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**MODERN TENDENCIES IN PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ART
AND BUSINESS IN RUSSIA**

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Abstract

The article reveals the general tendencies in the phenomenon of Art Collaboration in Russia during the 3-year period beginning in 2017. Its goal is to determine which types of brands and visual artists tend to collaborate and the objectives that they set for these interactions. The study analysed approximately 50 art collaborations involving Russian visual artists and/or Russian companies that took place in Russia. The origin, industries and price segment of brands that initiated creative partnerships with artists were defined. The study produced interesting findings: contrary to popular belief, mass-market brands cooperated with visual artists 4 times more often than luxury ones. The origin, age, gender and media of the collaborating artists were indicated. The study showed that brands tried to reach a young target audience, and that the artists engaged in creative partnership were therefore from a younger age group; nevertheless, they were strong art brands with a vast reference public. The study also showed the categories of art products that resulted from creative partnerships. The inquiry intended to determine whether there was any interrelation between the industry of the company and the artist's media, as well as the type of art collaboration that resulted.

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1. Introduction

Recently, art collaborations developed into a leading trend in the field of communication. In the 20th century, the number of art collaborations was characterised by luxury brands (Chailan, 2018), so today we could indicate the significant change in this scenario. We can notice a considerable increase in the number of mass-market brands that initiate cooperation with visual artists and art institutions. The soaring interest in culture and contemporary art displayed over the last 10 years or so, as well as the tendency to personify corporate communications and customise goods and services, actively stimulate brands toward this pattern of partnership (Osipova & Osipova, 2019).

However, this cooperation between commercial and personal art brands can have both positive and negative consequences on brands' reputation. Therefore, both companies and artists must take this into account and plan these kind of alliances with precautions, in accordance with their philosophy, core values, development strategy, and communication policy.

2. Problem Statement

Currently, even though art collaborations have been widely distributed, only a few aspects of this phenomenon have been scrutinised. However, general tendencies have yet to appear. The scientific reviews have defined the alliances of art and business as a popular type of partnership because a wide range of enterprises use this powerful tool for the expansion of retail brand personality (Zsolnai & Wilson, 2016; Kim, Vaidyanathan, Chang, & Stoel, 2018).

Also, since the Internet and social media play a significant role in people's everyday life, they have become an influential communication channel for brands (Essamri, McKechnie, & Winklhofer, 2019). These tools have been a major asset to the development of brands' awareness. However, fascinating creative entertaining content has more often than not surpassed direct publicity in the matter of its efficiency (Estes, Brotto, & Busacca, 2018). Given this, art has become a sought-after theme for both luxury (Blinicheva & Vankovich, 2017; Lebedeva & Stupnikova-Kal'tani, 2017; Kusova, 2018) and mass-market segments due to its emotional value (Starikova & Tiunova, 2017; Koronaki, Kyrousi, & Panigyrakis, 2018).

Some papers have focused on the figure of an artist who has been engaged in a partnership with a company. They claim that these collaborations have an effect on all stakeholders: they exert an influence on the image of commercial brands as well as on artistic brands. For artistic brands, which are smaller as a rule, a creative partnership with a brand can have a greater impact on image-making and reputation, especially if we talk about the early stages of their artistic career (Komarova, 2018). A strategic approach should be implemented while selecting a companion for partnership. Artists should base their choice on mutual recognition of values, respect, and above all else, that the art project to be created in partnership should satisfy all the criteria that define a true piece of art. If these terms are observed, the product would have value (Trumble & van Riemsdijk, 2016).

As social media has become a very powerful tool for distribution of information, artists should use this communication channel wisely (Kartseva, 2018). Moreover, artists who position themselves as personal art brands, with their own philosophy, mission, values and a thought-through communication

strategy can expand the range of their opportunities, including unlimited creative ones (Kalashnikova, 2015), as well as increase their target audience. It is significant that numerous papers have been dedicated to art techniques which are in demand in recent years among professional art communities and society. These works examined the implementation of various art genres in retail (Naletelich & Paswan, 2018). They also noted the ascent of street art all over the world (Molnár, 2018), as well as its influence on the society and the urban environment. They claimed that street art played a significant part in the modernisation of the urban habitat (Grigoleit, Hahn, & Brocchi, 2013) and in developing people's interest in this particular area, to the point that street art objects could serve as tourist destination (Yan, Xu, Sun, & Xu, 2019). Recently, the value of art's general availability has taken centre-stage; therefore, projects created with street artists emphasise the idea of the availability of art for each and every person, without the need to buy a ticket in a museum. Many people find this idea tremendously attractive, as when art objects are integrated into city streets, they assist in the humanisation of urban space (Drobysheva & Lapina, 2017; Rybinskih & Bragin, 2016). Several surveys revealed that the majority believe art projects of this type to have had positive impact on the urban space, and that those initiatives must be supported (Tanguy, & Kumar, 2019).

Currently, this paper is the first comprehensive study of art collaborations between visual artists and brands exemplified by the Russian experience to date.

3. Research Questions

The major research questions were divided into 4 categories:

3.1. Brands

How often and what kind of brands initiated cooperation with visual artists in Russia from 2017-2019?

The aspects of the study are the brands' origin, industry, price segment, target audience, the purpose of the art partnership and the presence of background experience in this particular sphere.

3.2. Visual Artists

The aspects of the study are the artists' origin, age, gender, media used for producing the art project, presence of background experience in this sphere, target audience, the number of followers in social media, popularity and personal brand awareness.

3.3. Products of collaboration

Which specific types of art objects were popular during the given period?

Where were the art objects represented, including the Internet space (and if so, where)?

What is the geography of the art collaborations? In what cities the art object was represented, including the particular area of the Internet space?

3.4. Correlation

The occurrence of any correlation between:

- the industry of the company and the type of art object, which was produced in collaboration with the visual artist;
- the industry of the company and the media used by the particular visual artist;
- the target audience of the company and the artist's age and gender.

4. Purpose of the Study

The represented research aims to examine the major trends in Art Collaborations from 2017-2019 in Russia. The determination of the potential impact not only on the commercial and personal art brands, their image, popularity, and communication, but also on the development of the art space of the region are important objectives of the study. The results of this research could be beneficial for companies to make decisions concerning this issue.

It is worth noting that this study is the first part of complex and multifaceted research which will focus on highlighting the similarities and differences in various geographical locations, such as Russia, Europe, and Northern America, and on defining the major regional tendencies.

5. Research Methods

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were implemented during the study. The data about art collaborations were collected from mass media, the official sites of the companies and the artists, as well as the statistics of official social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and VK.com) of the stakeholders.

6. Findings

6.1.Brands

During the study, data about 50 art collaborations between commercial brands and visual artists were collected and analysed. All the examples were chosen due to their public response and popularity in social media. All the collaborations took place in Russia or engaged artists of Russian origin.

The fewest number of art collaboration was indicated in 2017, with only 8 art projects (approximately 16% of all projects). Afterwards, in 2018, there was a considerable increase by more than 3.5 times, reaching 29 projects (58%). Then, in 2019, this figure declined to 13 projects (26%); however, this information is only complete up until October 2019, so the situation could change by the end of the year. For many international brands, art collaboration was already a common practice, while for many Russian companies it was their first experience.

Contrary to popular belief, the upmarket segment had only 14% of all collaborations, with 4 French brands (fashion, perfume, jewelry), 1 Swiss brand (watchmaking), and 1 Italian brand (fashion), all of which were currently a part of LVMH – a French multinational luxury commodities conglomerate

headquartered in Paris (France), well-known for its famous collaborations with art for many years. 1 Russian luxury brand was also represented (Spirits).

The mass-market segment was represented by the following industries:

- Apparel and accessories – 6 collaborations (brands: 4 US, 1 German);
- Cosmetics accessories – 6 collaborations (brands: 1 US company, 1 French, 1 Russian, 1 German);
- Finance services – 5 collaborations (brands: 2 US companies, 1 Russian);
- Retail – 5 collaborations (brands: 1 Dutch, 2 Russian);
- Media – 4 collaborations (brands: 3 US, 1 Russian);
- Spirits – 2 collaborations (brands: 1 UK, 1 Swedish);
- Sport – 2 collaborations (brands: 2 Russian);
- Tableware goods – 2 collaborations (brands: 1 Russian);
- IT – 2 collaborations (brands: 1 Russian);
- Art and entertainment – 2 collaborations (brands: 2 Russian);
- Oil and gas – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 Russian);
- Hospitality – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 Russian);
- Beverage – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 US);
- Event – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 Russian);
- Automotive – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 South Korean);
- Public space – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 Russian);
- Mobile Communications – 1 collaboration (brands: 1 Russian).

6.2. Visual Artists

Overall, 24 artists participated in art collaborations. Most of them created their artwork individually, but there were several group projects, involving 2, 3, 4 and 11 members. The majority of artists were Russian nationals, but there were also representatives from the US, the UK and Spain. This sphere could be called male-dominated because there were only 3 female artists.

However, we cannot talk about gender-based discrimination, as the main selection criteria were the presence of a unique and original artistic style, popularity among the target audience and popularity in media. The age of artists is various, but the younger generation 25-35 years old prevailed.

The themes of the represented artists were far from politics, religion or any other potentially provocative topic. Moreover, they propagated a positive attitude towards life, faith in oneself and creativity. There were 3 world-beaters between the visual artists who had backgrounds in collaboration with enterprises, and they were the only ones to participated in more than 2 projects.

The main leader was Pokras Lampas (born 1991), a young street artist and an official Calligraffiti ambassador famous for his partnership with global brands, a practice which he started in 2015. He participated in half of all collaborations (25) — mostly solo, except in 2 cases. Predominately, he created limited-edition collections of apparel or packaging and unique art projects for the urban environment, many of which set world records, such as the largest calligraffiti in the world.

The second one was Elena Sheidlina (born 1994), an Instagram star, artist and model who has become well-known among the youth due to her creative photographs of herself in social media (Instagram followers: 4.4 million, YouTube followers: 2.25 million). She participated in 14 art projects, primarily in publicity campaigns.

Those personalities become icons for young people from 13-25 years old, who were the most desirable target audience not only for mass-market brands but also for the upmarket sector, owing to the decrease in the age of customers of luxury commodities. The personal accounts of artists in social media were claimed to be excellent distribution channels, which were under most circumstances more popular and effective than official accounts of brands.

The third one was Andrey Bartenev (born 1965), a contemporary artist, sculptor, performer, theatre costume designer and curator (Instagram followers: 15.3K, Facebook followers: 10K), whose target group was more mature. He had only 4 collaborations, two of which were with luxury brands.

There were several factors which had an influence on artists' motivation, such as privacy, common values, mutual respect, credibility and brand loyalty, the opportunity to create an outstanding piece of art under its sponsorship, and the existence of essential artistic freedom.

6.3. Products of the collaborations

The study demonstrates the popularity of the following categories of art-objects during the given period: limited edition – 30% (15 projects); art-project for events (such as decorations for festivals, anniversaries) – 30% (15 projects); publicity campaigns – 22% (11 projects), and art projects for the urban and cultural environment – 18% (9 projects). The art projects were created using street art, media art, photography, video art, performance and painting.

The majority of products of art collaborations were targeted to the Russian Internet (Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and VK.com). As for the physical art objects, they were found in metropolises in Russia (Moscow and Saint Petersburg) and in other countries (New York, Rome). Also, a project by Hublot (the Official Timekeeper of the championship), dedicated to the 2018 FIFA World Cup, was shown in all the brand's boutiques all over the globe.

6.4. Correlation

The research revealed that there was no clear pattern in interrelations between the industry of the company and the type of art object produced. Nevertheless, the majority of apparel companies tended to create limited-edition collections more often than other brands; cosmetic companies initiated creative advertising campaigns; while luxury brands and large companies in IT, oil and gas, finances, sport, retail and automotive, participated in the creation of art projects for events or the urban realm.

Also, we can admit that companies tended to collaborate with leaders of the art area; however, we can hardly define any correlation between a brand's industry and an artist's media.

The age of the company's target audience in the majority of cases matched the artists' age, because in collaboration with personal brands not only the produced artwork mattered, but also a personality of a particular artist. Also, an artists' gender was especially important in publicity campaigns of apparel and cosmetics for young females, in which artists have been not only co-creators of advertising, but also

models and potential customers of these brands (Nike X SashaUnisex, Nike X Elena Sheidlina, Soda Make Up X Elena Sheidlina, L'Oreal Hair X Elena Sheidlina, Wella X Elena Sheidlina).

7. Conclusion

To summarise, the general trends in art collaborations in Russia from 2017-2019 were as follows. The majority of companies which initiated art partnerships with visual artists are representatives of global foreign brands with headquarters in the US or European countries, such as France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and the United Kingdom, while the share of Russian companies only make up 1/3 of the total. In contradiction to popular belief, the main initiators of art partnership were mass-market brands, while the upmarket segment had only 14% of all collaborations.

Attracting young audiences 13-25 years old (millennials and Generation Z) as well as maintaining interest in their products and services were the major motives of commercial brands which initiated art collaboration with visual artists.

The most solicited partners among the commercial brands in the given period were gifted young professional artists under 30 years old who have produced unique pieces of art in the realms of street art, multimedia art, performance and painting, and had also had previous experience in art collaborations with other companies. Primarily featured were artists who created their brand with all the necessary attributes, like philosophy, mission, core values, uniqueness, and genuineness; artists who had already a numerous audience of followers in social media and whose numbers continue to grow exponentially; and artists who enjoy communication with their fans, posting, answering comments and regularly appearing in media space, attracting attention to their art brand.

The art collaboration phenomenon considerably influenced the cultural environment of the specific region, as well as the world cultural art space in general, due to the stimulation of the genesis of innovations in art media and art technology, which were manifest in the process of art collaborations. The soaring number of art collaborations and their patterns could significantly advance the tourist attraction of the region, and what is more to escalate the interest to the cultural events among locals.

In summary, it is worth saying that the key factor of the successful cooperation between commercial brands and visual artists is the shared aims, goals and values as well as mutual respect. Therefore the choice of the partner should be a well-considered decision based on the development strategy of both commercial and art brands.

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