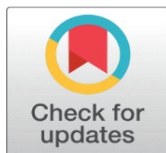# A STUDY ON PERSONAL BRANDING – THEORETICAL CONCEPT

Dr. Vinmalar J [1]

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Corporate Secretaryship, Loyola College, India

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly interconnected and competitive world, the conceptualization of personal branding has emerged as a critical element in shaping individual identities and enhancing professional opportunities. The process of people promoting themselves and their careers as brands by developing a distinctive persona that represents their special abilities, values, and career aspirations is known as personal branding. The study summarizes a comprehensive literature review on personal branding, exploring its theoretical foundations, processes, and implications across various disciplines. The researcher outlines the three-phase process of developing a personal brand: establishing identity, positioning, and impact assessment. The review highlights the potential benefits of personal branding for career advancement while addressing concerns about authenticity, sustainability, and adaptability. Future research opportunities are identified, including exploring personal branding in diverse cultural contexts and industries less conducive to self-promotion. The study concludes that personal branding is a complex and evolving concept reflecting broader shifts in the contemporary labor market, emphasizing the need for further research to address associated challenges and ethical considerations.

Keywords: Individual Identities, Professional Goals, Personal Brand, Sustainability, and Self-Promotion

1. INTRODUCTION

The cultivation and maintenance of a favorable public persona constitute the essence of personal branding. This process encompasses an individual's unique amalgamation of competencies, principles, and life experiences. Effective personal branding can elevate one's professional standing and recognition, potentially resulting in enhanced financial opportunities. Moreover, it facilitates the establishment of meaningful connections with one's target audience. Ultimately, a well-crafted personal brand serves as a magnet, drawing potential clientele towards the individual.

The concept of personal branding, an emerging field in marketing, examines the techniques individuals utilize to market themselves within their professional domains. The growing significance of personal branding is often connected to the expansion of available resources on the subject, encompassing publications, digital platforms, professional development programs, individual consultants, and

specialized academic works. These diverse sources offer guidance on effectively cultivating one's personal brand to achieve professional success in the corporate landscape Khedher (2014).

The conception of personal branding was articulated by the researcher Lair et al. (2005) as the amalgamation of product expansion and promotional tactics employed to market individuals for approaching the transition within the labour market. Hughes (2007) adopted a more explicit approach, drawing a comparison between individuals and commodities or services, proposing that the contemporary brand definition of the American Marketing Association could be directly applied to people. Shepherd (2005) framed personal branding as a series of task were handled by individuals to establish their presence in the market place.

The late 1990s witnessed the emergence of personal branding as a significant topic in self-help literature, digital platforms, and professional services. The broad appeal of these personal branding narratives stems from their pragmatic applications. The discourse surrounding personal branding has been predominantly shaped by industry professionals, who posit that individuals have the potential to create a successful brand, thus securing a competitive edge in an oversaturated market. This research was conducted to clarify the concept of personal branding, outline the brand development process, and investigate the importance of cultivating an individual brand identity.

2. STRATEGIC PERSONAL BRANDING

Strategic personal branding is a deliberate and systematic approach to cultivating a unique professional identity that aligns with one's career goals and target audience. It involves carefully crafting and communicating a consistent image across various platforms, including social media, professional networks, and in-person interactions. Effective personal branding need a deep insight of one's strengths, values, and unique selling propositions, as well as the needs and expectations of the intended audience. By strategically positioning oneself in the market, individuals can differentiate themselves from competitors, enhance their credibility, and create opportunities for career advancement. This process often includes developing a compelling narrative, showcasing expertise through thought leadership, and maintaining a cohesive visual identity. Successful strategic personal branding not only increases visibility and recognition within one's industry but also fosters trust and loyalty among professional contacts, potentially leading to new opportunities and long-term career success.

3. PROCESS TO DEVELOP A PERSONAL BRAND

The meaning of personal branding could be brought out as a three-fold process: 1. the creation of a distinctive unique identity, 2. its deliberate dissemination to a specific target audience, and 3. the subsequent assessment of its effects on one's image and recognition in pursuit of personal and professional goals. This conceptualization aligns with traditional branding practices, encompassing three key stages: identity establishment, positioning development, and image evaluation.

1) Personal brand identity

The inception of personal branding typically encompasses a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's characteristics, including their attributes, beliefs, values, motivations, and experiences that shape their professional identity. Parmentier et al. (2012) assert that individuals engaged in personal brand development should aim to distinguish themselves while concurrently meeting the

expectations and requirements of their intended audience. These personal attributes are subjected to assessment and alignment with the needs and expectations of the target market. This self-evaluation process is founded on a thorough comprehension of both the target market and competitors. The formulation of a personal brand identity integrates both intrinsic qualities of the individual being branded and extrinsic factors associated with their interpersonal relationships. Researchers in the field contend that personal branding is fundamentally an inside-out process, rooted in the individual's distinctive strengths and qualities as they relate to their target market Shepherd (2005).

2) Personal Brand Positioning: A Strategic Approach

The establishment of a personal brand necessitates its strategic positioning within the consumer psyche. Brand positioning encompasses the deliberate dissemination of one's brand identity to a targeted demographic through calculated marketing endeavors. At its core, personal branding revolves around the concept of self-promotion. Individuals leverage brand positioning tactics to highlight their advantageous qualities to their desired audience, while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from market competitors.

3) Personal Brand Evaluation

The core of personal branding involves the strategic management of one's professional image, akin to product or organizational branding, with the aim of achieving specific outcomes. Individuals who successfully develop authentic professional identities are viewed as capable of realizing their objectives. Inconsistencies between self-declared goals and external perceptions indicate shortcomings in branding efforts Labrecque et al. (2011). As brands are fundamentally created to meet market demands, the primary purpose of this phase is to assess whether branding initiatives have successfully fulfilled both branding and individual objectives. Thus, the integration of market feedback is essential. Ultimately, the attainment of brand status requires recognition and validation from the marketplace.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Arruda and Dixson (2007) emphasize the importance of distinctiveness in personal branding, arguing that being a "Me-Too" professional is insufficient in the modern work environment. They suggest that personal branding can guide career development and success by creating emotional connections with others, similar to how product brands differentiate themselves from commodities.

Rangarajan et al. (2017) posit that the interplay between personal and corporate brands is multifaceted. Although personal brands should typically be congruent with organizational brands, they may present avenues for enhancing or supplementing the corporate image. Nevertheless, vigilance is necessary to mitigate potential conflicts or adverse effects on the corporate brand.

The literature review elucidates concerns regarding personal branding's authenticity Hughes (2007), sustainability Bendisch et al. (2013), and portability Parmentier et al. (2013). This study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about managing multiple personal brands, modifying brand identities during career transitions, and safeguarding professional reputations from personal social media activities.

Existing research has primarily concentrated on industries conducive to personal branding. The difficulties of building and maintaining personal brands in settings that are either inhospitable or constrictive of self-satisfaction, especially for

external stakeholders, are still not well understood. The narrow scope of industries and roles investigated, combined with limited sample sizes, constrains the generalizability of current findings.

5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PERSONAL BRANDING

The multifaceted nature of personal branding necessitates the application of various theoretical frameworks for its explication. An examination of the extant literature reveals that these theories can be classified into four primary domains: sociological, marketing, psychological, and economic.

1) Sociological Theories

Meyrowitz (1990) extended this theory to broad social and digital environment, though only one paper referenced this. Whereas Gorbatov et al. (2018) in his article quoted that self-presentation and social interactions provides insights into personal branding, it may not fully capture digital interactions or explain personal branding outcomes. Sociological theory centers on the concepts of habitus, field, and capital. Habitus refers to internalized dispositions and behaviors shaped by social experiences. Fields are structured social spaces where individuals compete for resources and positions. Capital encompasses economic, cultural, social, and symbolic resources that determine one's position in a field.

2) Marketing Theories

According to Shepherd (2005), Kotler pioneered marketing expansion beyond products. Hughes (2007), Neale et al. (2008) credited Keller's differentiation between "small b" (product-focused) and "large b" (services, organizations, individuals) branding for personal branding's development. Thomson (2006) contributed to human logo discourse. Eagar and Dann (2016) proposed three self as human logo perspectives: (1) "consumerist," from consumer's standpoint, (2) "reputational," passive brand ownership approach, and (3) "agency," actively creating and managing personal brand. Most existing personal branding literature aligns with the latter two approaches: examining brand value or reputation.

3) Psychological Theories

psychological theories were used in eleven papers to highlight the personal branding. The part of personal branding in analysing oneself is underscored by Turner and Oakes (1986) which anchor their theoretical foundations in the research of Erikson (1968). Schlosser et al. (2017) drew an analogy between the narrative approach and personal branding, illustrating how executives project their identities to demonstrate leadership aptitude. Five studies investigated psychological needs, ranging from fundamental requirements of self-fulfillment and self-esteem Baumeister and Leary (1995) to non-social motivations Labrecque et al. (2011), encompassing needs for power, time management, entertainment, and advocacy. Shepherd (2005), and Khedher (2015) conceptualize personal branding as a self-development instrument, grounding their assertions in Schon's reflective practitioner theory Schon (1984).

4) Economic Theories

The broader context of personal branding is illuminated by economic theories, albeit employed in a limited number of studies. Scholars have endeavored to delineate the contemporary economic landscape that influences social interactions, introducing concepts such as flexible accumulation Harvey (1990), emotional capitalism Illouz (2007), and controlled discourse Andrejevic (2007), which have culminated in the emergence of a reputation economy Gandini (2016). To elucidate the complexities of brand positioning, Hernando and Campo (2017) utilized

Freeman's multi-stakeholder approach. According to this research, the four main social disciplines of sociology, marketing, psychology, and economics form the foundation of a comprehensive understanding of personal branding.

6. CONCLUSION

Personal branding has emerged as a significant concept in professional development and career advancement. This literature review has explored the theoretical foundations, processes, and implications of personal branding across various disciplines. The concept, rooted in marketing principles, has expanded to incorporate insights from sociology, psychology, and economics, offering a multifaceted approach to understanding how individuals can effectively market themselves in competitive professional environments.

Establishing a brand identity, positioning the brand, and evaluating its impact are the three main steps in the process of creating a personal brand. This process requires individuals to engage in self-reflection, align their unique attributes with market demands, and actively communicate their value proposition to target audiences. The success of personal branding efforts is ultimately determined by the marketplace's recognition and acceptance of the individual's brand.

While personal branding offers potential benefits for career advancement and professional success, it also raises important questions about authenticity, sustainability, and transferability. The literature reveals concerns about maintaining multiple personal brands, adapting brands when changing employers, and navigating the complexities of personal and professional identities in digital spaces.

Future research opportunities lie in exploring personal branding in diverse cultural contexts and industries less conducive to self-promotion. Additionally, investigating the long-term viability of personal brands and their adaptability to changing career trajectories could provide valuable insights for both practitioners and scholars.

In conclusion, personal branding represents a complex and evolving concept that reflects broader shifts in the contemporary labour market and professional landscape. As individuals increasingly navigate flexible and competitive work environments, understanding and effectively implementing personal branding strategies may become crucial for professional success. To ensure that personal branding is applied responsibly and sustainably in a variety of professional situations, more research is necessary to address the issues and moral dilemmas surrounding it.

REFERENCES

Andrejevic, M. (2007). Surveillance in the Digital Enclosure. Communication Review, 10(4), 295–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420701715365

Arruda, W., & Dixson, K. (2007). Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building your Brand. John Wiley & Sons.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation. Psychological Bulletin, 117(3), 497. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

Bendisch, F., Larsen, G., & Trueman, M. (2013). Fame and Fortune: A Conceptual Model of CEO Brands. European Journal of Marketing, 47(3), 596–614. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561311297472

Eagar, T., & Dann, S. (2016). Classifying the Narrated #Selfie: Genre Typing Human-Branding Activity. European Journal of Marketing, 50, 1835–1857. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-07-2015-0509

Erikson, E. H. (1968). Identity: Youth and Crisis. W. W. Norton & Company.

Gandini, A. (2016). Digital work: Self-Branding and Social Capital in the Freelance Knowledge Economy. Marketing Theory, 16(1), 123. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593115607942

Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2018). Personal Branding: Interdisciplinary Systematic Review and Research Agenda. Frontiers in Psychology, 9, 2238. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02238

Harvey, D. (1990). Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization: Reflections on "post-modernism" in the American city. Perspecta, 25, 251–272. https://doi.org/10.2307/1567167

Hernando, E., & Campo, S. (2017). Does the Artist's Name Influence the Perceived Value of an Artwork? International Journal of Arts Management, 19*, 46–58.

Hughes, A. (2007). Personal brands: An Exploratory Analysis of Personal Brands in Australian Political Marketing. Paper Presented at the Australia and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference 2007, Dunedin.

Hughes, A. (2007). Personal brands: An Exploratory Analysis of Personal Brands in Australian Politics.

Illouz, E. (2007). Cold Intimacies: The making of Emotional Capitalism. Polity Press.

Khedher, M. (2014). Personal Branding Phenomenon. International Journal of Information, Business and Management, 6(2), 29.

Khedher, M. (2015). A Brand for Everyone: Guidelines for Personal Brand Managing. Journal of Global Business Issues, 9, 19–27.

Labrecque, L. I., Markos, E., & Milne, G. R. (2011). Online Personal Branding: Processes, Challenges, and Implications. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 25, 37–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2010.09.002

Lair, D. L., Sullivan, K., & Cheney, G. (2005). Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self: The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding. Management Communication Quarterly, 18(3), 307–343.

Meyrowitz, J. (1990). Redefining the Situation: Extending Dramaturgy into a Theory of Social Change and Media Effects. In S. H. Riggins (Ed.), Beyond Goffman: Studies on Communication, Institution, and Social Interaction 65–97. Mouton de Gruyter.

Neale, L., Hughes, A., & Dann, S. M. (2008). Exploring the Application of Personal Brands and Opinion Leadership in Political Marketing. Paper Presented at ANZMAC 2008, University of Western Sydney, Sydney. Available online at:

Parmentier, M.-A. S., & Fischer, E. (2012). How Athletes Build their Brands. International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, 11, 106–124. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2012.045491

Parmentier, M.-A. S., Fischer, E., & Reuber, A. R. (2013). Positioning Person Brands in Established Organizational Fields. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 41(3), 373–387. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-012-0309-2

Rangarajan, D., Gelb, B. D., & Vandaveer, A. (2017). Strategic Personal Branding—And how it Pays off. Business Horizons, 60(5), 657–666.

Schlosser, F., McPhee, D. M., & Forsyth, J. (2017). Chance Events and Executive Career Rebranding: Implications for Career Coaches and Nonprofit HRM. Human Resource Management, 56(4), 571–591. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21789

Schon, D. A. (1984). The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. Basic Books.

Shepherd, I. (2005). From Cattle and Coke to Charlie: Meeting the Challenge of Self-Marketing and Personal Branding. Journal of Marketing Management, 21(5–6), 589–606.

Spence, M. (1973). Job Market Signaling. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87(3), 355–374. https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010

Thomson, M. (2006). Human brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities. Journal of Marketing, 70, 104–119. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.3.104

Turner, J. C., & Oakes, P. J. (1986). The Significance of the Social Identity Concept for Social Psychology with Reference to Individualism, Interactionism, and Social Influence. British Journal of Social Psychology, 25(3), 237–252. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1986.tb00732.x