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Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Marketing Communication and Public Relations

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Branding the Artist: The Case of Jeff Koons

Bachelor's Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2020

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on May 21, 2020

Lucia Legáthová

References

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Abstract

The general objective of this thesis is to develop the idea of an artist as a brand through the lens of contemporary theories on the relationships between branding and art. Over the last years, there has been a noticeable shift in the global art market, and art has become a subject to market forces and product life cycles, just like brands. This thesis attempts to provide new insights into the practice of branding within the art world, drawing from the case of Jeff Koons.

The first part of the thesis offers a theoretical framework which will develop the understanding of art within the context of brand management. Building on the research outputs, the notion of the artist as a brand manager is proposed, placing the artists in the middle of the branding processes as creators of their own brands through the utilization of various marketing activities. The second part of the thesis analyzes the artistic career of Jeff Koons within a branding perspective. The case analysis provides the reader with a detailed description of the artist's career, public image and use of four selected branding practices. With the aim to expand the theoretical knowledge of branding within the art world, contribute to its generalizability and stimulate further research in this matter, this thesis seeks to answer the questions of Jeff Koons's involvement in establishing and promoting himself and his art within the art market and thus determine whether and why an artist could be considered as a brand.

Abstrakt

Cílem této bakalářské práce je představit koncept umělce jako značky prostřednictvím současných teorií o vztahu mezi značkou a uměním. Na globálním trhu s uměním došlo v posledních letech k výraznému posunu a umění se stalo předmětem tržních sil a životních cyklů výrobků stejně jako tradiční značky. Tato bakalářská práce poskytuje nový pohled na praxi brandingů v uměleckém světě, vycházejíc z případové studie Jeffa Koonse.

První část práce nabízí teoretický rámec, který rozvíjí porozumění umění v kontextu řízení značky. Na základě výstupů z výzkumu teorie je definována role umělce jako manažera značky. Teoretická část práce popisuje roli umělců v rámci procesu budování značky jako tvůrců vlastních značek prostřednictvím využívání různých marketingových aktivit. Druhá část práce analyzuje uměleckou kariéru Jeffa Koonse v

perspektivě branding. Případová analýza poskytuje podrobný popis kariéry umělce, povědomí veřejnosti o jeho značce a použití čtyř vybraných postupů při budování značky. S cílem rozšířit teoretické znalosti o branding v uměleckém světě, přispět k jeho zobecnění a stimulovat další výzkum v této oblasti, se tato práce snaží odpovědět na otázku zapojení Jeffa Koonse do etablování a propagace sebe a svého umění na uměleckém trhu, a tedy určit, zda a proč by měl být umělec považovaný za značku.

Keywords

art, artist, arts marketing, branding, case study, Jeff Koons

Klíčová slova

umění, umělec, umělecký marketing, art marketing, branding, případová studie, Jeff Koons

Title

Branding the Artist: The Case of Jeff Koons

Název práce

Branding umělce: Případ Jeffa Koonse

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Introduction

In the last couple of years, there has been a noticeable shift in the global art market. Art has become a commodity, and artists are subjects to market forces and product life cycles, just like brands. According to The Art Market 2020 report, in 2019, global sales of art and antiques reached an estimated \$64.1 billion, and new markets and collectors have arisen all around the world (Art Basel & UBS, 2019, p. 30). The highest-priced work, Jeff Koons's Rabbit, was sold at Christie's auction house for \$91.1 million. The value of an artwork is nowadays significantly determined by who produces the given piece and, as a result of this, a discussion about the artists within a brand perspective has emerged.

The general objective of this thesis is to develop the idea of an artist as a brand through the lens of contemporary theories on the relationships between branding and art. The thesis attempts to provide new insights into the practice of branding within the art world, drawing from the case of Jeff Koons. With the aim to expand the theoretical knowledge of the researched matter, contribute to its generalizability and stimulate further research, this thesis will seek to answer the questions of Jeff Koons's involvement in establishing and promoting himself and his art within the art market and thus determine whether and why an artist could be considered as a brand.

In order to gain an extensive understanding of the discussed matter, the first chapter of the thesis describes brands and their relationships to culture, history and art to provide insights into contemporary branding practices. The second chapter outlines the position of arts marketing as an organizationally embedded strategic operation and addresses the dispute of market versus art orientation within the arts and culture industry. At the end of the second chapter, the notion of an artist as a brand manager is presented. Altogether, the theoretical part of the thesis - a combination of current theoretical discourse and empirical knowledge published in the academic literature - provides an elementary framework for the forthcoming qualitative research.

A theory-oriented descriptive single case study was chosen as the most suitable design method for this research in order to achieve the set objectives. The third chapter presents the potential benefits of this method which involves a detailed analysis and an in-depth description of the single case that would provide a clear understanding of the studied phenomenon and its particular circumstances. The reason why Jeff Koons has been chosen as an explicatory case for the research originates in his reputation as the

world's most expensive living artist. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to illustrate how an artist, who is a renowned name among collectors and a so-called superstar of the art world, has built his brand to the extent that results in multimillion-dollar auction prices. The data for the analysis will be drawn from bibliographic data and a relevant sample of available online media sources. A slight change has been made concerning the original thesis proposal in terms of the data collection. The qualitative interviews have been omitted from the final research method as a direct consequence of the current situation of a COVID-19 pandemic.

The fourth chapter presents the case analysis of Jeff Koons's career and oeuvre and four consequent branding activities utilized by the artist. The last chapter handles the discussion of the findings and briefly confronts the findings with the theoretical framework of artists as brands while answering the research questions. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of the discussed matter and reveal the contributions and limitations of the investigated practice that can be further discussed and applied in future research.

Theoretical part

1 Branding

1.1 Branding

Keller (2013, p. 30) broadly defines a brand as “... *a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services ... and to differentiate them from those of competition.*” For centuries, the common purpose of brands was solely functional. Back then, the primary objective was to enable shoppers to differentiate between offered products of one manufacturer from another (Keller, 2013, p. 30). Consumer’s purchase decisions would be based on their personal experience to identify who produced the best quality or performance (Hirschman, 2010, p. 569). The essential principle of branding is that the brand can be distinguished among other products in the same category (Keller, 2013, p. 36). However, many marketing professionals nowadays consider brands being more than just a means to distinguish themselves from the competition. They refer to a brand as “*something that actually created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, prominence and so on in the marketplace*” (Keller, 2013, p. 30). Current marketing literature associates branding with creating a particular image in the minds of its existing and potential customers. In other terms, branding creates a promise made by a company to its customers regarding the quality of the product, its utility and, just as importantly, psychological value. Customers associate particular brands with these qualities through branding activities of the company. According to McMurrian and Washburn (2008, p. 18), brand recognition, brand loyalty and brand reference are the resulting outcomes from positively recognized branding activities. Moreover, Hirschman (2010, p. 568) states that the matter of branding serves as a subject for a variety of research methodologies and can utilize concepts and theoretical perspectives from both social sciences, e.g. sociology, psychology or anthropology; and humanity disciplines, for instance, semiotics or rhetoric. Brands have been described as being icons; having personalities; representing reference groups; representing the self; being the basis for both community and individualization; being romantic partners or marking ethnic boundaries. Brands “*tell stories about us and we tell stories about them*” (Hirschman, 2010, p. 568-569).

Customers do not simply buy the brand name. They buy branded products that are a combination of tangible and intangible values formed by the actions of the company (Kapferer, 1997, p. 16). Therefore, as Kapferer (1997, p. 57) further argues, a brand is an instrument that helps the consumers to decipher a particular product and determines what to expect from the products that carry its name. The most influential brands are not accidents but an outcome of thoughtful and inventive planning (Keller, 2013, p. 68). Their power and influence lies in what consumers have heard, seen, felt and learned about them as a result of their personal experience. According to Aaker and Keller (cited in Hirschman, 2010, p. 569), the theoretical understanding of brands should not only concern the functionality or quality of the product but devote further attention to brands' personal, social and political meanings. For that reason, as Keller (2013, p. 69) affirms: *“the power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds and hearts of the customers.”*

Hirschman (2010, p. 569) argues that humans, unlike other primates, have developed an ability to understand specific connections on a symbolic and metaphorical level that allows them to perceive themselves and others as being able to have personal and social identities. Moreover, humans have a unique capability to anthropomorphize inanimate objects and make associations from symbolic meanings. This mental capability is not sufficient, yet it is a necessary condition for branding. Humans seek to form social, cultural, ethnic, political, and personal identities and they need symbolic markers, i.e. brands, for these sorts of identities. Seeking personal meanings has become firmly linked to brands as they have the potential to be cultivated around the need for being a part of a group. Owning specific brands typically manifests into a confirmation of feeling of identity (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2008, p. 93). McMurrian and Washburn (2008, p. 6) agree that on many occasions, brands enable consumers to make a personal statement about their character and identity. Customers choose and lean on brands they associate with particular societal groups to which they either belong or only aspire to belong (Hirschman, 2010, p. 569). Consumers of strong, iconic brands care about how a brand performs and what it accomplishes for their identities. When the consumers identify with the brand and its community, they tend to be more supportive of the brand and make positive references about it. Consequently, a higher level of feeling of identification with the brand leads to increased word of mouth (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2008, p. 93-103).

Moreover, marketers can, in all likelihood, benefit from strengthening the sense of identity by positively enhancing the reputation of their brand and focusing on the visibility through external communication. Such efforts have the potential to result in a growing level of identification with a brand (Ibid, p. 109). Fundamental influence of consumer's relationships to brands lies in the cultural codes, background knowledge and ideological discourse of the consumers. Consumers construct and perform self-concepts and identities, try out new roles and build their self-image in collaboration with and within the brand culture. This notion implies that neither brand managers nor consumers are in control of branding processes entirely - the process of the brand producing meaning is in some measure influenced by established cultural codes (Schroeder, 2005, p. 1291).

1.2 Brands in visual culture

“In the advanced consumer society, the act of consumption need not involve economic exchange. We consume with our eyes, taking in commodities every time we push a grocery cart up and down the aisles in a supermarket, or watch TV, or drive down a logo-studded highway” (Willis, 1991, p. 31).

In modern ages, consumption was regarded only as a consequence of production. However, in the postmodern period, it became a significant social function, meaning that the individuals do not consume a functional product anymore, but merely its image from which they fabricate self-identity (Bourgeon-Renault, 2000, p. 9). The daily visual consumption of commodities is such a large part of our environment that we do not consciously observe it as consumption behaviour (Schroeder, 2000, p. 38). Never before there has been a similar outburst of visual images. According to Schroeder (2002, p. 3), in the current visual information culture, consumers are daily exposed to a multitude of images all around - in newspapers, on television, on the Internet, on billboards, buildings, magazines and shopping carts. The author further incorporates *“looking, watching, spectatorship, seeing sites, gazing, window shopping, browsing, perusing, travelling, viewing, surfing the Web, navigating the Internet, and many other visual processes”* within the framework of contemporary visual consumption.

The image has become a designated vital characteristic of the economy of the twenty-first century (Schroeder, 2000, p. 38). Brands are based on images, products are promoted via images, and the company's image constitutes a vital role in its success.

The image became a primary subject of the marketing practice, and products strive to represent that image. The result of the image-based specifications of the market - whether it is brand images, corporate images, images of identity or national images - is a realization that vision is crucial for understanding managerial processes in today's society (Schroeder, 2010, p. 26). Marketing, at its core, is about the management of images. Schroeder's theoretical research (2002, 2005, and 2010) emphasizes the significance of visual communication in contemporary culture and the relevance of the connection between the image and branding particularly. He believes that brands are visual by their very nature. Product design, corporate websites, brand identity, logos or marketing campaigns all draw upon visual elements to differentiate the image of the brand, catch the eye and attract attention (Schroeder, 2010, p. 19). Therefore, understanding that images represent a critical indicator of economic value and are the basis of the market, would lead to a successful brand strategy with a focus on managing the meaning and competitive advantage of the brand in the marketplace, or, in other words, the brand image (Schroeder, 2002, p. 23; 2010, p. 19). He observed that brands are *"bought and sold for their image value over and above a firm's physical, intellectual, or organizational assets"* (2002, p. 13). Hence, the critical attribute of today's economy based on experience and attention is visual consumption. The world of marketing in the age following the digital revolution is built on images designed to stimulate the senses, build the name of the brand, and market successful products and services. Customers all over the world started to consume images enthusiastically while the global market culture is predominantly constructed of symbolic environments. Corporate image, brand image and self-image became critical economic values. All these matters contribute to visual consumption being of crucial importance for understanding customers (Schroeder, 2002, p. 3-5).

1.3 Culture and history as a context for branding

The contemporary culture industry tackles consumers' demands within economic, political, industrial and global perspectives. The manner in which culture is expressed is established by the ways of production and distribution of cultural messages through products and services (Fillis, 2011, p. 12). Schroeder (2000, p. 38) suggests that advertising became not only the dominant communication force but also the key player in the political domain and the engine of the economy. Currently, advertising handles most of the roles that the family, religion and the state once held. It provides meaning in

a way that helps us make sense of our world, similar to mythology. Companies attach meaning to their products through images and seek to connect these images to the personal identities of the customers that consume their advertisement. Even if an individual consumer hardly purchases any of the advertised products, commercials continue to function as meaning producers. The power to put images into a new context has put advertising at the very centre of the contemporary redefinitions of democracy, freedom and individuality with regard to corporate symbols (Schroeder, 2000, p. 39).

To illustrate how culture and history can serve as a context for branding's interaction with consumer and society, it is crucial to understand the process of how brands make use of the interaction of culture, history and aesthetics to inject themselves into the global stream of images otherwise called brand culture. Looking at brands from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, history, or sociology, provides new indications for brand research and acknowledges the importance of brands in the culture. The brand culture perspective brings light to the process of brands opening up to incorporate cultural, sociological and theoretical queries. Moreover, directing attention on brand culture calls for incorporating cultural issues within management, supporting the argument that history and culture can offer an appropriate contextualizing counterpoint to management perspectives on the interaction of branding with society and consumers (Schroeder, 2010, p. 19). The saturation of culture by commerce may be examined by considering processes of meaning-making in society. As O'Reilly (2005, p. 574) argues: "[T]here is an emerging commonality about how different kinds of cultural meaning in all of these sectors are being manufactured, sold to, and experienced by consumers and citizens." Brands are arguably an essential part of everyday contemporary culture for the reason that they act as essential vehicles for creating and spreading meanings in society. Further specified by O'Reilly (Ibid.), brands can be read as "*cultural texts which are culturally produced and consumed,*" and as "*symbolic articulators of production and consumption.*" Such cultural texts represent identities and construct meanings for people, organizations, places or products, and act as intermediaries between producers and consumers. In this regard, all brands are representational texts and thus are not merely managerially created but exist as social constructions (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 575-582). Additionally, Holt's (2004, p. 215) cultural branding theory affirms that for a more versatile understanding of branding, it should not be perceived as merely a neutral analytical tool but a broader historical context in which branding operates must be taken into account.

1.4 Art providing insights into branding processes

Branding and art are both robust representational systems that produce meaning, value and knowledge (Schroeder, 2010, p. 18-19). Despite the fact that the use of art history and criticism in marketing and consumer research remains relatively rare, it is not the case in the reversed scenario. Various art historians have addressed a large scale of issues associated with consumer behaviour and aspects essential to consumer research, such as demand, collecting of artworks or luxury commodities. The market-oriented approach to the art market demonstrates the view that market forces control art in the same manner as manufactured goods. Theories of identity construction and representation, originating from the history of art, appear relevant for better understanding of the role of brands and products in the contemporary consumer society (Schroeder, 2000, p. 47). Berger (cited in Schroeder, 2000, p. 39-40) describes the importance of connections between art history and marketing and illustrates how heavily advertising depends on the history of art, its symbols and techniques. Advertising employs not only photography and painting techniques but also, in a more general sense, art convention forms - symbols, genre and poses, for example. These techniques demonstrate how producers and consumers utilize elements of visual representation to decode marketing messages (Schroeder, 2000, p. 48). By considering form, content, and the uses of art, we gain a deeper understanding of many elements of consumer behaviour, culture, demand or pricing strategies, to name a few. It remains true that the world of brands intersects with the world of art in several ways. Overlaps of branding and art might be illustrated by countless examples: museum gift shops have become an essential part in the visitor's experience and revenue streams of the institutions (Kent, 2009); commercial brands have launched extensive sponsorships of art exhibitions (Rustin and Arnett, 2015); the most prominent art auction houses themselves have developed into strong international brands (Thompson, 2016); and even contemporary artists often include commercial brands in their work, critiquing and commenting on the role of the branding concept in consumer culture (Schroeder, 2005, p. 1293). Linking marketing discourse to the world of visual arts is a way for brand managers, advertising agencies and art directors to gain a better understanding of branding as a strategic practice (Schroeder, 2005, p. 1292-1301). An art-centred approach to consumer research, marketing and branding suggests recognizing the

position of branding in visual culture in relation to the commercial mechanisms of the art market and interactions between economics and aesthetics (Schroeder, 2010, p. 18).

2 Marketing the Arts

2.1 Arts marketing

While the relationship between art history and advertising would seem to be a natural focus for marketing scholars, for many years it remained poorly examined within the field of marketing and consumer research (Schroeder, 2000, p. 47). However, in recent times arts marketing has increasingly transformed from its previous position as merely a supplementary activity to an organizationally embedded strategic operation within the arts and culture industry (Hayes and Roodhouse, 2010, p. 40). Hill *et al.* (2018, p. 2) have defined arts marketing as “*an integrated management process which sees mutually satisfying exchange relationships with customers as the route to achieving organizational and artistic objectives.*” O’Reilly and Kerrigan (2010, p. 2) broaden this definition by remarking that in the interest of understanding the role of markets, marketers and marketing in the arts, their value in relation to art itself and the perception of arts-consumption should be relativized. Rather than solely concerning managerial objectives and financial gains, the main interest of arts marketing should be to develop an understanding of marketing and ensure that marketing practice complies with the aesthetic requirements. A similar idea is presented by Botti (2000, p. 21), according to whom the primary function of arts marketing is to guarantee that the artistic value of the product is adequately handled and passed from the artists to various audiences. Thus, the purpose of marketing within the field of arts relates to the ways in which either the emergent artistic potential could be improved or the established artistic skills and abilities could be reinforced. Brown and Patterson (2000, p. 16-17) define the content of arts marketing as “*promotional gimmicks, stunts, affronts and stand-out-from-the-crowd hyperbole; excessive, exaggerated, eye-catching activities - the more outrageous, the better; the greatest show on earth; it means to infinity and beyond,*” in contrast to traditional marketing subjects of consumer research, targeting, product life cycles, or break-even points.

2.2 Market vs. product orientation

Within the marketing literature, market orientation has earned a great deal of coverage. However, the product-centred theory has been mostly overlooked, despite the

fact that visual art has long been a successful example of the product- and artist-centred marketing (Fillis, 2010, p. 31). The individualistic method of marketing presented in this chapter - where the artist and the artwork are as relevant as the audience and the client - will facilitate the understanding of the relationship between the marketing function and the notion of the artistic orientation.

Fillis (2010, p. 38) points out the fact that historically, the arts-marketing theory has been developed mainly from conventional marketing frameworks and the focus has been mostly market-oriented. According to Dalgic and Yeniceri (2013, p. 25), the main objective of market orientation is to focus on target markets in the interest of achieving high business profitability considerations. As determined by Scheff and Kotler (1996, p. 37), the basic principle of market orientation is that the organization should decide what customers need and expect, and seek to satisfy these desires. However, Van Raaij and Stoelhorst (cited in Fillis, 2010, p. 33) note that the implementation of market orientation process is inconsistent with the circumstances of visual arts. Throughout the centuries, artists have operated in an environment which often coexists within the boundaries of market structures but is also influenced by their views towards art. Hirschman (1983, p. 46) argues that social norms and artists' values notably influence the artistic production process.

Furthermore, the central influence in the artistic process is artists' creativity that is experienced and expressed entirely for its own sake rather than responding to consumer demand. Art itself is observed to have a much more significant effect on influencing the behaviour of artists than external influences such as society, culture and the economic climate (Fillis, 2010, p. 31). This influence is an indication that the concept of market orientation does not reflect the artist's philosophy and behaviour. Fillis (2010, p. 31-32) suggests that the motivations and attitudes of the artists in the course of making art should be considered in terms of creating art for art's sake instead of following the existing market.

Art for art's sake theory is predicated on challenging the standard marketing conventions by creating, as opposed to responding to demand. The philosophy of art for art's sake approach advocates the conception that artists shape the market demand and create success through their creative marketing activities by seeking customers for their products rather than trying to find products for the customers (Fillis, 2010, p. 35-38; 2011, p. 15). Oscar Wilde (1982, p. 270) provides an insight into the tension between the market-driven, as opposed to artist-oriented, art: *"A work of art is the unique result*

of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want.” While demonstrating long-term customer orientation from the position of the artist often leads to indifference, on the contrary, ignoring the customer occasionally may result in creating customer lust over a product and prove beneficial in the long run (Fillis, 2010, p. 33). Meyer and Even (1998, p. 273-274) imply there is a connection between art for art’s sake framework and product-centred entrepreneurial creativity that eventually results in art becoming a marketed commodity. Unlike the general practice in the commercial sector where marketing only becomes involved once the product has been developed, Fillis (2010, p. 35) contends that marketing activities related to the artworks are involved long before the artwork is produced and marketing efforts begin with the early development of the creative concept. Artists’ creative marketing activities are eventually defined by a set of skills related to the artists’ personalities. Fillis (2010, p. 36) further suggests that commercially conscious artists eagerly adopt individualized marketing strategies as soon as the demand for their work is generated.

2.3 Artist as a brand manager

Artists have been creating images and developing a visual vocabulary for centuries (Schroeder, 2010, p. 28). Schroeder (2005, p. 1293) highlights the importance of art as a business viewpoint and highlights the fact that successful artists whose work is widely exhibited, bought and collected, can be considered as *“twin engines of branding knowledge, both as consummate image managers, and as managers of their own brand – the artist.”* Art generates considerable wealth, not only for artists themselves but for dealers, collectors and investors, along with money acquired via cultural development and tourism. Artists are continuously committed to successfully selling their works while simultaneously the art market circulates around money, value and investment. Despite that, a majority of marketing and branding literature does not consider art and the strategic insight it might offer of any value. For that reason, art remains under-appreciated, unseen and untapped within the field of branding (O’Reilly and Kerrigan, 2010, p. 2).

Schroeder (2005, p. 1299-1300; 2010, p. 26) proposes several ways in which contemporary artists engage with brands. First of all, artists extract brands out of the commercial context and use them as a raw material in their art. Moreover, the art market on its own is overflowing with well-known global brands such as Andy Warhol

(Schroeder, 1997, 2005; Kerrigan et al., 2011), Pablo Picasso (Muñiz et al., 2014) or Damien Hirst (Jin Woo Lee et al., 2019) and presumably, there is no other market with a more evident correlation between name recognition, value and branding. Ultimately, artists produce and establish visual brands through their style and artworks. Besides, marketing logic, including strategic acts such as developing distinctive products, segmenting the market, brand extensions, management of distribution and promoting exclusivity often influence creative outputs. While the development of distinctive products, segmentation of the market, and management of distribution are self-explanatory terms, brand extension refers to using an established name of the product or brand to introduce new products that target different market segments. Well-implemented extensions are vital for the brand in the long run because they can improve brand image, clarify the brand meaning, increase market coverage and bring new customers (Keller, 2013, p. 432-439).

Paintings are now among the highest-priced objects in the world (Beale, 2017) and who produces the artwork is now the critical determinant of its value. Schroeder (2010, p. 18) further elaborates that artists are susceptible to market forces, issues of career management or product life cycles in the same way as brands are. Nevertheless, Slowinska (2014, p. 187) regards an artist's economic success as more than just evidence of the aesthetic value of his or her work; in some cases, the price seems to establish and define the aesthetic quality of the artwork. Hence, as demonstrated above, successful artists may be discussed within the branding perspective and considered as brand managers, actively involved in creating, cultivating and promoting themselves in the competitive art market as recognizable products (Schroeder, 2010, p. 20) and risk-taking business managers who are willing to exercise a variety of opportunities and choose not to conform to organizational thinking (Fillis, 2011, p. 15).

Practical part

3 Research methodology

The general objective of this thesis is to develop the idea of an artist as a brand manager through the lens of contemporary theories on the relationships between branding and art. In this way, the thesis seeks to provide new insights into the practice of branding within the art world, drawing from the case of Jeff Koons. Therefore, a descriptive single case study was chosen as the most suitable design method for this research, with an aspiration to expand the theoretical knowledge of branding within the art world, contribute to its generalizability and stimulate further research in this matter. The contribution of this research lies within its focus on the phenomena of a contemporary living artist as a brand manager.

The research questions are:

- 1. How is Jeff Koons involved in establishing and promoting himself and his art within the art market?**
- 2. Therefore, can an artist be considered as a brand, and why?**

However, the research questions serve only as guidelines for the discussion of the results. The objective of this research is to gain an extensive understanding of the discussed matter and to reveal the contributions and limitations of the investigated practice that can be further discussed and applied in future research.

3.1 Case study research

A case study in the broadest sense of the term is described as an empirical analysis that examines a current phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the focus of research and the context are not immediately apparent (Yin, 2003, p. 13-14). However, Dul and Hak (2007, p. 4) suggest that Yin's all-inclusive descriptive definition does not capture the methodological characteristic that distinguishes a case study from other research strategies, namely the fact that a case study is essentially an examination of one single instance (the case) or a limited number of instances of the researched topic. Stake (2010, p. 444) emphasizes the influence of the social, political and other contexts of the case within the qualitative standpoint. In

contrast to the logic of quantitative research, in the case study, the case is selected for theoretical reasons or because the case itself is of interest (Ridder, 2017, p. 282).

A number of authors have offered several typologies of the case study research. However, for the purposes of this research, a theory-oriented case study method as described by Dul and Hak (2007) in their work 'Case Study Methodology in Business Research' was chosen as the research design of this thesis.

Following Dul and Hak's (2007, p. 9) theoretical framework, a distinction is drawn between practice-oriented case studies and case studies focused on theory. Practice-oriented case studies in terms of business research are based on systematic collection and evaluation of observable empirical evidence within the organization that determines whether a success occurred as a consequence of a specific intervention. Therefore, most practice-oriented case studies describe designing, implementing or evaluating such interventions, or demonstrate the practicality of a theory or approach to given circumstances. While practice-oriented case studies make use of theory, their purpose is not to contribute to its development, but rather to contribute to the knowledge of a specific practitioner (Ibid, p. 217). Contrarily, the theory-oriented research seeks to contribute to the development of the knowledge having the academic community as a target user of the research results. The main objective of theory-oriented case studies is to support a specific theoretical proposition, advance theoretical knowledge and contribute to its generalizability (Ibid, p. 30-33). Ridder (2017, p. 282) elaborates on the objectives of the case study research in terms of contributing to theory and claims that on the one hand, the strength of the case study research is its contribution to theory by "*expanding constructs and relationships within distinct settings,*" while on the other hand, case study research advances theory through comparison of differences and similarities between cases (namely in multiple case studies). The theory-oriented case study starts with an analysis of relevant academic resources in order to obtain ideas on the topic of study. Dul and Hak (2007, p. 37-40) continue to characterize the theory analysis as a combination of current theoretical discourse and empirical knowledge published in the academic literature that the researcher constructs in the process of preparation of the case study. In the event that one or more specific proposition is eligible, the practice is explored to find support for the validity and relevance of the proposition. The purpose of the examination of practice is to find support for the validity of the proposed conceptions and to establish reasons for prioritizing one or more of them for testing (Dul and Hak, 2007, p. 48). George and Bennett (2005, p. 6)

describe this process as an effort to establish logically consistent theories, subsequently derive observable implications, evaluate these implications against empirical findings or measurements and use the results of these tests to decide whether the theories tested can be modified.

3.2 Case selection

Stake (2010, p. 443) characterizes a case study as a form of research that takes an interest in a single case and directs the attention to the question of what can be learned about the particular case. It is worth noting that the potential benefits of the single case study research as seen by Riddler (2017, p. 282) involve in-depth description and detailed analysis that provide a clear understanding of the case and its particular circumstances. The analysis of the data anticipatedly results in creating, testing or contributing to theory by recognizing unforeseen interactions and patterns. Traditional case studies prefer in-depth descriptions of a single case, revealing and elaborating on the insights the case provides (Ibid, p. 284). The more detailed, unique and specific the focus of the analysis is, the more useful the epistemological argument becomes (Stake, 2010, p. 445).

In the matter of a single case study research methodology, only one single sample of the object of the study shall be selected from the discussed theoretical framework. However, the selection is principally subject to individual preference of the researcher, which is only moderately regulated by theoretical requirements (Dul and Hak, 2007, p. 92). According to Stake (2010, p. 447), the researcher draws from both what is typical and what is specific about the case and its connection to the examined theory. Considering the nature of the case, in particular, its operation and functioning; the physical setting, historical background or other contexts, such as cultural, political, economic or aesthetic; different circumstances in which the case operates; and other perspectives from which the case can be documented and understood. In order to analyze the particular case, the case study researcher collects qualitative evidence on those mentioned above. In the interest of selecting the right case the researcher explores various interests of the subject, choosing a case of some typicality but moving towards certain cases that provide an ability to understand the studied phenomenon (Stake, 2010, p. 450-451).

The design of a single case study has been chosen to apply to this research, particularly drawing from the case of the artistic career of Jeff Koons. The very reason

why this particular artist has been chosen as an explicatory case for the research originates in the fact that in 2019, Koons reclaimed the title of the most expensive living artist when his work *Rabbit* was sold at Christie's Post-war and Contemporary Art auction for \$91.07 million with fees. Koons's iconic work from 1986 was sold after 10 minutes of bidding, beating the previous living artist's record set by David Hockney from 2018 and Koons's previous auction record from 2013 - the sale of *Balloon Dog (Orange)* for \$58.4 million (Freeman, 2019). This event illustrates how the artist, who is not only a renowned name among collectors (Prisant, 2019) but became a so-called superstar of the art world (Landi, 2007) and in recognition of his artistic achievements has received multiple awards and honours (Holzwarth, 2015, p. 94-95) can build his brand to the extent that results in multimillion-dollar auction prices. A qualitative analysis of Koons's career, public image and use of branding practices will provide insight into the notion of a contemporary living artist within the branding perspective.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Gillham (2000, p. 2) notes that the key characteristics of case study research is demonstrated by the use of multiple sources of evidence and identifies relevant types of sources, such as observations, record and document analysis, work samples, interviews et cetera (Ibid, p. 13). Stake (2010, p. 450) further argues that the work has a reflective character and the task of the researcher is to explore meanings and relate them to the context and experience. In terms of the case study, the data analysis is conducted qualitatively and, in contrast to statistical analysis, is based on comparing two or more patterns and utilizing visual inspection in the interest of determining the pattern match (Dul and Hak, 2007, p. 95). Accordingly, throughout the practical part of this research, the emphasis is put on qualitative data given that the qualitative analysis offers an opportunity for a more in-depth insight into the selected case and the subject of the research while seeking answers to the research questions.

In order to gain a better understanding of Koons' career and the contexts within which he operates as a brand, several types of data will be analyzed. Although, it is important to bear in mind the high probability of a bias occurring due to the selective choosing of data by the researcher. There is a wide range of publications about Jeff Koons, but with regards to the scope of this research only a number of publications have been selected. For the purpose of this research, the data derived from the sources below will allow for a relevant and precise construction of the case.

Firstly, to obtain concise biographical information, Taschen's monograph on Jeff Koons, a part of the Basic Art series, will be examined. The book provides a comprehensive chronological synopsis of the artist's life and oeuvre and outlines his importance within history and culture. Furthermore, bibliographical information from the artist's website (www.jeffkoons.com) and information from an exhibition catalogue from his latest large-scale exhibition in Oxford, UK, titled 'Jeff Koons at the Ashmolean' will be reviewed as well. On top of that, the case will be built upon the data from the artist profiles written by several prominent galleries and auction houses. In the interest of filling the gaps in the understanding of Koons's career in various contexts, a descriptive content analysis of relevant reviews and articles by leading art critics or journalists will be conducted. The case study analysis will draw from a relevant sample of available online media sources consisting of the essential art related sites and the news media from English speaking countries, further specified in Chapter 4.

4 Case study – Jeff Koons

The structure of the following case study is divided into five key subsections that will consist of a descriptive analysis of selected instances of branding activities, as described in the theoretical part of this research. Stake (2010, p. 448-453) emphasizes the in-depth study of a small number of key issues as crucial, describing the issues as situated, complex relationships. These subsections serve to deepen the understanding of the specific case and offer some form of a conceptual structure. According to Stake (2010, p. 449), the issues have been chosen in terms of what can be learned within the limits of this research. First and foremost, an introduction to Koons' life and artistic career will be presented to offer an initial insight and context of the case, followed by an analysis of four particular branding activities translated into the specific actions taken by the artist.

4.1 Introduction

"The man is a phenomenon. For over thirty-five years, ever since he made his appearance in the art world back in 1979, he has had critics, collectors, art dealers, and the public holding their breath." - Eckhard Schneider about Jeff Koons (in Holzwarth, 2015, p. 7).

Jeff Koons is an American born artist who is regarded as one of the most influential people of his generation. He became a part of the contemporary art scene in the 1980s and rose to prominence since. Now, Koons is widely recognized mostly for his work portraying everyday objects and exploring new approaches to art. Influenced by the legacy of Marcel Duchamp's readymades¹, Salvador Dali's Surrealism, Andy Warhol's Pop aesthetic and the industrial approach of the Minimalism movement, Koons's large-scale artworks offer a new perspective on the notion of kitsch. Throughout his career, he has pushed the boundaries of conceptual art and popular culture imagery, questioned the limits of industrial production and broken new grounds on artists' relationship to the global marketplace and cult of fame.

Jeff Koons was born in York, Pennsylvania, in 1955. Five years later, his first encounter with art occurred when he received his first drawing lessons. As Koons (in Tate, 2009, 3:38) states: *"When I was very young, I kind of got a sense of self through art. My parents let me know that I could do something and I was proud of that, and I*

¹ Readymades are everyday objects re-contextualized as art.

just started to trust in this activity, and it gave me a sense of who I am.” At the age of eight, Koons started to paint copies of Old Master reproductions that were then exhibited in the windows of his father’s store and sold to the customers. Later on, he began studying art and design at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and spent a career-wise remarkably formative year at the School of Art Institute of Chicago as an exchange student. Artist Ed Paschke² was among his teachers and Koons developed a close friendship with him and became his studio assistant (Holzwarth, 2015, p. 92).

After finishing his studies, in order to immerse himself in the art scene and get closer to other artists, Koons moved to New York where he began working at the Museum of Modern Art. He spent a great deal of time wandering around the museum encountering works of Modernism for the first time. In 1979, he started to create sculptures featuring ordinary household objects and appliances that were mounted on fluorescent lights and hung vertically on the wall (see Picture 1).



Picture 1: Jeff Koons, *Nelson Automatic Cooker / Deep Fryer* (1979).

Available at: <http://jeffkoons.com/artwork/pre-new/nelson-automatic-cooker-deep-fryer>

² Ed Paschke was an American artist that belonged to the Chicago Imagists movement. Significantly influenced by Andy Warhol, Paschke was renowned for his confrontational, vivid paintings with references to pop culture, sometimes in a heavily sexualized or grotesque manner.

The series was later titled *Pre-New*. In this series, Koons was referring to the Duchampian idea that the assembly of two unrelated objects can produce unexpected meanings (Siegel, 2015, p. 16). The curator and co-founder of the New Museum of Contemporary Art, Marcia Tucker, saw these works in Koons's studio and invited him to create an installation for the display window of the museum. Koons installed three of his works alongside an electric sign with the slogan The New (see Picture 2), referring to the museum's name.



Picture 2: Jeff Koons, *The New (A Window Installation)* (1980) at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York.

Available at: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/exhibitions/solo/the-new-window-installation>

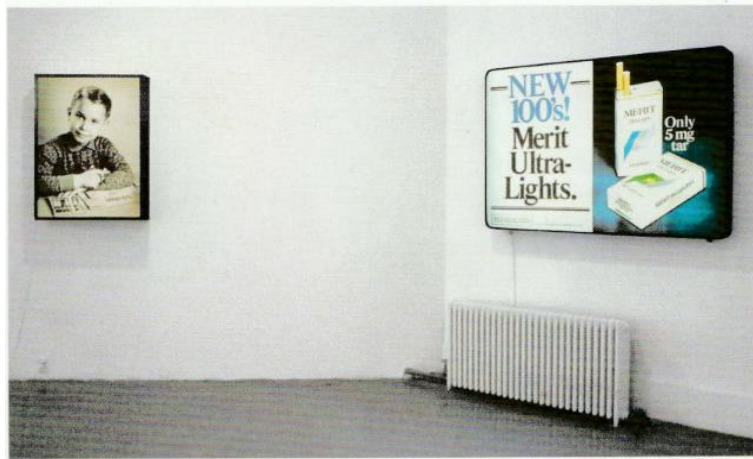
However, he became dissatisfied with the realization of his ideas and started to experiment with different solutions with respect to the integrity of the used objects. The following *New* series was made of Hoover vacuum cleaners. Koons ceased to manipulate the objects as they were no longer glued to the surface. Instead, he decided to rest the vacuum cleaners inside acrylic display cases (see Picture 3).



Picture 3: Jeff Koons, *New Hoover Convertibles, Green, Red, Brown, New Hoover Deluxe Shampoo Polishers Yellow, Brown Doubledecker* (1981-1987).

Available at: <http://jeffkoons.com/artwork/the-new/new-hoover-convertibles-green-red-brown-new-hoover-deluxe-shampoo-polishers-yellow>

Eventually, the pieces became an iconic artwork as they started to be frequently exhibited in the early and mid-1980s. The *New* series evolved into a comprehensive conceptual project with the addition of a photograph of the young artist himself titled *The New Jeff Koons* and posters of commercial advertisements that included the word 'New' (see Picture 4). Following the exhibition at the New Museum, Koons struggled to establish a relationship with a gallery and did not have a solo exhibition for several years. He was unable to finance his new work and in 1982 ran out of money and returned to live with his parents for six months to resource finances for the future production (Siegel, 2015, p. 16-27). After returning back to New York, Koons found a new career and started to work as a commodities broker at Wall Street to support the production of his artworks financially and become independent of the art market (Holzwarth, 2015, p. 92).



Picture 4: Jeff Koons, *The New Jeff Koons* (1980) and *New 100's Merit Ultralights* (1981), Exhibition view: Los Angeles - New York Exchange, Artists Space, New York, 1989.

Holzwarth, H. W. (2015) Jeff Koons. p. 22.

By the end of the 1980s, he was becoming a significant player in the contemporary art scene, having his work exhibited in a number of solo exhibitions while at the same time successfully participating in numerous group exhibitions across America and Europe (Jeff Koons, no date). Over the following years, Koons continued producing art and created a several successful series, including *Equilibrium*, *Luxury and Degradation*, *Statuary*, *Banality* or *Made in Heaven* series, which were rooted in a kitsch aesthetics, drew from generally recognizable imagery of commercial objects and introduced common artistic themes such as popular culture, pleasure or sexuality. As a part of the *Statuary* series that included ten sculptures of readymade objects cast in stainless steel, Koons created the iconic artwork *Rabbit* (see Picture 5). His 1988 series titled *Banality* that included another famous work - a sculpture of Michael Jackson and his monkey Bubbles (see Picture 6) premiered simultaneously in three prominent galleries across the world: Sonnabend Gallery in New York, Donald Young Gallery in Chicago and Max Hetzler Gallery in Cologne.



Picture 5: Jeff Koons, *Rabbit* (1986).

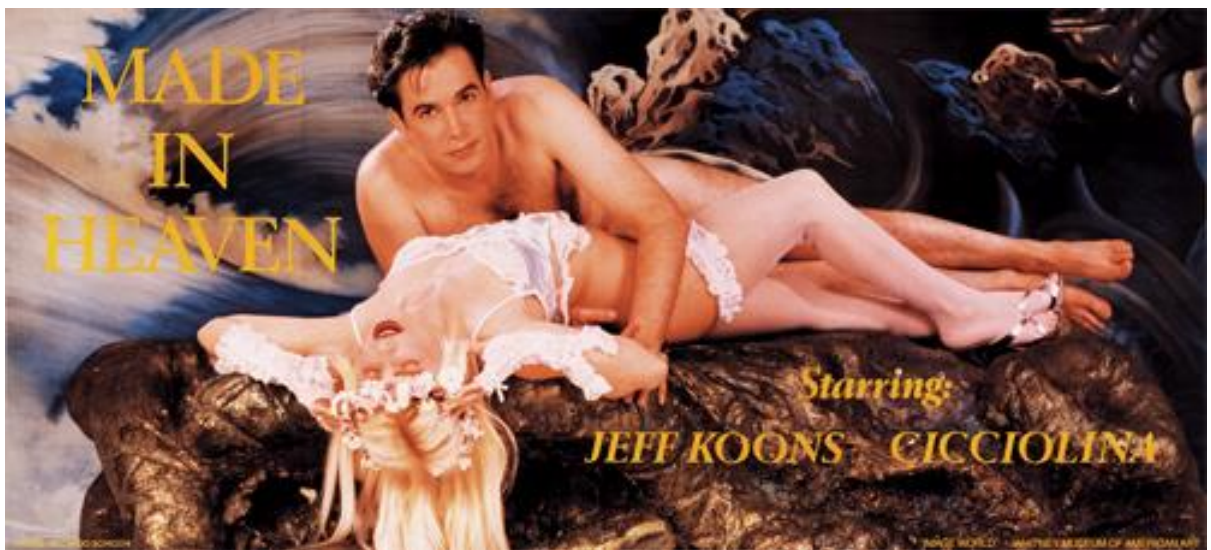
Available at: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/statuary/rabbit>



Picture 6: Jeff Koons, *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1988).

Available at: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/banality/michael-jackson-and-bubbles>

Following the controversial *Made in Heaven* exhibition in 1991, Jeff Koons became a media celebrity and one of the few contemporary artists that entered the consciousness of the general public. The series portrayed the artist himself and his newlywed wife, Italian adult film star Ilona Staller, or La Cicciolina, as she was known professionally. The idea for the series originated in Koons's mind when the Whitney Museum approached him to create a billboard for their upcoming exhibition. For the billboard, Koons inserted himself into the image setups he had already seen in Staller's magazine photographs using the same costume, sets and even the same photographer (see Picture 7).



Picture 7: Jeff Koons, *Made in Heaven* (1989).

Available at: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/made-in-heaven>

He fully realized the potential of the subject matter after seeing the billboard in real life, displayed in lower Manhattan, and decided to expand the original concept into a body of work. At the simultaneous exhibition at Sonnabend in New York and Max Hetzler in Cologne in 1991, Koons unveiled explicit photographic images and softcore sculptures of various sizes produced by European artisans featuring himself and Staller, busts carved from marble, glass sculptures and wall reliefs. Due to the abruptly graphic nature of many of the images in the series, the response of critics was bitterly critical, and the general public was outraged (Siegel, 2015, p. 56).

Needless to say, Koons enjoyed the public debate and his celebrity status and continued to create new works. After not being selected to exhibit at Documenta, a prestigious German contemporary art exposition, Koons created the Puppy, a 13-metre-high topiary sculpture of a West Highland white terrier (see Picture 8), and exhibited it in front of a nearby castle in Arolsen. Taking advantage of the proximity to Documenta, Koons's work became a highlight of the event, even without being a part of it (Smith, 1992, p. 27). The Puppy was later exhibited at Museo Guggenheim in Bilbao in 1997 and in front of the Rockefeller Center in New York in 2000.



Picture 8: Jeff Koons, *Puppy* (1992).

Available at: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/puppy/puppy>

Through 1992 and 1993, a major retrospective exhibition was held around the U.S. and Europe and received great acclaim and passionate criticism. The artist's work was collected and published in a monograph for art book publisher Taschen and Koons published his own book *The Jeff Koons Handbook* where he offers his philosophies on art and interpretations of his work. He set up a factory-style production studio on Broadway in SoHo that between 1994 and 1996 employed around seventy assistants and became his production headquarters for the next ten years. During that time, Koons was already planning his most celebrated and ambitious series ever in terms of logistics and volume of production, *Celebration*. The notorious works from the series take the form

of large-scale sculptures of balloon animals, Easter eggs and Valentine's hearts and the reflective surfaces of the sculptures come in five different colours (see Picture 9).



Picture 9: Jeff Koons, *Celebration* at Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2008-2009).

Available at: <http://jeffkoons.com/exhibitions/solo/jeff-koons-celebration>

Balloon Dog (Orange), one of Koons's most notorious works, was sold in a 2013 auction sale at Christie's for \$58.4 million, which was at the time the highest price ever achieved at auction by the work of a living artist (see Picture 10). However, initially intended for a 1996 exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the *Celebration* series could not be completed in due time for the show because of financial and practical problems that halted the production. Koons's perfectionism stood in the way as the artist struggled with rejecting imperfect versions of the new works, plenty of which were already bought by significant collectors. In fact, some of the artworks are still being manufactured to this day. At the time, Koons separated and eventually divorced Ilona Staller, and they started a public custody battle over their son. Both the new unfinished work and his family situation generated enormous public interest and were covered by mainstream media and art newspapers alike. Over the following years, Koons disappeared from public life while working with various dealers and collectors in order to try to find financial support for his production (Siegel, 2015, p. 60).



Picture 10: Jeff Koons, *Balloon Dog (Orange)* (1994-2000).

Available at:

<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/jeff-koons-b-1955-balloon-dog-orange-5739099-details.aspx>

Frustrated by slow production of the Celebration series, in 1999, he started working on a new series of collage-based paintings and reflective wall sculptures titled *Easyfun* and *Easyfun-Ethereal* (see Picture 11). The works were completed within months and exhibited in New York and Berlin. Koons rebuilt the injured popularity and the number of his solo exhibitions was growing. His work *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* from 1988 was enlisted at Sotheby's New York auction, and its final price of \$5.6 million set the artist's personal record for that time while generating lots of publicity.



Picture 11: Jeff Koons, *Easyfun-Ethereal* at Gagosian Gallery, New York (2018).

Available at: <http://jeffkoons.com/exhibitions/solo/jeff-koons-easyfun-ethereal>

In 2002, Koons began another new series of sculptures and paintings titled *Popeye*, in which he returned to the mass-produced inflatables and readymades, featuring blow-up animals, pool toys, and the famous cartoon characters Popeye and Olive Oyl (see Picture 12). The series was unveiled at Sonnabend Gallery in New York, and in the following year, Koons became the subject of national and international retrospectives in New York, Oslo and Helsinki.



Picture 12: Jeff Koons, *Popeye* (2009-2011).

Available at:

<http://jeffkoons.com/artwork/popeye-stainless>

Production for *Hulk Elvis*, one of Koons's most extensive series with approximately 60 sculptures and paintings, started in 2004 and continued until 2014. Over that period, Koons became an international celebrity: he collaborated with high-end fashion designer Stella McCartney, his sculpture *Balloon Flower (Red)* was installed in front of the 7 World Trade Center (see Picture 13), and, together with his wife Justine, he established The Koons Family Institute on International Law and Policy that addresses child abduction and exploitation (Holzwarth, 2015, p. 94-95). In 2008, a large solo exhibition of his works was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago where he spent the most formative year of his studies. The same year, another major exhibition took place in France, his sculptures from the *Celebration* series were exhibited at the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the National Galleries of Scotland and Tate acquired 17 Koons's works for their collection of contemporary art.



Picture 13: Jeff Koons, *Balloon Flower (Red)* in front of the 7 World Trade Center, New York, (2006).

Available at: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/exhibitions/solo/balloon-flower-red>

His latest major exhibition was held in 2019 at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and was curated by Koons himself. The exhibition featured artworks from the span of his career, including his most recent series of works, *Antiquity* and *Gazing Ball*. In these series, Koons connected the present with the past by going back to the source of Western culture and combining his typical symbols and motives with famous ancient or classical sculptures. The first artwork of the series is the sculpture *Balloon Venus* (see Picture 14), an immense balloon figure made from mirror-polished stainless steel that pays tribute to one of Koons's favourite artworks, the Venus of Willendorf. While designing the work, the artist insisted on creating the model from a single balloon and instead of simply making a 3D scan, Koons used an industrial C.T. scanner to acquire more detailed information (Sturgis and Rosenthal, 2019, p. 49).



Picture 14: Jeff Koons, *Balloon Venus* (2008-2012).

Available at: <http://jeffkoons.com/artwork/antiquity/balloon-venus>

The *Gazing Ball* series referenced the iconic coloured globes that decorate many gardens in the U.S. Koons positioned these reflective gazing balls on plaster casts of famous antique sculptures (see Picture 15) and in front of masterpieces of Western European painting, including hand-painted copies of works by Titian, da Vinci, Klimt or Picasso (see Picture 16). This way, he aimed to invite the viewer of the artwork into a visual dialogue with art through our own gaze, both drawing the viewer into and pushing away from the object, all placed in the building of the oldest museum in the world (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 27).



Picture 15: Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Farnese Hercules)* (2013).

Available at: <http://jeffkoons.com/artwork/gazing-ball-sculptures/gazing-ball-farnese-hercules>



Picture 16: Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Titian Diana and Actaeon)* (2014-2015).

Available at:

<http://jeffkoons.com/artwork/gazing-ball-paintings/gazing-ball-titian-diana-and-actaeon>

4.2 Diversified portfolio and distinguishable products

This subsection aims to explore whether and how a diversified portfolio and easily distinguishable products contribute to the development of the artist's brand. First and foremost, Koons's work is examined in terms of established meaning, underlying themes and diversity of materials. Furthermore, the importance of the place of the exhibition in relation to the difference of exhibiting in a gallery versus public space is considered, followed by an analysis of symbolism and iconography in his works, and the power of his personality.

In general, Koons's work explores the ideas of breath, life and death, love, desires, sexuality, taste, class, consumerism, and the blurring of differences between 'high' and 'low' art. Koons's aspiration has always been to empower people and give them confidence in their taste and art itself by elevating the objects of American everyday consumer culture, introducing them into art and transforming them into objects of beauty and desire. As Koons (in Sturgis and Rosenthal, 2019, p. 54) declares: *"I've tried to make work that any viewer, no matter where they came from, would have to respond to, would have to say that on some level 'Yes, I like it'. If they couldn't do that, it would only be because they had been told that they were not supposed to like it. Eventually they will be able to strip all that down and say: 'You know it's silly, but I like that piece. It's great."* Simply put, he aims to create art that would appeal to anyone. This illustrates Koons's clear focus on managing the meaning of these works, which constitutes an essential part of a successful brand strategy as described by Schroeder (2002, 2010) in Chapter 1.2.

Koons's work ranges from the depictions of commercial brands, such as his famous Hoover vacuum cleaners installed on fluorescent lights in display cases, the ill-famed pornographic photographs and sculptures that depict the artist himself with his first wife, Italian pornstar La Cicciolina, to the colourful enlarged balloon animals. The artist uses a wide variety of mediums and materials. As Peter Schjeldahl, The New Yorker art critic, points out, from the start of Koons's career his artwork has been created in thematic series, or otherwise said, product lines (Schjeldahl, 2008). The notorious use of found-objects and popular consumer items, including household appliances or basketballs, can be seen in his *Pre-New*, *New* and *Equilibrium* series. Furthermore, for the *Luxury and degradation* and *Statuary* series, Koons cast the readymade objects in stainless steel. Kitsch pastel sculptures of the *Banality* series were

fabricated by German and Italian artisans from wood, ceramics and porcelain. The *Made in Heaven* series incorporated polychrome wood carvings, wall reliefs, tinted transparent glass sculptures, photographic images and marble busts, carved in Pietrasanta where Michelangelo bought his marble. *Puppy* is a carefully shaped topiary sculpture that has been put together with a variety of living flowers installed on a transparent stainless steel understructure. The *Celebration* series consist of monumental colourful sculptures of balloon figures made from stainless steel with a shiny, reflective finish. Wall-mounted, highly polished colourful sculptures of cartoon-animal silhouettes and hand-made photorealist collage paintings, depicting imagery of advertising, magazines and Koons's memories, characterize the *Easyfun* and *Easyfun-Ethereal* series. Mass-produced inflatables featuring balloon monkeys, blow-up lobsters or pool toys, and imagery based on cartoon characters like Superman, Popeye, or the Incredible Hulk have been used in his series *Popeye* and *Hulk Elvis*. Last but not least, the *Gazing Ball* series include hand-blown gazing balls made from blue glass and placed in front of detailed hand-painted replications of renowned paintings and on plaster casts of famous antique sculptures, created in collaboration with the Louvre's plaster workshop. Through the creation of images and development of visual vocabulary that utilizes numerous elements of popular culture, Koons actively engages with brands, removes them from their original contexts and uses them as an unrefined material for his art, in accordance with Schroeder's (2005, 2010) theoretical concept of an artist as a brand manager (as per Chapter 2.3).

Koons's work has been exhibited in a number of prominent museums and galleries around the world, such as Sonnabend Gallery in New York; Gagosian Gallery in New York, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, London and Hong Kong; Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and New York; The Centre Pompidou in Paris; Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin; Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam or at the oldest museum in the world, Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to name a few. However, on numerous occasions, Koons has placed his work in a public space rather than inside a gallery or a museum. The *Puppy*, exhibited in front of a German castle, outside of Sydney Contemporary Art Museum, at the entrance of Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and finally at the Rockefeller Center in New York, serves as a perfect example. The reason for this approach, according to Nickas' article for Vice magazine (2012), is that locating the artwork outside a gallery allows for more ambitious scope of the artwork, both in terms

of size and creativity. Moreover, the artist can easily reach broader audiences and get the right public exposure. *“People have to pay to enter museums, and the price of admission can be steep, while walking in the street is free, and promises plenty of free publicity”* (Nickas, 2012). Koons benefits from the fact that in a contemporary consumer society, visual consumption has become part of a daily environment, therefore, the consumption does not need to necessarily involve economic exchange (Willis, 1991 and Schroeder, 2002 in Chapter 1.2). The underlying reason why artists seek out public spaces for their work is to broaden the reach of their art and take it from the art world into public debate. Jerry Saltz, an American art critic who received the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2018, agrees and further comments on Koons in terms of that: *“Few artists have ever exercised such precision targeting of an audience”* (Saltz, 2014). Koons ensures that he will reach as many people as possible by exhibiting his work not only in museums and galleries, but placing it in public spaces, making his art even more available, actively generating a vast amount of press coverage and enhancing his reputation through external communication, as previously discussed by Halliday and Kuenzel (2008) in Chapter 1.1.

Roberta Smith (2019), The New York Times’ influential co-chief art critic, claims that Koons’s sculptures have always been objects of desire, as well as comments on commodification. However, she adds: *“The strongest works imprint themselves on our visual memories with a striking, if uneasy singleness.”* In Koons’s monography for Taschen, Siegel (2015, p. 61-62) further elaborates this idea by underlining that Koons’s works speak to the public in the broadest extent possible. *“Almost any American, and many European and Asian viewers as well, will recognize many of the mass-produced symbols of what amounts to a Koonsonian calendar. In much the same way that an illiterate 16th-century city dweller could ‘read’ the iconography of Italian church murals - lilies, dogs, doves, etc. - we understand Koons’s secular archetypes.”* The artist aspires to represent meaning in his works by using easily identifiable symbols, even in his most straightforward works, so that anyone can look at his art and recognize Koons’s signature. As highlighted in Chapter 1.2, recognizable symbols and images form a fundamental foundation of brands and constitute the main focus of the marketing practice (Schroeder, 2000, 2010). Hans Werner Holzwarth, a Taschen editor, specializing in contemporary art and photography, notes that Koons’s work is switching back and forth between subject and object, reality and symbols, and between sense and illusion. He proposes a view of Koons as an artist who *“creates iconic work, crown*

jewels of some of the world's most prestigious public and private art collections, that simultaneously offer a cultural context to the global audience regardless of its social background" (Holzwarth, 2015, p. 88).

Employing Hirschman's (2010) attributions of brands mentioned in Chapter 1.1, brands can be considered, among other aspects, as icons. Using the artwork *Rabbit* as an example, the notion of regarding Koons's pieces as iconic has been exercised by numerous authors and critics. The *Rabbit*, made in 1986, is classified as the most expensive artwork by a living artist after its auction at Christie's in 2019, where the sculpture was sold at a record price of \$91.1 million. In Chapter 2.3, it is noted that there might be a correlation between the final price of the artwork and its established aesthetic quality Slowinska (2014). Alex Rotter, the chairman of Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art department, characterizes *Rabbit* as "*one of the 20th century's most influential works of art, which changed the course of art history as we now know it*" (cited in Prisant, 2019) and Christie's catalogue entry mentions almost two hundred books and articles that discussed the artwork (Christie's, 2019a). In its promotional video, Christie's referred to the artwork as "*iconic*" and presented it under a catchphrase "*Own the controversy*" (Christie's, 2019b). The New York Times described *Rabbit* as a work of art that is "*alternately loved and hated*". The author of the article Smith (2019) further remarked that "*some of its most fervent admirers see it as the perfect work of art for its moment, the roaring mid-1980s.*" The New Yorker used the phrase "*an icon of eighties excess*" (Scott, 2019), the Garage Magazine referred to the sculpture as "*Koons's first masterpiece*" (Diehl, 2019) and Jerry Saltz (2003) described it for Artnet as "*a toy become voodoo doll become demon become idol.*"

Farago (2014) developed the concept of Koons as one of the most famous artists of the last decade in his article for The Guardian. He identified two underlying reasons to support his argument - first, Koons's frequent appearances in the mass media, where he would utter witty remarks about 'self-confidence' and 'presence'; and second, Koons's mystifying persona, that is according to Farago his most enduring artwork. Farago adds: "*He irritates most when he insists he has no desire to irritate. He is unfailingly polite, endlessly good-natured. In a cynical, ironic art world he comes across as a suburban-mall Father Christmas.*" Chris Wiley (2014), an artist, writer and contributing editor of the Frieze Magazine, observed that the way how people feel about Koons's art is related directly to how they perceive his persona, which Wiley describes as "*a potent and*

seemingly self-contradictory mixture of guilelessness and hucksterism.” Farago and Wiley are in agreement with evidence from Keller’s (2013) theoretical framework (discussed in Chapter 1.1) that considers the underlying power of a particular brand in consumers’ personal experience, based on what they have seen, heard and learned about the brand.

4.3 Brand awareness and word of mouth

The following subsection explores the processes through which Jeff Koons elaborates on the use of his persona as a tool for branding. First, the process of creating awareness of his brand will be discussed in the Chapter 4.3.1, drawing on the example of the marketing activities used for promoting his artworks through advertising in renowned art magazines that supplemented the exhibition of the *Banality* series. Furthermore, establishing a reputation and creating word of mouth through controversial artworks, starring the artist himself, will be examined in Chapter 4.3.2, using the example of *Made in Heaven* series and its surrounding publicity.

4.3.1 Advertisement in prominent art magazines

The *Banality* series is considered Koons’s first series in which he established his signature artistic style and persona. Including artworks made from painted wood, porcelain, and ceramics, the series celebrated popular culture along with everything the art world categorizes under the name of kitsch. The themes were drawn from the imagery of different parts of popular culture and featured imagery usually found in magazines or gift shops, Christian symbolism, and generally recognizable motives, such as the Pink Panther, American actor Buster Keaton, or pop idol Michael Jackson (Siegel, 2015, p. 44-50). In the description of the sculpture *Ushering in Banality*, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (no date) noted that *“by increasing the size and giving it this particular title the artist questions both the relationship between art and commodity as well as fine art and kitsch.”* According to Koons (in Sturgis and Rosenthal, 2019, p. 39), the *Banality* sculptures embody our cultural history and deprives us of the guilt and shame. *“I wanted to make works that just embraced everyone’s cultural history and made everyone feel that their history was perfect just the way it was. I don’t like to use the word ‘kitsch’ because kitsch is automatically making a judgement about something. I always saw ‘banality’ as a little freer than*

that.” The sculptures were exhibited in 1988 in identical exhibitions at three major international galleries in New York, Cologne and Chicago at the same time.

To announce and promote these exhibitions, the artist created four advertisements targeted specifically for major art magazines. Titled *Art Ad Portfolio*, the photographs featuring the artist himself explore his own identity as an autonomous object for display and depict Koons in various flamboyant poses as a teacher, playboy or movie star in the style of glossy celebrity spreads. Reportedly, Koons saw pictures of David Bowie taken by photographer Greg Gorman and decided that was the look he wanted for his advertisements (Siegel, 2015, p. 43; Holzwarth, 2015, p. 87).

In the advertisements for prominent magazines *Art* and *Art in America*, the artist is wearing a robe and, sided by two seals, is proclaiming himself “*the leader of the art world*” in the former; and surrounded by women in bikini and a dead, stuffed animal, in the latter (Bellet, 2005). Described by art critic Mark Stevens (1989): “*They were funny—schlock fantasies of self-importance and the good life that made the usual flattery and sexual innuendo of Madison Avenue look tame. In one, Koons surrounded himself with a bevy of bimbos bearing gifts and a dead, stuffed animal. In another, he sits cross-legged between two seals decked out in grotesque floral arrangements.*”



Picture 17: Jeff Koons, *Art Ad Portfolio* (1989).

Available at: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/coll-nahon-day-sale-pf1961/lot.192.html>

In contrast, the Flash Art magazine advertisement displays Koons cuddling with pigs. The artist claims that, as a form of exercising power, he called himself a pig before someone else did (Stevens, 1989). In his ad for Artforum magazine, the artist impersonates a teacher indoctrinating vulnerable young children with phrases like ‘Exploit the masses’ and ‘Banality as saviour’ on the chalkboard behind him. As Koons (in Tate, no date) explains: *“I really wanted to direct that sense of their vulnerability to the Artforum readership, the people who hate me, to make them just grit their teeth and hate me even more because I was taking their future. I was getting at their future, the youth of tomorrow.”* Koons predicted the hostile response to the Banality series and the deliberately provocative advertisements placed in prominent art magazines were his way of mocking their readers and defending his position, thoughts and beliefs about art.



Picture 18: Jeff Koons, *Art Ad Portfolio* (1989).

Available at: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/coll-nahon-day-sale-pf1961/lot.192.html>

In these self-portraits, Koons acknowledges the art world’s perception of his persona as a symbol of success and excess of the 1980s. Rather than fighting or denying the interest in international success, he took the criticism and openly accepted the increasingly distinguished role of a salesman and celebrity (Siegel, 2015, p. 44). As Koons (in Stevens, 1989) declares: *“I feel very good about my sales skills because everything is based on sales. Sales is the front line and no matter what your problem or desire, there’s a sales pitch designed for it. And if, in fact, your product is nothing more*

than pure salesmanship—that is a fabulous product.” The photographs emphasize the position of advertising and publicity in relation to his artistic career and are a result of Koons’s growing reputation and powerful character. As Holzwarth (2015, p. 87) noted: *“He was his own brand, and banality promised salvation.”* In the *“memorable print ads”*, as described by the New Yorker (Schjeldahl, 2008), Koons demonstrated his knowledge of the commercial world through the use of symbolism and terminology of advertising. The *Art Ad Portfolio* reflects Koons’s awareness of himself as a commodity and proves that the artist does not create only the artworks, but at the same time is the author of the persona that is presented to the market. The impact of these advertisements is categorically in line with the conclusions discussed in Chapter 1.1, that positively recognized brand activities result in a certain amount of awareness, prominence and reputation in the marketplace (Keller, 2013; McMurrian and Washburn, 2008).

4.3.2 Controversial reputation

After the *Banality* exhibitions, Koons had continued gaining recognition and benefiting from the utilization of the advertising. As a part of the *Made in Heaven* series (described at length in Chapter 4.1), he seized the opportunity to obtain additional public exposure and publicity by positioning himself as a movie star on a billboard in Manhattan provided by Whitney Museum as a part of their upcoming exhibition. *“He had been looking at men's magazines in the course of doing the Banality work, because he wanted to give his production people examples of how to paint flesh”* (Wood, 2007). The final piece *Made in Heaven* (see Picture 7) was designed in such a manner, *“starring Jeff Koons and La Cicciolina as a one-off ad for a nonexistent film”* (Wood, 2007). Using himself, his relationship and desires, Koons has chosen to make his private life the subject of the resulting series. As Koons (in Sischy, 2007) recalls: *“I guess I felt that I was an art star, and I was playing with the idea of becoming another kind of star in our celebrity culture.”* The *Made in Heaven* series exemplarily demonstrates Koons’s art for art’s sake approach as defined by Fillis (2010) in Chapter 2.2 in which it is argued that, unlike the practice in the commercial sector, in this case, the marketing activities begin in the early stage of concept development.

The series premiered during a period when sex became a subject of public debate because of AIDS. In her article for Artsy, Annette Lin (2019) argues that the aesthetic of *Made in Heaven* series revealed how the modern society has objectified and commodified desire and that pornography transformed sex into yet another product

intended to be consumed. According to Ingrid Sischy (2007, 2014), former editor of Artforum magazine, by including some of Western art's most explicit sexual imagery ever created, *Made in Heaven* brought sex into the center of contemporary art and shattered taboos that have been firmly established in Western art for decades. Jerry Saltz (2014) summarized the controversial series by saying: "*Few male artists in the history of art have shown themselves with an erection, let alone having sex. Koons had found a point in taste lower than pornography.*"

Sischy (2007) further recalls the circumstances surrounding the controversial artworks: "*When a few of the works that came out of their first graphic photo session were previewed at the Venice Biennale in the summer of 1990, Koons and Cicciolina caused the kind of hoopla with paparazzi that normally goes on at movie festivals such as Cannes.*" By the time of the exhibition at Sonnabend Gallery in New York in 1991, "*word of mouth on this body of work was so strong that the television cameras were lined up outside the gallery on opening day.*" The gallery issued a warning sign on the door notifying visitors of the sexually explicit imagery inside, stating that "*Anyone under 17 years of age must be accompanied by an adult*" (Tully, 1991). The show and the resulting word of mouth portrayed the relationship between Koons and Cicciolina in such details that the public started to believe it was only a marketing stunt to gain more publicity.

It comes as no surprise that the show was highly successful and ended up being the most heavily visited exhibition in the history of the gallery (Sischy, 2007). According to Saltz (2014), "*the gallery was packed every day for a month.*" However, the critical response was divided. Even though that the exhibition was "*extremely popular with a curious public and hungry media*" (Sischy, 2014), the art establishment did not accept it too well, comparing it to Koons's career suicide. As reported by Saltz (2014): "*Then the axe dropped. The village turned on him. Koons had gone too far. He became the pariah that many see him as today, a sort of American Taliban. Since then, Koons has never been in a Whitney Biennial or Documenta. He's continually accused of cynicism.*" Others blamed Koons from "*indulging in shock for shock's sake*" (Sischy, 2007). Stevens (1989) further develops that idea by noting that artists, especially young ones, are craving to shock, and their audience wants to be shocked, too. "*Shock has become a kind of addiction, the elixir of modernism, a jolting 'high' supposed to accompany the transformation of the once outrageous into art. Where shock is concerned, of course, nothing succeeds like sex*" (Stevens, 1989). Sischy (2007, 2014)

underlines how difficult was to sell these works, which not only targeted the complicated American market “*where the puritanical ethos continues to make sex an X-rated subject*”, but the works were intended for sale in times of economic recession of the early 1990s and were also very expensive to produce. However, as *Artsper Magazine* (no date) noted, Koons’s strong proneness to controversy and media handling provided he perfectly mastered his market value. Drawing upon controversial, and therefore generally recognizable visual elements in his work, Koons, as a commercially conscious artist, managed to differentiate the image of his brand, get noticed and attract the attention of not only the art world but the broad public too, as described in Chapter 1.2 and Chapter 2.2 (Schroeder, 2010; Fillis, 2010).

4.4 Promoting exclusivity and controlling the market

The art market, in general, appears to resist the majority of traditional laws of economics. Nevertheless, it has always complied with the market forces of supply and demand. According to Schroeder’s (2005) theoretical research interpreted in Chapter 2.3, art market accumulates considerable wealth and, accordingly, artists are actively engaged in increasing the sales of their works. Moreover, who produces the artwork is a determining factor of its value (Schroeder, 2010). Melanie Gerlis (2019) characterized this principle in an article for international art magazine *Apollo*, claiming that the art market is “*prizing the rare above what is easily come by, and the unique above all.*” The Subchapter 4.4.1 explores Koons’s position in the art market, his highest auction prices and explains the reason behind the record-breaking prices. Subchapter 4.4.2 defines the artist’s target audiences, in particular the close circle of prominent galleries, dealers and collectors. Lastly, the Subchapter 4.4.3 describes the way how Koons addresses the market forces by taking payments for the unfinished works in advance and hence controls his market.

4.4.1 Position in the art market

Koons’s career has started to grow during an era in which other artists eagerly promoted themselves and were vigorously involved in the expansion of their markets to the extent of movie stars or music legends. With no hesitation, Koons jumped on the bandwagon and followed this trend. Since the early 2000s, the exhibitions of his works were often staged synchronically with the occurrence of his famous artworks at art auctions in order to raise the profile of auctioned works (Thomas, 2005). Claire Selvin

(2020), an associate editor at ARTnews who covers art market developments, noted that throughout the last decade, the number of Koons's auctions had been significantly rising. His auction highlights include sales at two prominent auction houses - Sotheby's sold his works *Hanging Heart (Magenta/Gold)* in 2007 for \$23.5 million and the sculpture *Popeye* for \$28.1 million in 2014; while Christie's sales estimated \$33.6 million in 2012 for *Tulips*, \$33.7 million in 2014 for *Jim Beam - JB Turner Train*, \$58.4 million in 2013 for *Balloon Dog (Orange)* and record-breaking \$91.1 million for *Rabbit* in 2019 (Sotheby's, no date; Christie's, no date).

However, as financial journalist Felix Salmon (2014) pointed out, these works are not expensive solely in terms of the auction house, mark-to-market sense per se. Koons's art is unusually expensive to fabricate, too. "*Koons is a technologist as much as he is an artist: he is personally responsible for the development of multiple cutting-edge fabrication techniques*" (Salmon, 2014). His groundbreaking technology has great importance for the final artworks, which is why the Whitney Museum's catalogue for Koons's retrospective in 2014 dedicated an entire chapter to them. "*Reading about the CT scans, structured-light scanning, volumetric data, customized software, and personalization of fabrication technologies, I started to understand why all those people are needed in Koons's studio*" (Sischy, 2014). Sischy further described the operations that take place in the studio that employed over 120 assistants at one time. Some of the assistants were responsible for mixing colours, while others involved in laboratory work, dressed in long white laboratory coats, wearing face masks and rubber gloves (Tate, 2009). This kind of massive operational processes illustrates the costs of production of Koons's artworks and, at the same time, give his iconography its unique appeal that results in the astonishing auction prices.

Attempting to explain how did Koons's auction prices reached such peaks, ARTnews magazine noted that "*Koons has masterminded his fame and fortune through a combination of charm, guile, and a talent for creating expensive art that inspires critical debate*" (Thomas, 2005). Scott Rothkopf (in Abraham, 2015), the curator of the 2014 retrospective at the Whitney Museum refers to Koons as "*a salesman*", pointing out the brief period when the artist worked as a Wall Street commodities broker to finance his art. As Koons (in Lin, 2019) himself admits, "*the market is just a reflection of the times, and the values people find in art.*" Thomas (2005) emphasizes that whereas most artists separate money and art, Koons's approach to the market forces is very straightforward. "*Jeff recognizes that works of art in a capitalist culture inevitably are*

reduced to the condition of commodity. What Jeff did was say, 'Let's short-circuit the process. Let's begin with the commodity'" (Pincus-Witten in Thomas, 2005). Nonetheless, Sischy (2014) underlines the fact that Koons perceives money just as a means to achieve his goals and create art. The process of achieving these ambitions includes a close circle of dealers and galleries that represent him, and a core group of collectors that build their collections around his works and continue to purchase new ones (Thomas, 2005). Rothkopf (in Sischy, 2014) explains it in further details: *"If it is going to cost several million dollars to produce new work, he has got to martial the resources from wealthy patrons to produce this thing. He has to convince extremely wealthy people, via art dealers, to buy into the dream of this perfect object."*

4.4.2 Close circle of prominent dealers and collectors

Over the years, Koons has worked closely with several prominent galleries and dealers. Currently, he is represented by three influential multinational galleries - Sonnabend, Gagosian, and David Zwinger - each working with him independently (Sischy, 2014). In 1986, following the *Statuary* series and the publicity around the *Rabbit*, Koons was officially signed under the renowned Sonnabend Gallery (Sischy, 2007). Except for a few years of disputes after the *Made in Heaven* series, Sonnabend has been representing Koons to this day (Sischy, 2007; Sonnabend, no date). Larry Gagosian, an owner of a global network of galleries, was among the dealers who helped Koons finance the *Celebration* series by pre-selling some of the works to his accustomed collectors. Gagosian believed in Koons: *"He has a vision that goes beyond his collectors. It's a huge vision, and it's out there. But he connects the dots in one of the more interesting ways I've seen"* (Thomas, 2005). The third powerful gallery owner that represents the artist is David Zwirner, ranked among the top 5 most influential people in the contemporary art world (ArtReview, 2019).

Dealers Mary Boone and Annina Nosei were among Koons's early supporters at the beginning of his career. However, business relationships lasted only for a short period (Thomas, 2005). For a share of the profits, art adviser Estelle Schwartz and Daniel Weinberg helped to fund Koons's ideas after the *Equilibrium* series were exhibited. Schwartz (in Thomas, 2005) recalled: *"I was a more voracious collector than even my clients. I remember saying to a collector, 'If I'm buying a snorkel vest, you should be buying an aqualung.'"* Chicago dealer Donald Young (in Thomas, 2005), who supported Koons in production of the *Banality* series, was quoted saying that *"he is*

a trophy artist and he isn't against being a trophy artist." As Salmon (2014) summarizes it: *"Pretty much the best way to go bust in the art world, over the past couple of decades, has been by signing on as Jeff Koons's dealer."* Throughout his career, the artist has built a comprehensive network of supporters who sell his work to wealthy collectors. Koons (in Thomas, 2005) referred to his circle of dealers as a *"platform,"* saying: *"I have all the support possible, as far as a stage for Jeff Koons to do his work."*

Editor of ARTnews magazine, Ann Landi (2007) cited dealer Donald Young describing Koons *"as very conscious of his market, which consists of extremely wealthy people."* Koons's target audience consists of competitive, oligarchical collectors that *"like their art instantly recognizable, easily graspable, unchallenging and shiny"* and art buyers *"who easily qualify for spending \$50 million or more on 'name brand' work"* (Farago, 2014; Sosnoff, 2014). According to Alex Rotter, Christie's Chairman of Post-War and Contemporary Art, Koons arouses great interest not only among collectors focused on Post-War and Contemporary Art but also among those who are *"driven by acquiring the most important examples of any collecting category"* (Prisant, 2019). As evidenced in Chapter 1.1, the ownership of a specific brand is often linked to seeking confirmation of individual identity or a personal statement about the buyer's character (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2008; McMurrian and Washburn, 2008).

The list of Koons's collectors features some of the most renowned names in the art world, including advertising agency and gallery owner Charles Saatchi whose collection features numerous works by Koons; CEO of Christie's François Pinault who owns a magenta version of *Balloon Dog*; press magnate Peter Brant who paid a then-record \$1.8 million for *Pink Panther* in 1999; real estate developer Eli Broad who financed the completion of works from the *Celebration* series at the time of Koons's financial difficulties in 1996; or Maria and Bill Bell, collectors who purchased *Play-Doh* sculpture and waited ten years for the piece to be completed (Sischy, 2007; Artsper Magazine, no date; Thomas, 2005; Prisant, 2019). These names belong amongst the super-rich elite of 0.1 percent who, according to Gerlis (2019), desire the same, recognizable symbols of wealth and therefore are the perfect clientele for an artist such as Koons. *"He has produced works whose seductive surfaces, expensive scale and quality, and flawless execution cast them frankly as luxury consumer objects"* (Landi, 2007). The artist has limited the supply by placing his works in prestigious public and private collections that are unlikely to sell them, which increases his market value even

more (Thomas, 2005). Moreover, the ownership of big-name, industry-leading collectors adds a certain amount of protection in the market, which sometimes comes with the additional validation of the value from museum exhibitions that run simultaneously with the auction sale (Gerlis, 2019). In the words of The New Yorker's art critic Peter Schjeldahl (2014): *"We might justly term the present Mammon-driven era in contemporary art the Koons Age. No other artist so lends himself to a caricature of the indecently rich ravening after the vulgarly bright and shiny."*

4.4.3 Control over the market value

Koons has been quoted saying that the *"great artists of the future are going to be the great negotiators"* (Thomas, 2005). Over the years, he has not only successfully sold his works to prominent collectors but gained control over his market value by persuading the buyers to pay for the production of his sculptures. In the 1990s, after discovering that the production expenses of the *Celebration* series had overrun the anticipated costs, Koons convinced his dealers and collectors to invest in the fabrication of the works. Koons has undoubtedly employed the art for art's sake approach as described in Chapter 2.2, as he achieves success by seeking customers for his products rather than creating products to serve his customers (Fillis, 2010). Felix Salmon, The Guardian's financial writer, has explored Koons's innovative economic model to fund the production of his work in the article titled 'Jeff Koons: a master innovator turning money into art'.

Salmon (2014) observed that as long as Koons's work was rising in value, not too many collectors would renounce a work they had purchased at a lower price. Therefore, when the production expenditures exceeded the anticipated costs, Koons went back to his buyers, who had already acquired and paid for the concerned work and asked them for more money. At that point, the collectors had two options. They could either pay up, or they could say no and Koons would return the money. In case they did ask for their money back, it caused no harm to the artist because there was an extensive list of other collectors that were willing to purchase the work. *"Koons, very cleverly, found a way of exploiting the mark-to-market mentality that is now ubiquitous in the art world: the way in which collectors are hyper-aware of how much their art is worth. So long as the collectors could credibly believe that they had "made money" on their non-existent art, they were generally happy to keep on funding it."*

Accordingly, the model is functional only in a commoditized art market where the values of art are continually rising. The artworks are purchased in part for their speculative value and as Salmon (2014) clarifies it, *“the amount that someone is willing to pay for a piece is mostly a function of how much someone else is willing to pay for that same piece.”* The model works in a way similar to the historical patronage model. Koons reversed this model, and instead of working for the collectors, he is the one who makes all decisions. However, Koons’s model has its disadvantages. In 2018, billionaire collector and MoMA trustee Steven Tananbaum sued Koons and his dealer, Larry Gagosian, for a breach of contract as Tananbaum has not received three large-scale sculptures worth millions of dollars (Kinsella, 2018). He was not the only one - shortly after the lawsuit was filed, a similar claim was pressed by a Hollywood producer Joel Silver. Nevertheless, Gagosian contends that these claims are baseless and the completion dates were only approximate, stating that in the case of Koons’s works, *“time therefore is not of the essence”* and that *“Mr. Koons could take years before commencing physical fabrication”* (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, it is evident that Koons, above all other artists, has capitalized on all the possibilities that opened up with the considerable value his works estimated in the auction sales. As Salmon (2014) noted: *“Koons’s art might be empty; it might be banal. But Koons does something very interesting, which very few other artists do. He turns money into art, rather than just turning art into money.”* With this groundbreaking funding model, Koons represents the conditions and possibilities of the contemporary art market better than anyone (Holzwarth, 2015, p. 87-88).

4.5 Brand extensions

Brand extensions provide yet another way how artists can engage with commercial culture and establish their own visual brand. As described in the previous chapter, art is commonly advertised to the high-end clientele that considers art as a luxury product. However, Koons opposes this perception of art, claiming that art is a vehicle to transform information, rather than a luxurious commodity (Sussman, 2018). Despite being widely recognized as the most expensive living artist, Koons desires to connect his art with even broader audiences and communicate his message across a wide public. *“I want my work to be accessible to people,”* Koons claims, adding that he perceives the impact that businesses have over masses as a vehicle to share his messages (Eckardt, 2017).

In 2005, Koons joined forces with the renowned fashion designer Stella McCartney and created a charm bracelet and a necklace shaped after the signature *Rabbit*. The necklace eventually sold for \$337,347 (Eckardt, 2017; Browne, 2018). In 2010, the artist was commissioned to create a design for the BMW Art Car, a collaboration that has a long tradition in the art world. Since 1975, BMW has partnered with artists like Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, David Hockney, Jenny Holzer, or Olafur Eliasson. Koons designed the BMW M3 GT2 model with bold, colourful stripes covering the surface of the car, inspired by pictures of race cars and explosions. The design was first unveiled at Centre Pompidou in Paris and later presented at the opening of Art Basel in Miami Beach (Squatriglia, 2010; Browne, 2018). The collaboration between Koons and Dom Pérignon, a prestigious vintage Champagne brand produced by the Champagne house of Moët & Chandon was announced in 2013. Koons created a limited edition of stainless-steel *Balloon Venus* sculpture that functions as a bottle holder, priced at €86,500 (Artsper, 2013). In the same year, Koons worked closely with Lady Gaga to design the cover art for her album *Artpop*. The cover featured a nude sculpture of Gaga with a blue gazing ball between her legs while the background consisted of cut-up images of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* (Vena, 2013). In addition to the album cover, Koons created a large-scale sculpture of Gaga with the gazing ball that was unveiled at Gaga's Art Rave party. She mentions Koons in her song *Applause* from the same album: "*One second I'm a Koons, then suddenly the Koons is me,*" as a statement about merging art and pop culture (Lady Gaga, 2013; Ehrlich, 2013).

In 2014, Koons collaborated with the fast-fashion brand H&M (La Ferla, 2014). The year 2016 marked three collaborations altogether. For French manufacturer Bernardaud, he produced a collection of porcelain dinnerware picturing his artworks (Bernardaud, 2016). Burton, a brand producing snowboard equipment, apparel and accessories, commissioned Koons to create a snowboard design titled 'The Philosopher' in which case all the proceeds from the sales were donated to a sport-related non-profit organization (Browne, 2018). Moreover, Koons infiltrated the tech world by collaborating with Google on \$40 Nexus phone cases and live wallpapers inspired by the *Gazing Ball* sculptures (Betker, 2016). Another technological collaboration was utilizing augmented reality to turn Koons's *Balloon Dog* into a Snapchat filter that would activate in a close distance of selected sites all over the world (Browne, 2018). Furthermore, the artist designed a collection of handbags and accessories for French

fashion house Louis Vuitton and hip hop artist Jay-Z commissioned Koons to create a stage design for his 2017 tour featuring an orange version of Balloon Dog (Browne, 2018). In 2018, Koons made an appearance in the HBO documentary ‘The Price of Everything’ that provides insight into the processes of the contemporary art market (Selvin, 2020).

Due to the limited capacity of the given research, the following subchapters will be dedicated to a detailed description of two collaborations that have great importance in terms of broadening the target audiences and reaching the wider public.

4.5.1 Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton



Picture 19: Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton, ‘Masters’ collection handbags, 2018.

Available at:

<https://eu.louisvuitton.com/eng-e1/articles/jeff-koons-masters-collection-available-online-and-in-stores>

Koons’s collection created for the Parisian fashion house and luxury retail company Louis Vuitton was inspired by his *Gazing Ball* series of paintings. Titled ‘Masters’, the collection featured more than 50 leather handbags, scarves, keychains and small accessories (Eckardt, 2017). This collaboration marked the first time Koons created an entirely new design rather than just appropriating his existing works onto a product (Friedman, 2017). The ‘Masters’ collection portrayed works of the most celebrated artists in the history, including da Vinci, Rubens, Manet or van Gogh, depicting their famous paintings which were precisely reproduced in high-resolution detail on some of the most iconic leather bag silhouettes, in particular the Speedy, the

Keepall and the Neverfull (Hawkins, 2017; see Picture 19). Michael Burke, the CEO of Louis Vuitton, who enthusiastically supported the project, noted that *“for classical art to compete with contemporary art, you need to get it on the street.”* In order to address the unpopular profile of classical art, each piece contains a short description of the featured artist, *“like a hidden history lesson for the Twitter generation”* (Friedman, 2017). Instead of a gazing ball, each bag was decorated with reflective silver or gold letters spelling the name of the artist. The leather loop around the handle was carved in the shape of the *Rabbit*, and the left bottom of the bag displayed Louis Vuitton’s logo while in the right corner, the famous logo featured Koons’s initials. For the first time in the history of the fashion brand, the collaborating artist was allowed to remodel the logo into the initials of the artist (Browne, 2018).

The Louis Vuitton brand has a long history of engagement with the art world - in the past, the brand launched collaborations with artists such as Yayoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince or Stephen Sprouse; and in 2014 the fashion house opened the Fondation Louis Vuitton which houses an art collection that includes Koons’s works, among others (Friedman, 2017). The ‘Masters’ collection was created in collaboration with Delphine Arnault, the daughter of the LVMH³ chief Bernard Arnault who also collects Koons’s work. In 2013, Koons established a collaboration with another LVMH brand, Dom Pérignon (Friedman, 2017).

“Working on this, I felt a sense of my own potential, and the sharing of that with a large community,” Koons stated for the New York Times (Friedman, 2017). Koons perceived the collaboration as an opportunity to broaden the audience for his work and considered it as a great communication platform. He further stated that his mission is to remove the elitism of the art world and explained that *“with the Master’s collection, people would be able to come into contact [with] art and how artists enjoy and reference each other”* (Sussman, 2018). Koons’s gallerist Larry Gagosian supported the idea of the collaboration, proclaiming that *“Jeff is one of the few artists who can step into that water without screwing up his day job”* (Friedman, 2017). Accordingly, the reactions were highly positive - Weinstock (2017) for i-D magazine described it as *“one of the coolest collaborations we’ve seen in a while,”* and Sussman (2018) for Artsy magazine identified it as *“the marriage of art and business at its best.”* However,

³ LVMH is a multinational conglomerate specializing in luxury goods that controls around 60 brands, including the fashion house Louis Vuitton, champagne producer Moët & Chandon or cognac producer Hennessy.

Vanessa Friedman (2017), in the article for The New York Times, raised an issue regarding the subnarrative behind the collaboration. She summarized it as follows: “*On one hand, Vuitton is exploiting art for its own gain. On the other, an artist is selling out. In the middle, consumers are being introduced to great art as if it is disposable.*”

4.5.2 Jeff Koons x H&M



Picture 20: Jeff Koons x H&M, *Balloon dog* Handbag, and the Opening of the H&M store in New York, 2014.

Available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/24/fashion/hm-and-jeff-koons-collaborate-on-a-handbag.html>

In 2014, Koons established a collaboration with the Swedish fast-fashion brand H&M and created a black handbag with a reproduction of his *Balloon dog* printed in the front, available for the retail price of \$49.50. The handbag was introduced to the public at the opening of H&M’s new store in New York that was also decorated with large-sized images of the artwork (see Picture 20). As Koons declared at the unveiling of the collaboration: “*I want my work to be accessible to people*” (Eckardt, 2017). He has taken advantage of the launch of the collaboration to use it as a preview for his exhibition that took place in New York - at that time the original Balloon dog artwork could be seen at the Whitney Museum which hosted Koons’s biggest retrospective in the history of his career. Moreover, by creating a partnership with a widely affordable commercial brand such as H&M, Koons has effectively broadened the target audience for his products from the domain of luxury to the mass public. As observed in Chapter 2.3, brand extensions can positively enhance the image of the artists’ brand while

increasing market coverage and creating new market segments (Schroeder 2005, 2010; Keller, 2013). As La Ferla (2014) stated: “*Mr. Koons has lent this time-tested marketing gambit a democratic twist,*” and she argued for the inevitability of the collaborations between high-end artists and mass market. However, curator Alison Kubler noted that “*luxury alliances lift the stature of both artist and brand, but in the mass market the message can be harder to get across*” (Ibid.).

5 Discussion

The qualitative analysis above provided a detailed description of the investigated case of the contemporary artist Jeff Koons within the brand perspective, with a focus on four particular branding activities translated into the specific actions taken by the artist. The following discussion does not aspire to reach any evaluative conclusions about the effectivity of the outlined activities. Instead, the objective is to comment on the findings and provide an answer for the research questions identified in the research methodology of this thesis (see Chapter 3). Therefore, the discussion aims to understand how is Jeff Koons actively involved in establishing and promoting himself and his art within the art market and to briefly confront the findings with the theoretical framework of artists as brands, developed in the theoretical part. The following Chapter 5.1 will discuss the contributions and limitations of the investigated practice that can be further discussed and applied in future research.

***Research question 1:** How is Jeff Koons involved in establishing and promoting himself and his art within the art market?*

Key findings:

As previously reported in the theoretical framework, successful artists could be considered within the branding perspective as risk-taking brand managers who are willing to seize a variety of opportunities and engage in creating, cultivating and promoting themselves in the competitive art market as recognizable products (Fillis, 2011; Schroeder, 2010; viz Chapter 2.3). Similarly, an analysis of Koons's work and career has demonstrated active involvement in building his brand and exemplified the marketing philosophy of a modern artist.

First, the research revealed a number of activities that, in reference to *establishing* himself and his art within the art market, contributed to the development of Koons's brand. In his art, Koons explores a wide variety of subjects and meanings with the ultimate goal to create aesthetically pleasing work that would appeal to everyone and therefore, he deliberately broadens his prospective target audience. To obtain even more public exposure and ensure that his work reaches broader audiences, rather than just art world enthusiasts and followers, Koons has located some of his pieces outside in the public space. According to Nickas (2012; viz Chapter 4.2), locating the artwork

outside a gallery allows for a better targeting of a mass audience and potential clientele, and makes the art more accessible for the general public.

Moreover, Koons's work reflects marketing techniques of commercial brands by linking art with consumption, using commercial objects and readymades typical for the American popular culture, and turning them into easily recognizable symbols and icons of his brand. Besides, the artist's ability to create widely identifiable works of art that have been acclaimed as 'iconic' (demonstrated on the *Rabbit* sculpture in Chapter 4.2) further establishes his brand in the minds of the public. Creating distinguishable products is a major focus of the marketing practice and one of the essential foundations of branding (Schroeder, 2000, 2010; viz Chapter 1.2).

Koons utilized his brand name and the celebrity status to further advance by establishing a close circle of prominent dealers and collectors as a strategy to promote the exclusivity of his products and increase the value of his brand (viz Chapter 4.4). The artist has been actively engaging in selling his works through the network of renowned galleries and dealers (as described in Chapter 4.4.2) that represent him and offer his work on the art market. Moreover, Koons has been described as fully aware of his target market, which consists of competitive art buyers and collectors who appreciate the recognizable iconography of his work and are willing to invest large amounts of money in 'name brand' art. Koons's success results in part from the fact that his work is being acquired by knowledgeable collectors and important figures within the art world. That eventually results in establishing the status of prestige and limiting the supply, thereby inflates the market value and evolves his works into a commodity. This model resonates with the theoretical framework that characterizes consumption as a critical component in creating personal meaning and social identities which eventually manifest into a feeling of identity (Hirschman, 2010; Halliday and Kuenzel, 2008; viz Chapter 1.1). Furthermore, Koons has found a way of exploiting the market and maintaining control over the market value of his brand. By persuading the collectors to pay for the acquired artworks in advance and therefore actually fund their production, Koons capitalized the rising value of his art and "*turned money into art*" through an elaborate model of commoditization of his brand (Salmon, 2014; viz Chapter 4.4.3).

Secondly, in relation to *promoting* his brand, Koons has engaged in utilizing his public image, creating brand awareness, generating word of mouth and introducing new products that target different market segments.

Koons's public presentation, celebrity image and his persona have been identified as his most enduring artwork (Farago, 2014; viz. Chapter 4.2). These factors, according to Keller's theoretical framework (2013; viz Chapter 1.1), influence consumers' personal experiences and, subsequently, the power of his brand. To promote his exhibition of the Banality series, he created a series of advertisements strategically placed in prominent art magazines whose readership represent the same demographic segment as Koons's target market. Instead of denying his interest in commercial success, Koons proudly accepted the brand attitude of a salesman and celebrity (Siegel, 2015; viz Chapter 4.3.1). By appearing in his works in different roles (viz Chapter 4.3.1 and 4.3.2) he explored the concepts of his own identity within the art world and engaged in managing his public image. In addition, he acknowledged the current trend of visual consumption as described in Chapter 1.2 (Schroeder, 2000) and used his own identity to strengthen the image of the Koons brand. The advertisements reflect Koons's brand attitude in addition to the awareness of himself as a commodity and prove that the artist does not create only the artworks, but at the same time is the author of the persona that is presented to the market. Moreover, as described in Chapter 2.2, the marketing activities of this kind generate brand awareness and build a reputation in the marketplace (Keller, 2013; McMurrian and Washburn, 2008).

His later works of the *Made in Heaven* series (outlined in Chapter 4.1) has reflected the rise of shock advertising. The photographs and sculptures involved sexually explicit imagery, starring Koons with his wife La Cicciolina. As noted by Stevens (1989) in Chapter 4.3.2, the audience wants to be shocked as much as artists yearn to shock them. The shock tactics are in line with Brown's and Patterson's (2000, viz Chapter 2.1) definition of the content of arts marketing, that consists of promotional stunts and excessive eye-catching activities. Despite the fact that the critical response was divided and in the case of art critics generally unfavourable, Koons managed to differentiate himself on the art market and promote his brand by generating word of mouth.

Last but not least, his other diverse creative outputs illustrated in Chapter 4.5, specifically his collaborations with well-established luxury brand Louis Vuitton and more commercial, fast fashion brand H&M expanded and even more enhanced both his target audiences and reputation. Using an established name of Koons's brand, the various collaborations have extended his brand, introduced his art to even broader audiences and communicated his messages across the wide public. As outlined in

Chapter 2.3, brand extensions can improve brand image, increase market coverage, attract new customer segments, therefore are vital for the brand in the long run.

Research question 2: *Therefore, can an artist be considered as a brand, and why?*

Key findings:

The general objective of this thesis was to develop the idea of an artist as a brand through the lens of contemporary theories on the relationships between branding and art. As noted in Chapter 2.3, artists whose work is widely exhibited, bought and collected can be considered as insightful sources of branding knowledge - both as image managers and as managers of their own brand (Schroeder, 2005). As evidenced in the case analysis above, Koons utilizes the tools of branding - he creates distinguishable and recognizable products, engages in creating awareness of his brand and actively generates word of mouth. Moreover, the artist controls the value of his works on the market by promoting exclusivity of his products and limiting the supply and extends his brand into different sectors by collaborating with other successful brands. The case of Jeff Koons is insightful in this respect, as he continuously manages to establish his brand within the market relevant for his works, promote it, extend the reach of his art and attract new audiences. His work comments on and interconnects with image management and the relationships between art and commodities. However, he achieved to build his brand not only around his art but further utilized his celebrity persona, which resulted in achieving record-breaking auction sales. The symbolic value and consumption of his name, original artworks that initiate public discussions, and the fact that he is aware of himself as a commodity, became key constituent elements of his brand identity.

5.1 Contributions and limitations of the investigated practice

5.1.1 Contributions

The contribution of this particular research lies within its interdisciplinary nature and its focus on the phenomena of a contemporary living artist as a brand manager. As mentioned in Chapter 2.3, the existing research on the notion of an artist as a brand has investigated well-known global artists, namely Andy Warhol (Schroeder, 1997, 2005; Kerrigan et al., 2011), Pablo Picasso (Muñiz et al., 2014) or Damien Hirst (Jin Woo Lee

et al., 2019). However, the matter of Jeff Koons within the branding perspective has not been investigated in the Czech academic setting yet. Drawing from the case of Jeff Koons, this research provides new insights into the practice of branding within the contemporary art world. Moreover, the application of a single case study design allowed for an in-depth description and detailed analysis of Koons's career, public image and use of branding practices that provide a clear understanding of the case and its particular circumstances.

5.1.2 Limitations

The principal limitation of this research originates in the application of a single case study research method. First, a common criticism of case study research suggests that the findings presented are inevitably subjective and cannot be generalized for the whole community of artists. As specified by Dul and Hak (2007, p. 41), one exemplar is not representative of the domain to which thesis is supposed to be applicable. However, it is essential to emphasize the requirement for replication that applies to any research in order to have a quality of being generalizable.

It is further argued that regarding the nature of the theoretical case study, a researcher cannot fully prove the correctness of the theory. Nevertheless, the level of confidence that the theory is generalizable for a specified domain can be strengthened by repeated tests of its propositions. Although a single case study can be a valuable contribution to the development of theory, it cannot be conclusive.

Moreover, the critical data and findings of the case analysis are subjective. It is essential to acknowledge that no interpretations or observations can be entirely repeatable (Stake, 2010, p. 454). Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution with regard to the high probability of bias caused by the selectivity of the analyzed data (viz Chapter 3.3).

Furthermore, in regards to the current situation and the state of emergency declared in the Czech Republic due to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic on 12 March 2020 and the subsequent restriction on the free movement of persons endorsed on 24 March, a slight change has been made in relation to the thesis proposal (p. 73-75). As a direct consequence, the qualitative interviews have been omitted from the final research method because they could not be conducted. However, content analysis has proven to be sufficient in order to answer the stated research questions. It should also be

noted that not all of the mentioned sources of literature were used, as other academic publications provided a deeper understanding of the researched theoretical framework.

To provide a better understanding of the relationships between art and branding, it is suggested that other artists from a variety of movements and historical periods should be examined. Moreover, to further verify the findings and enhance their generalizability, quantitative research should be conducted.

Conclusion

The ultimate objective of this thesis was to provide new insights into the practice of branding within the art world, drawing from the case of Jeff Koons. The previous research suggested that the art market shares an evident interdependence with branding in terms of name recognition and perceived value. Therefore, the first part of the thesis offered a theoretical framework which would develop the understanding of art in the context of brand management. A brief introduction presented a historical development of the perception of brands, followed by an overview of how culture, history and art provide a contextualizing counterpoint to branding's interaction with consumers and society. Research evidence suggested that art can provide a better understanding of the branding processes for building brand identities and connecting value to the images. Moreover, the view that market forces control art in the same manner as manufactured goods was demonstrated. The second part of the theoretical framework proposed various definitions of the art marketing approach and outlined the distinction between market and product orientation within the art sector. It was argued that rather than responding to demand, the central influence in the artistic process originates in the motivations and attitudes of the artists. Within the art for art's sake approach, the theoretical part demonstrated that commercially conscious artists actively adopt marketing strategies early in the process of development of the creative concept. Building on the research outputs, the notion of the artist as a brand manager was proposed, placing the artists in the middle of the branding processes as creators of their own brands through the utilization of various marketing activities.

The second part of the thesis analyzed the artistic career of Jeff Koons within branding perspective. A descriptive single case study was chosen as the most suitable design method for this research, with an aspiration to expand the theoretical knowledge of branding within the art world, contribute to its generalizability and stimulate further research in this matter. The case of Jeff Koons had been chosen due to the fact that in 2019, Koons reclaimed the title of the most expensive living artist when his work *Rabbit* was sold at Christie's auction for \$91.07 million. To gain a better understanding of Koons's life and oeuvre and provide the contexts within which he operates as a brand, several types of data had been analyzed. The data for the analysis drew from bibliographic data, a monograph on Jeff Koons, exhibition catalogues, artist's gallery

profiles, and from a relevant sample of available online media sources, consisting of the essential art related sites and the news media from English speaking countries.

The case analysis provided the reader with a detailed description of the artist's career, public image and use of four selected branding practices. The findings from the analysis summarized in the discussion reflected the research questions identified in the research methodology part. Hence, the discussion presented the ways in which Jeff Koons is actively involved in establishing and promoting himself and his art within the art market and briefly confronted the findings with the theoretical framework of artists as brands, developed in the theoretical part. The findings suggested that Jeff Koons exemplifies marketing thinking of a contemporary artist and the case of his artistic career reflects the relationships between branding and art. He utilizes various tools of branding, creates recognizable products that are designed to attract the attention of the public and generate word of mouth, maintains control over the market and, eventually, as a way of extending his own brand he establishes collaborations with commercial brands. His work comments on and interconnects with image management and the relationships between art and commodities. In general, Koons is seeking to find common ground between the commercial, mass production and the privileged art world. Furthermore, he successfully utilized his celebrity persona and the consumption of his name, which now constitute one of the critical elements of his brand identity. The case of Jeff Koons provides profound insights into the correlation of art and branding as he continuously manages to establish his brand within the market relevant for his works, stimulate the brand awareness and extend the reach of his art by attracting new audiences.

Drawing from the case of Jeff Koons, this research provided new insights into the practice of branding within the contemporary art world. On account of the innovative character of the chosen matter that has not been investigated in the Czech academic setting yet, it was necessary to exceed the recommended scope of the thesis in order to address all relevant issues and process both the theoretical and practical part comprehensively. This research did not aspire to reach any evaluative conclusions about the effectiveness of the outlined activities or generalizability of the findings. Therefore, it is recommended for any further research in this regard to address both of these objectives.

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Teze BAKALÁŘSKÉ diplomové práce

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Došlo dne:	31 -05- 2019 -1-
Čj: 578	Příloh:
Přiděleno:	

Předpokládaný název práce v češtině:

Branding umelca: Případ Jeffa Koonsa

Předpokládaný název práce v angličtině:

Branding the Artist: The Case of Jeff Koons

Předpokládaný termín dokončení (semestr, akademický rok – vzor: ZS 2012/2013):

(diplomovou práci je možné odevzdat nejdříve po dvou semestrech od schválení tezí)

LS 2019/2020

Základní charakteristika tématu a předpokládaný cíl práce (max. 1000 znaků):

In the last several years there has been a noticeable shift in the global art market. Art has become a commodity and artists are subjects to market forces and product life cycles just like brands. The fact that who produces the artwork is now the key determinant of its value results in opening a discussion about the artists within a brand perspective.

The aim of this thesis is to develop the idea of an artist as a brand through the lens of contemporary theories on branding, drawing from the case of Jeff Koons. Based on an analysis of Koons's career, the author attempts to demonstrate that by developing, nurturing and promoting themselves as a 'product' in the cultural sphere, artists can be considered as brand managers and art can provide important insight for studying and understanding cultural forces in branding.

Předpokládaná struktura práce (rozdělení do jednotlivých kapitol a podkapitol se stručnou charakteristikou jejich obsahu):

- Abstract
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Theoretical part:
 - o Branding
 - o Brands in the Arts and Cultural Sector
 - o Artistic Orientation vs. Market Orientation
 - o Artist as a Brand Manager
- Practical part:
 - o Research Methodology
 - o Case Study - Jeff Koons
- Discussion and Conclusion
- Bibliography
- Appendices

Vymezení zpracovávaného materiálu (např. konkrétní titul periodika a období jeho analýzy):

The author will be using archival data and biographies to present a descriptive analysis of Jeff Koons' career in order to examine the subject with cause and effect outcomes. To provide insights, the author will also conduct interviews with experts in the field of contemporary art and branding.

Postup (technika) při zpracování materiálu:

Qualitative research in the form of a critical case study will be applied. Methods will include qualitative interviews and content analysis.

Základní literatura (nejméně 5 nejdůležitějších titulů k tématu a způsobu jeho zpracování; u všech titulů je nutné uvést stručnou anotaci na 2-5 řádků):

O'Reilly, D., & Kerrigan, F. (2010). *Marketing the Arts: A Fresh Approach* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

This book consists of a set of essays providing an overlook on the current research in the art marketing discourse by leading scholars in the field and examines new areas of arts marketing theory, such as branding and consumer culture society.

Schroeder, J. (2005). 'The artist and the brand', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 39 Issue: 11/12, pp.1291-1305.

This study analyses the connection between the traditions and conventions of visual art and consumption of the images, discussing the crossing of art and branding with a focus on the interaction of arts, brands and culture. The author argues that successful artists can be considered as brand managers through developing and promoting themselves as a 'product' in the competitive sphere of culture.

Muñiz, A., Norris, T., Fine, G., (2014). 'Marketing artistic careers: Pablo Picasso as brand manager', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 48 Issue: 1/2, pp.68-88.

This paper explores the branding acumen of Pablo Picasso as a powerful brand using archival data and biographies. Based on an analysis of Picasso's career, the authors argue that artists build a complex public identity that shares important characteristics with corporate brands.

Thompson, D. (2018). *The Orange Balloon Dog: Bubbles, Turmoil and Avarice in the Contemporary Art Market*. London: Aurum Press.

The author provides a complex analysis of the international contemporary art world, offering insights and knowledge of the global art market. The book explores the behaviour of buyers and sellers that defines the value of the art in the market through behavioural economics.

Sturgis, A., Rosenthal, N. (2019). *Jeff Koons: At the Ashmolean*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.

This publication documents Koons' exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum in spring 2019, curated by the artist himself. It provides a complex overlook of Koons' controversial career as one of the world's most expensive living artist.

Yin, R. (2013). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*

A seminal text for researchers and students engaged in case study research, serving as a guide on how to design high-quality case studies that will stand up to questions of validity and reliability.

Diplomové práce k tématu (seznam bakalářských, magisterských a doktorských prací, které byly k tématu obhájeny na UK, případně dalších oborově blízkých fakultách či vysokých školách za posledních pět let)

Datum / Podpis studenta/ky

Legu h
.....

TUTO ČÁST VYPLŇUJE PEDAGOG/PEDAGOŽKA:

Doporučení k tématu, struktuře a technice zpracování materiálu:

Případné doporučení dalších titulů literatury předepsané ke zpracování tématu:

Potvrzují, že výše uvedené teze jsem s jejich autorem/kou konzultoval(a) a že téma odpovídá mému oborovému zaměření a oblasti odborné práce, kterou na FSV UK vykonávám.

Souhlasím s tím, že budu vedoucí(m) této práce.

Mgr. Tereza Ježková, Ph.D.

Tereza Ježková
.....

Příjmení a jméno pedagožky/pedagoga

Datum / Podpis pedagožky/pedagoga

TEZE JE NUTNO ODEVZDAT VYTIŠTĚNÉ, PODEPSANÉ A VE DVOU VYHOTOVENÍCH DO TERMÍNU UVEDENÉHO V HARMONOGRAMU PŘÍSLUŠNÉHO AKADEMICKÉHO ROKU, A TO PROSTŘEDNICTVÍM PODATELNY FSV UK. PŘIJATÉ TEZE JE NUTNÉ SI VYZVEDNOUT V SEKRETARIÁTU PŘÍSLUŠNÉ KATEDRY A NECHAT VEVÁZAT DO OBOU VÝTISKU DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE.

TEZE SCHVALUJE NA IKSŽ VEDOUCÍ PŘÍSLUŠNÉ KATEDRY.