
PERSONAL BRANDING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This study focuses on aspects of personal branding and its importance at the beginning of a professional career. The concept of a personal brand conceals the potential to think of oneself as a trademark. This concept is an important tool for job seekers, as it helps to sell their strengths and uniqueness to a potential employer. Conceptual building of a personal brand means a way to build a successful professional but also a personal life.

Keywords: personal, professional, career, target, groups

1. Introduction

Personal brand and the strategy of its building can be considered a modern marketing concept. Due to the interdisciplinary overlaps, it is not possible to clearly date the concept. The issue is to be found in partial concepts in topics of self-presentation, work psychology as well as in understanding of new marketing trends. At first, the personal brand was primarily associated with the celebrity image and top management. Given the growing competition, the importance of a personal brand has begun to be applied to lower work positions, and of course, it has also become more relevant for students and graduates of universities as well as young people at the beginning of their working career. One of the earliest authors who conceptually considered the issue of a personal brand was the motivational lecturer and business consultant T. Peters in 'Brand Call You'. It is possible to partially agree that the marketing category of personal branding began to have its own definition [1].

P. Montoya defines a personal brand as "*a clear, strong and convincing public image*" [2]. C. Kaputa understands the principle of building a personal brand as a process where your name, identity and image are at stake. It is a summary of what you have to do to differentiate yourself from the competition and what an individual can promote as a personal message to the target audience [3]. L. Labrecque, E. Markos and G. Milne understand the brand especially in the context of the personality. They define it as "*personal branding entails*

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capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience" [4].

In this context, it can be said that the importance and application of a personal brand has a direct relationship to the target groups. In this regard, C. Kaputa states: *"To be successful, you must create positive states of mind in other people. You cannot be successful for yourselves - Others make you successful."* [3, p. 9]. This means that an external viewpoint is important for a strong personal brand.

In the light of the understanding of the brand's traditional meaning, T. Peters understands the personal brand as a personal presentation of an individual using specific marketing tools [1]. Creating a personal brand is the on-going process of a predefined image or impression in the minds of other individuals, groups or organizations [5]. S. Banet -Weiser add that the relationship between consumers and brands needs to be continually updated and built [6]. This continuous process represents topicality and ambivalence of the brand. In this context, a correlation can also be found in relation to a personal tag.

In the literature, several authors such as S. Banet-Weiser differentiate between the term 'reputation' and 'personal brand'. From the point of view of building an individual's position on the labour market, it is necessary to mention the difference between these concepts [6, p. 39]. The reputation cannot be considered a contemporary phenomenon. It is not only a relative link to the marketing principles and personal brand. In this context, the reputation emerges gradually, based on good work and personal experience of consumers. The reputation is perceived as a social consensus that takes into account an individual's action. The result of building the reputation is social recognition and positive acceptance of the individual's professional activities in a wider working and personal environment.

On the other hand, personal brand can be perceived as a result of conceptual marketing practices. These techniques help to systematically transform the image of an individual and help to apply it for better professional life. The content may be a different form of personal presentation, e.g. on photos, personal appearance, web design, the style of communication on social media or traditional media so that everything works in a consistent, comprehensible and coherent way. Preferably, it promotes the recognition of the personality and public understanding of what makes the individual special [7].

Personal brand is characterized by the following three attributes:

- **Clarity:** When building a personal brand strategy, focusing on clarity is essential. The strong personal brand needs to express a clear, effective and relevant message about vision, values and mission statement.
- **Uniqueness:** The strong personal brand is about presenting originality and uniqueness. The key is expressing individual uniqueness and identifying what makes you different from the others.
- **Finality:** The key to successful personal branding is finality and any actions taken to develop this should remain consistent across both private and professional platforms.

In principle, every individual has a personal mark. However, not everyone is aware of the personal brand capital and does not approach it in a strategic, consistent and efficient manner. In this context, it is necessary to take responsibility and control over the value of one's personal brand and name. Most branding concepts focus on its marketing aspects, such as image enhancement, product or service sales promotion, potential revenue, and so on.

However, a personal tag should be authentic and should reflect the true nature of its bearer. It should be based on the concept of personal identity, life mission, values, uniqueness of talents and skills. If a personal brand is built on these natural, authentic and holistic fundamentals, it is assumed to be strong, consistent and relevant in the long run. It integrates the market demands as well as the personal ambitions of the wearer and leads to a full and satisfactory life on the professional and personal level of life.

This paper is beneficial for both theory and practice primarily due to the fact that trends in the global market indicate an ever-more free movement of labour. Increasing competition in the labour market requires a conceptual and strategic approach to building a personal brand that can provide a key competitive advantage in career development and professional growth.

2. Approaches in building a personal brand

Currently, multiple methods of building a personal brand are available, differing by approach in several points. Differences are primarily conditional on the target groups as well as the overall market for which they are designed. Preferred methods, especially for novice marketers, include the method called Personal Branding Canvas by L. Cenear. The author has created a concept composed of ten categories that build upon each other and, through questions, define strategically important points of building a personal brand [8].

Taking into account a more traditional marketing concept, K.H. Rampersad addresses an authentic model of a personal brand, which consists of four phases leading to the creation and formation of a strong so-called 'authentic personal brand'. Individual phases consist of analysis of personal and formulated ambition, setting out a promise of personal brand, determination of the method of transformation to personal goals, and finally, setting the method of development and the principles of personal brand care in the future. This model emphasizes the values and perception of the person and helps them to impress the selected audience in the proper manner [9].

According to D.A. Aaker, the model of planning brand identity is an extensive and effective branding tool. A communication strategy in the form of a brand identification model determines how the brand should be presented to target groups. The core of the model is created by the idea that the brand should be analysed from four different perspectives. We consider these perspectives as: product, organization, person or symbol [10]. If an individual is the starting point of building a personal brand, it is obvious that it has human characteristics, which means the existence of a unique human personality with his or her

specific properties. Therefore, where there is a person as a brand, the brand will in this case consist of the characteristics of the person. This idea summarizes the central idea of personal labelling and utilizes the methods of more conventional branding to use personal labelling. Aaker further explains that these characteristics are unique for each individual and can be turned into a brand. A brand based on such distinctions of personal brand identity is much more diverse than the one based on the product's properties [10, p. 83].

From the point of view of building a personal brand in terms of a long-term perspective in order to gain a competitive advantage on the labour market for this study, we recommend the methodology presented by N. Patel and A. Agius entitled 'The Complete Guide to Building Your Personal Brand'. The concept reflects the current developmental trends, basic attributes of building the brand are reflected in the personal professional environment as well as in social networks. It is these that play a key role in examining and evaluating job-seekers on the labour market and in addition to personal assumptions [N. Patel and A. Agius, *The Complete Guide to Building Your Personal Brand*, <https://www.quicksprout.com/the-complete-guide-to-building-your-personal-brand/>].

3. Building a personal branding

N. Patel and A. Agius divide the stages of building a personal brand into five steps:

1. creation of vision, mission and values,
2. analysis and choice of target audience,
3. online and offline personal brand activities,
4. content marketing and media channel attendance,
5. building relationships, mentoring and control [<https://www.quicksprout.com/the-complete-guide-to-building-your-personal-brand/>].

3.1. Creation of vision, mission and values of a personal brand

A personal brand gives us a major competitive advantage and helps us differentiate from others on the labour market. For this reason, it is important for an individual when entering the labour market to possess a certain element of self-awareness as well as the organization of ideas to create a vision of a unique personality in the context of a personal brand. It can be considered as a way we want to be perceived by others as well as the way in which our professional and partly also our personal life should be presented.

Before defining the vision, it is necessary to define the core values of the personality of the candidate aiming to find his or her place on the labour market. These attributes reflect criteria that are considered to be priority from a person's personal point of view. S.J. Gratton recommends starting from a personal relationship and even passion for the area we plan to enter. These preferences can be divided into a private and a professional level. The candidate entering the labour market should be aware of both these levels and thus reveal things that

motivate him or her both in professional and personal life. In this context, it is recommended that one conducts a personality test such as the Big Five Personality Traits Test or MBTI. For even a deeper understanding of the individual's subjective attitude towards personal brand development see [11].

It is possible to conceive the required state of the vision of the future which the candidate on the labour market aims to achieve through an appropriately implemented personal brand strategy. It can be considered as the basis for the whole process of strategic personal brand management. The vision in this context serves to clarify the framework of career direction and the motivation that leads to achievement of the goals and the vision as such. The basic principles that the vision sets are static, regardless of the development of the surrounding conditions. In principle, it is a combination of timeless and long-term principles, strategies and practices that adapt to a changing world. The vision should be based on the real situation of the individual and the objective evaluation of his or her options on the labour market [12].

Following the vision, it is necessary to formulate the concept of mission. The mission justifies the meaning of our activity, and it gives us good reasons for which we enter the labour market and the process of career development. It represents a unique purpose, inspiration, and sometimes even a description of how the candidate in his or her profession will make sense of their existence so that his or her mission is unique and in accordance with competitors. Vision and mission cannot be perceived separately, but they are commonly presented together because they are interdependent. Together, they provide the basis and the beginning of the strategic personal brand planning management.

N. Patel and A. Agius' methodology also recommends at this point to design and develop a professional image which is an indispensable part of building a vision of a personal brand. In this context, the authors recommend focusing on the following elements:

- **Consistency:** Means a commitment to recurring principles and to carry out all responsibilities in a responsible manner. Uniform principles and consistency relate to continuous complementarity and basic attributes of personal branding for example when building one's identity on social networks, in traditional media, in personal contact as well as in other activities connected with our professional life.
- **Creativity:** It is considered an important aspect for colleagues and partners in professional life. In general, it leads to curiosity and increases the chances of connecting and building professional and business relationships. Special space for presentation of creativity is offered by the existing communication technologies and the Internet. Individuals who actively create and build their own brand can present their outcomes on their own websites or social networks in a creative manner.
- **Remembrance:** It is important that a candidate for a job position is easy to be remembered among people who work in a similar field. In this case, a unique interest that falls outside professional life can play a role. These

personal hobbies or stories are recommended to be shared with people who are crucial for our professional career.

- **Credibility:** It is formed on the basis of trustworthiness and is built gradually on the basis of work references, or through collaboration with renowned organizations or generally respected personalities in the field [<https://www.quicksprout.com/the-complete-guide-to-building-your-personal-brand/>].

3.2. Choosing a target group

Selecting a target audience and defining its characteristics is important in business practice. When building a personal brand, it is important to divide the market into several target groups according to specific attributes. Based on common marketing practice, we rely primarily on socio-demographic and psychographic criteria, complemented by in-depth analysis in the context of their motivational structures, decision-making and information processes. The individual target groups that correspond to the segments of our market are characterized by their needs and responses to our offer and are also characterized in the context of the aspects of the individual's occupational activity on the labour market. When selecting criteria for the defined segments, internal homogeneous segments are created. At the same time, each such segment is heterogeneous compared to other segments. Market segmentation into target groups is a tool for an effective and effective marketing strategy because knowing the needs of target groups, their motivation of decision-making and information processes helps to create and build a personal brand, as well as planning and control tools.

Following the definition of target groups, their analysis needs to be carried out according to requirements of individual markets, in the case of building a personal brand for the purpose of being successful on the labour market in individual professions. The analysis of target groups is carried out on the basis of one's own research, whether qualitative (focus group, interview, etc.) or quantitative (questionnaire and the like) research. We can also rely on publicly available studies on the Internet or paid analyses by research agencies, where it is assumed that the conclusions of the analysis are more objective and more relevant to the market required.

Every individual should reasonably assess his or her possibilities of being successful on the labour market they are planning to enter. If they are not able to bring added value to clients or an employer, it is necessary to consider what needs to be done in order to be able to gain a competitive advantage for entering a given market segment.

Another tool that helps to realistically evaluate our input to the selected target segment is SWOT analysis. The analysis allows for a simple and pragmatic capture of the current personal brand situation and points to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual and the opportunities and threats of the established market segment [13].

3.3. Online media and personal brand assets

Social media offer us great opportunities to spread awareness of our personal brand on the Internet. The basic typology of social media can be divided into discussions, blogs, micro blogs, social networks, multimedia sharing, LSB (Local Based Services) and other social media [14]. Within the scope of social media typology, authors N. Patel and A. Agius refer to the term personal brand assets. In their interpretation, these are strategic brand attributes that, in a unique combination, create unique brand character in both online and partly in offline environment. According to the above mentioned authors, the most important assets of a personal brand are:

- **Profile:** Currently, one of the key attributes when creating a personal brand in an online environment is providing a username or an URL address based on the context of a defined personal brand strategy. Unique and original user accounts that are identical across a wider range of social media platforms have a competitive advantage. There are many suggestions for designing a personal brand name. In the case of the strategy of building a personal brand, it is recommended to build on one's own name. The brand name should be easily pronounce and to remember, and the possibility of its application in other areas of business should be guaranteed.
- **Social networks:** From the point of view of creating and building a personal brand, it is advisable to choose an appropriate combination of social networks. Each professional field may prefer different combinations of social media. It is not always effective to apply all available options. Priority is given LinkedIn Social Network. This network is considered to be the most extensive in relation to the presentation of work history, work experience, personal assumptions and references relevant to the labour market. Other social networks that are significantly involved in forming a personal brand in online environment are especially Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The disadvantage of social networking is an insufficient control of individual users' content.
- **Domain:** The domain name is one of the most important elements of a personal brand strategy. The key advantage is that the operator can regulate the content as well as the entire platform. In terms of a long-term strategy, it is recommended not only to secure the required domain, but also similar domains or alternatives, and redirect them to the main domain.
- **Website:** Unlike social networking platforms, the website operator can fully control the content presented. The role of the website is, in the context of building a personal brand, to create a platform that integrates all available online and offline activities of the user and creates an effective referral system to social media. When designing a website, it is important to build on a defined strategic framework of a personal brand that will be reflected in graphic design and content marketing.
- **Offline assets:** Equal importance is to be given to off-line personal brand activities. They play a significant role in personal meetings and informal

occasions. The most common offline assets are business cards which should, similarly to presentation in online environment based on a uniform layout, be based on a unique strategic concept [<https://www.quicksprout.com/the-complete-guide-to-building-your-personal-brand/>].

3.4. The issue of content marketing

There is no uniform definition of content marketing. Different interpretations often result from the different focus of authors who perceive this term from different perspectives of practice. Regardless of whether the term is interpreted from a commercial, marketing or creative point of view, the final substance remains the same. J. Pullizi perceives content marketing in a more complex way, defining it as “*marketing and business process for creation and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action*” [15].

Despite the fact that content marketing is mainly referred to in the context of the Internet environment, its application can undoubtedly be beyond the digital sphere. There are both online and offline tools that make use of this type of marketing in the context of a personal brand. There is a large number of different ways how to deliver interesting content to target audiences - for example, through interesting articles, interactive learning, or appropriately set e-mailing. R. Lieb divides the individual resources into blogs, e-books, e-mailing, social networks, mobile applications, video and infographics [16].

In terms of the strategy of building a personal brand, it is important to ensure the consistency of the communicated message within the range of individual communication platforms and to create an efficient

3.5. Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing can be defined as “a marketing link where the primary goal is to build deep and close relationships with all individuals and organizations that can directly or indirectly influence the success of corporate marketing activities” [17]. Relationship management deals with CRM (customer relationship management) and PRM (partnership relationship management). The methodology of building relationships with clients and partners can be implemented in both online and offline environments. It is built on fast, efficient and professional communication. In this context, as A. Hurajová states, building deep personal and professional relationships is also a key to increase opportunities on the labour market as well as make a workforce more mobile [18].

4. Conclusions

Based on the above-mentioned text, it can be concluded that building a personal brand is a very complex and long-term process. The overall strategy should take into account the unique characteristics and potential of each individual [19], thus ensuring a unique and individual approach to each branding project. It should be noted, however, that it is important to start building one's personal brand earlier than a search for a job begins. The environment of social networks leaves a footprint that has long-term effects on a personal brand.

The consistency of a personal brand requires individual attributes to be put in a hierarchical sequence. It is counterproductive to try to build a personal brand in the context of reputation if we failed to frame our personal or work identity or gain trust of the target audience. Based on the remarks mentioned above, we propose to divide the personal branding process into the following 4 steps:

1. to define a personal identity that is not only about self-understanding but also about a one's vision, mission, and values;
2. talent management – a process that focuses on identifying, developing and managing the skills needed in a professional life. This step is closely related to the process of choosing a career path and presenting key competencies and skills a person has.
3. relationship management with an emphasis on communication and building good relationships in offline and online environments. At this point, it is important to demonstrate soft and hard communication skills as well as basic knowledge of social marketing.
4. reputation management focuses on building a top-notch image of a person, highlighting one's expertise. This process is about presenting one's knowledge. This knowledge, however, should not be a part of on-going trends but rather should determine these trends (trend-setting mind-set). It is about showing and proving knowledge and experience that have been successfully implemented in practice.

The above-mentioned method is a summary of knowledge needed to be implemented by a personal branding campaign. However, it is important to highlight the importance of a long-term professional development as well. The concept of identity, professional competencies, target groups and acquired reputation form a communication bridge that can only be acquired over the long-term.

Attention should also be paid to the development of communication skills in offline and online environments. Current trends suggest that the focus of branding is shifting towards the online environment. For a consistent branding, however, we recommend building personal relationships, as the face-to-face communication has the greatest impact.

Last but not least, we need to pay attention to our own reputation. Building a personal brand image is a matter of our marketing strategy. However, as far as the direct contact with target groups is concerned, values we cherish

need to be demonstrated in a straightforward manner. The prerequisite for successful personal branding is not only to present the desired picture but also to act in line with the brand we represent.

This paper is particularly beneficial due to the fact that it reflects trends in personal branding and marketing strategies. Dynamics of the development of communication technologies and social media requires new strategies to be taken into account when trying to enter the labour market in the global economy but also when forming a career growth in the long run.

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