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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VISUAL ART ARTIST-ENTREPRENEURS USING MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES AND THEIR ARTISTIC INTEGRITY

Bachelor's Thesis

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I have written this Bachelor's Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

Table of contents

Introduction.....4

1. Theoretical framework: The relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity.....6

1.1. Definition of visual art entrepreneurship.....6

1.2. Overview of the variables: the artistic integrity and market-driven strategies employed by artist-entrepreneurs.....12

1.3. An overview of empirical studies addressing the relationship between implementing market-based strategies and artistic integrity.....21

2. Empirical research on the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity.....28

2.1. Methodology and sample of the empirical study.....28

2.2. Results and discussion of the empirical study on the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity.....34

Conclusion.....43

List of references.....46

APPENDIX A.....54

Description of the qualitative 4-point scale of the artists' strength of artistic integrity.....54

APPENDIX B.....55

Description of the qualitative 4-point scale of artists' usage of market-based strategies...55

APPENDIX C.....56

Socio-demographic questions in the distributed survey.....56

APPENDIX D.....57

Measurement tools for visual art artist-entrepreneurs' market-based strategy use in the distributed survey.....57

APPENDIX E.....58

Measurement tools for visual art artist-entrepreneurs' artistic integrity in the distributed survey.....58

APPENDIX F.....59

Descriptive characteristics of the survey sample.....59

Resümee..... 61

Introduction

In recent years, the intersection of art and entrepreneurship has become an increasingly prominent subject for discussion, which has highlighted how artists-entrepreneurs navigate their careers, sustain their practices, and relate to audiences and markets. (Callander & Cummings, 2021; Essig, 2015; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023) Artist-entrepreneurs are expected to balance creative ambitions with the practical demands of running a sustainable business (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2012; Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016; W. J. Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015). This thesis helps to provide an insight into a group whose work is often less utilitarian, and the value of it is more subjective. Artistic worth is frequently determined by intangible factors such as originality, cultural significance, and personal meaning, rather than purely by functional use (Morgan, 1998; Scherdin & Zander, 2011). The relevance of this topic extends beyond the artist as a person. It relates to the wider concern about the value of artistic expression that is shaped by the economic survival.

As someone who is an artist-entrepreneur and a business administration student, I have personally experienced the difficulties and internal conflicts that arise when artistic goals cross with concerns of financial sustainability. Tackling this issue matters because it helps artist-entrepreneurs make smarter choices about their careers, and it also contributes to building a healthier, more sustainable cultural scene overall. If artists are pressured to adopt market-based strategies to stay financially afloat (Pyykkönen et al., 2023), it becomes necessary to understand the impact of these choices on the core values of artistic practice, as artists may be tempted to compromise their artistic integrity for commercial appeal (Scherdin & Zander, 2011). By focusing specifically on visual art artist-entrepreneurs and investigating the possible relationship between their use of market-based strategies and the strength of their artistic integrity, this paper aims to contribute to rather underexplored areas. Understanding this relationship is not only important for academia, but also for practical implications: for artists, cultural policymakers, and stakeholders, maintaining the vibrancy and authenticity of the arts scene.

This study focuses specifically on visual art artist-entrepreneurs in Estonia. The Estonian art market, while relatively small compared to many other countries, has undergone rapid transformation in recent years. According to the Estonian Institute of Economic Research, the number of businesses whose main field of activity is the production and sale of visual arts has risen sharply: from 189 in 2015 to 1058 in 2019 (Eesti loomemajanduse olukorra uuring, 2018; Eesti loomemajanduse olukorra uuring, 2021). This strong growth shows that more and more Estonian artists are thinking like entrepreneurs. At the same time,

it reflects how the art world is changing – artists often have to find a way to stay true to their creativity while also dealing with market demands. This growth trend is not unique to Estonia. From 2013 to 2020, the number of visual arts enterprises in the EU-27, Norway, and Iceland grew by 134,080, reaching 598,570 in total—a 3.7% annual growth rate. (European Investment Fund & KEA European Affairs, 2021). Therefore, the urgency to study this relationship expands further from the local Estonian context.

While the notion that commerce and creativity are in conflict by nature is not new, there is a gap in empirical research: measuring this relationship. The existing literature either addresses the experiences of creative workers in large organisations (Beverland, 2005; Wei, 2012) or examines this relationship in a descriptive qualitative way (Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016; Kolbe, 2022; Komarova, 2018). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to measure the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs implementing market-based strategies and their artistic integrity. The author hypothesises that the relationship is negative, meaning that visual art artists-entrepreneurs who implement more market-based strategies in their practice experience weaker artistic integrity than those who do not. To fulfil this thesis' aim, the tasks are:

- Introduce a definition of visual art entrepreneurship (from here onward referred to as VAE) through a discussion of art entrepreneurship (from here onward referred to as AE) and entrepreneurship, and explore in what ways art and business conflict.
- Provide an overview of what artistic integrity is, and investigate market-driven strategies that artist-entrepreneurs use in general, as well as how those strategies might impact artistic integrity.
- Present the basis for the hypothesis with previous empirical research discussing the relationship between using market-based strategies and artistic integrity in other creative fields.
- Describe and justify the methodology and the sample for the empirical study.
- Analyse the data collected by the survey using descriptive analysis, Cronbach's Alpha, correlation analysis (Spearman), regression analysis, and ANOVA. Discuss the results of the empirical research in relation to the research question and theory, and draw final conclusions.

Chapter 1 will present an analysis and a definition of VAE, provide an overview of artistic integrity, provide an overview of the market-driven strategies artist-entrepreneurs generally use, and present previous empirical studies similar to the current topic, justifying the hypothesis. In chapter 2, the author will describe the methodology employed for

conducting the empirical research, analyse the collected data and present the results for this thesis.

Keywords: artist-entrepreneur, visual art, art entrepreneurship, artistic integrity, market-based strategies.

1. Theoretical framework: The relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity

1.1. Definition of visual art entrepreneurship

In this subchapter, the author will explore how entrepreneurship, AE, and VAE are conceptually related to build their definition of VAE to use in this research. It is necessary to study those definitions as they will help to understand the tension between art and business. This tension arises from the fundamental level for AE and VAE. The current academic literature does not offer a coherent definition, and research solely about VAE is scarce. By identifying in which areas entrepreneurship, AE, and VAE terms connect and where they differ, the author will be able to use a wider range of literature when dvelving into the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity.

While this thesis focuses on artist-entrepreneurs, it is important to note that AE, as a broader field, includes a wider range of participants besides the artists. These include intermediaries such as galleries, agents, brokers, and curators who help commercialise, exhibit, and promote artistic work (Eglīte, 2023; Panozzo & Cacciatore, 2018; Komarova, 2018). Essig (2015) and Chang & Wyszomirski (2015) similarly describe AE as involving the strategic management of creative enterprises, where artists and non-artists alike engage in balancing cultural value and economic sustainability. Therefore, while artist-entrepreneurs play a role in AE and VAE, they operate within a larger cultural and economic ecosystem. However, since the focus of this research is visual art artist-entrepreneurs, the following subchapter will analyse AE and VAE from that viewpoint, not touching upon the other participants.

Entrepreneurship is a foundational term for EA and VAE. Many authors define it from different perspectives, although there are several elements that authors lean on when defining it. The most common theme present in definitions of entrepreneurship is novelty: entrepreneurship is often described as the pursuit of innovation, societal change, and the ability to seize new market opportunities (Eisenmann, 2013; Kirzner, 2009; Rindova et al., 2009; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Venkataraman, 1997). Entrepreneurs create value by identifying problems and seizing opportunities for personal or societal benefit (Kuratko &

Covin, 2025). In addition, many authors link entrepreneurship to wealth generation, suggesting that innovation is not just about innovation and novelty, but also about producing economic value (Rindova et al., 2009; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Eisenmann (2013) finds that innovation, rather than profit alone, is often the stronger motivator, arguing that without novelty, an activity cannot truly be called entrepreneurial. Chang & Wyszomirski (2015) define entrepreneurship as a management process involving a set of skills and actions aimed at achieving specific goals. Despite some variation in viewpoints, innovation and value creation through skilful management remain the most agreed-upon features. Thus, entrepreneurship can be understood as the process of generating wealth by fulfilling personal or societal objectives through innovative and strategically managed efforts that respond to market needs.

To get more specific, this text focuses on a particular area of entrepreneurship: art entrepreneurship (AE). While it's rooted in the same basic ideas as general entrepreneurship, AE also has its own unique features. Since it's closely connected to the idea of visual art entrepreneurship (VAE), diving into AE helps lay the groundwork for understanding VAE more clearly. AE encompasses broadly industries such as visual art, performance art, dance, design, media arts, literature, music, and theatre (Essig, 2015). Although AE has been practised in business for decades, it remains a relatively new area of academic research, with definitions still varying and boundaries not yet fully agreed upon (Callander & Cummings, 2021). The author will review these definitions to highlight similarities, differences, and connections with entrepreneurship, ultimately formulating their understanding of AE.

As it was a central element in entrepreneurship, innovation plays a main role in AE too (Walter, 2015). However, the novelty is expressed through art creation and the focus is on the creative journey and artistic expression (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2012; Essig, 2015) along with the task of also being the manager, administrator and marketer for their AE (Walter, 2015). It includes the pleasure of creativity, innovation, and contributing to societal and cultural progress (Scherdin and Zander, 2011). A more recent definition highlights its role in societal disruption by introducing new ideas and challenging established norms (Jordan, 2023). Therefore, art pieces solely about what the average potential buyer finds beautiful might not always be the aim, although it may be a byproduct. Artist-entrepreneurs' creations need to add novelty in either a conceptual, contextual or methodological way to society and/or the art community. When talking about entrepreneurship, the generation of wealth through satisfying market demand plays a big part. Interestingly, AE may not necessarily have any practical usefulness or potential to satisfy demand at all – it can simply be a tool for the artist to

address the artistic urge to create, express, and to be able to show their work to an audience (Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016; Hoffmann & Coate & Chuah & Arenius, 2021; Scherdin & Zander, 2011). In fact, according to Grant (2010), in some cases, it can even be a negative thing to be profitable for fear that the artist would be seen as merely a hobby artist, “a day painter” in the art community, where “art for art's sake” is held high. Meaning that being profitable may be a sign of the artists' cheapened artistic integrity in exchange for meeting the market demand. This is something that distinctly separates AE from general entrepreneurship, where being profitable is a sign of success.

Regardless, an artist must put aside creative pride as generating wealth is crucial for maintaining both the freedom of the artist and their art (Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016). As AE does not necessarily require practical usefulness or solving concrete market problems as part of their outlets (Hoffmann & Coate & Chuah & Arenius, 2021; Scherdin & Zander, 2011), artists must rely on their ability to persuade the market of the value and necessity of their artwork (Scherdin and Zander, 2011). Artists face the challenge of balancing both economic and creative/social values in their work, which can lead to significant stress (Essig, 2015; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). Despite these hardships, they continue to pursue their art driven by the need for self-expression, artistic freedom, passion, and creativity (Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). The meeting point between art and business in AE often feels like a paradox – two very different worlds that have to work together to succeed (Pisotska and Gurses, 2023). On one hand, using market-driven strategies might help artists deal with financial struggles. But on the other hand, those same strategies can put their artistic integrity at risk.

This conflict between the nature of AE and the general field of entrepreneurship is one of the reasons why scholars have struggled to find a consensus on how to define AE (Callander & Cummings, 2021). Table 1 outlines the specific additions and emphases that different authors have brought to the definition of AE in academic literature over the course of more than a decade. It can be concluded that while some authors see art and business as supporting elements (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2012; Callander & Cummings, 2021; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023; Scherdin & Zander, 2011), others recognise the tension and opposition in their nature when trying to manage as an artist-entrepreneur (W. J. Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015; Essig, 2015; Hoffmann & Coate & Chuah & Arenius, 2021; Jordan, 2023). However, despite there being divergence of opinions, all the authors agreed on the necessity for the artist to have entrepreneurial and financial success to ultimately maintain their freedom and integrity as artists.

Table 1

Art entrepreneurship definition's progress in academic literature

Source	An addition to the definition
Pisotska & Gurses, 2023	Introduced balancing tensions between art and business through key entrepreneurial practices. Emphasised embracing the complementary relationship between the two domains.
Jordan, 2023	Focused on the application of entrepreneurial strategies to generate both economic and social value. Highlighted innovation, disruption, and challenging social structures for public benefit.
Hoffmann & Coate & Chuah & Arenius, 2021	Emphasised the commercialisation of artistic work for economic gain, combining artistic and business logic to transform creativity into financial success.
Callander & Cummings, 2021	Defined art entrepreneurship as an emerging field that navigates the tension between the commercial aspects of entrepreneurship and the creative autonomy of art.
Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015	Contributed to the idea of cultural workers using entrepreneurial approaches to support creative freedom, adapt to evolving conditions, and create both artistic and economic value through innovation and resource reorganisation.
Essig, 2015	AE is a strategic management of creative enterprises that combine business practices with artistic innovation, aiming to create sustainable value in both the cultural and economic sectors.
Bonin-Rodriguez, 2012	Introduced the concept of artist-producers, where artists manage creative work while navigating economic and collaborative demands in the cultural sector.
Scherdin & Zander, 2011	Bringing together business know-how and creative expression—while also dealing with the uncertainty and risk that come with developing bold, new artistic ideas.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources presented in the table

To continue to the author's definition based on the previous discussion: AE is an artistically innovative process where artists utilise entrepreneurial strategies to balance the tensions between business demands and maintaining artistic integrity, creating economic, social, and artistic value. It involves navigating challenges such as the need for self-expression, artistic freedom, and the pursuit of innovation, while also considering the commercial and societal impacts of their work. Artist-entrepreneurs are at the centre of this

process, acting as both creators and managers of their work; developing, promoting, and sustaining their artistic practice through entrepreneurial means (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2012; Walter, 2015; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). AE can be seen as a way for artists to manage creative autonomy while engaging with societal issues and driving innovation, with income generation often being a byproduct of the process rather than its primary goal. Nevertheless, it should be crucial for an artist that their business thrives, as it allows them to retain and finance their artistic independence and exploration. With the strict boundaries and stress that a lack of money could create, an artist would struggle to create anything valuable at all.

Lastly, narrowing it down even further and coming to the definition of VAE. The main area where those two very similar terms part ways is that VAE only includes practices that focus on visual expression and perception (González-Zamar & Abad-Segura, 2021; Welsh & Onishi & DeHoog & Syed, 2014). Visual art entrepreneurship (VAE) can therefore be defined as entrepreneurial activity carried out by artists whose main medium of expression is visual. The following, but not limited is a list of those practices: fine art (drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics), photography, cinematography, installation art, textile, fashion, architecture, design, and digital art (González-Zamar & Abad-Segura, 2021; Welsh & Onishi & DeHoog & Syed, 2014). Street art (graffiti) and body art (tattoos) also fit the criteria. The excluded areas compared to AE are literature, music, theatre, and dance, as illustrated in Table 2. As the general term “art” contains countless forms of art styles and expression forms, the list of art fields used to compare AE and VAE in this table is not limited, but serves as an illustration of where the terms differ and collide. Building on the broader AE framework, VAE carries the same core idea: it is an artistically innovative process within visual art fields, where artists apply entrepreneurial strategies to ensure the sustainability of their creative practice while striving to preserve their artistic integrity. The difference lies in the medium. Visual artist-entrepreneurs operate at the intersection of creative autonomy and market realities, using entrepreneurship not only to generate income, but to support long-term artistic independence and expression within visual domains.

Additionally, since the area of VAE is severely understudied, there is a lack of consensus on what practices exactly are or are not included under this term. The line between them is very unclear, and depending on context, it may vary. The author relied on the sources describing visual art as an art study when compiling the list, since there is no concrete research regarding the complete list in practice. Due to the innovative nature of AE in general, there are new subtypes of practices frequently emerging, which makes the list inevitably inconclusive. As VAE is a direct subcategory of AE, it is possible to predominantly

reuse the AE definition with an addition that VAE is specifically concerned with only visual art forms such as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Art practices that art entrepreneurship (AE) and visual art entrepreneurship (VAE) consist of

Type	Theatre	Music	Literature	Dance	Performance art	Textile art	Fine art	Cinematography	Photography	Design	Body art	Street art
AE	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
VAE	–	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Note. "+" - does include this practice, "–" - does not include this practice

Source: Compiled by the author based on González-Zamar & Abad-Segura (2021) and Welsh & Onishi & DeHoog & Syed (2014)

To sum up, even though VAE is based on general entrepreneurship, it's a different kind of practice at its core. It sits at the crossroads of two very different, yet deeply connected worlds – art and business. Visual art artist-entrepreneurs do not just create art; they also have to think strategically and manage their careers like business owners. This dual role brings opportunities for independence and visibility but also imposes demands that may conflict with the artistic integrity they seek to uphold. The business side of VAE is often regarded by artists as a necessary yet intrusive presence. It is one that enables financial survival and supports creative freedom, but can just as easily compromise that freedom and artistic integrity, if not carefully managed. While entrepreneurial strategies can be empowering tools that allow artists to sustain their practice and retain control over their artistic work, an excessive focus on the business side of VAE can chip away at the very artistic integrity that motivated the artist to this path in the first place. The real challenge is not whether artists should embrace entrepreneurship, but how to do it in a way that protects their artistic integrity while also meeting the demands of the market. The most sustainable path forward is likely one that supports both their creative vision and their need to earn a living. This balance is not static but requires continuous negotiation, adaptation, and self-awareness.

In the chapters that follow, this thesis investigates the market-based strategies artists use, what their artistic integrity means, and how artist-entrepreneurs, including visual art artist-entrepreneurs, navigate this dynamic relationship.

1.2. Overview of the variables: the artistic integrity and market-driven strategies employed by artist-entrepreneurs

This chapter provides an overview of the two central variables examined in this thesis: the artistic integrity of visual art artist-entrepreneurs and the market-based strategies they use. These two elements form the basis of the main research question, which seeks to understand how the preservation of creative values relates to strategic engagement with the market. This chapter begins by examining the concept of artistic integrity and the role it plays in the choices that artists make. It then explores the practical strategies artist-entrepreneurs use to sustain their work and connect with their audience. Understanding both variables in detail is necessary to establish a foundation for the empirical analysis that follows, where the relationship between them is tested.

The following paragraphs will first provide an overview of the concept of artistic integrity, which lays the groundwork for developing the artistic integrity scale. This will be followed by an overview of the strategic practices commonly used by artist-entrepreneurs to meet market demands, establishing the basis for the market-based strategy scale.

As explained in the previous subchapter, visual art entrepreneurship (VAE) is a subfield of the broader concept of art entrepreneurship (AE). However, there is currently a lack of literature that specifically addresses market-based strategies within the VAE context. For this reason, the author draws primarily from general AE literature, which also applies to VAE, to build a comprehensive understanding of the strategies artists use and the tensions they may encounter between market engagement and artistic integrity.

Artistic integrity is a topic often discussed and used in academic literature, yet it is a rarely defined concept and remains inherently subjective. As Barbour (2006) brings out, even state agencies use the term regularly in funding documents without even clearly defining what exactly it means. Instead, they imply that it can be “diluted” by too much external influence. In any case, it carries a strongly symbolic and ethical meaning that is dependent on the personal feelings of the artist and the current context (Barbour, 2008; M. Beaussart et al., 2013; Becker, 1998; Cohen, 1999; Mills, 2018). It is an idea often associated with artists staying true to themselves, their artistic principles, vision and, ultimately, to their art. However, what exactly affects the integrity of the artist, and how is this defined? Additionally, can it be possible to measure its strength? This chapter focuses on connecting the understandings of previous academic sources and finding the elements to measure artistic integrity. Lastly, the author will propose a scale of artistic integrity based on the discussion to better illustrate the concept.

At the very heart of artistic integrity lies the principle of “art for art's sake”, which means that art is supposed to be the sole purpose and motivation for making it without any external validation, commercial success or goals (Barbour, 2008; Favorsky, 1976; Morgan, 1998). This is reflected in the book by Morgan (1998), where he critiques the art world and artistic expression, which has shifted too much from inner vision to marketable content deprived of deep meaningfulness, endangering, therefore, the core of artistic integrity. He recognises the artist’s need to make themselves financially sustainable, but emphasises the principle to stay near the very roots of art: “It is a major challenge today for artists to focus on their work and avoid the seduction of the marketplace. (Morgan, 1998, p. 5)“. Similarly, in the interviews presented in Barbour's (2008) work, artists often tied their sense of integrity to the experience of creating, a personal necessity, rather than for the approval of the market or anyone else. To truly artistically innovate and create deep truth, which is the basis for artistic integrity, the artist’s inspiration for their work must come beyond ordinary, everyday values (Favorsky, 1976). This relationship is still relevant in today’s art world (Mills, 2018), however, some authors would somewhat argue against Morgan’s (1998) and Favorsky’s (1976) proposal of what it means to have a strong artistic integrity and what affects it.

To begin with, do artists have to be rigid and inflexible to achieve strong artistic integrity? The reality of surviving and thriving in the highly competitive creative industries inevitably requires a degree of willingness to make adjustments to artists’ work or evolve their style (Barbour, 2008; Mills, 2018). Artists often face the dilemma of whether to preserve their full vision or to bend it to meet the needs of either the market, a client or a partner. Mills (2018) argues against the notion by Morgan (1998) and Favorsky (1976) that artistic integrity is always damaged from submitting to external needs. She thinks that artists can make adjustments as long as they are still consistent with their internal standards, and they do not knowingly violate those standards for gain – “Integrity is not the same thing as rigidity. (Mills, 2018, p. 15)”. Flexibility and change, therefore, are not the opposite of integrity but can be part of a mature, sustainable AE practice. Barbour’s (2008) study shows how some artists attempt to bend a little by little in the direction of the external demands rather than immediately surrendering entirely to them. Artists like James and Ben described cases where they adjusted to the audience’s needs while still preserving their core vision (Barbour, 2008). This is an example of a great compromise that does not affect the artist's integrity, but still meets the request of the market. Becker’s (1998) supports this view, suggesting that morality and integrity are not rooted in blind rigidity. In this light, integrity is not something unbendable, but rather it is about finding the right spot to stretch towards without snapping.

When discussing artistic integrity, often the terms “artistic values and principles” are used as one of the core components of it. What are they? It is agreed upon that they are not fixed and universal to every artist’s experience, but rather deeply personal (Barbour, 2008; Mills, 2018; Pyykkönen et al., 2023). From the interviews conducted in Barbour’s (2008) research, it is found that the perspectives on those terms are very diverse. Artistic values can mean either devotion to craftsmanship, emotional authenticity, social commentary, or spiritual engagement (Barbour, 2008). Mills (2018) adds that artistic values are defined internally – what matters is the artist’s ever-evolving artistic standards instead of traditions, and the external validation factors. Favorsky’s (1976) work implies that artistic values might include devotion to the medium, to the honesty of the creative process. However, for Morgan (1998), they are rooted in the conversion of beauty, truth, and psychological depth from the artist’s mind onto their work. All qualities that have been undermined by the market-driven art and business system (Cohen, 1999). Therefore, integrity depends on the clarity and consistency of these self-defined values.

Perhaps the most visible tension between artistic integrity and meeting the market demands occurs when an artist refuses a commission or an opportunity for a collaboration because it is in too great a conflict with their artistic values. In that case, it becomes more than just a personal stance—it is a public way of setting boundaries, standing up for the autonomy and authenticity of their work, even if it comes with challenges (Pyykkönen et al., 2023). Interestingly, some artists in Barbour’s (2008) study said that even though turning down work was tough, especially financially, it reminded them why they do what they do. It pushed them to focus on the people who truly appreciate their authenticity, and in the end, that made the connection with their audience even stronger. Mills (2018) similarly finds that turning down projects which could compromise artists’ standards is one of the clearest demonstrations of integrity. In Morgan’s (1998) writing, the refusal to submit to institutional expectations is essential to the maintenance of artistic integrity.

Now it can be concluded that artistic integrity is neither a static state nor a universally describable ideal. It is a commitment to the artist’s own ever-evolving artistic values, whether they are derived from “art for art’s sake” principles or unique concepts rooted in the artist’s own inner values and goals. This integrity for the artist-entrepreneur is constantly challenged and negotiated by the shifting landscapes of the market and the audience. Integrity emerges not as purity but as coherence: the alignment between artistic action and artistic belief. Each artist must define and protect that coherence, resisting the temptation to lose touch with themselves. Based on this discussion, Appendix A demonstrates the author’s representation

of the qualitative strength scale for artistic integrity, which will also become a useful tool in the empirical part of this thesis for the reader to meaningfully understand the results and see what is behind the numbers. To assess the measurement based on this scale, it is crucial that the input for this judgement comes from the artists themselves.

Market-driven strategies are oriented towards satisfying the needs of the market. Specifically focused on forming the product, prices, and promotion strategies in a way that meets the demand of the market or eases the reach for a market. (Jaworski et al., 2000) Unfortunately, for VAE, it can be difficult to find a balance between innovating artistically and aligning with the market's needs and making profits through that (Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016), given the paradox discussed in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, those strategies are necessary for an artist-entrepreneur to make sure that potential clients see their work, appreciate it, and are willing to pay for it. Having a solid market-based business plan and understanding market demand can make a big difference in financial stability (Walter, 2015). However, a Finnish study by Pyykkönen et al. (2023) noted that artists have expressed dissatisfaction with "the fact that not much time is left for the actual artistic work (Pyykkönen et al., 2023, p. 477)", when they have to manage the business side of AE on their own as well. Therein lies the choice: do they dedicate themselves fully to their artistic expression or become successful as a business by developing and implementing strategies (Branagan, 2017; Dana & Salamzadeh, 2021; Roberts, 2012)? This chapter gives an overview of the general strategies artists use to meet the market needs for the success of the entrepreneurship and how it might affect their artistic integrity. Moreover, it will serve as a basis for the scale of strategy use among artists mentioned in the second chapter, discussing methodology.

The product is most often the heart of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs should try to meet the market demands by firstly understanding what type of product is the most popular amongst consumers or what problem it should solve, and according to the findings, design the product to align with that. (Nijssen, 2021) This, however, is more difficult to achieve for artist-entrepreneurs. Consumers' preferences towards artworks are highly shaped by emotional and contextual perception (Graham & Friedenberg & McCandless & Rockmore, 2010; Ji & Yang, 2022), making it hard to analyse and predict. This also explains why certain artworks, despite not fitting conventional aesthetic patterns, still gain widespread appeal (Graham & Friedenberg & McCandless & Rockmore, 2010), making the success of an art piece hard to predict in advance and for an artist to decide on a direction that they should aim their style towards. The preferences of the artist often do not match the taste of the audience (Kang et al., 2019). To tackle this problem, a strategy that some artists use is product

diversification. In order to increase the chances of provoking the emotional reaction, artists experiment with different styles, formats and mediums (Ji & Yang, 2022). However, the AE product is not just the artwork itself but also the artist connected to it (Colbert, 2014; Lehman & Wickham, 2014). Their personal brand, style, identity and storytelling contribute to the overall appeal of their work, making them a crucial part of their own product (Y.-Y. Chang et al., 2021). Therefore, the artist cannot stretch their range too wide. The artist's image and the artwork also have to make a consistent and attractive pair to appeal to the buyers (Colbert, 2014). This shows how nuanced and uncertain the artist's task is in meeting the consumer's needs in relation to the product. This will require a lot of experimenting and talent to eventually reach a solution for the market demand, meanwhile not losing the artistic integrity and freedom.

Pricing is another difficult aspect for artists because it is not just about covering costs; it is about the perceived value by the market and attempting to position their work within it (Lee et al., 2018; Robinson & Novak-Leonard, 2021). While creative goods generally benefit from lower price elasticity (Purnomo & Kristiansen, 2018), misalignment between pricing and artistic integrity can erode trust in the artist’s brand. Artists mainly rely on experience, comparisons with competitors, and an understanding of their audience's purchasing power when setting their prices (Komarac & Bradić, 2020). Some artists also consider whether their work is meant for a niche, high-end market by creating unique, high-value pieces, or for a broader audience by experimenting with mass production to make their work more affordable (Colbert, 2014; Walter, 2015). As a contrast, some artists price their work based on their own inner valuation, using their work as a reflection of self-worth rather than as a market commodity (Lee et al., 2022). Pricing strategies can also vary across disciplines, using different methods to determine what their work is worth (Colbert, 2014). An interesting discovery by Graham and Friedenberg and McCandless and Rockmore (2010) revealed that the economic value of an art piece does not shape the preference of the potential buyer. This means that setting a high price on a creation without any historical, social, rarity or artistic value factors justifying it will not make the work more desirable for the consumer. This is why the pricing of an art product seems to be a hard aspect for artist-entrepreneurs, as there is a severe lack of consistent and reliable rules to determine the price of art. It takes a lot of experimenting with the combination of art styles and prices to understand how the value of the work and the brand of the artist are perceived on the market and what the purchasing power of the main audience is. Moreover, it is important to consider how an artist may feel

pressured to change their style or compromise their integrity in order to reach a price point that appeals to their audience and ensures business sustainability.

Promotion is a key part of how an artist will reach their main audience. Some artists swear by marketing, however, others believe that if their art is strong enough, it will sell itself (Walter, 2015). Still, most artists realise the necessity of marketing and rely on a combination of networking and digital marketing. Artists now rely heavily on social media (Y.-Y. Chang et al., 2021; Komarac & Bradić, 2020), which serves as a cost-effective marketing tool (Dana & Salamzadeh, 2021). Especially, Instagram has become a platform for artists to showcase their work, build personal brands, connect with an audience and generate engagement (Y.-Y. Chang et al., 2021; Dana & Salamzadeh, 2021; Komarac & Bradić, 2020). However, algorithms often prefer content that is visually loud, easily digestible and generates strong emotion in the consumer, placing artists with subtler, slower work at a disadvantage. Their work requires more focus, which social media viewers often lack. The key to success in social media is consistent engagement, quality content, and engaging the followers to create a sustainable community. (Hausmann & Poellmann, 2013; Kang et al., 2019) Interestingly, Kang et al. (2019) study found that "80% of artists deny that the most-liked artwork is also their favourite artwork (Kang et al. 2019, p. 14)". Therefore, the artistic preferences of the artist do not match the favourites of the audience, making the artist possibly vulnerable to influence to please the public. Alongside social media, personal websites and digital portfolios are important tools for how artists present themselves professionally. A website is more than just a way to promote their work—it is also a thoughtful space where they can shape a clear online identity and strengthen their artistic brand (Crețiu, 2022).

Networking and word-of-mouth, though being more traditional approaches, still remain the most effective promotion strategies for artists to gain recognition and opportunities for finding new clients and reaching a wider audience (Y.-Y. Chang et al., 2021; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Lee et al., 2018; Robinson & Novak-Leonard, 2021;Welsh & Onishi & DeHoog & Syed, 2014). Networking, unlike the previous strategies, helps the artist relieve the tension between art and business by creating a community of support and opportunities. It is a specially vital strategy for those who experience a lack of political support and established cultural infrastructure. Networking can be done by participating in events, fairs, exhibition openings and other similar occasions to meet fellow artists and stakeholders of the art scene. (Bérubé & Gauthier, 2024). Collaboration is another strategy part of the networking that helps artists to access new markets and discover artistic innovation to keep themselves as well as their art relevant and attractive for the market

(Eglīte, 2023; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Panozzo & Cacciatore, 2018; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). Working with other creatives, including cross-sectoral collaboration, can open up new revenue streams and opportunities, offer support and inspiration (Eglīte, 2023; Komarac & Bradić, 2020; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015). At the same time, it's important to maintain a unique artistic identity and not lose sight of personal creative goals (Strøm et al., 2020). All in all, networking and collaboration are not just good for promotion – they also help artist-entrepreneurs stay connected, supported, and creatively engaged, without having to completely compromise their artistic integrity.

Article by Eglīte (2023) emphasises the significance of collaborating with intermediaries that help to form a bridge between creative professionals and the market. Some examples would be businesses (Panozzo & Cacciatore, 2018), galleries (Komarova, 2018), brokers, facilitators, and agents, who contribute by providing access to resources (for example, exhibition spaces) and supporting the commercialisation of creative outputs (Eglīte, 2023). Panozzo & Cacciatore's (2018) outline several stages that artists and intermediaries typically move through during collaboration: presentation, discovery, discussion, negotiation, agreement, and production.The first six stages are about making sure both sides are on the same page when it comes to their goals and vision, which makes this model helpful for understanding how early business involvement can shape an artist's creative path and sense of integrity. But if the business side starts to dominate, the artist's integrity can possibly take a hit, and their control over it may start to fade. The length and complexity of this process can also lead to mental fatigue and a disconnect from the artist's original inspiration (Pyykkönen et al., 2023). Additionally, if overused, it may push artists toward identifying more as service providers or collaborators rather than autonomous creators. While this might not reduce the artistic integrity of some (Mills, 2018), others may perceive it as a loss of artistic autonomy as it shifts further away from "art for art's sake" (Barbour, 2008; Favorsky, 1976; Grant, 2010; Morgan, 1998). Therefore, while collaboration with intermediaries can expand opportunities and professionalise artistic practice, it also poses risks to artistic integrity that artists must navigate with caution.

Self-promotion can be a challenge for many artists who struggle with an entrepreneurial mindset and the lack of skills needed to market themselves effectively (Turbide & Laurin & Lapierre & Morissette, 2008). However, those who embrace the role of self-marketer alongside being an artist are often more successful in getting their work noticed (Walter, 2015). In promotion, do-it-yourself mentality is a realistic way to build a successful AE, as competition is harsh and especially beginner artists need to first catch the eye of an

intermediary (Komarova, 2018; Lehman & Wickham, 2014). That being said, it is still strongly beneficiary to use networking and collaboration to ease the way into a market and create a sustainable foundation for the future. (Lehman & Wickham, 2014) Promoting the artist's work is a crucial part of reaching the desired audience, but it requires, on the one hand, skills that many artists lack and, on the other hand, sacrifices on the adjustments in style that would be more eye-catching and easier to use in promotion. The latter being once again a threat to the integrity of the artist.

Market-driven strategies are essential for artist-entrepreneurs navigating the complexities of balancing artistic integrity with financial sustainability. While the unpredictability of consumer preferences in art makes it difficult to create a universally successful art product, artists can employ strategies such as product diversification, personal branding, collaborations and emotional engagement to increase their market appeal (Ji & Yang, 2022; Colbert, 2014). Established artists, compared to the young artists, have more room to play in terms of having their integrity untouched when using some marketing strategies because they have already proven the worth of their art to the market, so in a way, they have more power to even dictate or ignore the market demands. Young artists, however, must bend their integrity more to implement those strategies. (Fillis et al., 2023; Lehman & Wickham, 2014) Pricing remains a significant challenge requiring artists to experiment with positioning their work in different market segments while maintaining integrity (Graham & Friedenberg & McCandless & Rockmore, 2010; Lee et al., 2018). Promotion, particularly through social media, has become a crucial tool for visibility, yet it often favours visually striking and emotionally immediate content, potentially sidelining more nuanced artistic styles (Hausmann & Poellmann, 2013). Networking and word-of-mouth remain indispensable, despite the rise of digital platforms (Y.-Y. Chang et al., 2021). Ultimately, the success of an artist-entrepreneur depends on their ability to embrace both creativity and business, continuously adapting to shifting market demands while preserving their unique artistic voice.

Figure 1 provides a visual summary of the most common market-based strategies employed by artist-entrepreneurs, as discussed above. These strategies are grouped into three main categories: product, pricing, and promotion – these areas show the range of strategic decisions that artist-entrepreneurs have to manage as they try to stay true to their art while engaging with the market. This framework also provides a helpful starting point for the methodology in the next chapter.

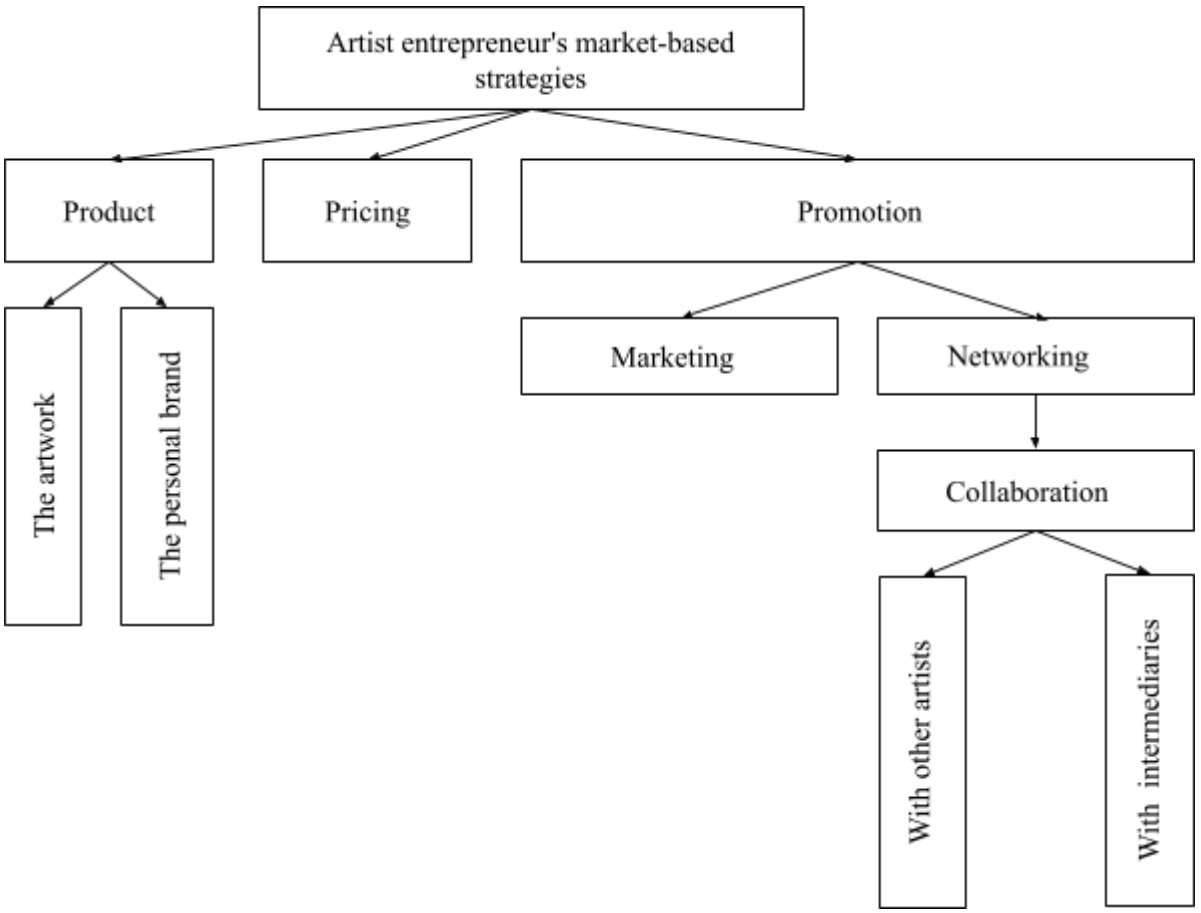

Figure 1. The most common market-based strategies used by artist-entrepreneurs
Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources used throughout chapter 1.2

While the strategies explored in this chapter are not exhaustive, they represent the most common and widely applicable market-based strategies used by artist-entrepreneurs across disciplines. According to the literature, they are also among the most effective for achieving entrepreneurial and financial sustainability. When applied skillfully, these strategies related to product development, pricing, and promotion, equip artists with a good foundation for success in the art market. Although many strategies can be carried out independently, a significant portion of their full potential often lies in collaboration and networking – they can open doors and amplify visibility. At the same time, many of these strategies come with some risk to artistic integrity—they might push artists to make compromises in their creative decisions or focus more on commercial success. Still, some strategies can actually help ease that tension by supporting the artist's integrity or creating more genuine connections with their audience. As with the findings of the last chapter, striking the right balance emerges as the most viable solution. Perhaps the most strategic approach of all is not to reject the market, but to selectively compromise, letting certain strategies bend the artistic integrity just enough to sustain the practice, while using others to

protect and strengthen the artistic integrity. To explore the topic of negotiating between artistic integrity and using market-based strategies more deeply, the next chapter turns to the concept of artistic integrity itself, examining what it means.

Having now explored the most common market-based strategies employed by visual art artist-entrepreneurs, and how these help navigate market demands, it becomes essential to address what is at stake when these strategies are implemented—namely, the artist's artistic integrity. As established in the earlier chapters, artist-entrepreneurs must constantly negotiate the demands of the market with their personal creative vision. The strategies discussed offer pathways to visibility, income, and sustainability, but they also introduce potential risks to the core values that define an artist's work. Therefore, to fully understand how these strategies impact the artist, the following subchapter delves deeper into the concept of artistic integrity—what it means, how it is shaped, and how it can be maintained or compromised in the context of entrepreneurial decision-making.

1.3. An overview of empirical studies addressing the relationship between implementing market-based strategies and artistic integrity

In this chapter, the author looks at five earlier empirical studies that help explain why this thesis topic was chosen. Although they are not precisely about the same topic or field that this thesis focuses on, they provide valuable insight about the general findings regarding the relationship between the creatives' artistic integrity and the interaction with the market. In the following paragraphs, firstly, the reasoning behind the selection of the studies is explained. Then, their focuses and methodologies are compared and analysed to support the methodology later in this thesis. Followed by the analysis of their findings and what were identified to be the key themes emerging across those studies, highlighting common patterns and nuanced differences.

As revealed in the previous subchapters, the tension between artistic integrity and using market-based strategies presents a persistent challenge for visual art artist-entrepreneurs. It has been studied in academic literature from many angles, but most often merely touched upon as part of investigating some other aspect that will steer too far away from the topic of the current thesis (Grant, 2010; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). The literature regarding VAE is severely scarce. Therefore, the author chose to approach the overview of previous empirical studies from a wider angle, introducing the presence of the relationship from various other creative fields, or those that address components of artistic integrity in exploring the relationship. In Table 3, the particular focus of each five studies has been visualised. The keywords used to find these articles were: artistic integrity,

market-based, market demand, strategies, artists, artist-entrepreneurs, art entrepreneurship, creative entrepreneurship, and tension. The prominent tools for reaching articles or clues to them were Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and ChatGPT.

Table 3

The purposes of the previous empirical studies addressing the tension between artistic expression and market demands

Author	Purpose of the study
Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024	To examine whether market power and competition influence artists' strategic decisions and indicate a compromise in artistic integrity.
Kolbe, 2022	To explore how economic inequality influences creative autonomy.
Komarova, 2018	To explore how early-career artists manage tensions between commercial viability and artistic autonomy.
Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016	To investigate how artists navigate their dual role as creators and entrepreneurs.
Wei, 2012	To examine how cultural workers manage the tension between meeting commercial demands and preserving their artistic integrity.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources presented in the table

The five studies presented in Table 3 as well as Table 4 were selected based on three criteria. Firstly, the study needed to remain in the creative entrepreneurship/business field so that both of the core elements of this thesis – artistic practice and market strategy – would be represented. Second, the focus was placed on research that explores the topic from the perspective of the artists themselves, as the previous subchapter established that artistic integrity is primarily rooted in the artist's internal experience and self-perception. One study out of five does not fit these criteria fully, which will be explained shortly. The final consideration was to prioritise recent studies from the last 15 years, as the field of entrepreneurship and art is dynamic and, by its nature, constantly evolving. The five studies are very spread out rather evenly in terms of their publication years, which makes it even more interesting to see if this diversity enhances the analysis by allowing exploration of

whether similar tensions and themes persist over time, or if new patterns and interpretations have emerged.

Table 4

The samples and data methods used in previous empirical studies

Author	Field of study	Sample size	Data collection method	Data analysis method
Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024	Pop-music industry	62 059*	Data from Million Song Dataset and the Billboard Hot 100	Two-stage least squares regressions
Kolbe, 2022	General arts and culture	45	Interviews	Thematic analysis
Komarova, 2018	Contemporary visual art	17	Interviews	Thematic analysis
Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016	Performing arts	17	Semi-structured interviews and observation	Thematic analysis
Wei, 2012	Reality television industry	20 (1 company)	Interviews and observation	Thematic analysis

Note. *This sample size number does not represent the number of people, but songs

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources presented in the table

Now, to begin with, a short comparison of the samples and methods used in the studies and how they relate to the current thesis. Most of the studies presented in Table 4 used qualitative methods to explore the relationship between market-based strategies and artistic integrity. Four of the five studies used interviews to collect their data, allowing the researchers to better understand the personal experiences and values of the artists they spoke with. For instance, Kolbe (2022) interviewed 45 people working in the cultural sector, making it the largest qualitative sample among the studies reviewed. Wei's (2012) research involved participant observation and informal interviews with approximately 20 employees

from one US-based TV production company. Here, it is important to note that in Wei's (2012) study, the creators are not independent but employed by a company. The study still fits in terms of discussing the tension between creating and meeting commercial demands, but the relationship is slightly different. Nevertheless, it is a valuable source to use in this thesis as it directly explores the experiences of the creative worker. Four out of five studies used thematic analysis to interpret their interview data. This method allowed them to identify common patterns and themes in how artists think about or deal with commercial demands. The only fully quantitative study was by Weinbach and Njoroge and Salvino and Woodside (2024), who analysed over 62,000 entries from the Billboard Hot 100 charts. They used a statistical method called two-stage least squares regression to see whether artists adjusted the characteristics of their songs in response to market pressures. While Weinbach and Njoroge and Salvino and Woodside (2024) do not examine artistic integrity from the artist's own perspective, their findings offer a valuable structural insight and context on how it might be affected depending on the market position. Even though most of the qualitative studies had relatively small sample sizes, this is quite typical for research that involves in-depth interviews. These smaller samples still provided rich and detailed information that helped explain the more personal and internal side of how artists deal with commercial demands. On the other hand, the Weinbach and Njoroge and Salvino and Woodside (2024) study provided a broader, data-driven view of how commercial success might relate to artistic decisions on a larger scale.

Throughout the five studies, the author determined the four most relevant themes. The presence of the themes in studies is also illustrated in Table 5.

- Theme 1: Strategic compromise and finding balance
- Theme 2: Market context influencing the relationship
- Theme 3: Power dynamic influences
- Theme 4: Artistic integrity as a flexible and evolving concept

To start with, across many of these studies, artists are shown to make compromises between their artistic integrity and meeting market demands. They do that not by abandoning their values completely, but by carefully considering how, when, and where to apply commercial and market-driven strategies. Wei (2012) found that workers often made peace with commercial compromises through strategies like distancing themselves from decisions they disagreed with or reinterpreting their actions in ways that still aligned with their internal values. Performing artists adopted entrepreneurial strategies not in order to "sell out", but more as a way to gain autonomy and independence from external demands, which often come

with restrictive conditions for artistic freedom (Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016). Kolbe (2022) also reported similar findings in her study with UK-based cultural workers, many of whom admitted to leaning into market activities for practical reasons while still managing to preserve a sense of artistic identity. These examples show that compromise, whether driven by financial pressure, the need to get by, or the desire to stay creatively free, does not necessarily damage the integrity or 'purity' of artistic expression. In fact, integrity often remains intact when those choices are made deliberately and on the artist's own terms, rather than being forced by outside demands or a lack of alternatives.

Table 5

Common themes in previous empirical studies

Author	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024	✘	✘	✔	✘
Kolbe, 2022	✔	✔	✘	✔
Komarova, 2018	✘	✔	✔	✘
Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016	✔	✘	✘	✔
Wei, 2012	✔	✘	✘	✔

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources presented in the table

The second theme that comes up is the role of market context in shaping the relationship between strategy use and integrity. In Komarova's (2018) comparison of Russian and Indian artists, she found that Russian artists were more likely to resist commercial influence and instead rely on state institutions and alternative networks to support their work. On the other hand, Indian artists were more comfortable using market-based strategies and even saw them as essential for gaining recognition and building a sustainable career (Komarova, 2018). In Kolbe's (2022) study, the level of financial security and class background significantly influenced how freely artists could choose how and to what extent to engage with the market. Some artists embraced marketing strategies because they had "a safety net" to experiment, while others felt pressured into commercialising their work just to survive (Kolbe, 2022). All of these examples show that artistic integrity is not equally at risk for everyone everywhere. It depends a lot on what kind of cultural and economic factors surround the artist. As well as external structures and resources that shape how market engagement is approached by artists. The what and how are great determinants to which artists need to sacrifice part of their artistic integrity.

Another pattern that appears is how power and reputation affect the ability of artists to balance creative freedom with commercial strategies. Weinbach and Njoroge and Salvino and Woodside (2024) found in their large-scale quantitative study that artists with more recognition – those who had already reached the top of the charts – had more freedom to experiment with song length and tempo while still maintaining commercial success. Meanwhile, artists who were less established had to conform more closely to market-friendly formats in order to even have a chance at visibility (Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024). Komarova (2018) noted something similar in the contemporary visual art world, where younger/less established artists were often expected to adapt their style to fit the preferences of gallery owners or curators (and through them the market in general), while more well-known artists could afford to take creative risks. What this suggests is that integrity and strategic freedom are not only about mindset or principles, it is a form of luxury that is not easy to achieve. Those with more institutional or reputational power can afford to stick to their vision, while those with less are often forced to compromise in order to grow. The more powerful and experienced an artist is, the less they depend on the need to implement market-based strategies, and are, therefore, freer to keep their artistic integrity from harm.

The final insight that emerges is that artistic integrity itself is not a fixed or one-size-fits-all concept. Instead, it is something that changes over time and varies from artist

to artist. That confirms the theoretical findings from the last subchapter: artistic integrity is fluid, as is its relationship with implementing entrepreneurial strategies. Calcagno and Balzarin (2016) show that artists often start out careful regarding entrepreneurial practices but, as they gain experience, come to see it as part of their creative journey rather than a threat to it. In a similar manner, reality TV professionals actively redefined their creative identity in ways that allowed them to continue feeling authentic, sometimes framing strategic decisions as part of their professional growth rather than as compromises (Wei, 2012). Kolbe (2022) also found that some artists who initially rejected the need to respond to market demands later adjusted their views to make room for practical realities without feeling like they were giving up their core artistic values. These examples suggest that the idea of integrity is very flexible and dependent on the inner thinking of the artist rather than on externally established indicators. What matters most is whether the artist continues to act in line with their own evolving values, rather than letting the market completely dictate their work despite there being a conflict with those principles.

The studies make it clear that when artists bring market strategies into their work, it is not just a simple clash between making money and staying true to their art. It is more complicated than that, something that shifts and evolves depending on the situation and the choices each artist faces. It seems that it is possible for artists to apply entrepreneurial strategies without fully compromising their values, especially when these decisions are made intentionally, with self-awareness and control.Whether these strategies help or hurt an artist's integrity really depends on the world around them—their financial situation, support systems, experience, and where they are in their career. Artists with more recognition and influence usually have more freedom to shape their work in a way that fits both their vision and the market. Those with fewer resources often have to bend more. What stands out most is that artistic integrity is not a fixed idea—it is flexible, personal, and shaped by an artist's own values, changing life circumstances, and ongoing self-reflection. This suggests that compromises to focus on the needs of the market are not inherently harmful, and may even become an element of an artist's process of maintaining integrity within a shifting personal, cultural and economic landscape.

2. Empirical research on the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity

2.1. Methodology and sample of the empirical study

In this subchapter, the author will discuss the methodology which will be used to conduct their empirical research and analysis. The methodology of the thesis is divided into the following six parts: literature review, compiling the survey, distributing the survey, coding the data, analysis in SPSS, and discussion of results. The process is further illustrated and explained in Figure 2.

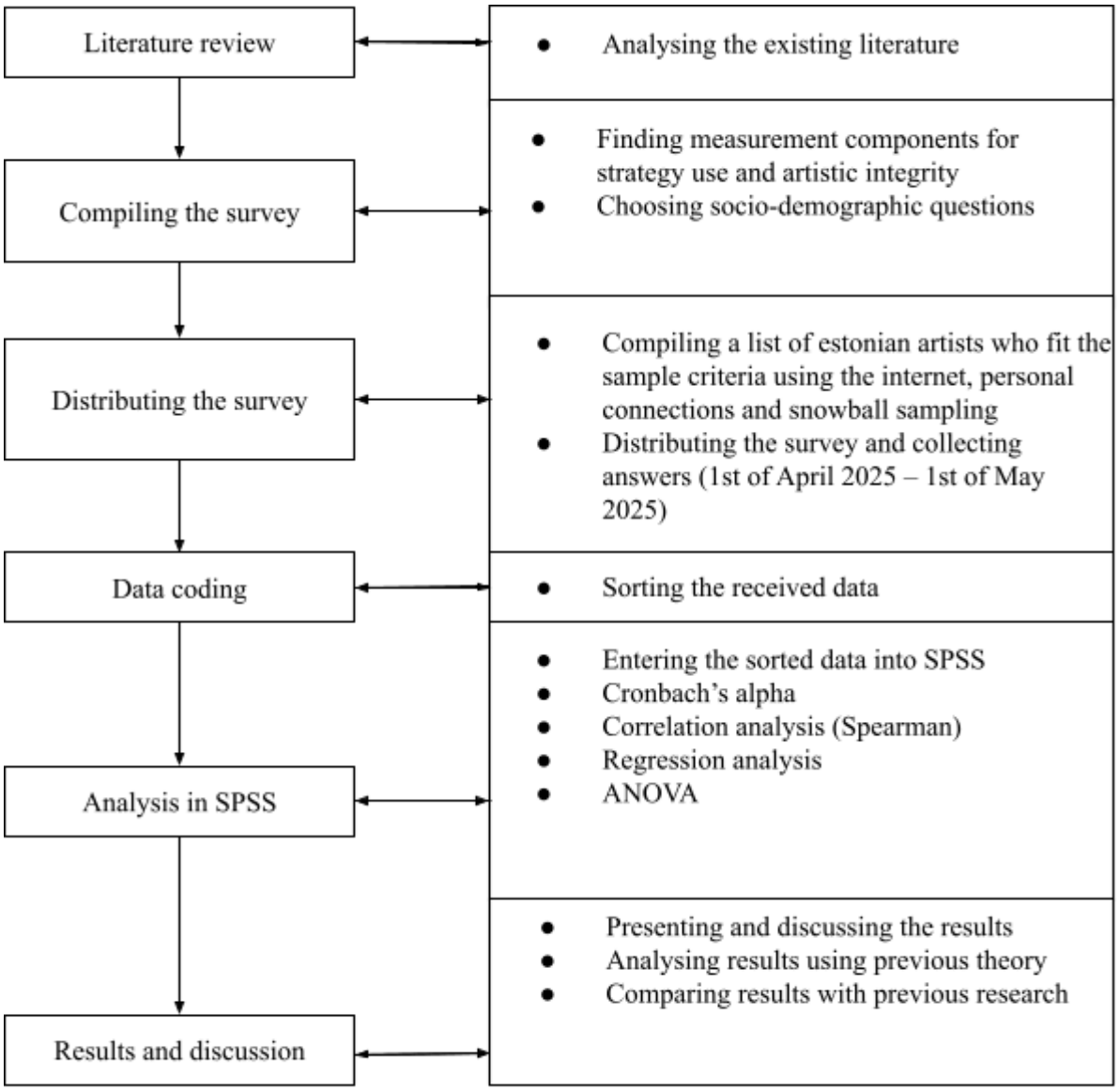

Figure 2. Methodology of the study

Source: Compiled by the author

The first step to give an overview and analyse previous literature on the topic has already been completed in the theoretical part. Now it is possible to move on to the second task: compiling the survey. The thesis aims to detect a relationship between two non-numerical components: market-driven strategy use and artistic integrity. The following paragraphs will cover the justification for the measurement method developed. Based on the reviewed literature, the author developed a 4-point scale to evaluate the extent to which artists employ market-based strategies (see Appendix B). This scale will be used in the empirical section of the thesis, alongside the 4-point artistic integrity scale (see Appendix A), to interpret the results of the measurement of the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs' market-based strategy use and their artistic integrity.

The respondents have also been asked additional questions, such as their gender, age, in which field of visual arts they operate in, how long have they been involved in art-making, how long have they been selling their art, and is being an artist-entrepreneur they main occupation or do they do other work on the side to supplement their income. These questions can be found in Appendix C of this thesis. Gender was chosen to ensure a demographic overview of the participants and for transparency. It was recorded but will not be used as a variable in this analysis, unless patterns emerge. Age groups, years of making and selling their art were chosen because it has been discussed by previous authors that artist-entrepreneurs with more experience and an already more established artistic integrity might feel less pressured to change their art for market demands (Komarova, 2018; Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024). Therefore, the author wanted to test whether older people or artists with longer experience in either being an artist or an artist-entrepreneur would have a stronger artistic integrity score than the younger and more inexperienced artists.

As for collecting information about is VAE artists' main occupation or not, is based on the theoretical notion that financial security influenced how freely artists could exercise their artistic integrity (Kolbe, 2022). The author assumed that when an artist's main source of income is not just the VAE, then they have a higher score in artistic integrity and a lower score in the use of market-based strategies, and vice versa. The relationship between market-driven strategy use and artistic integrity can only truly be measured in numerical terms, therefore, it is necessary to find a method to translate these components into a preferred form. As was discussed in the literature review subchapter, studies addressing similar topics have been conducted most commonly using exploratory research and interviews with artists. None, except Weinbach and Njoroge and Salvino and Woodside (2024), have measured the connection in a more concrete and numerical way. The reason for

this is rather understandable, it is very difficult to put a number on such qualitative components. However, the author of this thesis aims to contribute to the field of art entrepreneurship by providing their solution to measure this relationship. To measure the two components instead of just describing them, the author's solution would be to develop a Likert scale for each and calculate an average based on several questions indicating both variables.

The reasoning behind this choice of method is that there are a few studies that have previously measured integrity in a similar manner (M. L. Beaussart et al., 2013; Suryadi et al., 2018). As integrity is a more general term and artistic integrity a subcategory of it, it makes it appropriate to measure artistic integrity this way as well. Suryadi et al. (2018) chose the 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree) instead of the classical 5-point one (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree). The same scale was chosen for this study as it forces the artist out of their comfort zone and pushes the respondent to clearly express their attitude towards a question, providing more concrete responses to use in the analysis. To keep the measuring of either component (strategy use and artistic integrity) consistent and comparable, a similar scale method was also used for the market-based strategy use. The basis for forming questions was the theory introduced in the previous chapters about each topic. A table with the questions about market-based strategy used in the distributed survey can be found in Appendix D, and a table about the measuring items for artistic integrity in Appendix E. In Appendix D, the answer options are also brought out, but for artistic integrity (Appendix E), almost all the answer options were the following: "Strongly Disagree"; "Somewhat Disagree"; "Somewhat Agree"; "Strongly Agree". The only exception was the last question, where a fifth option, "I am not interested in market demands at all", was added – the reason will be explained in the next paragraph. The survey was compiled in the Estonian language because the target audience was Estonian visual art artist-entrepreneurs. When designing the survey, the author aimed to maximise both the clarity and comfort for respondents, as well as the reliability of their answers. The survey was conducted anonymously to protect respondents' privacy and to help them feel more comfortable in providing honest answers.

In formulating the survey questions, first of all, it was avoided that they would include highly academic vocabulary and complicated wordings. It needed to be clear and comfortable for artists from various backgrounds. Using overly complex wording could have led to confusion, which might have affected the quality of the responses or caused some people to quit the survey early. To help keep response rates high, the second key consideration was

making sure the survey stayed short and to the point. While including more items per variable could have offered stronger theoretical depth, the author prioritised broader participation in order to obtain a larger data pool for more reliable statistical analysis. Another aim was to minimise feelings of guilt or shame when responding to the artistic integrity section. Artistic integrity is often a point of pride for artists, and acknowledging a perceived lack of it, whether consciously or subconsciously, can be difficult. To reduce the risk of socially desirable or inaccurate responses, the items were phrased as neutrally as possible. Similarly, the author took care to avoid biased or leading question structures. At the end of both the market-based strategy and artistic integrity sections, an open text box was added so participants could share any extra thoughts. This helped identify responses that might suggest someone did not quite fit the target group, making it possible to leave those cases out of the analysis if needed. It also provided an opportunity for the author to gather nuanced insights into the artists' experiences and perspectives.

After drafting the survey based on theoretical foundations and personal reasoning, the author distributed it for testing and feedback to two artist-entrepreneurs and three experts from the Estonian art community. The three experts included were an experienced curator in a reputable art museum, an art educator with decades of experience in higher art education while being an artist-entrepreneur themselves, and an owner of a well-known gallery with extensive experience in helping artists develop their artistic brands. This step was key to making sure the survey was clear, made sense to also others besides the author basing it on theory, and and that the ideas behind it actually matched in real-life practice. Thanks to the experts' helpful feedback and experience, the author revised parts of the survey: fixing the wording, adjusting the flow, and reworking the structure to make it clearer and more effective. The question "In which field of visual arts do you operate as an entrepreneur?" was changed from a single-answer to a multiple-answer format. An "Other" option with a specification text box was added to the question "Is art entrepreneurship your main occupation [...]". Additionally, a fifth response option was introduced to the item "I am able to develop my art in a way [...]", after one expert highlighted that some artists may not consider market demands relevant at all. The fifth response option, "I'm not interested in market demands at all," was assigned the same artistic integrity score as "Strongly agree" because both reflect a high level of artistic autonomy. While the former expresses a complete disregard for external influence, and the latter affirms the ability to maintain integrity despite market pressures, both indicate a strong commitment to internal artistic values. Therefore, in terms of measuring artistic integrity, they are considered equal.

After finalising the survey design using Lime Survey software, the next step was distribution. To ensure the relevance and consistency of the sample, several criteria were used to determine which groups and artists to target in the distribution process to participate in the survey. First, participants had to be active in at least one visual art form and operate as artist-entrepreneurs part-time or full-time. Second, they had to be working on the Estonian market. This did not have to be their only market, but it needed to be one of the contexts in which they operated, in order to keep the sample geographically consistent. Although the questionnaire did not include a specific question to confirm whether the respondent operates in the Estonian market, this criterion was addressed during the distribution phase of the survey. Participants were primarily approached through Estonian art networks, local social media community groups, and personal contacts within the Estonian visual arts scene. Given the targeted recruitment approach, it was reasonable to assume that participants had some level of activity in the Estonian context, even if they also operated internationally. Third, only independent artist-entrepreneurs were included, meaning those who manage their own strategy decisions. Artists represented by galleries or other organisations that handle business activities on their behalf were excluded. Finally, participants had to focus their entrepreneurial activity on selling or promoting work they had created themselves, not the work of others. Owning a registered business was not required, as many artists operate independently or freelance without formal registration– these artists often fall outside traditional employment classifications, yet they are still actively engaged in entrepreneurial practices (Woronkowicz, 2021).

At first, the survey was shared in two visual art artist community groups. One mainly specialising in painting, sculpture, illustration and graphics; the other in metal yewlery makers groups. Additionally, the author’s personal social media was used as they have many artists contacts who might be willing to share it to their artist friends.. But this approach led to only a few fully completed responses and a lot of partial ones during the first week of distribution. So, the author changed tactics and started reaching out to artists directly through social media and email. Potential participants were found in different ways: by browsing online platforms, using personal contacts, getting help from ChatGPT, and through snowball sampling, where artists who had already been contacted shared the survey or passed along new contacts. Before reaching out, the author made sure each person fit the criteria for the study.This revised approach proved significantly more effective. After directly contacting over 160 artists, the final number of completed responses was 72. However, one respondent noted in the open text box that they found it difficult to answer the strategy-related items due

to being represented by a gallery. As this did not align with the sampling criteria, focused on independent artist-entrepreneurs, their response was excluded from the final dataset. This brought the total number of valid responses to 71.

The final dataset consists of a diverse representation of visual disciplines: most notably painting, followed by fields such as illustration, photography, and jewellery art. While the dataset is not large enough to generalize to the broader Estonian art population, it does capture a useful cross-section of early- to mid-career artist-entrepreneurs. Most respondents had more experience as artists than as artist-entrepreneurs, which aligns with theory suggesting that entrepreneurship is often adopted later out of necessity rather than intent (Grant, 2010; Pyykkönen et al., 2023). Nearly half indicated that VAE was their main occupation, confirming that many artists work in hybrid roles, combining art with other income-generating activities (Eglīte, 2023). Despite some imbalances in subgroup sizes, particularly among older and more experienced artists, the sample offers meaningful insights into the dynamics of market strategy use and artistic integrity within this population.

Some of the age and experience groups had only a few respondents, which meant less variation and lower reliability in those specific categories. Even so, the five-group structure was kept to keep things clear and consistent throughout the analysis. It helped highlight possible trends without making the results harder to interpret. With a larger sample, future research could look into using more detailed grouping methods.

In the fourth and fifth stages, the survey responses were coded and analysed using SPSS. To calculate an overall score for each respondent on both the market-based strategy use and artistic integrity scales, the author used the arithmetic mean of all item scores included in each scale. This involved summing the numeric values of all relevant items, after reversing the negatively worded ones, and dividing the total by the number of items (7 in both scales). This approach helped make sure that every item counted the same toward the final score. The analysis started by looking at how reliable the survey tools were, then moved on to basic stats for the main variables. To explore how things were connected, the author used Spearman’s rank correlation and ANOVA. Finally, the results were interpreted and discussed using the theoretical framework from the previous chapter of this thesis. The analysis of this thesis is assessed at a significance level of 0,05.

Although no previous studies researching this relationship have used the exact same measurement scales as developed in this research, the selection of analysis methods is derived from the nature of the data and the research aim. As both market-based strategy use and artistic integrity were measured ona Likert-like scale and calculated into average scores,

correlation analysis using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was chosen to assess the direction and strength of the relationship between them. Spearman's method is appropriate for non-parametric data and does not assume normal distribution, which aligns with the structure of the collected data. In addition, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to explore potential differences in strategy use and artistic integrity scores across demographic and experiential groups, such as age, gender, share of VAE in occupation, years of experience as an artist and a visual art artist-entrepreneur. Overall, these methods were chosen because they offer useful insight into how the two main factors relate to each other and make it possible to compare different subgroups – it fits well with the exploratory aim of the study.

2.2. Results and discussion of the empirical study on the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity

In this section, the results of the survey will be analysed and compared to those of previous empirical research. To begin with, the author has measured the reliability of the measurement tools, as the current thesis is primarily exploratory, as it seeks to examine a previously rather underexplored relationship between market-based strategy use and artistic integrity among visual art artist-entrepreneurs – the author has developed their own survey scale based on theory and literature. As can be seen from Table 6, one of the factors (artistic integrity) had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,72 and the strategy use factor had a slightly lower score of 0,61. 0,72 is a satisfactory level of reliability and means that all of the variables have enough internal consistency within them (Cho & Kim, 2015). While a Cronbach's alpha of 0,7 is often cited as the standard for acceptable reliability, Cho and Kim (2014) argue that this cutoff is context-dependent. In exploratory research, values as low as 0,6 or even 0,5 may still be acceptable, particularly when constructs are broad or the number of items is limited (Cho & Kim, 2015; Nunnally, 1967). Therefore, the strategy uses factor reliability ($\alpha = 0,61$) can be considered acceptable within the scope of this study.

Table 6

Reliability analysis of measurement tools

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Market-based strategy use	,61	7
Artistic integrity	,72	7

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

To further ensure the reliability of the responses, two neutral control items that were included in the artistic integrity section of the survey were used to check trustworthiness.

These items were not used in the calculation of the artistic integrity score but were used as a quality check to assess whether participants responded thoughtfully. The summary statistics showed variation in answers, with the means of the two neutral items differing (M = 3,18 and M = 2, 23 respectively) and standard deviations indicating a reasonable enough spread (SD = 0,76 and 0,72). The differences in responses show that people were actually thinking about the questions, not just picking the same answers or rushing through. In both cases, the mean and median are pretty close, which suggests the data is fairly evenly spread out. This supports the assumption of normality, which was further confirmed through other testing: the Shapiro-Wilk test and the skewness-kurtosis test. They showed non-significant results ($p > 0,05$), indicating no violation of the normality assumption. In addition, histograms with normal distribution curves and Q-Q plots visually supported the normal shape of the distributions for both variables. Together, these results justify the use of parametric analyses in the next steps of the study.

Now that the reliability of the measurement tools has been confirmed, the next step is to analyse the descriptive statistics of the variables. As described in the previous subchapter, both items were measured on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (weak score) to 4 (strong score). From Table 7, it can be observed that the respondents in this study reported a higher average level of artistic integrity compared to market-based strategy use. Similarly, the median score for artistic integrity exceeds that of strategy use. The descriptive results show a clear trend: visual art artist-entrepreneurs in this study reported a stronger overall commitment to artistic integrity than to market-based strategy use. This is not a surprising outcome given that, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, visual art artist-entrepreneurs often begin their careers primarily as artists, not as businesspeople (Barbour, 2008; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). Their entry into entrepreneurship tends to emerge from necessity to sustain their creative process financially rather than from a desire to commercialise their work. This means they tend to stay more rooted in the values and inner drive that shape artistic integrity. This supports what Grant (2010), Morgan (1998), and Mills (2018) have pointed out—that artists, especially those early in their careers or working independently, often care more about staying true to themselves and their work than about growing a business. What makes this finding stand out is that it shows artistic values are not easily pushed aside by strategic goals. It also highlights that, while using strategy can help with survival and visibility, the creative core still holds a central place in how most artists see themselves. This suggests that the challenge is not simply encouraging more strategy use, but

finding ways to help artists implement strategies that do not erode their sense of artistic integrity.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variable	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max
Market-based strategy use	2,59	2,71	,49	1,29	3,71
Artistic integrity	3,12	3,14	,48	1,86	4

Note. N=71

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

To better understand what the numerical survey responses actually represent, the author developed two qualitative 4-point scales, one for artistic integrity (Appendix A) and one for market-based strategy use (Appendix B). These scales were created to give clearer meaning to the survey data and help interpret what a score of “2” or “4” actually looks like in practical terms. Numbers alone do not always tell the full story, so these descriptions help show what each level actually looks like in practice – what people do, how they think, and the kinds of choices they make. For example, only one person scored the highest possible mark for artistic integrity, meaning they stayed closely true to their values in how they work. Most artists, however, were spread across the mid-range of the scale, reflecting varying levels of compromise, experimentation, or uncertainty in maintaining integrity. A similar distribution was seen in market-based strategy use, where only a few artists demonstrated a clearly structured and intentional strategic approach, while many used strategies irregularly or selectively, often not being sure of their skills to strategically plan. These tools helped connect the theory with the actual data, making it easier to see how market-driven actions relate to artistic values. So, the scales were not just ways to measure things, they also helped make sense of how artist-entrepreneurs deal with the push and pull between maintaining their artistic integrity and making a living.

After examining the descriptive statistics, the author proceeded with a correlation analysis of the studied variables. The correlation analysis provides a cautiously supportive result for the hypothesis introduced at the beginning of this thesis: that increased use of market-based strategies may relate to lower levels of artistic integrity. Even though the result was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.090$), the negative Pearson coefficient ($r = -0.203$) points in the expected direction. This small negative correlation suggests that when artists lean more into market-driven strategies, their sense of artistic integrity might dip

slightly. The relationship appears weaker than anticipated, which could partly be explained by the sample size (N = 71), which may not be substantial enough to detect stronger patterns. As argued by Pyykkönen et al. (2023) and Kolbe (2022), artists often struggle with time, energy, and identity when juggling creative work and entrepreneurial demands. These are the effects that are not fully captured in this methodology design and in small-scale studies in general.

Still, even a weak negative trend has a meaningful contribution to the bigger picture: the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs' market-driven strategy use and their artistic integrity is real and measurable. Figure 3 visually illustrates this tendency, showing that higher reported strategy use generally corresponds with slightly lower artistic integrity scores. These findings do not undermine the value of strategic thinking, but they suggest that its long-term success may depend on how well artists protect their artistic principles while navigating the market needs.

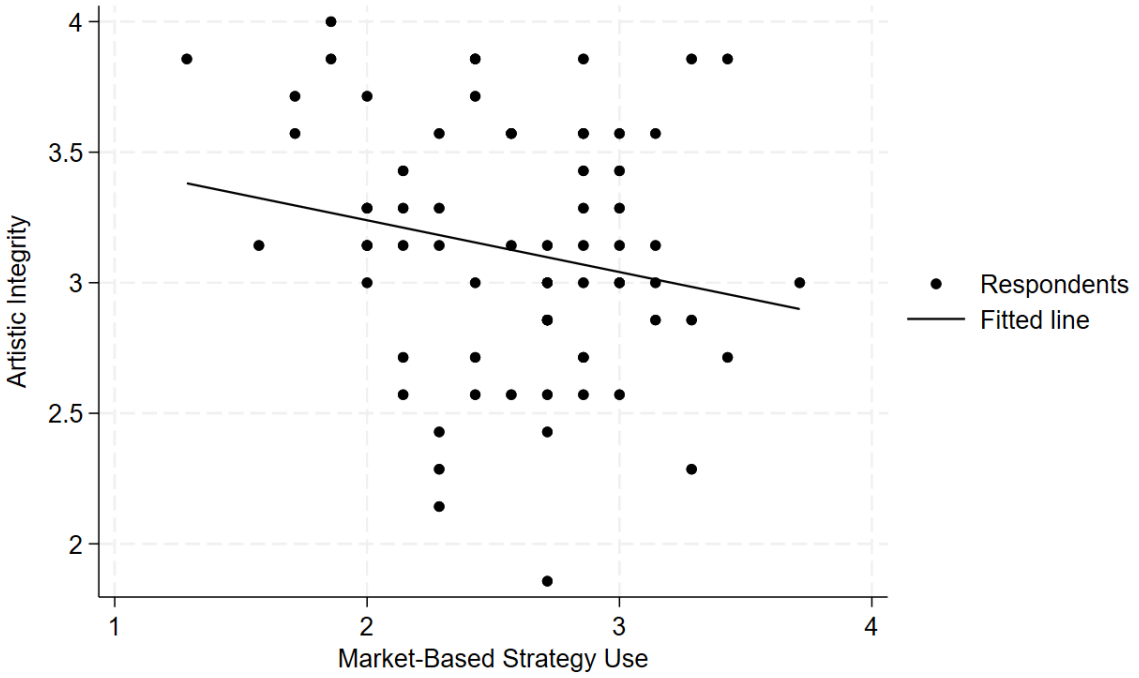

Figure 3. Pearson correlation results illustrated between variables

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

The regression analysis reinforces the earlier correlation findings, again indicating a weak negative relationship between market-based strategy use and artistic integrity. While neither model reached conventional statistical significance (0,05), the direction of the coefficients remained consistent: higher use of strategy is linked with slightly lower artistic integrity scores, and vice versa. The effect size is modest in each one-point increase in strategy use corresponding with a 0.20-point decrease in artistic integrity. However, the

consistency across models allows to interpret moredate credibility about the trend. These results align with the broader theoretical result that the adoption of market-based strategies can, in some cases, challenge the artist-entrepreneur's artistic integrity. The low R^2 value of 4%, indicating that only a small portion of the variance in artistic integrity is explained by strategy use, highlights that the relationship is complex and likely shaped by multiple overlapping factors that were not included in this thesis that should be explored in future research with larger samples and refined instruments.

Table 9

A simple linear regression model between the variables

Variable	β	p-value	R^2
Market-based strategy use	-,20	,09	,04
Artistic integrity	-,20	,09	,04

Note. β=unstandardized regression coefficient, R^2=coefficient of determination; N=71, Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

To explore whether market-based strategy use and artistic integrity varied across different respondent characteristics, the author conducted group comparisons using one-way ANOVA and mean estimations. These comparisons were based on background variables such as age, artistic experience, artist entrepreneurship experience, and occupational status (e.g., VAE as a full income source or not).

The ANOVA results on age (Table 10), artistic experience (Table 11), and artist-entrepreneurial experience (Table 12) offer little statistical support for differences in either market-based strategy use or artistic integrity. Although minor variations appeared, such as slightly lower strategy use among older and more experienced artists, none of these differences were statistically significant (Tables 10–12). This contrasts with expectations grounded in the theoretical literature, which suggested that more experienced or successful artists may feel less pressure to compromise, thereby maintaining stronger artistic integrity and relying less on strategic adaptation to meet the market needs (Grant, 2010; Kolbe, 2022; Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024). The underlying assumption was that with time, reputation, and financial stability, artists would gain more autonomy and have less need to adopt market-driven approaches. However, the data suggest that age and years in the field may not translate into this kind of freedom, at least not in a reliably measurable way. Experience on its own does not always lead to success or influence—it often needs to be supported by recognition, financial stability, or backing from institutions.

Table 10

One-way ANOVA of age groups

Factors	21-29		30-38		39-47		48-56		57-67		F-stat	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Market-based strategy use	2,71	,32	2,51	,51	2,72	0,53	2,62	,51	2,12	,11	2,30	,07
Artistic integrity	3,14	,38	3,22	,56	3,05	,53	3,01	,29	3,17	,44	,51	,73

Note. M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

One limitation from a research standpoint is that the group sizes were uneven. The oldest and most experienced artists made up only a small part of the sample, which made it harder to identify clear patterns and reduced the reliability of the results. With a larger and more balanced group, it's likely that other trends would have come through more clearly. Still, the finding raises an important point: just being in the field for a long time does not automatically make it easier to navigate strategy or protect artistic integrity. The factors shaping these outcomes are likely more complex, involving not only experience but also personal values, career orientation, access to networks, and external pressures (Komarova, 2018; Scherdin & Zander, 2011; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). These variables alone may not be sufficient indicators of entrepreneurial or artistic success.

Table 11

One-way ANOVA of experience as an artist

Factor	1-10		11-20		21-30		31-40		41-50		F-stat	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Market-based strategy use	2,54	,44	2,58	,46	2,82	,48	2,55	,63	2,14	0	1,11	,36
Artistic integrity	3,15	,42	3,09	,53	3,18	,52	3,21	,40	2,64	,10	,69	,60

Note. M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

Table 12

One-way ANOVA of experience as an artist-entrepreneur

Factor	1-10		11-20		21-30		31-40		41-50		F-stat	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Market-based strategy use	2,56	,45	2,74	,48	2,69	,64	2,07	,25	2,14	0	2,04	0,10
Artistic integrity	3,07	,48	3,19	,47	3,27	,54	3,21	,44	2,71	0	,59	,67

Note. M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

The ANOVA results for occupational status show that differences in market-based strategy use and artistic integrity across full-time, part-time, and some niche other roles, which did not fully fit either of those options, are not statistically significant. With p-values well above the 0.05 threshold (see Table 13), the results indicate that the type of occupational engagement with VAE does not meaningfully influence how artists adopt strategies or maintain their artistic integrity. While the author expected that full-time artist-entrepreneurs would engage more with market strategies due to financial necessity, or that part-time artists would be more protective of their integrity, these assumptions are not supported by the data. This lack of significance reinforces the broader finding that visible indicators such as time commitment or occupational share of VAE are not strong predictors of how artists manage the relationship under question of this research. Instead, as the theoretical framework suggests, internal factors such as personal values, career orientation, and external pressures likely play a more important role in shaping both strategic engagement and the preservation of artistic integrity (Komarova, 2018; Mills, 2018; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). However, as suggested in the previous part of this chapter, further research with larger samples and refined instruments would be needed to confirm or deny this claim.

Table 13

One-way ANOVA of VAE as an occupation share

Factor	VAE as a full-time occupant.		VAE as a part-time occup.		Other		F-stat	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Market-based strategy use	2,67	,50	2,51	,47	2,51	,48	,98	0,38
Artistic integrity	3,08	,47	3,13	,51	3,34	,30	,67	,51

Note. M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

To better connect the findings to artists' real-life experiences, the thesis also included open-ended comments from survey participants. These responses added a bit of qualitative depth to the numbers and helped support many of the key ideas that came out of the analysis. In regard to the strategy use section of the survey, several artists noted that they rarely used formal market strategies, especially those with longer careers, suggesting that familiarity and internal resourcefulness may replace structured tactics over time. Others expressed a desire for support or education in navigating strategic aspects, which aligns with previous studies highlighting the entrepreneurial learning curve faced by artist-entrepreneurs (Pisotska & Gurses, 2023). When asked about extra comments regarding artistic integrity, many participants emphasized inspiration, and personal development, viewing these as core to their artistic integrity and practice, regardless of commercial concerns. This affirms the role of personal values as a key component of integrity (Grant, 2010; Barbour, 2008), and helps explain why even those actively engaged in entrepreneurship may still prioritize creative authenticity. These comments also revealed the influence of context: artists who work in applied or craft-based disciplines noted different pressures and expectations than those in fine art settings. This supports the broader conclusion of the thesis that strategy use and integrity are shaped by more than age or experience – they are embedded in artistic ecosystems, shaped by audience, medium, and platform. Altogether, the comments echo the central theme that navigating art and business is a nuanced, personal, and often non-linear process, not easily captured by simplistic measures.

The aim of this thesis was to explore the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs' use of market-based strategies and their artistic integrity, with the

hypothesis that greater use of such strategies would be associated with a decrease in artistic integrity. This topic emerged from the wider tension between creativity and commerce that defines visual art entrepreneurship (VAE), where the artist must operate as both a creative force and a business manager. The hypothesis was developed based on a review of literature that emphasized how market demands can impose compromises on artistic values (Scherdin & Zander, 2011; Grant, 2010; Kolbe, 2022), potentially threatening the authenticity and self-expression at the core of artistic practice. Looking back, the results mostly lined up with what was expected based on the theory. But the connections between the variables were noticeably weaker than anticipated. The correlation between the use of market-based strategies and artistic integrity was negative as hypothesized, but the effect was statistically non-significant and small in size. Similarly, regression analysis showed that market-based strategy use explained only around 4% of the variance in artistic integrity. These results indicate that while there may be a relationship, it is likely not linear or strong, at least not in the simple, direct way this study attempted to measure it.

Several reasons may explain the weak outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the sample size (N = 71) was quite limited—especially in the older and more experienced groups—which may have made it harder to find statistically significant results. Some of the limitations could also be linked to how the key concepts were measured. Although an effort was made to build clear and theory-informed 4-point scales for both artistic integrity and strategy use, these constructs are nuanced, and the scales may not have captured their full complexity. On top of that, the relationship might be influenced by a wider range of factors that were not included in this study. Things like how financially dependent the artist is on their work, their personal values, the support they get from institutions, access to networks, or even their personality. These are all elements that existing literature has linked to artistic compromise and entrepreneurial behaviour (Komarova, 2018; Pisotska & Gurses, 2023; Mills, 2018), and they deserve closer attention in future studies. Another limitation is the use of self-reported data, particularly when measuring something as personal as artistic integrity. Even though the author took care to word the survey questions as clearly and neutrally as possible, some bias may still be present, as responses can be shaped by personal values or a desire to present oneself in a certain way.

Limitations aside, the study still points to some important takeaways. One of the main ones is that most artists seem to care more about staying true to their work than about fully committing, while possibly compromising their artistic freedom, to market-focused strategies. This aligns with earlier theoretical claims that many artist-entrepreneurs, especially in the

visual arts, identify as artists first — entering entrepreneurship often out of necessity rather than desire (Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016; Grant, 2010). Their deeper commitment to artistic values may make them more resistant to commercial compromise, even if this limits their financial success.

It was also revealed that while strategy use is important for navigating the market, it does not guarantee nor predict a sacrifice in integrity — the relationship is more complex than often assumed. Another contribution of this thesis is the demonstration that superficial factors like age, years of artistic experience, or even whether the artist works full-time in the field do not meaningfully influence the extent to which artists adopt strategies or preserve integrity. This challenges the assumption that maturity in the field equals autonomy or greater integrity and supports the argument that internal value systems and strategic choices play a more central role.

Looking ahead, future research would benefit from a more refined methodological approach. The development of validated multi-item scales with stronger internal consistency could help measure both constructs more accurately. It would also be useful to investigate whether different types of market-based strategies — such as branding, pricing, or collaboration — have differing impacts on integrity. Longitudinal or mixed-methods research could provide deeper insights into how this relationship unfolds over time, particularly in response to external pressures such as market shifts or institutional expectations. Adding qualitative interviews to the mix could help shed light on the personal values and deeper reasons behind each artist's choices, things that numbers alone might miss.

To wrap up, this empirical investigation has revealed several key points. The anticipated negative relationship between market-based strategy use and artistic integrity exists in direction but is weak and statistically inconclusive. External characteristics like age or experience do not seem to drive this relationship. Artists overall place more importance on protecting their creative values than on commercial optimization. And lastly, the balance between art and commerce remains a delicate and highly individual process — one that deserves continued exploration, not just to understand success in visual art entrepreneurship, but also to preserve the cultural and creative value that artists bring to society.

Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis measured the relationship between visual art artist-entrepreneurs using market-based strategies and their artistic integrity. The author has fulfilled all of the research tasks that were listed in the introduction of the thesis.

First, visual art entrepreneurship (VAE) was defined by building on concepts from entrepreneurship and art entrepreneurship (AE), while adding features specific to visual arts. Since the literature lacked a clear definition, the author combined insights from multiple sources to define VAE as an artistically innovative process within visual art fields, where artists apply entrepreneurial strategies to ensure the sustainability of their creative practice while striving to preserve their artistic integrity. This highlights the artist's dual role as both creator and business operator and helps clarify a still-evolving academic concept.

The next step was to examine the market-based strategies artist-entrepreneurs use to sustain their work. These were grouped into three main areas—product, pricing, and promotion—as shown in Figure 1, which was composed by the author. The figure outlines how artists manage their work and brand, assign value, and engage with audiences through marketing, networking, and collaboration. While not exhaustive, it reflects key strategies from the literature and served as the basis for the strategy use scale in the empirical part of the thesis.

Then, the author provided an overview of how artistic integrity has been discussed in academic literature, often as a secondary topic linked to artistic freedom, authenticity, and resistance to compromise. Based on this, the author concluded that artistic integrity refers to the artist's ability to stay true to their creative vision, values, and process, even when faced with commercial or external pressures. This overview was used as the foundation for developing the artistic integrity scale used in the empirical part of the thesis. This approach helped give structure to a complex and often abstract idea, making it more usable for measuring how strongly artists stay aligned with their creative values in the context of visual art entrepreneurship.

Lastly, in the theoretical part of this thesis, previous empirical studies were reviewed to understand how the relationship between market-based strategy use and artistic integrity has been approached. Five studies (Weinbach & Njoroge & Salvino & Woodside, 2024; Kolbe, 2022; Komarova, 2018; Calcagno & Balzarin, 2016; Wei, 2012) were analysed, showing that while the topic is often acknowledged, it is rarely measured directly. This supported the relevance of the current thesis and informed the design of its empirical part.

One of the limitations of this study is the small sample size, which made it harder to detect more subtle patterns, especially when comparing subgroups, since older and more experienced artists were underrepresented. Using self-reported data also comes with some risk of bias, particularly around questions of artistic integrity, where answers might be shaped by personal beliefs or a desire to give socially acceptable responses. Another limitation is

that, although the survey was shared within Estonian-based communities, it was not confirmed whether all participants actively work in the Estonian market, which leaves a bit of uncertainty.

Then, the methodology was developed, and data were gathered and analysed. A survey was compiled based on the theoretical framework, including two original scales to measure market-based strategy use and artistic integrity, as well as background questions on age, experience, and occupational status. The survey was distributed through Estonian art-related platforms and gathered responses from 71 visual art artist-entrepreneurs. The data was processed in STATA, where descriptive statistics, correlations, regression models, and ANOVA tests were run.

Finally, the results were interpreted and discussed in relation to existing theories and earlier research. While most of the findings pointed in the expected direction, the relationships turned out to be weaker than expected. Market-based strategy use and artistic integrity were negatively correlated, yet the effect was small and statistically non-significant. Demographic and experience variables had no meaningful influence on either scale. These results show just how complex the topic really is. Simple factors like age or work status do not seem to fully explain how artists handle the push and pull between art and entrepreneurship. The findings point to the need for deeper research, with larger samples and more precise tools, to better understand how visual art artist-entrepreneurs manage this balance in real life.

This study contributed to the literature by addressing the lack of empirical research that measures the relationship between market-based strategy use and artistic integrity in visual art artist-entrepreneurs. It introduced and tested a novel method to measure this relationship.

Research in this thesis showed the general direction of the relationship between the variables. However, the relationship proved to be very weak. Further studies should be conducted to better understand other factors that influence it. This would allow future research to build on the findings and explore the topic in more depth.

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Appendix A

Description of the qualitative 4-point scale of the artists' strength of artistic integrity

	1	2	3	4
Criteria type	No apparent integrity	Low integrity	Moderate integrity	High integrity
Awareness of their artistic values and standards	The artist shows no signs of artistic values or appears indifferent to having artistic principles. Sees art purely as a product or service.	The artist shows a vague indication of the presence of their artistic principles.	The artist has a clear sense of their artistic values but is still experimenting with the boundaries.	The artist has a strong sense of their artistic values.
Consistency in practice	Creative practice is wholly dictated by external requirements, lacking artistic authorship.	Actions often contradict artistic values. The process of creating is opportunistic.	Actions usually take those artistic values into consideration, though occasional compromises are made.	Actions consistently align with their artistic values across different contexts.
Response to external pressures	Shows no resistance to compromise, work is shaped entirely by what others want. (market, clients, etc). Fully surrendered to commercial/institutional motivations.	Repeatedly changes content to fit external tastes and trends for financial gain. Aligns closely with market or institutional demands, even when it weakens their integrity.	Responds to external demands flexibly, aiming to compromise without losing their integrity rather than completely surrendering to them.	Resists compromising, carefully negotiates collaborations without betraying their vision. Turns down commissions that conflict their values/adapts without distortion.

Source: Compiled by the author

Appendix B

Description of the qualitative 4-point scale of artists' usage of market-based strategies

	1	2	3	4
Criteria type	Low to no strategy use	Limited strategy use	Moderate strategy use	Extensive strategy use
Strategic understanding	No plan or market awareness. The artist acts on instinct, personal taste, or avoids commercial planning entirely.	Aware of commercial factors but lacks a structured plan. Strategy is used irregularly or reactively.	Thinks about strategy and has a general plan or awareness but applies it selectively.	Has a clear and conscious market-based plan, grounded in customer/audience expectations. Develops and adapts work to meet demand intentionally.
Extent of strategy use	Rare or no use of business strategies. No branding, pricing logic, digital marketing, or collaborations.	Engages in a few tactics (like social media or occasional events), but without consistency or analysis.	Uses strategies like branding, pricing, and promotion sometimes and with intention, but not systemically.	Regularly applies multiple strategies: brand development, pricing strategy, content planning on social media, participation in fairs/events, and proactive collaborations.
Role of strategy use in career goals	Market engagement is not a goal. Artistic practice is kept separate from commercial aims.	Artists would like visibility or income, but strategies feel overwhelming or secondary.	Sees market engagement as helpful, but artistic priorities usually take precedence.	Business activities are core to career planning. Artist consistently builds visibility, sales, and network as part of long-term development.

Source: Compiled by the author

Appendix C

Socio-demographic questions in the distributed survey

Question	Answer options
Age	Text box (in years)
Gender	● Female ● Male ● Other
In which field of visual arts do you operate as an entrepreneur?	Multiple answer options: ● Painting ● Textile art ● Photography ● Jewelry art ● Body art ● Street art ● Sculpture ● Printmaking / Graphic art ● Fashion design ● Ceramics ● Digital art ● Illustration ● Other (with a text box for writing)
How long have you been involved in art?	Text box (in years)
How long have you been working as an artist-entrepreneur? Count from the time you started selling your art.	Text box (in years)
Is art entrepreneurship your main occupation, or do you also do other work on the side to supplement your income?	● Art entrepreneurship is my main occupation (only source of income) ● I have a side job to supplement my income ● Other, please specify (with a text box)

Note. The distributed survey was originally in the Estonian language

Source: Compiled by the author

Appendix D

Measurement tools for visual art artist-entrepreneurs' market-based strategy use in the distributed survey

Author	Question	Answer options
Walter (2015); Branagan (2017); Roberts (2012)	Have you ever deliberately acted towards making your art more visible or sellable based on what people value or look for in the market?	1. I do not have a plan; I act more based on feeling and seize random opportunities. 2. I have thought about it a bit, but my actions are quite spontaneous. 3. I have a general plan for how to make my art more visible to people. 4. I have a clear and deliberate plan for how to sell and promote my art based on market expectations.
Ji & Yang (2022); Nijssen (2021)	How often do you adapt your artistic work to better suit the preferences of buyers?	1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Often
Colbert (2014); Lehman & Wickham (2014); Y.-Y. Chang et al. (2021)	Do you consciously connect your personal image and public persona as an artist to create a unified brand?	1. I do not deal with this at all; my art and I are separate. 2. It has happened rather accidentally, without a specific strategy. 3. I do this consciously, but not consistently. 4. I have deliberately and strategically connected my personal and artistic image.
Crețiu (2023); Dana & Salamzadeh (2021); Komarac & Bradić (2020)	Do you consciously and deliberately use digital marketing tools to sell your work and increase visibility?	1. I do not use them at all. 2. I use them, but without a specific plan. 3. I use them and think about a plan when I have time and energy. At other times, I act spontaneously. 4. I mostly use digital tools in a planned and purposeful way.
Bérubé & Gauthier (2024); Kuhn & Galloway (2015)	How often do you participate in art fairs, markets, exhibitions, or other sales events to promote and sell your work?	1. Never 2. About once a year 3. 2–3 times a year 4. More than 3 times a year

Eglīte (2023); Kuhn & Galloway (2015); Komarac & Bradić (2020)	Do you actively collaborate with other artists, galleries, or art institutions to increase your visibility, build contacts, and grow your business?	1. I do not do this at all; I prefer working independently. 2. Very rarely and rather randomly. 3. I do this purposefully, but not regularly. 4. I do this very actively and strategically (e.g., regular collaborations, attending art world events, maintaining relationships with curators, galleries, and other artists).
Colbert (2014); Komarac & Bradić (2020); Lee et al. (2022); Lee et al. (2018)	Have you strategically priced your artworks based on client perceptions of value, their ability to pay, or competitor pricing?	1. I have not thought about pricing strategically; I just set it based on what I feel it is worth. 2. I have tried different things and experimented, but without a clear plan. 3. I consider clients' expectations and market-perceived value, but not systematically. 4. I use a clear pricing strategy to better position my work and increase its value.

Note. The distributed survey was originally in the Estonian language

Source: Compiled by the author

Appendix E

Measurement tools for visual art artist-entrepreneurs' artistic integrity in the distributed survey

Author	Item
Barbour (2008); Favorsky (1976); Morgan (1998)	I create art solely for the sake of art (art for art's sake) and do not act based on motivations like income, brand growth, or business success.
Beaussart et al. (2013)	I enjoy experimenting with different artistic styles and themes, regardless of their sales potential. (N)
Becker (1998); Mills (2018)	If a client has a strong request, I am willing to meet them halfway and make creative compromises, even if it contradicts my previous artistic values. (R)
Beaussart et al. (2013)	I believe an artist should be open to collaboration, even if it means adjusting their style or concept. (N)

Barbour (2008); Mills (2018)	I have had to create works or change my style in order to sell and survive financially, even if it did not fully align with my artistic values. (R)
Barbour (2008); Favorsky (1976); Mills (2018); Morgan (1998)	My artistic expression is primarily guided by internal values, ideas, and artistic direction, not by market expectations.
Barbour (2008); Favorsky (1976); Mills (2018); Morgan (1998)	When creating, it is important to me that the work aligns with my inner convictions and artistic intuition, even if it is not the most profitable option.
Barbour (2008); Mills (2018);	I have refused commissions or collaborations that did not align with my artistic principles.
Barbour (2008); Mills (2018)	I am able to develop my art in a way that considers market demands, without compromising my artistic honour, vision, or integrity.

Note. The distributed survey was originally in the Estonian language. "R" – reverse scored; "N" – neutral scored

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources listed in the table

Appendix F

Descriptive characteristics of the survey sample

Variable	Category	Distribution	Percentage
Age (years)*	21-29	13	18,3%
	30-38	22	31,0%
	39-47	19	26,8%
	48-56	11	15,5%
	57-67	6	8,5%
Gender	Male	22	31,0%
	Female	48	67,6%
	Other	1	1,4%
Field of visual art	Painting	36	50,7%
	Textile art	7	9,9%
	Photography	12	16,9%
	Jewelry art	10	14,1%

	Body art	4	5,6%
	Street art	2	2,8%
	Sculpture	8	11,3%
	Graphic art	11	15,5%
	Fashion design	7	9,9%
	Ceramics	2	2,8%
	Digital art	7	9,9%
	Illustration	12	16,9%
	Other	9	12,7%
Experience as an artist (years)	1-10	17	23,9%
	11-20	30	42,3%
	21-30	11	15,5%
	31-40	11	15,5%
	41-50	2	2,8%
Experience as an artist-entrepreneur (years)	1-10	39	54,9%
	11-20	20	28,2%
	21-30	7	9,9%
	31-40	4	5,6%
	41-50	1	1,4%
AE occupation share	Main occupation	35	49,3%
	A side job	31	43,7%
	Other	5	7,0%

Note. *age group min = 21 and max = 67; N=71

Source: Compiled by the author based on their calculations

Resümee

SUHE VISUAALKUNSTIKEST ETTEVÕTJATE TURUPÕHISTE STRATEEGIATE KASUTUSE JA NENDE KUNSTILISE TERVIKLIKKUSE VAHEL

Katariina Leets

Bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on uurida turupõhiste strateegiate kasutamise ja kunstilise terviklikkuse vahelise seose tugevust visuaalse kunsti valdkonnas tegutsevate kunstnikest ettevõtjate seas. Töö täidab järgnevat uurimislünka: varasemates teadusartiklites on neid kahte mõistet tihti käsitletud eraldiseisvalt või mainitud nende vahelist seost vaid põgusalt, ilma seda suhet eraldiseisva uurimisalusena kvantitatiivselt mõõtnud, mida see uurimistöö tegi. Lisaks on senimaani visuaalkunsti ettevõtluse kontekstis üle-üldiselt väga napp vara teaduslikku kirjandust, käesolevast suhtest rääkimata.

Töö teoreetilises osas defineeris autor esmalt visuaalse kunsti ettevõtluse (VAE), toetudes ettevõtluse ja kunstiettevõtluse (AE) varasematele käsitlustele. Kuna VAE selget ja ühtset määratlust kirjanduses ei esine, sõnastas autor selle töö kontekstis oma definitsiooni, mille kohaselt on tegemist kunstiliselt innovaatilise protsessiga visuaalsetes valdkondades, kus kunstnikud rakendavad ettevõtlusstrateegiaid oma loometegevuse jätkusuutlikkuse tagamiseks, püüdes ühtlasi säilitada oma kunstilist terviklikkust.

Edasi anti ülevaade kunstilise terviklikkuse mõistest ning selle põhikomponentidest, mida kasutati skaalana empiirilises uuringus. Siis käsitles töö enamlevinud turupõhiseid strateegiaid, jaotades need kolme kategooriasse: toode, hinnastamine ja turundus. Autor lõi nende põhjal skaleeritava raamistiku (joonis 1), mis aitas mõista, milliseid strateegiaid kunstnikest ettevõtjad tavaliselt kasutavad ja kuidas need võivad mõjutada nende kunstilist terviklikkust.

Empiirilises osas kasutas autor kvantitatiivset lähenemist. Küsimustik koostati eelnevalt defineeritud teoreetiliste skaalade põhjal. Kokku vastas 71 kunstnikust ettevõtjat. Andmeid analüüsiti kasutades kirjeldavat statistikat, Pearsoni korrelatsioonanalüüsi, regressioonanalüüsi ja ANOVA testi.

Tulemused näitasid, et turupõhiste strateegiate kasutamise ja kunstilise terviklikkuse vahel on negatiivne, kuid nõrk ja statistiliselt mitteoluline seos. Samuti ei ilmnenud märkimisväärseid erinevusi vanuse, kogemuse või ametialase staatuse alusel. See viitab, et kunstnikest ettevõtjate turukäitumist ja väärtushinnanguid mõjutavad pigem sügavamad isiklikud ja kontekstuaalsed tegurid, mitte nähtavad demograafilised muutujad. Avatud vastused küsitluses kinnitasid samuti, et mitmed kunstnikud väärtustavad loomingulist

sõltumatust kõrgemalt kui majanduslikku edu ning strateegiline tegutsemine on sageli pigem sund kui teadlik valik.

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