

## MANAGING AN ARTS BRAND: THE CASE OF ARA GÜLER

**IremEren-Erdoğan, Ph.D\***

Marmara ÜniversitesiİngilizceİşletmeBölümü  
BahçelievlerKampüsü  
RessamNamık İsmail Sok. No:1  
Bahçelievler/İstanbul/Turkey  
Email: [ireme@marmara.edu.tr](mailto:ireme@marmara.edu.tr)

**CemTaluğ, Ph. D**

KörKadıSokakTurizmSitesi Blok:4 No:26  
Ulus/ İstanbul/Turkey  
Email: [cemtalug@gmail.com](mailto:cemtalug@gmail.com)

**EmineÇobanoğlu, Ph.D**

Marmara ÜniversitesiİngilizceİşletmeBölümü  
BahçelievlerKampüsü  
RessamNamık İsmail Sok. No:1  
Bahçelievler/İstanbul/Turkey  
Email: [ecobanoglu@marmara.edu.tr](mailto:ecobanoglu@marmara.edu.tr)

**\*Corresponding Author**

### **Abstract**

*Today's arts world is more engaged with marketing and brand management than ever before. Therefore, drawing from Associative Network Memory Model of brand management, an exploratory free association research was undertaken to uncover the underlying associations of AraGüler, a strong brand in photography art. The study revealed that although the functional benefits and product related attributes were the main concern of the artist throughout his career, for the arts consumer, the emotional and experiential benefits were the foremost reason to acquire his work. In addition, the recognition, prestige, lifestyle and character of the artist were found to add value to the arts work. This study aims to combine arts with branding and management, providing rich insight to the artists for positioning and communicating their work, making a significant contribution to literature.*

**Key Words:** Arts Management, Brand Associations, Arts Marketing, Personal Branding, Brand Associations, Photography

## 1. Introduction

The marketing notion is considered as a necessity in today's arts business environment. It is believed that arts would benefit from the import of marketing techniques (Evrard and Colbert, 2000; Fillis, 2004; Conway and Whitelock, 2007). However, there is also a long tradition of reluctance to rely on marketing in arts and a negative predisposition towards it. The postmodern view of arts, on the other hand, takes a different perspective on the whole art world. According to the postmodern view, every form of art is unpredictable (Bjorkegen, 1993; Scheff and Kotler, 1996) and arts sell potential meanings and values to people rather than finished goods. Thus, for an art product to be commercially successful, these meanings should be understood and find a place in the hearts and minds of people. Arts become popular through its influence on and meaning transfer to people. It is, thus, important that arts products should be easily accessible and people can understand their meanings (Bjorkegen, 1993). What can be said is that arts do not only mean innovation, creativity or play, it is a serious business (Schroeder, 2005). Alienation from the society, living antagonistically towards commerce, nobly dedicating themselves to the production of aesthetic experiences versus commodification and gaining financial returns seem like two different options for the artist. However, there is a realization lately that in order to create and gain control of their arts; the artists need to gain financial and managerial control of their career. There is interdependency between creating arts and managing it for financial returns. Therefore, a balance is needed between being true to artistic principles, and being sensible to commercial reality. The commercial reality would make it easier for the artist to pursue bohemian desire for career construction and sense of self (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2006). Thus, the 'Creative' or 'Discovery Period' (Rentschler, 1997; 2001) in the development of marketing in the arts organization (1994-present) is the era when the artists and art organizations came to realize the need for creative marketing strategies to differentiate themselves in the ever increasing competitive arts industry, and gain share of the customers, especially because the artist is no longer as much funded by the government or by the patrons as in the past.

Effective marketing can be a way of creating the balance between artistic desire and commercial realities, and overcome the threat of survival for the artists (Conway and Whitelock, 2007). Creative, strategic, and entrepreneurial marketing is needed to differentiate from competition, and acquire a positive image (Fillis, 2004). Although marketing, branding, consumer culture is criticized and the negative side of consumption and marketing is highlighted, marketing concept gradually proved as a necessity in the arts market despite these negative connotations towards it (Fillis, 2004). Traditionally, artists had made use of marketing in the sense of promotion such as public relations and word-of-mouth communications (Mc Donald and Harrison, 2002; Conway and Whitelock, 2007; Hill *et al.*, 2003, Evrard and Colbert, 2000; Fillis, 2002; Ebewo and Siravi, 2009). Rentschler (2002) has put forward in his examination of 171 arts marketing articles in key international arts management journals that arts marketing had evolved into a more holistic and strategic perspective in the last years. The arts marketing literature have recognized the importance of the customer, marketing strategy and attributes of the marketing mix (Rentschler, 2002; Mc Donald and Harrison, 2002). The terms audience and marketer have become focal in arts literature along with patron and scholar (Schwarzer, 1999). The goal of arts marketing is defined as creating a better fit between the consumer behavior, customer needs and arts. The aim is to search for strategies to build long-term relationships and gain loyalty of the arts audiences (Silverman, 1995; Weil, 1997; Diggle, 1995; Rentschler, 2002; Conway and Whitelock, 2007; Bogart, 1995; Fillis, 2000; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Fillis, 2002).

In today's competitive environment, managing artists and their products as brands is the new reality. Branding process and arts are interlinked, even though their stream of research seems very separate. A successful artist is also a good brand manager, actively engaged in developing, positioning, nurturing and promoting himself as a recognizable brand in the competitive cultural sphere and creating meaning for the

audience (Colbert, 2003; Schroeder, 2005). Art is not only about creativity and innovation, but also about management. Artists should be a manager of their own brand so that their work is widely exhibited, bought, collected and in return create revenue (Ebewo and Siravi, 2009). Andy Warhol (Schroeder, 2005) and Salvador Dali (Fillis, 2000) are good examples of artists who successfully managed themselves and their work as brands finding opportunities to promote themselves and their distinguished work. Another well-known artist is AraGüler. AraGüler, the distinguished photographer, is a photojournalist and a visual chronicler, awarded many times, with works in museums and private collections. AraGüler may be considered as the photographer brand of Turkey in the world. The purpose of this study is to conduct a brand audit of AraGüler to shed a light on what type of brand associations are evident in him. There are different publications about AraGüler, regarding his work, personality, biography, but none of these publications consider him as a brand. Knowledge on what values and associations people ascribe to a strong brand in photography might be used by future photographers to position themselves by benchmarking the associations/image of AraGüler. Another purpose of the study is to uncover the conscious and subconscious marketing moves of the artist that had helped to create his image, leveraging him to high equity. This will help to identify effective marketing strategies for photography and arts management.

## 2. Brand Management in Arts

In marketing and branding theory, for building long-term equity and loyalty, brand image is an essential ingredient (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2007). A strong brand with high equity means that its image had been well managed. Consumer based discussion of the brand image relies on the Associative Network Memory Model (ANMM), which proposes that the network of brand associations constitute the brand image and represent the perceived value of the brand in the eyes of the consumer (Keller, 2007; Farquhar and Herr, 1993; Özsoymer and Altaras, 2008). The concept is defined as the category of a brand's assets and liabilities that include anything linked in memory to a brand (Aaker, 1991) or as informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory that contains the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller, 2007). Here, it can be said that links represent positive or negative relationships whereas nodes represents brand associations (Hsieh, 2002). A recognizable, strong brand with high equity has strong tangible and intangible brand associations (Keller, 2007; Aaker, 1991; Shocker and Weitz, 1988; Agarwal and Rao, 1996). Consumer's brand image/associations form the basis of brand equity since they create value to the organization through affecting consumers' brand attitude, choice and loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2007; Kapferer, 1997). What differentiates one brand from another are brand image associations; thus they provide valuable managerial implications in marketing strategy development.

Different authors (e.g., Keller, 2007; Aaker, 1991; Farquhar and Herr, 1992; Biel, 1992) have dimensionalized brand associations in more or less the same way. Aaker (1991) argues that brand associations could result from product attributes, intangibles, customer benefits, relative price, use/application, user/customer, celebrity/person, lifestyle/personality, product class, competitors, country/geographic area, and usage situation. Farquhar and Herr (1992) suggest types of brand associations as product category, usage situation, product attribute, and customer benefits. Biel (1992) divides them into corporate image, product image, and user image. Park *et al.* (1996) propose symbolic, experiential, and functional benefits as brand unique abstractions. Finally, Keller (2007) classifies them into product-related attributes, and non-product-related attributes (such as price, user imagery, usage imagery, and brand personality).

Even though previous research has stressed the importance of branding in arts (Colbert, 2003; Schroeder, 2005; Brown and Patterson, 2000; Witkowski, 1999), this research stream is still in its infancy. Enlarging the brand research into the arts world, in other words, studying the art market in terms of image-based brand

management is timely and necessary. The emphasis of this paper is on brand associations/image as an influencer of loyalty and financial returns. Consumers use brand associations to help process, organize, and retrieve information in memory. The brand image literature proposes that there is a hierarchy among associations, and associations at a higher level have more impact on the consumer behavior. However, at the conceptual level, all types of images at different levels should be incorporated (Wu *et al.*, 1988; Hsieh, 2002). The three-dimensional attitude model (belief, attitude, behavior) in consumer behavior can be applied to connote the link among brand associations, attitude and purchase likelihood. Accordingly, positive brand associations create positive brand attitude, and positive brand attitude leads to consumer purchase and loyalty. To form brand attitudes, purchase likelihood, and loyalty, the existence of associations that are salient in a brand is a must (Keller, 2007).

The artist himself or his brand manager should know what values and associations their product creates in people's minds and hearts, since strategic matching of brand image and target audience, and building it over time is identified as one of the key success factors for arts (Mc Nicholas, 2004). An emerging trend in branding of arts is an appeal to underlying values and associations to build loyalty (Scott, 2000). Cadwell (2000) and Scott (2000) had found in their researches that strong museum brands that are well known by the consumers have salient tangible and intangible associations, such as special events and collections, high quality curators, and a loyal customer base. However, brand associations are rather product category specific (Bearden and Etzel, 1982), which makes it hard to generalize findings for every arts category. Photography as an art implies producing a picture, that renders reality, but also conveys ideas and feelings, is aesthetic and personal. It is considered as a subset of fine arts since 1960s and gaining more popularity especially recently with the digital developments. Managing the photographer as a brand may include identifying his target audience, his differentiation in his work, the limitation to selling his work, exhibition details etc. It is important to understand which of these activities are crucial and help leverage the brand in the target audience's eyes. Therefore, it is timely to conduct an exploratory research to understand the possible tangible and intangible associations related to a personal brand in photography.

### 3. Case: AraGüler

AraGüler was born in 1928, to a well-off family in Istanbul. His life struggle was always funded by his family, his stubbornness and passion that helped him throughout his career. A series of events led him at an early age to pursue a career in Yeni Istanbul newspaper and he took off from that point on. Throughout his career, he was employed by many prestigious national and international newspapers and magazines, and was awarded countless times. He was the Near East photo-reporter for Time, Life, Paris-Match and Der Stern. The turning point in his life was when Marc Riboud of Magnum<sup>1</sup> introduced him to Henri Cartier-Bresson, in 1961. After a while AraGüler started to work for Magnum, even though he never became a full member. Since then, he is called the "Magnum of the East" (Simon, 1995). His tie with Magnum and his worldwide connection with influential people in the photography helped him travel all around the world and shoot many important events and people. Among the internationally well-known people, he photographed and most of whom he became friends with are Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Alfred Hitchcock, and Tennessee Williams. He was also present in archeological discoveries in Turkey. He was the first to shoot Aphrodisias, Mount Nemroud, and the Noah's Ark.

He started to gain international recognition starting from 1960s. He was acknowledged as among the seven best photographers of the world by Photography Annual Anthology in 1961, and entitled as the 'Master of Leica' in 1962. He was chosen among the 45 worldwide famous photographers of the 'Day and the Life

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<sup>1</sup> A group of photographers who desired to work on their independent projects and free themselves from loyalty to any particular organization

of...’ program, and photographed and documented different countries for the program. AraGüler was bestowed the Order of Merit by the Armenian Patriarchate in 2000 to mark his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Legion d’Honneur medal and the title of Officier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Republic in 2002. He was named Photographer of the Century in Turkey in 2000 and was given the ‘Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Grand Award for Culture and Art’ in year 2005. He had many national and international exhibitions of his own as well as attending mixed exhibitions with other artists. A big selection of AraGüler’s photographs is now kept at the Paris National Library, Nebraska University Sheldon Collection, and in private collections in Boston, Chicago, and New York. Most of his photos were shot with Leicas with high-speed black and white films, and he is famous for them. AraGüler still continues to shoot photographs, lives at Beyoğlu/Istanbul, and edits the photography magazine, called ‘İz (Trace)’.

#### 4. Research Methodology

*Data Collection:* A brand audit explores the history, origins, associations, and marketing of a brand to discover what it stands for in the eyes of the customers relative to competitors. Accordingly, this study also employed a brand audit that will help to identify the key associations of AraGüler and his conscious or sub-conscious marketing processes beneath. Since the study aims to explore meanings, attributes, feelings, thoughts, and associations, the research was conducted with the interpretivist mindset. Given the exploratory nature of the study, in-depth, face-to-face interviewing was preferred as a contact method. The research process consisted of multi-stage and multi-method data collection, which included free association research and in-depth interviewing techniques with open-ended questions.

In the first step, qualitative and projective technique of free associations research (Malhotra, 2010) was employed to capture respondents’ point of view in a face-to-face context and to uncover the mental portrayal of the respondents’ associations of AraGüler. The research questions included what comes to people’s mind when the name ‘AraGüler’ is spelled out; what is it that they liked the best about ‘AraGüler’; and what in their opinion distinguishes ‘AraGüler’ from other photographers. Upon the receipt of responses to the questions, all comments were collated and analyzed using content analysis technique. Content analysis is a systematic approach to quantifying the frequency, intensity, and direction of the responses (Malhotra, 2010). The researchers identified and evaluated the items that appeared to be theoretically important, meaningful and related to the central theme of the study; the underlying associations of the photojournalist AraGüler. Then these associations were grouped together based on common themes and were labeled so that the core values and positioning of AraGüler was revealed. The grouping criteria were based upon previous brand association work by Keller (2007), Aaker (1991), Farquhar and Herr (1992), and Biel (1992).

In the second part of the research, AraGüler himself was in-depth interviewed face-to-face to understand his role and point of view in his branding process and to uncover the artist’s perspective as the provider and marketer of his work. The open-ended questions included his self-assessment as a photojournalist, his associations, distinctiveness and uniqueness from his point of view. To conduct better evaluation, crosscheck accuracy of data, gain confidence and finally ensure internal validity and reliability of data, triangulation method (Yin, 2003; Sinkovicset. al., 2008) was employed and multiple sources of evidence were sought at each step of the research process. Previous work (Rifat, 1993; 2002; Baydur, 1995), dissertations about AraGüler (Ayten, 2008; Ergener, 2007), his own books (Güler, 1995; 2005) and his biographical book by Tavlaş (2009) were also consulted during the interpretation of the research results.

*Sampling:* In line with the qualitative and interpretive approach of the study, purposive sampling was applied. To fully understand the photography market, collectors of photography were identified and contacted. Since there were no formal lists of photography collectors, two different sources were consulted; AraGüler’s personal assistant and the owner of a reputable photography house in Istanbul. The list

compromised of twenty collectors, out of which eight agreed to participate in the study. All of these people were well-educated elite of Istanbul, earning a relatively high income, which was in conformity with the typical arts audience described in the literature (Colbert, 2003; Colbert *et al.*, 2001).

## 5. Findings:

### 5.1. Study 1: Free Association Research

The results of the free association research, categories of brand associations and their underlying elements with how many times they were mentioned in brackets are listed in Figure 1. The content analysis of the free associations research indicated seven different sets of brand associations; product-related attributes, functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits, brand personality, and price associations.

Based on the argument of Keller (2007), the frequency of favorable and unique associations may be better than the frequency of total associations to identify the core brand values/positioning of the brand. Each brand should have its unique and positive association as its core association to build a competitive advantage upon. The most frequently mentioned associations, with their frequencies in brackets, were; unique, quality old Istanbul photos (5); black and white photos (5); documentary photos in the period between 1940s and 1980s (4); doyenne of photography (4); and the Istanbul we had admired, but lost (4). All respondents mentioned the old, black and white Istanbul photos, their documentary nature, and the nostalgic feelings aroused by them as the most favorable associations. Based on these, the brand positioning of AraGüler can be summarized as black and white, nostalgic Istanbul sceneries by a doyenne of photography. Hence, in the words of one respondent, the position of AraGüler in the photography industry was described as:

“The collectors buy AraGüler’s old Istanbul pictures to include a classic in their collection. His other documentary photos of the archeological discoveries, photos of other cities or portraits of the back then celebrities do not create the same demand. They know that AraGüler’s black and white, old Istanbul photos will become very valuable when he passes away. Old Istanbul pictures are irreplaceable since Istanbul had changed rapidly through time and there were not many alternative photographers to document the old times (Respondent 1).”

Black and white, old, nostalgic Istanbul sceneries is the core positioning of AraGüler. To fully understand his meaning from the eyes of his target market, it is also important to consider the whole set of association categories. The following section puts forward the respective associations.

#### *Product-Related Attributes*

Product-related attributes consist of materials used, colors, and brand function. In the case of AraGüler, the most mentioned product-related attributes in respective order were black and white photos, their documentary and thematic nature, realism, and sentimentality. Since most of his photos belonged to the period of 1940s and 1980s (Tavlaş, 2009), it is no wonder that AraGüler’s photos were in black and white color. One of the respondents explained why the black and white feature of his photos was remembered:

“His black and white photos are more impressive. The grains and blurred parts in his photos give a depth to them. They represent the possibilities of photography in those times, what makes them more a part of those days (Respondent 2).”

Similarly, AraGüler in the biographical book by Tavlaş (2009) pointed out that “Black and white photos give meaning to a scene. They have a dramatic effect because of the shadows and fuzziness (p.260)”.

The aim of AraGüler was to document life in the period between 1940s to 1980s as a photojournalist and a documentary photographer<sup>2</sup>. As discussed by Oral (2003), AraGüler was known to be a ‘witness’ of his time

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<sup>2</sup>Documentary photography aims to shoot pictures to show objective reality and give a message without a concern of aesthetics and editing (Oral, 2003).

and ‘perfectionist’ in his art, where he penetrated the life of the underprivileged and common men, and reflected it in a simple but striking way. Ayten (2008) also stressed that AraGüler searched for natural, real life in his photographs, and did not allow for editing which was against the idea of documentary photography. His aim was to catch moments in life (Ayten, 2008; Ergener, 2007). His photos were both realistic and sentimental since they were about life and people’s stance in it. According to AraGüler(2005), the role of a photojournalist was not only to witness the ongoing events, but to visually make the life, art, pleasures, grieves, traditions and behavior of one age available to next generations through the help of photography. He viewed the camera as a means of recording (Ayten, 2008; Ergener, 2007). He defined his work as “I wait long hours for a photo to come to being. Then I press the trigger. That is documentary photography. A photojournalist writes the visual history of mankind with his camera (Tavlaş, 2009, p. 114)”. As one respondent puts it:

“I believe he takes those photos so that we can also live through those moments. Whenever I look at his photos, I feel like I am actually living that moment as if I am also there. The exposures that he shot with the perspective of a news reporter back then became a work of art in these times (Respondent 4).”

Other than the common men, AraGüler also photographed many famous people of his time. If it was not for him, it would be very hard to find pictures of those people today, especially the Turkish artists of the past. One of the respondents put this fact as:

“He took pictures of many poets, writers, and artists of 1940s to 1980s. Today we know how they looked like. He has a special composition in his photos; they explain the character of the photographed person. If AraGüler takes a photo of a person, that is because he likes that person, he respects him, and because that person has a special place not only in his life, but in the world, a value that is encyclopedia-like (Respondent 6).”

Another mentioned attribute of AraGüler’s photos was the cinema technique he used, with perfect, complete, and sharp exposures and a theme or a story in every picture. This association can be tied to how his life and career was shaped since his early adolescence. In his early ages, he started his art career by working in the cinema sector, and then passed on to photography (Tavlaş, 2009). Therefore, the effects of cinema industry and techniques are apparent in his work. Thus, one of the respondents explained:

“His work gives guidance to a period in Istanbul because his photos do not only tell you about the environment and streets of those times, but also how a greengrocer, a fisher, or a coffeehouse looked like. You understand the way people dressed, and how the street life was proceeding. I find the photos very cinematographic in that sense. When you put them one after the other, you can watch them as if you are watching a movie. His photos have a story. They are very sincere; and you can easily write a scenario just by looking at one of them. AraGüler just took the photo of what was there. All his photos were shot sensually (Respondent 6).”

In the biographical book by Tavlaş (2009), AraGüler himself was also quoted: “Most of my life passed on within the cinema sector. I know every trick in the business; dubbing, synchronicity, assembly and editing of a film (p. 19).” and “You may see the influence of theatre on my photos. The composition in my photos is like the decoration in a theatre (p.242)”. Rıfat (2002) also put AraGüler somewhere between being a pure wandering minstrel and a strict documentarist. According to him, “poetry and documentary are melted down together in AraGüler’s work; one is nearly born from the other (Rıfat, 2002, p.123).” Even though he was a documentary photographer, he had a unique artistic way of displaying what he saw in life, what made his photographs attractive.

Rıfat (1993) mentioned that AraGüler turned Istanbul into Istanbul with the surprising images, striking stories, and fascinating forms in his photographs. Human beings were the main subjects in most of his

photographs along with landscapes; the essence of documentary photography. AraGüler's work became a testimonial evidence of the near past because he documented places and people who were no longer present in the modern life. He portrayed the lives of common people such as makers and sellers of yogurt, sherbet, candied apple, and salep in a cinematographic way (Ayten, 2008; Ergener, 2007). His scenes were described as fresh encounters filled with action, documents of unique moments (Ergener, 2007).

#### *Functional Benefits*

Derived from product-related attributes, functional benefits are intrinsic advantages of product/service consumption such as quality, safety, security, problem resolving or avoidance. Results of the free association research spelled out that AraGüler provided unique and quality old Istanbul photos which were the best visuals for the period between 1940s and 1980s, without many alternatives. His photos served the function of a bridge to the past.

As one respondent put it:

“AraGüler has the best archive of photos that characterizes and documents the life style of the 1940s and 1980s of Turkey. For any cultural or art project, his archive caters the best pictures to visually describe the period between 1940s through 1980s (Respondent 1).”

Even though AraGüler was known for his quality old Istanbul photos, he also took first pictures of many archeological discoveries such as Aphrodisias, Mount Nemroud and Noah's Ark, and photographed many famous international and Turkish figures (Tavlaş, 2009). However, none of these were mentioned as associations of him even though he frequently talked of these memoirs in his biographical book (Tavlaş, 2009). One of the respondents also mentioned this fact:

“He also took a lot of portrait photos of many well known politicians, and artists of Turkish or foreign origin. I started to buy them 10 years ago. However, it took my attention that no other collectors had bought those portraits. Even though nobody is really interested in them, whenever I meet Ara, all he wants to talk about is those people that he had photographed and interviewed. He is not interested in talking about old Istanbul. Istanbul photos are kind of his hobby. He does not see them as his real mission because he describes himself as a photo journalist (Respondent 2).”

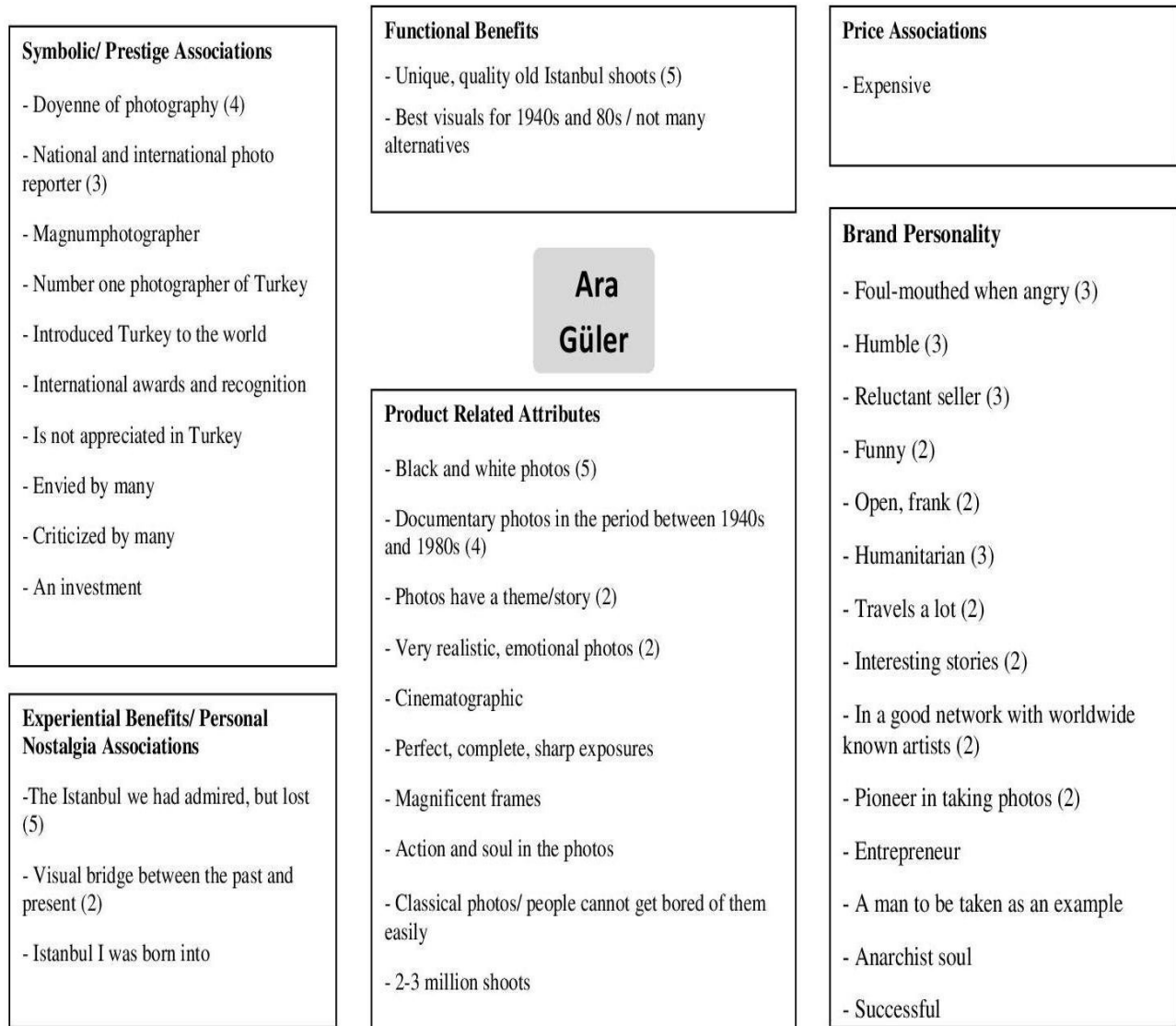
#### *Brand Personality*

As much as product-related attributes, the respondents also mentioned the personality of AraGüler as an association. The artist's character was as much remembered as his photos. AraGüler was remembered as a foul-mouthed person, but also as funny, humble, and humanitarian. He was remembered as frank and open, not afraid of spelling out what is in his mind. AraGüler was also remembered as a frequent traveler with a good network of friends and famous people surrounding him. As one of the respondents put it:

“AraGüler had an admirable life. He had a very fine period where he became friends with many writers, artists, and poets. They had beautiful friendships and enjoyed their lives at Beyoğlu, İstiklal Street back those days (Respondent 5).”

AraGüler was also mentioned as a pioneer and an entrepreneur in photography with the will and the courage to pursue his career no matter what. He was very focused in his work, and never hesitated in his choices. He mountain-climbed, flew in and leaned down from a helicopter to shoot the first pictures of the Noah's Ark, made all kinds of tricks, role played, and waited under pouring rain for days to shoot celebrities. Most of what he did was the first in Turkey, and sometimes in the world. He accomplished his mission to document life as a photojournalist (Tavlaş, 2009; Ayten, 2008).





**Figure 1. Brand Associations of Ara Güler**

### *Experiential Benefits*

One of the most frequently mentioned associations of AraGüler was the nostalgic attachment to old Istanbul. AraGüler's photos created nostalgic remembrances for the respondents from childhood or past, given the fact that Istanbul had rapidly surrendered to modernity. The respondents put their nostalgic associations as follows:

“AraGüler had documented the old Istanbul in such a beautiful way in his photos. That Istanbul is something we are not able to see any more because of modernism's victory (Respondent 3).”

“I like his photos because they represent my childhood (Respondent 2).”

“It was AraGüler's pictures that made me love Istanbul. Whenever the older generations talked about old Istanbul in a nostalgic sense and complained how they missed those days, it was hard for me to understand them. I could not see the difference between today's Istanbul and old Istanbul. It was Ara's pictures that helped me to visually understand old Istanbul and what the older generations meant (Respondent 5).”

“When you want to tell your kids a memory that took place in the old times of Istanbul, his work creates the best visual bridge. When you buy his work, you actually buy something that had been long gone. That is the best investment (Respondent 1).”

“When I see his pictures, I say to myself; ‘how beautiful Istanbul used to be’ (Respondent 6).”

“What we aimed in our hotel project is to document the lost Istanbul culture, with also the clothing and stance of people, not just the buildings and scenery (Respondent 7).”

Other than the collectors, 2006 Nobel Prize winner writer, Orhan Pamuk, also made reference to Ara Güler in his book *Istanbul* (Pamuk, 2004) to emphasize the sceneries, and feelings aroused by the old Istanbul of his childhood. He said that Ara Güler’s photos captured the Istanbul of his childhood with trams, streets, and combined the city’s weariness, agedness, and gloominess with the picturesque of the poor neighborhoods on the outskirts. Pamuk (2004) claimed that Ara Güler’s photos reflected the soul and texture of old Istanbul in a poetic sentimentality.

Ayten (2008) also mentioned that nostalgic Istanbul was one of the main themes in Ara Güler’s photos. She claimed that Ara Güler was after the old Istanbul, neighborhood culture, relationships, and naiveness of the past. Ara Güler’s testimony to Istanbul made a lot of sense, as in several of his interviews he had been quoted saying he was born in Istanbul, lived in Istanbul, have been in Istanbul for centuries, and will always be there (Ayten, 2008). Baydur (1995) also mentioned that “it is possible to see the love relationship between Ara Güler and Istanbul; just like the photographer and his subject (p.9).”

#### *Symbolic Benefits*

Symbolic benefits include extrinsic advantages of products/services, social approval, personal expression, and outer-directed self-esteem. Fashionability, exclusivity, and prestige associations are related to symbolic dimension. Besides the experiential benefits and nostalgic attachment to Istanbul, symbolic benefits were also strongly observed in the research. Ara Güler was described as a doyenne of photography with international and national experience. He was mentioned as the number one photographer of Turkey, linked to Magnum Group, with international awards and recognition. As one of the respondents mentioned:

“I know no other person in Turkey that is well known and published in the world press like him. He is appreciated by experts in his area. He has a stance in life and photography, what makes him Ara Güler (Respondent 7).”

Throughout 1961 to 2008, he received 21 national and international awards and medals for his photographs. For example, he was awarded as the world’s number seven star photographer in 1960 by British Photography Yearbook, and also was named the Master of Leica in 1961 (Tavlaş, 2009). In this sense, it could be argued that it is prestigious to own an Ara Güler photo. His work is an investment. Even though Ara Güler was described as a prestigious brand, the respondents also mentioned that many envied and criticized him; he was not appreciated enough in Turkey. One of the respondents put it as:

“I guess in Turkey, Ara Güler is undervalued. He is not given the value and respect he deserves as a representative of Turkey in arts (Respondent 4).”

On the contrary, however, in the biographical book by Tavlaş (2009), Ara Güler was quoted “What is important is to be honored and appreciated by the people in my country. It makes me happy when people of my country like my work and give me titles (p.234).”

#### *Price associations*

One respondent mentioned the fact that Ara Güler’s work was expensive. Given the fact that his work, especially old quality Istanbul photos, did not have many alternatives, this is not surprising. However, three respondents also mentioned that Ara Güler did not apply limited edition policy in his work, and that this had a negative effect on his work. As one respondent spelled it out:

“It is bad that AraGüler does not apply limited edition. His work would be more valuable if he applied limited edition to his photos (Respondent 5).”

### 5.2. Study 2: AraGüler’s Perspective

In the second part of the research, AraGüler was interviewed to uncover his point of view in marketing and branding of his work. The first question was about his self-assessment as a photojournalist, his associations, distinctiveness and uniqueness from his point of view. AraGüler viewed himself as the visual writer of history, documenting and photographing today for those in the future. He explained with his own words; “I work as I feel like, without too many rules”. According to him, some of his photos came just up to it. He described one of his distinctiveness as being a photojournalist. Documentation was everywhere in his life and character. He kept a very organized archive at the attic of his house, which used to be his studio and darkroom.

Another distinctiveness of him was being a hard worker. He was very active and diligent at work. As he put it, he went four times to war, traveled all around the world and sometimes even financially sponsored himself. This was something that most other photographers or photojournalists did not easily dare. He had formerly reported that he never left his work to chance. Before going to interviews, he researched his subject thoroughly in detail, and he often went to shooting with 300 rolls of film, and five or six cameras (Güler, 2005). Abidin Dino, a well known Turkish painter, also explained in the foreword of AraGüler’s book (2005) that he was a man of will and responsibility, taking the risk to go and meet people like Picasso, Aragon without any formal arrangements except a letter in his pocket. He was also very attentive at his work. For example, a warning sign hang on his wall at the attic that was directed at photography workers, explaining in detail how to handle an AraGüler photo, not allowing eating, drinking, smoking, or even coughing near a photo.

This responsibility, hard work, ambition, and his quality shoots allowed him to meet and work with important professionals in the international photography business. He was able to work for very important journals such as Time, Life, Paris-Match and Der Stern. Even though he was never fully a member of the Magnum Group, he had good connections with and took photographs for them. The Magnum Network made it easier for him to travel to different locations of the world. In his biographical book by Tavlaş (2009), AraGüler explained the turning point in his life as meeting Romeo Martinez, the editor of the Camera Magazine, one of the most prestigious photography magazines of its time. Martinez believed in him and included him and his work in the 41<sup>st</sup> issue of the magazine in 1962. He also helped him meet people and open the doors in his career. Thus, as confirmed by him in the interview, his network and ties with influential people in photography was another distinctiveness that assisted him to be internationally known. Photography meant documentary for AraGüler. He saw the camera as a means of documentation, which was also stressed by Ayten (2008) and Ergener (2007). He told that the scenery took place in the mind of the photographer. That was what made the difference, not the camera. He was very interested and peaky in his work. He handpicked every photograph to be included in his exhibitions. Even though he was very focused in excelling his work, he claimed that he did not apply marketing strategies to communicate it to the arts audience. However, he was always lucky enough to be surrounded by people who would help him organize his schedule, meetings and exhibitions, and narrate his photos.

## 6. Discussion

Arts world was separated from the business world and strategies for a long time. However, there has been recent interest in applying business and marketing knowledge into arts. Branding and brand management are considered as vital for success regardless of the fact that arts are not produced with the customer satisfaction in mind. The findings of this study on brand associations of AraGüler are believed to add to arts positioning

and marketing management literature by identifying which aspects of an arts brand cause differential responses in consumers, and how the artist can enhance the process. The study followed triangulation method in identifying AraGüler's added value; evidence from the collectioners and from AraGüler, himself as well as secondary sources about AraGüler were all combined to complete the picture.

The results showed that the collectioners mostly associated AraGüler with the old, black and white Istanbul photos, and the emotions of nostalgia that were aroused by these photos. Thus, as had been mentioned previously in literature (Bjorkegen, 1993; Scheff and Kotler, 1996), the collectioners bought feelings, emotions, and values as well as physical photos from AraGüler. AraGüler, preferred to define his value and associations as visual documentation of the past for people in the future. He was a photojournalist, a writer of visual history in his eyes. He viewed his benefits as functional rather than experiential or emotional. The collectioners also agreed with him on his functional benefits, based on product related associations. His technique, colors, cinematographic and realistic viewpoint, characteristics and quality of the photos representing the past and old Istanbul were well appreciated. AraGüler was also known for having the biggest and the best-kept archive of photo negatives of his time, which makes his work functionally unique for anyone interested in the period between 1940s to 1980s. Hence, the uniqueness and artistic value of his art were important and essential parts of his brand. However, alone, they were not enough for creating positive attitudes towards the artist.

The brand management literature also supported that non-product related associations, such as emotions and experiences, were more important in shaping brand equity (Park and Srinivasan, 1994). Thus the feelings of nostalgia, witnessing the people, buildings, and lifestyle of old Istanbul created the emotional attachment between the collectioners and AraGüler. Art work creates emotional or experiential associations in people's minds, and these associations together with product-related or functional ones, create a bond between the artwork and the audience. AraGüler created a brand resonance or relevancy with his audience. In other words, he reflected and reinforced meanings from a shared social space, namely the old Istanbul, with which the audience link themselves with through shared experiences, visuals, and understanding. The artist, or their managers then, should be aware of which feelings or experiences are expressive in their work and create relevancy for their target audience, and communicate and market them to the right target audience to create desire and purchase intention.

The 'AraGüler' name did not only create associations for his work, but his unique character, lifestyle and story were also much remembered by the consumers. His audience admired his dedication and passion towards work. In the literature, Holt (2004) puts forward that the story of the brand can be used to address identity desires and anxieties of the consumers, and help build a connection. In this specific case, out of the crowd, yet creative and interesting stance of the artist towards life attracts the attention and admiration of the audience, and draws them more to his work. The arts audience wants to learn more about the artist even if he prefers to live a preserved life. Thus, as another implication of this study, is that an artist should have a story, something interesting to talk about his life or his process into creating an artwork, and communicate it well to his audience to improve his brand equity.

The symbolic associations of AraGüler as a doyenne of photography in Turkey, with international recognition and awards turn him into a prestigious art brand in the eyes of the collectioners. A prestigious brand is considered as a crucial signal of social status, wealth, or power, creating value to the owners through conspicuous consumption (Baek et al., 2010). Brand prestige is even more relevant in societies that are characterized by income disparities and status mobility (Featherstone, 1991) or where power distances are high (Kuesteret et al., 2007) such as Turkey. Thus brand prestige made AraGüler's work an investment in the eyes of his target group, increasing the desire to own one of his photos. This study, therefore, also implies that national, and international recognition exhibitions are also critical for an artist to become a

prestigious brand. Still one of the criticisms of AraGüler was that he did not apply limited edition to his work. Therefore, the demanded exclusivity by the collectioners could not be achieved. As Güler's art products are perceived as prestigious by the target audience, it could add value if the artist applied limited edition rule to his work.

The second part of this research explored what AraGüler himself had done to create his image. The outcomes of this part show that the artist was distant from branding, marketing, or management practices, and did not make any conscious strategies to communicate or market himself. However, unconsciously, he was a good relationship marketer, keen on relationships, networks and interaction. AraGüler created a network around himself and built very close ties with the various stakeholders surrounding him such as The Magnum Group, Time, Life, Paris-Match, and Der Stern. Through these referrals, he was able to shoot the photos that he did, exhibit them all around the world, and thus became internationally well known. In return, the arts audience were informed about him and started to demand his work. As a final implication of this study, it can be asserted that relationship marketing is critical in the success of an artist as was also suggested by Conway and Whitelock (2007). Even though an artist is mostly alone in his creative work, he needs to have good ties and relationships with the influential people or organizations to advance his work possibilities, be accepted in the arts society, and reach audiences. In other words, the artist or his manager should be involved in creating and managing his reputation and career in a collaborative manner with other influencers in his market.

How enlightening the implications of this research may be, it should not be forgotten that this is a preliminary step in understanding brand management and marketing in the arts practice, specifically in photography. This study is limited in scope as it is based on a single case, AraGüler. Thus, it is hard to generalize the findings. Considering this work as a first step, future research should include more qualitative and quantitative analysis to fully understand brand management in arts. Although this topic is gaining popularity in academia in the last decades, the research done is rather scarce; it is an unexplored area promising future for research. Qualitative work may include different areas of arts to draw other image components, in order to compare and contrast them. More qualitative work may also be done to uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms of an arts consumer. Quantitative analysis can be undertaken on a larger number of arts audience to fully comprehend which type of associations create positive attitude, trust, commitment, and loyalty in people towards an artwork.

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**Author's Note:**

**İremEren-Erdoğan** is an associate professor of marketing in Marmara University, Business Administration Department, İstanbul, Turkey. She received her PhD degree in marketing from Bogazici University, İstanbul in 2006. Her main areas of interest are international marketing, brand management, emerging markets, social media, and relationship marketing.

**CemTaluğ** is a lecturer of management at Mimar Sinan University, Fine Arts Faculty, İstanbul, Turkey. He received his PhD degree in management from Bogazici University, İstanbul in 2008. His main areas of interest are strategic management, arts management, corporate governance, and mergers and acquisitions,

**EmineÇobanoğlu** is an associate professor of marketing in Marmara University, Business Administration Department, İstanbul, Turkey. She received both her masters and PhD degrees from Marmara University with specialization in marketing. Her research areas are organizational marketing, logistics, ethics, corporate image and sustainability.