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Self-branding on the example of *barbiesundaytattoos*

Undergraduate thesis

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INTRODUCTION

Tattoos are a big part of modern-day society and, as a tattoo artist and tattoo 'collector', I am captivated by this form of art in every way. Creating a design from scratch and then seeing it settle in on the skin is an amazing experience. The same thing can be said about graphic design, specifically branding. The process of designing a brand identity has always fascinated me and the idea of creating one has always lingered on my mind.

After being introduced to copious amounts of brands and analysing their identities in the four years of studying at Pallas University, an idea of a project sparked. A perfect opportunity to merge all the knowledge gained and use it to pursue my career as a tattoo artist is to create a self branding for my unofficial brand – *barbiesundaytattoos*.

As tattoos have become incredibly popular in recent years, the profession of a tattoo artist is rapidly becoming more desirable as well. A single tattoo artist can now use their position to become a personal brand. Becoming my own client will mean having complete artistic freedom, knowing what the brand's outlook and message is without briefing, having a clear picture of how the brand is perceived by the audience and what route will be best to take to be correctly represented.

This paper will focus on two major topics: the tattoo subculture and logo design. Briefly revising the history of contemporary tattoo culture and how it has evolved will be a good reminder of the role of tattoos as a subculture in modern-day society. Analysing the Estonian tattoo scene from the perspective of design and finding similarities and differences in the artists' online presence will be a key step to determine the direction which the branding should take. Researching how logo design has bloomed since the beginning of the century and if the rules of good logo design have changed, will both be crucial in the creation of a logo for my brand. The two general topics combined will be the theoretical foundation of the design process in creating a branding and will make the end result become something original, modern and professional.

Focusing on the brand itself, it will be essential to determine the target audience for *barbiesundaytattoos*. A poll will be created and its results will be analysed to be a supporting factor in the practical process of creating the branding. All the steps that led up to the final result, such as typography, color scheme, etc., will be discussed as well.

The long-term personal intention for this project is to create a cohesive branding for professional use, which will boost the brand's online presence, authenticity and attract new clients. A public goal is to contribute to Estonia's tattoo community and inspire other talented artists to take their career to the next level by becoming a brand.

DICTIONARY

- Skeuomorphic (p. 18) – using symbols or other objects on a computer screen that look or sound like a physical object in order to suggest their purpose (Oxford Learner's Dictionary).

- Logotype (p. 20) – a logo centered around a company name or initials (Ellis 2019).

- Logomark (p. 13) – a logo centered around a symbolic image or icon (Ellis 2019).

- Combination mark (p. 13) – a logo combined from a logotype and a logomark.

- New school (p. 14) – using new ideas in a type of music or art (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English).

- Merch (p. 14) – short for merchandise.

- Fast fashion (p. 29) – cheap clothing produced quickly and sold by large, mass-market retailers in order to respond to the latest fashion trends (Macmillan Dictionary).

- UX/UI (in web and app design (p. 15)) – user experience and user interface design (uxplanet.org).

1. TATTOO SUBCULTURE AND ITS CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

Since one of the two subjects in this paper will be heavily focused on the subculture of tattoos, it is important to briefly introduce several topics. Explaining the concept of tattoos, revising the history of contemporary tattoo culture and how the meaning of tattoos has changed to become the way it is today, will create a clearer understanding of the matter at hand.

1.1 What is a tattoo in modern understanding?

Explaining the meaning of the word by tracing it back to ancient history is not necessary for this project, the present day terminology is what holds importance for understanding of the topic at hand. The word 'tattoo' in Oxford Advanced American Dictionary is described as "a picture or design that is marked permanently on a person's skin by making small holes in the skin with a needle and filling them with coloured ink" (Oxford Advanced American Dictionary 2011).

A tattoo in modern understanding is a means of self expression, a separate form of fine art. The rapidly growing popularity of the tattoo community is slowly shifting the meaning of the word 'tattoo' from a term that carries stigma, social stereotypes and any other negative baggage to something that is positive and acceptable. "They [tattoos] are permanent expressions of a feeling, attitude or sentiment that someone wishes to commemorate, and instead of using a canvas they use their own skin" (Phillips 2018). Tattoos convey immense feelings when being done in memory of events, people, places and any other meaningful moments in one's life.

1.2 Where did the modern tattoo subculture originate from and how has it evolved?

To get a grasp on how the modern tattoo culture came to be the way it is known today, it is important to revise the history that has led up to this point. Tattoos as permanent body art

have always been a part of societal history, from sailors and travellers to celebrities in the media. Even though the popularity of tattoos has fluctuated over the centuries, and the economical classes of people getting tattooed constantly varied, one fact is certain – tattoos have always been an irreplaceable form of art in cultural history.

Undeniably, the first person to bring tattooing to a more contemporary level was tattoo artist Samuel O'Reilly from New York, who, in 1891, patented the first electric tattoo machine (Forquer Nyssen 2015). This led to a faster spread of tattooing within the lower classes, while the rich vice versa abandoned the trend (DeMello, Rubin 2000: 50).

Even though a lot of men and women with all sorts of backgrounds in the United States were getting tattooed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the biggest groups attracted to tattoos were part of the navy and military. Since the armed forces were so keen on getting tattoos, tattoo shops started being located in port towns, so customers could easily come in for a tattoo anytime (DeMello, Rubin 2000: 55).

In the nineteen hundreds, tattoo artists were working class men, who did not have any professional or even artistic training. They practised tattooing by 'paying a dollar' to someone, who claimed to be knowledgeable on the topic, or learned some skills while tattooing at carnivals (DeMello, Rubin 2000: 51).

A few decades later, the so-called Tattoo Renaissance began, when in the late nineteen fifties the meaning of getting and having tattoos shifted entirely. The new era was heavily influenced by such artists as Lyle Tuttle, Cliff Raven, Don Nolan and others who became most respected in the community at that time.

Lyle Tuttle, for instance, brought the mainstream media's attention to tattooing by being the only tattooist in San Francisco in 1957. His tattoo shop was the first to be featured in magazines and many local papers, he himself appeared on TV shows in the seventies (DeMello, Rubin 2000: 76). Besides the 'regular' clients, he was tattooing musicians and other celebrities, which influenced the general public to view tattoos as something desirable instead of bearing a connotation exclusively to sailors, criminals and the lower class.

The Tattoo Renaissance is referred to as a time of technological, artistic and social change. The people who were now getting tattoos were considered to be part of a group

who viewed their body art as "signs of resistance to the values of the white, heterosexual, middle class. The clientele changed from sailors, bikers, and gang members to the middle and upper class" (DeMello, Rubin 2000).

Since the seventies, tattoo subculture became mainstream and globally accepted into Western society. Both men and women of all sorts of economic statuses started getting tattoos. With this shift, the meaning of the word 'tattoo' had "'undergone dramatic redefinition' and shifted from a form of deviance to an acceptable form of expression" (Roberts 2012).

The growth of the tattoo community now allowed artists with professional artistic training to have a new output for their art, and together with the improvement of tattoo ink and equipment, the level of tattoo quality began to increase (DeMello, Rubin, 2000). Among these aspects, the rising diversity of clients outdated the "stereotypical image of the 'tattooee' as young, male and working class … as more and more men and women, of various age-groups and socio-economic backgrounds, chose to enter the tattoo studio" (Sweetman 1999).

Since the eighties, tattoos became widely loved by young adults I.E college students. They consolidated the reputation of tattoos to the perspective that tattoos are not only to be done by criminals, but also artists and free thinkers. Tattoo artists started proudly putting up banners on their studios' windows with slogans such as "Tattoos: Not Just for Bikers Anymore" (Atkinson, 2003: 47). At the end of the twentieth century, tattoo studios flooded big cities, and some independent artists started working from home as well. The tattoo community was now "overrun by young, hip, affluent adolescents and professionals" (Atkinson 2003: 47).

Michael Atkinson (2003: 48) refers to that time as the 'supermarket era' of tattooing, meaning that tattoos have become easily accessible and a consumer choice. Despite the term and the rise of tattoos in the mainstream, Atkinson still states that getting tattoos gives young adults a sense of greater control over their bodies and therefore lives.

Moving into the two thousands, tattoos became extremely prominent in pop culture. Those in the public eye – celebrities, musicians, actors, etc., started getting tattoos and therefore inspired their fans to do the same, all while making the trend less stigmatised.

The acceptance of tattoos in society inspired the creation of multiple TV shows on the topic (A&E's Inked, TLC's LA Ink and others), and with increasing media coverage, the tattoo industry began to thrive even more. According to Paul Sweetman (1999: 66), while aspects of tattooing can now be seen as fashionable, "…the invasive and often painful manner by which [tattoos] are produced adds weight to the argument that it would be misplaced to interpret tattoos … simply as superficial accessories".

Nowadays, tattoos hold just a mere fraction of the stigma from past decades, even though tattoos in the workplace can in certain cases be frowned upon. Some employers can turn down job applicants with tattoos on visible places, but mostly, tattoos that can be covered up, do not pose an issue. Unlike in the nineteen forties when sailors were banned from the navy for provocative tattoos (DeMello, Rubin 2000: 51), public service workers in our generation can have tattoos, as long as they are hidden under uniform.

The stereotype that tattooed people are uneducated with no potential to be a well functioning member of society is fading away because the popularity of getting tattoos within all age groups and socioeconomic classes is only growing and thus making tattooed people normal.

1.3 What significance do tattoos carry in modern day society?

At present, tattoos are stigmatised predominantly by the older generation, who have the notion that tattoos are done solely by criminals and do not hold any value in them whatsoever, ingrained in their beliefs. Yet in a world where being unique is now extremely difficult, where people are struggling to accept themselves due to the unreachable beauty standards, tattoos can be a sort of safe haven to express oneself and become part of a whole community of like-minded people. Good tattoo artists are now fairly easy to find, thanks to the rapid growth of social media, so getting tattoos is becoming part of a lot of young people's daily routine, and a gateway to self-confidence. In spite of the fact that tattoos have become a commodity, associating with other tattooed people gives a strong sense of belonging to a community that holds similar beliefs. For humans, who are social beings and need to feel part of a group, this is a positive part of modern day tattoo culture.

Tattoo artist Bruno Levy "sees tattooing as one of the purest art forms, untainted by the conventions of the modern art world, or by money" (McGrath 2017). Tattoos are finally being acknowledged as a form of art, and, even more, as a very special one, as they are not confined to a canvas or paper, but rather are part of someone's lifelong story which "walks around the world" (McGrath 2017).

Even though nowadays both genders are getting tattooed all around the world, the meaning behind tattoos can be very different for each gender. Men usually fortify notions of being traditionally masculine; women go against the conventional beauty standards and/or put emphasis on femininity by getting tattoos. For some, getting tattooed can also be a spiritual experience, and those clients turn to "modern primitive tattoo artists who take a ritualistic approach" in their work (Kang, Jones 2007).

The meaning behind tattoos can always be misinterpreted and a tattooed person can still be stereotyped by someone outside the tattoo community, it is usually not a deal breaking factor for tattoo lovers today. Albeit any preconceived notions, tattoos hold a "considerable psychological meaning for the wearer because the tattooed skin acts as metaphor for a person's relationship with society and the self. A tattoo can simultaneously accentuate and mask one's personal identity" (Kang, Jones 2007).   Tattoo 'collectors' have also become a big part of the tattoo community. These are the clients who simply have an artistic appreciation for tattoos, not necessarily an emotional attachment to the pieces they get. They visit numerous artists to collect art on their bodies from different places simply for aesthetic reasons. "This, for some, is modern art collection at its finest" (Phillips 2018).

Tattoos have finally become an established nonconforming statement to social norms, a desire to feel unique in one's body and express oneself. After almost completely breaking the stereotype that tattoos are done exclusively by the working class, the meaning behind a person's tattoos can now be perceived as something positive, a personal statement of ownership of one's body and not as something to be discriminated against. Although older generations will most probably stay true to their beliefs of negative connotations to having tattoos, the younger generation will keep bonding over permanent body art and find self acceptance through the form of getting tattoos.

2. MARKET RESEARCH: BRANDING OF TATTOO ARTISTS IN ESTONIA

Creating a brand identity requires a lot of groundwork, one aspect of which is brand market analysis. Since the tattoo community in Estonia is relatively small, gathering information on other tattoo artists' existence of branding or lack thereof, will be compact. It is still important, however, to analyse the position of artists on the Estonian tattoo scene and how they present themselves online. Finding positive aspects will help in the creation of my own branding and other discovered patterns will help to avoid mistakes.

2.1 How many tattoo artists are there in Estonia?

There are approximately 117 known tattoo artists in Estonia as of 2018 (Aurely 2018), with a few more, who might not be mentioned in the list. They are most likely at-home artists, who are just starting out and do not have any sort of name or 'brand'.

The majority of the artists listed are located in Tallinn and Tartu, where the tattoo culture of Estonia is most prominent. For a country with a population of roughly 1.3 million (www.stat.ee), the ratio of tattoo artists is fairly reasonable and there probably is an artist out there for most desired tattoo styles. Although 117 is not an objectively high number in itself, competition still exists as each artist has to attract clients to make a living, be successful and respected in the community. To achieve that, artists arguably need to have a pleasing and memorable image on their online page.

2.2 An observation of Estonia's tattoo artists' online presence

The platform I chose to analyse Estonia's tattoo artists' Internet presence and the existence of any sort of branding is Instagram because it is the most popular and convenient social media platform through which to find and choose a desired tattoo artist.

After visiting each artist's page, I found similarities in the following aspects:
- existence of an illustration as the profile picture – 47 artists;
- existence of a logo in the form of a symbol as the profile picture – 27 artists;
- aesthetically pleasing page – 38 artists;

- use of a watermark – 15 artists;

- existence of a complete branding – two tattoo studios.

A key point I found is that, apart from a few artists, these statements seem to be true for those based exclusively in Tallinn and Tartu. Tattoo artists outside of these two cities appear not to feel a necessity in transforming their page to seem more like a brand, but rather keep it as a personal unedited page.

The main focus of tattoo artists in Estonia is having a brand-like logo, be it an illustration or a traditional symbol. This makes the artist's online presence more memorable and professional.

Since Instagram is arguably the only platform to reach a wide audience and significantly expand one's clientele, the page of an artist has to give off an impression of a portfolio – clean, pictures edited in an equal manner, aesthetically pleasing. Thirty-eight artists follow this principle and together with a logo, it makes the artist seem more reliable and advanced by social media standards.

The use of a watermark on each post makes an artist's page look more put together and can be considered to be a theme of its own. It resonates with a product that is unique and belongs to a single person – the artist, since a watermark is a statement of individuality.

After reviewing all the known tattoo artists in Estonia, I found only two studios that have an entire branding. Although the number is low, it is a great addition to Estonia's tattoo community.

In general, despite the fact that Estonia is a relatively small country, the number of talented tattoo artists who pursue the notion of being visually comparable to a brand is quite high. This leaves a positive impression of the tattoo scene as a whole.

2.3 Do tattoo artists in Estonia have any sort of branding?

After completing the analysis, a conclusion can be drawn that a full branding in Estonian tattoo culture is a rarity. Those who have any sort of logo (both in the form of an illustration and a *logomark/combination mark* usually have a themed Instagram (all photos edited in the same way), which makes their page more aesthetically pleasing and therefore trustworthy. This trend has been and continues to be popular mostly among younger tattoo

artists, who have been using Instagram for a long time and know the underlying tricks to attract clients with an exquisite page. Since an online page is the first impression of the artist, the logo and page theme reflect the owner's style and who they represent as a person and/or a brand.

Some other similarities that I have noticed by being present in the tattoo online and offline community, is that some younger/*new school* tattoo artists have stickers and sell clothing with their designs, but do not position themselves as a brand. Nevertheless, taking the time to create and sell *merch* expands one's audience and in turn, clientele. This is a newer way to promote an unofficial brand, making it more similar to music bands' merchandise with the band's logo or photo. This is a great advertising technique and an additional source of income.

There are currently only two tattoo studios which have an entire brand identity: Backbone Tattoo Studio and Pirados Tattoo Shop. Although they have a similar underlying branding style, at a closer look, the brands convey different messages.

2.3.1 The Backbone Tattoo Studio

The Backbone Tattoo Studio is located in Tartu and has been prospering since 2012. Being part of the Backbone's team for three years, I have had some time to take note of the studio's position in the tattoo community and their work ethics.

The Backbone is a respected part of the Estonian tattoo community, due to the professionalism and hands-on approach of the team in the work they do. The current eight artists work in different tattoo styles which enables a constant flow of new customers. An impressive loyal online audience of 16,000 followers (via Instagram and Facebook) also suggests that the studio has put in effort in building up its reputation from the start.

The branding of the studio is sophisticated and modern enough for clients with completely different tattoo preferences and of all ages to be attracted to come in. A black and white color palette, a timeless serif font with a distinct brand mark conveys a feeling of an old school tattoo studio from the United States. The composition fitted into a circle is reminiscent of a vintage emblem (Appendix 1). The studio has business cards for each of their artists, two gift cards – 50€ and 100€ (Appendix 1), embroidered patches, apparel

with the studio's logo and with various designs by the artists. The studio has a stamp with the logo that is used on gift cards as an additional personal touch.

Although Backbone Tattoo Studio has all the necessary aspects of being a full on brand, they do not regularly promote their products on their online page, nor do they have a regulated theme on their feed or use a watermark on their photos. Still, this does not limit the studio in having new clients constantly coming in for a tattoo, even though only a selected few know that there is an option to purchase merchandise.

2.3.2 Pirados Tattoo Shop and Pirados brand

Pirados is a tattoo shop located in Tallinn having its start in 2009 and is the only tattoo shop in Estonia so far that has expanded into an active brand. Pirados has a logo, a color scheme, gift cards, an online store/website with a clothing line, a store in a shopping mall (T1 mall of Tallinn) and other locations, they use a watermark on their photos and have a themed feed on their social media accounts.

The tattoo service part of the brand does mostly old school realism tattoos, which are usually preferred by a more mature client base. The design for the tattoo shop logo and gift cards is a mix of calligraphy and gothic fonts in white on a black background (Appendix 2). The design of these elements suits the tattoo styles the artists work in and is cohesive with the image the shop presents – a professional traditional tattoo studio.

The logo for the clothing line part of the brand is entirely different. It is somewhat reminiscent of the tattoo shop's one – the brand's name in a brush stroke/calligraphy font, but still conveys a different, more youthful feel (Appendix 3). It also bears a different version of the original name – Pirados brand, seemingly to separate the two entities.

The website *UX/UI* design is very modern and clean. The models for the apparel are young adults and therefore the merchandise seems to be geared towards a younger demographic. The clothing comes in all sorts of colors for each customer's taste with varying designs, and the brand's name being the recurring element (Appendix 4).

To summarise, it seems Pirados has successfully evolved into a multifaceted business, having an audience of multiple ages and both genders. Some can make a connection with the brand through tattoos, others through apparel. Separating the tattoo shop from the

clothing line has evidently been a great business move to widen clientele, and it is refreshing to see someone being part of the tattoo community rise to the mainstream market level.

2.4 Conclusion

The broad conclusion is that almost none of the tattoo artists in Estonia present an innate need to make their presence as a tattoo artist a whole brand and create a complete branding. The absence of branding, however, does not seem to hinder success and career growth of those who choose to skip having it. Everything is online and therefore at arm's length. Clients can find all the necessary information with a simple look at the artist's online page. The closest aspects that resemble a brand that tattoo artists in Estonia have, is an illustration or a *logomark* or a *combination mark* as the profile picture, and an aesthetically pleasing, thought through Instagram feed. A lot of artists have a unique style that can be perceived as a brand, but they do not position themselves as one.

Although these points seem to be mostly cohesive with my own, this conclusion seems to contradict the necessity of the creation of my own brand's identity. Since almost none of the artists and evidently clients seem to need the artist they work with to be an entire brand, is there a point in working on this branding project?

I still view branding as a separate form of art and am inspired by those selected few tattoo artists who have done the work and taken the time to create their brand identity. This has undoubtedly taken their business to the next level. Coming to these conclusions has strengthened my desire to work on creating a branding for my brand, and the end result will hopefully inspire other artists to also create their brand identity. Objectively, I think it would help them have more individuality in the endless sea of tattoo artists in our country and in the tattoo community in general.

3. CHANGE OF LOGO AS AN OUTPUT: CAN A LOGO BE AN ILLUSTRATION OR MUST IT BE A TRADITIONAL MINIMALISTIC SYMBOL?

After collecting information on the Estonian tattoo scene in terms of branding, the next step is to gather some historical facts and theory about logo design. Before exploring the characteristics of a good logo though, it is important to determine what the underlying meaning behind the word is.

A logo in its literal sense is a graphic mark used by brands to identify themselves and separate themselves from each other. For a designer though, the figurative and deeper meaning of the term is what matters more. As Matt Elliss (2019) describes, "Logos communicate need-to-know information about your brand. They accomplish in a second what press releases, product descriptions and about pages do with paragraph after paragraph of copy". A logo is the first impression of a brand, a so-called greeting.

To aid with the creation of a branding, it is important to evaluate the trends of logo design at the beginning of the century, how they have changed up to this point and if all the established rules of 'good logo design' should be implemented for this specific project.

3.1 What were the characteristics of good logo design 20 years ago?

In 1956, when Paul Rand designed the iconic IBM logo, it was considered by a lot of logo historians to be a significant turning point in the history of logo design. Before that moment, logos were not acknowledged to have a deeper meaning than simply being commercial marks separating business owners apart from each other. Now, companies and small business owners realised how meaningful something as small as symbols can be. "… [they] began to move away from simply creating utilitarian logos for identification purposes, and began to put a great deal of thought into intentionally branding their businesses" (Lant 2017).

Society has immensely changed with the introduction of the digital era, and with that, logo design has as well. Skipping through the timeline of when the principles of a good logo were just getting established after Paul Rand's breakthrough, the era of the two

thousands is something closer to the logo design known today. It also holds more meaning for this project in comparing logo design of the beginning of the century and how it has changed within recent years.

Once the population became comfortable with digital technologies, designers started to stray away from *skeuomorphic* designs by excluding shadows, textures and gradients, and the characteristics of a good logo became a flat, clean symbol with minimal distraction. This became to be known as minimalism and flat design.

Flat design is influenced by Swiss style design and has been around since the nineteen twenties, but became the norm in logo design at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. It emphasises readability and cleanliness, making the design utilitarian, efficient and flat (Workerbee 2017). Minimalism in design was created around the nineteen fifties and is similar to flat design. It finds only the most essential elements important, favors a limited color palette and simple shapes (New York Film Academy 2016). The two directions together result in a logo that is easy to remember, but at the same time is very impactful in its simplicity. As Sean Adams (et al. 2004: 25) describes, "A logo is a shortcut, a visual language that is quickly recognisable and memorable".

A pattern with logo design starts to be seen, where huge brands start to embrace change for their logos. No longer logos stay the same for tens of years, brands recognise that as trends change, they have to adapt and change too, in order to stay current and relevant (Lant 2017). Huge corporations like Apple, Google, Target and many others have perfected their logos throughout the years, reaching a perfect timeless logo with the help of flat design and minimalism (Appendix 5).

Describing a brand's position in the market, analysing its target audience, choosing the right color scheme for the logo with the help of color psychology, among other steps, have been in use from the start of logo design, but started to become universally more emphasised in the digital era. The Logo Design Workbook by Sean Adams has a great description of briefing questions needed to be answered by the designer in the process of creating a good logo for a client (Appendix 6).

3.2 Have the rules of good logo design changed?

Logos are a method to instantly convey what the brand owner and their brand feel and stand for. All the logo elements like color choice, typography, shapes and design complexity have an influence on the audience of the brand and how the brand is perceived (Elliss 2019). A good logo design as well as any other design from an artistic standpoint is somewhat subjective, but some general rules have been formed and stayed in place throughout the years for a logo to be created in the best way possible.

Reading through the history of logo design, one characteristic withstands any changes: memorability. A logo does not have to be aesthetically pleasing to each and every viewer, but if it is memorable – the logo is a success.

Nowadays, good logo design takes all the principles formed from the introduction of flat design and minimalism into consideration. The less background noise there is and the more coherent and cleaner the composition is, the better. This general rule of thumb is used by graphic designers along with some other in depth rules that were customised and perfected from the ones created at the beginning of the century.

Different shapes of logos convey different emotions and represent different characteristics of a brand. For example, a circular logo is friendly and casual, whereas triangles present authority and dominance (Elliss 2019). Other shapes have been analysed and classified as well, making the creation of a logo base easier.

Ever since color psychology and color theory were implemented into use in logo design, it has become one of the most important characteristics of a good logo. Color alone can be a defining factor in how a brand is perceived. This rule has not been swayed throughout the years, conversely, it is emphasised a lot more nowadays. Primal instincts of consumers towards colors can be a game changer for the success of a brand, if the color scheme is chosen correctly.

Creating the right logo for the right audience aids a brand in staying relevant. Doing audience research is important to understand "…who exactly the logo should be speaking to" (Pomerleau 2019), from age and gender, to factors like hobbies or values on certain topics.

Typography is still extremely important in a *logotype* or a mixture of a *logomark* and *logotype*. New fonts are constantly created and logos are now divided into more and more groups by the font that is used in the logo. For example, sharp angles express edginess and aggression, serifs look more professional, handwritten and sans serif fonts can be considered feminine, carefree and friendly.

New trends in logo design are always coming and going, but in this day and age, it is widely considered to be in bad taste, if a logo is made solely based on a current trend. The longevity of such logos can fade away extremely fast and the logo will become outdated.

In recent years, a new addition to logo design rules has been implemented, where a good logo has to be versatile enough to be scaled into various sizes. In other words, a brand has to have a 'responsive logo'. "That way, you can optimise your logo's size to wherever it appears, whether a tiny in-app advertisement to a massive highway billboard" (Elliss 2019).

The rules of creating a good logo design have essentially been established quite some time ago and are now just being tweaked in certain areas. The meaning given to a single brand mark, however, has exponentially changed.

Since consumerism is now a way of living with such an extreme variety of choice, buyers gravitate towards brands with the most appealing logo and branding, sometimes disregarding the quality of products the brand is offering. "The logo has evolved from a mark of quality on a product to a visual distillation of a cultural ideal" (Redding 2010). Logos have become trends, as they are fitted onto clothing items and worn as a sign of wealth, with luxury brands like Gucci, Louis Vuitton, etc., being the main example.

Nowadays, simply designing a good logo is only a small part of what makes a brand stand out among the constantly growing quantity of other brands. A small *logotype* or *logomark* carries more value now more than ever before, all while encompassing the same aspects that were set to be important at the start of logo design history. Although it seems as though with such an influx of new brands having a logo can be assigned to anything and anyone, "…typography, layout, patterns and color have a huge impact on how people perceive a logo" and the brand it is attributed to (Paish 2018).

3.3 Can a logo be an illustration or must it be a traditional minimalistic symbol?

As someone who is about to create a logo for a brand, it was important to learn about all the characteristics of 'correct' and current logo design. Taking into consideration all the information in the previous two chapters, a widely mentioned statement is that a good logo is a flat minimalistic symbol, with or without accompanying typography.

As a small brand that caters to a narrow audience and a niche market, compared to big mainstream brands, I find that some rules of good logo design can be slightly overlooked in certain situations, while other characteristics should be respectfully followed. Colette Pomerleau (2019) mentions: "Graphics in a logo might include elaborately drawn illustrations and icons or simple lines, patterns and textures", which invites the possibility of creating a more complex, yet laid back logo instead of a sophisticated symbol.

Since my brand is not a conventional formal business, the emotions delivered through the logo will be casual, welcoming and carefree, as opposed to authoritarian, professional and dominating. I find that creating strict basic shapes and choosing a restricted color scheme will stray the logo away from the message I wish to share with my audience through my brand. If a brand follows the next few criteria while creating a logo, I believe that a logo can be almost any sort of shape, complexity and taste.

First of all, it is extremely important to create the perfect composition for any logo design, for it to be dynamic and all elements to be in a balanced harmony. The logo should be distinctive enough to stand out among other brands in the same market. Avoiding current trends creates a stronger sense of individuality. The logo should tell a story behind the brand, and originality in the design should convey that with ease.

Next, if an illustration is chosen to be the focal point of the logo, it still has to be simple enough to work well in monochrome and be scaled down to smaller sizes to be placed on various surfaces and platforms. The illustration also has to be extremely well thought through, since timelessness of a logo is a sign of good design. Redesigning logos takes away from the brand's credibility and interferes with "consumers' ability to associate a logo with a company" (Pomerleau 2019).

Typography is always an important aspect of logo design if chosen to be part of it, no matter if the logo is a symbol or an illustration. The font should not be overpowering to the point where the composition becomes messy, since the illustration in its detailedness is the main attraction. The font should mirror the style of the illustration for the pair to be visually pleasing and memorable.

For my particular brand that provides the service of tattooing and merchandise with digital art, choosing a hand drawn illustration as the logo seems to be most suitable. It mirrors the message that everything provided by the brand to the customer is hand drawn, relaxed and personal.

In a world that favors minimalism and clean sophisticated design, creating a logo in the form of a flat minimalistic symbol seems to be the 'right' way to proceed. Both successful conglomerates and smaller businesses have done exactly that and are extremely prosperous in how their audience connects to them. I believe, however, that if the standard approach of logo design does not click with a brand's message, the brand is free to create a logo in a nonconventional form, if that will reflect its values. Favoring an illustration over a symbol will definitely require the designer to be more careful and conscious of their choices, but if done correctly and in conformity with the rules that apply to logo design in general, the end result can definitely be as satisfactory and as successful as a traditional minimalistic symbolic logo.

4.   CREATING   A   BRANDING   FOR BARBIESUNDAYTATTOOS

The final part of this paper will be focused on the theoretical and practical part of the branding process. It is first required to determine the necessity of branding and then conduct a poll to determine the target audience for the brand. The results of the poll will be studied to help in the design process, focusing on age, gender and location. A brief exploration of the design process on how the branding was eventually created will be the closing part of this paper.

4.1 Why does *barbiesundaytattoos* need branding?

After tattooing for roughly five years, each year I have been getting increasingly more insight and experience both into the tattoo culture and the business side of tattooing. When starting out, having a 'brand' or even creating an alias was far from important because the skills had not yet been developed to put myself out there as a tattoo artist.

After a few years of working in the field and gaining a consistent client base, I created a 'business account' on Instagram with a pseudonym to separate myself from my work. The amount of clients kept growing and my audience started to expand consistently. I came to the conclusion that *barbiesundaytattoos* has the potential of becoming a small business and a brand, and any brand that wishes to be taken seriously has a branding.

After analysing Estonia's tattoo artist market and coming to the conclusion that even though branding for Estonia's tattoo artists is not a priority, the idea of creating a branding for *barbiesundaytattoos* is a great opportunity to bring something new to the community. Having a brand identity attracts new clients and makes a brand more authentic.

Deciding on this project made me rethink my presence as an artist and inspired me to create a brand identity with a professional approach. Designing all the necessary features of a brand identity (a logo, typography, color scheme, business card, gift card and *merch*) under the guidance of a professional supervisor and applying the knowledge gained while studying design at Pallas University, seems to be the perfect way to take my career as a tattoo artist and a newly formed brand to the next level.

4.2 Target audience of *barbiesundaytattoos*

The audience I personally wish to connect with through my brand is young adults with similar artistic preferences. Since I am a young adult myself, the interests I have and the style I present through my brand have a reflection of me as a person. The designs I prefer tattooing on clients are custom made and tailored to those who see tattoos as an expression of their character, for those who simply enjoy collecting art on their skin with no specific meaning. Of course, this personal preference does not exclude those clients, who come in with their own ideas and who have emotional connections to them. Any person who takes interest in tattoos and art in general is welcome to be part of the community and target audience of the brand.

4.3 Poll results

The best and most effective way to distinguish what target audience *barbiesundaytattoos* has is to create a poll on the brand's Instagram page, since the vast majority of clients and viewers are focused there. Collecting data and analysing the results will be crucial for the future development of the brand.

I created five general questions, three of which will help me get a clearer picture of who my audience is and connect to them more. That in turn will help me design my brand's identity with a better understanding of who I am creating it for and what characteristics to keep in mind. The remaining two questions will not be discussed in detail in this paper, as they do not benefit the creation of the branding, but can be found in appendices 7 and 8. The results that will be discussed are linked to the topics of age, gender and town of residence, as they are vital in concluding what audience the brand has and who the branding should be directed towards.

Since 50% of the respondents are at the age 18-20 and out of the remaining half 29% of respondents are at the age 21-23, the main target audience of the brand makes up 18-23 year olds (Appendix 9). Taking this information into consideration, I can conclude that younger clients and viewers might prefer a more quirky and original branding as opposed to a held back and formal one.

The next category is gender, with 87.3% of the respondents classifying themselves as female (Appendix 10). This makes it logical for the branding to be geared towards females as in making the branding more colorful and cute instead of masculine and dark.

When it comes to location, 41.4% are based in Tallinn and 30.8% in Tartu, which makes up significantly more than half of the clients being from the two largest cities in Estonia (Appendix 11). These two cities are also the ones I alternate working in. Based on my experience of working with clients from different counties for over three years, clients from Tallinn and Tartu are more open to creative ideas, less conservative in their preferences, have a more peculiar personal style and therefore will enjoy a more extravagant branding.

4.4 Design process

After gaining insight on the key points that are crucial in the practical part of the branding process, the final stage can begin. Focusing heavily on the information collected in the previous parts will help make more informed choices when it comes to logo design, color choice, typography and overall style of the branding.

4.4.1 Logo, font, color scheme

The most important part of any brand's identity is the logo, as it is the face of the brand, the first thing that a viewer sees. "You have to ask, what does the logo communicate about the brand? Can people remember it all after one glance?" (Pomerleau, 2019). After studying the characteristics of good logo design, I came to the conclusion that the brand's logo can be in the form of an illustration, as long as it is designed mindfully.

Before the beginning of this project, *barbiesundaytattoos* already had an illustration in use as the logo, but it needed a stylistic change in order to be classified as a *logomark* (Appendix 12). I perfected the design to make it cleaner and suitable to convert into a vector shape, simple enough to be printed in smaller sizes and monochrome-friendly. Prominent outlines, no shadows and a pop of color make the composition eye-catching. The design conveys the message of the brand being personal, laid back and girly.

Adding typography with the name of the brand will accompany the illustration in depicting the brand's field of work. The main font has to be the one that is not too formal, yet is bold, and the secondary font has to be a sans serif font to reflect the brand's casual and friendly approach. Since having a few variations of a logo is recommended, I turned the illustration into a responsive logo, the design of which will vary depending on the situation the logo will be used in (Appendix 13).

The final step in creating the base for my brand's identity is to pick colors that correspond with the emotions and feelings the brand radiates, and also the colors that ensure differentiation from other brands in the same field. In a study called Role of Color in Perception of Attractiveness, DJ. Radeloff found that males prefer bright colors drastically more than females, whereas females find soft colors more appealing (Radeloff, 1990). Making a conclusion solely based on statistics would be wrong, because it is far more important "…for colors to support the personality you want to portray instead of trying to align with stereotypical color associations" (Ciotti, 2018). It is still important, however, to know the basic human psychology about color and how it can have an effect on the perception of a given brand. After trying out several color combinations, the colors that corresponded most with the brand's message were:

- cream – background;
- burgundy – base;
- pastel pink – accent;
- muted red – accent.

These colors are all relatively on the muted side, not too obnoxious, yet still complimenting each other in a way that has personality (Appendix 14). I then found the equivalent colors in the Pantone color guide that will be used for printing (Appendix 15).

The cream shade as a background color acts instead of a stark white. Judging by color theory, it gives a sense of calm and warmth to the design. The base color was chosen to be burgundy, since it is a rich sophisticated color and dark enough to be a substitute for black.

An accent color to stand out and make the design brighter was chosen to be a muted red. It attracts attention all while being the right tint to not be too bright and aggressive. Pastel

pink is arguably the most tender color, so it seemed fit to be part of the brand as an additional accent color. It dilutes the red and together they emphasize each other nicely.

4.4.2 Business card

After creating the basics of the brand's identity, the next step is to create a business card. Since the format I use when posting my works is a square, and the main platform I share my works on - Instagram - has a square gallery view, the logical decision is to make a square business card as well. Squares are also more gripping from a design standpoint.

Since business cards mostly have a standardised size, I decided to not stray away too far from that and make the business card 60x60 mm. Big enough to be readable, small enough to fit into a wallet.

As someone who enjoys peculiar designs for something as small as a business card, I envisioned it to be not only for professional use and a quick method for sharing contact information, but also a separate piece of art that would look intriguing to a viewer.

The design does not have to be over the top, so by placing the logo, brand name and creating a wavy frame around the corners as a small detail brings everything together perfectly. Pink, red and burgundy on a cream background complement each other vividly enough to catch attention from afar (Appendix 16).

4.4.3 Portfolio

One of the most important items to be part of *barbiesundaytattoos'* branding definitely has to be a tattoo portfolio with the best works done so far as a tattooer, and ones that best represent my style as an artist. A portfolio is not only necessary for most artists when applying for work and presenting to clients, but it is also useful to compile a physical collection of past successful projects to look back at and acknowledge growth.

To keep in line with the brand's theme, the format for the portfolio was chosen to be square as well. The same design as on the business card was used for the portfolio cover.

The size has to be big enough to clearly distinguish all the small details in the photos, but also compact and portable for convenience and aesthetic purposes. After

recommendations from my supervisor and some test printing, I decided to go with 135x135 mm.

I envisioned the tattoos being the main and only focal point while flipping through the pages, because after all, the artwork speaks for itself. No text of a backstory is needed to comprehend the motion happening on the page. I cropped all the photos to contain as much information in the centre as possible, getting rid of excess background noise. This will help the viewer to fully dive into the artwork without distraction. No other text except the date when each tattoo was made – for keeping track of progress. To include some variety for the viewer, I compiled a few categories of tattoos into collages (Appendix 17).

4.4.4 Gift card

In spite of the fact that the business card and portfolio turned out to have a square format, a gift card has to stick out. It has to be something of its own, since the sentiment behind it is more than carrying contact information and being solely about the brand.

The meaning behind a gift card, from a standpoint of a tattoo artist, is something that is shared between customers in joyous moments. It brings positive emotions to the person getting it as a gift, and therefore, becomes more of a sentiment than an item being simply part of a brand's identity. It gifts an experience that will become part of the client's life for the rest of their life, so it has to be special in every way. With that in mind, the format for the gift card was chosen to be a heart with a size of 100x103 mm.

Staying in line with the overall childlike and cute style of the brand, I added a frilly frame with a heart shaped outline to set the edge apart. Afterwards, I created two designs with varying color schemes for two amounts of money the card could be purchased for – 50€ and 100€ (Appendix 18).

4.4.5 Merch

Last in order but not in importance, merchandise to bring the project into full circle. Being a tattoo artist and someone who admires the world of art, I am constantly surrounded by talented people, who push their art to be seen by others. Coming up with original ways to

distribute their artworks on different platforms, materials and items continuously inspires me to think outside the box and to also come up with diverse ways to share my art.

The most common and uniform way to sell designs as a tattooer is to print them on T-shirts, hoodies and other items of clothing. Custom apparel is something almost anyone likes to buy, since it is unique unlike mainstream *fast fashion* clothing. Nonetheless, I decided to skip creating apparel, even though it has always been and continues to thrive in the art community. I want something that can be more of a decorative item, something to spice up an interior and/or be able to gift without needing to figure out the right size. The items that seem to fit best with the brand's outlook are phone cases, a decorative pillow, a skateboard, a metal mug, posters and stickers with tattoo designs.

The first tradition that illustrators follow is selling prints of their artworks. Tattoo artists often sell their designs as prints too, which is a bonus way to spread, sell and/or gift art. The prints can be framed, put up as decor and simply be a part of someone's art collection (Appendix 19).

Stickers are another branch of this tradition and they are also more versatile. Stickers can decorate any kind of surface in someone's personal space and be spread across town on poles, walls, etc., giving some extra exposure to the brand (Appendix 20).

Tattoo designs as illustrations also fit well on phone cases, as they have a distinct outline and are unique for every artist. Having a case with a custom design is an original way to stand out among the one-tone phone cases, once those become boring and mundane (Appendix 21).

Taking into account that the logo for *barbiesundaytattoos* is a face on a square background, the shape fits perfectly on a square decorative pillow. It can be just as useful to rest on, as being a nice addition to the interior of a room (Appendix 22).

A metal camping mug that usually has an important role while travelling, is a more original choice in terms of shape and material to a basic ceramic cup. The metal mug has a border that can be a different color to add an extra touch with the brand's logo on the side (Appendix 23).

Finally, another versatile way to use a tattoo design is to place it on a skateboard deck. A long and narrow design is preferable due to the shape of the skateboard (Appendix 24).

The various items that tattoo designs can be placed on are not limited to those listed above, but are the ones that I would consider producing in the near future. If they become successful as gifts and the brand's audience takes interest in them, I will not hesitate to expand the *merch* line for *barbiesundaytattoos* as it is something I am passionate about.

CONCLUSION

Tattoos and design have always had a connection between them, more so nowadays than ever before. Being a tattoo artist and simultaneously studying graphic design has had an impact on the quality of work I produce for my clients. The knowledge on certain topics has given me the opportunity to be more mindful in creating tattoo designs and to pay attention to details that otherwise would have been left unattended.

The objective of this paper was to explore these two directions of art and merge them together in order to create a branding for myself as a tattoo artist. Tattoo artists use a lot of techniques and rules that graphic designers use in their work, and bringing the two forms of art together makes a great opportunity to create an original output for someone who is passionate about both.

Since a logo is the face of a brand, and *barbiesundaytattoos* undoubtedly needed one, it was important to put emphasis on studying the nuances of good logo design. After diving into the history of logo design, how the characteristics of a conventionally good logo have changed, the results have given an inspirational boost to create something that is not exactly standard, yet is still effective.

Evaluating the current position of Estonia's tattoo community from the aspect of design, going through each artist's online page and determining similar patterns or discovering differences, has conjured a clearer picture of what image I wish to portray of my brand and what emotions I would like to convey to my clients. Turning to my audience for opinions on some vital topics has broadened my outlook on how tattoos are perceived within the community by those who get tattooed, but do not work in the field.

This project has been extremely useful in expanding knowledge on all the aspects that are necessary in creating a good branding. The study of the two subject matters has awoke a wave of self-analysis to determine short-term and long-term goals for myself as a tattoo artist and a brand. Although it is not uncommon for a tattoo artist to become a personal brand, it is still less documented in contrast to creating a branding for a 'regular' brand. As well as personal goals that were mentioned before, the objective of this paper was also to expand the reader's horizons on the topic of tattoo subculture, discover new perspectives

on the topic and share my experience in combining the well known essence of graphic design with tattooing.

RESÜMEE / SUMMARY

Enesebränding *barbiesundaytattoos* brändi näitel.

Töötades tätoveerijana ja samal ajal õppida graafilist disaini on olnud põnev kogemus. Tätoveeringud on saanud eriti populaarseteks viimaste aastate jooksul, seega on tätoveerija amet saanud ihaldusväärseks. Üksik tätoveerija võib nüüd oma kunsti abil saada omamoodi brändiks. Brändi identiteedi loomise protsess on mind alati huvitanud ja seoses sellega tekkis idee projekti jaoks, mis on esitatud selles lõputöös – minu isikliku brändi *barbiesundaytattoos* identiteedi loomine.

Lõputöö kirjalik osa keskendub kahe teema uurimisele: tänapäevane tätoveeringute subkultuur ja hea logo kujunduse omadused. Turu ja sihtgrupi analüüs koos disainiprotsessi kompaktse kirjeldusega annavad lugejale võimalust osaleda selle projekti loomise igal sammul. Praktiline osa hõlmab brändi identiteedi kõigi vajalike aspektide kujundamist: logo, tüpograafia, värvivalik, visiitkaart, kinkekaardid, portfoolio ja *merch*.

Selle lõputöö isiklik eesmärk on luua täiuslik töötav bränd iseendale kui tätoveerijale, suurendada selle abil persoonibrändi mainet ning väljendada oma identiteedi (CVI) loomise oskust, mis on omandatud nelja aasta jooksul Kõrgemas Kunstikoolis Pallases. Üldine eesmärk on laiendada lugeja silmaringi tätoveeringute subkultuuri teemal, esitada uusi vaatenurki ja jagada oma kogemust graafilise disaini ühendamisel tätoveerimisega.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Backbone Tattoo Studio branding

https://instagram.com/backbonetattoo

Appendix 2. Pirados Tattoo Shop branding

https://facebook.com/PiradosTattoo

Appendix 3. Pirados brand logo

https://piradosbrand.com

Appendix 4. Pirados brand apparel

https://piradosbrand.com

Appendix 5. Timeline of Google's logo

Sep - Oct 1998

Oct 1998 - May 1999

May 1999 - May 2010

May 2010 - Sep 2013

Sep 2013 - Aug 2015

Aug 2015 - ?

if it's hip, it's here
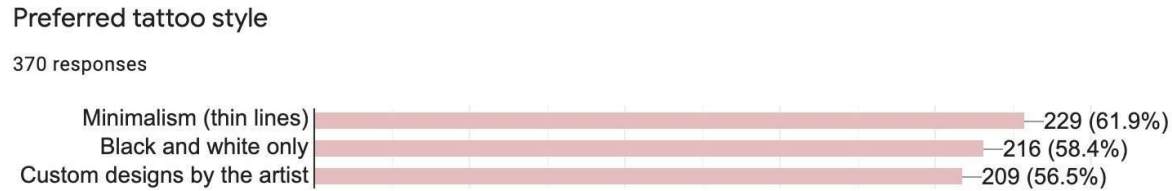
https://99designs.com/
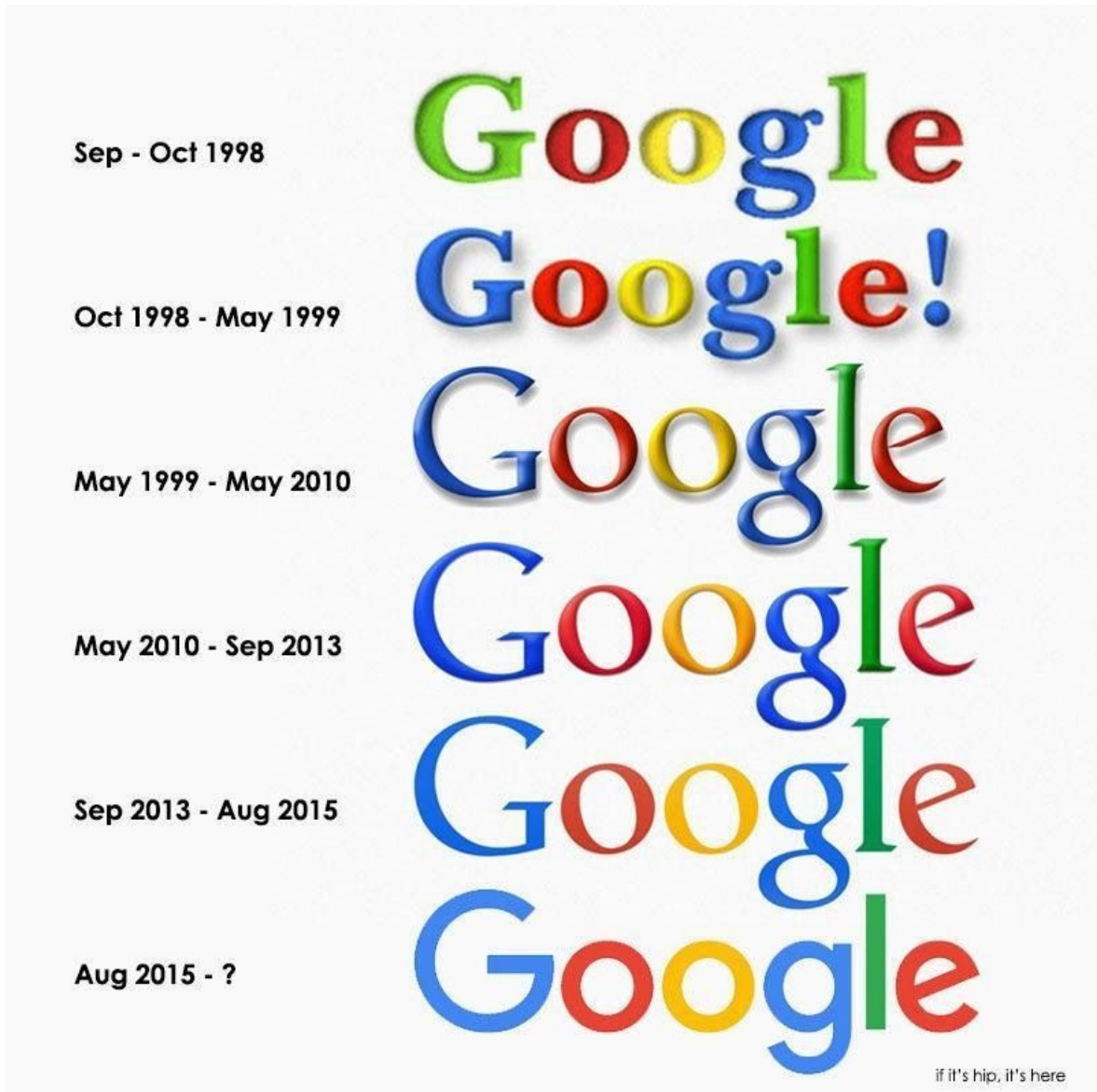
Appendix 6. Briefing questions

1. Positioning
Compared with other companies, what is the client's current positioning?

2. Purpose
What is the client's business? What is the client's purpose?

3. Mission
Beyond the economics, why is it worth doing? What is the client's mission?

4. Composition
What is the client's current internal structure?

5. Culture
What are the client's distinctive shared behaviors that best support the purpose and mission?

6. Personality
What is the client's chosen style and manner?

7. Client goals
What are five key goals over the next year/five years?

8. Growth
What are the greatest opportunities for the growth of the client and its image?

9. Promises
What promises does the client make?

10. Current audience
Who is the client's current audience? Who, where, when, why?

11. Audience goal
Does the client want another type of audience? What is the desired demographic?

12. Perception
How does the client's target audience currently view the brand?

13. Desired perception
How does the client want the audience to view the brand?

14. Competition
How is the client different from its competition?

15. Response
What response does the client want the target audience to take away with them?

16. Objective
What is the marketing objective?

Adams, S. et al. (2004:23) Logo Design Workbook: A Hands-On Guide to Creating Logos.
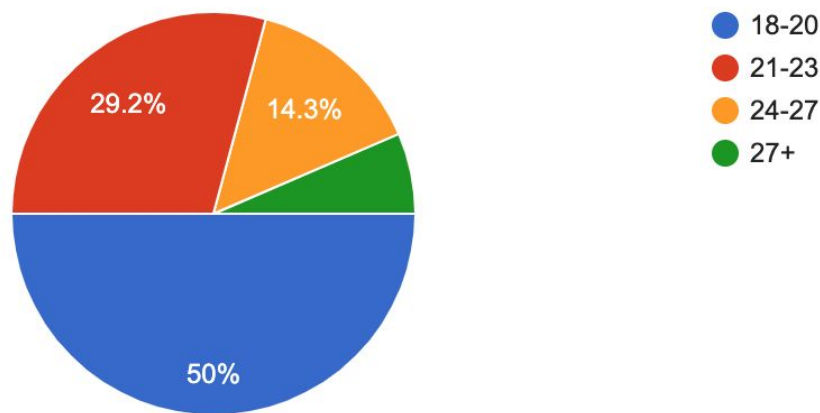
Appendix 7. Poll results: preferred tattoo style

Preferred tattoo style

370 responses

Minimalism (thin lines)	229 (61.9%)
Black and white only	216 (58.4%)
Custom designs by the artist	209 (56.5%)

Appendix 8. Poll results: reason for getting tattooed

Reason why you get tattooed

370 responses

Self expression	283 (76.5%)
Memorable moments, dates	204 (55.1%)
I'm a "tattoo collector"	188 (50.8%)
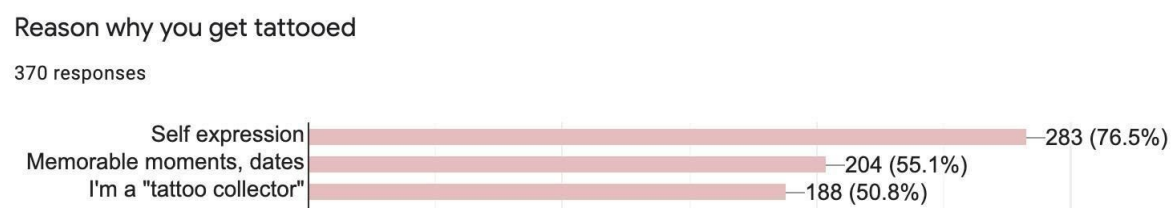
Appendix 9. Poll results: age

Your age

370 responses

Legend:
- 18-20
- 21-23
- 24-27
- 27+

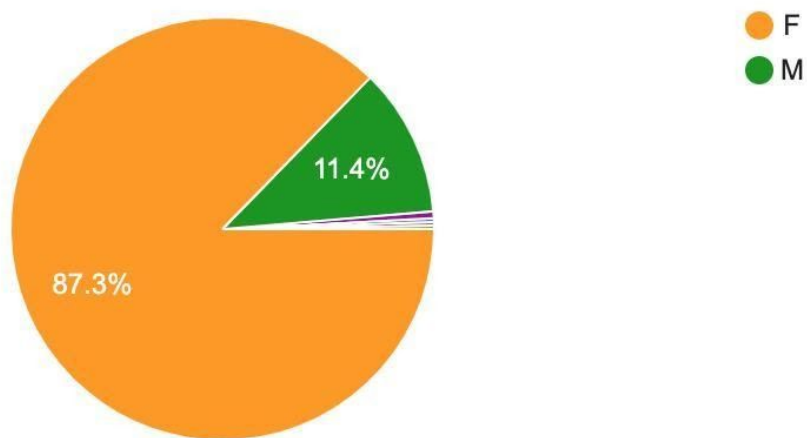Pie chart values:
- 50% (18-20)
- 29.2% (21-23)
- 14.3% (24-27)

Appendix 10. Poll results: gender

Your gender

370 responses

Appendix 11. Poll results: town of residence

Town of residence

370 responses

- Tallinn
- Tartu
- Narva

41.4%
30.8%
8.9%

▲ 1/7 ▼
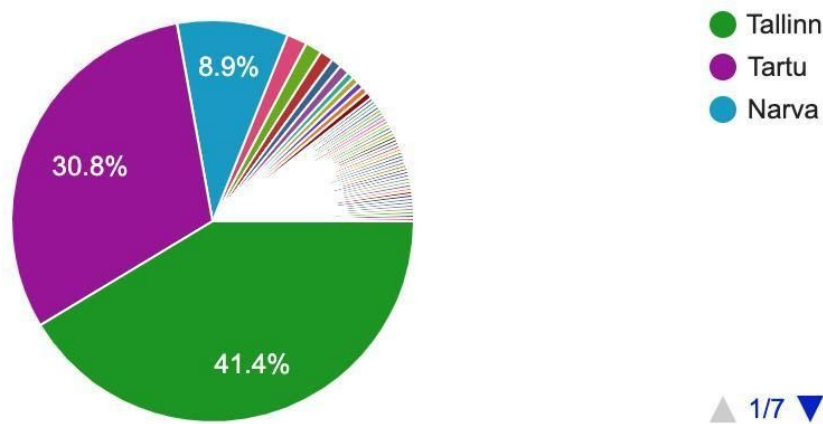
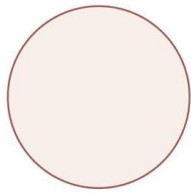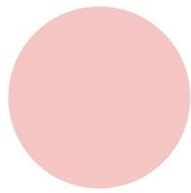Appendix 12. Old logo of *barbiesundaytattoos*

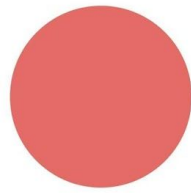Appendix 13. New logo variations for *barbiesundaytattoos*
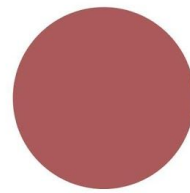
Appendix 14. Color scheme for *barbiesundaytattoos*

#f7efe6   #f6bcbd   #e8484   #a5383

Appendix 15. Corresponding Pantone colors

PANTONE 7506 C — 1⅜ pts PANTONE Yellow / ½ pt PANTONE Rub. Red 2.2 / 60⅝ pts PANTONE Trans.Wt. .8 / 97.0

PANTONE 169 C — ¾ pt PANTONE Warm Red 4.7 / ¼ pt PANTONE Yellow 1.6 / 15 pts PANTONE Trans.Wt. 93.7

PANTONE 172 C — 12 pts PANTONE Warm Red 75.0 / 4 pts PANTONE Yellow 25.0

PANTONE 180 C — 16 pts PANTONE Warm Red 94.1 / 1 pt PANTONE Black 5.9

PANTONE 173 C — 12 pts PANTONE Warm Red 72.7 / 4 pts PANTONE Yellow 24.3 / ½ pt PANTONE Black 3.0

PANTONE 181 C — 16 pts PANTONE Warm Red 80.0 / 4 pts PANTONE Black 20.0

∷ = Achievable in CMYK
⬡ = Achievable in RGB

Appendix 16. Business card mockup for *barbiesundaytattoos*

Appendix 17. Portfolio mockup for *barbiesundaytattoos*

Appendix 18. Gift cards for *barbiesundaytattoos*

Gift Card
barbiesundaytattoos
50€

Gift Card
barbiesundaytattoos
100€

Appendix 19. Framed print mockup with tattoo design

Appendix 20. Stickers with tattoo designs

Appendix 21. Phone case mockups with tattoo designs

Appendix 22. Decorative pillow mockup with *barbiesundaytattoos* logo

Appendix 23. Metal mug mockup with *barbiesundaytattoos* logo

Appendix 24. Skateboard mockup with tattoo design