GALLERY BRAND IMPACT ON ARTIST NAME RECOGNITION: EVIDENCE FROM RUSSIA

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Abstract: This paper examines the influence of the gallery brand on artist name recognition in the contemporary art market in Russia. The authors first discuss theoretical approaches to understanding the phenomenon of branding in the art market, as well as private gallery brand formation, and offer a brief description of the art market structure, specifying the features of branding in this sphere. Then they present and discuss the empirical data obtained by means of semi-structured expert interviews and online survey conducted in 2024. The main findings from expert interviews show that gallery brand formation is an important part of artist promotion and art industry development. The used questionnaire consists of both questions based on the relevant literature, and questions elaborated by authors based on the insights gained from interviews. The analysis of survey results leads to the conclusion that gallery brand has a positive effect on artist recognition, and setting a higher price for his works; the main functions of a contemporary art gallery include promoting the artist, selling works of art, and developing contemporary art.

Keywords: art market, private gallery brand, artist brand, artist recognition, contemporary art.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, artists face the need to respond to challenges caused by the changing demands of people and the development of market relations in the field of culture (Gürşen, 2020). Accordingly, the urgency of finding marketing solutions that will help contemporary Russian artists increase the recognition and attractiveness of their works is growing. International experience indicates the important role of galleries in promoting artists (Prinz et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand new developments in the galleries activity in connection with their impact on the destiny of artists in the contemporary world that moves to business relations in all its parts.

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Gallery owners have long neglected management practices in their businesses. They felt protected from the irritations common in other markets, such as inefficiency or bankruptcy. Trying to impose business thinking on art galleries was considered a violation of the art world (Resch, 2011). However, now many galleries turn to building new business models, with clear development strategies and clear marketing communications. One can attribute this to the fact that new art platforms and opportunities to buy art online are emerging, giving access to a larger base of potential buyers to attract (Habelsberger & Bhansing, 2021).

Currently, academics and practitioners pay growing attention to issues of art marketing. Still, there are many gaps in the literature on the subject. In most papers on emerging markets, including Russia, relevant issues are considered from the art history point of view or as part of cultural studies, while marketing aspects remain insufficiently studied. There are virtually no studies examining the impact of gallery branding on artist recognition in the contemporary art market.

In this paper, we present the results of the study conducted in 2023-2024 on the Russian contemporary art market. The main research goal was to examine and identify the influence of a gallery brand on an artist's name recognition.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In the literature review, we discuss theoretical approaches to understanding the phenomenon of branding in the art market, as well as private gallery brand formation. In the Data and Methodology section, we offer a brief description of the methods used and put forward the research hypotheses. In the next section, we present and discuss the empirical data obtained by means of semi-structured expert interviews and online survey. Finally, we provide conclusions and paths for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Branding in the art market

Issues of branding in the field of art have become the subject of close researchers' attention relatively recently: the first significant papers appeared at the end of the twentieth century (Plattner, 1996; Kotler & Scheff 1997; Wu, 1998). In the first decades of the 21st century, the volume of scientific literature on this topic has increased significantly (Lacey, 2002; Schroeder, 2005; Williams, 2011; Camarero et al., 2012; Pusa & Uusitalo, 2014). One can explain the growing interest by the fact that in the field of art, business issues become more and more important, and this requires new marketing approaches (Colbert, 2009; Brown, 2023). At the turn of the century there were revolutionary changes in the number and type of scientific articles on art marketing: they increasingly document the dramatic shifts in strategy, power, structure and control in the art market (Rentschler, 2002; Milano, 2020).

One of the main ideas reflected in the arts marketing and branding literature is the need for a holistic and strategic approach (Williams, 2011; Byrnes, 2022). For arts organizations, this means a new leadership model controlled by professionals (including professional marketers). It also means that arts organizations have become more institutionalized and more dependent on stable sources of funding—in other words, a move toward Mintzberg's “professional bureaucracy” (Mintzberg, 1980). Accordingly, such professionalization will entail an increase and diversification of the audience and that the role of branding as an effective tool for creating additional value for the consumer will increase (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

The dichotomy of the art market is that an object of art, endowed with a halo of an object that is impossible to assess in the material equivalent, becomes the subject of assess from the investment attractiveness point of view, not so much in terms of aesthetic and conceptual qualities. Accordingly, art becomes an investment value (Seshanna et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022).
In the investment literature, there are comparisons between art and gold, real estate, or securities in terms of investment effectiveness (Ekelund et al. 2000; Rengers & Velthuis, 2002; Velthuis, 2003). However, there is also an opinion that collectors rarely use acquired objects as an investment component and prefer not to sell them.

The art market is multifaceted and has a multi-level structure, combining educational, sociocultural, pricing, and intermediary functions. The key property of the contemporary art market is the merging of the institution of mediation with the institution of art criticism (Bertrand, 2021). Participants in the primary market are artists, gallery owners, and art critics. The secondary market comprises collectors, auctions, art dealers, museums, international art fairs, and biennials. Therefore, brand plays a particularly important role here from the point of view of forming a network of relationships connecting different market agents.

An important point of contention in the art market is the idea of the importance and place of the client. P. Kotler promotes the idea that the customer-value approach, which has proven successful in commercial business, is the best approach for art marketing, as long as it applied within the framework of the artistic mission (Kotler & Scheff 1997; Kotler & Kotler 1998). Some other scholars, on the contrary, oppose the introduction of the language and philosophy of business into the field of art (Bernstein, 2006; Fillis, 2006).

It is worth noting that both viewpoints contain important truths. There is no doubt that most artists and arts organizations need an audience. Building an audience is one of the main tasks of arts management (Boorsma, 2006). Therefore, one should neither prematurely reject the customer-value approach, nor mindlessly copy the marketing philosophy applied to commercial business. Rather, one should adhere to the logic of relationship marketing that aims at establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges (Christopher et al., 2013). Due to the specifics of the art market, the relationship marketing approach is most useful in creating the prerequisites for successful sales based on building trust and long-term relationships with the buyer and sustainable mutually beneficial interaction between all market participants.

2.2. Private gallery brand

In the field of art, galleries are not only a financial instrument for converting artistic value into monetary value, but also a place where symbolic capital circulates. Each gallery director acts as a curator and producer for the artists. In turn, collectors act as intermediaries between the artist and the gallery. This is how one can describe the purpose of the gallery.

A gallery, as an intermediary, has the task of inserting art objects into the economy of society by transforming aesthetic value into economic value (Becker, 1990). All large foreign private galleries gained the names of their founders. These galleries have grown into a big brand with a large rotation of artists. After decades of work and completed large projects, they have the market power and reputation to promote a budding artist in a couple of years and make him or her an expensive market actor. Private branded galleries can also have a great influence on the choice of public museums (Quemin, 2020).

Galleries serve a specialized market that they influence and educate (Joy & Sherry, 2003). An important function of the gallery is the creation of exhibitions and projects that increase the artist’s recognition and the turnover of his/her art objects on the market (Velthuis, 2011; McKenna-Cress & Kamien, 2013). The gallery also sets trends, based on which it can give recommendations to its artists about popular styles and directions.

So far, an art gallery is an organization engaged in collecting art collections, holding exhibitions, promoting artists on the art market, selling works of art, and shaping the art market.
Therefore, we can define a gallery brand as a unique set of benefits perceived by target audiences due to a set of elements, including reputation based on the artists exhibited by the gallery; sales levels; participation in prestigious contemporary art fairs; the collector base; the professionalism of the gallery owner.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research goal, we used mixed qualitative and quantitative approach. To form a more detailed idea of the Russian art market and the factors increasing artist recognition, we conducted a set of semi-structured expert interviews with gallerists, artists and collectors of the domestic contemporary art market. A semi-structured interview is a tool that provides insights, learning from experience regarding the issue under study (Fawcett et al., 2014). During the interview, direct, indirect, guiding, clarifying questions helped to unveil the main trends in the art market. The average interview duration was 50 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed, the content analysis performed.

Based on the analysis of academic literature and data obtained by means of in-depth interviews, our research hypotheses were as follows:

H1. On the Russian art market, one of the main functions of a contemporary art gallery is to promote the artist

H2. The technique of an artist’s work is the main factor of recognition for representatives of the art market

H3. In the Russian art market, the gallery’s brand has a positive effect on the formation of the brand of the artist who collaborates with it.

H3a. The fact that an artist collaborates with a branded gallery influences his recognition by visitors to contemporary art galleries.

H3b. Gallery brand has a significant positive effect on setting a higher price for works by artists with whom it collaborates on an ongoing basis.

A questionnaire for an online survey was developed. The online survey platform was used to conduct the survey. The survey was conducted in February-April 2024. The information was collected anonymously and did not imply the processing of the respondent’s personal data. Respondents were informed that the results of the survey would only be used in an anonymous form as part of the study.

The total sample was 309 people, of which 66.3% were gallery visitors, 33.7% - the art market actors. In the sample, the largest number of market actors that took part in the survey belong to the groups “art dealer,” “curator,” and “collector”. Thus, the main part of respondents consisted of persons directly related to the sale and purchase of art works.

A descriptive method was used to test hypotheses H1 and H2. A graph of respondents’ answers about the main functions of a contemporary art gallery, as well as a graph of their responses about their attitude to the degree of influence of the artist’s work technique on his recognition were analyzed. To test hypothesis H3, sub-hypotheses H3a and H3b were tested using the least squares method. The dependent variable being the recognition of a contemporary artist and the price of the artist’s works, respectively. The regressors in sub-hypothesis H3a were ways of promoting an artist on the art market: cooperation with galleries; independent promotion; collaboration with an art dealer. The regressors in sub-hypothesis H3b were factors that influence the formation of prices for artists’ works: gallery brand; sales; solo exhibitions; collective exhibitions; auctions; education.
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of semi-structured expert interviews with actors of Russian art market are consistent with the results of previous studies. Respondents noted fragmentation in the Russian art market, pointing out that this complicates the formation of a sustainable, transparent art market and consumer-friendly pricing. It also complicates the work of galleries and art dealers, causing mistrust to grow and difficulties to arise when collaborating with artists.

Respondents also pointed to the trend of introducing marketing into the gallery activity and said that in art, there is often added value to the artist’s work and it is often formed from many elements, including gallery brand that represents him/her, and the brand of the artist. Based on this, gallery owners and artists think about the importance of creating added value. Artists strive to get noticed by established galleries to hold collective and personal exhibitions. A personal exhibition demonstrates the gallery owner’s trust in the artist and attracts public attention.

However, it is also important to consider the technique and skill of the artist himself, as well as the tastes of a particular gallery’s collector base. Gallerists pointed out the difficulties in developing a promotion strategy in additional ways than personal exhibitions, social networks and participation in auctions, as this can affect the image and artistic value of the work (implying the value of art). Collectors noted the great importance of “own taste”.

All respondents underlined a high level of trust in experts at the initial stage. Answering the question about the value of art and the factors that influence its formation, they say that this area is highly susceptible to “taste.” However, some respondents indicated that if they have the task of purchasing a work as an investment value, then the opinion of experts plays a significant role for him, since he/she evaluates the work as an asset, and not as a work of art.

Among the top 10 galleries in Russia that could be classified as a branded contemporary art gallery, respondents mentioned the following galleries: Vladey, Sample, XL, Anna Nova, Pop/Off/Art, Triumph, Ovcharenko, Alina Pinsky, Iragui, Fragment.

In general, based on the interviews, we can conclude that market participants evaluate the gallery as a business and that the art market has the features of any other market where there is a consumer. However, there are peculiarities of the gallery business in the Russian art market. In the Russian art market, organizational and relational resources play the greatest role. The main criterion in creating the value of such organizations is the development of informal connections that create special conditions for a customer-oriented approach. Based on this, we can say that relationship marketing is an important part of the art business.

The results of the survey are as follows.

We can conclude that for the majority of respondents, visiting a contemporary art gallery is timed to coincide with the opening of exhibitions. It is worth noting that a significant portion of respondents received information about new artists from gallery invitations to exhibition openings, as well as visits to contemporary art fairs.

Based on the survey data, we can conclude that the majority of respondents (both art market participants and visitors) consider personal exhibitions to be the main factor in an artist’s recognition. Cooperation with galleries greatly helps the artist in holding personal exhibitions and facilitates sales to famous collectors. Getting into the private collections of famous collectors was also noted as one of the main factors for representatives of the art sphere. Representatives of the art sphere believe that the third factor in increasing the artist’s recognition is the inclusion of his works in the museum’s collection.

Turning to the results obtained from a survey of gallery visitors, we see that only the first factor coincides with the opinion of representatives of the art sphere; the second and third factors turned out to be different. Thus, gallery visitors highlight the participation of the artist’s
works in bidding at auctions, as well as personal pages on the artist’s social networks. For representatives of the art market, personal pages on social networks occupy second to last place.

Participants in the Russian art market highlight three major functions of a contemporary art gallery: sales of art objects (82%); development of contemporary art (79%); promotion of artists (72%). Based on this, hypothesis H1 was confirmed.

76% of respondents rather disagree with the statement that the recognition of an artist is primarily influenced by the technique of his work. Therefore, hypothesis H2 was not confirmed.

When testing hypothesis H3a, the dependent variable was recognition of the artist, and the following factors were selected as regressors: gallery collaboration, self-promotion, the art dealer services.

The study was carried out to assess the impact of the artist’s collaboration with a branded gallery on his recognition in the professional community and among visitors to contemporary art galleries. For this purpose, a multiple linear regression model was built using the least squares method (OLS).

The results of the analysis showed that the coefficient for the art dealer services variable did not reach statistical significance (p = 0.6185), indicating that this factor does not have a significant influence on the recognition of the artist. Also, no statistically significant effect on the level of artist recognition was found for the self-promotion variable (p = 0.6968). However, the coefficient for the gallery collaboration variable has a statistically significant p-value (p = 0.0248), which indicates the presence of a positive effect of an artist’s collaboration with a branded gallery on his recognition in the professional community and among visitors to contemporary art galleries.

Table 1. OLS used observations 1-363. Dependent variable: recognizability.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Coefficient</th>
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Thus, based on the analysis of the OLS model data, we can conclude that subhypothesis H3a was confirmed.

Based on the econometric model results analysis, we can conclude about the influence of the gallery brand on setting prices for artists' works. The coefficient for the "brandfactor" variable is positive and statistically significant (p-value = 0.0327), indicating a significant positive impact of the gallery brand on the price of art works.
Having analysed in detail other factors, such as sales, personal and group exhibitions, participation in auctions, and artist’s education, we unveiled that their influence on pricing turned out to be insignificant or even unnoticeable. For example, the coefficients for the variables “sales”, “education”, “groupexcibition”, “auction” have negative values or are close to zero, and their statistical significance has not been achieved (p-values above the significance level of 0.05). This means that these factors probably do not have a significant impact on the pricing of artists' works within this model. It is also important to identify the relationship with the variable “personalexcibition”, which has a positive coefficient (0.0256735) and statistical significance (p-value = 0.6631). This indicates that an artist's personal exhibitions may influence the setting of higher prices for his works.

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Thus, the data analysis confirms sub-hypothesis H3b about the significant positive impact of the gallery brand on the pricing of artists' works, and indicates the importance of holding personal exhibitions of an artist as an additional factor influencing pricing in this model.

Based on the confirmation of sub-hypotheses H3a and H3b, it can be argued that hypothesis H3 was confirmed. In the Russian art market, the gallery’s brand has a positive effect on the formation of the brand of the artist who collaborates with it.

Based on the study, one can draw the following conclusions:
- According to representatives of the art community, one of the main functions of a contemporary art gallery in the Russian art market is to promote artists, sales of art works, and development of contemporary art.
- The technique of an artist’s work affects recognition, but is not the main factor, according to representatives of the Russian art market.
- In the Russian art market, the gallery’s brand has a positive effect on the development of an artist's brand, as well as on setting a higher price for his work and recognition.

5. CONCLUSION

The research confirmed that the gallery business plays a key role in the maintenance and development of contemporary art in the Russian market. Galleries are important in determining the value of art objects, but also in shaping the cultural significance of those works. They open doors to new talent, promote the spread of ideas, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. According to experts, a gallery has intermediary, pricing, information, regulatory, stimulating, socio-cultural functions. The factors influencing the recognition of an artist in the modern art market of Russia include cooperation with galleries, auction sales, acquisition from museum collections, and famous private collectors.
As a result, following recommendations for artists are expedient.

**Public Relations and Media Coverage**
- Develop relationships with art critics, journalists, bloggers and influencers to generate press coverage and media attention for gallery exhibitions and artists’ work.
- Submission to art publications, online platforms and mainstream media can significantly increase an artist's visibility and credibility.

**Interaction with collectors**
- A personal, formed base of collectors increases the attractiveness of the gallery and the possibility of promoting artists.
- Offering personalized consulting services, private viewings and exclusive gallery-based events.
- Providing collectors with the opportunity to meet artists and be the first to purchase works by providing expert advice on the artwork and its investment value, thereby increasing demand and recognition in the art market.

**Curatorial vision**
- Develop a strong curatorial vision that is relevant to the contemporary art scene and resonates with the gallery's target audience.
- It makes sense to curate exhibitions that showcase emerging and established artists whose work is innovative, engaging, and relevant to your target audience.

**Digital presence**
- It is important to strengthen the gallery's digital presence with a well-designed website and active social media presence.

**Art fairs and biennales**
- Participation in prestigious art fairs, biennales and international exhibitions allows artists to be presented on a global level, reaching new audiences of collectors, curators and art professionals, raising the profile of artists and expanding their market reach.

The recommendations presented above are based on the understanding that the modern art market is largely built on relationship marketing. Relationship marketing in the art market involves establishing long-term relationships with collectors, artists, galleries, and other stakeholders. It helps to build trust and loyalty, and create mutual value.

Central to relationship marketing in the art market is understanding preferences, tastes, and collecting habits of collectors. For galleries, it is important to understand the interests of collectors through personalized interactions, surveys, and data analytics. It will allow them to tailor their offerings and communications accordingly. Trust and reliability are of paramount importance in the art market, as transactions often involve significant financial investment and emotional attachment, as well as being based on personal, individual experience. Galleries must prioritize personalized experiences, customer satisfaction, and ongoing engagement.

**REFERENCES**


