

MA International Music Marketing

Module: Foundation in International Music Marketing

Term 1: Essay - Portfolio Rationale

“The Rebrand of Hart Media & PR: A Rationale”

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Introduction:

The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown the world as we know it into the most challenging times we have experienced in decades. We have witnessed western societies engage in widespread demonstrations against systemic racism, watch as the climate crisis continues to cause irreversible damage to the environment, and behold democracy and national security assailed by authoritarian regimes hiding behind false justifications. Amidst all of these major global events, the transition to a new, ethical and sustainable model for business is welcomed with open arms. Centred around the stakeholder - and aptly named ‘Stakeholder Capitalism’, it “positions private corporations as trustees of society” (*Schwab, 2021*). The new model recognises that “publicly listed corporations[s... aren’t just] profit-seeking entit[ies], but [are] also Social Organism[s]” (*Schwab, 2021*). The instigator of this transition is the ‘Davos Manifesto 2020’, which was created at The World Economic Forum’s 50th annual meeting (in Davos). In essence, the manifesto “made explicit that companies should do more than chase short-term profits, and focus on a broader purpose instead” (*O’Brien, and Gallagher, 2021, xvii [forward]*). This translates as “show[ing] no tolerance for corruption, uphold[ing] human rights [...] and advocat[ing] for a competitive playing field. The future of businesses and brands are now determined by their values, the way these values are communicated, and how an entity’s values are conveyed through action. In other words, words and actions speak loudly if they are consistent with one another.

Passion, Authenticity, Transparency, Community, Individuality, Respect and Progress. These are the values I was searching for in the company I wanted to centre my portfolio around because I strongly align myself with the movement towards ethics and sustainability permeating all industries. These are the values I found at the core of Hart Media, resulting in my decision to make the brand the focus of my portfolio. Jo Hart (founder and owner of Hart Media), has worked diligently over the last twenty-five years in supporting artists through

the medium of radio - and while technology advances, she has led the charge in maintaining its relevance for the past two and a half decades. Hart Media has provided support through radio for over a generation - and now it's time for the next generations of artists to be equipped with the knowledge and support they need to form the sustainable careers they are working towards. Hart Media is in a unique position to be able to educate and work with these new audiences, however, it lacks a modern brand that is intentional in its messaging and presentation - which is now fundamental to conducting itself according to its values (as stated by Klaus Schwab, Founder and Chairman of the World Economic Forum). This essay aims to examine and rationalise the decisions I have made whilst creating the three primary elements of the portfolio: the current state of Hart Media's brand, the Rebrand, and the Campaign.

Methodology & Research:

This essay aims to explain and justify the choices that have been made during the creative process of developing a company Rebrand, and subsequent Campaign that aligns with the new brand identity.

‘A Rationale of the Strategic Approach to the Rebrand of Hart Media’

Due to the scope of this assignment, an in-depth market-research survey has not been conducted, and the resources used primarily consist of secondary research such as modern marketing educational resources such as practical guides, white papers, and other relevant assets shared within the wider marketing sector. This Secondary research is used to contextualise the choices made within the process of creating the portfolio. The primary research conducted consists of an hour-long phone call with the founder of the brand in order to learn as much about the brand’s culture, business practices, and core values as much as possible in an attempt to inform my subsequent decisions within the context of a rebrand.

Throughout the portfolio, it should be noted that I have applied concepts from a variety of marketing theories such as *The Seven P’s*, *The Consumer Decision Making Process*, *SWOT analysis*, and *Porter’s Five Forces*. However, I have intentionally been selective with the components of these theories that I apply in the portfolio. I have also been intentional in the way that I have organised and presented the information obtained from these processes - in a format that I believe provides a flow that increases continuity and comprehension - both for the purposes of my rebrand, and the overall scope of this assignment. Therefore,

I have not included individual sections for these marketing theories - but rather integrated them throughout the portfolio.

The Brand:

In order to justify my creative choices within the rebrand - we must first look at the reasons behind those choices. This means identifying the issues that have negatively impacted the brand in its current context. I feel it is necessary to explain that strategic choices that may have been relevant in a previous business context, may no longer serve their intended purposes - and could result in more issues than benefits if regular strategic maintenance is not carried out on the brand (*McKinnon, 2019*). This is what I believe to be the case for Hart Media's current brand. At one point, it was enough to pick a font, a couple of colours, set up a website and throw information about the business on some of the pages, and not worry about whether or not the information, language, user interface, etc. was appropriate for their intentions as a business. After all, as a business that grounded itself within its real-world connections with a reputation solidified in word of mouth - as long as they had an online presence, surely that would suffice (*O'Brien, and Gallagher, 2021*). However, this is no longer a sustainable practice for brands in a modern context (*O'Brien, and Gallagher, 2021*). While real-world relationships are at the heart of any business, social technologies have advanced everything; from our marketing capabilities to the expectations we hold as consumers - for the people, cultures, and brands we

engage with. So in respect to this ever-growing standard that brands need to adhere to (or even surpass), whilst I was researching Hart Media I had identified a variety of significant issues that needed to be addressed. This was accomplished through the use of a SWOT analysis, and applying Porter's Five Competitive Forces that inform Strategy - this highlighted the primary threats to the current brand, largely consisting of alternative and substitute services that have a stronger brand (*Porter, 2008*). For the scope of this essay, I will concentrate these identified areas of concern into three core points to address: a lack of ***purpose***, a lack of ***authenticity***, and a lack of strategic ***communication***.

The first point to address is that of *purpose* within the brand. In my efforts to identify the essence of the brand (core values, vision etc.), I found myself spending a lot of time sifting through paragraphs upon paragraphs that make up Hart Media's website - that unfortunately said very little about the brand - raising more questions than they answered. Keeping in mind, digital marketing best practices now see websites as the ultimate summation of a brand's essence online (due to the internet's rise to dominance in the field of information & discovery for everything including businesses) (*McKinnon, 2019*), (*Hudson, 2021*). With this knowledge, I recognised that there was a complete lack of intentional copywriting that answered my questions on the website (the place that's meant to be able to answer everything), highlighting the first issue. I had a vague understanding of what the brand was involved in but lacked any understanding of *why it was valuable, what its intentions are,*

and generally why it exists in the first place. While the argument could be made that the answers to these questions are all implied and that the intended audience should be able to “figure it out” through context - I believe this defeats the purpose of having a brand and engaging in marketing practices - all activities with the intentions of creating clarity. The next point to address is the brand’s lack of authenticity in its current identity. While this could be considered an opinion - I would argue that if a brand is not explicit in its purpose and values from the beginning - nothing beyond that point can be viewed as authentic as it will lack intention and the ability to conduct strategic actions that convey this intention as a result (*O’Brien, and Gallagher, 2021*). Additionally, a brand is only partly the intentions and actions of those who lead them, the other part consists of the perception of the brand by the intended audience (*Kirsch, 2022*).

In order to gain a better understanding of what this intangible concept of authenticity meant to the founder of the brand - I chose to have a conversation with them in an attempt to see the gap between ‘intentions’ and my own perception as someone who falls into the category of the intended audience. This is where I noticed how different the identity of the brand is compared to the character of the team that makes up the brand’s culture and presence. The personality, values, and passions of the founder Jo, and her team, were not being delivered in a way that reflected these fundamental aspects of the brand (*McKinnon, 2019*). This leads me to the final point of concern - the lack of strategic *communication*. This issue is fairly straightforward - lacking purpose

and authenticity will result in a natural difficulty when trying to communicate your intentions in a way that will serve your purpose while sounding natural and convincing - important elements when running a business that deals with clients who rely on your expertise. It is important to be able to go to any of the touchpoints of a business/brand, whether that's online, by phone, or in-person, and expect to have a consistent experience across all means. If there are inconsistencies, it calls into question the reliability of the business and its brand, as well as poses risks to the reputation - which could cause knock-on effects that result in a decrease in clientele, or worse - a crisis situation that could cause irreversible damage to the business (*O'Brien, and Gallagher, 2021*), (*Kirsch, 2020*).

The Rebrand:

When designing my rebrand, the core questions that helped me in navigating my choices were of course - “how do I go about solving a lack of *purpose*, a lack of *authenticity*, and a lack of strategic *communication*?”

In this section, we will examine the answers that I found to these questions, and work towards justifying these answers which ultimately influenced my creative choices.

Firstly, solving a “lack of purpose”... The way this question is phrased assumes that there is no purpose throughout the entire brand, whereas I believe that the issue itself has more to do with a lack of *explicitly expressed intention* that informs its purpose. It is unlikely that Hart Media has survived for over 25 years without purpose or intention - which is exactly why I chose to speak with Jo Hart herself to try and find out what the company’s purpose is. While we did not clearly define what the brand’s purpose is - her answers instead gave insight into the culture that surrounds the brand (*See figure 1*), allowing me to come to an interpretation of the brand’s purpose on a variety of levels pertaining to the business and services itself, as well as the culture and attitudes held by those involved in making the brand what it is.

I came up with the following ***vision statement*** in order to capture what it is that

Hart Media wants to achieve through its existence - in essence, its purpose:

“To provide unwavering and impassioned support to musical artists - big and small - in order for them to achieve their personal, and career aspirations while Celebrating Radio, its community, and nurturing the relationships built through it.”

My solution - the brand’s purpose (as seen through their new vision) - came from the decision to observe the culture of the brand rather than to try and force an answer to be created - as that would then lack authenticity (*O’Brien, and Gallagher, 2021*), (*McKinnon, 2019*). Of course, it is difficult to state for certain whether or not my interpretation of the brand’s purpose is the best fit for Hart Media due to the scope of this assignment. I was not able to work directly with the company, and I was not hired to do a professional rebrand - this came with limitations in my ability to provide as tailored a solution as would have been possible if I was in fact hired and worked closely with the team at Hart Media.

Despite these limitations, I believe that the next best solution would be to collect as much information that was readily available online and then observe the brand through a variety of lenses - interviews, previous work, and clientele in order to best understand what it is that they’re doing and why it has been successful - and then attempt to interpret that into a defined ***purpose***.

This “new” *purpose* is to then act as the foundation for the brand’s new ability to present *authentically*. Seeing as there is a domino effect that comes into play when developing strategy - the foundation will set the scene for any information that is built upon it. For the sake of this essay, we will define *authenticity* as “the quality of truly being what something is said to be” (*Oxford Languages, 2022*). This definition allows us to take action when trying to fulfil a ‘lack’ of authenticity and does so by setting parameters by which we can work. These parameters consist of:

1. *What ‘something’ is said to be (something’s description).*
2. *The ‘something’ in question’s ability to align with its description.*

This is particularly important to define because it highlights the important role that language, visuals, and intention play when defining whether or not something is considered authentic. As mentioned in the previous section ‘*The Brand*’, the authenticity of Hart Media was called into question because the way it has been “described”, or rather - what it was said to be (whether with words or visuals), did not align with how it was described by the founder of the brand, or rather the *intention* of the founder (*see figure 1*). Now that we understand this, the solution is simple: design the brand’s visual identity and the language surrounding the brand (the way the brand presents itself), in a way that is to align the founder’s description of the brand (their intentions).

In other words, we now need to *communicate* Hart Media’s *authentic qualities* - which are found in its actions, and in its human-touch. Therefore, I chose to

base my rebrand on the words of Jo Hart herself. While the visual assets I created are an interpretation on my part, it is the most I could do in an attempt to align the brand with its stated values (*see figure 2*) without being able to work directly with the team to further develop the concepts. This is why I chose to use an illustration as a part of the logo - to highlight the human touch that makes the brand uniquely itself. I made the decision to emphasise the brand's personality and passion visually by making the logo's heart larger (compared to the small heart that dots the 'i') - and by using a vibrant shade of pink alongside an array of complementary and contrasting colours which draws the eye to the human qualities of the logo. With the visuals decided, I then had to refine the brand into a simple statement that describes what it is that they do as a business in a way that aligns with their values.

"Bespoke Radio Promotion & Campaign Strategy delivered with Love."
"Supporting You Through Reliably-Impactful, Purpose-built Radio Campaigns to Bolster Your Reputation, and Boost Your Momentum."

The objective of this statement is to be able to clearly describe what the business does, and how this benefits its clientele. A benefit of doing this is that we can reduce the superfluous information on the website, and make it much easier to navigate. Additionally, we now have a much clearer direction for how to set up the social channels, allowing for much clearer communication of the

brand's key messages (*McKinnon, 2019*) - which is a big part of *attracting the ideal new customers to work with....*

The Campaign:

The campaign's structure was informed by the Berenschot Project Management Model - where I had to define the objective of the campaign, design a strategy to achieve this objective, design a process to follow while executing the plan, taking into account the fact that not all projects are linear in the process to accomplishing goals, and therefore needed to follow a model for adjustment - the Deming Cycle - which would allow for regular reviews and strategic adjustments to the foundational plan (*Deming, 1986*). Just as any other business, Hart Media sustains itself by working with a variety of clients. While they currently have a reliable client base that has been built up over the past thirty years - this also leads us to consider the sustainability of this in the long term. Clients are human, and humans do not live forever, and neither do their careers. Therefore it is important to consider how the business should move forward in the future once their currently reliable clientele are no longer in need of Hart Media's services, regardless of reason. The campaign I have developed has been built under the assumption that Hart Media will continue to operate - and do so authentically - for as long as it possibly can (both under current management and future management). In order to accomplish this - Hart Media needs to

consistently build a younger clientele who's career still has a long lifespan.

What is possibly the most crucial aspect to this campaign is that the target audience needs to align with the brand's values because of consistency. In order to provide "*unwavering impassioned support to artists of all sizes*", you have to first be in a position to steadily assist your clients, and of course... have a steady stream of clients. This means staying relevant, maintaining useful connections and relationships, and of course, having a good flow of clients ***that your brand can be passionate about supporting*** (O'Brien, and Gallagher, 2021), (Kirsch, 2022). With this in mind, I made the decision to set the campaign's objective as ***"lead generation"*** (Hubspot Social Media Marketing Course, 2020).

As a result of this decision, I felt that the most appropriate way to start with a lead generation campaign would be by educating the intended audience on the value of what Hart Media provides - and doing so in the context of the intended audience's own dreams and aspirations - both from a career perspective and a personal one. Once the target audience for this campaign had been identified, the decision was made to funnel the audience towards the brand's educational resource, or 'white paper' - the intention of this resource being to educate the audience on the benefits of radio within an artist's campaign (Caputa, 2017).

However, releasing a free resource is risky as it could either say too much or even direct the intended audience towards a competitor. Therefore, the resource will be placed behind a mailing list signup in an attempt to at least gather customer data, as well as garner brand loyalty by providing regular instalments

of content that the audience would likely perceive as valuable. In addition to this - a simultaneous release of this resource with AIM would be in order to reach a wider audience, gain stakeholder buy-in from AIM and partners, and gain further support from a reputable, trustworthy brand.

Efforts to support the mailing list sign-ups & resource downloads include: creating social content & hosting live events/talks that give a taster of the information in this resource in order to pique the audience's interest and hook them - leaving them hungry for more information - in turn, funnelling more audience members towards the resource. Additionally, this should be done alongside collaborative works with other music-industry influencer brands such as 'Burstimo' to release relevant content that also taps into their audience for Hart Media & Pr, while also providing value to their audience to strengthen these wider relationships (*Overbeck, and Black, 2021*).

All of these actions have been designed to align with the values of the brand, and stay consistent with our messaging so as not to compromise Hart Media & PR authenticity, while still serving the brand's purpose.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, the process of strategically designing a rebrand for Hart Media has been an exercise in problem-solving and developing creative solutions, while maintaining a high level of consistency across all ideas. The rebrand demanded a holistic approach that would not hinder the progress that the brand has made over the past twenty-five years, while simultaneously opening new doors for the future of the business. With all of this in mind, I believe that my approach of diagnosing specific issues, providing solutions for those issues, and assigning a framework for measuring the success of these solutions, acts as the fundamental core for all strategic idea generation - a process that all successful and tenacious marketers must adhere to. As a result of my research behind this assignment, the process of constructing a portfolio, and rationalising my decisions - the importance of recognising *Purpose, Authenticity, and Communication* as the fundamental core elements of any modern brand activities, has now become clear. These fundamental elements act as the driving force behind any brand, and their absence renders any activities beyond the initial steps of ascertaining *Purpose, Authenticity, and Communication* in a holistic, symbiotic manner, pointless. This is because, without these core elements - no activities conducted

under the name of the brand can be considered ‘strategic’. Therein lies the justification of my choices.

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Figure 1:

Notes - Conversation with Jo Hart:

Questions for Jo Hart:

- What are the core values of your brand?
- What are your brand's revenue streams - what are your services?
- Who is your brand's clientele?
- Who are your brand's partners (type of artists you work with - indie or signed, age, genre)?
- How would you summarise your brand's current identity?

Answers & Thoughts & General Information:

- 25th anniversary, in the biz for 31 years.
- Artists to radio promo, set up sessions, all on the radio. Really multifaceted company tailoring the experience for artists.
- Setting up interviews. Work with the whole range big and small, as long as they have potential.
- Works with all national radio stations.
- All genres.
- Services - a variety of packages that are boutique/bespoke custom.
- Radio doesn't like it when you send them the wrong type of music. Understand what they play.
- Right songs, right people, right area. Radio is PR. TV. Touring. Interviews around the community. After all, A & R and records are done.
- 30% UP in radio since pandemic. Everything like tv and social media streaming is difficult. Radio is your friend - always giving you a bit of everything. Doesn't feel so alone. Locals are brilliant. News artists are getting radio play. Radio helps sell tickets to shows. Radio they talk about it, but streaming is just listening to the song. You have to adapt, but older diet methods are still valuable. Right tool for the job. Power of presenters - basically influencers. Radio has so much potential for growth again.

“Honesty, authenticity, passion, full **heart** into the work. Always give everything to the smallest of artists. Mentorship. Caring relationship. Integrity, strong moral compass. Conscious. Appreciating someone where they’re at - and completely personalised experience. “No bullsh*t” - Jo Hart. Can’t take on work that doesn’t feel right. Feedback/mentorship/guide/advice. Respected, honest, good at what they do. Supporting Women in music. Do what you do because you love it. Support women in music.

Spent the last 3 decades building her reputation. She knows how to do what she does. She works with everyone. ***She didn’t give me super clear answers, but in a way*** - I think that’s her brand as well because she isn’t faking anything to sell her services. Word of mouth is how she gets many of her clients, and genuine quality is what she provides. Plus, because she’s working in a medium (radio) that still holds a lot of power *if used correctly*, but is seen as less important by people who aren’t in the know, *she needs a brand that is attractive to the various radio stations she works with, the artists she works with, the presenters and the rest.* Needs to come across as a professional, authentic, real person and full of character. Very knowledgeable and experienced.

Which makes me think that needs to be reflected in the visuals.

I would say that the rebrand or campaign really needs to sell the values of radio and sell the passion that she describes having.”

Figure 2:

Brand Values:

- ***Authenticity (From passion to beliefs).***
- ***Transparency (No games, hiding nothing).***
- ***Human Touch (Radio brings something special).***
- ***Tailor-made is the way. (No such thing as ‘One Size Fits All’.)***
- ***Respect (Good Relationships are Golden).***
- ***Growth (Not settling for one-off campaigns that won’t lead anywhere)***

Figure 3:

Berenschot Project Management Model -

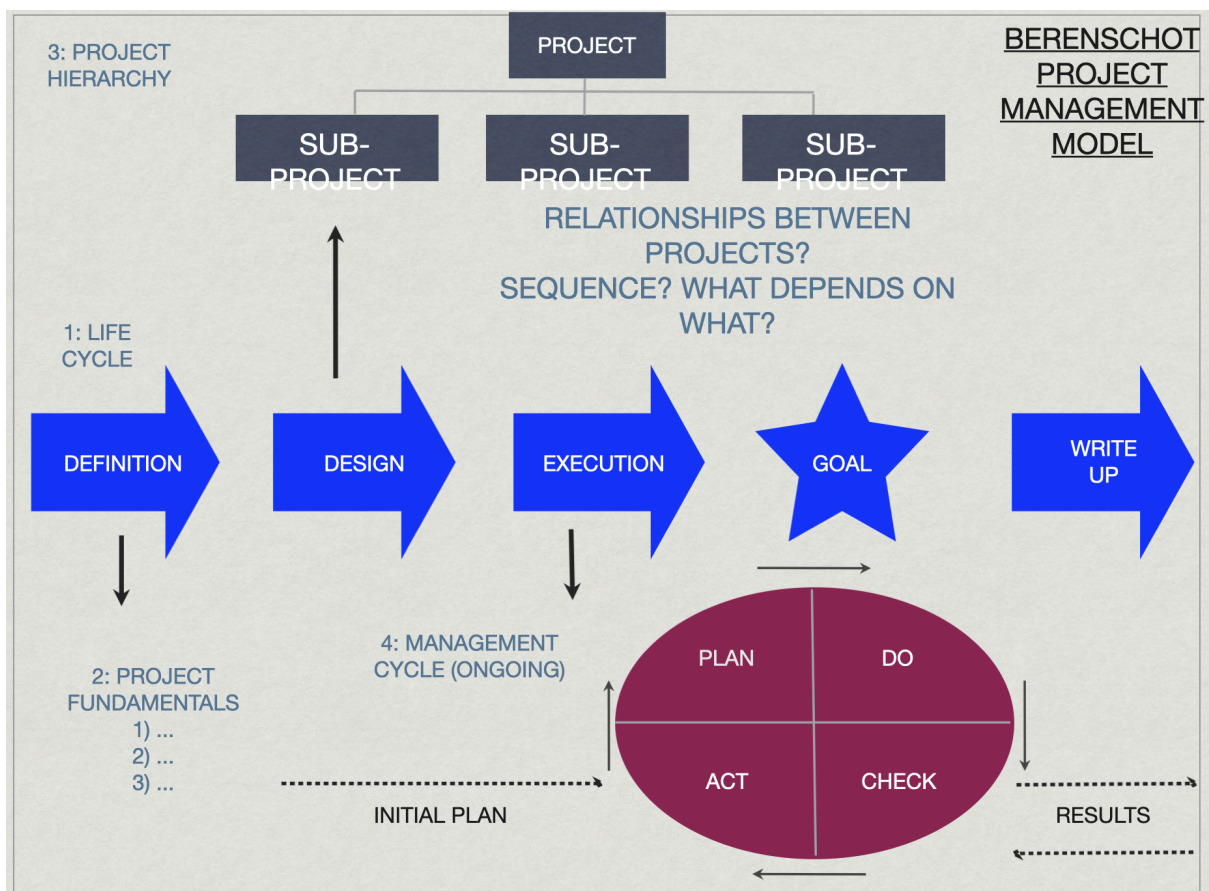


Figure 4:

The Deming Cycle -

