

Merchandising and Brand Extension in the Music Industry

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Abstract

Use of brand extension in the music industry has become a focal point in current marketing trends. Musicians need to accept that in order to be successful they need to actively engage themselves in this process. This article presents the functional appeal of brand extension and strategies used to extend musicians' brands into different categories of products and services, identifying the most advantageous of them. While brand stretching is omnipresent in all genres of music, this work focuses on hip hop as the most prominent source of successful brand extensions into the areas of entrepreneurship and leadership, with names such as Diddy and Jay-Z being known even by people not familiar with their music. Although artists are still torn between love for music in its pure form and financial success, acceptance for their right to take advantage of their work spreads. It is concluded that multitasking may therefore become a standard not only in the hip hop industry but across all genres of music.

I. Introduction

In our everyday life, we tend to rely on brands when we make our purchase decisions without even realising how they affect our final choices. Branding is not a new device used by producers to attract consumers, neither is brand extension. Use of brand extension in the music industry, however, seems to be more and more important. It looks like every artist needs to develop his or her own brand in order to really exist on the market. It seems that musicians cannot just be performers anymore, and that there is a strong pressure for them to become entrepreneurs in their own right.

This research paper will attempt to present the functional appeal of brand extension and the strategies used in the music industry in order to successfully extend musicians' brands into different categories of products and

services. This article will attempt to find the reason for the growing popularity of using merchandising and brand extension in the music industry and what are the most successful techniques used by artists to extend their brands. Other questions that this work will answer are what are the reasons for using brand extension instead of creating new brands, why celebrity-endorsed and celebrity-owned brands are more appealing to consumers than regular brands and why the music industry, especially in the hip-hop sector, has become such a popular playground for brand extension. In order to answer all these questions, this paper will first discuss the main function of branding and the rationale behind brand extension. Next, it will consider the growing popularity of celebrity endorsement, along with brands owned by celebrities, referring to brand personality and lifestyle brands and how they are used in the brand extension process. Following this discussion, this work will try to show the rationale behind using brand extension in the music industry and what possible obstacles musicians might need to overcome. Lastly, this research paper will assess the strategies for a brand extension in the hip-hop industry along with the most prominent examples of the most successful brand extensions.

II. Brands - functional significance

The word “brand” is derived from the Old Norse word meaning “to burn”, as branding was the principal means by which animals were marked by the owners of livestock. Nowadays, branding is still the means by which a business can differentiate its goods. The benefits of this process have become more important as producers started becoming more and more distant from the buyers. As a result, a brand now serves as a means of assuring product authenticity and, most importantly, its quality. They act as an

assurance that the characteristics, functions and features of the branded product will remain the same for every item.¹

Brands identify the goods and services of one producer and differentiate them from those of competitors. Particular brand equity is exhibited when consumers respond more favourably to the marketing actions of one producer than they do to his competitor. The image of the producer in the consumers' minds is the basis for this brand equity.²

What is especially important is that a brand is much more than only the name or the object that it identifies. Consumers buy products for many more reasons than just their quality. The main difference between products and brands, therefore, is that products are made in factories, whereas brands are made and exist only in consumers' minds. Hence, the creation of a strong image and identity is a significant part of brand management. This is why it is not the brand on its own that is the real asset, but the brand loyalty created as an intellectual concept.³ Brand loyalty is a type of affective commitment - if this commitment is high, it could motivate consumers to continue the relationship between the brand and themselves.⁴

It needs to be emphasized, however, that the word "brand" does not refer solely to consumer products anymore. It includes places, companies, industrial products and services but also people, such as movie stars, politicians and musicians.⁵

1 Richard Cree, 'Papa's Got A Brand New Brand: An Investigation of Brand Strategy in the UK Music Industry' 4 (2) *The International Journal of Urban Labour and Leisure*, 4 <<http://www.ijull.org/vol4/2/cree.pdf>> accessed 23 August 2012.

2 Kusum L Ailawadi, Kevin Lane Keller, 'Understanding Retail Branding: Conceptual Insights and Research Priorities' (2004) 80 *Journal of Retailing* 331, 332.

3 Cree (n 1) 4-5, 8.

4 Tsan-Ming Choi et al, 'Fast Fashion Brand Extensions: An Empirical Study of Consumer Preferences' (2010) 17 *Brand Management* 472, 474.

5 Cree (n 1) 1.

III. Brand extensions

Establishing a new brand name in international markets requires a big investment, sometimes well over \$100 million, which makes it beyond the capability of most companies. This initial cost is not the only issue, companies need to face the struggle to broaden the market base of their products, avoid the price competition and differentiate products.⁶ Launching new products is then a business activity that is connected with high risk and high costs. Since success rates are usually below 50%, many companies tend to resort to brand extension strategies in order to make their new offers more attractive for consumers.⁷

Brand extension is usually defined as the use of an established brand name in order to enter new product classes or categories. It can be classified into two general forms - horizontal and vertical extensions. Horizontal extensions involve the application of an existing brand name to a new product. It can be either a product in a similar class or in a category new to a producer. Vertical extension refers to introducing a similar brand in the same product category, but with a different quality and price.⁸

Between 1977 and 1984, 40% of the brands introduced into the United States supermarkets were brand extensions. The main advantage of this strategy is the reduction in product introduction risk.⁹ It needs to be noted, however, that while brand extension is now one of the most frequently employed branding strategies, it is not risk-free. The failure rates of brand extensions in many high-tech

6 Ashley Lye, P Venkateswarlu, Jo Barrett, 'Brand Extensions: Prestige Brand Effects' (2001) 9 (2) *Australasian Marketing Journal* 53, 53.

7 Eva Martinez, Teresa Montaner, Jose M Pina, 'Brand Extension Feedback: The Role of Advertising' (2009) 62 *Journal of Business Research* 305, 305.

8 Choi (n 4) 473-474.

9 Mary W Sullivan, 'Brand Extensions: When To Use Them' (1992) 38 (6) *Management Science* 793, 793.

and fast moving industries are close to 80%.¹⁰ While chances of success are higher than in the regular new brand introduction strategy, it is never possible to precisely predict the market reaction and consumers' needs.

Another type of brand expansion is brand stretching. While the difference between brand extension and brand stretch is often difficult to define, brand stretch generally involves stretching brand names way beyond the original core product area and as such, it generates the greater risk.¹¹

The main advantage of all these types of brand expansion is its speed and lower costs. Building an entirely new brand with an unknown name takes both time and investment. Obviously, simply extending the same name also places some limitations on diversification and may in turn lead to a lack of creativity and innovation. The decision as to when to use the same brand name depends not only on the core brand image but also on internal company capabilities. It is very common for companies to be overconfident and stretch the brand too far outside of its original industry base. The best attitude seems to be a slow systematic progression to different but related industries rather than rushing from one end to another.¹²

While the risk of introducing brand extension always exists, consumer acceptance of a proposed extension is higher if the perceived quality of the brand is high. Another factor is a perceived match between product categories, especially if the skills seem to be transferable and the products are complementary.¹³ The success of brand

10 Ali Besharat, 'How Co-Branding Versus Brand Extensions Drive Consumers' Evaluations of New Products: A Brand Equity Approach' (2010) 39 *Industrial Marketing Management* 1240, 1241.

11 Mike Bastin, 'How Far Can You Stretch Your Brand?' *China Daily* (18 November 2011) <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-11/18/content_14118755.htm> accessed 23 August 2012.

12 *ibid.*

13 Lorraine Sunde, Roderick J Brodie, 'Consumer Evaluations of Brand Extensions: Further Empirical Results' (1993) 10 *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 47, 47.

extension depends on how consumers perceive the extended product and whether it can satisfy their needs. Other factors that may affect the consumer behaviours towards brand extensions include self-image, brand loyalty, and brand concept, consistency and involvement.¹⁴

Brand extension is a form of permanent and free advertising. If the product that was initially advertised has a unique and coined name, every addition to the basic product line to which the name is attached, makes the name grow stronger.¹⁵ It is also a balancing act and producers need to be very careful not to extend their brands too far as this may in turn become harmful to the brand. Careless licensing and attaching a logo or trademark to all kinds of unrelated products may destroy the integrity of the brand.¹⁶

IV. Celebrity endorsement

Celebrities are a common feature in the contemporary marketplace - they often become faces of consumer products, brands and organisations. Brands make use of well-known and liked celebrities by leveraging their equity.

By pairing a brand with a celebrity, a brand is able to leverage unique and positive secondary brand associations from a celebrity and gain consumer awareness, transfer positive associations tied to the celebrity onto the brand, build brand image and ultimately enhance the endorsed brand's equity.¹⁷

Celebrity endorsement is then a very useful tool used to improve communication with potential consumers by

14 Choi (n 4) 472, 474.

15 Victoria Slind-Flor, 'Money and Mayhem' [2007] *Intellectual Asset Management* 15, 15.

16 *ibid* 17.

17 Jasmina Ilicic, Cynthia M Webster, 'Effects of Multiple Endorsements and Consumer-Celebrity Attachment on Attitude and Purchase Intention' (2011) 19 *Australasian Marketing Journal* 230, 230.

creating connections between the advertised brand and consumers. The role of celebrity endorsement cannot be underestimated as it facilitates breaking down cultural barriers, helps to reposition brand images and, as a result, improves sales of the endorsed product. Even announcing an endorsement contract affects stock returns. An example of that could be an announcement of Tiger Woods' endorsement deal which increased Nike's stock value.¹⁸ There is no doubt then that celebrities are a worthwhile investment.¹⁹

The power of celebrities is not limited to selling products and brands; they influence popular culture and public life, which in turn has an impact on consumer perceptions and attitudes. This is why companies try to attract celebrities for various campaigns within different product categories. Such an overexposure, however, does not help a brand since consumers perceive celebrities endorsing multiple product categories as less credible.²⁰ Various researches show that the image associated with a celebrity is transferred onto the brands he or she endorses, and then from the celebrity to consumers through their brand selection, which communicates their self-concept that, in turn, forms a self-brand connection.²¹

The most important qualities affecting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement include their personal attractiveness, likeability, familiarity, believability, expertise and credibility. Consistency of the celebrity endorser's image with the image of the brand or product is also an important factor. If a celebrity matches the product and brand, he or

18 Christopher R Knittel, Victor Stango, 'Celebrity Endorsements, Firm Value and Reputation Risk: Evidence from the Tiger Woods Scandal' *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* (25 August 2010) 4 <http://www.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/knittel/papers/Tiger_latest.pdf> accessed 24 April 2013.

19 Ilicic (n 17) 230, 230.

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid* 230-231.

she is perceived as more credible and persuasive so it is important that the spokesperson's characteristics are relevant for the attributes of the brand.²² It is, therefore, important for both the brand and the celebrity, to pick up the match wisely since consumers perceive celebrity endorsers as believing in the brands they support and look for reasons for the endorsement. This is why they react more favourably if a celebrity endorses only one product. The persuasive power grows if an endorser is seen as an expert in the given category, making the decision to buy the brand easier.²³

The reason why celebrity endorsement works so well for selling products is that the consumer attachment to a celebrity affects consumer attitude toward the brand and influences purchase intentions. According to the attachment theory, the basic human need to make strong emotional attachments with significant others results in the relationship between a consumer and a brand. In this scenario then a brand acts as a link to a significant other, i.e. to a celebrity to which a consumer feels emotionally attached. Consumer attachment to a celebrity leads to a higher attitude towards the brand endorsed by a celebrity because consumers see celebrities as their role models or at least people they would like to be associated with. If a celebrity endorses a brand, consumers see that as their rational decision and perceive them as believing in the endorsed brand or product. Buying such products is a way of getting closer to the celebrity. They may not have the same lifestyle but at least they wear the same clothes, use the same perfumes or drive the same cars.²⁴

A. Celebrity-owned brands

It seems that not only producers noticed how big the power of celebrities is but also celebrities themselves are

²² *ibid* 231.

²³ *ibid*.

²⁴ *ibid* 232, 235.

ready to take advantage of their persuasive power. In recent years, more and more celebrities decided to use their name as a brand on its own right and started developing ranges of products and services. It is no longer about brands extending into different categories and using celebrity endorsement as an effective marketing and promotional tool. Rather about celebrities using their names as brands and extending themselves into completely new categories. It usually starts with the support from some other brand, that already exists in the market, but being a silent partner in the business partnership sealed with a celebrity. The use of the professional expertise combined with the known name, brings astounding results.

In the past when a celebrity decided to lend his or her image to further a product it was seen as a sell-out. Nowadays, however, getting behind a product and using the fame to support it is seen as a good example of entrepreneurship.

The kind of active investment we are seeing from celebrities like 50 Cent, Ashton Kutcher, Sean Combs and Leonardo DiCaprio is marked by market research, personal engagement in the product and an ownership stake. Sure, a lot of these glitzy moguls-in-the-making have business managers and research teams, but compare their entrepreneurial endeavours to what they could be doing - renting out their likenesses to underwear ads - and you have got to admit they are a little bit more engaged.²⁵

It seems that it is not enough to be an artist anymore; being a celebrity investor is now an essential ingredient if a celebrity wants to be seen as successful. 'It is hip to be an entrepreneur, maybe more so than ever, and being hip while making money could be reason enough to become an

25 Karsten Strauss, 'Celebrity Entrepreneurs on the Rise?' *Forbes* (16 May 2012) <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/karstenstrauss/2012/05/16/celebrity-entrepreneurs-on-the-rise/>> accessed 23 August 2012.

investor'.²⁶ The list of celebrities becoming entrepreneurs is endless. Lady Gaga, after engaging in many endorsement deals, such as the one with MAC where she endorsed her own line of cosmetics, has now become a major shareholder in Backplane – a platform connecting music and sports stars with their fans through social networks. Ashton Kutcher founded a venture firm, A-Grade Investments that aims at scanning for tech start-ups to which it could lend money. Justin Bieber has stakes in the messaging platform Tinchat, the social-app Stamped, as well as Spotify and Sojo Studios.²⁷ These are just a few examples which are only a tip of the celebrity investments' iceberg and with the current trends, it seems like this iceberg can only grow bigger in the future.

B. Brand personality

What is particularly interesting is how it is possible that celebrities with no professional expertise will manage to become successful in endorsing other brands or promoting their own. Celebrities can convince consumers to buy particular products even though they did not take part in the creative process and all they did was lend their face to support it. In other cases, they might even be active in the creation of a product but it is still quite a mystery why consumers trust a good singer to also be a good engineer.

The answer to these questions may be in the theory of brand personality. Brand personality is defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand, including gender, age, human personality and socioeconomic class.²⁸ By associating brands with certain human characteristics, consumers are anthropomorphizing them. These personalities differentiate brands in consumers' minds even if consumers are not able to articulate these differences. 'The colourless, odourless and tasteless vodka product

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Choi (n 4) 476.

category is a case in point. One vodka may be seen as “cool” and “hip”, whereas another may be described as “intellectual” and “conservative”.²⁹

This process of association is indeed a very strong marketing device. Consumers, who identify themselves with a particular personality, will have a greater preference for the brands matching this dimension.³⁰ Brand personality, therefore, plays a pivotal role in attitudes of consumers and their purchase intentions. Consumers are familiar with the rugged persona associated with Harley-Davidson and Marlboro, the youthful excitement of Pepsi or sophistication of Mercedes Benz and they react to them accordingly. This is why it is crucial for producers to understand their target audience and try to build the personality of their brand that would match the one of the potential consumers.³¹

Brand personality has a few positive effects as it influences consumer preferences, elicits their emotions, encourages self-expression and stimulates active information processing. What is the most important, though, is that brand personality not only increases levels of loyalty and trust, but also influences brand attitudes and associations while at the same time providing a basis for product differentiation. By creating favourable brand associations among consumers, which they would regard as satisfying their needs, a favourable brand personality is created. Brand personality is then a non-product-related attribute of a brand that has the power to detract or add to a consumer’s impression of the brand.³²

As it was explained, brand personality gives a brand human-like features. In order to attract consumers,

29 Bernd Schmitt, ‘The Consumer Psychology of Brands’ (2012) 22 *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 7, 11.

30 Choi (n 4) 476.

31 Traci H Freling, Jody L Crosno, David H Henard, ‘Brand Personality Appeal: Conceptualization and Empirical Validation’ (2011) 39 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 392, 392.

32 *ibid* 393, 395.

producers need to manage their brands so that they appeal to the target audience. Creating a brand as a person may be a lengthy and complicated process. Using a celebrity is then an alternative route to this goal saving time, money, effort and resources. The features associated with a particular celebrity are easily transferred to the product so the brand adapts the personality of the chosen celebrity. The same logic works in the case of celebrity-owned brands – if a celebrity decides to launch a product, this product will be seen as having the same features as the celebrity in question. Using celebrities to promote products is then not only about attracting the attention by using a famous face, which would only have a short-term effect. It is about matching the personalities, which could turn out to be profitable in the long-term.

The important part is then the right choice of celebrity so he or she matches the product or brand. Using a celebrity who is seen as tacky, controversial and is associated with a hard-partying lifestyle, such as Paris Hilton, for promoting a high-end product could only backfire and tarnish the luxury brand image. She is, however, very successful in promoting her clothing line, perfumes, handbags, watches, stationery, bedding and footwear.³³ The reason for this is probably that she is known for her love of luxury and splendour so consumers looking for products having these features, are inevitably choosing the products she promotes. Others may actually like the product but try to hide the label in order not to be associated with such a persona.

On the other side of this spectrum, there are celebrities who are associated with high quality products, prestige and respect. A good example could be Bruce Willis who is an award-winning Hollywood actor, and is also engaged in his own business activities, such as the Planet Hollywood

33 Jen Ortiz, 'Surprise? Paris Hilton Earns Over \$10M a Year From 17 Different Product Lines' *Business Insider* (1 June 2011) <http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-06-01/entertainment/30076238_1_piers-morgan-paris-hilton-product-lines> accessed 23 August 2012.

restaurant chain. It was not a surprise when he agreed to endorse Belvedere's Sobieski vodka, which is known for its quality and is portrayed as a top shelf product in its category. The famous actor did not agree only to become the ambassador of the product, which is now advertised as 'designed by Bruce Willis', but he also obtained a 3.3% stake in the company in exchange for signing a four-year contract to promote the Sobieski vodka brand world-wide.³⁴ Such an endorsement contract benefits both sides - it strengthens the prestigious image of the Sobieski vodka by associating it with a respected celebrity, but it also reinforces Bruce Willis' image as a good businessman. If the sides of this deal were not equally respected, i.e. if the actor agreed to support a low-end product, instead of improving the appeal of the promoted brand, he would tarnish his own. A good example of such a disaster could be Donald Trump advertising "Trump Steaks", the decision more than questionable. Sometimes such a mismatch may only raise some eyebrows like in the case of "Sex and the City" star - Kim Cattrall promoting Super Mario for Nintendo DS. Nevertheless, obtaining the right balance between the product/brand and the celebrity chosen to endorse it is crucial since a mistake may negatively affect both.

C. Lifestyle brands

Another consideration when trying to understand the power of brand extension is a creation of "lifestyle brand". Harley Davidson is a lifestyle brand since the consumers associating themselves with this brand use the product as a lifestyle, i.e. they associate themselves with the images linked to the brand. In other words, it is not only about a purchase decision, being a Harley Davidson consumer means living a certain lifestyle. Products with such a status can extend the

34 Amelie Baubeau, David Kesmodel, 'Bruce Willis Sees Spirits in Equity Deal With Belvedere' *The Wall Street Journal* (23 December 2009) <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703478704574611690552812758.html>> accessed 23 August 2012.

brand to all kinds of different areas and categories that consumers might buy. Sometimes the extension might go into fields completely unrelated to the original product. For Harley Davidson it resulted in extending the brand not only to t-shirts, leather jackets, helmets and beer but also perfume, cribbage boards, wedding-cake toppers, condoms or Barbie dolls.³⁵

Creating a lifestyle brand is, therefore, a very worthwhile undertaking. Once a brand is established, the possibilities for the extension are endless. However, the process of giving the brand the lifestyle dimension might be lengthy and it might not always succeed since not all brands have the potential to have such an appeal. Some industries, however, are particularly prone to welcome lifestyle brands. The music industry is one of such examples. Music is not only about the sound, it is about certain flair, the aura that surrounds the artist and with which the audience wants to be associated. It is easy to manipulate consumers' attitudes and make them believe that whatever their favourite artist has is a must-have. This is why establishing a brand instead of just performing is the focus of the music marketing nowadays. It is an unstoppable machine with unlimited power, which is exploited by the biggest players in the show business game.

V. Brand extension in the music industry

There is no doubt that a musician's name is one of his or her most important assets. It encompasses the reputation an artist built around it and what consumers use as a point of reference to identify the artists they enjoy. An artist is able to protect this asset by obtaining registered trademark rights to a word, series of words, stylised words or logo. Artists need to consider in advance what they want to do with their brand when applying for a trademark. If they decide to extend the brand, they need to ensure it is protected with regard to all relevant goods or services. A

³⁵ Slind-Flor (n 15) 15.

brand name can also be protected even without a registration if an artist has managed to establish a reputation associated with a given name over a significant period.³⁶

Trademark protection gives an artist a legitimate right to use his or her brand with regard to certain goods or services. It also guarantees a right to prevent other parties producing either music or merchandise from using the artist's mark, as it could lead to a loss of revenue for the given artist or damage to his or her reputation. Another merchandiser selling, for example, t-shirts of poor quality with the artist's name or logo, not only takes over the revenue that this artist could gain. He also potentially tarnishes the positive association with the artist's brand name if consumers are disappointed with the quality of the product they purchased not knowing that it was not in fact a product authorised by their idol. Another significant benefit of a trademark registration is that once registered, the brand can be used to exploit other valuable revenue channels, including merchandising, licensing or sponsorship.³⁷

Although brand stretching is a very popular marketing strategy, there used to be a certain reluctance to take advantage of it in the music industry. The money-art dichotomy and the tension between artistic integrity and popular success were the main forces stopping artists from exploiting their fame in order to earn more money. This attitude, however, has shifted as it became obvious that artists were simultaneously the product, producer and brand.³⁸ What used to be seen as a sell-out is now seen as a good decision. Artists do not have to hold back and refuse good business deals out of fear of being seen as "not artistic" enough. In fact, they pursue their careers and get involved with various industries like the best businessmen, with their

36 Georgina Harris, 'The Sugababes: the trademark rights associated with band names' (2010) 21(5) *Entertainment Law Review* 165, 165-167.

37 *ibid* 167.

38 Krzysztof Kubacki, Robin Croft, 'Markets, Music and All That Jazz' (2011) 45 (5) *European Journal of Marketing* 805, 805.

fans patting them on the back and happily spending their money on products endorsed by their idols.

It is estimated that in 2004, Ozzy Osbourne earned US \$35 million from concert sales and another US \$15 million from merchandising. It shows how big a business merchandising is in the music industry and how important revenue stream it constitutes. Stretching a brand name beyond the usual classes such as video/sound recordings and entertainment services into fields including obvious merchandise goods such as clothing, stickers or mugs is usually the first step of the brand extension strategy. Next step is to extend the brand into more unusual items such as dolls, as registered by the Spice Girls, or suntan lotion and perfume, as registered by the Pussycat Dolls.³⁹

The music industry is very peculiar though, with its self-obsession and desire to stand apart from all the other markets. While there is still some reluctance to fully embrace the principles of branding, it cannot ignore modern corporate pressures. Four of the big five major record companies - Sony, BMG, Warners and Universal - are owned by multinational companies with no music interests but with important brand assets. Even though these corporations tend to leave their music subsidiaries to run themselves independently, there are still pressures to integrate the successful management model across all its divisions.⁴⁰

The music industry is especially also interesting because 'musicians' identities are multiple and fluid, adapted to social conditions encountered in everyday life, and inseparable from the art work⁴¹ and as such are transferred to their music. They are not, however, free to be whoever they want to be. The society and the values it believes in determine what kind of people can become musicians, what

³⁹ Harris (n 35) 167.

⁴⁰ Cree (n 1) 4.

⁴¹ Kubacki (n 35) 806.

types of musicians can be recognized and what social position is given to them. Musicians need to be very careful since they are not only judged by their performance, but they are also presented with various opportunities to express their identities in their everyday working lives and everything they decide to do, may affect their overall image.⁴²

The universal routes that every artist needs to follow in order to become a brand on his/her own right are now an inevitable part of an effective marketing strategy. An artist starts out as just another new and unknown act and depends heavily on solid product he or she is trying to sell, as well as good marketing in order to make an impact. Over time, an artist may start being recognized as a source of consistently high quality and each act is expected to be as good as the one before. Gradually an artist manages to develop into the personality of a star and then eventually, those with the strongest brand reach the iconic status. Artists, therefore, just like regular branded products, need to go through the entire process of brand creation. They start as an unbranded product, then brand working as a reference point, brand as personality, and they end up as icons. At this stage, identities of many of the biggest and most successful stars begin to become tied up with the identity of their label. The reason for that is often that they outsell other artists so that they become the major name bringing the highest revenues or that they simply start their own labels and start promoting new and upcoming artists.⁴³

Because of technological innovation and digital revolution, all the relationships between stakeholders in the music industry are being redefined. Due to this change, all music producers, but especially the major record companies, have to look for new ways of creating and sustaining competitive advantage for their releases. One of the potential solutions is the development of strong brands to

42 *ibid.*

43 Cree (n 1) 7-8.

which consumers would feel strongly attached. Such a brand not only guarantees a bigger chance of success of new releases but it also allows sustaining a price differential over competitors, based on the perceived extra value of the brand. A strong brand name gives an unquestionable advantage. When we think about artists such as Madonna, Michael Jackson or Lady Gaga, we do not only think of recording artists, these are images connecting a number of different areas of culture.⁴⁴ These associations attract a bigger audience which is exactly what record companies are looking for.

The need to develop a strong brand which can later be stretched originates in the said digital revolution as, according to the Recording Industry Association of America, illegal music downloads were responsible for a 23% decrease in sales of music CDs worldwide only between 2000 and 2006. It was reported that music sales fell from 449.2 million in 2007 to 360.6 million in 2008.⁴⁵ Looking at these numbers, it should not come as a surprise that artists need to start looking for alternative sources of income. Illegal downloading created a major dent in profits, forcing the artists to look for new and innovative ways to ensure they can remain entertainers without having to search for a new profession in order to pay their bills.⁴⁶

Using brands to boost the income is certainly not a new device and different strategies were used in order to take advantage of brands' power. Licensing tracks for use in movies, television and advertising helped Moby's 1999 album "Play" sell over 10 million copies worldwide even though it underperformed commercially upon release.

44 *ibid* 13.

45 Julian Gratton, 'How the Music Industry Is Using Brands and Advertising to Plug the Gap Left By Illegal Downloads' (*Red C*, 20 October 2009)

<<http://www.redcmarketing.net/blog/marketing/how-the-music-industry-is-using-brands-and-advertising-to-plug-the-gap-left-by-illegal-downloads/>> accessed 23 August 2012.

46 *ibid*.

Almost all set to be a total flop; it is now the number one selling electronica album of all time.⁴⁷ Similarly, 'Too Close', a song by Alex Clare released in the United Kingdom in 2011, without much initial outcome, has become international success and has now reached over 43 million views on YouTube after being featured as the soundtrack to Microsoft's advertisement for Internet Explorer 9 in 2012.⁴⁸ Another route the artists may follow in order to increase the revenue are sponsorship deals. Every concert is sponsored by some often completely musically unrelated brand, with the major ones for the sponsorship deals being Pepsi, Coca-Cola or Heineken.⁴⁹

Brands and music are working together to generate new revenue streams and they succeed in these endeavours. It is estimated that to date, brands devote 5% of their advertising budgets to music, and brand managers strongly believe that music is an effective way of building brand awareness. At the world's biggest music industry trade fair – MIDEM 2009, key players of both music industry, such as Sony BMG and EMI, and brands agencies, including Coca Cola, met behind closed doors to discuss and explore practices for the most effective music-brand collaborations.⁵⁰ In March 2013 Universal Music Group announced a new global partnership with Bang & Olufsen, the Danish provider of high-end audio and video products. The official goal of this collaboration is to allow music lovers to 'experience recorded music in the highest possible quality'.⁵¹ The strategic rationale seems to be achieving a perfect blend of the creative image of UMG and the high quality and excellence associated with Bang & Olufsen.

47 *ibid.*

48 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYXjLbMZFmo&ob=av2n>

49 *ibid.*

50 *ibid.*

51 <http://www.universalmusic.com/corporate/detail/2460>

While some of the brand extensions in the music industry seem to be fairly rational, like Britney Spears promoting her own line of perfumes or Nicki Minaj, known for her eccentric looks, promoting her own line of makeup for MAC, others are astonishing, to say the least, with JLS condoms being just one of such examples.

A. Hip-hop industry

While the brand extension is a phenomenon occurring in every sector of the music industry, it seems like the hip-hop music industry is the breeding ground for the biggest amounts of strong brands extending into many different categories of products. The origins of hip-hop can be found in the neighbourhoods of poor black and Latino families in New York City. From the days it was born in the 1970s when it was mostly underground and spread in the streets to the present day, it has evolved into a multi-billion dollar global phenomenon and its contribution to the economy of the United States is estimated to be in the billions of dollars. Its growth was rapid and ‘by the end of the 1980s it became the single most potent global youth force in a generation’,⁵²

Hip-hop is not only the music, it is a culture and the core four elements that emerged in the 1970s include MCing, DJing, breaking and graffiti art. This culture is reflected not only in the music, but also in the clothing, art, film, literature, social advocacy, entrepreneurialism and politics. It provides a certain lifestyle that incorporates various groups of products, which can be associated with it. ‘Hip-hop is the thread that holds together the fabric of today’s urban-youth culture and it touches a multitude of

52 Valerie L Patterson, ‘Engaging Hip-Hop Leadership: Diversity, Counter-Hegemony and Glorified Misogyny – (Free-Style Version)’ 1 <<http://www.ipa.udel.edu/3tad/papers/workshop2/patterson-newman.pdf>> accessed 23 August 2012.

industries - from entertainment to apparel to marketing to technology. To put it bluntly, hip-hop is big business'.⁵³

Hip-hop culture proved to be very demanding even for the artists and in the mainstream; it is not enough anymore to be a rapper. Nowadays it is expected that artists will also engage in entrepreneurship. The role model consists of a rapper turned chairman, with Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter, Sean "Diddy" Combs, Dana "Queen Latifah" Owens, Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, to name only a few, being the examples of successful transition from hip-hop to corporate culture.⁵⁴

Since rappers are often too controversial to be sponsored by a mainstream brand, they often create their own. Eminem, for instance, created Shade 45 Radio Channel, Shady Games, Shady Ltd. Clothing and Eight Mile Style LLC, stretching his brand name into different sectors while still maintaining the integrity of the core brand.⁵⁵ Creating their own brands is also a very productive move in terms of free advertising. It is very easy for musicians to incorporate brand names into lyrics and since they are the owners of the brand, they do not have to pay extraordinary amounts of money for such advertising. 'After all, if millions of people are downloading the track and singing along to it... what better way is there to get your brand on the lips of a nation?'.⁵⁶

VI. Brand extension strategies

When discussing brand extension strategies in the music industry, there are two names that can never be overseen - Jay-Z and Diddy. In the May 2007 issue of *Ebony Magazine*, it listed the most influential 'Blacks in America' and placed both of them in the business category

53 *ibid* 1, 3.

54 *ibid* 4-5.

55 Gratton (n 44).

56 *ibid*.

presenting them as president/CEO Def Jam and founder of Sean Jean and Bad Boy, respectively.⁵⁷ In a recent Forbes article, they were both featured as potential future billionaires.⁵⁸

A. Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter

Shawn Carter, known as Jay-Z, has been regarded as a very successful entrepreneur for a while now and his individual fortune is estimated to be around US \$450 million. Most recently, Jay-Z and his wife Beyoncé topped Forbes' 2012 World's Highest-Paid Celebrity Couples list.⁵⁹ He has sold more than 50 million albums, won 10 Grammys and had more number one albums on America's Billboard chart than any other solo artist. Nevertheless, he is also an extraordinarily successful businessman.⁶⁰ Jay-Z holds stakes in a very wide range of businesses, including Brooklyn Nets, ad firm Translation, cosmetics company Carol's Daughter and the 40/40 Club chain. In 2008, he signed 10-year deal with Live Nation worth \$150 million.⁶¹ He has partnerships with Coca-Cola, Budweiser, Reebok, Microsoft and Hewlett Packard.⁶²

57 Patterson (n 49) 5.

58 Zack O'Malley, 'Who Will Be Hip-Hop's First Billionaire?' *Forbes* (22 September 2011) <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/zackomalleygreenburg/2011/09/22/who-will-be-hip-hops-first-billionaire-jay-z-diddy-dr-dre-birdman-50-cent/>> accessed 23 August 2012.

59 Nida Dar, 'Jay-Z, Beyonce to Become Forbes Highest-Paid Couple' (*Business Recorder*, 9 August 2012) <<http://www.brecorder.com/arts-a-leisure/261-life-a-style/72829-jay-z-beyonce-to-become-forbes-highest-paid-couples.html>> accessed 23 August 2012.

60 Simon Hattenstone, 'Jay-Z: The Boy from the Hood Who Turned Out Good' *The Guardian* (20 November 2010) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/nov/20/jay-z-interview-simon-hattenstone>> accessed 23 August 2012.

61 O'Malley (n 55).

62 John Jurgensen, 'The State of Jay-Z's Empire' *Wall Street Journal* (22 October 2010) <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304741404575564092478617462.html>> accessed 23 August 2012.

He started his music career in 1996 but despite his efforts, no major labels wanted to sign him. Together with two partners, he decided to form an independent label Roc-A-Fella Records. Following his commercial success, the label entered a joint venture with another major company Def Jam. By 2005, Jay-Z became the president and CEO of Def Jam.⁶³ Currently, the label evolved into The Island Def Jam Music Group and is comprised of Island Records, Def Jam Recordings, and Mercury Records. Representing artists such as Justin Bieber, Kanye West, Mariah Carey, Rihanna, Bon Jovi and Duffy, it is now recognized as one of the most successful labels in the industry.⁶⁴

In late 1990s, Jay-Z launched his clothing line Rocawear. On the brand's official website, we can read that

[it] represents a borderless, global lifestyle. With Roc-A-Fella Records serving as the initial launch pad, The ROC realized its prowess in creating culture far beyond the realm of music. Hence, the birth of the apparel company, Rocawear. Like Roc-A Fella Records, Rocawear quickly staked its claim in hip-hop history becoming the destination brand for street savvy consumers.⁶⁵

The brand was, and still is, very successful, bringing US \$700 million in sales annually. This allowed Jay-Z to sell his clothing label in 2007 for US \$204 million, while still maintaining creative and operational control.⁶⁶

Shawn Carter ventured into sports bar chains and lounges when he opened his 40/40 Club and a Greenwich Village bistro, the Spotted Pig. He created them as an extension of himself and delivered brand recognition by

63 *ibid.*

64 <http://www.islanddefjam.com/>

65 <http://rocawear.com/>

66 Rasha Proctor, 'Jay-z Brand Extension' (14 December 2011)

<<http://www.rashaproctor.com/wp-content/uploads/Jay-Z-Brand-Equity.pdf>>
accessed 23 August 2012.

mentioning the club in his songs.⁶⁷ He also retained creative control when he entered into a deal with Reebok and became the first non-athlete to have a sneaker line with this company. In 2006, he agreed to help with designing Budweiser Select campaign, shattering the myth of Champagne-drinking-rappers. He uses all these deals to shape his own public image and this is why he carefully considers each of them before rushing into any decisions.⁶⁸

Jay-Z created his brand based on high quality product he provides, namely, his music. His brand is not heavily dependent on his own personality but he maintains its appeal by entering into various business ventures. Instead of creating a different stage persona for himself, he is now a successful and respected businessman, taken seriously by all his partners.

B. Sean "Diddy" Combs

Sean Combs, who has been known variously as "Puffy", "Puff Daddy", and "P.Diddy", in August 2005 decided that henceforward he wanted to be known as "Diddy". This brought about proceedings against him in the UK, as there was already one Diddy in the music game.⁶⁹ It does not look, however, that this dispute could in any way harm his already established brand. His net worth is estimated to be US \$500 million with music making up less than 20% of his revenue. He has stakes in his own record label Bad Boy, clothing line Sean John and Enyce, marketing firm Blue Flame and most recently, he entered into a deal with Diageo's Ciroc vodka which brings him double-digit millions each year as he receives an annual cut of profits as well as a percentage from every bottle sold.⁷⁰

67 *ibid.*

68 Jurgensen (n 59).

69 Michele Boote, 'Diddy Do It?' (2007) 197 *Trademark World* 18, 18.

70 O'Malley (n 55).

His success is not coincidental, it was all a carefully planned strategy he followed in order to establish his own brand. He started from establishing his own record label Bad Boy Records that then was turned into a multifaceted entertainment powerhouse – Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group, of which he is the CEO and founder. Apart from its core function as a music label, it now encompasses a broad range of businesses including recording facility, music publishing, television and film production, artist management, apparel and restaurants. His success in music has translated into a collection of businesses, not limited only to entertainment but also fashion and fragrance. The fashion brand Sean John, which debuted in 1999, turned out to be a tremendous success with annual retail sales in the United States exceeding US \$525 million. Combs made sure that his brand is not only popular but also luxurious and of the best quality and in 2004 he was honoured by the Council of Fashion Designers of America as Men's Wear Designer of the Year. Following the success of the clothing line, he decided to form a partnership with Estée Lauder Companies, and has launched three fragrances, of which two won the FiFi awards in the best men's fragrance prestige category.⁷¹

In 2007, Sean Combs signed a deal with Diageo to oversee and manage all marketing and branding initiatives for Ciroc Vodka. On its website we can read that the reason for that partnership was that 'the company understood that [he is] not just a celebrity endorser, [he is] a brand builder. [He is] a luxury brand builder'.⁷² Even though many can see him as overly confident egocentric, his successful businesses only prove that he really is the person he claims to be.

His trust in his own capabilities and the power of the brand he now rightfully represents is reflected in everything he does. He launched a series of headphones, advertised by

71 <http://www.seanjohn.com/>

72 <http://www.ciroc.com/>

a slogan 'Diddybeats embody the celebration of the finest in music, luxury and pop music. In other words, these incredible sounding in-ear headphones represent all things Diddy'.⁷³ Egocentric or not, he certainly knows how to run the business.

C. Musical collectives

What is especially popular, and what does not seem to be as prominent within any other genre, is the creation of musical collectives. Under one brand name, they unite not only rappers but also DJ's, producers, songwriters and often other non-musical members, such as photographers, filmmakers, designers or bloggers. They all cooperate in order to promote each other as individuals, as well as the umbrella brand they create together.

One of the most popular hip-hop collectives of all times, the Wu-Tang Clan is also the most revolutionary rap group of the mid-'90s but their music is only part of their influence. More importantly, the way they decided to operate completely changed the standard concept of a hip-hop crew. The Wu-Tang Clan emerged in 1993 as a loose congregation of nine MCs. They decided that instead of releasing one album after another, they would establish their brand with their debut album and then engage into as many side projects as possible. In this process, thanks to the initial attention brought by the strong first release, each individual member became a star on his own right as well as received individual royalty cheques.⁷⁴

The Wu-Tang brand became very powerful and in short time they were introducing new associates as a kind of a brand-name franchise. While many argue that the Wu-Tang brand was suffering from inconsistency and overexposure, the commercial success was indisputable. They released a video game, a comic book and a clothing line; they also

⁷³ <http://www.diddybeats.com/>

⁷⁴ <http://www.wutang-corp.com>.

operate a record label, fashion house and film production company, all under the Wu-Tang brand.⁷⁵

In March 2011, yet another collective emerged and attracted a lot of public attention. The Los Angeles-based hip-hop collective Odd Future (also known as Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All and OFWGKTA) seems to follow the same strategy as their predecessors. The group consists of skaters, artists, photographers and friends, all living in Los Angeles. Through internet releases, they managed to create a very strong fan base, which in turn brought about the attention of the mainstream. Under the Odd Future umbrella brand, each artist releases his own tracks. Thank to this strategy, with every critically acclaimed release of an individual artist, the Odd Future brand becomes stronger and that appeal is then transpired onto each member of the collective. As in the case of Wu-Tang Clan, the strategy proved to be reliable.⁷⁶

In only one year, Odd Future came from unknown underground artists to worldwide fame. They have created their own independent music label - Odd Future Record and gained their own slot on Adult Swim for their show *Loiter Squad*. They also opened their own pop-up shop selling all types of Odd Future merchandise, such as socks, skate decks, shirts and air fresheners. While it was intended to be only a temporary store open for a couple months, it still stands to this day. They also sell their merchandise in their online store, which enjoys unabated popularity since their fans want to follow their distinctive clothing style, inspired by the old school rappers.⁷⁷

Manchester is also a home of successful musical collectives. The Murkage Cartel is an arts organisation made

75 Cree (n 1) 3.

76 Jarvis, 'OFT x CCS Present: The History of Odd Future | A Beginners Guide to OFWGKTA' (*Odd Future Talk*, 24 August 2012) <<http://oddfuturetalk.com/2012/08/oft-x-ccs-present-the-history-of-odd-future-a-beginners-guide-to-ofwgkta/>> accessed 29 August 2012.

77 *ibid.*

up of the core band Murkage, and a group of closely cooperating with it DJs, artwork designers, producers, promoters, bloggers, stylists, radio presenters, film makers and photographers. They all support each other in their endeavours, promoting both the Murkage Cartel brand, as well as their own names. It would be interesting to see where they are going to be in a few years' time, especially since they have already started being involved in merchandising and sell their originally designed tees, which proved to be the first step in almost every brand extension strategy.⁷⁸

While each of the artists presented above is different and they adopt different marketing strategies, there seems to be a pattern that they all have in common. If we wanted to create a model for brand extension in the hip-hop industry, it would follow a few basic steps. First one would be the same as it is for every emerging brand - deliver a good quality product, gain recognition and establish brand as a reference point of consistently high quality products. Once an artist's name earns this positive association, an artist may start slowly extending his or her brand. It looks like the most common step is to create an independent label, which will promote not only the core artist but also new talents he or she discovered. These new artists are assumed to represent the same quality as the founding artist and as such are his or her brand extension as well. If they succeed, it only reinforces the label's appeal, which in turn also transfers to the core artist.

Another essential element in the early steps of the brand extension strategy is the creation of clothing lines. It usually starts with simple T-shirts with artists' logos but following the success of the artists, they can become rightful fashion labels. The number of artists expanding into fashion has been on the rise in the recent years, giving consumers

⁷⁸ Daniel Nolan, 'Interview: Murkage Cartel' *City Life* (6 May 2011) <http://www.citylife.co.uk/news_and_reviews/news/10019404_interview__murkage_cartel> accessed 28 August 2012.

plenty of options to express their individuality and style.⁷⁹ This is why it is important for the artist to create a unique style, which he or she represents and which consumers may follow by buying the clothes he or she endorses.

Once these three pillars – strong brand name, record label and fashion label – are established, the possibilities are endless. Depending on their own personal style and attitude, they may want to create a luxury brand, like Diddy, or become entrepreneurs, like Jay-Z. Artists need to be very careful though as all their actions influence and affect their brand names and images, both, with their fans and their investors. This is why the hip-hop artists need to make sure that their brand extensions are all reflections of themselves.⁸⁰

VII. Conclusion

The intense competition in the dynamic marketplace, combined with high cost of investment needed to enter new markets, have pushed companies to adopt new and innovative brand strategies⁸¹ Since brands belong to their owners who helped create and nourish them, they should have a right to exploit them and prevent others from taking advantage of their work. This research paper aimed at explaining why brand extension is so popular in the music industry. Since artists are producers, products and brands at the same time, they should have a right to take advantage of their work.

Hip-hop culture has produced very successful artists who have managed to extend their brands into the areas of entrepreneurship and leadership. This global phenomenon is a symbol of innovation and creativity offering useful lessons for various mainstream organizations in the public and private arena. There is still a struggle for the artists as to how to extend further into the mainstream without losing the

⁷⁹ Proctor (n 63).

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ Besharat (n 9) 1247.

street appeal, which is supposed to be inseparable from the hip-hop culture.⁸² Looking at the successful artists becoming entrepreneurs, there is no doubt that the acceptance for the business deals creeping into the hip-hop culture is now a common feature. If this trend remains, the multitasking artists may become a standard in the industry, as hip-hop is definitely not the lonely island. The only question is how much consumers are willing to accept and, consequently, how far the brand can extend.

82 Patterson (n 49) 11.

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