when people would pay to gaze upon real sculptures, drawings and paintings. However, the advent of social media brought about a seismic shift in how people discover, experience, share content, news and art. This new form of media allows people from all over the world to be connected and form relationships for personal or business needs. In this sense, the art world has been revolutionized. This study focuses on some of the protagonists of this new world namely traditional visual artists who are experiencing this transition. It aims to capture the approach of some of the visual artists to burgeoning online environment, focusing on artists who were part of the “pre-digital generation”. These artists have a wealth of experience of the traditional channels but they are now having to work within an increasingly digital world. The study also explores the way in which visual artists are becoming more commercial. Nowadays artists need to consider not only their work but their brand image, use marketing tools and at all times they cannot be seen to be diminishing the integrity of their art. It also investigates how traditional visual artists have adapted to a new hyper-connected world, with all its associated demands. Instagram, the most popular social network in the art world, has completely changed the methods of promoting, producing and interacting with artworks. As a result, traditional artists have experienced radical changes in their working lives and methods. Therefore, this research seeks to explore how these changes have affected pre-digital visual artists’ core values. It also attempts to shed light on the influence of Instagram upon the art world – both economically and culturally - and the changing relationship between artists and their digital audiences.

Keywords: Instagram, pre-digital traditional visual artists, values, commercialism, self-branding, authenticity.

Table of Contents

Abstract

1. Introduction p. 7

2. Theoretical Framework p. 10

2.1 The advent of the digital age p. 10

2.1.1 *Visual artists and the advent of the digital age* p. 10

2.2 Zooming into digitalization: the Web 2.0 p. 12

2.2.1 *The Web 2.0's Social Network: Instagram* p. 14

2.2.2 *The relevance of Web 2.0 for visual artists and their consumers* p. 16

2.3 Commercialization p. 18

2.3.1 *Commercialization of art* p. 18

2.3.2 *The art of arts marketing* p. 21

2.3.3 *Personal Branding* p. 22

2.4 Aura p. 24

2.5 Model conceptualization p. 26

2.6 Expectations p. 27

3. Methodology p. 28

3.1 Introduction p. 28

3.1.1 *Research question and sub-questions* p. 28

3.1.2 *Research design* p. 28

3.2 Conceptualization p. 29

3.3 Research goals p. 30

3.4 Sample p. 31

3.5 Data collection p. 40

3.6 Data analysis p. 41

3.7 Limitations p. 41

4. Results and analysis	p. 43
4.1 Online presence of visual artists	p. 43
4.1.1 <i>Traditional artists and Web 2.0</i>	p. 44
4.1.2 <i>Website</i>	p. 45
4.1.3 <i>Instagram and the relevance to be active on it</i>	p. 45
4.1.4 <i>Impact on work</i>	p. 46
4.1.5 <i>Promotion and sales</i>	p. 47
4.1.6 <i>Communication and engagement</i>	p. 49
4.1.7 <i>Visibility</i>	p. 50
4.1.8 <i>Benefits vs costs</i>	p. 51
4.2 <i>Artists' values</i>	p. 52
4.2.1 <i>Expression of values through Instagram</i>	p. 53
4.2.2 <i>Experiencing the art through Instagram</i>	p. 53
4.3 Commercialization	p. 55
4.3.1 <i>More commercial vs less commercial</i>	p. 55
4.3.2 <i>Marketing in the arts</i>	p. 56
4.3.3 <i>Self-branding</i>	p. 57
4.3.4 <i>Instagram's influence on artists' style</i>	p. 58
4.4 Other findings	p. 59
5. Conclusion	p. 61
5.1 Impact on artists' career	p. 61
5.2 Expression and experience, new opportunities?	p. 62
5.3 Commercialism	p. 63
5.4 Limitations and Future research	p. 64
References	p. 66
Appendix 1	p. 71
Appendix 2	p. 76
Footnotes	p. 78

Overview of Figures and Tables

Table 1:	Model Conceptualization	p. 26
Table 2:	Summary of interviewees	p. 34
Figure 1:	After beach. 9th June, 2019 Retrieved from Jacopo's Instagram page	p. 34
Figure 2:	Ninos de Cuba – The secret of Cuban boxe. 4th June, 2019 Retrieved from Carlo's Instagram page	p. 35
Figure 3:	Luna_5344. 10th January, 2020 (Milano) Retrieved from Edoardo's Instagram page	p. 35
Figure 4:	Japan inspiration is still strong. 18th September, 2019 Retrieved from Chiara's Instagram page	p. 36
Figure 5:	#Passwords #dogmadelcolore. 13th April, 2020 Retrieved from Giorgio's Instagram page	p. 36
Figure 6:	5th January, 2020 Retrieved from Miriam's Instagram page	p. 37
Figure 7:	#amicimasai. 20th February, 2018 Retrieved from Irma's Instagram page	p. 37
Figure 8:	11th April, 2020 Retrieved from Michele's Instagram page	p. 38
Figure 9:	16-19 – Paper. 2016 Retrieved from Paola's Instagram page	p. 38
Figure 10:	Women. 25th April, 2020 Retrieved from Milena's Instagram page	p. 39
Figure 11:	Lactose – free for me. It makes me fat. 28th January, 2020 Retrieved from Davide's Instagram page	p. 39
Table 3:	Summary of Codebook Interviews	p. 77

1. Introduction

Digitalization has deeply changed the ways of making and promoting art. Artists' now – more than perhaps at any other time in history – have an increasing need to attract audiences and revenues. Thus, there evolves an ambiguity of the concept of art which results in an ongoing debate as to what can be justifiably called art.

The new global trend of digitalization within the cultural sector, in particular regarding the world of art, has brought about big changes. Traditional visual artists may not believe in digitalization, which is seeing artists increasingly use online platforms to promote and sell their artworks. Established artists often feel that real artists do not need to use social media to promote themselves.

Is this correct in the 21st century? Sotheby's, one of the most famous auction houses in the world, made \$220 million through online sales (Sotheby's Annual Report, 2018). Furthermore, according to Hiscox's Online Art Trade Report 2019, there has been a 29% year-on-year increase in the number of art buyers who 'visit' online art and collectibles. These platforms mean consumers can easily purchase artworks.

The most affected artistic sectors are music and movies, as these products' production, promotion, distribution and consumption are perfectly suited to and as a result, vulnerable to digitalization. On the other hand, non-reproducible cultural goods such as paintings and visual arts in general are less likely to be affected by digitalization due to their creation process (Bekar & Haswell, 2014).

However, increasingly, visual artists are making use of the Internet to create stronger artistic identities, show their creative process and promote their artworks. This development is exemplified by the challenges faced by the traditional ways of selling and promoting art through, for instance, within galleries. In fact, such traditional ways are characterized by high barriers to entry as is the ever-increasing number of artists which intensifies competition. In general, artists work in a complex industry, described by the notion that "nobody knows" (Caves, 2000). In other words, as long as highly differentiated products are created, demand is uncertain and unpredictable (Caves, 2000). Interestingly, in his book "The Orange Balloon Dog" (2017), Donald Thompson talks about the parallelism, originally proposed by the famous art speculator, Stefan Simchowitz, between the world of art and Lutheranism. Martin Luther (1483–1546) revolutionized the Christian world by removing the intercession of a priest, of a bishop or of the Pope to create a connection with God. Similarly, in the art world, it is possible to avoid any kind of intermediary: an Internet connection is sufficient to look for and buy artworks. In particular, Instagram, among all the myriad social networks, offers the

chance to visualize an enormous number of pieces, which no art dealer could ever curate (Thompson, 2017). Is this revolution changing the art world irrevocably?

According to Hiscox's Online Art Trade Report (2019), Instagram overtook Facebook during 2017 as the social platform for the art world. The report shows that Instagram is mostly used by art buyers: to discover new artists (80%), to be up to date with their favorite artists (79%) and with the latest innovations (75%), to look for new art pieces to buy (75%). Noticeably, 34% of art buyers assert that Instagram has a growing impact on their decision-making.

With regard to galleries, 89% are actively using social media, mainly by engaging with Instagram to promote their artworks. One in two galleries considers Instagram the most efficient platform for selling and for identifying new buyers.

As previously asserted previously, Instagram is a favorite tool of a new generation of artists and collectors. Moreover, Instagram and other social media platforms are tools for the democratization and diffusion of art: every day millions of artists have the chance to share their own artworks with enthusiasts and collectors, and carve out a slice of the market (Walmsley, 2016).

In this era of digitalization, artists can explore digital opportunities to create, distribute and sell artworks (Samdanis, 2016). Social networks such as Instagram and Facebook, as well as more targeted art platforms such as Saatchi Art, provide artists new ways to reach and widen their audiences. To stand out from the masses, artists need to build stronger and more original online identities.

The emergence of new social media platforms, such as Instagram, warrants an investigation into how they impact upon traditional visual artists' approaches to their work. Accordingly, this research has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to construct and describe a general approach of artists to the online environment, taking into account artists who transitioned from the "pre-digital generation", with an experience of traditional channels before moving into digital. Secondly, the study explores the way in which visual artists are becoming more commercial, using their own persona to build a brand image through marketing tools and the impact on the integrity of their art. It should then be possible to draw a general picture of how the art world is changing with digitalization, especially in terms of values. When art is purely a business and the sole motive is to achieve the highest commercial value, one may argue that art is losing its integrity and essential meaning.

In practical terms, this qualitative research addresses the use of online channels, in particular Instagram, from the perspective of entrepreneurial (visual) artists. The aim is to address the research question:

How does Instagram affect pre-digitalization traditional visual artists and their artworks in economic terms and in terms of their values?

The study also includes the following sub-questions: *Is it necessary for traditional artists to have an Instagram profile to pursue and succeed in their careers? Is Instagram helping visual artists to valorize their art? Are the artistic values of artworks being influenced by Instagram? Are traditional artists changing their attitude and switching their image into a brand through marketing tools? Are traditional artists becoming more commercial because of Instagram?*

Despite the continuous process of digitalization and the vast amount of research on this topic, no similar study on how Instagram is affecting pre-digital visual artists in terms of revenues and the purpose of their work has been conducted. The decision to investigate traditional visual artists arises from a curiosity about their “survival” in an era of digital transition shaping the world of art.

In practical terms, this research describes the advent of Instagram in the digital context of the Web 2.0. Particularly, the study considers the relevance of this tool for pre-digital visual artists, in terms of self-branding and commercialization. Lastly, the concept of authenticity is analyzed to understand if the intrinsic and hidden values of art are disappearing or being disrupted.

2. Theoretical Framework

To approach an answer to the main question on how traditional visual artists and their artworks are being affected by their presence on Instagram, both in economic terms and in terms of their values, several topics have to be explored.

Firstly, the focus is on the category of emerging visual artists and institutions in the virtual art world. The study is built around the influence that social media, in particular Instagram, is having on the artists and the promotion of their artworks.

Secondly, literature about self-branding and concepts of authenticity are explored to discuss the relationship that may exist between the increase in commercialization and the loss of meaning in the art world.

2.1 The advent of the digital age

Through the Internet, which has almost eradicated many barriers to entry into the art market, artists have more opportunities. Even though it is easier for artists who aim to promote and/or sell their art to enter in this market, it has become more complicated to stand out from the crowd. Artists are trying to find innovative ways to promote their art, apart from the traditional channels which are now less used and always hard to access. As a matter of fact, online spending habits are benefiting the online art trade with an increase of 9.8% from last year (Hiscox Online Art Trade Report, 2019). This suggests a revolutionary change in the art market.

This thesis concentrates on visual artists who have seen the transition from the traditional way of making and showing artworks to the era of digitalization.

2.1.1 *Visual artists and the advent of the digital age*

The term “traditional arts” refers to fine art including art created using the traditional methods, such as brushes, pens, clay and other tools (Elmansyin, 2011). Traditional art forms are characterized by the texture of the painting, the colors on the paper or canvas, large dimensions, and by a work that is tangible and it is possible to touch and feel, such as sculptures. Texture and volume give viewers and consumers the chance to get involved with the artworks in different ways, living a real experience and building a relationship with the artwork.

The term “visual arts” encompasses a large number of artistic disciplines from various sub-categories such as drawing, painting, collage, assemblage, photography and video art to name a few. Moreover, the term “visual arts” includes each work of art that “appeals primarily to the visual sense and typically exists in permanent form” (American Heritage Dictionary, 2016). Both traditional and digital arts – in the sense of art made by digital tools – use the same art concepts and foundation, such as color theory, harmony, contrast and balance. Therefore, digital arts have to be thought as a natural extension of traditional arts due to the digital evolution which introduced innovative tools to create pieces of art.

In this study the attention is on artists who promote and (maybe) sell artworks through social media, with a particular focus on Instagram, and at the same time have experimented, at least once, the promotion and the sale through a traditional channel. It is clear that the digital is increasingly complementing the offline world. The analysis finds its core in the adaptations made by visual artists that have inevitably followed from the shift from the offline traditional way to online, in regard to their artworks’ meaning and values.

Many visual artists are individuals who “brand” themselves and their products to enlarge their social and symbolic capital and build a reputation around their image. In other words, most of them try to build a unique identity to obtain greater visibility. Indeed, in recent years, the field of marketing has realized that art practices may provide a valuable approach to branding (Colbert, 2015). Commercial brands can learn a lot from artists as the latter are adept at the process of (personal) branding. In a rather straightforward way, artists are brand managers who are able to turn themselves and their self-image into recognized cultural products (Schroeder, 2005). This perspective is quite uncommon as the starting point of the discussion around the notion of branding is always strictly related to commercial activities instead of artistic ones. However, Schroeder illustrates how a new approach where visual art practice informs businesses about new branding processes might extend the concept from merely commercial to cultural.

In support of this theory, successful brands in both commercial and cultural sectors maintain and depend upon memorable brand identities and this is a tool which visual artists should also utilize. In fact, the presence of art positively impacts brand image, eliciting favorable responses to the brand and therefore enhancing and extending it (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008).

Following this line of thinking, Muniz, Norris and Fine (2014) compare successful artists with exclusive brands, as they clearly show a public and artistic image of themselves. This process of maintaining a certain reputation is the same process mechanism as managing a brand. Artists, as well as brands, need to be aware of what surrounds them such as their audience and their “stakeholders”. This trend of self-branding is increasingly widespread thanks to the advent of new platforms (i.e.

Instagram), which allow a large number of emerging artists to enter the market and promote themselves in a simple way.

The environment in which artists are operating in is also extremely taxing. New media and new platforms appear to force artists into changing their traditional way of making art (Samdanis, 2016). The shift from a traditional way of creating art in a digitalized world is a challenging one. New tools, new mechanisms and new technologies are becoming fundamental for artists to be able to distinguish themselves, particularly when dealing with social media and potential collectors. As a result, they could become more mainstream and perhaps lose the real meaning of being an artist.

2.2 Zooming into digitalization: the Web 2.0

A key component of the digital revolution is Web 2.0, which is entrenched in the transition that artists are going through. The term Web 2.0 originated in circa 2005, although there is still not a clear explanation or definition of it. This new media has a variety of applications which differ from the previous incarnation, Web 1.0. The main distinctive feature is that Web 2.0's applications are created by and based upon content generated by the entire community of users, while the previous version did not see the user as an essential contributor. It is exciting in that it offers new marketing parameters – switching the market power from producer to consumer and from traditional media to new personalized ones (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). In general terms, “Web 2.0 is a collection of open source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes” (2008).

It follows that a large number of new technological advances are achieved with this new version. For instance, blogs and social networks are part of this new media. It is argued that Web 2.0 establishes new business models and strategies and it is a new opportunity of growth (Henning-Thurau et al., 2010). As a matter of fact, the new platforms of Web 2.0, lead to new ways of collaborations and interactions leveraging the possibility of sharing content between users (Shultz, 2017). Firstly, there is a focus on the service-based, meaning that the notion of software shifts from product to service: new independent platforms offer services, typically free to users, easy to download, share and distribute. Furthermore, from users' perspectives, Web 2.0's applications are considered simple to use. Additionally, users have more control in Web 2.0, where they can easily share and exchange services or products. In this collaborative environment it is important to build a robust network to establish strong customer loyalty. Meanwhile, there is the constant contribution and definition of new content (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). The continuous improvement and the expanding number of

users are two of the main factors which give incredible opportunities to young businesses, start-ups and even artists (2008).

Web 2.0, and in particular the new sharing platforms, provide countless opportunities to artists. Indeed, almost non-existent barriers allow artists – in fact anyone who wants to call themselves an artist – to enter the market and share digital copies of their art. This is made possible by the process of digitalization which negates the need for physical artworks and/or art buildings (Enhuber, 2015). This process of digitalization and the decrease in the barriers to entry to the market allow visual artists to distribute, promote and easily sell their works without the need of intermediaries. Also, it allows minor artists to exhibit and to be known.

However, for many traditional artists, for example the ones who started making art prior to digitalization, it can be now more complicated to adapt and change.

There are numerous examples of platforms which have arisen thanks to the development of Web 2.0. In this research, the focus will be on a social network used most often by artists to promote themselves and to get more visibility: Instagram. Nevertheless, it is relevant to mention that there are many online art market platforms for established and emerging artists' artworks. For instance, Saatchi Art is an online gallery which presents artworks without any limitations about quality or genre to support young and rising artists entering the market (Lee, 2018). Other well-known platforms include, ArtAndCollect, a global platform which permits artists to post artworks directly for sale with no intermediary or commission; Artsy, Artspace, Artnet are just a few others. All of them follow the same concept and allow users to search for pieces filtered by styles, period and price. This is the main difference between using one such a platform and a social media platform like Instagram, where users need to know the name of the artist to find his artwork. However, many of the above-mentioned platforms have additional costs for artists and for this reason they may not be suitable for young, emerging artists.

To conclude, the study will exclusively investigate how the social media of Instagram is utilized by artists, particularly those from a non-digital generation who have to confront this new way of interaction. Web 2.0 and all that it entails could be an important tool for (visual) artists to widen their audience and achieve greater success.

2.2.1 The Web 2.0's Social Network: Instagram

As already mentioned, this research seeks to investigate the influence on artists of one of the main platforms of Web 2.0: Instagram.

Instagram is a photo and short video sharing social network launched in 2010. Users can upload photos and videos to their profiles and share them with followers or with a specific group of friends. Instagram also gives the possibility to receive and give “feedback” through the use of comments and likes under the images. Video sharing was added in 2013, and in 2016 Instagram Stories, which allow users to upload a short series of photos or videos that remained accessible for just 24 hours, were included.

From the beginning, Instagram has played a pivotal role in the everyday life of younger people in the 21st century. New media platforms gave birth to new societal protagonists, such as influencers, who can be grouped into categories according to the topics they are active within (i.e. foods, fashion, politics and art to name just a few). Furthermore, through this platform, various new activities are arising and artists are increasingly exploiting Instagram as a way to showcase their artworks and gain increased visibility.

According to the Hiscox Online Art Trade Report (2019), in 2017 Instagram overtook all the other social media platforms used in the art world. After a survey about the increasing influence of social media in the art world it was found that in January 2019, Instagram had more than 1 billion monthly active users and it continues to be the art world's favorite channel, with 65% of the survey respondents choosing it as the best platform for art related purposes. As a platform, it is used by users to discover, follow and buy art. According to the report, 80% of respondents use Instagram to discover artists, 79% are following at least one artist and 75% use Instagram to buy from artists (2019).

The landscape is changing: museums, galleries, art fairs and auctions have lost traction in terms of followers in the last 12 months (Hiscox's Online Art Trade Report, 2019). However, the key beneficiaries in this scenario seem to be the artists. For instance, the already well-known artist Banksy added 3.5 million followers to his Instagram fanbase in the previous 12 months (Boroni, 2019). Among NextGen artists, which include all the artists aged under 40, the French photographer and street artist JR has the largest number of followers, at over 1.2 million. For younger talents, Instagram may represent a significant opportunity to enter the art scene, as it allows artists to become known and to build a wide reputation with a solid fanbase, and potentially, collector base outside the strictures of the traditional art market. This said, one may wonder about all of the artists from the previous generation who have had to manage the transition from the traditional arena.

A variety of studies, including the annual report of Hiscox's Online Art, show that Instagram is becoming one of the most popular platforms also for galleries as a tool for promotion, interaction, marketing, participation and engagement with their audience. It is argued that Instagram is even playing a relevant role for arts educators who are broadening the participation of people eager to learn more about the art world (2019).

In other words, Instagram is a huge opportunity, but it also presents challenges. Instagram exerts a strong presence on our society ("Social Media and Its Effect", 2019). For this reason, it becomes self-perpetuating that artists need to achieve more and more market visibility, and to understand what the mass market consumer wants. Therefore, this process leads us to the notion that, to be successful in terms of followers and fans, artists may even have to change their attitude regarding art to reach a broader audience. The world of art has always been seen as a world where artists could express themselves without any restrictions, a world in which fame, wealth or followers should never be valued over talent. Perhaps, this may change.

Digitalization presents artists with both huge challenges and opportunities. With all sectors of the arts being affected by emerging technologies, the way of creating art is also undergoing a transition. As stated by Abbing in his book "The changing social economy of art" (2019), the world of art is faced with uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity. For instance, the process of digitalization and the ever-increasing need to be on a social media platform as an artist, could lead to loss of control over the distribution of one's own works. There is also the chance of a loss of income for illegal file sharing/downloading of artworks (Poort et. al, 2015). Meanwhile, artists from an older generation face competition from amateurs and younger (visual) artists who use social media and online distribution to bypass the traditional barriers to entry. Then again, according to Abbing, art barriers do not exist (Abbing, 2002), in the ways that they did previously and the art world is now a more democratic, accessible arena, which all types of artists can enter.

As importantly, when looking at time invested when working on social media platforms, it has been proved that the new generation 2.0, works fewer hours in their creative profession when compared with the previous generation and their more traditional approach. Moreover, the perception of risks associated with social media and platforms tends to increase with (visual) artists' age (Akker et al, 2015), even though this argument is perceived differently across artists' categories depending on which kind of art they are producing.

To conclude, Instagram is a fantastic opportunity for artists in general to enter the art market, but it may be disruptive to the role that traditional artists have previously enjoyed. To survive and to remain up to date with all the new developments in the sector, it is fundamental to be part of this community because of its primary role in the world of art (Sokolowsky, 2017).

2.2.2 The relevance of Web 2.0 for visual artists and their consumers

In general, creative industries suffer from uncertainty as a result of information asymmetry and uncertainty (Caves, 2000). This problem results from several factors, such as cultural products not being presented with a clear-cut description. Also, cultural products depend on individuals' preferences, leading to deep differences in the perception of products, or the subjectivity regarding an artworks' qualities (Kirmani & Rao, 2000). The demand for cultural products is also being compromised by oversupply: the number of cultural goods supplied usually exceeds what consumers are able to purchase or be informed of. Therefore it is necessary for artists or producers, to establish a relationship with their consumers based on trust in an attempt to reduce uncertainty.

Particular academic attention has been paid to management in the field of art and creative industries, which is considered to differ from other industries' management (Byrnes, 2009). Traditionally, the way of managing artists' creative production was not dependent only on the artists themselves, but also on other figures such as agents and gallery owners. Meanwhile, nowadays, many artists have shifted from the traditional way to the use of social network such as Instagram to self-manage their paths, which is a fundamental shift in the art market as whole. Indeed – cultural goods – which are usually “experience goods” from the consumer's perspective – have undergone a radical change where it is no longer necessary to view a canvas in a museum or traveling to a performance. It is now sufficient to view and admire them through a screen (“Life through a screen”, 2018).

As the new means of consumption highlight, it is possible to distinguish between search, experience and trust characteristics (Nelson 1970; Adler, 1996). These three distinctions have a direct impact on the information behavior of Instagram's users. While search characteristics can easily be found and assessed before the purchase of an artwork, real life interaction is difficult to emulate via a screen. However, if experience is not enough to make an ex-post judgement, there is a high share of trust characteristics. In a rather simplistic way, consumers need to rely on “promises”. The more experience and trust a consumer has, the more discerning he becomes before the engaging with the artist and/or artistic event. However, there could also be a fear of making the wrong decision which could mean lots of demands for information and insight being made of the artist. Therefore, marketing

and communication between artists and their followers will help to reduce behavioral uncertainty. Nevertheless, according to many authors, such as Levy-Garboua & Montmarquette (2011) or Nelson (1970), personal experience of a specific cultural item gives the possibility to consumers to determine the effective “utility” of the object and it plays a central role in the taste formation and in the determination of demand.

Social media, especially Instagram, might be a way to spread more information about an artist and his/her artworks positively affecting their visibility but, at the same time, the actual essence of the piece of art and its authenticity would differ from the traditional one (Newman, Bloom, 2011).

This new way of experiencing art is changing not only the consumption but also production by artists. Traditionally, art was considered to be paintings, drawings or sculptures physically produced by the hand of the artist. With the advent of digitalization, the traditional definition of art has expanded beyond this to encompass different forms of artistic production which includes artistic creation through the use of digital technology. The term digital art is now used for artworks that are created by using non-conventional methods. This latter category includes artworks which are created or reproduced by digital tools. However, digital art is derived from traditional art forms, with the addition of constituents of new technology. This radical change of experiencing art, has made it easy for (visual) artists to use devices to change the style of their artistic production.

Undeniably, there are some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the current digitalization of art. Firstly, the main strength is the greater possibilities for creative activities and artists. Artists can challenge and push themselves to do better and more but, at the same time, this could give the chance to everyone to act as an artist, musician, architect, director without being formally “trained” to do it. This attitude could transform the world of art, where everyone could “pretend” to be an artist and where there would be no line defining the boundaries of such professions. Secondly, in terms of weaknesses, the knowledge obtained through the digital experience is incomplete: practical experience and more profound knowledge can be achieved only through face-to-face contact, by sharing ideas and points of view with others, and the connection between the individual and artworks (Collins, 2005, p. 64). Thirdly, several opportunities emerge, namely new possibilities are opened for training, education and entertainment – either for artists to become known or by using technology to develop skills – allowing users to have more possibilities to reach out and enrich their own experience. Threats can also be apparent when it comes to the increase in unprofessionalism and false creative self-confidence. This could lead to a decay in the aesthetics as well as the loss of originality and creative thinking in a world where consumer tastes are becoming more and more mainstream (Velev, 2004).

Even though it could be said that Instagram is a useful tool for artists to reduce uncertainty and build an online relationship based on trust, the reality is that many artists and consumers do not fully interact on Instagram. Due to digitalization, experiences, relations and face-to-face connections with others are decreasing (Ashworth, 2019) and this may be applied also in the art world. While accepting this trend, it becomes crucial not to lose sight of the fact that cultural goods such as visual art might be looked at and consumed with a real experience, appreciating dimensions, textures and play of light on sculptures, paintings and photos.

2.3 Commercialization

Commercialization is the “process of managing or running something principally for financial gain” (Oxford Dictionary Definition) or “the organization of something in a way intended to make a profit” (Cambridge Dictionary Definition). Consequently, pointing out the commercialization of art underlines the existing connection between money and arts.

2.3.1 Commercialization of art

Although the commercialization of the art world has helped artists to be more popular and sponsored (“The Pros And Cons Of Instagram”, 2019), it has moved the concept of profit from the economy into the art world. Many artists choose to be unaffected by commercialization, but others have altered their course of action to fit in with modern society. While many artists have found motivation and success in commercialization, the same artists and art itself have become less singular and more focused on making money (Abbing, 2019, p.169). In a practical sense, some artists look for the quickest way to make art, whether it be in decreasing the size of the artwork, using an easier medium, not paying attention to small details, or by creating the same artwork multiple times.

When art is hurried, quality and originality are proportionately decreased. Meanwhile, some artists are focused on creating what they know will create profit. In this situation, art may be mass produced or produced solely for the buyer, but not in a personal way. In modern times, the effect of artworks sold at auctions for huge sums of money is that some artists are tempted to turn their works into a brand, to start giving the audience what they want and what they expect (Schroeder, 2005).

The Internet, auction houses and the art fairs have helped the process of commercialization in the art world. This commercialization has been condemned both by the protagonists within the market, for example the artists, as well as by observers from outside, the public. Indeed, it is argued that the

above-mentioned institutions, especially auctions and art fairs, are inappropriate physical contexts in which to appreciate art. They focus on the commodity and the status value art is supposed to have, often overlooking artistic considerations.

Furthermore, the institutions have built specific market rules among the participants: artists would no longer produce high quality artworks, but they would be more interested in earning profits, producing art that is appealing to consumer taste. The purpose of art thus shifts into being fashionable, establishing a solid career for the artist who receives attention and achieving a recognized status, meaning that the primary non-monetary motivation has been shifted into a monetary one (Fray, 2001). Besides, there is another factor intensifying the commercialization of art: the work of art is sometimes not seen as a cultural object anymore, but most likely as a financial asset which can be used for investment purposes (Velthuis, 2013). The market institutions have contributed to this social definition of a work of art seen as a financial object. On account of this, new collectors are being attracted to the art market, not looking for intrinsic artistic value per se but merely to diversify their portfolios. Currently, the idea is that “...high price stands for artistic value, as well as exclusivity, as well as the possibility to become a member of a very select group and more of such things” (Abbing, 2019, p.170). This trend should it increase, will be detrimental to the art world as a whole.

Lastly, maybe the most relevant factor is the availability of various online art world portals which are increasing the commercialization of the art. In the past, it was difficult to find and build connections with buyers, but today the online platforms have made the process very easy (Chaudhary, 2016). There are many portals which let users find and purchase artworks in an intuitive way. These portals, such as Saatchi Art, ArtAndCollect, Artsy and Artspace, are actual online markets for investors looking for quick profits or for collectors or established buyers.

These online portals make the communication between artists and their public easier and faster. If a buyer wants to get in contact with an artist, many ways are available to contact him, from email, to the website or the Instagram profile. Through these portals, artists are promoted but they could feel like they belong to a “huge online catalogue” which is not properly curated and without any verifiable recognition. In this scenario, artists are ever more focused on self-promotion, aiming to attract as many people as possible. In doing so artists are thought to lose the purity and the essence of what they are creating (Woolf, 2016).

Contemporary art heavyweights, such as Damien Hirst or Jeff Koons, actively brand themselves. Hirst, a British artist, made a name for himself by creating art that is “purposely provocative and disturbing”, accumulating wealth due to his unique ideas and ideologies about art, which consists of shocking the public. Through his marketing strategies, he has built a brand identity will not be

forgotten soon. Regarding Jeff Koons, his marketing strategy is all about creating and being a “controversial figure” who has a strong instinct for self-promotion. Koons does not hide his desire to market himself or his artworks, publicly stating that one of his main goals is to increase his market share by establishing his works in as many galleries as he can.

This process of marketing one’s own persona and artworks could be explained through the concept of enrichment. In respect to art, following Abbing’s book, enrichment refers to the phenomenon through which artists add to their works elements of information, narratives and labels, with the consequence that the artwork creates more interest and curiosity for the consumer. There “can be, but does not have to be, a commercial incentive”, but due to enrichment there is reputational and/or financial gain (Abbing, 2019, p.198).

Regarding the world of art, there are two key concepts, namely marketing and self-branding— both in terms of enrichment and promotion – which strive for reputational or financial gain. Specifically, two forms of enrichment exist and both influence consumer choice. The first enriches the positioning/branding of the artwork without affecting it, while the other form sees the artwork being affected with the addition of extras, or changes, which do not serve the artistic goal (Abbing, 2019). In this context, artists and producers pay more attention to making their artworks appealing to the public or on the promotion of their artworks perhaps forgetting the real meaning of the artwork itself.

In these terms, the pessimistic view of the commercialization of the art world is not all bad. Firstly, it could be argued that the quantity of art which has been tainted is overestimated (Malik, 2007). There is a natural conservatism in the marketplace because of the nature of high risk investments, high transaction costs, the lack of liquidity in the market and the difficulties in obtaining access to new artworks which have the potential of rising in value (2007). Secondly, many well-known or emerging artists do their best to avoid overt commercialization and they develop strategies to resist this trend and remain unique (2007).

As already mentioned, artists are free to decide which goals they want to pursue, whether artistic ones or economic ones. Some artists really want to convey meanings or concrete feelings. In other cases, artists are more money/market-oriented, so they adjust themselves and their artworks depending on what the consumer wants. In the art world, a world made by experiences and connection, the main risk is to impoverish the real essence of art. Many economists are trying to convince artists that the concepts of marketing and personal branding strongly related to commercialization need to affect the nature of the artwork and the art experience. Other economists, as Arjo Klamer, state that it is indisputable that “...the monetary measurement of value may corrode the art experience”.

Moreover, “the price may make people forget about the artistic qualities of the work” (Klamer, 2017, p.199). In a system where money controls almost everything and regulates the relationships between individuals and groups, it is true that most of the population judges the importance and the quality of things through a financial assessment.

Attributing a price to an artwork is extremely difficult. Increasingly, it seems as if society is attaching value to “goods”, rather than looking at the work’s artistic quality or considering expert opinions. Furthermore, art is far more complex to value because the opinion on pricing varies from person to person. While one person could think of an artwork as worthless and meaningless, others may see value and purpose in it. Thus subjectivity plays an important role in the art world and it is also for this reason that it is difficult to find a fixed monetary value to each piece of art.

There might be both advantages and disadvantages concerning the commercialization of art. If used wrongly, the commercialization of art devalues and undermines its main purpose as artists and their artworks start to be purely judged on price with the purpose of profit. However, the commercialization of art is a necessary “evil” and in the world we live today, money is a big issue. As Hirst said “in the world we live today, money is a big issue. It’s as big as love, maybe even bigger” (Hirst, 2009).

2.3.2 The art of arts marketing

The development of modern marketing started in the 1950s when the focus shifted onto the products and increasing the volume of sales. Marketing techniques are numerous, and they are especially related to consumer’s behavior, but also to competitors’ positions and government actions. Generally speaking, the main elements include product planning, pricing, place and promotion (Colbert, 2001). In the last few decades, the concept of marketing has evolved in that it is no longer solely applied to companies but also to individual producers as well. Central is Colbert’s definition of marketing’s goal as “the optimization of the relationship between companies and costumers and maximization of their mutual satisfaction” (Colbert, 2001), meaning that the main aim of marketing is to reach the mutual satisfaction for producers and consumers.

Focusing our attention into the art world, in 1967, the new concept of arts marketing was introduced by Kotler as “an integrated management process which sees mutually satisfying exchange relationships with customers as the route to achieving organizational and artistic objectives” (Hill et al, 2003). Such definitions depict a combination of organizational and economic intentions which are usually objective and measurable, while art is usually subjective and individual. Nonetheless, as already mentioned, these two sides are difficult to combine.

Following this line of reasoning, there are different perspectives about marketing of the arts. On one hand there is the assumption that traditional marketing's framework does not take into account the fields of art where artists produce art for art's sake and for their own satisfaction. Consistent with this belief there is the marketing principle that products are produced and created in response of consumers' needs and desires, which intuitively does not fit in this scenario. On the other hand, some authors, such as Schroeder (2005), claim that artworks are goods just like any others: they are involved in the same market dynamics, and can be measured by market mechanisms as they are subject to consumer influences. It can be argued that the consumers' need for an artwork is related to the social recognition it could bring to them, but it does not fulfill needs that other commodities do.

Recent developments demonstrate an existing link between art and an economic way of thinking. A need for marketing in the arts field is now recognized and accepted. Though, the main differentiation between the traditional marketing theory and the marketing of art theory is that the latter should not be consumer-centered, but product-centered. Nowadays, artists and art institutions make art more user-oriented, introducing adaptations and changes with the purpose of satisfying the needs of others (Abbing, 2019, p. 178). In other words, artists make compromises to be more appealing to their consumers. However, if artists openly adapt their creation for personal gain, they not only encounter artistic compromises, but their work is also presented and seen as commercial, and they run the risk of being called commercial artists (Abbing, 2019 p.179). The difficulty of marketing is to succeed in combining artistic and economic goals while finding a balance with the individual artist and his/her followers.

2.3.3 Personal branding

It is interesting to consider the concept of self-marketing which will lead us to present the notion of self-branding which, in turn, brings us to the different opinions in academic literature. The connection between (visual) artists and marketing is an appealing subject because it can demonstrate the existing link between the artistic side and the economic one.

Many authors have considered the relationship between culture, arts and marketing (Fillis, 2004; Colbert, 2007). Here, the focus is on how an artist interacts personally with the market and the meaning of marketing to the individual artist. Following the study done by Lehmann (2009), visual artists consider the concept of marketing relevant for them, but they do not define this concept following the traditional marketing theory. The paper reveals how an artist can utilize marketing tools to promote themselves and communicate with the audience (Lehmann, 2009). It is shown that self-marketing plays an important role in the extension of an artist's career and self-image (2009).

It appears that (visual) artists and the world of art are in many ways reluctant when it comes to marketing theory. The resistance to embracing marketing as a tool to enrich their careers is best evidenced by the confusion over how best to create a brand image and develop a following.

Philbrick and Cleveland define personal branding as “an introspective process by which the individual defines him or herself professionally as a pathway to professional success” (Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015, p.181). Moreover, they state that “when you engage in personal branding, you are developing your human capital by investing in continuous learning and enhancing your social capital through visibility and notoriety and access to financial success and financial profitability” (Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015, p.181). This concept is often criticized by questioning whether treating an individual as a brand or product is ethical, especially in the world of art where notoriety has a negative connotation as it affects the artists’ creative integrity (Timms 2004, Lehmann, 2009).

Many examples show how artists can strategically manipulate their image participating in activities that go beyond their creative work, such as media interviews, Instagram profiles, and participating in art fairs. Furthermore, the action of advertisement and publicity is affected by consumer’s ignorance about quality differences among different brands (Nelson, 1970). This concept can also be related to the art field. In fact, as artists are increasingly concentrated on their image, they deal with their consumers and build more precise techniques of advertisements focusing on the consumers’ perspective. In this scenario, the artwork could be affected and as a result the art might be involved in a radical change of its authenticity, and with it the artists. This could directly impact an artist’s credibility as well.

Self-branding is interesting and relevant in the arts field because many artists view their creative works as an extension of themselves. Artists usually combine their private persona with their business and consequently offer products which are extremely personal and reflect their personality. Consequently, even if they do not consider this action as personal branding in an active way, they communicate their personal “brand” to the market. As a matter of fact, successful artists can be compared to brand managers who are carefully curating their own brand concepts and are involved in the development and promotion of themselves as defined products in the cultural scene (Schroeder, 2005; Allen, 2016).

In the field of art, promotion and the concept of brand are correlated to marketing, often holding a negative connotation and carried out by the artist him/herself. It is believed to undermine artists’ creativity and purity. On the other hand, a certain degree of market orientation and interaction is seen as necessary for the financial success of an entrepreneurial artist (Lehmann, 2009).

Also, emotional relationships are cultivated by the intimacy and the self-connection that a consumer is able to create with the brand (or artist) (Kemp, 2000). They will create a strong connection which can play an extremely important role for the branded artist because it leads to loyalty in the form of purchase behavior. Moreover, value co-creation plays another important role on the artworks of an artist and it could have either positive or negative effects. In this sense, artists can be more inclined to adapt their works for the consumers, which could mean losing the artistic integrity and authenticity. However, building brand relationships between consumers and artists can be a challenging and complex process which could lead to either advantages or disadvantages.

As already mentioned, social media platforms are applications of Web 2.0 which allow individuals to support the communication, interaction and creation of relationships with others (Scott, 2010). The positive side is that everyone has the opportunity to access a wider audience and visibility. At the same time, the increasing imbalance towards the consumers' side is pushing the world of art down the road of traditional marketing.

2.4 Aura

Technology is now part of everyday life. It is used from jobs to interactions, but also for interests such as art. Art, which has been always seen as a discipline expressing human emotion and creativity, is now taking a new form. Because of the process of digitalization, art is mutating towards "digital art". Digital art is not only a new concept regarding creativity and expression, but it also faces problems in terms of originality and authenticity of the artwork itself (Budiman et al., 2018).

According to Walter Benjamin and his article "The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), art has an aura in its production, "the original preserved all its authority" (p. 3). It is argued that the originality of an artwork is based on its aura, while something which is reproduced by machines cannot be called a work of art. The concept of aura can be explained as an effect on a work of art which is uniquely present in time and space. Even if the author states that "in principle, a work of art has always been reproducible", you could also state that "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" does not exist (1936). The definition of aura and its link with the originality of a work are also related to the notion that an artwork needs to be original or authentic in its core values (Badry & Lubis, 2018).

According to Benjamin W., the aura of much art has disappeared in the modern age because it has become reproducible (Benjamin, 1936). Aura is a quality integral to an artwork that cannot be

communicated through mechanical reproduction techniques, such as photography. In practical terms, classic literature can now be bought cheaply and easily, and a painting can be accessible as a poster. Intuitively and undeniably, there is a substantial difference when these examples are compared to the experience of admiring in person an original art piece in a gallery or reading an original manuscript in a library. Walter Benjamin, in his work, was trying to capture these differences. The traditional piece of art is experienced through contemplation, which is now seen as an introverted activity. Nowadays, modern cultural forms such as social media do not give the possibility to just contemplate, instead they are experienced as pastime or amusement. The idea of contemplation switched to the idea of distraction, which became the social alternative. Thus, contemplation can be seen as a “domination”, where the artworks fully absorb its audience (Benjamin, 1936). On the other hand, the concept of distraction involves the audience engaging with the artwork.

The argument of how social media is reducing the ability to pay attention can be associated with the art on Instagram. Through social media, art is shared via photos of art pieces and it can be said that is now gaining entirely new functions. Art may be participatory and interactive or it might at least be able to create an interaction between the audience and the artwork (Saltz, 1997) within a gallery setting. However, as soon as a new art piece is created or put in a gallery, it will be immediately posted on Instagram. Being an artist, in a traditional sense, is no longer sufficient. There is a need to always be connected and sharing everything with as many people as possible; from artworks to self-promotion. By doing so, artists run the risk of losing authenticity, the original essence of making art.

If the notion of aura is taken into account in this new digital era, it could be said that the world of art is changing. As a matter of fact, as stated by Michael Sankey (2016), the tradition is no longer playing a relevant role, but a new concept of doing art is developing, where accessibility and mass replication is preferred over the importance of integrity and authenticity. It is undeniable that artworks are becoming something different from what we were used to. Unlike in the 1930s, where galleries, posters and newspapers were the only key means of dissemination, our digitalization era offers tools such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, online platforms. Internet can be seen as the gallery of an artist and the Instagram profile of each artist can potentially reach an audience of millions people. Art has been given a new value and new meaning.

In the last decade, our prospective has adjusted and matured to another way of consuming and appreciating art. As a consequence, all the mechanisms that were specific to the world of art have changed: the “like” has become the signal of quality and fame for an artist, the followers have become the token of participation. The question arises about whether it is still possible for the audience to be absorbed by the artwork, rather than just scroll a screen distractedly. Certainly, the act of contemplation

is still a possibility, as galleries and other institutions are still alive. However, there is also the chance, to get distracted from digital screens and not notice there could be a place to contemplate art. “The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one” (Benjamin, 1936). For this reason, with Instagram and all the new digital tools which give the power to the audience, artists should pay attention: the risk is to be manipulated by the public and to consequently transform art pieces into products built on consumers’ will.

2.5 Model Conceptualization

The theoretical framework designed for this research is summarized in the following Conceptual Model. Through this schematic overview, the reader is provided with a description of the research stages. In particular, the main question and sub-questions with the respective topics are connected, accompanying the reader to the main results found by the researcher.

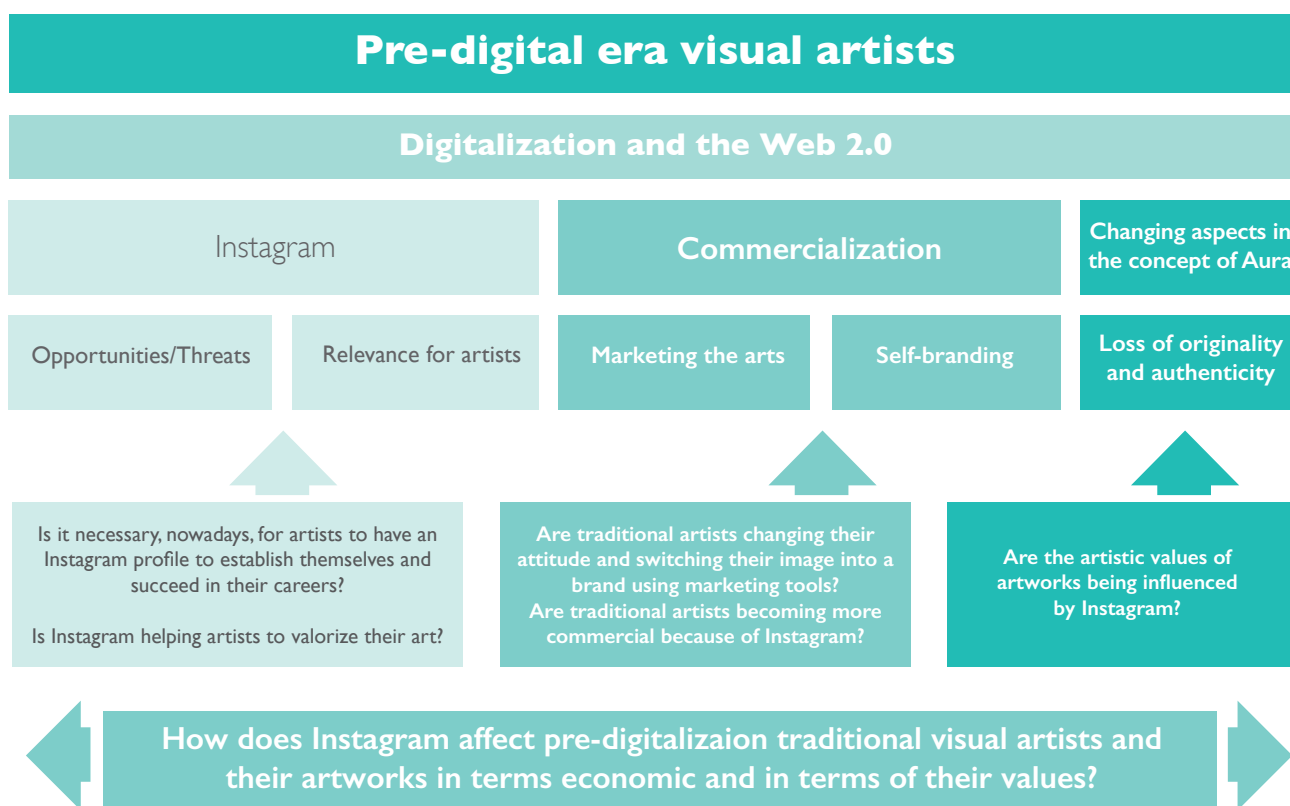


Table 1: Model conceptualization

2.6 Expectations

Given the above theories this thesis is expected to establish that artists from the previous generations are facing difficulties in the new digital world. Although there are more opportunities, at the same time there are also more challenges, as asserted by Velev (2004) and Chaunday (2016).

Following the argument of Abbing (2019) and from interviews carried out, the researcher expects to find increased commercialization of artists. If these results are correct, the final answer to our research question will be that in monetary terms visual artists and their works, are positively affected by their presence on Instagram. Especially their online visibility and self-promotion will be higher and easier to harness. In terms of values and meaning of the art itself, relevant change is expected, both in terms of the actual essence of the art and the attitude of artists who are becoming more focused on consumers rather than the market (Schroeder, 2005; Allen, 2016). These results, imply that the social network could be a fundamental source of non-financial rewards for artists in the form of increased notoriety. Consequently, artists may change their behavior to become more focused on self-branding and promotion.

As far as the authenticity and the values behind the artwork itself, it is expected artists, and, as a consequence, their artworks, are dealing with a radical change and are becoming more commercialized than ever before, leading them to a loss of their main artistic bedrocks (Benjamin, 1936).

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the following chapter, an in-depth explanation of the methodology followed in the research is presented. Starting from the research question and sub-questions, it follows an analysis of the research design, terms' conceptualization and research objectives. The chapter is concluded by depicting the factors determining the sample selection alongside an investigation of the qualitative information and data collected.

3.1.1 Research question and sub-questions

The aim of this study is to seek how the online presence of traditional visual artists is affecting their careers and the authenticity of their artworks. In this regard, the following research question has been defined:

How does Instagram affect pre-digitalization traditional visual artists and their artworks in economic terms and in terms of their core values?

To answer this main question, several sub-questions were formulated:

- *Is it necessary for traditional artists, nowadays, to have an Instagram profile to pursue and succeed in their careers?*
- *Is Instagram helping visual artists to valorize their art?*
- *Are the artistic values of artworks being influenced by Instagram?*
- *Are traditional artists changing their attitudes and switching their image into a brand through marketing tools?*
- *Are traditional artists becoming more commercial because of Instagram?*

3.1.2 Research design

Instagram is becoming a relevant tool for artists to promote themselves and potentially become known all around the world. Traditional visual artists have been interviewed to find out how their presence on Instagram is helping them to increase their online presence. The attention is focused on monetary returns from the use of the platform and artists' feelings about the perception of their artworks through a screen.

Following the notion that commercialization of art is becoming increasingly significant along with the concept of artists' self-branding, the study questions the existence of a potential loss in terms of authenticity and uniqueness in the art world.

The content analysis is characterized by qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews. This methodology is suitable to find out how traditional visual artists and their artworks are being affected by their presence on Instagram. Qualitative methods take an interpretive approach to the subject and investigate people in natural environments (Bryman, 2012). In other words, qualitative research techniques seek an understanding of behavior, values and beliefs of participants through the creation of close involvement with the subjects being investigated (p. 408). Specifically, through semi-structured interviews, a creative dialogue between the two sides is likely to be created, leading to a mutual benefit: while visual artists have the possibility to express their thoughts in an honest way and feel comfortable during the interview, the interviewer has the chance to pilot the conversation through an in-depth analysis, benefiting the research. Disadvantages of this approach however include the risk of subjectivity of both the interviewer and interviewees or the possibility of changing contents, risking credibility of the study and increasing the speculative nature of the final conclusions. However, taking note of such possible biases, the decision to use semi-structured interviews has been taken on the basis of pre-existing theory, which strongly guides the inquiry (Bryman, 2012).

In practical terms, in this study, 11 traditional visual artists were interviewed and data was retrieved from their Instagram profile. Regarding the problem of subjectivity, great attention has been placed on two key aspects, namely validity and reliability, to obtain trustworthy findings. In practical terms, to establish the total credibility of findings, interviewees have been submitted a confirmation that the questions were correctly understood.

3.2 Conceptualization

The study is built around the analysis of the impact of Instagram on traditional visual artists, in economic terms and in terms of their values. In addition, the attention is on artists' attitudes regarding the concept of (self-)branding.

A brief explanation of some concepts mentioned in the research question and sub-questions is necessary to understand the focus. Regarding the term traditional artists, a brief explanation has been already mentioned in the theoretical chapter.

Firstly, the term economics refers to a social science concerned with production, distribution and

consumption of goods (Chappelow, 2019), studying how individuals allocate resources to satisfy their needs and achieve the maximum output. The research seeks to investigate how visual artists are being affected by their presence on the World Wide Web in monetary terms. For example, are their revenues related to the distribution and “consumption” of their artworks positively increasing?

Secondly, the term values is defined as “whatever people consider important, the relevant qualities of things, social entities, and practices” (Klamer, 2017). In this sense, the study focuses on the relation which could exist between the presence of artists on Instagram and the implications for their artistic values.

Thirdly, the term career. The researcher wants to underline the fact that the term career, in this study, includes variables which are not only related to the level of income, but also to recognition by others or different rewards in the field of art. Artists could succeed in their career, not only increasing their incomes, but also having job satisfaction such as learning from others, flexibility in choosing time and space where they can work and have a variety of interactions. As shown by Steiner, & Schneider, the income often takes a secondary position regarding the measure of job satisfaction (2013). However, all these elements will be taken into account to better understand on how artists’ careers are influenced by Instagram.

Fourth, a brand is defined as “a name, term, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (American Marketing Association, 2007). Thus, a brand can be considered as the idea that people call to mind when thinking about specific goods or services. To create a brand there has to be more than physical recognition (like specific colors), but also emotional recognition (like happiness, powerful). The combination of these two elements is the key to convincing consumers to purchase a particular product (“What Is Branding?”, 2020). However, the action of branding, which means to endow “products and services with the power of a brand” (Kotler & Keller, 2015), is the process of giving a meaning to a specific good by generating a brand in the consumer’s mind. It is a strategy, commonly used by organizations and companies, which gives people the possibility to quickly recognize their brand, giving them a reason to buy their products (American Marketing Association, 2007). This process could also be useful for artists to easily attract a bigger audience and to reach as many followers as possible (Newberry, 2019). At the same time, following this line of reasoning, artists who decide to focus on brand strategies are aiming at sales, thus monetary returns (Tarmy, 2015)).

Lastly, the term commercial, as mentioned in the literature review, refers to the process of managing something for financial gain (Oxford English Dictionary Definition). In this context, the term concerns artists who are focused on making profit through their art. However, the action of being commercial

illustrates the trend of becoming/being mainstream, merely satisfying their consumers' needs. As already discussed in the chapter on the Theoretical Framework, commercialization of art is increasing because of the availability of online portals which are facilitating the transaction between artists and consumers (Chaudhary, 2016). Thus, given that it has been proven that Instagram is the most powerful online platform in the world of art (Hiscox Online Art Trade Report, 2019) and that the amount of art collectors and investors who are buying from the social platform is increasing (Tarmy, 2015), it has been decided to investigate the hypothesis that artists adapt their way of creating art for the consumers' taste.

This research aims to find out if a strong relation between the concept of self-branding and loss of values exists. As argued by Andy Warhol, art has become a business and making money in business is an art, suggesting that the action of making money and the production of art involve the same motivation (Warhol, as cited in Viciss, 2015). Here, a new hierarchy of value has been established: money has come to have a higher value than art. While money used to support art, now art supports money (Kuspit, 2007). The thesis' idea is that, with the advent of new online platforms, this tendency is growing. In practical terms, traditional artists have been selected to analyze if artists need to reach compromises in terms of their artworks' production not to be left behind.

3.3 Research goals

The above-mentioned research method aims to answer the study's sub-questions: *Is it necessary for traditional artists to have an Instagram profile to pursue and succeed in their careers? Is Instagram helping visual artists to valorize their art? Are the artistic values of artworks being influenced by Instagram? Are traditional artists changing their attitude and switching their image into a brand through marketing tools? Are traditional artists becoming more commercial because of Instagram?*

As mentioned in the introduction, it has been decided to focus on these themes because of a gap in the literature regarding the effect of social networks, and in particular Instagram, on the production of traditional artists and art's values. Indeed, many studies have concentrated on how Instagram has changed the consumption of arts from the audience perspective and on how artists are becoming more commercial. But there is a lack of studies on how traditional artists have had to adapt the meaning and the essence of their artworks with the advent of social networks. To tackle this gap in knowledge, in-depth interviews with traditional visual artists were carried out. The main goal was to attempt to understand if the presence of traditional artists on social platforms, such as Instagram, is helping them

to gain a wider audience and a successful career while remaining authentic. Alternatively, are social networks having a negative impact on artists and their artworks in economic and critical terms?

The study offers traditional visual artists the possibility to express their opinions on this topic and to share their knowledge and their stories, contributing to the understanding of the digital world, along with the advantages and disadvantages of social networks.

3.4 Sample

As specified in the introduction, the decision to study traditional visual artists arises from the personal curiosity of the researcher about their “survival” in a transitioning art world. Young artists, who were born in the digital era do not need to transition, to them a digital world is all that they have known. In addition, the invasion of non-professional “have-a-go-artists” along with the demise of aesthetic expectations of collectors, the loss of uniqueness and the fall of entry barriers (Velev, 2004), could cause difficulties for traditional (visual) artists.

As discussed in the theory chapter, it is not easy to radically change to fit into a new world. According to statistics by the Hiscox Online Art Trade Report, the revolutionary change in the art market following the advent of digital platforms is clear. This transition allows artists to easily promote their artworks, reach their audience faster and achieve global visibility. Many traditional visual artists had to review their art and adapt themselves and their artworks to new demands.

As a consequence, from the use of online platforms, such as Instagram, a person’s experience of an artwork has completely changed: from tangible to virtual, from the actual recognition of the concrete dimensions and materials of the artworks to a 2D picture. Even if behavioral uncertainty has been reduced through marketing strategies and the easiness of communicating through the platform, personal experience plays a central role in the determination of demand (Levy-Garboua & Montmarquette, 2011). A digital experience is not sufficient.

That said, as mentioned in the literature review, nowadays many artists are more incentivized by having success through the commercialization of their art, despite losing authenticity (Abbing, 2019). Many artists are now also focused on creating what they know will generate larger profits. Following what the market wants leads the artwork to a loss of originality and personal meaning. At the same time, looking at a picture on Instagram instead of admiring the original piece of art cannot be comparable (Benjamin, 1936).

In practical terms, when browsing Instagram, it seems that the more followers, the more the chances

to be influenced by the public and market mechanisms, resulting in increased commercialization. For instance, artists who have from 200,000 to 300,000 followers on their Instagram profiles seem to be more commercialized. For example, Ashley Longshore, an artist with 286,000 followers, during an interview gave advice to other artists and frequently mentioned the word “business” (Somers, 2016). Another example is Dan Lam, an artist with 267,000 followers, Lam stated that Instagram allowed her to make direct sales and that it definitely helps her practice (Somers, 2016).

Since reaching traditional artists with so many followers is difficult, the study focuses on traditional visual artists who have fewer followers but are still active on Instagram. Table 2 displays the sample of visual artists and their specialist subject, their gender, the region in which they are based and the number of followers they have on Instagram. Unfortunately, it has to be specified that, because of the currently situation (COVID19), there were fewer chances to contact artists around the world. For this reason, it was easier to get in touch with visual artists from Italy, the home country of the researcher, because of the highest quantity of contacts. In spite of this obstacle, the researcher tried to find artists from different regions of the country and also with as much gender mix as possible, to have a greater diversification. Furthermore, thanks to the snowball effect, the researcher was able to get in contact with many other artists suggested by the previous ones around Italy. The final sample consists of six male and five female visual artists. The amount of Instagram followers ranges from 300 to 9,000.

Visual Artists	Gender	Number of Instagram followers	Region
Jacopo (Photographer)	Male	8,574	Liguria
Carlo (Photographer)	Male	1,660	Sicily
Edoardo (Photographer)	Male	1,476	Lombardy
Chiara (Illustrator)	Female	1,300	Tuscany
Giorgio (Painter)	Male	970	Lombardy
Miriam (Decorator/Painter)	Female	684	Lombardy
Irma (Painter)	Female	622	Lombardy
Michele (Illustrator)	Male	591	Lombardy
Paola (Painter)	Female	443	Lombardy
Milena (Painter)	Female	374	Lombardy
Davide (Illustrator)	Male	299	Liguria

Table 2: Summary of interviewees

A brief description of each artist is relevant to have a deeper understanding on the determination of the sample.

Jacopo is a photographer who joined Instagram in 2013. Mainly focusing on portraits, his photos are always in black and white and his main purposes as an artist are the results, the ability to see colors in the black and white, and the work of the photo.



*Fig. 1: After beach. 9th June, 2019
Retrieved from Jacopo's Instagram page*

Carlo is a photographer, filmmaker and visual storyteller. His photos are usually reportage pictures. His two main purposes as an artist are humanity and the act of listening to others. In his works, research is always paramount.



Fig. 2: Ninos de Cuba – The secret of Cuban boxers. 4th June, 2019 Retrieved from Carlo's Instagram page



Edoardo is a photographer. His main subject is the moon, the first photo of it dates back to 1988 and represents the beginning of his career. With his photos, Edoardo is trying to express his emotions. He aims for his images to go beyond reality, to make artworks “fly”, and he is looking for dynamism.

Fig. 3: Luna_5344, 10th January, 2020 (Milano) Retrieved from Edoardo's Instagram page.

Chiara is an illustrator. Her art is an elaboration of what she has accumulated during her entire life both physically and emotionally. She is an avid observer, enthusiastic connoisseur and passionate researcher. Chiara, through her art, wants to express a sense of mysterious, almost sarcastic, aspects usually using boxes, which are her signature.



Fig. 4: Japan inspiration is still strong -18th September, 2019 Retrieved from Chiara's Instagram page.



Giorgio is a painter. Through his art he seeks to discover a story without any words. Giorgio is also hoping of creating sense in his creation through humility. He loves achieving a state where the strain has been lost and the observer can look at painting – which appears very simple – even if extremely complex.

Fig. 5: #Passwords #dogmadelcolore. 13th April, 2020 Retrieved from Giorgio's Instagram page.

Miriam is a painter who brings together two different cultures, Italian and Chinese. Her figures are linked one to another creating an abstract environment in which her emotions become protagonists. She is always painting idiomatic expression of the Chinese written language to express her feelings about life.



Fig. 6: 5th January, 2020 Retrieved from Miriam's Instagram page



Irma is a painter who likes to experiment new techniques. Her art allows her to feel good with herself and her main purposes are to find wellness and harmony and transmits these to others. She gets inspired form her internal emotions, creating ever different canvases.

Fig. 7: #amicimasai. 20th February, 2018 Retrieved from Irma's Instagram page.

Michele is an illustrator who aims to evoke curiosity through his art. Furthermore, he is looking for significance in his artworks through the use of personalization. His idea is to move towards something else through his drawings.



*Fig. 8: 11th April, 2020
Retrieved from Michele's
Instagram page.*



Paola is a painter. Her art is a clear exercise of freedom. Through her canvases she wants to express mysterious meanings. She does not like words which are used to communicate, so she uses her art to express herself and communicate with others.

*Fig. 9: "AL QUADRATO-
BIS". 16-19, 2016.
28th April, 2020
Retrieved from Paola's
Instagram page.*

Milena is a painter who, driven by her passion for art, creates canvases mixing different techniques. She is expressing herself and her feelings by trying to go beyond reality.



Fig. 10: Women. 25th April, 2020 Retrieved from Milena's Instagram page.



Davide is an illustrator who depicts caricatures of people, but he experiments with all kinds of techniques, from comic strips to cartoons. Through his art he is looking for both flexibility and rigor. He never stops researching and his art is something dynamic which never stops changing.

Fig. 11: Lactose-free for me. It makes me fat – 28th January, 2020 Retrieved from Davide's Instagram page.

Each of the above artists started working in the 1980s and they are aged between 50 and 75 years old.

3.5 Data collection

The foundation of this research is based on semi-structured interviews, as shown in Appendix 1, which have been developed according to a conceptual framework realized attempting to answer the points raised in the literature review. However, even though they follow the same main guidelines, each interview has been tailored and adapted to every artist. Information was retrieved to formulate the most suitable and appropriate questions to focus on during the interview. After a detailed background analysis of individual Instagram profiles and websites, each interview was independently prepared. Furthermore, interviews were characterized by a certain flexibility and freedom for both the interviewee and the interviewer. Improvised questions were asked to artists whenever an unexpected topic arose. This helped, interviewees feel comfortable and gave them the chance to talk about their own experiences and be as open as possible during the duration of the meeting.

Looking at the structure, even if each interview has been developed in a different way, some general questions were the same for everyone (see Appendix 1, first part). Also, seven main topics were touched upon during each meeting, with slightly different questions depending on the artist who was interviewed. Furthermore, each interviewee was given an introduction to the research's topic, so as to have a guide to the interview's questions (see Appendix 1, second part). If any answers were not answered in full, the interviewer had the chance to ask more questions providing clarifications on specific questions, or asking the respondent to elaborate if necessary. Thus, the interviewer exploited the opportunity to guide the conversation and not to limit the interview process (Kajornboon, 2005). As a matter of fact, this conversation method might have helped the interviewer to discover unexpected evidence which could be helpful for the study and this was not initially considered (Gray, 2004).

Because of the current situation (COVID19), none of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, but via a Skype meeting or a WhatsApp video call. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in Italian. The quotations reported in the results' section have been translated literally, but sometimes it has been necessary to make minor adjustments in order to give a better understanding to the reader. The length of a single interview varied between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. Interviews were recorded for a total of 10 hours and 31 minutes.

3.6 Data analysis

Once the interviews were carried out, they were transcribed and coded manually. The process of coding used in this research follows the so-called substantive coding, meaning that the researcher works directly with the data, analyzing it “initially through open coding for the emergence of a core category and related concepts and then subsequently through theoretical sampling and selective coding of data to theoretically saturate the core and related concepts” (Holton, 2010). Through the use of this process, the researcher has the possibility to ask herself questions about the data, is able to identify and verify some categories, minimizing possible shortcomings to guarantee relevance by generating links with the area under study (Galser, 1998; Holton, 2010).

The researcher has followed three main steps as shown in Appendix 2. Firstly, open coding methods have been used to break down the interviews and identify relevant sentences and paragraphs. Secondly, through selective coding, a large number of codes (basic units of meaning) have been created and reviewed identifying essential links with the theory in order to reduce them to a manageable number. Thirdly, the process of conceptualization, which represent a higher level of analysis (Bryman, 2012) has been implemented, grouping each code in categories according to relevant themes.

3.7 Limitations

Beyond the methodology, some limitations are pointed out. Firstly, qualitative research could prove to be too impressionistic and subjective (Bryman, 2012). This means that qualitative findings sometimes rely too much on the researcher’s view, on what is important and relevant and also on the relationships with interviewees. The focus on the personal experiences and emotions of interviewees could lead to unintentional bias in the study. Therefore, to retain the credibility of the entire study, feedback about the correct understanding of the interviews have been requested from the interviewees. Secondly, qualitative research is difficult to replicate (Bryman, 2012). Precisely, because the study depends on the investigator’s choice on what to focus and concentrate on, this could cause difficulties in the replication of the study. Issues that could be relevant for one researcher, might not be so significant for another. Furthermore, aspects such as personality, age and gender of the researcher could play a fundamental role in the decisions made about conducting the study. In addition, because of the unstructured nature of the qualitative research, interpretation might be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher herself. Thirdly, it is argued that when qualitative interviews are conducted with a small number of individuals, it is impossible to correlate the findings with other studies (Bryman, 2012). In this research, 11 visual artists were interviewed, all of them

from Italy. Even if an in-depth analysis of each interview has been conducted, this research's results could not give a full generalization about the topic. Lastly, another limitation of the study concerns the coding process. The major criticism of the coding approach is the possibility of losing the context of the argument made by the interviewees (Bryman, 2012). By taking pieces of the text out of context, the entire meaning could be lost. This could lead to the fragmentation of the data, or rather to the loss of interviewees' narrative flow.

It is significant to underline another important limitation caused by the current situation, namely the COVID-19 global pandemic. Because of the pandemic, it was not possible for the researcher to find visual artists from all around the world. However, the study concentrates only on one location – Italy, the home country of the researcher. This circumstance hampers the generalization of the study.

4. Results and analysis

The interviews all brought useful and meaningful insights, giving answers to each of the sub-questions. Through these sub-questions, it was possible to identify a feasible answer to the main question of the study:

How does Instagram affect pre-digitalization traditional visual artists and their artworks in economic terms and in terms of their values?

The topics covered in the interviews are related to the topics discussed in the theoretical chapter (see paragraph 2, “Theoretical Framework”). In addition, quotations made by interviewees have been used to clarify different concepts, referring to the document of the interviews’ transcriptions. However, unexpected topics/patterns came out during the interviews and are considered during the analysis of the results. This section is divided in four main parts to provide a clear structure where the findings of the research are outlined, and all the relevant aspects are examined through an in-depth explanation of each theme touched upon during the interviews.

4.1 Online presence of visual artists

Before analyzing the outcomes of the interviews, it is useful to mention again the online presence of visual artists, especially in the context of Instagram.

The almost non-existent barriers allow artists to enter the market through online platforms, such as social media platforms or specific platforms aimed at garnering sales. Artists do not need physical spaces to show their artworks (Enhuber, 2015), driven by the process of digitalization and the emergence of online tools.

Instagram is one of the most popular platforms used by artists, providing a virtual gallery as a tool for promotion, interaction, connection, marketing and engagement with a broader audience (Hiscox Online Art Trade Report, 2019). Used to operating within a traditional framework including face-to-face relations, real galleries, intermediaries and other figures, traditional visual artists are now experiencing a completely revolutionary environment where they are allowed to interact with people all around the world without moving from their houses or studios, promoting their artworks without the help of an institution and selling their artworks through the world wide web.

The following sub-question will be addressed: *Is it necessary for traditional artists, nowadays, to have an Instagram profile to pursue and succeed in their careers?*

4.1.1 *Traditional artists and Web 2.0*

The interviewees confirm that, for the last decade, traditional artists have experienced a significant transition. They have had to adapt to new tools, methods and techniques. According to Carlo, being on the world wide web is almost compulsory, to keep in touch with the audience and the public (Carlo, p.30).

In the early stages of this transition, most of the artists who were interviewed were skeptical about new platforms and social media. This new arena meant they could create their own profiles easily share images etc. But in the early days they mostly viewed this as a waste of time: “everyone tells you that it needs just five minutes per day. But, five minutes here, five minutes there... so I have always been resistant”¹ (Michele, p.45). Many cited that they needed to have someone younger to explain how to better use these tools and all the platforms. For instance, Milena stated that she finds difficulties in using social media in particular. She would love to have someone explain to her how to use it properly, and that “maybe for the young generation it is easier and faster”² (p. 97). These results are in line with the study of Akker et al. (2015), who argued that the perception of risks caused by social media platforms and a presence on the web increased with visual artists’ age.

Another relevant anxiety for artists is the number of people on the web. As argued by Paola, there are too many users online, so it is extremely problematic to be recognized (p.86).

In spite of these doubts: “objectively I told myself that, by now, when you are mentioning something, people tend to go and see it directly on Instagram, so I joined”³ (Michele p. 44). Over the course of the interviews, a common thread arose about the power that being on the web could have on artist’s career and art. Indeed, all the interviewees have a personal website and, in particular, it has been observed that photographers and illustrators are also active on other platforms designed solely for photos or illustrations, for example, Alamy and Etsy to name just two. With regards to painters, none of the interviewees is active on online platforms in order to increase their sales. They prefer being associated with galleries and art institutions. At the same time, the majority of respondents, eight out of eleven respondents, specified that it is not enough to only be present on the web in a general way. Nowadays it is compulsory, especially for visual artists, to be on at least one social media network, which is Instagram. One interviewee said, “I think Instagram is super important ... a photographer, a friend of mine, told me to join the platform because it was becoming more important than Facebook, because with Instagram you have the possibility to use it professionally”⁴ (Miriam, p. 101).

4.1.2 Website

All the artists interviewed have a professional website used to publish their artworks and a brief introduction about themselves, as well as articles and books.

The website is seen as an important tool, but it has clear limits in terms of visibility. Typically, no one visits a website before looking at social media channels. The website offers “just extra information, to those who desire to deepen their knowledge about my activity ... I use it as a documentation ... it is an accessory”⁵ (Paola, p.86).

It is never the first channel used by artists to promote, communicate and show their artworks. As Chiara said, “the website is more of an online catalogue ... in the website I try to upload high quality pictures”⁶ (p. 60) and also “the website is a sort of archive which I update every night adding the things I did during the day and I posted on Instagram, most of the time”⁷ (Davide, p.116).

It follows that the website is a place on the web where artists often have their entire collections to show to an interested and dedicated public who want to have specific and detailed information about an artwork and its technical details (i.e. prices, measurements, technique, etc.). Usually, the website is more structured and the pictures are higher quality: while on Instagram the focus is on the quantity, on the website it is on the quality (Chiara, p.60).

4.1.3 Instagram and the relevance of being active on it

Instagram is an important tool in today's digital world. Artists feel the pressure to be active on it in order to remain up to date about what is happening in the world. As stated by Paola, “you can really feel that everyone is there, active on Instagram and so you need to participate to that world. In some ways, it is also good to understand the language of a social network such as Instagram”⁸ (Paola, p. 82). Again, another respondent stated that from now on, it will be fundamental to be present on Instagram (Milena, p. 91).

Instagram is part of everyday life and traditional artists are aware of this, as testified by many answers. For instance, Davide argued that “by now all of us are using the social network. I am realizing that the first thing I do as soon as I turn on my phone in the morning, is to go on Instagram...”⁹ (Davide p. 116). These results are in line with the theory of Sokolowsky (2017) which explains that Instagram, by now, is the key to remaining up to date with all the new developments in the artistic sector.

Instagram has become a big opportunity for artists, but also a challenge (“Social Media and Its Effect”, 2019). Traditional artists are facing difficulties in the use of the platform, especially compared with artists of the new generation who were born into this scenario. Edoardo argued that “for me it is an opportunity, a big opportunity, it seems that a path has been opened to be on the top of the mountain and no one knows where the top is”¹⁰ (p. 5). But at the same time, a key difficulty mentioned by the respondents is that the time an artist should spend on Instagram is sometimes too much: the time spent on the social network is not worth to the outcome it gives to you (Michele, p.45).

In this scenario, the question that arises is whether it is convenient for artists to have an Instagram profile, being aware of the opportunities and the risks they can face. Looking at all the answers, Instagram is playing an important role, and even the sceptics are observing a real and concrete need to be present on it. At the beginning, most of the interviewees joined the platform for personal reasons. After a while they recognized the power of the tool in as much as they were not willing to be left out of the online market and from this emerging sector.

All of the respondents reveal that they would never unsubscribe from the platform and they would always advise other traditional artists to join the community on Instagram: “I would say to absolutely join it, even to talk to someone who knows how it works ...”¹¹ (Edoardo, p.9). Following this idea, according to Jacopo, Instagram could also facilitate the actual work, in terms of getting contacts, networks and more opportunities (p.22). Indeed, all the interviewees stated also that they would recommend it to all traditional artists: “I always recommend it to everyone ... even if they are fearful of these things, I try to explain it to them and recommend it”¹² (Miriam, p. 96).

These results clearly show that artists are aware about the risks (i.e. it is time consuming) and problematic but there are opportunities with Instagram. This tallies with the notion that Instagram might be a good opportunity, but it is also a real challenge for traditional visual artists from pre-digital era (“Social Media and Its Effect”, 2019).

4.1.4 Impact on work

Web 2.0 gives many new opportunities in terms of establishing new businesses and strategies (Hinning – Thureau et. Al, 2010). Since its advent, Instagram has played an important role in regard to artists’ working live. Traditionally, the way of managing artists’ production was not only dependent on the artists themselves, many figures, such as patrons or institutions, were playing key roles. Several artists have shifted from the traditional way to online platforms to promote their artworks, communicate and engage with the audience and to get more visibility in the world of art (Newman

, Bloom, 2011). It has been proven that, as Instagram continues to gain traction within the art world, online courses taken by specialists in the sector of the online platform have emerged, especially focusing on sales strategies (Stone, 2017).

As evidenced by most of the interviews, Instagram is having a great impact upon the working lives of artists. Overall, the majority of them are satisfied by the platform, even if they admit they do not really know how it all works. In fact, it is stated that: “I am happy to be part of it. I do not know how to use it properly. I am sorry about that, I would love to learn to have more possibilities”¹³ (Milena, p. 97).

Instagram is extremely important for artists who lack a connection to the traditional art world (Stone, 2017). The general feeling is that a presence on Instagram is helpful to traditional visual artists in terms of their individual job satisfaction. However, not all the aspects of artists’ careers have been improved by this tool, which means this argument cannot be made for all the artistic categories.

The research focuses on promotion and sales, communication and engagement and visibility. This combination of factors is the most suitable to find out how artists’ careers are being affected in detail. For now, from these results it can be argued that, in line with the conclusion of Hinning – Thurau et. Al (2010), Web 2.0 is giving new opportunities to establish new businesses and strategies to control artist’s own careers.

4.1.5 Promotion and sales

“It is clear ... that artists can use Instagram to promote and sell art” (Somers, 2016). It has been proven that Instagram is the most powerful online platform to promote artists’ artworks and art in general (Hiscox Online Art Trade Report, 2019) and also that the amount of art collectors and investors who are buying directly from the social platform is growing (Tarmy, 2015). The Chief Operating Officer of Instagram explained how the platform has become a go-to destination for many artistic businesses. She observed how people are turning their passion into their livelihood and, with Instagram, this is possible. “60% of people say they learn about new products on Instagram and 75% take action — they tell their friends, they visit a website, [etc..]” (Marne, as cited in Stone, 2017). However, the results of the interviews indicate that promotion and sales do not go at the same speed, meaning that good promotion does not lead to guaranteed sales. Regarding promotion, Instagram turned out to be a relevant tool for artists. All the respondents are using Instagram primarily to promote themselves and their artworks, trying to reach as many people as possible. “It is a quite powerful promotional tool ...”¹⁴ (Carlo, p. 27) and by now it is the “first and only”¹⁵ (Edoardo, p. 7) tool that they are focusing on. But what about the sales aspect? From all the interviews it is clear that “the

main reason for using Instagram is the promotion [of artworks and the artists themselves]. Sales are very uncommon: as I told you, I sold one photo in seven years”¹⁶ (Carlo, p.31). Ten respondents out of eleven stated that since they have subscribed the platform, sales have been “very poor anyway ...” and they “do not use Instagram to sell, but of course if it happens I will”¹⁷ (Miriam, p. 105). The majority of them, ten respondents out of eleven, could not say if the amount of total sales increased after their subscription to the platform. Artists find the platform useful regarding the aspect of promotion, but when it comes to sell through, they can observe that sales “are always more substantial during art fairs, through the gallery or the studio”¹⁸ (Edoardo, p. 6)

However, while in terms of promotion traditional visual artists are having success, in terms of actual income made directly from their presence on Instagram the majority of them are not observing any kind of benefits. Many of them are aware they should spend more time on the platform and also invest more in terms of courses to really understand all the mechanisms to improve their abilities, but at the same time they are encountering doubts about the actual potential of this tool regarding the overall amount of sales. Many of them consider themselves “terrible on selling ...” (Chiara, p. 58), but apart from that, they recognize the potential power of this platform. Traditional visual artists might not have the opportunities in terms of skills to benefit from the platform. An important role is still played by galleries and institutions which represent traditional artists. Therefore, Instagram is “especially important for artists who lack a connection to the traditional art world through their educational paths” (Stone, 2017).

These results partially contradict the theories mentioned. Regarding the promotional aspect, the results are in line with the argument of the Hiscox Online Art Trade Report. Results about the sales aspect show that it is not easy to sell through the platform, going against the theory of Somers (2016). It might be argued, partially in line with Somers, that potentially, artists with a large number of followers and with more visibility than the respondents have more chance for sales directly through the platform. In fact, the majority of interviewees stated that, in their case, traditional institutions are still better for dealing with this aspect. This could mean that young artists with large followings who did not pass through traditional channels may well find it easier to sell via Instagram.

In addition to this, an interesting observation made by many of the respondents is that the relationship is established between not just the artwork and the viewer, but also between the artist and the viewer, which can then influence the decision of a potential buyer (Chiara, p. 59). Indeed, from these results it is clear that artists themselves are relevant during the sales transactions, meaning for them it is still more relevant to have personal interactions when it comes to making sales.

4.1.6 Communication and engagement

It is argued that the digital platforms of Web 2.0 lead to new types of collaborations and interactions, making it possible to share content between users (Shultz, 2017). Communication is a vital tool. It is absolutely necessary when sharing ideas, building relationships, presenting yourself and much more. There are many different types of communication: face-to-face communication, non-verbal communication and much more (“Different Effective Methods of Communication”, 2020). The digital era has given us new, faster and easier ways to connect with people that no one could have imagined before. Thanks to social media, people can remain up to date about everything that is happening around the world without moving (“The lost art of face-to-face communication”, 2019). As evidenced by many statistics, such as Statista, social network penetration is increasing worldwide and “as of January 2020 stood at 49 %” (Clement, 2020). It is necessary to specify that engagement, in this case, the process of encouraging people to be interested in artworks, is relevant for artists. In line with this, as argued by many of the interviewees, something can be built and perhaps a sale be born from it.

As shown from the majority of the respondents, in terms of communication, Instagram is comparable to “an absolutely huge, very huge phone book” (Carlo, p. 27) where artists have the chance to create more contacts either with their public and viewers or other artists. There is the possibility “to get known and watch artists who are not [usually] available to you. Rather, discovering things together”¹⁹ (Paola, p. 86). Also, it has been observed by the majority of the respondents that Instagram has helped them build new working collaborations and gain more opportunities to work with artists or curators. Another important point is that Instagram “has reduced times and expanded contacts exponentially”²⁰ (Davide, p. 112), meaning the time needed to get in contact with other people has been dramatically decreased.

However, despite many positive aspects of this platform in terms of building new relationships and engaging larger audiences, the most pressing problem for artists – being in line with Collins (2005) – is that this kind of communication, is not comparable to face-to-face meetings. “The face-to-face meeting is better. When I search for something it does not have to be functional or practical, instead

I look for something that enriches my life, my environment, something aesthetic and abstract, and I like an artist ... I want to know more about this artist...I would love to meet him, shake his hand, understand his process of creation, drink something with him...so the personal relationship it is not comparable”²¹ (Davide, p. 111).

It can be argued, in line with Schultz (2017), that Instagram has a relevant role “to reach more people, communicate to them, because anyway it is a necessity to communicate, it is an absolute necessity...”²² (Davide, p. 102), meaning that more collaborations and interactions have the chance to arise between artists and viewers. This thought is in line also with Scott (2010), who argued that Web 2.0 allows individuals to support the communication, interaction and creation of relationships between people. But, at the same, this is not enough: “human contact is essential ... the person counts, also the personality, letting [your audience] know the place where you produce art has a lot of influence.”²³ (Miriam, p. 101).

4.1.7 *Visibility*

The four variables analyzed above, are strictly connected to each other and can highly affect the visibility of an artist.

Visibility is “the degree to which something is seen by the public” (Cambridge Dictionary Definition). As stated by Newman, Bloom (2011), Instagram is playing an important role in this aspect. Artists can now have more control over their own public and audience. Since artists get visibility and “you can get it...” It remains there, if someone is interested, curious, etcetera then they can find you easily.”²⁴ (Chiara, p. 57). It is not only a source to increase the passionate public or art lovers, but as mentioned before, in line with Chaudhary (2016), it is a way to expand the entire network in terms of opportunities, collaboration with other artists and get in touch with different realities. The majority of respondents, argued that since they subscribed to the platform, they could observe more opportunities and visibility in their sector, especially because it helped artists to be accessible from anywhere even if they are always in their studios (Jacopo, p. 13). When it comes to working on their Instagram profiles, each of them realizes that the more active you are on the page – meaning the more regularly you post or are publishing stories – more outlets are established and the greater the chance that their profiles have of gaining visibility.

Even if the majority of interviewees are satisfied with how the effects of Instagram are positively influencing their followers and how their visibility has increased, agreeing with the theory of Newman, Bloom (2011), a main issue came up during the interviews. Many artists, six out of eleven, argued that the main doubt about being present on the Web is that, it is “an endless sea”²⁵ (Paola, p. 86) meaning that too many artists are on it and that “it is very complicated to be seen ... So also this tool, I am worried, will not be a tool to get [incredibly] visibility”²⁶ (Paola, p. 85-86).

Overall, the visibility, in terms of contacts artists have or the fact of being known worldwide, is increasing. At the same time, difficulties for artists to differentiate themselves from the masses are greater, “especially now, that everyone takes photos and everyone is good at taking them”²⁷ (Milena, p. 95). This is in line with the theory of Veltev (2004), which stated that the art sector is observing an invasion of unprofessionalism or the increasing level false creative self-confidence.

4.1.8 *Benefits vs costs*

It could be argued, observing the results discussed above, that Instagram has many positive benefits for artists' careers, but also it involves myriad challenges for them and their artworks. Regarding the positive benefits that the platform can give to artists' careers, the majority of interviewees argued that this tool is a good way to “stay alive in people's minds ... so it is a sort of reminder”²⁸ (Michele, p. 47). Being active and present on their own profile is the first step to create a network based on trust and loyalty. Furthermore, “the fact of being in contact with people is wonderful ... To keep company between people who have similar tastes and passions, or quite similar jobs”²⁹ (Chiara, p. 62), to share ideas and get inspired by other artists. The possibility to share knowledge, the “cultural and artistic exchange open to everyone and worldwide”³⁰ (Miriam, p. 107) are big opportunities to expand networks and create constructive relationships between artists and relevant people who might be significant in terms of artists' career development.

However, even if the majority of respondents could argue about an overall satisfaction with the platform, they are facing losses too by using it. For instance, regarding the artwork, “even if you take a very good picture of it, it cannot be seen the materiality and the dimensions”³¹ (Miriam, p. 108), meaning that a great part of the artwork's essence cannot be experienced by the viewer. Of course, artists are trying to convey this physicalness in images, but “I can observe that people protect themselves ... also from real meetings and conversations. Everything becomes more comforting ... [reaching the conclusion that] maybe we have lost something”³² (Michele, p. 46). Therefore, Instagram is erasing all the personal contacts and this leads to an overall carelessness and ever less detailed study of things: “there are no discussions anymore, no more similar objectives, no more real critics or conversations”³³ (Paola, p. 86), causing a general “esteem.”³⁴ (Paola, p. 86).

Instagram is seen by the majority as a big container where “everything is being mixed”, where everyone “is copying each other” and so, there is “a bit of uniformity”³⁵ (Michele, p. 45). Therefore, although Instagram is playing an important role in their sector, many of the respondents felt that “it is additional, it is not fundamental to having real success”³⁶ (Jacopo, p. 17).

These results address the sub-question posed at the beginning, showing that Instagram is a relevant tool for promotion and visibility, but it is not completely fundamental and necessary for pre-digital traditional visual artists’ careers, in terms of increasing revenue. In line with the Hiscox Online Art Trade Report (2019), the results show the need to have a presence on it because it has a great impact on the art sector and it gives opportunities regarding the expansion of one’s personal network and the possibility to stay up to date on what is going on in the art world as shown by Sokolowsky (2017). Regarding careers, in line with the thoughts of Stone (2017), it has been shown that Instagram could play a fundamental role for young and emerging artists who do not have any contacts with the traditional art world. However, against the theory of Somers (2016), for many traditional artists this tool continues to play only a secondary role, especially in monetary terms.

4.2 Artists’ values

All artists have values and objectives, which guide them during the process of creation. Values refer to what someone (in our case traditional visual artists) considers important and relevant (Klamer, 2016). All the respondents were asked to mention three or more fundamental values they have in mind every time they are creating and producing a piece of art. Through Instagram and through a screen there might be the possibility to lose some of them, not being able to express them in a proper way. In this sense, the research’s objective is to find out if traditional visual artists have the feeling of losing sense of these values and if they are able to completely “valorize” their art through a screen.

Emotional connections and feelings connect artists with their artworks. Most of the respondents stated that some of their main goals are the expression of something, evoking a meaning and motivating others. In this context, two main questions will be answered:

Is Instagram helping visual artists to valorize their art?

Are the artistic’ values of artworks being influenced by Instagram?

4.2.1 *Expression of values through Instagram*

It is true that an emotional connection to a piece of art is hard to evoke when there is a screen in the middle (“Life through a screen”, 2018). Each artist has particular values which guide them in the production of their artworks. Values help to tell the story that the artist wants to express. The piece of art is “part of yourself, part of your soul, of the time which it occupies, it is part of your life”³⁷ (Irma, p. 112). The results collected from the interviews reveal that just over 50% of the respondents are not satisfied with how social media allows them to express their values. Six respondents out of eleven, argued that it is hard to present artworks just from a picture: “Instagram is just the picture ... the first impact is Instagram ... but then, the human contact is fundamental and it is relevant because the picture counts, but also the artist, the personality ... from the pictures you cannot see the materiality or also the effort”³⁸ (Miriam, p. 89). Partially, according to Benjamin (1936), the originality of an artwork and its aura have disappeared in the modern age. Regarding the expression of artistic values by artists, the majority asserted that Instagram is not sufficient to clearly communicate core values. Exhibitions are necessary in order to receive feedback, or possibilities to have editors and publishers create books (Jacopo, p. 15 - 16). So if artists are able to use these tools, such as art-related events, “Instagram becomes very important, and stands as a support”³⁹ (Jacopo, p. 15). However, it can be argued that not all of traditional artists believe in the power of just images, “people will not understand because I am not sure you can, [just] from a picture”⁴⁰ (Jacopo, p. 15).

Therefore, the most relevant issue that arose from the majority of interviewees, is that the full impact of the artwork can be lost and its real meaning – which might be expressed by a small detail – can also disappear. Moreover, in line with Benjamin (1936), the traditional piece of art needs contemplation and this has become uncommon in the digital world. For this reason, it is necessary to “switch from an Instagram relationship to a personal and private one”⁴¹ (Edoardo, p. 3).

4.2.2 *Experiencing art through Instagram*

In line with the results reviewed above and as already discussed in the theoretical chapter, cultural goods, which are usually experience goods, are facing a radical change. Many might assert that there is no longer the necessity to admire pieces of art in a museum or exhibitions, but it is sufficient to admire them through a screen (“Life through a screen”, 2018). However, it can be argued that the way of experiencing art has changed and it might have also changed the meaning that artworks possess.

Following this line of thought, each respondent gave a personal interpretation of the idea of how Instagram has changed the experience of art and if it has influenced the consumption of their art. The

majority of respondents argued that through Instagram “you lose the connection with the materiality of the artwork. You do not perceive that physicalness. For instance, oil on canvas or a sculpture, or experiential art ... it is not the same thing ... because there is also the time of experiencing. Furthermore, you also see the context in which the artwork is, the place which usually interacts with it”⁴² (Carlo, p. 39). Thus artists and consumers who mediate their experiences through a screen, are taking themselves out of the present moment (Sokolowsky, 2017). This is in line with the majority of respondents who stated that Instagram can be just a tool to get known and discover art related events, but it is not sufficient to really appreciate the real meaning of what they are admiring: “the fact you are allowed to make the screen bigger ... it is not the same as being in front of [the work] which can really fascinate you”⁴³ (Irma, p. 125). Furthermore, everything on Instagram and on the web in general, loses the sense of the true dimensions. Viewers does not have a complete perception of the artwork, “for you everything is the same, dimensionally speaking ... The Sistine Chapel seems like a small square. But if you go to the Sistine Chapel, it is enormous ... So, a piece of art [posted on Instagram] can become as important as the Sistine Chapel”⁴⁴ (Carlo, p. 39), without any distinction.

According to Saltz D.Z. (1997), art may be participatory and it should interact with the viewer. In line with this though, seven respondents out of eleven, argued that “it is not you who chooses the artwork, but it is the artwork which chooses you”⁴⁵ (Irma, p. 125), meaning that the relationship between the audience and the piece of art is a fundamental part in the experience. Moreover, “the artwork is one piece, but the observer is the other piece. So, it is the relation of these two” (Chiara, p. 59) which creates an actual connection and a full experience.

It has been clearly shown that through the use of Instagram as a tool to promote and achieve recognition for artists, they are “for sure watering down the importance”⁴⁶ (Giorgio, p. 73) of physical experiences. In addition to this, in line with the study of Poort et al., (2015) the feeling of having less control by the use of the social platform is increasing. Furthermore, it means that many artists are becoming increasingly concerned about the privacy of their work because an image can be shared easily and the credit for the work could get lost in this process. In spite of these arguments, the majority of interviewees stated that it is necessary to make a distinction between who is an art lover and who is just an occasional viewer. “They see the picture they like the most and then they go on the website ... requesting information or feedback”⁴⁷ (Giorgio, p. 75). This means they believe that the platform is changing the actual experience of artworks, but also, they still believe and hope that real art lovers who will go beyond the simple picture of the artwork.

4.3 Commercialization

As already mentioned in the theoretical framework, online platforms have made the process of finding and connecting artists with buyers easier (Chaudhary, 2016). Through these portals, artists have more opportunities to be known, but also to be inspired by other artists and especially to see how the market works. In this scenario, artists might be more influenced by and exposed to market dynamics rather than preserve the purity and essence of their artworks (Woolf, 2016). Therefore, the two main concepts of self-branding and marketing have been analyzed to answer two main questions:

Are traditional artists changing their attitudes and switching their image into brands through marketing tools?

Are they becoming more commercial because of Instagram?

These two questions are connected with the notion of commercialization. It has been proven that the process of marketing and establishing a brand is increasing in the world of art, especially because of the amounts of money artworks are sold for at auction, which leads artists to create artworks specifically for the audience (Schroeder, 2005).

4.3.1 More commercial vs less commercial

As already discussed in the theoretical part, following Abbing's line of thoughts many artists have found commercial success. However, the same artists and, importantly their art, have become less original and singular and more focused on sales and generating money. Results from the interviewees show that the majority of artists are in line with this assumption. Moreover, partially in line with Sankey (2016), the importance of integrity and authenticity are preferred to accessibility and mass replication. As stated from Irma, "if artists are real ones, they express themselves through artworks and so they will never be commercial"⁴⁸ (Irma, p. 128). However, most of them argued also that being commercial is a personal decision: "you become commercial if you decide to do so"⁴⁹ (Irma, p. 128). From eight respondents, it was clear that being an artist does not sit comfortably with commercialization. However, at the same time, as already mentioned above, artists need to survive and for this reason they need to seek out ever more innovative routes to market. The process of making art means that at the outset the artist does not focus at all on the marketing side, but it is something that comes after, when he/she needs to (Giorgio, p. 77): "I sell because I need to look for money. But I do not work in order to sell"⁵⁰ (Giorgio, p. 77).

Most of the interviewees have recognized that in the last decade, the world of art has become more commercial in line with Abbing (2019), who argued that some actors in the art world have become more focused on making money. However, they also believe that real artists will never transform themselves and their art into something made for the market: “to be art, to be pronounced without any embarrassment, it has to be pure, clean and yours”⁵¹ (Giorgio, p. 77). Despite this, it is recognized that the process of remaining themselves and to not listen to the consumers is not easy. “But if you want to obtain results and you want to differ from others, being recognized and having a personality in each artwork, then artworks need tell who you are. That is why I think it is always important being who you are, having passion for what you are doing, believing in what you are creating and communicating what you have inside ... all these things are part of the artist, so changing yourself to move towards something else, which is the trend nowadays, it is not good”⁵² (Miriam, p. 104-105). This thought is in line with the idea of Malik (2017), who argued that not all the actors in the art scene, who are artists themselves, have a passive behavior towards commercialization.

4.3.2 Marketing in the arts

Connected with the theory of commercialization there is also marketing. The tool of marketing in the field of art is now recognized. As discussed in the theoretical part, the marketing of arts, which has the focus on the product, is now shifting its focus to the consumers’ side, meaning that artists are perhaps compromising and making adaptations in order to satisfy consumer tastes (Abbing, 2019). The main difficulty in this context for artists is to find a good balance between the combination of artistic and economic goals, avoiding the risk of being completely market focused. Now that arts marketing has been accepted, the main thought that came up is whether it is possible for artists to remain product focused or if they are switching their attitude more towards the market side.

According to the majority of respondents it is necessary to make a distinction between some kind of artists and some others, paying attention to the actual objectives of each of them. For artists who want to build a career oriented towards money and success, it is impossible not to focus on marketing (Michele, p. 49). If an artist’s first goal is sales, it is impossible to not be marketing oriented “because one would have to have great luck in meeting people to be able to have success”⁵³ (Milena, p. 96). This is extremely uncommon and too long a process. This means that the tool of marketing is a necessity, but each artist can decide if they want to compromise and perhaps lose their singularity and purity in order to sell more to just settle for less economic recognition but more authenticity (Miriam, p. 103-104). In other words, in line with Abbing’s thoughts, the artists have argued that “this idea of publishing artworks in the social media world, makes you lose a bit

of singularity”⁵⁴ (Giorgio, p. 73) and this is a trend that younger generations of artists are exposed to. Furthermore, it is more difficult for artists who are coming from the pre-digital era to enter the digital world and build an economically viable career through Instagram and social media alone.

4.3.3 Self-branding

Closely connected to marketing is the concept of self-branding. As already discussed in the theoretical section, successful artists can be compared to brand managers who curate their own brand and are involved in the development and promotion of their actual selves as defined cultural products (Schroeder, 2005; Allen, 2016). Following the study of Kemp (2000), artists who are using the tool of self-branding are cultivating emotional relationships with consumers. This can lead to a relationship based on loyalty and trust but, on the other hand, it might have a negative connotation because artists become more inclined to adapt their creations for consumers.

However, from the interviews it has been shown that the notion of self-branding is recognized by the majority of artists. Seven out of eleven, are convinced that “besides being possible it is also necessary in some ways”⁵⁵ (Edoardo, p. 35) to have a chance to be recognized by consumers. The respondents also underlined the necessity for artists to sell not only an object, but “a story, an emotion, something to say”⁵⁶ (Michele, p. 49), because consumers need this additional connection. This argument does not mean that artists “have to get stuck in their recognition”⁵⁷ (Edoardo, p. 8), but that the notion of a brand should help them in their career to be recognized immediately thanks to their artistic style and maybe some personal idiosyncrasies. Therefore, when consumers buy an artwork, they are buying a story. “Then, it depends how much you amplify this story, how much you make it authentic ... how much you build around your brand”⁵⁸ (Michele, p. 49). As a matter of fact, all respondents argued that the act of selling the artists’ own image could be damaging (Giorgio, p. 73). This idea is in line with Woolf (2016) who argued that the presence of artists on the web could have a great influence on their actual authenticity. Furthermore, it is also partially in line with the thoughts of Kemp (2000), who argued that through the tool of self-branding artists are cultivating an emotional connection with their consumers and at the same time it could place more importance on the consumer side of the market, focusing more on products rather than their artistic passion. In addition to this, contrary to the idea of Schroeder (2005) and Allen (2016), the majority of respondents argued that artists who have focused on the liberal arts in their past, are more inclined to focus on the product side, meaning that “someone who is prepared or naturally skilled, can do it”⁵⁹ (Paola, p. 83), but it is not something that everyone can have access to.

However, it is necessary to make a distinction between young artists and artists who are coming from the pre-digital era. It has been shown by Somers (2016) that, for many younger generation artists, Instagram is the only tool they use to control their networks and their sales, using their own image to promote themselves and to be recognized. Whereas artists from the pre-digital era still need to have the support of galleries and recognized institutions. As mentioned before, even other online platforms from which they can sell are not used that much by those artists. Only a few of them stated that they tried these platforms, but usually without any good economic return.

An interesting point which has been developed during the interviews and that was touched by the majority of respondents (nine out of eleven) is that at the beginning of their careers, artists “should be entrepreneurs of themselves”⁶⁰ (Carlo, p. 35). They have to combine the artistic and creative part of themselves with the business side. For traditional artists that was possible by going in person to exhibitions or events. However, nowadays through Instagram and online platforms the respondents feel the process is far easier and quicker because through the promotion of their own image, artists get more chances to be known. In any case, pre-digital artists still believe in institutions and for this reason “it is still a complex world to understand...”⁶¹

4.3.4 Instagram's influence on artists' style

Even though the majority of the respondents have recognized an increasing trend of commercialism in the field of art and that artists are becoming more product focused, they stress the fact that all of this is a matter of choice, being in line with Malik (2007), as already discussed above. Only artists themselves have control over their artworks. In this scenario Instagram is not playing a relevant role because if an artist can be influenced on Instagram, the same will happen in the real life and vice versa (Edoardo, p. 7), meaning that the person counts more in this scenario. In addition to this, “when you decide to create [an artwork] in order for everyone to like it, you are losing the only value that an artist has: the uniqueness, ... the common taste is always a dumbing down”⁶² (Michele, p. 48). However, creating artworks to appeal to the widest possible audience is incredibly difficult for artists: “I am not able to listen to consumers when I am creating. When I think about them, the artwork appears faulty ... I struggle to keep going with my work”⁶³ (Chiara, p. 62).

Meanwhile, Instagram does allow them to gain regular updates and insights as to what is happening in the art world. They are able to follow trends, see what people like the most, how people interact and so on. Therefore, Instagram and the reactions artists receive as a result of their posts are valuable: “I listen. In the sense that I think ... I try to understand what I can change in my art, but just me ... things

that I like”⁶⁴ (Miriam, p. 104). As stated by nine out eleven respondents, they enjoy how Instagram users react to their posts, but at the same time it is impossible to think that artists can or should appeal to everyone (Giorgio, p. 75-76). Surely, “the absurd thing about Instagram is that you can already know which photos could have thousands of likes and also which may not be liked by people”⁶⁵ (Jacopo, p. 17). The interviewees stated however that they could never create something which is not stemming from their personal emotions.

To conclude, “technology has always influenced the art world. So ... also Instagram has the power to influence the art”⁶⁶ (Carlo, p. 39), but at the same time artists have the power to make decisions for themselves. From the interviews it has been shown that strategies or tactics can be implemented to gain more visibility and a better promotion, but regarding the artistic style of each artist, it is pointless to assume that they will adjust their individual styles to conform purely to consumer tastes.

“Things that change, things that make history, are always made by someone who is original. So if you follow a trend, this will never happen. Yeah, maybe you will sell while the trend lasts. But it depends on who you are. In my personal case, I would not be able to do it. I would continue to do what I am doing.”⁶⁷ (Davide, p. 118).

4.4 Other findings

The study has focused on particular topics to answer the main question: *How does Instagram affect pre-digitalization traditional visual artists and their artworks in economic terms and in terms of their values?* The results discussed above are the fundamental points covered by the interviews and they are in line with the literature. However, during the interviews other patterns were uncovered and some of them turned out to be interesting and gave other insights into the study. In particular, three main topics could be suitable for further research. These three main patterns have been observed in each interview and for this reason the researcher has decided to take them into account as they could influence the results of the study. Two in particular will be discussed in the last section of the research as being suitable for further research. Because of the lack of literature on this topic, the present reflections are just observations by the researcher.

Firstly, it has been observed that the background of each respondents such as the field of study they specialized in, might have an impact on their approach to digital platforms and especially on how each artist behaves regarding the subject of commercialization. It seems, from the findings above, that artists who have attended liberal arts studies (i.e. artistic high school, Academy of Arts or Design) are less inclined to embrace the idea of being commercial and, with that, the notion of self-

branding. Especially, as stated by Paola, “we are generally coming from a humanities culture so neither connected with economy nor to the market”⁶⁸. On the contrary, artists who attended schools such as communication and media or economics, seem they have a mind-set more focused on the market and to the mechanisms which control it. Strictly connected with this argument, another interesting observation which came up is that artists with a humanities background, usually, do not define themselves as entrepreneurs of their own activity, while the ones with a more economic background recognize themselves as actual entrepreneurs, with full control over their activity.

Secondly, as mentioned by Lehman in his study in 2009, personality is a factor which plays a relevant role in the artist’s choice about being commercial or being focused only on critical success (Lehman, 2009). This concept has been argued with some respondents mentioning that it is a matter of choice and personal decisions either to commercialize their own persona or continue following only their passion: “it depends on who you are. If you are a shrewd person who immediately wants to live on it and sell it, then you follow the trend”⁶⁹ (Davide, p. 118), meaning that you listen and then produce according to what the market demands.

Thirdly, the last key observation worthy of attention is the role that traditional galleries and institutions are still providing for traditional visual artists. The majority of respondents, ten out of eleven, argued that having a gallery which follows the artists with regard to the management part of their careers, is still necessary: “the role of a gallery is quite important. Especially for the planning that guides you in your career. I don’t know, [only through Instagram] it becomes insignificant”⁷⁰ (Chiara, p. 63). This argument is in line with the thought of Stone (2017), who declared that social media represents an important additional channel through which artists can take control of their careers. At the same time, this is especially true and important for artists who lack a connection to the traditional art world through their educational paths. Therefore, it could be argued that for artists coming from the most recent generation who were born in the digital era, the tool of Instagram is a potential springboard to start their career and they need to be active only on it, while this is not valid for traditional visual artists who are coming from another era.

5. Conclusion

With the growing digitalization of everyday life and new processes of consumption and promotion, the main protagonists in the world of art, artists, are best placed to understand how their world is changing. They are best placed to judge what influence these changes are having on them and their work. Instagram is a platform which is having an impact and it is revolutionizing the sector. Artists have greater opportunities, more chances to become well known and gain new contacts within their specific oeuvre or in terms of wider, mass market audiences. However, there are also threats and challenges, which include the need to conform with the masses while trying and stand out through a post of just a picture of their artworks.

This chapter discusses the results of observations collected during the semi-structured interviews of this research. The section is structured following three main themes in order to answer the main research question: *How does Instagram affect pre-digitalization traditional visual artists and their artworks in economic terms and in terms of their values?*

Firstly, this looks at the artists' approach regarding the use of Instagram, as well as the impact this platform has on their career – monetarily speaking – and in terms of their ability to preserve their core values. Secondly, I will discuss whether Instagram gives opportunities to artists to express their values in a positive way and if the experience of viewing their work via a screen means that they lose part of the work's real essence. Thirdly, the role of commercialization in the field of art and in particular how this tool is changing the artists' style, perhaps making them more commercial than before, meaning they are becoming more consumer-focused, will be analyzed.

A brief discussion follows, about the themes which the researcher believes are the most relevant, followed by the final section about where limitations and future research are perhaps needed.

5.1 Impact on artists' careers

The analysis conducted in the research defines the traditional visual artists' points of view, analyzing how they are dealing with the tool of Instagram. A strong emphasis on being actively present on Instagram was evident in most cases. During the semi-structured interviews, the majority of respondents showed an interest in the platform, although many negatives were identified. The openness and willingness to stay up to date with the world of art, having possibilities to meet people from all over the world – both artists and art lovers – encourages ever more artists to create a profile on Instagram. Most of the artists recognized the power of the platform, particularly in terms of self-

promotion, viewer engagement and the enlargement of their network. In terms of communication, it has been suggested from the interviews that artists recognize and appreciate the potential of the platform. However, in itself it is not enough: the face-to-face interaction and the personal relationships are a necessity.

With regards to sales, our findings show that no verifiable increases were achieved by any of the artists who were interviewed. Traditional institutions and art related events (i.e. art fairs) are still more relevant for this aspect. These four factors discussed above, led the researcher to analyze a fifth variable which could be considered as a final summary strictly connected to the performance of the four mentioned above. Starting from the point that the visibility has increased for the majority of interviewees, there are still too many negative aspects which do not permit them to be completely satisfied about what the platform is offering them, especially in terms of job satisfaction. Instagram has a relevant position, but it is not fundamental tool for a pre-digital visual artists' career.

5.2 Expression and experience, new opportunities?

A leading question that guides the researcher is whether it is possible for artists to truly express their main values through the platform by merely posting pictures of their artworks. Furthermore, whether experiencing art solely through a social network is enough to be able to really understand it. In this scenario, is Instagram giving artists new opportunities with regard to these two issues? From the findings discussed in the previous chapter, it was clear that there were real difficulties for artists to fully express their values and emotions through a digital reproduction of their artworks, ie by posting pictures on Instagram. It has been shown that through the platform, the materiality, the dimensions and the actual essence of an artwork can be lost. Our results demonstrate that although the ways of experiencing art are changing, Instagram and social media are not enough to establish a real connection between the viewer and the artwork. As mentioned before, more than 50 per cent of interviewees argued that a personal relationship is necessary, especially because art is built on personal interactions and relationships (Saltz, 1997). Our artists still believe in the ability of art lovers to get in touch with them and to have the possibility of being shown the actual piece of art.

5.3 Commercialism

The notion of commercialization has been discussed a lot during the interviews. The findings show that artists are facing an increase of commercialism in the field of art. In this scenario, Instagram is playing a key role. However, two main aspects came to the fore during the interviews. Firstly, it will be discussed if traditional artists are using the tool of marketing to change their attitude and switch their images into brands. Secondly, if they are becoming more commercial as a consequence of using Instagram will be looked at.

Everything is a matter of choice and that is the key consensus asserted by the majority of respondents. The concept of commercialization has been analyzed from the artists' perspective and it is acknowledged that the art world is becoming more and more commercial. To have financial success, it is necessary to use marketing tools and to brand an artist's own image. Most respondents stated that the act of branding their own image is a necessity nowadays and they acknowledged that it enabled greater recognition. In terms of branding, Instagram is not that relevant because if artists can be influenced, it does not really matter if it is by Instagram or by their in real life. Trends and fashion can be accessed from anywhere, not only on Instagram, meaning a matter of artists' personal choice and free will. As proof of this fact, most of them are active on Instagram as it does make things easier for them in terms of promotion, communication and work opportunities. However, none of them would be prepared to change their artistic style just to pay attention to what social media consumers want.

To conclude, social media is an amplifier. In short, Instagram and other networks have the power to influence people, their thoughts, their ideals, their passions and their tastes. Instagram is a powerful tool for beginners and for artists who might not have the possibilities, usually financially speaking, to be selected by galleries or travel around the world in person. But, at the same time, the platform itself is not a safe environment for anyone who is trying to create original art. First of all, to truly flourish, art should come from the unique relationship between the artist and the world. We live in a world composed of human beings, emotions, relationships, daily interactions and much more besides – all this should be reflected. Producing art requires the freedom to be who you are and who you want to be, exploring new things, without the fear of being judged or watched. Whereas Instagram is a place where users must capture people's attention, by being extroverted and exhibiting extreme emotions, it is a world where everyone watches and judges others. In this scenario, it is easy

to stumble upon trends or to be unduly influenced. Hence, the presence of artists on Instagram might end up diminishing the value of their artworks. It could even be argued that the art world might lose the purity and the importance it has always had. The feeling could be that artists are becoming more focused on merely making money than on the expression of their core values. In this sense, the art world appears, nowadays, as more consumer-oriented than artwork focused, raising doubts about its authenticity. Indeed, as already mentioned before, questions about the relationship between digitalization and the world of art are still open and need to be answered through the collection of case-specific data relative to how digital platforms and social networks are affecting the art world.

5.4 Limitations and future research

As already mentioned in the introduction, the lack of studies done in this field have encouraged the researcher to delve into the above topics. Even though much original and valuable data have been collected by the researcher, there are certain limitations to this research that should be addressed in order to conduct further detailed analysis on the subject. There are a few limitations in this research. First of all, as already mentioned in the Methodology part, qualitative research includes risk of subjectivity and therefore non-credibility of the study. The focus on personal experience, emotions, feelings and so on of interviewees lead the researcher to take this into account with regard to the validity of some of the answers and whether there was unintentional bias by some respondents. Therefore, in order to ensure credibility, feedback about the interviewer's understanding was sent to the interviewees for them to respond to and correct if necessary.

A second major limitation, as already discussed in the Methodology part, refers to the fact that because of the current situation, namely COVID19, the researcher had fewer chances to contact artists around the world. For this reason, the focus has been only on Italian artists, the home country of the researcher.

Thirdly, as already mentioned in the Methodology, because of the research's nature, this study would be difficult to replicate (Bryman, 2012). The study depends on the researcher's choices about what is most relevant, which could result in difficulties in the replication of the entire study. Other personal aspects, such as personality, gender or age could play a significant role in the decision-making process.

As a fourth point, another limitation relates to the fact that the research focused its study on pre-digital era visual artists who do not have a large number of followers. The lack of opportunities to get in contact with already established visual artists on Instagram might also have influenced the findings of the research. In fact, had we focused on artists with a larger audience on Instagram, the results

could have been significantly different especially in terms of the influence of follower comments and feedback. Having more followers could increase the need to be more influenced by consumers in their choice of production and style. The fifth limitation refers to the coding process, as already discussed in the Methodology chapter, that could cause a loss of the narrative context structured for the interviews' process.

Lastly, it is worth noting the number of respondents that have been taken into account. Even though an in-depth analysis of the interviewees' answers was conducted, this research does not claim to provide findings which can be easily extrapolated into concrete results regarding self-branding and marketing in the art world. It is simply not possible as the conclusions are based on results from a limited sample of just 11 respondents. Moreover, as shown in the results, respondents are focused on their personal experiences which are not completely measurable and this could be considered as a further limitation in the study. Therefore, this research could also be seen as a suggestion and a starting point to other research into this topic. In addition, to avoid problems of subjectivity, having a larger number of respondents would aid further study to give a more representative overview on the subject and more objective results. Finally, a comparison between pre-digital visual artists and artists born after the digitalization era began would be interesting in order to have a more complete analysis about the topic developed in the research.

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Appendix 1 – Guide to Interviews

Introduction

- Brief introduction of the interviewer
- Introduction to the research topic
- Comfort of respondent
- Permission to record the interview

Background of the interviewee / *Background dell'intervistato*

- Where do you come from? / *Da dove vieni?*
- Which is your background studies? / *Qual è stato il tuo percorso scolastico? Quali studi hai fatto?*
- How long are you being an artist for? Please tell me about when your interest in visual art began? / *Da quando sei un artista? Quando sono iniziati I tuoi interessi per le arti visive?*
- Which kind of visual art are you producing? Could you say something more about that? / *Quale tipologia di arte produci? Puoi raccontarmi qualcosa in più sulla tua attività?*

Exploring artist's values and purposes / *Valori e obiettivi dell'artista*

- What are your artistic purposes? / *Quali sono I tuoi obiettivi dal punto di vista artistico?*
- Does the Internet help you to reach them? And what about realizing your goals before the use of Internet? / *Internet ti ha aiutato a conseguirli? Come influisce/ha influito Internet sulla tua attività?*
- Do you think is possible to compare the communication through Instagram with the one in person? / *Dal tuo punto di vista, comunicare tramite Instagram può essere comparabile a comunicare vis a vis?*

If yes, in what sense? / *Se la risposta è sì, che cosa intendi?*

If not, in what sense? / *Se la risposta è no, che cosa intendi?*

Did internet contacts sometimes lead to encounters in person (for instance a studio visit or a Skype conversation)? / *Ti è capitato qualche volta di incontrare I tuoi contatti attivati online di persona (ad esempio tramite visite in studio o su Skype)?*

- Could you name at least three of your main values as an artist? / *Puoi citare almeno tre dei tuoi principali valori come artista?*
- Do you feel expressing your personal artistic values clearly through the online platform? Do you think is that sufficient? / *Senti di esprimere a pieno I tuoi valori personali tramite la piattaforma di Instagram? Pensi sia sufficiente?*
- Do you feel a pressure for artists to be active on Instagram? And if so: Why? / *Percepisci una sorta di pressione nel dover essere attivo su Instagram? Se sì: perché?*

Artists as entrepreneur/creators / *Artisti come imprenditori/cretaori*

- Would you define your act of making art as a job? Can you make a living from this? What about second jobs? / *Definiresti la tua attività di artista come un lavoro? Riesce ad essere l'unico mezzo di sostentamento? Possiedi altri secondi lavori?*
- Why did you choose this career/path? / *Perché hai deciso di intraprendere questa carriera?*
- How have you started to be known and to sell your artworks? / *Come hai iniziato ad essere conosciuto e a vendere le tue opere?*
- Would you define yourself as an entrepreneur? Would you say that you are running a business? / *Definiresti te stesso come un imprenditore? Diresti di gestire un business/attività?*

Artist and Web 2.0 / *Artisti e Web 2.0*

- Why did you decided to create your own profile on Instagram as an artist? When have you subscribed Instagram? / *Perché hai deciso di creare un profilo su Instagram come artista? Quando hai aderito alla comunità di Instagram?*
- Have you ever used other online platforms to sell you artworks before joining the community of Instagram? / *Hai mai utilizzato altre piattaforme per la vendita delle tue opere prima di Instagram?*

If yes. Which one of them? Were they useful? Are you still using them? / *Se sì. Quali di queste? Sono state utili? Le utilizzi ancora?*

If not. Why? / *Se no. Perché?*

- How many followers do you have? / *Quanti followers hai?*
- Is your profile helping you to have a better reputation and to be known? What effects have this on you? / *Il tuo profilo ti sta aiutando ad ottenere una reputazione migliore e ad essere più conosciuto? Quali sono gli effetti che ciò ha sul tuo essere artista?*
- What do you use this platform for primarily? Which is your main aim? / *Per cosa utilizzi questa piattaforma principalmente? Qual è il tuo obiettivo principale?*
- Are you seeing your profile as a sort of CV and portfolio of yourself? / *Consideri il tuo profilo come una sorta di CV e portfolio personale?*

If yes, why you think is more efficient than for instance a LinkedIn profile? / *Se sì, perché pensi sia più efficiente di LinkedIn, per esempio?*

If not, can you give me a reason of why you think is important for your personal career? / *Se no, puoi citare una ragione per la quale pensi sia importante per la tua carriera personale?*

- Are you using Instagram as the first channel to show your artworks? / *Utilizzi Instagram come primo canale per mostrare i tuoi lavori?*

If yes. Is it because then it is easier to be accepted from galleries or other institutions? Is it to receive some feedback on what you did? But if the feedback you receive are negative, what should you do? / *Se sì. E' perché è più semplice, successivamente, accedere e essere accettato da gallerie o altre istituzioni? E' per ricevere feedback su ciò che crei? Ma, nel caso in cui i feedback fossero negativi, cosa faresti?*

If not. Which primary channel are you focusing on? Why? / *Se no. Qual è il primo canale su cui ti concentri?*

Impact on work / *Impatto sul lavoro*

- Have you had to change something in your style as an artist when you started using Instagram? / *Hai dovuto cambiare qualcosa nello stile della tua arte da quando hai iniziato ad utilizzare Instagram?*
- Do you mind about the reactions of your followers (i.e. comments or likes)? / *Ti interessa delle reazioni dei tuoi followers?*

If yes, how? And is it influencing in some ways your creations and productions? / *Se sì, in che modo? I commenti e le reazioni dei tuoi followers influenzano le tue creazioni e produzioni?*

- Do you find it easy to keep producing your artworks without adapting them for your followers? Do you think your art is losing something since you started using Instagram? (e.g. values, meaning, authenticity) / *Pensi sia facile continuare a produrre i tuoi lavori senza doverli adattare ai gusti dei tuoi followers? Pensi di star perdendo qualcosa da quando utilizzi la piattaforma (es. Valori, significato, autenticità)?*

Benefits / Benefici

- How do you feel about exhibiting through Instagram? Are you happy about what you are receiving from this platform? / *Come percepisci il fatto di esibire i tuoi lavori su Instagram? Sei soddisfatto da ciò che ricevi da questa piattaforma?*

If yes. Can you tell me some positive effects (including positive feelings) you are receiving back from this? / *Se sì. Puoi citarmi alcuni effetti positivi (inclusi sentimenti positivi)?*

If not. Why are you still using the platform? / *Se no. Perché continui ad utilizzare la piattaforma?*

- Does Instagram help you to create connection with other artists and to collaborate with them? Or just to be known in the field? / *Instagram ti sta aiutando ad ampliare il tuo network di artisti conosciuti e a collaborare con questi ultimi? Oppure, ti sta aiutando solo ad essere conosciuto nel tuo campo?*
- Are you selling through Instagram? If yes, have you increased your sales since before? / *Utilizzi Instagram per vendere le tue opere? Se sì, hai aumentato le tue vendite rispetto a prima?*
- Are you struggling to differ from the mass? To set yourself apart? / *Stai riscontrando difficoltà a differenziarti dalla massa? A prendere le distanze?*

Self branding

- What do you think is the role that the Internet play in your field in general? / *Quale pensi sia il ruolo di Internet nel tuo campo?*
- Can visual artists “market” themselves? / *A parer tuo, è possibile per un'artista (nello specifico visual artist) “vendere” la propria immagine?*
- Is it possible to be successful (in a commercial sense) without marketing yourself? In other words, are you treating yourself as a brand? / *E' possibile avere successo in termini economici senza essere orientati al marketing? In altre parole, tratti/ritieni te stesso un brand?*
- Do you think are you being treated as a brand from the consumer? / *Pensi tu sia visto e ritenuto dai tuoi consumatori come un brand?*
- Is your online figure the reflection of who you really are? / *La tua immagine sul web rispecchia te stesso nella realtà?*
- Who do you want to address with your presence on Instagram? And who you really address primarily? / *Chi vuoi raggiungere tramite la tua presenza su Instagram? Chi veramente raggiungi primariamente?*

Conclusion questions

- Would you ever consider going back and do not subscribe on Instagram? / *Prenderesti mai in considerazione la possibilità di tornare indietro e non iscriverti alla piattaforma Instagram?*
- What advice would you give now to an artist as you who still has some doubts on joining the platform? / *Quali consigli daresti a un'artista come te se in questo momento avesse ancora dei dubbi sull'isciversi o meno alla piattaforma?*

Appendix 2 - Summary of Codebook Interviews

Instagram and pre-digital era visual artists																												
Commercialization					Online presence								Artists' Values					Authenticity										
Sales	Entrepreneur	Influence	Necessity	Brand	Audience/Consumers	Marketing	Product Focused	Communication	Support	Pressure	Get known	Information	Network	Relationships	Benefits & Losses	Visibility	First Channel	Opportunities	Objectives	Carelessness	Emotions	Experience	Background	Education	Personality	Uniqueness	Originality	Inspiration

Table 3: Summary of Codebook Interviews

Footnotes

1. “Ti dicono poi tutti che si tratta solo di 5 minuti al giorno. Però poi, 5 minuti di qua, 5 minuti di là...e quindi sono sempre stato un po' refrattario in particolare”. (Michele, p. 45)
2. “Per i giovani forse è più facile” (Milena, p. 97)
3. “Obiettivamente mi sono detto che la gente ormai quando gli parli di qualcosa va su Instagram, allora me lo sono fatto” (Michele, p. 44)
4. “Penso che Instagram sia importantissimo ... una mia amica fotografa d'interni mi disse di mettermi sulla piattaforma perché sta iniziando ad essere una cosa molto importante rispetto a Facebook perché puoi usarlo professionalmente” (Miriam, p. 101)
5. “E' solo un'informazione aggiuntiva, per chi volesse approfondire ... lo utilizzo come una documentazione ... E' un accessorio” (Paola, p. 86)
6. “Il sito è proprio come un catalogo online ... sul sito cerco di mettere immagini di qualità buona...” (Chiara, p. 60)
7. “Il sito è come l'archivio dove vado ad aggiornarlo la sera con quello che ho fatto durante il giorno e postato su Instagram, molte volte” (Davide, p. 116)
8. “... si sente che sono tutti lì e sono attivi, quindi uno deve partecipare al mondo che c'è. Quindi in qualche modo va bene anche capire il linguaggio di un social come Instagram” (Paola, p. 82)
9. “Ormai siamo tutti sui social. Io mi rendo conto che la mattina la prima cosa che faccio appena accendo il telefono è andare su Instagram ...” (Davide, p. 116)
10. “... per me è un'opportunità, è come se si fosse aperto un sentiero per andare in cima al monte e la cima non si sa dove sia” (Edoardo, p. 5)
11. “Io direi di iscriversi assolutamente, di parlare bene con qualcuno che ci sa fare anche ...” (Edoardo, p. 9)
12. “Io consiglio sempre a tutti. Anche nel mio studio che sono persone che hanno una ventina d'anni in più di me e anche se sono impauriti quasi da queste cose, cerco di spiegargli e consigliarglielo” (Miriam, p. 108)
13. “Io sono contenta di esserci. Non so usarlo bene. Questo mi dispiace, vorrei essere capace per avere più possibilità” (Milena, p. 97)
14. “E' un mezzo promozionale abbastanza potente” (Carlo, p. 27)
15. “primo e unico” (Edoardo, p. 7)
16. “Il mio motivo principale dell'utilizzo di Instagram è promozione. La vendita rarissimo: come ti ho detto in 7 anni, ne ho venduta una” (Carlo, p. 31)
17. “Molto limitate comunque ... io non uso Instagram per vendere, ma se mi capita le vendo” (Miriam, p. 105)
18. “... molto più cospicue attraverso le fiere, la galleria o lo studio” (Edoardo, p. 6)
19. “Conoscere e di vedere artisti che non sono alla portata del tuo braccio. Piuttosto che scoprire insieme di cose” (Paola, p. 86)
20. “ha ridotto i tempi e amplificato i contatti in una maniera esponenziale” (Davide, p. 112)
21. “il face-to-face è meglio. Io quando cerco qualcosa che non sia funzionale a livello pratico, ma certo qualcosa che arricchisca la mia vita, il mio ambiente, che a che fare con il bello e l'astratto e mi piace un'artista ... di quell'artista voglio conoscere di più ... Vorrei conoscerlo, stringerci la mano, capire il suo processo, berci qualcosa insieme...quindi la relazione personale non è paragonabile” (Davide, p. 111)

22. per arrivare a più persone, per comunicare con più persone, perchè comunque è una mia necessità più assoluta quella di comunicare ..." (Davide, p. 114)
23. contatto umano è fondamentale ... anche la persona, la personalità, far conoscere il tuo angolo dove fai arte secondo me incide molto" (Miriam, p. 101)
24. "riesci a prenderla ... è qualcosa che resta lì, che se uno è interessato, curioso, eccetera, ti trova." (Chiara, p. 57).
25. "è un mare infinito" (Paola p. 86)
26. "È davvero complicato farsi vedere ... Quindi anche questo mezzo, ho paura non sia un modo di visibilità" (Paola, p. 85-86)
27. "soprattutto ora, che tutti fanno foto e tutti sono bravi a farle." (Milena, p. 95)
28. "per rimanere vivi nella mente delle persone ... Quindi un po' questo tipo di reminder" (Michele, p. 47)
29. "il fatto di essere in contatto con delle persone è molto bello ... Di farsi compagnia tra persone che hanno gusti simili e passioni simili, un lavoro relativamente simile" (Chiara, p. 62)
30. "l'interscambio culturale e artistico aperto a tutti e tutto in tutto il mondo" (Miriam, p. 107)
31. "anche se tu la fotografi molto bene, non si vede la materia e la dimensione" (Miriam, p. 108).
32. "vedo che però le persone si proteggono ... anche dagli incontri o conversazioni. Diventa tutto più rassicurante ora... forse abbiamo perso qualcosa" (Michele, p. 46)
33. "non ci sono più discussioni, non ci sono più intenti comuni, non ci sono più veramente critiche o discorsi" Paola (p.86)
34. "apprezzamento o neutralità..." (Paola, p. 86)
35. "tutto si sta mescolando. Ci si copia all'interno l'uno con l'altro. Quindi c'è un po' un'uniformità." (Michele, p. 45)
36. "una cosa in più, non una cosa fondamentale per avere il vero successo" (Jacopo, p. 17)
37. "è parte di te stessa, è parte dei tuoi sentimenti, del tempo che occupa, parte della tua vita." (Irma, p. 112)
38. "Instagram è l'immagine ... il primo impatto è Instagram ... il contatto umano è fondamentale e importante perché
39. l'immagine conta, ma anche la persona, la personalità ... dalle foto a volte non vedi la materia con cui hai fatto il quadro o il lavoro che c'è." (Miriam, p. 89)
40. "Instagram diventa una cosa in più che è importante, che fa da supporto" (Jacopo, p. 15)
41. "la gente non capirebbe perché non so se capisci da una foto di Instagram" (Jacopo, p. 15) "passare dal rapporto Instagram al rapporto personale/privato." (Edoardo p. 3)
42. "perdi il rapporto con la materialità dell'opera. Non percepisci più quella materialità. Ad esempio l'olio su tela o una scultura, o l'arte esperienziale ... Non è la stessa cosa ovviamente ... perchè c'è il tempo di fruizione. Vedi anche
43. il contesto e anche dove sta l'opera d'arte che sta in un contenitore che a sua volta è opera d'arte che interagisce con essa. (Carlo, p. 39)
44. "il fatto che puoi anche ingrandire e cercare di vedere non basta, non è come essere di fronte al quadro che ti rapisce" (Irma, p. 125)
45. "per te sono tutti uguali di dimensione ... La Cappella Sistina risulta un quadratino. Se vai sotto la Cappella, è immensa ... Quindi un'opera d'arte può diventare importante come la Cappella Sistina" (Carlo, p. 39)

46. “Non sei tu che scegli il quadro, ma è il quadro che sceglie te.” (Irma, p. 125)
47. “sicuramente stiamo un po’ diluendo l’importanza” (Giorgio, p. 73)
48. “loro vedono l’immagine che gli piace e poi vanno a vedere sul sito ... richiedendo poi informazioni o feedback” (Giorgio, p. 75)
49. “se sono veri artisti, esprimono se stessi con le opere d’arte e quindi non sono mai commerciale” (Irma, p. 128)
50. “diventi commerciale solo se tu lo vuoi” (Irma, p. 128)
51. “vendo perchè devo cercare denaro. Ma non devo fare lavoro per vendere” (Giorgio, p. 77)
52. “per essere tale da pronunciare senza rossori, deve essere fragrante, pulita e tua.” (Giorgio, p. 77)
53. “Non è facile sicuramente, ma se vuoi ottenere dei risultati e vuoi comunque essere un po’ diverso dagli altri. Essere riconosciuto e avere una personalità nelle opere, le tue opere devono dire chi sei. Allora penso proprio che sia molto importante essere sempre te stessi e poi avere la passione in quello che fai, credere in quello che fai e comunicare quello che senti dentro... tutte queste cose fanno parte dell’artista quindi il cambiare te stesso per andare verso qualcosa che oggi va di moda, non va bene.” (Miriam, p. 104-105)
- 54 “perché bisognerebbe avere una grandissima fortuna di incontri” (Milena, p. 96)
55. “questa idea di pubblicare nel mondo social, ti fa perdere un po’ il senso di singolarità” (Giorgio, p. 73)
56. “oltre ad essere possibile è in qualche modo necessario” (Edoardo, p. 8) 56 “una storia, un’emozione, una cosa da raccontare.” (Michele, p. 49)
57. “non debba sentirsi imbrigliato dalla sua riconoscibilità.” (Edoardo, p. 8)
58. “poi dipende quanto gonfi questa storia, quanto la rendi autentica ... quanto costruisci poi intorno al tuo brand.” (Michele, p. 49)
59. “lo può fare qualcuno che è preparato o che lo è per natura.” (Paola, p. 83)
60. “debbono anche essere un po’ imprenditori di se stessi” (Carlo, p. 35)
61. “è un mondo ancora difficile da capire ...” (Paola, p. 83)
62. “quando decidi di fare le cose per piacere a tutti, perdi l’unica cosa che è il nostro valore come artisti: l’unicità, ... diciamo che il gusto comune è sempre un livellamento” (Michel, p. 48)
63. “io non riesco a pensare molto a consumatori quando lavoro. Quando ci penso, il lavoro è viziato ... faccio fatica ad andare avanti” (Chiara, p. 62)
64. “ascolto. Nel senso che rifletto ... Cercando di capire cosa cambiare nella mia arte, ma io ... quello che piace a me.” (Miriam, p. 104)
65. “la cosa assurda di Instagram è che sai già le foto che possono avere tantissimi like e che ne so, che possono piacere alla gente” (Jacopo, p. 17)
66. “la tecnologia ha sempre influenzato l’arte. Quindi ... anche Instagram ha il potere di influenzare l’arte” (Carlo, p. 39)
67. “le cose che cambiano, le cose che fanno la storia, le fa sempre qualcuno di originale. Quindi se tu segui un trend, quella cosa non succederà mia. Si magari venderai fino a quando quel trend dure. Però dipende da chi sei tu. Io nel mio caso non riuscirei. Continuerei a fare ciò che faccio.” (Davide, p. 118)

68. “Noi si viene generalmente da una cultura umanistica quindi ne’ legata all’economia ne’ al mercato.” (Paola, p. 83)
69. “Dipende da chi sei. Se sei uno furbo che vuole immediatamente camparci e vendere, allora segui il trend” (Davide, p. 118)
70. il ruolo di una galleria sia abbastanza importante. Ma proprio per l’impostazione che ti aiuta a dare al lavoro. Non lo so, solo così diventa un po’ insignificante” (Chiara, p. 63)