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Institute of Enterprise Management**

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THESIS ASSIGNMENT

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Thesis title: A Critical Examination of the Relationship between Art, Marketing and Business Life

Task description:

1. Drawing on secondary literature, conduct a critical examination of the complex relationship between the arts, marketing and business life!
2. Introduce the chosen startup and provide an analysis of their marketing strategies and the way they navigate between art and business life!
3. In light of your research hypotheses, offer an in-depth analysis of the interviews conducted with the representatives of the chosen startup!
4. Draw your conclusions from your primary research and offer suggestions for artists and businesses in terms of how they could benefit from more regular collaboration with each other!

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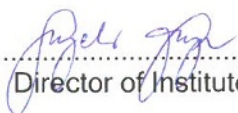
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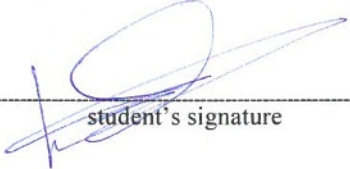
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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I the undersigned student named Hussam Halawa (Neptun code: [REDACTED]) hereby declare that the degree project is the result of my own work; I referred to the special literature and the means used in an identifiable manner. The results included in the degree project completed are allowed to be used by the university and the institution announcing the task for their own purposes free of charge, subject to any restrictions on classification as confidential.

Budapest, 14... day Dec... month 2023 year


student's signature

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research addresses the relationship between art, marketing, and business life, focusing on visual arts as an art form and its possibilities in the business world through the mediums of print, design, and photography. Art and business have always been considered as two different worlds. The former has typically been associated with self-expression, assuming that the artist does not start his work thinking how much money he is going to make as a result. For instance, when a painter starts drawing, he is not thinking about how many hours he should invest in the work, how much it will cost and how much revenue he would make at the end. It starts off as an imaginative way to communicate a range of unique emotions, and ends up as a finished artwork which has a marketable worth. It could be zero or millions, depends on many factors, including the political or the economic - it could also depend on the timing, and how original the artwork is in its relation to the local or the global environment. But if it is a commissioned work, that means it has already been assigned a value. In contrast, any project within the business world begins with cost and production and focuses on profit, which is crucial for financial survival and business development. Demand and supply in the market, as well as revenue, are the main motivations that drive the business world from one direction to another, from success to failure. These two worlds, arts and business, have their differences and similarities in some entrepreneurship areas, as both of them start from an idea and move towards a physical product.

What I claim in this thesis, however, is that despite the perceived differences between the arts and business life, business and art need each other. Art has a value and it needs to be sold. The price of Pablo Picasso's paintings, which were sold for millions of dollars both during his lifetime and in the market today, was well-known to the world. However, other painters' works did not bring as much money or were never sold, and many artists died in poverty. The relation between art and business is important for many reasons. Knowing what is going on in the business world as an artist could give some basic insights and knowledge to understand what people are interested in, and what businesses people are looking for. Maybe greater knowledge about the business world can bring those two worlds closer to each other, so the artist is not in ignorance about the other side. From a personal experience as an artist and a photographer, I see there is a significant gap between these worlds: business people know hardly anything about art or how their

company culture can benefit from art, while artists have limited or no knowledge about basic elements of business and marketing. In art schools, people are taught about how to make art and how to produce the final product, but artists are not taught how to promote their work after school in real life or what the other side of the world looks like. The aim of this thesis is therefore to analyze this gap further, and explore ways in which the two worlds can better interact, knowing that one cannot live without the other. This thesis aims to highlight the benefits and complementarity of this better interaction.

A number of artists during history were aware of the significant relationship between arts and business, and understood the value of marketing. I would like to flag three visionary artist who embraced marketing in their artistic journey, including Andy Warhol, Banksy, and Yayoi Kusama. Warhol was the master of pop art, an iconic figure in the pop art movement in the 1960s. One of his famous marketing tools was The Factory, namely his studio, which served as hub and meeting point for creatives and musicians, curators and celebrities - all kinds of artists who shaped Warhol's character as we know it today. Banksy is the enigmatic street art phenomenon and street artist whose identity is still a mystery. His graffiti has political charge and social commentary and always challenges authority. Banksy purposefully created this mystery around his persona, which renders more curiosity to his work and as such it functions as a perfect marketing tool. His work, as a result, attracts more attention from public interest and media rumors stoked by this veil of secrecy. My third example is the Japanese Artist Yayoi Kusama: a contemporary artist who is renowned for her iconic polka dots. After moving to New York city, she began organizing public events and gatherings as a marketing tool, using her art to attract attention from art critics and curators.

On the other hand, over the course of history countless talented artists have languished in poverty and obscurity in their lifetimes, and their creative brilliance was overshadowed by lack of marketing and recognition, such as Vincent van Gogh, Camille Claudel, and Amadeo Modigliani. Vincent van Gogh was one of the most celebrated post-impressionist painters who created one of the most influential and iconic art works in art history. Van Gogh was virtually unknown during his lifetime, and his mental illness further deepened his financial struggles. Camille Claudel was a gifted French sculptor who faced the same destiny as van Gogh. She lived at a time where women's abilities were frequently suppressed, and thus she had to overcome many obstacles to become recognized. Sadly,

her career ended in obscurity and poverty. Amedeo Modigliani was a French painter and sculptor, known by his unique style of elongated figures. In spite of his creative, innovative, and captivating artworks, Modigliani struggled to attract recognition from critics and buyers during his life.

Artists such as Andy Warhol, Banksy and Kusama understood that talent alone is not enough to gain fame and a long-term successful artistic career: they were ahead of their times and adopted several marketing strategies combined with their brilliance to reach wider audiences, crossing borders, and obtaining international recognition already during their lifetimes.

Whilst we see therefore that an understanding of business is important in the art life, on the other hand, we must also consider the crucial importance of art in business life. For instance, the art of storytelling is an important skill for any business leader - to connect with the employees' imagination and guide them from one point to another, to motivate and encourage them as well as to guide them through difficult times, or to familiarize them with bad news. Understanding the importance of visual identity is also a key to connect with customers, making sure that they are familiar with the brand. A clear visual identity is equally relevant for new and potential customers who will see the product for the first time before they place any purchase order.

I claim in this research that it is crucial for a successful artistic career to have some extent of business knowledge. I contend that the basics of business, management and marketing should be taught in art schools in order for artists to gain a better understanding of how they can promote themselves as artists through various marketing strategies. Teaching business management and marketing in art schools could also help future artists in creating a powerful and impressive portfolio of an artistic work. Based on these claims, my thesis hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: For an artist to be financially successful in the 21st century, some extent of business knowledge must be acquired.

Hypothesis 2: There is still a lack of focus on marketing in art schools.

Hypothesis 3: Those artists who possess sufficient knowledge of business management have better chances of sustaining their art studios even in times of crisis.

This thesis explores these hypotheses through analysis of primary and secondary data by conducting a thorough desk review, followed by an in-depth case study of a relevant for-profit arts collective – Studio Kunukku. For this study, I have conducted research about a startup called Studio Kunukku - a design and printing studio which employs the ancient ways of Syrian craft and wood printing as a technique in its practice. This studio has been chosen based on the relevance of its mission and vision, and the work it conducts. As a start-up in the arts world, and as an entity that aims to be for-profit, there is a lot of room for exploration on the dynamics between the art and business world in this case study. Furthermore, the studio is built around art-forms from Syria, that are being lost due to economic crisis and the conflict, it is to say, the art they create has a story to tell and a role in maintaining community cultural practices. This element of their work allows us to further explore the role of art as a story telling tool, and as a tool of social justice. Finally, the studio has been founded in Lebanon which poses a particularly unstable economy, yet has a rich cultural practice. This implies that business there face bountiful artistic competition, whilst needed to ensure a significant level of stability to survive the economic crisis and instability within the country.

In terms of structure, following this introduction, in Chapter 2, I outline and discuss the complex relationship between art, marketing, and business life, building on relevant secondary sources on the topic. Once the theoretical background is established in Chapter 2, I will introduce the studio, its history, and its marketing tools in Chapter 3. In Chapter 3, I introduce the startup, their history, and their practice in light of marketing and other business strategies. I will investigate their process, including the ways in which they come up with ideas, their marketing plans, and the creation of the final product. As part of Chapter 3, I analyse the techniques they use and recommend suggestions on how art and business could complement each other in this case study. I will offer a detailed analysis of their art making process: how they start their process as an idea till the final product is sold in the market. In terms of primary research, in-depth interviews have been conducted with the founders of the startup company and their artists in order to gain qualitative information. I have conducted three interviews: one with Sarah Hayes, an American

anthropologist and the founder of the studio; an interview with Syrian artists Fadi Al Hamwi (master of carving and printing), and Wared Al Khalaf (the creative director of the studio).

In Chapter 4, I will offer in-depth analyses of the key informant interviews conducted in light of my thesis hypotheses, draw my conclusions from the research, and offer suggestions for businesses and artists regarding the usefulness of more intense and regular collaborations between the two fields. In what follows, I will establish the theoretical background through a critical engagement with scholarship on the chosen topic, which will serve as a crucial basis for the analysis of my primary research.

2. THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART, BUSINESS AND MARKETING: A LITERATURE REVIEW

I have always been curious as to whether well-known artists who have influenced our culture also engaged in any sort of business activities while working as artists. The answer, in Adler's book, is yes. As she quoted “business and the arts [are] not . . . different fields, but . . . different aspects of the creative process. Shakespeare, remember was a manager and an artist. He ran a company and wrote the plays. If the two fields weren't separate for someone like [Shakespeare]...why then for us normal mortals?” (Adler,2006).

This chapter looks at the increasingly interactive relationship between art, business, and marketing, considering their symbiotic interaction. In order to assess this, the chapter first provides a brief summary of marketing, and the shifts that have happened in the past half century to move away from a product-focus to a customer-focus. From here, the need for businesses to engage an ever-more interactive consumer into their thinking in marketing reveals the need for art in its various forms, to convey messages, convince and create relationships. It is from this basis that one begins to see that the consumer becomes one of a multitude of stakeholders in a product, service or concept. This chapter assesses further the role of these stakeholders, particularly outside the business sector, with a focus on the public and third-sector, looking at how social factors and trends influence art and vice versa.

Building on this, the chapter begins to assess the role of marketing within the arts itself, and then the role of various art forms in business. All of these contribute to the complex, intertwined relationship between art, business and marketing. It is important that this relationship be explored to further understand the variety of capacities artists must have in order to succeed in being creative, whilst considering their financial and reputational success through business and marketing.

2.1. A Brief Summary of Marketing History

Simply put, the history of marketing has been summarized by academics as the history of common sense – it is to say, its development was based on logic (Hill et al., 2003). The

history of marketing dates back to the mid-twentieth century. It originally appeared in post-World War II America, when industry discovered that it could produce consumer items on a previously unheard-of scale for a newly prosperous workforce. Manufacturers learned they had to change their business philosophies in the face of heightened competition. The previous methods of conducting business which had centered on the company's belief that its own products were sufficient in-and-of themselves ('product-orientation') or on the necessity of selling products that the customers might not necessarily choose for themselves (sales-orientation) had to change to move its focus from product to customer. These previous methods, proved to no longer be effective (Hill et al., 2003).

Before the middle of the twentieth century, business's functions were arranged in the following order: finance came first, then production, then sales. There was little understanding of the 'customer'; the sole focus was on the product. This was before the marketing revolution in the mid-twentieth century. This shift is seen clearly in the four key stages of the development of marketing, outlined by Keith (1960): production; sales; marketing and market control. Throughout these phases, the client slowly started to become the focus, as will be explained below. The focus switched from production to marketing, i.e., from product-orientation to consumer-orientation, driven by the interests and wants of the consumer. This meant a shift in internal thinking of businesses – from looking solely at their product to external thinking – reflecting on what the consumer wanted. This was the very start of change – it was acknowledged that this would be a long process whose impacts would continue to be seen long into the future (Keith, 1960).

In order to understand these developments, it is important to review the four phases outlined by Keith. The first phase – the production phase - was oriented towards manufacturing. It started at the end of the 18th century and lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. It is notable that production was the first priority rather than marketing. Companies hired salesmen to market products, just as they had to hire accountants to maintain their finances - it is to say it was considered an obligation rather than a priority. Neither a market-study nor market-considerations were taken into account to produce a new product (Keith, 1960).

As Keith explains, the second phase of the marketing revolution focused on sales. This started in the 1930s. For the first time, businesses started to pay close attention to the

customer, their demands, and their biases as a crucial element in the equation of doing business. Commercial research departments were created by businesses to supply market data, in order to better understand the customer. Companies wanted their sales representatives to have all the equipment and knowledge necessary to promote the product to their consumers. Businesses also began to understand the significance and importance of salesmen. This shift in business culture, in which both customers and salesman were essential to the company's success, represented the first step towards becoming market-focused. Businesses began to use market intelligence to guide their sales force as well as to target consumers with advertising (Keith, 1960). This is also where we begin to see the arts gradually coming into play in the sphere of business, from a marketing lens.

The third phase of the marketing revolution, as defined by Keith, began to center on marketing specifically. A clear shift was seen as businesses started to introduce marketing-specific capacities into their organizational structures in order to focus on the customer, to maximise sales based not on the product alone, but based on the needs and interests of the customer. Keith concluded at this stage that the company itself was no longer the centre of the corporate universe – the customer was. This was the fundamental idea of the marketing revolution (Keith, 1960). According to Keith, the last phase oriented towards the late 1950s and 1960s. Marketing began to dictate corporate operating policy in the near term. Marketing was coming into its own, having a prioritized focus in business mentality. It was expected to increasingly have an impact on long-term policies. Marketing started to include all aspects of a company's being, from procurement to research, to production to advertising. Since this period, it became clear that marketing had to be connected to senior management, and was vital for business success. Even in the 1960s, Keith was aware that the marketing professional of the future had to understand capital finance as well as how marketing strategy affects long-term profit forecasts (Keith, 1960).

While Keith's "The Marketing Revolution" (1960) did not delve specifically into the influence of arts in marketing, it did sit within a broader historical context of change in the marketing landscape during that period which is important to acknowledge. The 1960s marked a significant shift in marketing strategies, transitioning from traditional, product-centric approaches to more consumer-focused methods. Packard, in this book "The

Hidden Persuaders”, whilst written prior to Keith, did explore this potential evolution of the marketing landscape laying the groundwork for understanding emerging trends in marketing during that period. The author explored the psychological and emotional aspects of advertising and marketing strategies, shedding light on the ways in which marketers began to employ psychological techniques and visual appeals to influence consumer behavior (Packard, 1957).

This period was characterized by a heightened emphasis on understanding and appealing to the desires, emotions, and lifestyles of consumers. As marketing evolved, advertisers began to recognize the power of visual communication and aesthetics in capturing attention and conveying brand messages effectively. This shift laid the groundwork for the integration of arts in marketing, as advertisers started employing creative elements such as visuals, design, and storytelling to engage and connect with audiences on a deeper level. Over the years, this trend has only intensified, with the arts playing a crucial role in shaping brand identity, fostering emotional connections, and differentiating products and services in a competitive marketplace.

Since Keith’s analysis of the development of marketing, the economy has become more firmly consumer and marketing-oriented, as more and more businesses are beginning to understand and apply principles that emerged in the marketing revolution.

That said, this phenomena also extended to the services-sector. From the 1970s onwards, various service sectors - including health care, tourism, transportation, and professional and financial services, were valued more than the industrial industries that saw the initial rise in marketing prior to this moment. Service-oriented businesses, as opposed to manufacturing companies, provided their consumers with an intangible service rather than a physical product. Marketing tools therefore had to adapt to cater to services as well, and also had to reflect on the concept of ‘consumer’ given that this target audience was now a more active interlocutor or stakeholder in the exchange. This change meant that several of the institutions into which marketing had permeated began to find even the notion of ‘consumers’ to be troublesome, given that this audience was now a much more active, prioritized group, rather than the recipient of a unilateral exchange (Hill et al., 2003).

For example, as the same source mentioned (Hill et al., 2003). in fields such as healthcare, education, and the arts, organizations frequently prefer to refer to their consumers as ‘clients’ or ‘service-users’, given that the word ‘customer’ conveys implications of straightforward commercial and financial dealings that are unsuitable for a more interactive and socialized relationship. The need to turn a profit—which had been the driving interest in the consumer in the commercial sector—started to coexist with other organizational or social goals, or in some cases is entirely superseded by them. Additionally, the nature of trade between these organizations and the individuals they assist may not even entail any direct monetary benefits (for example, free entry to an art museum), nor a single, easily distinguished client to focus on. There is mutual benefit beyond profit and commercial purposes between the various parties – the consumer, the service provider and other involved stakeholders. The table below demonstrates this intricate interaction between these parties in the example of an arts gallery, demonstrating a nuanced map of interests and benefits, between the different stakeholders.

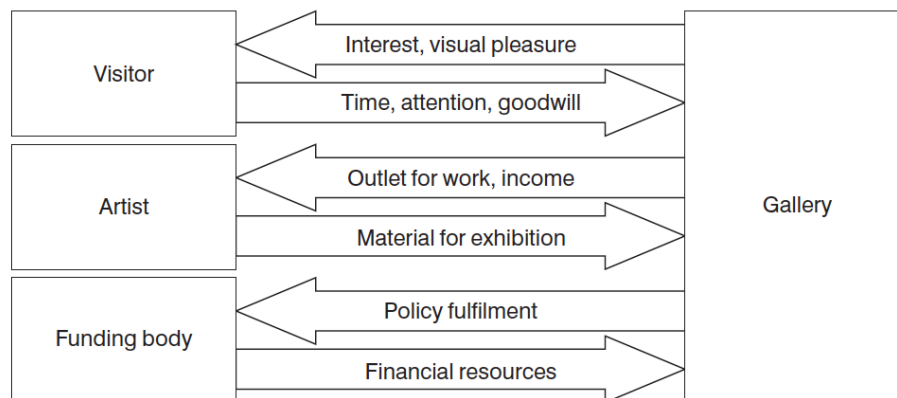


Figure 1 : Exchange relationships for a gallery. Source: Hill, O’Sullivan, et al.,2003, p. 15.

One may argue that the visitor, the artist, or, in the case of a public sector gallery, the financing body are the customers of the art gallery. All three offer resources to the gallery that it would be unable to function without, such as finance, patronage, and current art, but they all have distinct expectations from their interactions with it (see Figure 1).

In summary, from 1970s onwards, as public and non-profit organisations – including the arts - also engaged in greater marketing initiatives, an additional layer of complexity was added to marketing, with goals more diverse than financial gain (Hill et al. 2003). This is

to say that the classic producer-consumer relationship changed as more factors and actors became engaged. In this context, the idea of ‘stakeholders’, in place of ‘customers’ has since become crucial.

Simply described, a stakeholder is any group or person who has an interest (a "stake") in an organization's performance. Stakeholders may not even be the organization primary clients; however, they still have an impact on the organizational wellbeing or how it may acquire funding and other resources (Hill et al., 2003). This wide variety of stakeholders has long been important in non-profit and arts marketing, which do not rely on a simple, unilateral, for-profit customer exchange. These stakeholders may include financial organizations, local and federal governments, the media, the local community, the professional community, amongst others. The example of stakeholders involved in an arts organization is demonstrated in the below figure, and seen, they demonstrate a large and diverse range of profiles and interests.

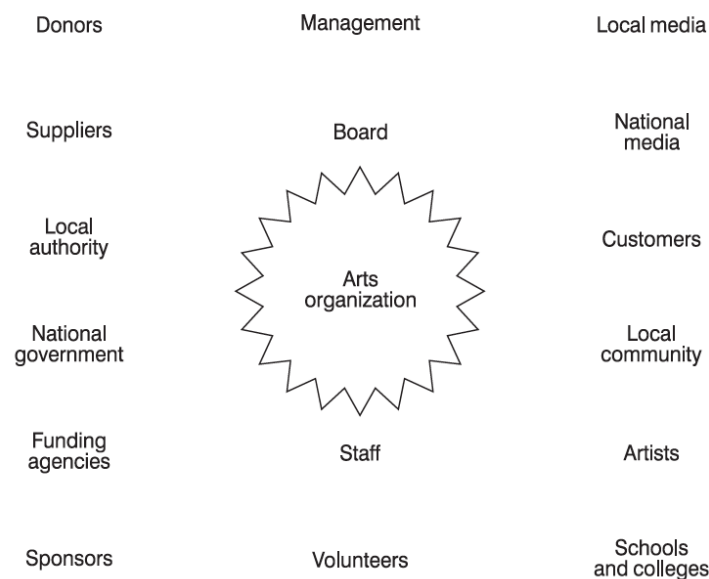


Figure 2: Stakeholders for an arts organisation. Source: Hill, O’Sullivan, et al., 2003, p. 16.

This shift towards stakeholders has also implied a change in the relationship with the customer. In many organisations, the focus has now shifted from finding new consumers and simply hoping they will remain loyal to the business, to analyzing and actively

building long-term relationships with current customers in an effort to keep them. This has therefore transformed these interactions from what marketing theorists refer to as 'transaction-based' exchanges (much like single-ticket purchases at the theater), to 'relationship marketing', where the theatre would aim to engage the audience member on a longer-term, building loyalty to the theatre, and a longevity in the relationship. Relationship marketing places a strong focus on a long-term connection (similar to subscription-based marketing in the performing arts), which is needed for non-profits and artists to endure. A long-term relationship with an audience is frequently a crucial component of creative policy, which is why such a marketing strategy for the arts is attractive.

In conclusion, by reviewing the development of marketing since the mid-twentieth century, what distinguishes marketing from other organizational management styles that are occasionally mistaken for it (such as sales orientation and product orientation) has become clear. Marketing stands apart due to its focus on the customer, which shifts an organization's planning and decision-making to take its consumers' needs into account. According to their aims, firms with this attitude eventually outperform their competitors in terms of profitability or effectiveness.

Hence, the old transaction-based idea of marketing was replaced by a relational one in most marketing theory and practice since the 1990s. Due to a heightened competition, businesses must now focus on strengthening and preserving relationships with current clients, as well as attracting new ones. This has been facilitated further by modern technology and its falling cost, which means businesses can now more easily obtain and use client information. (Hill et al., 2003).

In my view, this evolution represented a substantial change in how companies viewed their markets and clients. A growing understanding that business success requires a deeper understanding of customer behavior and a commitment to ethical and socially responsible practices can be seen in the shift from a product and sales-centric approach to a market and eventually societal marketing orientation. Increased competition, shifting customer expectations, improvements in market research and data analysis, and a greater understanding of the function of business in society were some of the elements that sparked this revolution. As above mentioned, companies or service providers working for this longer-term customer engagement also needed to employ various techniques,

including the visual arts. As Gibbons in 2005 flagged, whilst art and advertising had previously been antagonistic, there becomes a moment where the two worlds realise the mutual benefit they could provide, and each begins to learn from and employ techniques from the other. The arts world – the gallery fictionally mentioned above for example – needed to start using advertising and marketing tools to develop and maintain its customer base, whilst the marketing world started to use various art forms to reach new customers in an ever-more competitive market (Gibbons, 2005). As I have mentioned before, switching the emphasis from product to consumer is a logical, and irreversible process – that has shaped the way businesses function on the long term. Overall, it signaled a beneficial change in the business sector, bringing forth more customer-focused, moral, and socially conscious behaviors that are still relevant and significant in contemporary marketing. Further sub-chapters will also explore how this phenomenon was also adapted to social justice campaigns, extending beyond business and service-providers.

I also consider that this shift has introduced art to the marketing game – businesses have had to think creatively, attractively and aesthetically to gain customer interest. The marketing revolution gave birth to creativity and invention in a variety of ways, including advertising for the product, product variety, customer service, among other things. The influence of art on marketing became more apparent from this moment onwards. This influence became more apparent not only in product-oriented industries but also in service-based industries and the public/not-for-profit sector which constitutes the topic of the following subchapter.

2.2 The Role of Nonprofit Organizations in Influencing Art Marketing

As seen with the above example of the art gallery, marketing has also become a vital lifeline for non-profit organisations and social justice movements, and art plays a strong role within this outreach. That said, the non-profit sector also serves the arts scene through various channels – as this subchapter will explore. This inter-connectedness has mutual benefits, such as visibility that the nonprofit organizations provide to the artist, or on the other hand, for nonprofit organization could be amplifying their message and goals through their work, and also could be engaging with the community and helping to increase awareness and funding resources, building a network of contributors to the organization or arts space.

Non-profit bodies may include public sector bodies, charitable organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as the arts. These organisations do not function in the sole interest of profit but have social or ethical impacts that drive their work. Therefore, they need to constantly navigate the socio-political landscape to position themselves in front of the public as well as before local and international governments who often fund their initiatives. Here, the term “political” refers to a broad range of viewpoints, events and interests that have an impact on an organization, not simply the narrow sense of who holds office in the government. Due to their lack of profit-generation and hence their lack of financial resources, non-profit organizations have historically concentrated a large portion of their marketing efforts on building and preserving positive reputations with several prominent publics, particularly those that may support them financially or socially. Relationship-marketing is vital to developing long term relationships with these organisations and their causes, and various art and communication forms are therefore applied (Hill et al., 2003).

With this move to relationship marketing, I believe that art has been given a stronger role in engaging the consumer and the stakeholder in the non-profit sector. Organisations are obliged to engage their audiences for both short-term transactional exchanges as well as for longer term impact and relationships. Hence, I believe there has long been interest in and discussion about the meeting point of art and commerce for this purpose. For example, although commercial galleries and auction houses control the majority of the arts market, non-profit groups have become more and more significant actors, bringing a unique set of ideas and goals to the field of art. The same goes for the fashion industry – whilst big brands have previously dominated the market, more and more independent and socially-driven brands are making important contributions to the fashion world.

On the other hand, one must be aware of the valuable contributions the non-profit sector has made to increasing outreach and audiences for art, i.e., supporting its marketing. Based on firsthand experience, there are several ways in which nonprofit organizations have influenced the art marketing landscape which can be noted. The first one is by financially supporting artists: non-profit organizations frequently give money to artists in the form of grants, funding, and other forms of assistance. With this financial support, artists may be able to work on new projects and continue their creative work without being under immediate financial pressure, for example if an artist is granted an arts

residency. This relieves the pressure of generating income at the same time as advancing an art. It encourages exploration and creativity in the arts as a result. The second is by promoting public access to art: non-profit art organizations regularly work to increase public access to art. They frequently manage galleries, museums, and other cultural institutions that provide free or inexpensive entry to art exhibitions and events. Because of this accessibility, more people are able to appreciate the arts, and this builds a broader audience and customer base for the arts world. The third way is through curation and exhibition: a lot of non-profit organizations organize exhibitions that feature both well-known and up-and-coming artists. These shows can open up the market to new artists and offer a venue for avant-garde and provocative artwork. Whilst this may not necessarily rely on non-profits, many upcoming and new artists would be unable to afford the costs of launching or exhibiting in well-known galleries.

Furthermore, non-profit organisations can create community involvement in art: non-profit art organizations frequently involve the neighborhood through collaborations and outreach initiatives. This involvement can strengthen local ties and advance the region's cultural diversity. They can equally provide and create alternative markets: non-profit art fairs and markets offer a non-commercial venue for artists to exhibit and sell their work. As a result, artists can reach a larger audience and try out new ways to exhibit their work. Finally, they can promote social and cultural change: a number of non-profit organizations use art to speak to social and cultural issues. They might support initiatives that use artistic expression to promote social change or to question accepted standards. This will be further explored in sub-chapter 2.3.

There have been several impacts as a result of this support from the nonprofit sector. It has helped to preserve and advance art and culture while also assisting artists, promoting accessibility, and educating the public. Despite the fact that they may not operate as conventional market participants with a profit-driven mindset, it is my opinion that non-profits clearly play a crucial and important role in forming the art ecosystem - this is vital for the art world to continue to expand and advance.

In summary, since the 1970s, marketing theories have shifted toward stakeholder- and relationship-focused methods, which are now essential to the survival of non-profit organizations and institutions of higher learning. This method emphasizes the development of long-term value through ongoing connections rather than transactional,

one-time exchanges. This new way of thinking recognizes the complex socio-political landscapes that stakeholders work in, as well as their diversity and influence. It is especially pertinent to social businesses and marketing for the arts. Organizations in the non-profit and arts sectors may adapt to shifting environments and achieve their purpose of creating lasting connections with individuals who support their success by placing a high priority on these relationships. This sophisticated approach, which comes from experiences outside of the commercial sector, demonstrates the adaptation and resilience required for such organizations to succeed in a social context.

2.3 The Role of Arts in Relationship-Marketing and Social Transformation

Based on the observations in subchapter 2.2 regarding the involvement of non-profit organisations as marketing tools in the world of art, this subchapter explores the ways in which art contributes to the world of non-profits through relationship marketing and as a result in driving social transformation. It also examines how this relationship has had to adapt to evolving environments and interests, with a particular focus on social trends and contextual obstacles in recent years, such as that of COVID-19 and the increase in online forums for social and cultural exchange.

In recent years, art has been used as a tool for social justice and activism – take the example of Banksy that was referred to in the introduction. There have been multiple examples of art being used to raise awareness and bring light to a given social theme, often in coordination with non-profit groups. It is therefore interesting to explore the role of activism in art as a form of relationship marketing, helping communities and publics build an engagement, interest and passion for a particular social theme.

It is also important however to assess the challenges that the arts world encounters in relationship-marketing, with numerous factors affecting its success. The most prominent obstacle witnessed in recent years was COVID-19. This obliged consumer interactions to change and had a particular impact on the arts and social space in terms of artistic and cultural gatherings and outreach to audiences. It is expected that these changes will have influenced relationship-marketing trends permanently as new online platforms and virtual features are now more accessible. This sub chapter aims to explore this and other obstacles further.

2.3.1 *The Increasing Role of Arts Marketing in Social Movements*

In recent years, art consumers have witnessed a number of social movements *within* the arts world itself, such as #OscarsSoWhite and #TimesUp giving voice to previously unheard accounts of systemic inequality in the arts and challenging ideas of whose story deserve to be told.

However, this has also extended to other social movements *outside* of the arts world – such as #BlackLivesMatter or Ai Wei Wei’s lifejacket installations raising awareness on irregular migration – where art has played a significant role in raising awareness on a given issue, and in turn attempting to bring about social justice (Kerrigan and Preece, 2023). As seen below, this has been used by diverse groups, from those seeking racial justice, to women’s groups, indigenous groups and political issues, both within the arts and without.

The work of Francesca Sobande, a writer and senior lecturer who researches power and politics, investigates this further – both inside and outside of the arts world - delving into the relationships between marketing for the arts, social justice movements, and public discourse. In providing two case studies to demonstrate the distinction between (arts) marketing and activism and the function of social media in obfuscating these boundaries, Sobande focuses particularly on issues of race and discrimination, and has studied recent incidents where racism, art, and activism have collided. She does this to highlight structural racism in society at large and in the arts (Sobande, 2023). As below discussed, it should be acknowledge that these same artistic tools used to raise awareness on racism can be applied to other social justice campaigns.

As we see, it is not only racism that is being tackled in the arts. There are now also greater attempts to decolonize the arts, and to value art being created outside of the West. Ai Ming Chow, describes how the Indigenous art market in Australia has emerged within the framework of colonial history (Chow, 2023). Chow's research illustrates the deeply political nature of art in society and the similarities between forms of artistic expression that have cultural and economic value and the political positions of the artists and the communities to which these artists belong. When a piece of territory is colonized, the prior occupants and their means of life—including artistic and cultural expression—are

often reduced. The necessity of the ‘colonizer’ to dismantle existing power systems is shown through reestablishing the significance of artistic expression.

One can also turn to the example of climate change, and the numerous artistic campaigns that have taken place to flag the urgency of the issue and get publics engaged in the topics. For example, the Climate Clock – a campaign that exemplifies the pivotal role of art as a communicative medium which has the ability to garner public awareness and interest. In this case, in the critical issue of climate change. The campaign utilizes artistic components as both symbolic representation and relatable instruments to convey messages on complex or sensitive issues, and to highlight the urgency of the issue and the need for action – for example, countdown timers, and bright colour schemes which engage audiences. The campaign fuses artistic expression and methods of communication, with fact and science to simplify complex messages, creating impactful, relatable stories. By installing such features in important, busy public spaces, the campaign brings people together, gives them a tangible connection to the project, and creates a visual that is unavoidable. As we see their role increasing, "alternative" artforms that have evolved from social justice and resistance have however now developed into marketable commodities. Previously non-commercial art genres have now been commercialized as sought-after pieces of protest art, as the art form has grown in popularity (Kerrigan and Preece, 2023). Hanna Borgblad's study, which fits under constructivist market studies, focuses on one such art form: graffiti and street art. She investigates the market players responsible for transforming an art form that has historically been seen as resistant commodification, anti-commercial, transitory, and illegitimate into an art form that feeds into economic markets. The materiality of art and the issue of ownership and possession for more transient art forms are clarified by Borgblad's work (Borgblad, 2023). Once again, the example of Banksy comes into play here – a street artist now worth millions, and who exhibits globally in some of the most renowned galleries in the world, all in the name of telling the stories of the underserved or underheard.

It is however, important to note that in any social justice issue, it's "curation" to any given audience is vital. Curation is key to marketing and commercialization of alternative artforms – as without this the public would have much more limited access to art forms that traditionally may have stayed in the street or in local communities without broader outreach. Matthew Waters has examined how the art of curating has evolved from its

conventional function as a professional skill into a larger cultural phenomenon with significant consequences – this can be understood to impact the role of art across sectors, both culturally and for social justice movements for example. Waters highlights how this has been made more accessible in light of new technology and online networks, and as the digital literacy of the general public grows. In examining the underappreciated but significant role of the curator as cultural intermediary in the visual arts market, Waters emphasizes the criticality in their traditional role as mediators, bringing fresh perspectives to a variety of audiences, but raises concerns about being replaced by market-oriented tools, such as algorithms and artificially generated content, which limit our horizons to hyper-curated, cultural artforms (Waters, 2023).

According to Waters, it is necessary to pay attention to how the definitions of ‘artistic labor’ and ‘artistic identity’, are changing in light of recent technology advancements, as well as the way in which audiences participate with arts given new digital forums. While digital art has been around for a while, the introduction of algorithms that shape taste is a relatively recent development (Waters, 2022). This algorithmic curation has significantly dictated how art is consumed, both for the positive and the negative – on the one hand digital platforms have made art significantly and democratically more accessible, however, these platforms and algorithms also manipulate the information audiences see and the content that they are exposed to. It also risks the homogenization of art, or the silencing of non-conforming voices in art.

Stephanie Janes keeps us focused on the relationship between art and promotion, but this time she makes Virtual Reality the main point. In order to produce VR projects for the creative industries, Janes describes the type of collaboration that takes place when tech companies, cultural institutions, and artists come together. Focusing on how virtual reality (VR) is being used to promote movies, Janes addresses some of the difficulties that are present, including the nature and design of the experiences, the relatively low levels of involvement, and ethical issues with the use of participant-provided personal data (Janes, 2023).

Based on the above, I conclude that it is vital to observe the arts from different perspectives, not just from the angle of entertainment. Art is also a tool for social change and movement. As Sobande mentioned in her study, art marketing can be used for

marketing social justice across cultures, and as seen, the role of digital platforms has only served to expand this influence.

However, I would like to reiterate Water's observations on new technology and its role in art curation and how algorithms are moving us away from traditional curation. It is critical to be mindful of the possibility of algorithmic prejudice as the visual art industry embraces the capabilities of AI and machine learning. These prejudices may affect how both the arts and social justice are discovered, popularized, and produced, which may result in less diversity and unjust representation. In the next chapter will move to other issues where digital technology increased the interest in art whilst also challenging it at the same time.

2.3.2 The Main Challenges for Arts Marketing

Regardless of the use of arts marketing – be it for social good or in the interest of arts promotion itself – artists face numerous challenges in this regard, particularly so in recent years with COVID-19, economic downturns in many parts of the world and an ever-growing political divide.

During COVID-19, due to numerous lockdowns and restrictions, the ability to peruse an art gallery, share seats with others in a theater, attend art classes, go to choir, and many other pleasures that had been taken for granted in terms of engaging with the arts were disrupted (Kerrigan and Preece, 2023). A study by Naylor et al. specifically found three crucial factors that were detrimental to specific sectors of the arts industry and its workers – namely restrictions on in-person activities; social distancing; and an inability to work remotely. These particularly affected the performing arts, cultural heritage and visual arts. Due to the cancellation of concerts and other cultural and artistic events, independent artists found themselves without a source of revenue. Despite this, artists came up with a variety of inventive methods to communicate their work and experiences (Naylor et al, 2021).

The demand for this alternatives amply demonstrated the need for the arts, with many of us becoming more reliant on drip-fed entertainment through services such as Netflix and Spotify as well as new forms of televised theatre, concerts, and other live arts events that are delivered to people's homes via digital platforms. An increase in online activities was

seen, including seminars, online performances, and movie screenings (Naylor et al, 2021). Scholars in fact highlighted that there was a big uptake in consumption of the arts as a result of the pandemic (Bradbury et al., 2021).

Artists and art institutions began to rethink the way they reached remote audiences, and hence how they were able to market these new initiatives. The worldwide pandemic sparked an acceleration and experimentation in utilizing digital technology to link art to people – this had slowly been on the rise with technological improvement, but the instant need created by COVID-19 boosted this. In order to maintain relationships with their audiences, creative and alternative marketing tools and arts platforms had to be created. These platforms played a pivotal role in sustaining the arts during the pandemic. However, despite these attempts to keep artists and art institutions afloat during the crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the insecure nature of work for people working in the arts sector, as well as in many other industries. A rise in loss of income and unemployment were recorded globally. Studies state that the global pandemic had a far worse effect on the sector than the Global Financial Crisis of 2008–2009 (Naylor et al., 2021).

The desire from the audience to interact and participate in the arts in these tough times demonstrates that both audience and artists are capable of establishing new channels of communication via experimenting with and exploring new modes of participation in the arts. Important developments – as above highlighted – have already been seen in this regard. As a result, certain academics argue that it is the responsibility of arts marketers to investigate the relationship between art and the market from a wider angle, in order to uncover how marketing can further integrate the arts into people's lives, including from a distance (Kerrigan and Preece, 2023).

This will be an important learning curve for the arts world, particularly in terms of sustainability for artists and independent art forms. For artists, generating income has always been challenging. As seen above, many of the now most renowned artists died in poverty in their time. While there are many romanticized images of artists as dedicated to creating art for art's sake, for the artist, the necessity to support oneself can be a constant struggle. A study by Katharina Stolley and Samantha Glynne looks at a situation in which artistic needs and practical requirements coincide. In their investigation of the overlap between the arts and marketing that is obvious in the context of branded entertainment, Stolley and Glynne bring these to the forefront despite the conflicts

between the artists and marketing already being clear (Stolley and Glynne, 2023). These new online tools and techniques may well be an opportunity to expand outreach and success into the future.

However, this does not deny the need for a solid understanding of business and marketing for artists to survive in an increasingly commercial and competitive world. Global art markets have grown rapidly and intensely during the past ten years, along with other major industry developments such as the rise in large industry actors, the effects of economic restructuring on public support for the arts, and the growing dominance of neoliberal models of success. Therefore, the arts will face a number of difficulties in the future, including managing finances in the face of significant cuts to public funding, considerable income losses for artists and collectives, and the requirement to invest heavily in new methods of operation – for example during the COVID-19 pandemic - while also demonstrating increased participation of a variety of audiences (Kerrigan and Preece, 2023).

In conclusion, the COVID-19 epidemic challenged conventional ways of connecting with art, which hastened the acceptance of virtual platforms, fueled the growth of digital art, and changed the ways in which art is produced, appreciated, and traded. These modifications are probably going to have a long-term effect on the art world, affecting how people interact with and value art in the future. The pandemic brought to light the value of art and creative expression in people's life and demonstrated how these activities can provide comfort, inspiration, and a sense of community in time of crisis, providing an escape and sense of interconnectedness.

Moving on from the idea of creating links with the audience, the following sub-chapter explores another form of artistic expression that has been applied across businesses for a variety of aims – that of storytelling.

2.4. The Role of Storytelling in Organizations

I want to start this chapter by quoting Brian Moriarty, who stressed the value of employing storytelling as a tool for internal communication with both stakeholders and employees. He said “Storytelling is a crucial skill that leaders use in a variety of business situations. Accomplished leaders employ storytelling to improve interpersonal

relationships, communicate strategy and build culture” (Moriarty, 2022). Also, Stephen Denning in his book *The Leader’s Guide to Storytelling* (2005) details his attempts at convincing the organization that he used to work for (the World Bank) about the importance of storytelling and its effectiveness on the productivity and the environment in companies; and how good stories can change a data-heavy presentation into an engaging narrative that resonates with the audience. Denning would commonly use stories to convince peers and employees of an idea, believing that this artistic communications tool helped his audiences envisage an alternative narrative, or set the scene for diverging opinions.

Following on from successes in his application of storytelling at the World Bank, he started to consider how storytelling could be used even more successfully across organisations (Denning, 2005). The following subchapter therefore aims to explore this idea further, analysing the role of storytelling as a creative modality within business – looking its role as an artistic communications tool. It will review the influence and benefits – be they social, operational or financial—of storytelling. Whilst this thesis predominantly focuses on the visual arts, this creative communications skill should be analysed as a key instrument in the world of business and one that is also engaged across marketing – from for-profits, non-profits and arts enterprises.

2.4.1 *The Influence of Stories*

Stories may have a real impact in a variety of ways, and can be complimented with a variety of visuals, as flagged in Schramm's book, *Communicate with Mastery*. He stressed the significance of creating the narrative before creating the visuals. According to the book, graphs and axes can often be confusing and hinder understanding of a topic. The presentation of a story for understanding and comprehension is vital. He also stated that visuals make up just 10% of the material, with storytelling accounting for the remaining 90% (Schramm, 2020) – that’s the say, this communicative art form is vital in selling an idea, or convincing an audience.

Stephen Denning in his book *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling: Mastering the Art and Discipline of Business Narrative* (2005) began exploring the specific connection between stories and the business world. He stated that business audiences were often dubious about

stories, and one could expect skepticism from the business world. This is due to the fact that the majority of business-minded individuals work with a rationale, analytic and objective driven mindset. A mindset that appears to go straight to the truth by cutting through the cloud of imagination and guesswork. It claims to follow observations, premises, and conclusions without being influenced by the analyst's wishes or concerns (Denning, 2005).

Whilst this corporate businesses talent for objectivity, impersonality, and heartlessness was acknowledged by Denning as what gives it power, these strengths were also has seen to have their drawbacks. Though this approach may stimulate the business-mind, it rarely provides a path to passion. And that is where you need to focus if you want to inspire others to act, and to act enthusiastically. When a company's survival depends on transformative change, leadership entails persuading employees to take on novel and at times disagreeable actions (Denning, 2005).

As Denning flagged, change cannot be created with long, black and white displays of figures or PowerPoint presentations alone, even when this presents logic and rationale. In contrast, a good narrative can often change opinions and convince the audience of a new reality. Despite the fact that strong business cases are often built using figures, they are frequently accepted on the basis of a story—specifically, a narrative that connects a series of events in some sort of causal order. The aims of a leader may be vividly depicted via storytelling instead of being reduced to dry, abstract data (Denning, 2005).

Aristotle stated in his *Poetics* more than two thousand years ago that stories should have a start, middle, and a finish. They should include a storyline with a turn of events and a lesson taught, as well as complex characters. In 2020, Shramm added that every good story should have a direction of travel and change - even a subtle one - be it attitude, behaviour or action (Shramm, 2020). Additionally, the storyteller must be so involved in the tale that the listeners are brought into the characters' universe. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to *The Arabian Nights* to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and most Hollywood screenplays, Aristotle's approach has proven effective throughout history. Denning was also convinced that a compelling tale still holds weight in the contemporary workplace, even in the time-constrained reality of modern businesses (Denning, 2005).

That said, a story does not always have to be positive. Denning highlighted this in his book, claiming that there was equal weight in a negative, cautionary tale, and he often cited his peer Dave Snowden and his experience in the corporate world.

Snowden often employed “negative” tales to impart information, perhaps explaining why a team failed to complete a task and how they did it, with the hope of guiding others away from the same blunders. The same may go for less compelling tales, whose purpose is not necessarily to enchant their audience but to impart a lesson or a technical advice to a certain audience. Denning used the example of a tedious tale amongst photocopier repair professionals – a tale that would hold limited interest or relevance to other audiences, yet one that plays a role as an important yet creative learning tool for these technical specialists (Denning, 2005).

One topic Denning was particularly interested in as he continued his inquiry was the connection between leadership and narrative – a topic we see throughout the above-mentioned examples – guiding and leading an audience through the art of storytelling. An academic, Adler, also confirmed this, stating that the now is the time for cross-fertilization between leadership and the arts – in this instance, storytelling (Adler, 2006). He was aware of the power of tales as a motivator for action due to his own experience and observations. He had observed in a number of significant books—including *The Story Factor* by Annette Simmons, *The Leadership Engine* by Noel Tichy, and *Leading Minds* by Howard Gardner—how stories could assist leaders in defining their personalities, boosting confidence in their integrity, and giving some insight into how they might act in a particular circumstance (Adler, 2006).

If we relate these creative communication forms to contexts outside of business, we can see that, as with other forms of arts, it has also been employed to create social change and drive social movement. Classic examples include Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Winston Churchill's "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" speech.

The above draws us to the conclusion that the artistic form of storytelling plays a powerful role in business, acting as a strong tool of influence, persuasion and connection. Storytelling is a technique to convey difficult, sensitive, or complex messages; to provide guidance and leadership, creating connectedness and identify amongst colleagues and

businesses. When storytelling is applied by a business in a marketing sense, these same principles also extend beyond colleagues, to the consumer themselves, pushing the relationship beyond one of transaction alone, to one of unitedness and connectedness. Undoubtedly, and as seen throughout Chapter 2, this story telling feature is also employed by other sectors, feeding into relationship-marketing to develop an active engagement with the client, consumer, or service-user. The same tools are used across these sectors to generate the same outcome, albeit for different purposes.

Hence, storytelling becomes not only a creative tool, but a strategic imperative that business, artists and other actors alike should master. The following subchapter goes on to explore further the return on investment as a result of strategic communications and storytelling.

2.4.2 The Return on Investment of Storytelling: A Strategic Imperative for Sustainable Success

Storytelling has become a dynamic and strategic force in the ever-changing world of modern business. It is no longer only a tool for audience engagement but also a means of producing a quantifiable Return on Investment (ROI). This subchapter aims to investigate the complex and significant effects of storytelling on corporate outcomes, highlighting the strategic importance of storytelling in modern marketing. The fundamental strategic value of storytelling stems from its unmatched capacity to evoke strong emotional responses among listeners. According to a thorough review published in "The New Science of Customer Emotions" (Magids, 2015) by the Harvard Business Review, narratives that are in line with the values and emotions of the target audience not only strengthen bonds but also increase customer loyalty and advocacy. Long-term client connections and brand distinctiveness are sparked by this emotional resonance.

Apart from evoking strong emotions, good storytelling makes a big difference in improving brand memory. According to "The Impact of Sensory Marketing" (Krishna, 2016), Nielsen Consumer Neuroscience's study highlights the cognitive strength of tales that appeal to several senses. These kinds of stories not only help customers remember brands better, but they also significantly contribute to their recognition and leave a lasting impression on their thoughts.

Storytelling, however, has an effect that goes beyond the emotional and cognitive domains and impacts the crucial field of consumer purchasing decisions. A startling finding from the One Spot survey is that 92% of customers said they prefer commercials that tell a compelling story. This data emphasizes the critical role that narrative-driven material plays in shaping and directing customer behavior, reaffirming the strategic importance of storytelling in the marketing domain.

Narrative has a significant impact on internal business culture in addition to outward communication. The profound study "The Power of Purpose: Find Meaning, Live Longer" by Deloitte (2017) illuminates the revolutionary effects of a robust story culture in businesses. Effective story-sharing companies see a 5.3-fold boost in employee engagement, which in turn promotes a healthy corporate culture and helps employees feel like part of the company.

In addition, social media platforms provide new channels for amplification and virality for storytelling in the digital era. The findings from Social Media Today, as presented in "The Role of Storytelling in Social Media Marketing" (Jones, 2018), clarify how engaging tales may spread naturally, promoting word-of-mouth marketing and increasing brand awareness globally. Jones' study demonstrates the relationship between social media and storytelling, showing how well-crafted tales can appeal with a wide range of consumers and spread brand awareness.

In summary, the value of storytelling extends beyond marketing tactics and is a critical strategic component for any firm hoping to succeed over the long term. According to Jones (2018), the emotional connection it fosters, the improved brand recall, the impact it has on consumer decisions to buy, the part it plays in creating positive company cultures, and the possibility of social media virality all come together to create a complex and multidimensional story for companies negotiating the complexities of the cutthroat business world. The capacity to create and disseminate engaging tales emerges as an essential differentiator and a vital route to long-term success in the fast-paced, constantly changing world of modern business as businesses continue to change.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has briefly scanned the history of marketing and has provided examples where art and creative tools have fed into marketing in both business and social contexts. This chapter has aimed to demonstrate the complex and two-way relationship between the arts, marketing, and business. Nowadays, these sectors are so closely intertwined that the success of one can be linked to the involvement of the other, as has been demonstrated with a number of examples from across the two sectors. This chapter has also touched on a range of “successes” and advances that these various sectors may be aiming to achieve – from profit, leading a team through a transformative process, or indeed social change or justice.

Chapter 2 has explored how the arts can enrich sectors outside of its own in a variety of ways, including marketing business ideas or concepts, or supporting in branding and selling commercial products; providing creative tools for corporations or agents of change; or raising awareness to broader audiences. This, however, has also led to a need to examine the conflicts that arise when balancing the need to make money and broader social, cultural, political, and aesthetic concerns.

The chapter also observed the need for the infrastructure of the art world and its various marketing tools to be reshaped in both the long and short term, due to the political, economic, and sociocultural fallout of global crises, whether COVID-19, or humanitarian and social issues. These tools need to be dynamic and able to adapt to a shifting environment, ensuring that audiences across the globe have access, irrelevant of geography, or the art form..

These significant changes demonstrate the importance of the art industry, while also highlighting how delicate its ecology is. They also call to go beyond the conventional dichotomy of "art vs. market," which ignores the overlap of corporate and artistic interests as well as the diversity of possible forms of resistance both between them and within them. In order to reflect the complexity of discourses at play in the current context, where the arts represent an important form of soft power, this research aims to present nuanced perspectives on how art intersects with the market. The following chapter will research an art startup closely, the way it interacts with the market by selling their product and the

feedback they receive from the customers, and at the same time keeping their artistic practice and experimentation in parallel.

3. INTRODUCING STUDIO KUNUKKU

This chapter introduces an art studio named Studio Kunukku as a case study, focusing on the captivating story behind the studio, the founders, their interests, and the ways in which they came together to take the first step towards building the studio. In addition, this chapter takes a closer look at Studio Kunukku's marketing tools and strategies and the range of products they produce.

3.1. The Studio's History and Founders

Based in Beirut, Lebanon, Studio Kunukku is a multidisciplinary design studio. The workshop was founded with the idea of resurrecting vanished crafts, with the goal of reintroducing and relearning old textile and printing processes, particularly woodblock printing. The Studio was officially founded in 2020 by three main founders - two visual artists from Syria - Ward AlKhalaf, Fadi AlMelhem and one business partner - Sarah Hayes, from the United States. As it has been mentioned on their website.

The studio's objective is to present a fresh perspective on the revival of these crafts as a means of expression that aims to have an impact on modern design domains. The practice of the studio is concentrated on furniture, fashion, and textile design. Woodblock printing, which was first brought to Syria via the Silk Road from China and India, is rapidly vanishing due to mass manufacturing and war-related issues, including security and economic downturn.

The craft entails making blocks with particular patterns printed on textiles, and the resulting patterns are used to create fabrics. The designs are based on vanishing cultural elements, including the architecture of historic homes in Syria that have been demolished throughout time or as a result of the war, as Sarah said in one of her interviews during her collaboration in Milan fashion week (Fraccari, 2021).

According to AlKhalaf, the studio's goal is to bring back these well-known patterns that are ingrained in Syrian society but which are gradually being forgotten. He states, "we are attempting to construct a rescue strategy for whatever is left of this craft" (Iskandarani, 2021, n.p.).

According to *Coca & Jasmine* magazine the studio aims to have cultural and social input through:

- Creation of a digital archive of the old blocks, and motifs.
- Production of new wooden blocks inspired by the heritage and architecture communicate with modern days.
- Creation of a library which has educational books about the craft and motif's stories for the community.
- Organization of workshops, teaching print making, carving, and training new students to work in artisans or create their own. (*Cocoa and Jasmine*, 2022)

3.1.1 Kunukku's process

To gain a greater insight into the studio's process and services, how they produce and resource materials, it is worth consulting Studio Kunukku's website to see the process of work:

"We source fabric and textiles from local markets and suppliers who either supply deadlock fabrics from European manufacturers or from small batch textile makers within the region. We are always interested in connecting with small-scale local makers who make handmade, unique and vintage fabrics".

For the design and Inspiration website mentioned that the designs is drawn from visual references encompassing themes and designs that are either lost or unobtainable. The initial batch of prints was inspired by images from everyday life and Syrian homes (Figure 3).

For The printing website emphasized that the process is executed manually, utilizing the wooden blocks carved in-house. Fabrics are hand-printed using silk screen paints, showcasing classic flower patterns, geometric forms, and graphic motifs (Figure 4 and 5).

The process of crafting designs involves the manual carving of local wood by the studio in-house printer and carver, Fadi. The wood is carved into various block prints. As part of Kunukku's commitment to fostering craft skills in the community, training seminars in carving and printing are conducted by the studio.

All the studio's textiles are crafted from organic or natural fibers. Natural dyes and local food waste, such as onions, avocados, and beetroots, are employed to naturally dye the cloth. This approach reflects the studio's commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness in their production processes.



Figure 3 old home in Damacus

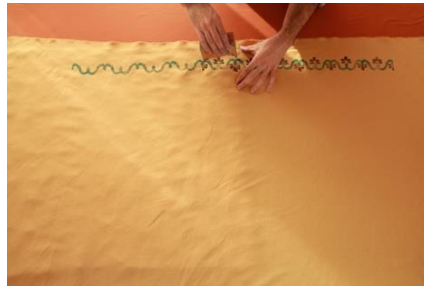


Figure 4 hand block printing



Figure 5 wood block

Source: Studio Kunukku website



Figure 6 original block

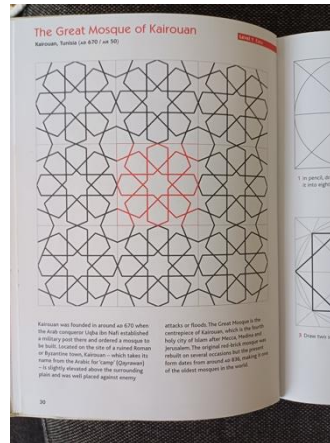


Figure 7 geometric zakhrafa



Figure 8 wood block carving

Source:

Figure 7: Islamic Geometric Pattern, Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2008

Figure 6 and 8: @studiokunukku

3.1.2 Backgrounds about the founders:

Sarah Hayes:

Sarah Hayes is an American anthropologist with a focus on immigration, cultural and heritage. Through my interview with Sarah, I asked about her background and her passion to found the studio. Sarah answered that this interest goes back to 2012 and 2013, when she spent a year living in India. This is where Sarah got into block printing, and where the idea first started, however, seeds had been sewn during her childhood - being around her creative mum. They used to go on small adventures together to the mountain communities in Indonesia and Venezuela for example, looking for fabric and pottery and boutiques. Sarah stated “I was really inspired by how communities express themselves by crafts” - that impression has stayed with her. Wherever she travels, she wants to see fabric, arts and crafts and to understand what that means to the community that she is visiting.

Back to India, one day she came across a rehabilitation center where they rescue women from sex trafficking, and one of the activities they conducted was block printing as a therapeutic channel to support in the healing process from their trauma. It was also an opportunity for them to create and sell products, generating income and gaining some financial independency. Sarah spent some time there and it made a strong impression. From there she knew she wanted to do something related to block printing in the future.

Sarah eventually joined the United Nations, focusing on migration. During this time she travelled around the Middle East, Morocco and Egypt, always looking for a chance to work with block printing. She wanted to engage in the art not as charity, but with a business mindset, as she had seen in India. She tried hard to start a business in Egypt but it did not work and she found it difficult to connect with the city and people. But through her visits to Lebanon, she gradually developed strong networks and she met the Syrian artist named Zena Sabbagh – a Syrian block printing artist with more than 40 years' experience in block printing, and a large personal collection of original blocks. In the last 20 years Zena has fought hard to revive the craft and to keep the old Syrian techniques of block printing alive. There were multiple occasions she lost hope and almost gave up, but meeting Sarah and seeing her passion and energy encouraged Zena to continue and teach some of her secrets to Sarah, supporting her to build her own project. This moment was also a spark for Sarah and she went on networking until she eventually met Fadi and Ward who would become the other integral team members. These two Syrian artists brought knowledge and experience of Syrian heritage and motifs to the table – and this was exactly what Sarah needed to kick off the project. And so Kunukku began – setting up in a small studio in Sarah's house, until they had the resources to move to an independent studio space.

Ward Alkhalaf:

Ward Alkhalaf, from Damascus, is an artist and designer who explores different artistic practices including illustration, design and archiving. He studied English literature at Damascus University while honing his art skills through individual practice until he moved to Beirut in 2018 to study fashion design. He met Sarah in 2020 through a friend's recommendation, given his passion for textile and design. After meeting Sarah and then visiting Zena Sabagh together, through his artistic networks, Ward formulated a team that could materialize the project Sarah hoped for. This included another local artist - Fadi,

and other suppliers from Syria who have hand weaving experience to build the first shape of the studio. In early 2021, he became the Co-Founder and Creative Director for Studio Kunukku.

In my interview with Ward AlKhalaf asking him about his role in the studio as a Creative Director, he explained that he knows a bit of everything, he has some knowledge about the process from A-Z, as he quoted “my hands are in every aspect of the process”. For example, his English skills help in copy writing, his fashion experience helps with the design, and other expertise related to the production and marketing all contribute. He continued to build this knowledge, creating a vision for the studio with his team, but insists that he is still learning to this day.

Fadi AlMelhem:

Fadi AlMelhem, a Syrian graduate from Damascus University for Fine Arts, is specialized in print making, focusing on carving as a technique. After graduating, he spent a year making jewelry until he moved to Lebanon in 2018. Through Ward, Fadi met Sarah in 2020 to discuss his role in the project she was visualizing. That was the seed of the studio, and following this, Fadi started to learn more about the craft. It didn't take long for Fadi to realize that there was very limited information about this specific craft- knowledge was mostly kept within families as family businesses and was not archived or shared for longevity. Through some creative experimentation with Ward, and with the financial and networking support of Sarah, the shape of Kunukku was gradually formed. Fadi now holds the role of Master Carver and Printer in the studio.

In my interview with Fadi I asked him how he came up with the idea of carving the wood block, and where he gets the design inspiration from. He said his background in jewelry helped him, and after some research about original blocks (for example Figure 6 above), he tried to find a way to develop these designs. The idea started by drawing some geometric shapes, and then looking for the wood and exploring carving and design techniques to create new designs with traditional foundations (see Figure 8 above).

For the design and inspiration, Fadi reports that it is mainly based on a pattern of geometric shapes, lines and triangles. Through research with Ward, they found that the architecture of old homes in Damascus has floral geometric and Islamic zakhrafa

(decoration) as seen in seen in Figures 3 and 7. From this starting point, Fadi continued to explore this concept, developing unique prints for Kunukku.

3.2. The Studio's Main Marketing Tools

In terms of marketing strategy to sell products outside of Lebanon, I asked Sarah in her interview about the studio's marketing strategy. Sarah answered with a laugh, commenting that there is no marketing strategy in a place like Lebanon. She has been approached by other Americans founders of similar businesses with sophisticated marketing strategies who offered advice, but given the specific economic context of Lebanon, she decided not follow any of them.

In some ways, Sarah says the outreach and marketing process has happened very organically, naturally being approached by new clients in the country and abroad, for example from the Gulf – there was a certain appetite for their products. She added, their strategy in the studio is the artistic approach of the brand itself, and how they tell their story. They do many editorial photoshoots that tell stories, and with these they build their Instagram page which now has an active community, browsing their products and designs. The followers they have on their page on Instagram (@studiokunukku) are very engaged and this is key for the team.

Since they launched their Instagram page, they have also explored other ways to outreach. This includes offering studio visits, where they allow visitors to see the work they do as well as private workshops on how to print. Another example, is the additional feature of adding an online shopping feature to their Instagram and creating a website. Sarah noted that they did not notice many visits to the online store start with, until she started participating in pop-ups outside the country. From there, the studio started to see more

visits to the online shop, and clients starting to place orders. See Figures 9, 10, 11 below from the shop.



Figure 9 Mashrabiya Rug

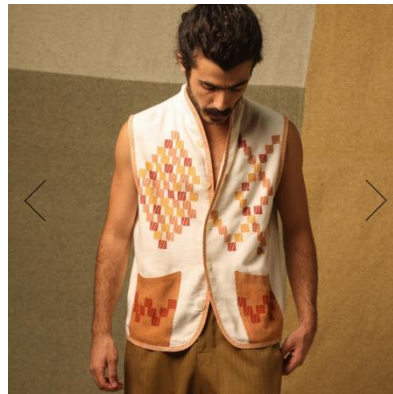


Figure 10 Checkered Gilet



Figure 11 Zellige Pillow

Source: studio kunukku website, shop

Given the limited economic capacity in Lebanon in light of the crisis, Sarah mentioned that they focus a lot on collaborations based in Europe, such as small-scale fashion designers. For example, they conducted a small project with the Italian based designer - Bav (@bavtailor), and through this the studio were able to feature in an Italian fashion week as a collaborator. Another way of marketing that the studio employs is to offer a specific product to a company, as they did with another NGO. The studio produced unique tote bags for the NGO, which included a Kunukku label and information on the studio's work. This became a natural marketing tool for both the NGO and the studio.

Sarah explains, as the above demonstrated, that when they started, they did not have a set marketing strategy that would restrict them or frame them in one category of products, for example homeware goods sellers. Instead, they let the strategy grow naturally and let people approach the studio with their own ideas – from interior design, to clothing items – and the strategy grew from there. Based on this, Sarah began to observe the possibilities and capabilities of the studio in the future. She began to see that their new marketing strategy would be built through offering design consultancies, focusing on multiple art mediums, not restricting themselves to one. This is how she is planning her new marketing strategy right now.

3.3. Conclusion

The studio has had to develop both its products and its marketing and design strategy in the complex environment of Lebanon and Syria – both deep in economic crisis, yet full of under-valued and under-protected cultural heritage. Despite not having a fixed marketing strategy, it appears that it has been to the benefit of the studio to have a fluid, organic approach to marketing and outreach. This has allowed them to grow based on demand, need and interest, having avoided limiting themselves to a fixed evolutionary path or business strategy. This has also allowed them to move between profit and non-profit activities, as the studio gradually works towards financial stability. As will be seen in the next chapter, the studio has at times turned to charitable funding for certain projects, but as chapter 3 demonstrates, they have worked on developing for-profit artistic collaborations that offer financial return and networking results which will serve their sustainability in the future.

Studio Kunukku has achieved this by offering an impressive combination of expertise and experience in the founding members that has clearly allowed the studio to grow organically, with the space to experiment with marketing strategy and outreach. This has allowed the studio designs and products to develop based on a bottom-up approach, influenced by contextual factors and client interest, rather than being determined strictly by the founders. That said, the founders offer strong and in-depth cultural and artistic knowledge that guides the evolution of designs, maintaining the link with local culture and traditions.

Lebanon has a range of competing artistic projects but Kunukku offers a unique customer experience, as above seen, both in the ability of the customer to tailor products, as well as visit the studio as an interactive experience.

Whilst Kunukku offers an interactive experience for customers in Lebanon, they have also concentrated on expanding their market outside of the country, notable in Europe and the United States. These two geographies have certain logic, Sarah having networks in the United States, and Europe being close enough to create bridges and familiarity. There is also a big network of Europeans in Lebanon who also communicate the work of Kunukku when back in their home countries.

Now with greater understanding on the products offered by Studio Kunukku, and their approach to sales and marketing, the next chapter will explore the latter further, and the relationship that the founders have with business within this.

4. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH

This chapter outlines the research methodology that has been used for this thesis, namely in-depth interviews with key informants, and then goes on to analyse the data gathered from these interviews to assess the thesis's hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: For an artist to be financially successful in the 21st century, some extent of business knowledge must be acquired.

Hypothesis 2: There is still a lack of focus on marketing in art schools.

Hypothesis 3: Those artists who possess sufficient knowledge of business management have better chances of sustaining their art studios even in times of crisis.

This chapter delves into the approach of the studio and its founders, exploring moments in which the worlds of business and art cross over – if at all – and the results of such interaction.

4.1. Detailed Research Methodology

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between art and business, as well as the strategies artists employ to market their work, this thesis has undertaken a case study of Studio Kunukku, a design studio specializing in textile design and printing, focusing on community story-telling and cultural heritage. The choice of this startup as the subject of study was motivated by its unique position in the market, and the brave work they are undertaking in an unstable socio-political-economic context. It is of particular interest to explore the business-approaches used by the studio in such an unstable economy, and the artistic influences that drive their design and products in a region that has lost significant cultural heritage due to conflict and economic downturn. As above seen, Studio Kunukku creates homeware and fashion products that not only embody artistic value but work towards preserving traditional cultures and community stories from the region. Their discerning clientele values handcrafted items, demonstrating a willingness to invest in these products, even when more cost-effective alternatives exist.

In order to explore and elaborate the relation of art and business in this particular case, this thesis employs primary data gathered from interviews conducted with representatives of Studio Kunukku. The Studio Kunukku team comprises of three pivotal members: Sarah Hayes - the Founder; Ward AlKhalef - the Creative Director; and Fadi AlMelhem - the Master Carver and Printer, and Chapter 4 summarises interviews conducted with all three profiles. To compliment this, the thesis builds on relevant secondary sources seen in Chapter 2, to review and assess the connection between art and the business world. The author of this thesis specifically designed research questions for each of the key informants, based on a core set of questions to gather key information, and then tailored questions depending on the specific role of the interviewee. This allowed the researcher to corroborate key facts amongst the interviewees whilst also gathering information on their specific roles, and the modalities of business they use in that role, if at all.

The choice of interviews as the primary research method was guided by the need to collect qualitative data. Interviews offer a unique opportunity to gather in-depth, nuanced, and context-specific information that might otherwise remain elusive through quantitative approaches. By engaging in conversations with the team members, this research derived original data directly from the participants, data that was meticulously tailored to address the specific research questions and objectives of this study.

Furthermore, interviews added a human dimension to this research, allowing for the exploration of personal experiences and individual perceptions. Through the narratives shared by the participants, this research was enriched with firsthand insights. This aspect holds particular significance in a research domain where personal perspectives and narratives are at the core of the study.

In this research, the primary objective was to delve into Studio Kunukku's artistry and their marketing strategies – and the business concepts that these employ. The researcher conducted interviews with key personnel behind Studio Kunukku to unearth the inner workings of their creative processes and their marketing strategy. These interviews also provided insight into how Studio Kunukku competes in an industry already saturated with mass-produced, economically viable alternatives.

4.2. Interview 1: Sarah Hayes

In my interview with Sarah, when I asked her if she could elaborate and explain how art and business could meet in her career as a founder of the Studio, she reflected on her role within the business. She replied as follows: “I think of myself as a catalyst, the supporter of the artists. I am sure I am a creative person but I am not an artist – [rather] I want to be the bridge between an audience and an artist. I like to be that ‘in-between’, to find ways to showcase the work of an artist, and to give them a platform.”

Sarah went on to explain the work she was doing prior to Kunukku. Before founding the studio, she was working in the humanitarian and development sector, primarily at the United Nations (UN). This taught a great deal in terms of fundraising and strategy. However, she also witnessed how much money was being spent on projects to help vulnerable groups, but often she saw that these projects were not sustainable – many projects were being done so the donors were happy in the short-term, but without considering the long-term impact on the community. There was a lack of business-mindedness, as other elements, such as donor requirements and project specifics were prioritized.

As a result however, Sarah stated that she no longer believes in the system of grants and non-profit and this has marked her approach in setting up Studio Kunukku. In the business world, where profit is made, there is more control over the development and evolution of the enterprise – she stated that that is more fulfilling than getting money from charity. That is why she did not want her studio to be an NGO or to rely solely on funds from donors in the long-term, even though she did receive some funding when she started the studio, but it was only to kickstart the project and was never anticipated to be long-term funding.

In her role as founder, she tries as much as she can to focus on the business aspect, letting Ward and Fadi elaborate on the artistic side. She is also in a unique position in the team to travel and focus on the outreach abroad, focusing in many design pop-ups in the United States for example. Whilst she may offer her artistic opinion – for example, based on the common colour schemes of a recent pop-up in New York, she refrains from dominating the design process, because she believes that the products and designs must evolve from the cultural and experience of the local artists themselves, not from the “outsider”.

However, her influence here allows the studio to cater to international clientele and to build designs off the interests of markets outside of Lebanon.

This allows a certain depth to the studio – creating products which go beyond the visual and have a story to tell. Sarah quoted that one of the great talents of the studio “is that people are drawn to the artwork without even knowing the story behind it”, but reflected that the products are more than a visual item alone – they have a story to tell and a tradition to uphold.

I believe that Sarah is indeed playing this role between art and business, where she gives insights to the artists or the artwork based on international market trends, and at the same time provides the basic business/financial structure for the enterprise. From my personal experience I do know that this is not an easy role, given the need to balance artistic development and financial planning. The studio’s aim is not only to create, it is also to generate income, and hence Sarah has a nuanced task of giving the space to the artists to experiment and creatively evolve, whilst also ensuring the final results are financially viable and generate interest from their client base. She also has a professional responsibility to generate enough income to cover salaries. As will be further explained below, whilst the artists Fadi and Ward employ business mentalities in other components of the work such as selling and generating customer interest, Sarah holds a unique responsibility in terms of financial accounting and fundraising within the organization, ensuring that the team are paid and have the piece of mind and space to fulfil their artistic roles.

Sarah says she manages this based on her trust that her team will produce a product she will be pleased with, yet she always has at the back of her mind the “business-thinking”. This might include looking for funds, building a portfolio, networking and outreach, accounting and finances, etc. so that she can drive profit through a multitude of channels. Sarah’s experience in other sectors has contributed to this strategic vision, financial planning and fundraising. Whilst she did not study business, she has self-taught herself a number of tools, and has had exposure throughout her other professional experience that has been vital to her financial planning for the studio. It is clear that without this, there would be much less sound financial planning for the studio which would put in jeopardy the staff and the project in itself.

As seen in this case study, and particularly through the interview with Sarah, it is not about art all the time – it is about marketing, and I mean here art marketing. The studio could not survive if they focused on art alone. Based on the example of Kunukku founder, it is clear that the relation between the two worlds of art and business is crucial for any art form to grow and for business to grow, which supports what I have mentioned in hypothesis one and three. That said, it appears Sarah has a particular talent at linking these two worlds together, despite not having received particular studies or trainings on this previously. If Kunukku did not have such a profile in their team, the studio artists may have a harder time to link these worlds, hence I return to my hypothesis one, that all artists can benefit from even a small amount of business knowledge, even if this is self taught, as seen with Sarah.

During her interview, Sarah also reflected on the business angle of the studio – and the balance that she needed to strike for sustainability. She noted on the one hand that they are ready to accelerate and expand, yet at the same time, that they also need to take it slowly and cautiously in order to preserve their quality and their principles. She reflected that it is important for the studio to not unquestioningly accept all opportunities, but to assess each one to be sure it aligns with the creative vision and the principles of the studio itself, to not place these in risk. If they take a project based on profit alone, a project that does not align with artistic foundations of the studio for example, or one that stretches the capacity of the team to the extent that they are not able to maintain the promised quality of the product, this could do more damage in the long term than good, particularly in terms of reputation. Sarah stated that the studio has taken a long time to create a reputation of quality and reliability, based on a manual craft that takes time and care. She would not want the studio to lose this reputation and wants the enterprise to remain dedicated to quality output.

My next question to Sarah regarded the difficulty of founding an artistic project in a country like Lebanon which has high inflation rate, and is deep in an economic crisis; and on what the tools are to sustain the project for the long term. Sarah explained that the studio received two grants at the beginning of its journey from institutional donors, which supported in basic salaries, materials and trainings – equipping the studio with basic resources and stability to kick-start. Whilst she recognized these grants as vital to the studio's ability to start, she also recognized the risks associated with these, for many

reasons. First, the preparation to get these grants and communication with the donor was (and she notes, most often is) highly time and energy-consuming, plus donors often need months to send funds to Lebanon due to banking restrictions related to the crisis. This can impact planning, the payment of salaries and to suppliers and can create uncertainty. Additionally, such grants are often dictated by donor-interest and guidelines which the organization receiving the funding is bound by. Whilst oftentimes the organizational vision aligns with these anyway, it may divert an organization away from its true artistic development of mission. Sarah reiterated that a lot of time can be diverted from the team to focus on complying with these grants, rather than really focusing on creative or business development.

Sarah stated that a sustainable aspect that could be gained from these funded projects was to build a small team around their work, and upskilling a bigger team with the relevant skills and knowledge which would endure beyond the lifespan of the funding, for example to teach more artists to carve or print and build their capacity beyond the specific project.

Sarah therefore insisted that this donor-funding must be in addition to bringing in profit through customers. Sarah noted here the complexities of business identity in this case, in relation to how to register, and the local rules and regulations on non-profits generating income. This in itself requires a certain understanding of business set up which Sarah invested a lot of time to understand.

Based on the above, Sarah noted the importance of having enough clients to buy products (homeware, or fashion items for example) from the studio to keep the studio going and pay the team's salaries and suppliers, as well as purchase necessary materials. Here, she has to do a business calculation, to balance the need to keep building a product base to attract customers, whilst also maintaining the vision of being a design studio. The studio is therefore obliged to apply principles of relationship-marketing – whether this is intentional or not - to build a customer base who help the studio survive and grow, in a city like Beirut, where “the crises never ends” as she quoted.

My next question was related to the obstacles in marketing that she has faced in the studio. She elaborated that in the United States, where she has participated in many pop-ups and events, it was much easier to sell home goods than to sell clothes. She added that their first “capsule collection” - or limited edition - of clothes was “amazing”, including

stunning handmade and printed designs. The audience loved it, but given they are such a small team, they did not have the capacity to multiple sizes, nor wider production lines, and this limits their ability to sell, despite the quality and beauty of the product. Hence, selling home ware was much easier given that it is one-size-fits-all. Many customers purchased hand-printed table clothes, curtains, pillow covers, among others. The studio has consequently had to review the products it sells to suit their current capacity and the client interest and needs. This in itself is a valuable business exercise that the studio has conducted based on experience and an identified need. However, those artists or collectives entering the market already equipped with business knowledge may well have conducted this step at an earlier stage of business development and hence saved time and energy.

She noted that in addition to this, they are not yet a known brand, and still customers are often drawn to the familiar. She reflected that it would be much easier for them as a studio to collaborate with better-known brands and designers to help them achieve their final product than to do the product itself, but they want to maintain their integrity and work towards building the name of the studio as a unique entity, rather than a collaborator. Again, for Sarah, this is a fine balance between earning profit and maintaining the identify of the studio.

Sarah added that for the studio it is vital to define their niche in the market – this is something dynamic and that they are in the process of doing. This is important from an artistic angle so that they are represented and present at the right artistic events and in the relevant circles and networks. However, it is also vital from a business lens. Identifying the studio's niche according to Sarah is important in many business areas such as pricing, production timing and to better understand what kind of products to sell. As an example, as she has learnt through her participation in various local and international pop-ups and art events, the products that are popular in the US are different from the ones being sold in the Middle East. Preferences and purchasing power change according to geography.

Another benefit of participating in international arts forums that she noticed is to do competitor-comparison. For example, seeing other artisans selling lower-quality products for higher prices, she has learnt that she does not “need to lower my prices, [rather] the opposite”. If the studio were to sell for significantly lower cost, they may be undervalued or underestimated, considered a low-end rather than a high-quality brand. By networking

in the relevant artistic forums, Sarah has developed this knowledge, but this has taken time and determination.

Again, developing strong relationships the targeted customers in the market makes life much easier for the artists in the studio too. In this case, studio clients do not mind waiting two to three weeks for their orders to be delivered, given that they know the background of the product, the artists and are aware that their orders are tailored to their requests. This makes the artist more creative and comfortable in their work.

It is clear from the last two questions, that Sarah is very aware about the business aspects in many areas, from finding a way to generate income without relying on funds which give more strength and control for the art and creativity; to finding the right niche of customers and expanding the market to sell in many countries. This mindset will allow for financial sustainability even in crisis times, and give more space for artistic practice. This also supports my hypothesis one and three - that art studios need business knowledge to survive, particularly in the face of financial crises, otherwise they will find difficulties in keeping both their art and their careers alive.

In conclusion, it is clear that both in terms of business development and strategy, as well as in the day-to-day, Sarah applies business thinking to the studio's operations, but she has invested a lot of time learning this first hand, rather than gaining this knowledge through studies. This creates an interesting and tailored journey for the studio, but one can conclude that their business development may be taking longer than if the Founder had a business background. That said, it is clear that there is no compromise on the artistic integrity of studio, and this is also considered vital to its long-term goals, maintaining its reputation of a brand of quality and value.

4.3. Interview 2: Ward AlKhalaf

In my interview with Ward AlKhalaf, we started by reflecting on his role in the studio as Creative Director. He said, as a Creative Director his aim is to establish new aspects for the studio on the business side in terms of being aware of market trends and customer interests, more than looking at the design itself. He added that any creative director in general needs to think about the business - they should follow trends and filter ideas, all with a business lens. He explained briefly that in his position he tries to combine three

elements together to communicate with the customers, a personal formula he developed. This formula includes high quality product design and material, followed by strong copywriting, and finally editorial photoshoots that tell the story of the studio. From his point of view, those elements together build the value of the studio's products and helps determine what customers are buying.

He added that to know exactly what is happening in the market or to understand what other competitors do, he needs to go the market and see firsthand the products and producers. He needs to meet suppliers and service providers in person. What you see in the internet is not enough – indeed it can be a good introduction but you need to see and meet competitors and suppliers first hand to truly understand. However, he recognized his limitations, at this time only being able to focus on Lebanon due to visa restrictions and finances. As a result, he does not have the possibility to really see what is happening in other markets around the world to determine where he can best market the studio, or where to find his targeted clientele exactly. In this sense, they must rely on Sarah, as the founder able to explore international markets and relay information back to the local team in country. This is an interesting reflection – even with a business or marketing knowledge, this may not always be implementable first hand given other financial, geographical or administrative limitations.

My next question to Ward was if he thinks artists should make money at beginning of their career. He replied “definitely” though it is difficult. Even if they are not established artists, whatever kind of artists they are, they should get paid, as long as the artist is professional which means he has the skills and the knowledge to produce the work regardless the medium he is working on. Art and the artist should be valued. He added that when they are established, they will certainly get paid because they have a body of work and they are known, but as they start out, this is much more challenging. However, he went on to explain that in this day and age, there are many ways to make money – not solely by producing and selling art - and artists should know how to do this, or at least educate themselves even if the university did not.

From Ward responses to the first and second questions, it is clear that he combines the two worlds of business and art together - this derives from his own knowledge and experience. This supports hypothesis 1, that artists in many fields - Ward being an example - need a certain level of business knowledge to build a career and have financial

stability and hence survive in the industry. This point emphasizes the need for an artist to have a basic business understanding in order to generate income at the start of their career – without this, their lifespan as an artist will be severely reduced, and we would see much fewer established artists in the long run, if they cannot financially survive at the start of their careers.

In the interview, the interviewee went on to discuss the design process as a Creative Director. Ward explained that this usually happens in reverse from the end to the beginning - it starts from the place where he imagines the complete design in his head. From there, he starts to experiment with the motifs with the artists and team members. The experimentation ends up with an artwork sample, from this point either they take it forward to a bigger scale or they create more alternatives and ideas. Sometimes they do not fully agree on the same piece but when the client shows interest, they follow the client direction until the end because they know this piece will sell. This informal market research is again self-taught and based on Ward's extensive experience as a Creative Director. However, had he studied art-marketing at school, he may well be equipped with a greater range of tools to conduct such an exercise.

I then asked Ward what his motivation was for getting involved in a small start-up. He detailed his previous thinking with other artists in his network, always wondering if they could manage to create designs for pleasure without "the headache of business". They often felt it was risky to transfer their artistic skills into the business world, but at the same time, they felt that this would give them room to grow and also an opportunity to generate income. He stated that this is particularly important in an unstable city like Beirut – where you cannot rely on a social welfare system or always finding a job. You need to create financial stability yourself. He stated that making money for art can have impact on the art and definitely can have benefit to the artist. That said, he stated he was wary of commercializing his talent and his artistic product, reducing originality and the work behind the scenes that goes into producing a unique artwork.

The interview went on to discuss if he considered that Kunukku's design were local or more international. He said that the products in general look international because they are a fusion of many motifs from the region, merging traditional design with the inspiration of other cultures and aesthetics. Ward concluded that the designs are more modern with historical inspiration. And this in itself is also strategic in a marketing sense

– that is the way in which it communicates with international crowds, not just locals and increases their outreach and financial opportunities. This is an important business angle as well, ensuring that the studio can reach greater markets, and greater clientele. There is a fine line here between being unique and niche, whilst also being accessible to a wide market.

Following this, we discussed how Ward considers that business and art meet in the studio in his future vision. For Kunukku, it is a constant chain of production on a small scale, exploring sales and markets and building of this. However, Ward acknowledged that only when they reach a certain financial stability, will they have more space for creative exploration. It is the only way in his opinion to create space for new artistic experimentation to be explored - when the studio has enough resources and financial stability, there is a time that he can try new ideas with the tailor, and the with new prints. Now they have identified themselves as a business, they need to ensure upscale so they can carve out this creative breathing space, and not focus solely on financial survival. He said this requires a lot of patience, but he is confident in the product and the team to make this happen. They have already seen successes in this overlap between art and business in the studio's short lifespan to date, and following the first donor-grants, have largely managed to maintain themselves month to month.

Following on from the previous question, the next question explored how the studio fits into industry standards, and production in a city like Beirut. As he mentioned before, Ward reiterated that Kunukku is not and could not be a supply chain, and it would be impossible to be so, given the limited capacity of the team in addition to other external factors such as limited raw materials in a country like Beirut. Import is expensive, and given the economic crisis, and the Beirut blast at the main port of entry, can also be complicated – so if he needed to import goods in a large quantity it would be difficult and costly. That is why they always need to teach their cliental about the limited and small quantity of pieces they produce and inform them about the background of the materials and techniques used. He mentioned examples of an artisanal fashion brand called @storymfg where they produce huge quantities and different sizes and sell all over the world. They moved all of their production to India which allowed them to upscale and reduce costs. However, this is not in the interest of Kunukku, whose identity is crafted in Lebanon and Syria, and such a move would only undermine the story-telling aspect of

their design. Hence, in this instance, it is clear that Ward has prioritized artistic value over profit.

From my last two questions to Ward, about art and business, and market standards, I see Ward has formulated his practice in a way to have more artistic space and practice, but this is based on the financial stability of the studio. Better said, the financial enables the creative - the studio has to be stable first to move to second, creative step. This supports hypothesis 3 – that art studios should have sufficient business knowledge in order to increase their sustainability and their ability to continue to be creative. As flagged by Ward, this is particularly important when in such an unstable economy such as that of Lebanon.

It was important to understand from Ward if he considered fashion education as distanced from the fashion industry (or that of design and print for example). He confirmed that yes, there was great distance, going on to explain, that graduate students from fashion school find great difficulty to establish themselves in the industry, due to a lack of business knowledge. Irrelevant of talent, innovation or creativity, graduates will often need to work in established, large-scale brands as an intern and some time for very low paying, just to get some knowledge about how business happens behind the scene. Then after gaining some business knowledge, the graduate can start to create on his own, offering something new to the market. However, without a business understanding, he cannot do this from the outset. He emphasized that in the end, industry is about business owners who think about profit as priority year after a year. He added that only some artists are the exception to this rule and manage to jump these steps. For the vast majority, new graduates need to have a minimum level of business knowledge and talent to survive. This supports hypothesis 2 - that there is a lack of business and marketing guidance in art schools. Ward added new insights and light for this hypothesis which is need more exploration and research.

At the end of my conversation with ward he added a very important point, that in addition for the business knowledge the student should get, the consumer also should have some basic knowledge about the brands and their back grounds, how sustainable they are, how they work and so on. This is key to the success of Studio Kunukku, which acts as a story-telling process as well as a material art form.

4.4. Interview 3: Fadi AlMelhem

In my interview with Fadi, I asked him if he had received any business or marketing education during his studies at the Fine Arts University. Fadi responded that he had not received any at all, and that there was no conversation about the commercial life in the art school – the studies focused solely on the craft of art, for the art's sake. According to Fadi, this creates a problem. When students graduate and go out to face the industry, they do not have any knowledge how to deal with it or how to market themselves in the industry. Fadi elaborated that there is a significant gap between the education system and the industry, and that from his own experience, usually after graduation the student needs to figure out his way on his own, with no business education or guidance from the school. This includes identifying what they can offer to the market and most important how to give a marketable value to their skills. He added, that he managed to find a formula for himself where he can offer artistic *services*, rather than art itself, for a given amount of money – as he does with Studio Kunukku. Until he has made his name, it would be difficult to make money from his art alone, and offering a service is more financially sound for him. This however requires a distinct style of marketing, which he says he is continuing to learn about.

My next question to Fadi regarded the possibility of closing the gap between art education and entering the industry, how this could be done and if there is any kind of education that could help. He said that it is possible and useful to provide such education at university, but he also raised concern that this would have to be tailored to the arts scene. He stated that it may be risky to have this kind of education in an art school for many reasons. For example, there are endless possibilities and varieties for the way artist like to work as independent or group and this cannot and should not be bound by overly-structured business-thinking or marketing tools. He also pointed to a crucial point - that the art marketer should have qualifications, understanding and knowledge about art to be able to critique and evaluate the artwork. In other words, the business education that could be provided in arts studies, should be tailored to the arts world. The professors should have a sound understanding of the specificities of the sector in order to provide specific and focused guidance, otherwise it harms the market and the artist at the same time. Fadi's answers for questions one and two highlighted the lack of the business and marketing education in art schools as I referred to in my hypothesis number 2, at the same time he

shed a light about the criteria of the art marketer should have which needs more exploration and research.

In the interview, Fadi then reflected on the difference between Studio Kunukku and other competitors in the market. Fadi stated that as Kunukku they have an environmental conscious, and the studio does not do mass production unlike other studios who have moved their production to countries such as India to reduce costs and increase profits. Studio Kunukku prides itself on being a local brand, designed and developed in the country. Fadi went on to explain that mass production and the greater miles the product travels means pollution. The studio is well aware of this point, he added even in the future if the studio grew bigger, they would ensure to maintain standards related to the kind of ink and the material they use, ensuring they are environment friendly. In the interview, the use of machinery in the printing process was also discussed, to produce greater quantities and hence generate more income. In Fadi's opinion, machinery in his line of work makes the product really perfect, and hence lacks the human touch – losing touch with the original craft and undermining the cultural and artistic process. He believes that the product would lose its artistic value, and hence lose its economic value.

My next question related to how the designs in Kunukku manage to be traditional and modern at the same time. Fadi reflected on an example for the studio's homeware designs. For the last couple of years he take an active decision not to use the colour black which is more traditional. Instead, he has tried to use vibrant colors like terracotta (soil colors) and bright green related to the area and environment where he lives in which make it modern and more related to daily life.

When asked if he thinks about international trends and social media influencers and network when he is thinking about new designs, Fadi stated that he does not necessarily follow or abide these. He stated that the studio work needs to be original, and related to the environment and culture that they come from – not influenced by those abroad or outside of his specific context. That said, he did reflect that at the same it is very important to acknowledge international trends and influences, and that the studio can and should use it in their branding and marketing on social media. Provided the studio remains true to its principles and design standards, these two worlds can be compatible. He reflected that it is also important so that they can sell out of Lebanon. This should ensure greater

financial sustainability in the future, particularly in light of the economic crisis in Lebanon.

The interview then asked whether Fadi thinks about the customer preferences when he start designing. He replied that he does. He said that he had also designed a simple calculation for his designs – to keep the designs that are already selling, whilst also listening to customers for new designs and input. He added it is a nice experience to sense what designs and products people communicate and associate with, but that is not static, and that the studio must keep experimenting with new shapes and stamps and colors. This is a continuous cycle for him as a designer, responding to both the studios and the customers' needs. He added there is a relationship of trust with the customer, at the end of day it is a handmade product the customer cannot get exactly what he asked for. Otherwise, there would be no human touch. It is a real joy Fadi said - he feels that there is a connection between his imagination and the clients. From Fadi's answer to this question and the previous, it seems that he always keeps the client in mind, based on his own business calculation about what could sell or not according to the market and the client's preferences. This supports hypothesis number 1 where I mentioned business knowledge is required for some extent to keep the artist practicing their career and have financial success.

Finally, the interviewee reflected on how it is to be an artist and co-founder at the same time. Through working in the studio, Fadi claimed that it helped him produce new artistic identity, one in which the studio's identity adopts his vision, and vice versa. It is a collective creativeness, that has contributed to maximise the value of the products they offer. He states that he would not have been able to have such outreach as an individual artist. The studio has given him space as an artist to experiment and reach people, which he would not have achieved on his own. Being in the studio allows him to deliver an artistic message to a wider crowd than he would alone, without compromising the craft that studio trying to revive, and at the same time making a profit. It like a "magic circle", that is hard to achieve but the studio is managing to do so. He stated that it could be a way to make a living as an artist, acknowledging that many artists do not have this opportunity. At the same time it could be challenging for artists to work in such a collective, following a group vision or rules of engagement, rather than having their own autonomy or artistic independence. That said, given that greater financial stability and exposure it offers, Fadi

considers it a greatly valuable experience. It is a great kick off for an art career, and alone is hard to achieve.

4.5. Conclusions and suggestions

My interviews with Kunukku Co-founders were a very good way to obtain a deeper insight into their world and processes, getting to know them personally and understand their different backgrounds. As I see from the team, there are many similarities between the three of them in different aspects. The first one is the devotion for art and the craft itself, and the unlimited efforts they invest to revive the craft from dying, finding new ways to revive it in modern ways that relate to our daily life. The second point takes into consideration the business and marketing part - they all understood the value of marketing and engaging with the customers, and acknowledged how this would help them to transfer the value of their products and help them to grow as referred to in my literature review. The founder of the studio referred to an important point, where counting on donor funds alone is not enough and a business calculation should be applied to the studio to keep it growing in the right direction – this clearly demonstrates the founder’s long-term vision for the studio. Most of the interview supported my hypothesis as the following figure and narrative will explain in further detail.

Hypotheses	Result
Hypothesis 1: For an artist to be financially successful in the 21st century, some extent of business knowledge must be acquired.	Accepted
Hypothesis 2: There is still a lack of focus on marketing in art schools.	Accepted

Hypothesis 3: Those artists who possess sufficient knowledge of business management have better chances of sustaining their art studios even in times of crisis.	Accepted
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Figure 12: Thesis hypothesis results

As seen in the table above, all three hypotheses have been accepted by the evidence collated throughout this thesis. The following bullet points highlight the key findings from the primary research that contribute to confirming the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1:

- Providing a bridge between the art world, and the business world was considered vital for growth throughout the interviews, allowing space for art to grow as well as generating profit. Having business knowledge contributes to the financial sustainability of the artist allowing more space for creativity in the future, and hence more potential for future revenue as the artistic portfolio increases.
- In a team, it is easier to incorporate a variety of profiles with a range of business and arts experiences to achieve this skill set, whilst a sole artist must strive to offer both artistic and business knowledge as an individual. Both artists (Ward and Fadi) agreed they would struggle to do this alone, given their lack of business studies at the university.
- Given an ever-more competitive market, including in the arts and cultural scene, it is vital to understand competing brands and products in order to define a niche and consequently survive and thrive. Applying basic business principles and analysis – for example, learning from what other competitors sells, comparing their pricing etc. allows artists to tailor what they offer and communicate in a targeted manner to their customers. This in return, would help ensure competitiveness and better change for success.

Hypothesis 2:

- Art school only focuses on art itself, and does not sufficiently prepare the student for the business industry after graduation. This in turn leads to unempowered graduates, who are unable to offer their creative, innovative ideas and perspectives to the table before learning the ropes in larger brands or corporations.
- Without this knowledge, many artists are left to discover on their own formulas that may help them to survive in a very competitive market. For example, Fadi was able to offer artistic services, rather than art itself, which has allowed him greater financial stability. However, this was based on his own assessment, rather than mentorship or guidance from his studies.
- Teaching marketing should be done at universities but always taking into account the specific sector – the arts world. It would not be sufficient to offer business skills alone. Rather this business discussion needs to be linked and relevant to the arts scene, in order to provide practical and applicable information.

Hypothesis 3:

- Practice the business knowledge on small scale, and doing the business calculation, without counting only on grants
- Sourcing raw materials from local market, and local suppliers.
- Whilst donor grants can be a useful starting point – particularly for artists living in areas where there is a strong interest from humanitarian and development donors, artists and business should be wary about overly relying on these, as they can distract from the creative process and can also misguide an artistic entity if they are forced to conform with donor wishes. Hence, it is vital for artists to find financial autonomy, and not rely on donors.
- As above mentioned, artists practicing business principles in their work may find greater financial stability, which in turn leaves more space for artistic development. A combination of financial stability and a growing artistic portfolio contributes to sustainability and longevity.
- Artists should possess this knowledge in order to grow, but they should however also be wary that this does not jeopardize their quality or business principles as a result. Financial growth should not come at the cost of artistic reputation or integrity. Recognising resource and capacity limitations is also an important part of this process.

- Having the ability to enter and/or explore international markets first hand should not be taken for granted, and is not always for local artists in certain regions. That said, it is a very important component in order to upscale and reach global audiences, particularly when working in an economy in crisis. This ensures greater financial viability, by selling to markets outside of Lebanon in this instance.

As seen from the above, the qualitative data supports the hypotheses of this thesis. Kunukku, largely through the broad profile of its team members has been able to find a certain level of financial stability thanks to the application of basic business principles. The founder in particular – who already possessed marketing knowledge (from the development sector) has played a significant role by connecting the art and business world together. Her knowledge was particularly relevant in times of crisis, knowing how to approach donors, and how to access international markets. Furthermore, the other co-founder's awareness of the business world outside their studio, starting from sourcing the material in the local market, to developing a strong online presence based on trends and customer interests, has also helped the studio grow. Whilst these techniques were largely self-taught, all interviewees considered that this process would have been easier had artists received better education and knowledge in art school about business and marketing as a connection to the art craft in the industry.

To address and overcome the gap between the two worlds, the interviewees suggested many possibilities. All of the interviewees agreed that it is vital to have a certain level of business knowledge in order for an art career to take off and grow. All of them were self-taught in this regard, which does also demonstrate that it is possible for the artist to educate himself, but this will never be as comprehensive as an educational foundation included at university. The interviewees hence suggested that including a module in an art school to teach marketing would be a vital tool, that would be used by all students as an extension to their art education. That said, this should consider the niche market of art, and offer tailored business advice in order to protect the art values in the market. The most important point in my opinion is that the interviewees emphasized that having a business mindset does not and should not contradict the art practice. Rather, it is a complementary, allowing the artist to understand both fields properly and as a result helping sustain the artist and the art practice, whilst also opening the door for creativity to new art experimentation. Lastly, one important point that was flagged by the

interviewees was the need for clients to also have a certain extent of education about what they are consuming and what the narrative is behind the product. This could also help in making the two worlds even closer.

5. SUMMARY

This thesis has walked the reader through the complex relationship of art and business, using a variety of tools to assess the hypotheses laid out in the introduction, namely: for an artist to be financially successful in the 21st century, some extent of business knowledge must be acquired; there is still a lack of focus on marketing in art schools; those artists who possess sufficient knowledge of business management have better chances of sustaining their art studios even in times of crisis.

Following a scene-setting introduction where influences from the artistic work were highlighted reflecting on their artistic and financial success, the thesis moves on to analyse the theoretical background of art and marketing, in Chapter 2. This chapter provides a brief history of the dynamics of marketing, and the main shifts in this sphere over the last half a century, namely from a product-focus to a customer-focus. This shift has prompted an ever-more interactive consumer relationship, and a growth in “relationship-marketing”, which influences all sectors today, from the arts, to hospitality to public services, and inherently requires the engagement of a broader range of stakeholders, including non-profits.

In order to assess this symbiotic relationship between the two worlds, Chapter 2 also explores the role of arts in business, particularly as marketing becomes more artistic, and how various arts forms can be used to sell an idea, product or service. It also reflects on how the influence of art on forming and selling an idea translates in social justice movements.

However, with changing socio-economic contexts, particularly with that of COVID-19, or the cultural fallouts falling global economic crises and reprioritization of funding for example, this chapter also reflects on the dynamic and adaptive role arts and marketing need to have, to shift to new reality, ensuring accessibility and outreach irrelevant of the context.

With the scene set, Chapter 3 goes on to introduce the organization chosen for the case study – Studio Kunukku, as well as its marketing tools and strategies. Studio Kunukku provides a particularly interesting case given that it is based in Lebanon where the economic climate is challenging but the cultural scene is strong. The studio also branches out from traditional design studio functions, and serves to tell the stories of local

communities as well as preserve traditional cultures and traditions. The team have therefore had to think alternatively and diversely about the artistic products they offer, their marketing strategy, and the fine balance between the business and artistic worlds.

As further detailed in Chapter 4, this thesis used a combination of approaches, namely a secondary literature review and qualitative interviews with key informants. Chapter 4 examines the key informant interviews conducted within the framework of this thesis against the hypotheses presented in Chapter 1, analysing how artists within Studio Kunukku engage and combine the two worlds of arts and business. The author concludes that this qualitative data supports the hypotheses, whilst flagging some nuances for further research.

Throughout the thesis, it has been demonstrated that whilst the worlds of art and business are distinct, the way they interact can be of great value and benefit to both worlds. From boosting creativity of employers through artistic channels, to using arts in marketing campaigns, to applying business strategies to arts start-ups, there are benefits on both sides. Whilst a career in the arts is never easy – success is not guaranteed and can be difficult to measure, unlike the business world, where profit often defines accomplishments. Careers in the world of arts requires bravery and courage, to experiment and take risks. However, as explored above, the space for artistic creation and room for risk can be increased when an artist has at least a minimal financial stability, and when an artist or an artistic collective applies at least a minimum of business principles in order to ensure its future sustainability and artistic longevity.

To further explore these ideas, I suggest follow up research in a number of areas based on the evidence gathered during this thesis. Firstly, who is best placed to teach business and marketing to arts students, and what should the content of such a course look like? As highlighted by Fadi in his interview, this cannot and should not be purely business theory. It requires an understanding of the arts world, and of value of arts and creativity, a framework of learning that is not based solely on business development and on profit but on creating a space for creativity and artistic expansion, often abiding by a set of ethical and/or artistic principles. Secondly, I would recommend further research on the role of the consumer in an ever-more interactive marketing landscape. The customer can no longer be a passive consumer and should understand the product they are buying into, forming a social awareness and understanding around it. Studio Kunukku offers a

niche product that requires the consumer to understand the origins and backgrounds of what they produce. Whilst not all companies or art studios work in such a way, increasing social justice campaigns and social-business may increasingly demand that the consumer makes ethical and informed choices when purchasing. More research is needed on this to understand the influence this could have on both arts and marketing in the future.

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Abstract

This research addresses the complex relationship between art, marketing, and business life, focusing on visual arts as an art form. It reflects on the thought process of the artist when he embarks on a creative project, and the progression of determining the marketable work of an arts piece. The thesis focuses on a specific case study in a very unique economic context – namely a design studio start-up, Studio Kunukku, based in Lebanon, to examine this question further.

This thesis claims that despite the perceived differences between the arts and business worlds, business and art need each other. The aim of this thesis is therefore to analyse this gap further, and explore ways in which the two worlds can better interact, knowing that one cannot live without the other. Whilst this runs mutually both ways, this thesis zooms in on the benefits of basic business knowledge for artists and those working in the art world to survive and succeed. This thesis both claims and concludes that a limited extent of business knowledge is crucial for a successful artistic career, and assesses this through the lens of three main hypotheses: for an artist to be financially successful in the 21st century, some extent of business knowledge must be acquired; there is still a lack of focus on marketing in art schools; those artists who possess sufficient knowledge of business management have better chances of sustaining their art studios even in times of crisis.

Following the introduction, the thesis is framed around the theoretical background, established in Chapter 2, followed by a brief study of the studio and its marketing tools in Chapter 3. Chapter 4, offers in-depth analyses of the three interviews in light of my thesis hypotheses, drawing conclusions from the research in Chapter 5, and offering suggestions for businesses and artists regarding the usefulness of more intense and regular collaborations between the two fields.