PERSONAL BRANDING AND CAREER SUCCESS:
AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

by

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ABSTRACT

PERSONAL BRANDING AND CAREER SUCCESS: AN EMPERICAL INVESTIGATION

Knowledge about personal branding, the development and sustaining of a personal brand and the link between personal branding and career success did not exist in a scientifically structured manner. The purpose of this study was to understand what the elements of personal branding are and what it takes to develop a personal brand in the corporate environment. It was also important to identify whether personal branding is key to career success. The systematic literature review procedure was used to identify, analyse and critically evaluate both empirical studies and popular literature relating to personal branding. The current body of knowledge was ill defined and a six step model detailing how to develop and maintain a personal brand was developed as a result of a content analysis of the available popular literature. A measure of a complete personal brand within the workplace was subsequently developed. In this study, the hypotheses of a possible relationship between personal branding and career success (performance appraisal score, 360 leadership evaluation and talent board placement) were tested. It was found that talent board placement was statistically significant and practically related to personal branding. The study was the first to provide a measurement tool as well as empirical evidence on the relationship between personal branding and career success and, as such contributed significantly to the body of knowledge. This study also opened avenues for further research.

KEYWORDS

Personal branding, career success, individual performance, corporate environment, workplace, large organisation, talent management, performance management, South Africa

OPSOMMING

'N PERSOONLIKE HANDELSMERK EN LOOPBAAN SUKSES: 'N EMPIRIESE ONDERSOEK

Daar was min kennis oor 'n persoonlike handelsmerk, die ontwikkeling en handhawing van 'n persoonlike handelsmerk, en die verband tussen 'n persoonlike handelsmerk en loopbaansukses in die wetenskaplike domein beskikbaar. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die elemente van 'n persoonlike handelsmerk te begryp, asook om te bepaal wat dit behels om 'n persoonlike handelsmerk in die korporatiewe omgewing te ontwikkel. Dit was ook belangrik om te bepaal of 'n persoonlike handelsmerk deurslaggewend is tot loopbaansukses. 'n Sistematiese literatuuroorsig is gedoen om empiriese studies asook gewilde literatuur oor 'n persoonlike handelsmerk te identifiseer, te ontleed en krities te evalueer. Gegewe beperkte akademiese kennismateriaal, en na aanleiding van die inhoudsontleding van die beskikbare gewilde literatuur, is 'n sesstapmodel ontwikkel om aan te dui hoe 'n persoonlike handelsmerk ontwikkel en gehandhaaf kan word. Na aanleiding hiervan is 'n instrument ontwikkel om 'n person se handelsmerk omvattend in die werkplek te meet. Dit is gevolg deur hipoteses van 'n moontlike verband tussen 'n persoonlike handelsmerk en loopbaansukses (prestasiebeoordelingtelling, 360-leierskapevaluasie en talentplasing) te toets. Die studie het bevind dat 'n persoonlike handelsmerk statisties beduidend en prakties relevant is tot talentplasing. Hierdie navorsing lewer 'n omvattende meetinstrument vir die meting van 'n persoonlike handelsmerk, asook empiriese bewyse rakende die verhouding tussen 'n persoonlike handelsmerk en loopbaansukses. Die studie maak in dié opsig 'n beduidende bydrae tot die gebrekkige akademiese kennismateriaal wat oor hierdie onderwerp beskikbaar is.

SLEUTEL WOORDE

Persoonlike handelsmerk, loopbaansukses individuele prestasie, korporatiewe omgewing, werkplek, groot organisasie, talentbestuur, prestasiebestuur, Suid-Afrika

ABSTRACT

I-BRANDING YOMUNTU SIQU KANYE NEMPUMELELO EMSEBENZINI: UCWANINGO OLUNOBUFAKAZI OBUMBABEKAYO

Ulwazi nge-branding yomuntu siqu, ukuthuthukiswa kanye nokuqhubekela phambili kwe-brand yomuntu siqu kanye nokuxhumana phakathi kwe-brand yomuntu siqu kanye nokuphumelela emsebenzini bekuyizinto ebezingahlelekile ngendlela yesisayense. Inhloso yalolu cwaningo bekuwukuqondisisa ukuthi ngabe iyini imikhakha ye-branding yomuntu siqu kanye nokuthi yini okudingekayo ukwenza i-brand yomuntu siqu emkhakheni wezamabhizinisi. Bekubalulekile nokubheka ukuthi ngabe i-branding yomuntu siqu isemqoka kangakanani ekuphumeleleni emisebenzini. Inqubo yokubuyekeza imibhalo ngendlela ehlelekile iye yasetshenziswa ukuphawula, ukuhlaziya kanye nokuhlola izifundo ezinobufakazi ezenziwe kanye nemibhalo edumile maqondana ne-branding yomuntu siqu. Imikhakha yolwazi ekhona ibingachazekile kahle, kanti kuye kwalandelwa imodeli yezinyathalo eziyisithupha echaza imininingwane ngokwenza kanye nokugcina i-brand yomuntu siqu, iye yenziwa ngakho-ke kwase kuhlaziywa ingqikithi yemibhalo edumile ekhona. Kwenziwe i-brand yomuntu siqu ephelele emkhakheni wezemisebenzi. Kulolu cwaningo, kuhlolwe i-hypotheses yobudlelwane phakathi kwe-branding yomuntu siqu kanye nokuphumelela emsebenzini (amaphuzu ohlolo lokusebenza ngendlela efanele, uhlolo lobuholi obungu 360, kanye nokubekwa kwebhodi yamathalente endaweni efanele) kuye kwahlolwa. Kutholakale ukuthi ukubekwa kwebhodi yamathalente endaweni efanele yinto esemqoka ngokwamastatistiki kanti futhi kuhambisana ne-branding yomuntu siqu. Ucwaningo belungolokuqala ukuhlinzeka ngethuluzi lokukala kanye nocwaningo obunobufakazi obubambekayo ngobudlelwane phakathi kwe-branding yomuntu siqu kanye nokuphumelela emsebenzini, kanti-ke, lokhu yikho okuye kwaba nomthelela obabalukile kulwazi. Lolu cwaningo luvule imikhakha lapho okungenziwa khona ezinye izinhlobo nemikhakha yocwaningo.

AMAGAMA ABALULEKILE

I-branding yomuntu siqu, ukuphumelela emsebenzini, ukusebenza komuntu oyedwa, emkhakheni wamabhizinisi, emisebenzini, inhlangano enkulu, ukuphathwa kwamathalente, inqubo yokuphatha kwezokusebenza, iNingizimu Afrika

DECLARATION

Name: Esme Coetzer

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Degree: Doctor of Business Leadership

Title: PERSONAL BRANDING AND CAREER SUCCESS: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

I declare that this thesis titled "Personal branding and career success: An empirical investigation" is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at the University of South Africa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

_____   _____

Esme Coetzer   Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving mother, Sally, my precious children Monre, Zandre and Maryka as well as my special siblings Philip, Dirk and Hildegard. I truly admire the way each of you represents your own uniqueness through your well defined and authentic personal brand.

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This has been an incredible journey with my supervisor Professor Renier Steyn. Your uniqueness has had an enormous impact on my being. Your patience, academic care, ability and wisdom are beyond world-class.

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- The industrial psychologists that provided inputs into the development of the questionnaire.
- The anonymous participants, who were the senior managers, who offered their precious time to participate.
- Mr. Conrad Baudin, for his professional text and language editing.

PREFACE

The reader should note that the thesis is not presented in the traditional format, which normally includes chapters on orientation, theoretical foundations, a literature review and findings and conclusions, along with recommendations and limitations. Instead, this thesis instead follows an adjusted format aligned to the specific research objectives. Most of the objectives are presented as separate chapters. These research final objectives were identified as the study unfolded and are presented in Chapter 1.

Each of the objectives was approached separately as a single task, including a short introduction, a focused literature review, a short section on methodology and ending off with the findings and conclusions. In the final chapter, the objectives are brought together again and discussed in an integrated manner, ultimately aligning the individual objectives to the aim of the study. This approach resulted in some aspects of the research being repeated in the different chapters, influencing the flow of the complete dissertation, which the researcher apologize for.

The candidate was responsible for all aspects of the research. The supervisor provided academic and scholarly direction, review, support, and quality assurance.

CHAPTER 1

Orientation

The research is about personal branding in general, and specifically, the role it fulfils in achieving career success within corporate organisations or the bigger world of work.

This chapter begins with a background to the study. The problem statement derives from the background and is followed by a statement of the goals and objectives. Thereafter, the importance of achieving these objectives is discussed, followed by the delineation of the research, as well as the limitations expected. Discussion of the research method is presented next and includes an explanation of how the literature review was conducted, as well as clarification of how the empirical phase of the study was approached. The chapter concludes with a brief section describing the chapters that follow.

1.1   Background

Personal branding as a topic of particular interest is evident from the large number of results returned on Google, Google Scholar and Amazon Books when the term "personal branding" is entered to the search field. There are also large numbers of self-help books on the topic in evidence in any bookstore.

Nelson Mandela, Donald Trump, Richard Branson, Bill Gates and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum are often presented as examples of individuals who used their journeys towards success as a basis to build, implement, maintain and cultivate an authentic, distinctive and memorable brand. Ex-post-facto accounts such as these should be viewed with suspicion, based on the hindsight approach.

When initiating a search for academic literature on the topic, it soon became evident that the concept is not yet well explored within the academic domain. As will later become evident, fewer than 100 articles have been published on this topic (refer to Chapter 2), many of these being position papers and most without any empirical base. It seems that research on this concept is still at an initial stage and that very few of the higher-level requirements, such as theory building, are available in this field as yet.

In considering the manner in which existing research on personal branding has been done, very few articles were located (refer to Chapter 3). It also became apparent that

the methodology was largely qualitative. Secondly, it was found that there is no reliable or valid measure available pertaining to effective branding. This may be why the researcher was unable to locate any empirical research on the relationship between personal branding and career success.

Given the disappointing lack of academic literature available on the topic, it was thought necessary to explore the vast amount of literature available within the popular domain (refer to Chapter 4). Without exception, all the sources consulted referred to the importance of consciously developing and managing a personal brand. Most of the authors concerned also suggested routes to developing one's personal brand irrespective of one's present status. The suggested processes seem to overlap in many respects. Disappointingly, none of the authors substantiate their developmental processes with empirical links to the success they promise. Some, however, present consultant-like reports on the effectiveness of their programme offerings, but these showed little empirical robustness. Neither academic literature nor that in the popular domain provides sufficient information regarding any link between a consciously developed personal brand and the achievement of career success. The hypotheses of such a link are thus so-far untested.

1.2   Problem statement

Career success could be observed as an egoistic aim, but it also relates to organisations achieving their goals. The career success promised through attaining a well-defined personal brand may thus be as important to the employer as it is to the individual. Exploring and verifying the relationship between nurturing a personal brand and career success may thus benefit both the individual and the organisation. As this relationship has not yet been empirically established, both employers and employees are at loss as to how much should be invested in efforts to establish personal brands for individuals.

The problem is subsequently that personal branding is presented as an important determinant of success, primarily in popular literature, but empirical evidence data to substantiate this relationship between personal branding and career success is absent. This research aims to fill this gap.

1.3 Goals and objectives

The primary goal of this study was to test whether those who have well-established personal brands enjoy higher levels of career success. To achieve this goal, three initial objectives were pursued.

- To systematically and critically evaluate the present body of knowledge regarding personal branding.
- To identify the present methodologies used when testing hypotheses related to personal branding and the outcomes thereof.
- To empirically test the relationship between personal branding and career success amongst a group of senior managers.

As alluded to earlier, academic information regarding personal branding is/was scarce, a factor which necessitated the formulation of two additional objectives:

- To synthesise and critically evaluate the popular literature on personal branding.
- To develop a comprehensive, reliable and valid measure of personal branding.

Adding these two additional objectives allowed for testing the hypotheses and thus for achieving the goal of the study.

1.4 Importance of the study

The research is important as it addresses a research problem to which has popular, academic and business importance.

- Quantifying the nature of the relationship between personal branding and career success within the workplace holds value for the public who invest time and funds in acquiring literature which seems to link these concepts. This research could also influence those writing for that particular audience. Given the findings of this study, this topic may demise popular interest.

- On an academic level, several important contributions were made. Firstly, literature on the topic was synthesised giving rise to a useful reference source for prospective researchers. Secondly, the voids of not having a reliable and valid measure of personal branding were found. This will allow for testing other important hypotheses. The findings are important for those teaching in the field of career management, coaching and leadership.

- Should personal success and organisational performance be linked, a study on the antecedents to personal success would attract business management interest. This research makes a valuable contribution towards determining the time and funds that should be afforded to those interested in developing a personal brand. In addition, coaching and leadership development practices should be aligned to the findings of this study.

This study thus contributes to the body of knowledge on this topic and has theoretical and practical implications as well as stature.

1.5   Delineations

This study was delineated by the corpus of literature available through the Unisa library. This is a very comprehensive database, but it could never been seen as a complete record of available literature. With regard to popular literature, the research was delineated in terms of literature available within the public domain in South Africa. Given the existence of sources such as Amazon and Take-a-Lot, an abundance of other literature is also available.

With regard to the empirical study, this was confined to a single large organisation within South Africa. Achieving right-of-entry to this organisation was difficult in its own right, while the challenges of gaining access to sensitive information such as performance ratings made it effectively impossible to include more organisations in this study.

Without the goodwill that comes with the researcher being an employee within this organisation, this study would most likely not have been realised.

1.6   Theoretical framework

From a paradigmatic perspective, critical rationalism is at the core of the research method. With critical rationalism a researcher starts off with a biased idea, and checks that against reality to find out if it is right or wrong (Higgs, & Smith, 2006). In this study it is assumed that personal branding effects workplace success and this will be tested empirically. However, within the confines of critical rationalism, even when the results are presented, we still remain sceptical on our findings.

Theoretical framework appropriate to the thesis is the general systems theory. As will become evident from the literature review presented in Chapter 2, present literature on personal branding is silent on their theoretical underpinnings. The multidimensional concept of personal branding, as well as the relationship between personal branding and workplace success, can be explained referring to general systems theory, including an input-throughput-output model (Kast, & Rosenzweig, 1972), where outputs generate the inputs that are required to maintain the system (Katz, & Kahn, 1966). General systems theory can be viewed as an deterministic model (Teece, 2018) in as much as systems and subsystems respond to each other, and in this case of personal branding (the individual) will influence personal workplace success (in a broader system). Although general systems theory professed to be nonlinear, the input-throughput-output premises are directional (see Wright, & McMahan, 1992; Wright, & Snell, 1998), pointing to specific outcomes or paths.

General systems theory can therefore be applied within the workplace as a "network or system of sequential and interdependent decisions" (Cascio, & Aguinis, 2011:43). The general systems theory may be more appropriate in this exploratory work, where the paths are not clear. General systems theory is credited for being more useful than the behavioural theories (ability, motivation, and opportunity), or the resource-based view, which typically portrayed closed systems and simple linear processes linking inputs to outputs (Shin, & Konrad, 2017).

1.7   Research methodology

The research consists of the literature review and the empirical investigation. The methods followed for each part is presented below.

1.7.1 Literature review

Objective 1 was achieved through a literature review and systematising the data found. To structure this review, the structure described by Kable, Pich and Maslin-Prothero (2011) was used as a framework to guide the collection of literature. This included the purpose statement, data search limits, inclusion and exclusion criteria, search items, documenting the search process, assessment of retrieved articles, number of articles retrieved, quality review of retrieved articles, critical review of the literature and also an accurate reference list. The framework of De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011)

was used to analyse the collected literature. This framework included concepts, definitions, hypotheses, propositions, and truth statements, as well as typologies, models and theories, and paradigms. This is explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Objective 2 was also achieved through a systematic literature review. In this case, the traditional academic scientific approach (Babbie, & Mouton 2001; Bryman, & Bell 2014; Creswell, 2013; Leedy, & Ormrod 2014; Neuman, 1997), that relies on specifying the research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysed and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations was used to order the findings.

The final literature objective was achieved through analysing the content of 19 books covering 5 379 pages. The chapters of the various books were analysed for their content which was then integrated and from there, the corpus of the text of each book was analysed. The major steps associated with the development of a personal brand were identified.

1.7.2 Empirical investigation

To test the hypotheses of a link between personal branding and career success, a valid and reliable questionnaire was required. In the absence of such a questionnaire, the Personal Brand Maturity Measurement was developed. The six stages relevant to the development of a personal brand were identified in the aforementioned literature. The process was largely based on the design suggested by Aquins, Henley and Ostroff (2001). Following several meetings with subject matter experts, 10 items per stage were included in the initial questionnaire, based on a pool of 240 items. A detailed description of the process is presented in Chapter 5. The questionnaire was administered to a convenient sample of 88 managers from a large organisation. The internal consistency of the proposed measure was calculated, as was the correlation of the various items with the identified stages. Exploratory factor analyses were used to explore the nature of the questionnaire.

The final step of this research was to test the hypothesis of a relationship between personal branding and career success. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted in carrying out the study. The participants in this study were senior managers within a large South African organisation.

1.7.3 Ethical considerations

Following the acceptance of the research proposal, a large organisation was approached to host the study. The proposal was presented to the appropriate decision makers who granted permission to conduct the study. The research protocol was then presented to the Unisa Research Ethics Review Board (2018_SBL_DBL_002_FA). Permission was granted subject to adherence to the standard ethical considerations which included informed consent, freedom to withdraw and confidentiality.

1.8   Chapter division

A summarised view of the division of the various chapters is presented below. Chapter 2, 3 and 4 address the literature review and Chapter 5 and 6 address the empirical methodology of this study

CHAPTER 2: *Personal branding: A systematic literature review of academic literature.* The aim of this chapter was to systematise available literature in order to understand the current body of knowledge regarding personal branding, to identify, build on what is known about, and to identify possible gaps in the present knowledge systems.

CHAPTER 3: *Personal branding: A systematic review of the research and design strategies used when investigating personal branding.* The aim of this chapter was to identify the research and design strategies and, specifically, the scientific procedures used in research articles about personal branding, to build on best practices, and to avoid the pitfalls identified by previous researchers.

CHAPTER 4: *Developing a personal brand: Systematically exploring popular literature on the topic.* The aim of this chapter was to present a synthesis of what it entails to develop a personal brand, including inputs from various sources – mainly because no such analyses have been conducted previously and academic literature is thus very scarce.

CHAPTER 5: *The development and validation of a measure of a comprehensive personal brand.* The aim of this chapter was to compile a questionnaire to measure the extent of personal brand development and which would thus serve as a quantitative measure of the effects of the implementation of a personal brand. Achieving this aim was a necessary first step towards testing hypotheses linking personal branding to success in the world-of-work.

CHAPTER 6: *The relationship between personal branding and critical career success factors.* The aim of this chapter was to report on the empirical testing of the relationship between personal branding and elements of career success. This was the primary aim of the research.

CHAPTER 7: *Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.* The aim of this chapter was to present conclusions of and limitations to the study. These are followed by a discussion on the limitations. Lastly, recommendations are made, directed first towards the individual and then towards academia, future researchers and business leaders.

CHAPTER 2

Personal branding: A systematic literature review of academic literature

In this chapter the topic of personal branding will firstly be introduced followed by a discussion of the present academic body of knowledge available on the topic.

2.1 Introduction

Personal branding as a topic of particular interest is evident from the large number of popular inscriptions found on Google. On the Google web function, at least 1 820 000 results are displayed while Google Scholar leads to at least 249 000 results. Amazon Books lists 2 110 books when 'personal branding' is entered into the search bar. Personal branding is thus definitely a point of interest in the public domain.

A literature review is a sophisticated academic skill, and the review must be current, comprehensive and reflective of developments in the field (Burton, 2011). During the last few years there has been a shift from the more traditional narrative reviews to a more systematic approach (Kable et al., 2011).

A literature review is a summary of previously published work, or a description of the history or development in a specific area of interest (Green, Johnson, & Adams, 2006). The review could add further value if it indicates differences and similarities in approaches and points to emerging issues (Kable et al., 2011). A consolidated literature review could be particularly useful in the context of teaching as it provides a single source on a topic (Green et al., 2006). As such the review could also be valuable in the understanding of such a mass of information.

Literature reviews are however more than just a remedy to handle the bulk of information available. It has considerable importance for researchers. Through a literature review, researchers can identify conceptual and operational definitions and appropriate methodologies for the investigation of a particular phenomenon (Kaniki, 2009). Researchers can diverse frameworks for the analysis of their own work

(Anderson, 2009), and the research can also assist them to identify, justify and refine hypotheses and avoid pitfalls in previous research (Green et al., 2006). Burton (2011) puts it strongly and states literature reviewing is central to the argument of all academic text as it should explicitly and implicitly bind together all parts of the research into a coherent whole. Authors of comprehensive literature reviews are often acknowledged as experts in the field (Green et al., 2006).

However, in writing a comprehensive literature review, it could be difficult to know which literature to report, more so with vast amounts of literature available on a particular topic. Bias in reporting literature is very common and it is important to avoid biasness through appropriate writing and researching techniques, as applying such techniques will increase the utility and credibility of the publication (Green et al., 2006). A systematic literature review is the process for reviewing the literature using a comprehensive pre-planned strategy to locate existing literature, evaluate the contributions, including analysing and synthesising findings to allow conclusions to be reached about that particular body of knowledge (Denyer, & Tranfield, 2009). A systematic literature review thus uses explicit, thorough methods to identify, select, appraise and synthesise information (Rossman, & Rallis, 2002). As such, a systematic literature review differs from conventional reviews in that it aims at synthesising research in a predetermined, systematic, transparent and reproducible manner (Denyer, & Tranfield, 2009).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a systematic literature review of the body of knowledge about personal branding.

2.2 Literature review

A literature review should be done with cognisance of how the body of knowledge in the scientific domain is organised (Steyn, 2014). In the case of the current topic, personal branding, it is within the social sciences domain, and as such, a social sciences framework would be applicable. De Vos et al. (2011) provide such a social sciences framework, tapping on the seminal work of Mouton (1996), Kerlinger (1986), Kerlinger and Lee (2000). De Vos et al. (2011) present the building blocks of (social) science under three main headings, namely concepts, statements (definitions,

hypotheses, propositions, and truth statements) and conceptual frameworks (typologies, models, theories and paradigms).

What follows is a description of the structure of the body of knowledge, which is the framework which was used to systemize the literature as it pertains to personal branding.

2.2.1 Concepts

Concepts are the most basic building blocks of a body of scientific knowledge. It is the most elementary symbolic constructions (mostly single words) by means of which scientists classify or categorise reality. Concepts are however abstract notions which are derived from a combination of personal intuition and the systematic observation of the environment (Fletcher, & Sarkar, 2013). It could thus be a very subjective connotation based purely on personal previous experience, or the meaning of the concept could be based on its conventional connotation, which is the widely accepted meaning implicitly agreed upon (Mouton, 1996).

Researchers within the same discipline and more specifically within the same paradigm of research tradition tend to share specific conventional connotations (Mouton, 1996). This sharing of meaning is important as possession, understanding and use of such concepts (those with shared meaning) by the members of a profession are the most basic requirements of the scientific base (De Vos et al., 2011).

No discussion, including one on personal branding, would be possible without agreement on the connotation associated with the concept, and associated concepts.

2.2.2 Statements

Once concepts have been formulised, they can be combined in statements, which is the next level of building blocks of scientific knowledge. Statements include definitions as well as hypotheses and propositions (De Vos et al., 2011), and statements of truth (Babbie, & Mouton, 2012).

Definitions: These are statements that aim to describe the meanings of words or concepts. Definitions delimit or demarcate the meaning of a word in terms of its sense and reference (Mouton, 1996). As such, a definition facilitates communication as it describes the connotation of the term in a specific context. It thus facilitates a clear understanding of what exactly the concept means (De Vos et al., 2011). A distinction

can be drawn between theoretical (connotative) and operational (denotative). A theoretical definition is a scholarly representation of the relationship between a given concept and related concepts, within a specific framework or theory based on the theoretical connotation (Mouton, 1996). An operational definition, on the other hand, describes the operationalisation of the concept. It shows how the elements of the theoretical construct will be observed and measured at an operational level. It thus presents specific conditions for the appropriate use of a specific concept (Mouton, 1996).

Hypotheses and propositions: According to De Vos et al. (2011), a hypothesis is an expectation about the nature of things derived from a theory and is a statement of something that should be observed in the real world if the theory is correct. It is basically a statement that postulates a certain relationship between two or more variables and used in quantitative research. Hypotheses differ from propositions as the proposition would be more difficult to identify, as it is normally not presented as blatantly as hypotheses. Propositions are expected to be found in qualitative research.

Truth statements: These are sentences, which contain demonstrable, testable claims about the world (Mouton, 1996). When they address one variable, they are usually descriptive and describe the amount or value of that variable, as it is manifesting in the (real) world. When statements refer to two or more variables, they usually refer to the relationship between the variables. Normally, in the social sciences, truth statements are about the causal powers and forces that produce things or events (Mouton, 1996).

Statements are thus very important in understanding the body of knowledge relating to a specific topic. Knowing the different definitions allows for conceptual clarity, while examining hypotheses and propositions allows for understanding research questions relating to a specific topic. Truth statements, which relate to accepting or rejecting hypotheses and propositions, allow researchers to know what was verified and what is not.

2.2.3 Conceptual frameworks

Conceptual frameworks are scientific statements organized according to certain interests or objectives (Mouton, 1996). It is the integration of scientific statements into a scientific structure (De Vos et al., 2011). According to De Vos et al. (2011), conceptual frameworks are the highest-level building blocks of scientific knowledge.

Conceptual frameworks include typologies, models, theories and paradigms.

Typologies: Typologies are the most basic conceptual frameworks of science. Typologies are the outcomes of a classification process, where phenomena are classified in terms of characteristics that they have in common and which differentiate them from other (dissimilar) phenomena (Mouton, 1996). The common purpose of classifying includes administration (thus creating nominal groups), triage (to give order to observed phenomena, thus creating ordinal groups) and knowledge development (which occur when the created groups are studied in greater detail) (De Vos et al., 2011). Typologies, importantly, serve as a frame of reference for observation and data collection, focusing the researcher's attention on the structure of the current body of knowledge of the specific field of study (Mouton, 1996).

Models and theory: A typology present no more than a static image or a cross-section of a specific class of events, whereas a model is an attempt to represent the dynamic aspects of the phenomenon by illustrating the relationships between its elements in a simplified form (Mouton, 1996). "Where a typology presents the major elements, a model presents the relationship between these elements" (Mouton, 1996:198). A model is defined as a representation of reality (De Vos et al., 2011). Differences between models and theories are largely differences of degree (Mouton, 1996).

"Theory presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying logical relationships among variables, with the purpose of explaining, predicting and verifying the particular phenomena through established data in the social world" (De Vos et al., 2011: 512). Theories can be distinguished from models as far as they are also instruments aimed at explaining and predicting phenomena or events (Mouton, 1996). The very nature of the theories lies in the explanation of observed phenomena (Kerlinger, 1986). Important to note is that there are three levels of theories, namely grand theories, theories of the middle range, and low-level or ad hoc theories. Grand theories are

widely accepted while low-level or ad hoc theories are built to explain a given set of data (De Vos et al., 2011).

Paradigms: A paradigm is an established research tradition in a particular discipline inclusive of accepted theories, models, body of research and methodologies (Mouton, 1996). Paradigms verbalise the (legitimate) assumptions when viewing the world and provide the design for collecting and interpreting data. They guide researchers on which actions to take (De Vos et al., 2011). More specifically, paradigms enable researchers to establish appropriate facts, match facts and theory and articulate appropriate theory. Paradigms are thus used as a departure point in research (Mouton, 1996). A paradigm is therefore a framework, viewpoint or worldview based on philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge (De Vos et al., 2011). Within the social sciences there are three dominant paradigms, namely positivism, interpretivism and critical social science (Rubin, & Babbie, 2005). A distinction could also be drawn between the positivistic critical rationalist approach (which acknowledges that the truth eludes us and that scientists should try to avoid falsity and focus on the rejection of the nil hypothesis) (Higgs, & Smith, 2006) and the more interpretive hermeneutics approach (which sees the truth as being revealed through [the subjective] human understanding of the phenomena obtained by means of the process of interpretation and dialogue (Higgs, & Smith, 2006).

Knowledge of conceptual frameworks allows researchers to delineate their investigations by focusing on typologies. It also allows researchers to understand the prevailing way others think, group of constructs relate (models) and the reasons for the relationships (theories). It also informs them on what the established traditions of research in the area are (paradigms).

2.3   Methodology

The research methodology is aligned with the aim of the research, namely, to provide a systematic review of academic literature about personal branding. With such an approach, the researcher should clearly state the aims and objectives of the review, the way that appropriate data will be identified, the inclusion and exclusion criteria of data and a plan to analyse the data (Nightingale, 2009). The methodology developed for the systematic literature review served as a guide to the replication of the study

(Green et al., 2006). It is also designed to reduce bias as the complete operational protocol is written before the process commences, and it therefor defines and guides the process (White, & Schmidt, 2005). The methodology should aim to minimise the effects of selection, publication and data extraction bias (Nightingale, 2009). For the current review the structure described by Kable et al. (2011) was used as a framework to guide the collection of literature on personal branding, while the framework of De Vos et al. (2011) was used to analyse the collected literature. The process which was followed, is presented below.

2.3.1 Provide a purpose statement to describe the question that must be addressed by the literature review

The research question for this study was as follows: What is the current body of knowledge, as reflected in published academic literature articles, regarding personal branding?

2.3.2 Specify the limits applied during the search for data

Publications which appeared between 2002 and 2014 were included in the search. The search was executed on 17 June 2014, and a wide bouquet EBSCOhost and ProQuest database were used. A full list is attached in Annexure A. The search was further limited to full text publications in English. Only articles which were classified as peer-reviewed were included.

2.3.3 List the inclusion and exclusion criteria utilized for the search:

Although ideal to have a complete operational protocol (White, & Schmidt, 2005), this was only developed after some pilot searches. Many clearly promotional titles were found, despite specifying that results should reflect peer-reviewed articles. These were excluded, as Babbie and Mouton (2012), cautioned that only information or data that are accepted by the scientific community should be included in building the body of knowledge.

The initial search also yielded results pertaining to the link between individuals and product brands, such as, Place branding: creating self-brand connections and brand advocacy. This, and similar articles which related to typical of consumer behaviour were excluded.

2.3.4 List the search terms used

Five search terms were used to search the databases, targeting their inclusion in the title of the research. The searched terms used were personal brand*, individual brand*, professional brand*, self-brand*, and self-marketing. The asterisk allowed the search engine to use all variations of the word, including terms such as *branding, brands and branded*, for example.

2.3.5 Document the search process

The search was conducted on 17 June 2014, using the search engines, inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as search terms as indicated above.

2.3.6 Assess retrieved articles for relevance

It is suggested that during the review process, at least two reviewers should independently assess studies for inclusion in order to minimise the risk of selection bias (Nightingale, 2009). For this chapter it was done by the researcher and verified by the research supervisor, strictly following the inclusion and exclusion criteria, particularly excluding articles that covered matters other than personal branding. After deriving two independent lists of acceptable articles, these were discussed and, in the spirit of being sensitive rather than specific (Nightingale, 2009), included or excluded. Added to this, attention was given to articles which compromised literature reviews and systematic reviews (Kable et al., 2012). No such reviews were found.

2.3.7 Specify the number of articles retrieved

In total, 56 articles were captured when doing the computer search after excluding duplications in the reach of the EBSCOhost and ProQuest bouquets. After the researcher and research supervisor had reviewed the list a total of 36 articles met all criteria.

2.3.8 Conduct quality appraisals of retrieved literature

Assessing the quality (not the themes) of articles to be included may be important, but is a contentious issue as different methods do not produce consistent results (White, & Schmidt, 2005) and could be "extremely subjective" (Green et al., 2006:111). Green et al. (2006) states that some authors suggest that a proper narrative review should assess each study included in the review, while others state that this is not a

requirement. Although some (see Kable et al., 2012) argue that a quality appraisal of retrieved literature is valuable, this route was not followed, as it could work against the possibility of replicating the study and introducing unnecessary data. As such, all 36 articles which were thematically acceptable were included for further analysis.

2.3.9 Conduct a critical review of the literature

If the researcher wants to engage in critical analysis, the criteria assessed against should explicitly be expressed (Green et al., 2006). In the case of this research the framework of de Vos et al. (2011), as discussed in the literature review, was used to systemise the literature. An elaboration on how it was operationalised is provided in section 4 below.

2.3.10 Provide an accurate reference list

The last step of the process is to provide a reference list of the articles used, which meets the criteria as per the guidelines of Kable et al. (2011). This is presented in Annexure B.

2.4 Plan of analysis

The plan to classify and analyse the articles was based on the work of De Vos et al. (2011), and as stated several times, is presented in the literature section of this article. What follows is how the analyses were operationalised.

2.4.1 Concepts

Concepts were identified as the words that appeared in the key word list of the articles selected. When articles did not have a keyword list, no concepts were identified.

2.4.2 Definitions

Only statements which included the word *definition* or phrases such as *"the phenomenon is described as…"* were included as definitions of the concept. No effort was made to integrate information to construct definitions, as this would have introduced bias. As such, only verbatim single sentence definitions were considered.

2.4.3 Hypotheses, propositions, and truth statements

Hypotheses are statements which indicate a relationship between two or more variables and are derived from a theory. Hypotheses are identified in text when they are presented. Hypotheses are to be found in quantitative studies. Propositions are expected to be found in qualitative studies and also to describe the relationship between two or more variables and are derived from a theory.

Factual statements contain demonstrated, tested claims about the world. In this study, these were interpreted as accepted hypotheses or affirmed propositions. It is expected to find these statements in the finding section of the articles which will be reviewed.

2.4.4 Typologies

Typologies in the text were recognized when they were presented as lists or strings of characteristics associated with the phenomena. The test used to identify a typology was to ask whether this list or string represents the characteristics of the phenomena, or if it describes types of the phenomena. If the list or string of statements did not meet these criteria, it was not deemed as a typology.

2.4.5 Models and theories

As the differences between models and theories are largely differences of degree (Mouton, 1996), it was decided that these two building blocks will be discussed together. It was deemed beneficial to follow this route as the researcher then did not need to debate whether a specific framework is a model or a theory. Models and theories were identified as pieces of text which explain the multiple relationships between variables and the reasons for these relationships. The emphasis in this section was on multiple relationships and, in some cases, an explanation of the mechanisms responsible for those relationships.

2.4.6 Paradigms

A paradigm is an established research tradition in a particular discipline inclusive of accepted theories, models, body of research and methodologies (Mouton, 1996). As it is doubtful that the authors would formally present such information the view was deducted from the nature of the articles. A distinction was drawn between the critical rationalist approach (identifiable through the presence of hypotheses) and the

hermeneutics approach (identifiable through the analysis of text). The critical rationalist approach points to a positivistic approach and the hermeneutics approach to interpretivism.

2.5   Findings

The sections below describe the findings of the analysis of the 36 articles against the pre-determined framework as discussed above.

2.5.1 Descriptive data

In total, 56 articles were located given the search strategy. Of these, 36 articles were analysed (see Annexure B), given the inclusion and exclusion criteria described above. The *Journal of Marketing Education* (N=2) and the *European Journal of Marketing* (N=2) both published two articles, as indicated. No other journal published two or more articles. No author published more than one article.

2.5.2 Themes per section of the body of knowledge

The findings from the analyses against the predetermined framework discussed are presented per element of the body of knowledge.

2.5.2.1   Concepts

The first findings relate to concepts. As previously mentioned, key words listed between the abstract and the body of the article were used as descriptions of the constructs of personal branding. In total, 18 of the 36 articles on personal branding included a list of key words. The most common key term was "*personal branding*" (N=11, refer to articles 2, 5, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 24 and 30). The next most popular key term was *brand* (N= 6; refer to article 3, 11, 12, 19, 26 and 27). No other key words were mentioned more than five times.

2.5.2.2   Definitions

Definitions were the next building block of knowledge investigated. In total, 28 of the 36 articles provided definitions relating to *personal branding,* which met the inclusion criteria (N=28, refer to articles 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36). The definition of Kheder (2014:33) in article 16 was typical of such a definition. It defines *personal branding* as the "process

of establishing a unique personal identity, developing an active communication approach of one's brand identity to a specific target market and evaluating its impact on one's image and reputation, to fulfil personal and professional objectives".

Another comprehensive definition in article 9 reads as follows,

> "Personal branding is defined as a personal perception or emotion about a person. It is reflected as who we are, what we believe, what we do, and how we do it. It is the reflection implemented through actions. It is authentic and natural therefore it avoids one from competition but focus on uniqueness" (Karsudjono, Christianta, & Eliyana, 2013:628).

A further example in article 9 by Eke (2012) reads as "A personal brand is the public projection of certain aspects of a person's personality, skills or values that stimulate precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that a person stands for."

From the different definitions offered by the authors of the different articles, it could be concluded that some consensus exists between the authors. This consensus states that personal branding identifies, packages and promotes the unique profile of the individual in a way that creates meaningful value for the individual.

2.5.2.3 Hypotheses, propositions and truth statements

Hypotheses were the next building block of knowledge to be investigated. In total six of the 36 articles provided hypotheses on personal branding, which met the inclusion criteria (N=6, refer to articles 15, 19, 18, 21, 27 and 29).

In Table 2.1, the most distinct hypotheses are reported. These hypotheses are presented in a generic format, and were not directly taken from the set of articles.

Table 2.1

Hypotheses

Article	Hypotheses
15	Branded leaders have a positive effect on the performance of followers.
18	Culture affects the way individuals portray themselves (in a social media domain).

19	Performance of the individual will affect his/her status (eminence).
21	Different student factors affect the possibility to enter the job market
27	Products associated with a personal brand are more desirable than those without.
29	Individual attitudes (and behaviour) have an influence on their creation of a personal brand.

Some researchers focused on leadership, as seen in article 15. The hypotheses set by Karsudjono et al. (2013:631), for example state the following "The leader's personal branding has significant effect on achievement motivation of leader candidates" and "The leader's personal branding has significant effect on the performance of leader candidates".

Further hypotheses were related to the way individuals from different cultures portray themselves within the social media domain (see article 18). Li (2007:131) indicates for example, "English chatters provide more personalized information in their profiles than Chinese chatters do" and "Chinese chatters provide more highly respected and power related occupational information in their profiles than do English chatters".

Another group of hypotheses (see article 19) related to reputation (in the academic domain). Noble, Bentley, Campbell and Singh (2014:316), state the following, "Increasing numbers of national or regional awards within the discipline will be associated with greater eminence" and "Focus in a particular research area (depth) will be more strongly associated with eminence than will be publication across numerous topics (breadth)".

From the 36 articles reviewed, only six articles offered and tested scientifically formulated hypotheses relating to personal branding. This lack of scientifically formulated hypotheses indicates the need to formalise research in future, within the specific area of personal branding.

Propositions were the next building block of knowledge to be investigated. In total, two of the 36 articles provided clear propositions on personal branding which met the inclusion criteria. The proposition of Khedher (2014:32), in article 16 reads as follows:

"The key premise for personal branding is that everyone has a personal brand, but most people are not aware of this and do not manage it strategically, consistently and effectively". Corsten (2013:52), in article 8, presents the following proposition: "For personal sports brands to succeed financially by monetizing on a person's name, athletic potential and talent, a vital requirement is a large stage and a product and/or brand with wide appeal". He also states, "To optimize the power of a personal sports brand, athletes must engage in hybrid relationships, be strategic about this engagement and thus rely on these actions to 'brand themselves' via relationships outside the athletic field to gain higher ROI than what is constituted only from athletic abilities" (Corsten, 2013:52). Although six of the articles followed a qualitative research approach, surprisingly, very few authors stated propositions based on the research conducted.

Statements of truth were the next building block of knowledge to be investigated. In total, eight of the 36 articles provided statements of truth relating to personal branding, which met the inclusion criteria. The following accepted hypotheses or affirmed propositions were identified:

Article 15 focused on leadership branding. In article 15, it was accepted that "A leader's self-mastery has significant effect on variable achievement motivation of leader candidates" meaning the better the self-control of a leader, the higher the achievement motivation of the leader candidate will be. It was also accepted that "A leader's personality has significant effect on variable achievement motivation of leader candidates, meaning the better the leader's personality, the higher his/her achievement". Furthermore, it was also accepted that "A leader's personal branding has a significant effect on the performance of candidate leaders", meaning the better the personal branding of a leader, the higher their performance will be" (Karsudjono et al., 2013: 631)

Article 24 focused on on-line self-marketing and related gender differentiation. It was accepted that "Authenticity in the context of e-dating is an issue for both men and women. No difference in gender with respect to honesty was identified" and also, "Women were more likely to state a preferred relationship status for a prospective dater when compared with men". It was further accepted that "Men were more likely to articulate that they wanted to exchange photos with a prospective dater when

compared to the women" and "Women are more likely to state preferred demographics (employment status) in their online personal ads". It was further accepted that "Men pitched more of their physical characteristics in the ads, while woman pitched more of their personality characteristics, hobbies and interests" (Peters, Thomas, & Morris, 2013: 91-92).

Article 29 focused on the branding of newspaper reporters. In article 29, it was accepted that "Newspaper reporters are not actively and aggressively branding themselves". It was further accepted that "Reporters place a higher value on social media for promotion rather than audience interaction and brand building". It was also accepted that "Age plays a role in the development of personal branding" and that there is "a high level of managerial support for personal branding of newspaper reporters" (Schultz, & Scheffer, 2012:68-74).

From the above, it could be concluded that newspaper reporters are not focused on personal branding although utilising social media, depending on age, and also receiving high levels of managerial support for personal branding. It is further concluded that elements of personal branding could enhance leadership results. Lastly, definite gender difference is identified when creating self-marketing messages on social media.

2.5.2.4   Typologies

Typologies were the next building block of knowledge to be investigated. In total, six of the 36 articles provided typologies of personal branding which met the inclusion criteria (N=6, refer to articles 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 29 and 35).

The following typologies were recognized and associated with personal branding:
According to Wetsch (2012:34) article 35, "Deployment of a personal brand begins by creating a 'positioning pitch' that includes all information learned by the self, which makes the central core of one's personal brand and demonstrates an understanding of one's image and identity ". Wetsch (2012:34), also indicates in article 35 that

> Personal branding requires the following elements: clear understanding of own personality; critical evaluation of own strengths; achievements; passions and weaknesses; and also, clear understanding of how one is perceived by others.

It furthermore requires the establishment of a goal and achieving it through a well-executed plan.

In article 16, the authors indicated that the process of personal branding includes three phases:

Phase 1: Establish a brand identity which is based on inherent internal characteristics in a person to be branded and external elements which are important to the person's relationship with others. People differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd while fitting expectations of a specific target market. The process begins with establishing an inventory of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences as defined within a role. From where the findings are then compared and matched with the target's needs and expectations (Karsudjono et al., 2013).

Phase 2: Development of the brand's positioning: which is focused on planning the communication of one's brand identity through managing behaviour, communication and symbolism while marketing to a specific target market. Individuals use brand positioning to highlight their positive attributes that are of value to their target audience, differentiating themselves from others. Brand positioning occurs through self-presentation, non-verbal cues, verbal disclosures and actions (Karsudjono et al., 2013).

Phase 3: Evaluation: evaluate the brand's image to ensure the fulfilment of personal and professional objectives. To become a brand requires recognition by the marketplace of such a status. A brand is built to meet the needs of the target market. Evaluation of the brand is needed to determine whether the branding efforts had achieved the branding goals and met the personal goals. Incorporation of market feedback into the process of evaluation is essential (Karsudjono et al., 2013).

According to Corsten (2013:42-43) in article 8, which addresses personal sports branding,

The type of brand influencers identified for a personal sport brand include: visibility and public relationship management through media exposure; career wins (athletic performance); endorsement deals; fan interest and followers; corporate social responsibility; personality; extraordinary activities; timing consumption patterns; brand development and innovation; strategy planning

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and collaboration; availability, work ethic and integrity; passion as well as brand execution and communication.

Although the same trend is identified regarding creating the brand, establishing the brand, and maintaining the brand, different authors offer different elements or key steps to meet the requirements of the process. Whereas Corsten (2013), refers to the before mentioned when establishing a personal sports brand, while Wetch (2013), focuses more specifically on the core, the self, image and identity.

2.5.2.5 Models and theories

Models and theories were the next building block of knowledge to be investigated. In total 23 of the 36 articles provided models and theories of personal branding which met the inclusion criteria (N=23, refer to articles, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36. The following models and theories were identified as pieces of text which explain the multiple relationships between variables:

Gall (2012:555-557) in article 11, suggests a model that implies that your personal brand will improve given that you follow the following steps: "understand what your brand already is; do what you are good at; be good at what you do; think in the longterm; know your audience; have a message and build relationships".

Article 25 refers to "An authentic personal branding model which includes the following steps: define and formulate a personal ambition; define and formulate a personal brand; formulate a personal balance scorecard and implement a personal ambition, brand and scorecard" (Rampersad, 2008:35-36).

Thomas (2011:142-143) suggests in article 32, "Four critical building blocks are needed to support personal brand and develop it into a credible, recognizable, representation of a person and one's work." The four essential building blocks for personal brands are "name of brand; message: definite understanding of value, purpose and uniqueness; channel: multiple information streams develop a presence and bridges: development of reciprocal relationships of value, connection, opportunity, partnerships and growth".

In article 33, Vitberg (2010:43-44) indicates that to form a personal brand equity, the following steps should be adhered to: "understand personal branding and the process of branding; craft personal brand statements and brand positioning; understanding the

tools, tactics and media for growing personal brand equity and finding the correct balance between all the steps".

Although different approaches were followed by the different authors, similarities could be identified. Some of the authors referred to the elements of a strong personal brand, whereas others referred to the process of establishing a brand, and others again to the steps within the process to be followed. In one of the articles the measurement of the brand value was addressed.

2.5.2.6   Paradigms

The next building block evaluated was paradigms. In total, only six articles were quantitative, reflecting a rationalistic approach. The five qualitative articles suggested the presence of hermeneutics. The position papers (in total 25) also relied on the hermeneutic approach. It may therefore be stated that the field of personal branding is dominated by a hermeneutic attitude towards knowledge creation.

2.6 Conclusions

2.6.1 General summary

A literature review, in general, should reflect the knowledge in the field (Burton, 2011), and the major conclusions drawn from the overview (Green et al., 2006). The discussion that follows summarises the strength and weaknesses of the data used, and states that which was not known before the literature review was concluded and what is known (Green et al., 2006).

In the study, 36 articles relating to personal branding were reviewed. No particular journal specialises in this field and only the *Journal of Marketing Education* and the *European Journal of Marketing*, published two articles each. Not one of the found articles was published by a South African author or journal. In total 13 of the articles were published between 2003 and 2008 and 23 of the articles were published between 2009 and 2014. From the aforementioned, it can be observed that 2009 to 2014 offered an increase in academic output relating to the topic of personal branding. Five articles represented a qualitative research approach, six articles represented a quantitative research approach, and 25 of the articles were position papers. Most articles were thus not empirical in nature. This is reflected in the scarcity of evidence found to substantiate

the body of knowledge. Only 18 of the articles presented keywords, 28 of the articles presented definitions, six of the articles presented hypotheses, two of the articles presented propositions, eight of the articles presented statements of truth, six of the articles presented typologies, and quite surprisingly 23 of the articles presented models and theories.

Based on the framework utilised to evaluate the body of knowledge certain conclusions could be drawn. The main concepts referred to in the articles on personal branding were: personal branding (this goes without explanation), marketing, branding, and career management. Personal branding is thus within the domain of marketing (marketing and branding) and human resources development (career management).

When considering the definitions offered by the authors of the articles, it was possible to construct a comprehensive definition of personal branding, namely personal branding is a product of the purposeful marketing of an individual to achieve a higher standing than those with similar competencies and reputations who did not engage in such activities.

Qualitative studies offered relevant propositions which indicated that the key premise for personal branding is that everyone has a personal brand, but most people are not aware of this and do not manage it strategically, consistently and effectively.

Some quantitative studies reviewed offered statements of truth. Article 29 indicated that newspaper reporters are not actively and aggressively branding themselves, although they do place a significant value on social media for promotion. The study also confirmed that Twitter, followed by blogging and Facebook is utilised and also that this utilisation of social media is influenced by age. Despite this there is a high level of managerial support for personal branding of newspaper reporters (Schultz, & Sheffer, 2012). Article 15 focused on elements relating to leadership branding.

According to the findings in article 15, a leader's self-mastery, personality and branding have a significant effect on variable achievement motivation and performance of leader candidates; thus, the better, the higher the achievement motivation and performance of the leader candidate will be (Karsudjono et al., 2013). Article 18 investigated marketing approaches of on-line chatters and confirmed certain differences relating to characteristics within a specific culture. For example, that English chatters provided

more personalised information in their profiles than Chinese chatters did, and Chinese chatters provided more highly respected and power-related occupational information in their profiles than English chatters did. Furthermore, Chinese chatters provided more apparently fake information in their profiles than English chatters did, where-as English chatters provided more gender-related information than Chinese chatters did (Li, 2007).

During the review process a number of typologies were identified. Article 35 indicated that personal branding requires certain elements, which includes a clear understanding of a person's personality, critical evaluation of that person's strengths, achievements, passions and weaknesses and also a clear understanding of how a person is perceived by others. Furthermore, personal branding requires the establishment of a goal and achievement of the goal through a well-executed plan. The author of article 35 states that deployment of a personal brand begins by creating a 'positioning pitch', including all information learned by the person, which makes the central core of the person's personal brand and demonstrates an understanding of the person's image and identity (Wetch, 2012). Where-as article 16 suggested that the process of personal branding involves three phases, including establishment of a brand identity (which is based on inherent internal characteristics of a person to be branded) and external elements (which are important to the person's relationship with others so that people can differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd while fitting expectations of the specific target market). The author of article 16 further states that the process of personal branding begins with the establishment of an inventory of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences as defined within a role. The inventory is then compared and matched with the target market's needs and expectations. According to the author, phase 2 refers to the development of the brand's positioning through the development and communication of the person's brand identity by managing behaviour, communication and symbolism for the purpose of marketing to a specific target market. It was further stated that individuals use brand positioning to highlight their positive attributes that are of value to their target audience with the purpose to differentiate themselves from others. The author indicated that brand positioning occurs through self-presentation, non-verbal cues, verbal disclosures and actions. Phase 3 comprises focusing on evaluation; thus, evaluating the brand's image

and how it fulfils the personal and professional objectives. The author concluded that for a person to become a brand, it requires recognition by the marketplace of such a status. This brand is built for the satisfaction of the target market. Evaluation is needed to determine whether the branding efforts had achieved the branding goals and met the personal goals and therefore incorporation of market feedback is essential (Khedher, 2014).

A number of models and theories relating to personal branding where identified during the review. Article 11 indicated that a person's brand will improve provided the following steps are followed: understanding what one's brand already is, doing what one is good at, being good at what one does, thinking long term-related, knowing one's audiences, having a clear message and building relationships (Gall, 2012). Article 15 suggested that personal branding is a process where people are considered as a brand. Personal branding is also defined as creation of assets which relates to specific people or an individual. This could include: clothes, body language and knowledge that creates uniqueness. The authors further stated that personal branding includes the following elements: a controlled perception or emotion of a person within a given situation, and a reflection of employees and what can be trusted and relied on expressed by what can be done and how to do it. Personal branding further stimulates the meaning of perception for others of value and quality which is held by the employee and influences how other employees feel about the specific person's personal branding. Personal branding furthermore results in a number of expectations and associations that grow in the mind of the target audience and which is also an image of the leader with whom they identify. Furthermore, personal branding eliminates competition and position the leader better in the market or specific scenario (Karsudjono et al., 2013).

Based on the articles analysed, five qualitative studies and 26 position papers, it was concluded that the field of personal branding is dominated by a hermeneutic approach.

2.6.2 New knowledge about personal branding identified based on analyses of the articles

Article 11 indicated that in recent decades, individuals have applied the tenets of branding to themselves to create the idea of personal branding, which is marketing of the self as a brand. By thinking in terms of personal branding and relationship

marketing, the author indicates that distance education librarians can reach out to remote students effectively and build long-term relationships that are beneficial to both students and librarians (Gall, 2012).

Article 29 which reported on an exploratory study of reporters at newspapers and television stations, reported that newspaper reporters are not as actively engaged in using social media for personal news branding compared to television and web/online reporters. It is evident that reporters may place a higher value on social media for promotion than audience interaction and brand building. Management control was not considered a significant issue, but several reporters mentioned that their individual outlets were too restrictive, and the reality is that more and more media companies are regulating how their reporters use social media as personal branding media. This further indicated that age will certainly play a role in the development of personal branding. As the older, more resistant group of reporters begins to fade from the scene, they could be replaced by groups much more accepting of social media and more open to personal branding. The strongest outlet for social media branding appears to be Twitter, followed by blogging and Facebook (Schultz, & Sheffer, 2012:63-74).

In article 27, the study findings revealed a 'gap' between today's student needs and what the universities offer. 'Self-brand orientated' management seems to support the development of personal development programmes in a promising way, since the majority of participating students claimed that they were willing to participate in such a program to position themselves better for the market place (Rigopoulou, & Kehagias, 2008).

According to the authors of article 35, digital and traditional media are becoming increasingly integrated. The authors indicated that advertising students today need to understand the roles that online channels, especially social media, play as part of an integrated marketing communications strategy. The authors indicate that by implementing experiential learning assignments, such as having students develop and deploy their personal brand in the online social media environment, the educational experience of students will be enhanced and their value to potential employers after graduation will be increased (Wetsch, 2012).

The study reported in article 15 indicated that the relationship model between the variables studied showed that leader self-mastery, leader personality and leader personal branding have a significant relationship with achievement motivation and the leader candidate performance at the specific company (Karsudjono et al., 2013).

The study reported in article 14 aimed to measure the individual manager's effort to achieve a value-adding personal brand. The results of this study revealed that elements such as following through on commitments, demonstrating competence, protecting confidential information, emphasising shared vision and values, exhibiting desired behaviours and encouraging ethical discussions were identified as important for followers, while the following were less important: using truth and information for supporting rational persuasion, acting support-full and helpful, possessing extraordinary personal qualities, emphasising similarity to the audience, doing unsolicited favourable fair favourites, and a strong sense of right and wrong. As a result, the managers indicated limited ability to demonstrate the above features (Isfahani, Aghdaie, & Homae, 2011).

Article 8 indicated that the hybrid nature of personal sports brands draws highly on emotional capital and social currency. Personal sports branding act as a hybrid, which facilitates hybrid branding relationships between personal sports brands and sports brands at product and corporate levels. It was stated that underlying good return on investments for all involved parties of the sports branding process is often executed strategically well (Corsten, 2013).

Article 3 suggested that Chief Executive Officer's brands can legitimately be considered as brands, and existing brand conceptualisations can be applied to CEOs as long as some particularities are accounted for. CEO brands are influenced by the CEO's personalities and their role as managers, and the organisational need to monitor CEO brand reputation consistently as well as communicate its positioning. A successful CEO branding enhances perceived brand value for organisations (Bendisch, Larsen, & Trueman, 2013).

In article 30, an attempt was made to explore the current popular interest in self-marketing and personal branding from the perspective of marketing as an academic discipline. The author indicates that a particular challenge for the discipline is whether

it can absorb these twin ideas into its ever-broadening pantheon, and at the same time resolve some of the conceptual and practical issues that attend their advocacy and practice. The author asks the question whether the discipline of marketing can reclaim self-marketing and personal branding from the enthusiast. It is further indicated that for the professional self-marketer, the authors of self-help books, career advisors and WEB pundits appear to be the primary sources of advice currently available on the subject. The author indicates that the topic of self-marketing was then beyond the ambition of mainstream marketing (Shepherd, 2005).

2.6.3 Notes to practitioners

"Specific implications to the practice environment should be mentioned" (Green et al., 2006:112). The literature reviewed indicated the implication of the personal brand concept within five professional careers namely educators, public relations practitioners, media reporters, accountants and librarians. It also focused on CEO, leadership or managerial branding as well as personal sports branding. Limited focus was placed on any other type of specific profession or area.

2.6.4 Notes to future researchers

"Specific directives for new research initiatives should be proposed" (Green et al., 2006:112). The review should conclude with recommendations for future research and practice (Kable et al., 2011). Not all the articles suggested further research options, but below follow suggestions for future researchers as indicated by the articles reviewed.

Article 29, which focused on personal branding for newspaper reporters, suggested further research. Future research could focus on several areas, and a content analysis of reporters' social media seems like a logical step. This could determine the value reporters place on the components of the BAV (brand asset valuator), especially in terms of uniqueness, quality and feedback. A more thorough investigation of how reporters are using the social media for reporting would add valuable information. Furthermore, understanding the motivations for social media reporting could help branding patterns. There also appears to be a legal component to this situation that requires investigation. Specifically, does the newspaper own the rights to a reporter's

work and would that keep reporters from personal branding? (Schultz, & Scheffer, 2012).

Article 27, which focused on personal development planning within the area of self-branding orientation, also suggested further research options. In order to proceed, a personal development model could be proposed and tested. This model can be seen as a journey leading to consistent and ever-going building process of a strong self-brand (Rigopoulou, & Kehagias, 2008).

Article 17 builds around marketisation and recasting of the professional self. The question could be how savvy, self-reflexive or even cynical appropriateness of personal brands might actually lead to a form of social transformation for the individual, organisational, professional community, or even beyond (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005).

Article 3 investigated the value of CEO brands and also suggests further research. The conceptual model of CEO brands provides a basis for further research on CEOs. The authors of the article suggest that the next step should be the empirical testing of the conceptual model. They confirmed that there are many other aspects of CEO brands that remain un-researched. For example, a detailed exploration of the relationship between CEO/organisation/stakeholder identity congruence and brand equity would be both theoretically and practically valuable. There is also little understanding of how stakeholders perceive CEO brands, if this perception is influenced by their own identity and self-image or their expectations of CEOs and the companies they represent. Finally, if CEO brands add value to their organisations by positively influencing stakeholders' perceptions, there is an urgent need to research this phenomenon more rigorously. It is also important to have an in-depth understanding of how CEO brands can be built and managed over time to enhance company performance (Bendisch et al., 2013).

Article 2 focused on self-marketing tools for business educators. Future researchers may identify empirically the extent of effectiveness of the self-marketing tools in

general, and assess the role of self-marketing tools as opposed to the role of other factors, for instance the educator's high level of professional commitment, hard work, and ability to deal with the institutional politics successfully in his/her real career growth (Batra, Klein, & Byramjee, 2009).

Article 24 examined gender differences in self-marketing on-line. The authors indicated that gender differences merits future research. Future research needs to assess these gender differences to determine the extent to which consumers plan which kind of content they build into a personal advertisement in order to maximise their chance at obtaining a potential date. Future studies are also needed to understand why, given that men want to attract fertile females, woman are more likely to specify what they want with respect to the physical attractiveness of a man (Peters et al., 2013).

Article 21 focused on self-marketing skills for marketing students and suggested further research. Additional research is needed with samples representing students from multiple universities rather than one, different geographic areas or job markets, urban rather than suburban/rural campuses, and/or private rather than public universities to validate and extend findings. In addition, further investigations could consider an expanded focus on the quality of various career preparation activities. More research is needed to validate the actual success of the measured self-marketing strategies, skills and methods. Follow-up measures could be taken after graduates had actually used their self-marketing skills and job search preparations to determine the relative effectiveness of their efforts. "While assumptions are made about the importance and success of self-marketing strategies such as networking and internships, there is no existing marketing literature to validate this or to determine whether such strategies or combination of strategies will be more important than other qualifications such as grade point and completion of specialized courses in marketing" (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, & King, 2003:206).

2.6.5 Limitations of the study

"Authors should address weak points of their own study and mention areas for improvement" (Green et al., 2006:111). The reviewer has the responsibility to ensure that the limitations are clearly indicated, primarily when the quality of the studies reviewed was not good (White, & Schmidt, 2005).

The articles represented international authors and journals. No South African authors and journals could be found. The articles presented a large number of definitions, typologies, models and theories, but fewer statements of truth and very few propositions.

CHAPTER 3

Personal branding: A systematic review of the research and design strategies used when investigating personal branding

The aim of this chapter was to identify the research and design strategies and, specifically, the scientific procedures used in research articles about personal branding, to build on best practices, and to avoid the pitfalls identified by previous researchers. The chapter will commence with a short introduction to the topic.

3.1   Introduction

One may ask what the following people have in common: Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Richard Branson, Philip Knight, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, JK Rowling, Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, the late Princess Diana, Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. The answer is that these individuals, amongst others, used their journey towards success within different areas of life as a basis to build, implement, maintain and cultivate an authentic, distinctive and memorable personal brand. It could be relevant to ask which personal and professional lessons could be learned from the way these prominent individuals built their brand and also what the true meaning of personal brand is.

Kheder (2014:33) refers to personal branding as the "process of establishing a unique personal identity, developing an active communication approach of one's brand identity to a specific target market and evaluating its impact on one's image and reputation, to fulfil personal and professional objectives". Furthermore, "personal branding is defined as a personal perception or emotion about a person. It is a reflection of who we are, what we believe, what we do, and how we do it. It is authentic and natural and therefore it avoids one from competition but establish a sincere focus on the value of uniqueness" (Karsudjono et al., 2013:628). Thomas (2011:142-143) suggests:

> four critical building blocks are needed to support personal brand and to develop it into a credible, recognisable, representation of a person and their work. The four essential building blocks for personal branding are: *name of the brand*, *message:* what the brand stands for, definite understanding of value, purpose

and uniqueness, *channel:* multiple information streams to develop a value adding presence that builds value adding bridges, *development of relationships* of value, connection, partnerships and growth.

Personal branding as a topic of particular interest is evident from the large number of popular entries found on Google, namely at least 1 820 000 results, while Google Scholar shows at least 249 000 results. Amazon Books lists 2 110 books when personal branding is entered into the search field. Personal branding is thus definitely a topic of interest within the public domain.

Surprisingly, when a search for published journal articles with regard to personal branding was done, only 56 articles could be found of which 36 articles met the inclusion criteria for analysis. It is evident that a definite limitation exists with regard to research concerning personal branding. This is further confirmed by the fact that of the 36 articles, only five articles represented a qualitative research approach, and another six a quantitative approach, whereas the rest (25) were position papers.

This chapter reports on an investigation into the current research and design strategies related to personal branding by means of a systematic literature review. A methodological framework was developed to analyse the 36 identified articles, which was used to synthesise the data. The framework is inclusive of traditional research elements such as, the research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity, reliability, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations. The findings may provide practitioners and academics with insight into the limited research available and indicate the status of the research approach towards personal branding.

Although personal branding has not yet been developed as an academic discipline, it is possible to report on some methodologies that have been used, and to indicate future research opportunities. A detailed explanation follows in the next paragraphs.

3.2   Literature review

According to Wetch (2012), development of a personal brand begins by creating a 'positioning pitch' that includes all information a person knows, understands and accepts, which then becomes the foundation of his/her personal brand, and demonstrates an understanding of his/her real image and identity. Personal branding

requires clear understanding of one's own profile including personality, strengths, weaknesses, achievements, passions and how one is perceived by others. Personal branding can only be successfully achieved if aligned with a specific life or career plan followed with a well-executed plan.

The literature review reflected in this chapter focused specifically on the elements which should be discussed in the methodology section of an empirical report. The subheadings which follow represent common elements included in textbooks on business research, and guidelines to authors, as presented in esteemed journals (Babbie, & Mouton, 2001; Bryman, & Bell, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Neuman, 1997). Apart from providing these elements (research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity, reliability, measurement scales, data analysis and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations), each element is discussed with reference to the general concept, as well as to specific ways in which it can be presented in an article. The latter was done in order to guide the researcher to identify common and less common ways by which the phenomenon (personal branding) is researched as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2013). The elements discussed below were utilised as a framework to analyse the research and design strategies used by researchers in the area of personal branding.

3.2.1 Research methodology

The research methodology is the scientific approach the researcher follows to pursue the research project. Below is a description of the elements that were an integral part of the framework used to analyse the research and design methodologies of the articles related to personal branding. It includes research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, limitation and ethical considerations (Babbie, & Mouton, 2001; Bryman, & Bell, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014; Neuman, 1997).

3.2.2 Research paradigm

Paradigms play a fundamental role in science. A paradigm is a set of laws, theories, methods, applications and a whole system of thinking that form a scientific research tradition. It includes basic assumptions, questions to be answered, and problems to be

solved or research techniques to be used (Gringery, Barusch, & Cambron, 2013; Mc Burney, 1994; Neuman, 1997).

Within the business environment, paradigms may either objectively view the organisational processes and structures, or see the organisation subjectively, as constructed by individuals. Four possible paradigms for the study of business or an organisation are suggested by Bryman and Bell (2014). The authors refer to a functionalist approach as problem solving, which leads to rational explanation as a dominant approach within an organisation. Using the interpretative approach, the researcher questions whether the organisation exists beyond the social domain based on the experience of those working there. Then again, the radical humanist approach looks at the organisation as a social set-up where research is seen as the initiation of change. Lastly, the radical structuralist assumes that the organisation is a result of structural power where relationships could end in conflict.

The four paradigms are not aligned with one another as they are based on fundamentally opposing views. According to Bryman and Bell (2014), a paradigm influences the choice of research design and data collection as either qualitative or quantitative or a multiple approach. Choice of a paradigm is thus used as a starting point in research, which leads to the research design as indicated by Mouton (1996) discussed in the next paragraph.

3.2.3 Research design

Research design is the approach followed to investigate the problem at hand, inclusive of a structure to collect and analyse data. This research strategy could be qualitative or quantitative research or in some cases a combination, as indicated by Leedy and Ormrod (2014). Quantitative research focuses on theoretical explanations, concepts, variables and the interrelationship based on the testing of formulated hypotheses in an empirical manner. To ensure future replication, measures and intended procedures are pre-developed and standard. Analysis normally takes place by using statistics, tables and charts (Neuman, 1997). On the other hand, qualitative research captures and discovers meaning. Measures are setting-specific. Data may be obtained from documents, observations and transcripts. Research procedures are specific, and replication is normally rare. Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalisations

from evidence and organising data to present a coherent and consistent picture (Neuman, 1997).

It is very unusual for a researcher to study the entire population, therefore a procedure referred to as 'sampling' is utilised. Sampling refers to the process where a researcher will select a subset or sample of the population so that the results could be used to provide general results relating to the entire population. Two major categories of sampling exist, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling, and the type most appropriate to the research aims and methods, as well as other characteristics, such as the time and resources available, will be chosen. Probability sampling allows each person an equal possibility to be chosen. It uses random selection, which allows for minimum error. Types of probability sampling are simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, proportional stratified sampling, cluster sampling as well as systematic sampling (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014; Bryman, & Bell, 2014). However, with non-probability sampling it is not possible to predict or guarantee that elements within a particular population will be represented, which means that some members have little to no opportunity to be sampled for a specific study. Convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling are all non-probability sampling types (Neuman, 1997).

Measurement is needed to limit the data of any topic to ensure that the data can be interpreted and compared to a specific qualitative or quantitative standard. The following paragraph explains the measurement scales used to order data during a research project.

3.2.4 Measurements

Measurement is the assignment of numbers to events or objects according to rules that permit important properties of the objects or events to be represented by properties of the number system. Four types of measurement scales are common: nominal scale, ordinal scale, interval scale and ratio scale (McBurney, 1994). A nominal scale is a simple approach that limits data to a specific name assigned and restricts it then to the meaning by dividing it into categories that can be compared with each other. With an ordinal scale, "symbols become relevant which refers to > (greater than) and < (less than). The scale allows the researcher to rank-order data". An example could be

classification of education, income or levels of performance. Furthermore, an interval scale is characterised by its equal units of measurement and by its zero point, which has been established arbitrarily. A good example is the Fahrenheit (F) and Celsius (C) scales for measuring temperature. Also, the scales used by some survey groups, businesses and professional organisations could be assumed as interval scales. Then, lastly, a ratio scale has two characteristics, namely equal measurement units and an absolute zero point. The ratio scale can express values of multiples and fractional parts, and these are true ratios (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

Reliability and validity are central issues in scientific measurements. Different techniques are followed for quantitative and qualitative studies. Reliability refers to an indicator's dependability, indicating that the information provided by indicators does not vary as a result of characteristics of the indicator, instrument or measurement device itself. It is expected that measuring instruments will offer consistent results (Neuman, 1997; Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014). In business or social research, focus is placed on inter-rater reliability (that will evaluate the same item with the same judgment), test–retest reliability (that the same results will occur on different occasions), equivalent form reliability (that different instruments will produce the same outcome) and internal consistency reliability (for all items, the same instrument will produce the same results as indicated by Leedy and Ormrod (2014).

Both reliability and validity reflect the degree to which error is possible in measurement. Measurement can only be accurate if measured consistently. When the reliability of a measurement instrument is increased, the validity also increases (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

The validity of a measurement instrument is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. The validity of a measurement instrument can take different forms, which include face validity (on the surface it looks like measuring as expected), content validity (it reflects the various parts of the content domain in appropriate proportions), criterion validity (results correlate with results from another instrument) and construct validity (it measures patterns of a characteristic that cannot be directly observed) (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

When conducting qualitative research, external reliability, internal reliability, internal and external validity are recommended (Bryman, & Bell, 2014; LeCompte, & Goetz 1982).

In qualitative research, validity is sometimes referred to as 'trustworthiness', which could be described as engagement and persistent observation over a longer time to facilitate trust. Triangulation occurs when multiple data collection methods, sources, investigators and theoretical approaches are used. It includes peer review and debriefing to ensure additional independent evaluation. A search for negative cases to un-confirm the proof, explicit clarification of research bias and subjectivity, verification of thoughts and documentation as well as external independent review are other techniques used to bring about trustworthiness. Lastly an adequate research context is ensured through thick and rich writing (Bryman, & Bell, 2014; Creswell, 2013).

3.2.5 Data analysis and interpretation

'Data analysis' refers to a search for patterns in data. Once a pattern is identified, it is interpreted in terms of a theory or the setting, within which it occurred, thereby providing a possible deeper interpretation of its meaning (Neuman, 1997).

Although qualitative data analysis is less standardised than quantitative data analysis, it requires more effort by the researcher who is required to read, reflect and compare in a logical way through conceptualisation as well as open, axial and selective coding. Most of the data collection is dependent on the personal involvement of the researcher. Methods of qualitative data analysis include successive approximation, analytic comparison, domain analysis and ideal types, such as conversation analysis, discourse analyses, narrative analysis, rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis, semiotics and thematic analysis (Neuman, 1997).

Quantitative researchers, in contrast, follow an approach of deductive reasoning beginning with a premise and then drawing logical conclusions from it. Objectivity is maintained through predetermined statistical procedures with objective criteria to evaluate the outcomes. Data is typically reduced to means, medians, correlations and summarising statistics. One or a few variables are identified with the intention to study and collect data relating to those variables, with a focus on the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments (McBurney, 1994).

Five types of main variables are relevant within quantitative research. This includes dichotomous, nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio variables. Univariate analysis refers to one variable at a time, while bivariate analysis refers to analysing the relationship between two variables. Univariate analysis utilises frequency tables and diagrams. Measures of central tendency use the arithmetic mean, median and mode, whereas measures of dispersion use the range and standard deviation. Bivariate analysis utilises contingency tables, and the techniques include the Pearson's correlation coefficient r, Spearman's rho as well as phi and Cramér's V. Furthermore, to verify the level of statistical significance techniques, the chi-square test is utilised. Some researchers manage to combine elements of both approaches, in which case the research is referred to as having a mixed-method design (Bryman, & Bell, 2014; Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

3.2.6 Limitations

It is important for researchers to acknowledge the weak points of their own studies and indicate areas for improvement. The researcher has the responsibility to ensure that the limitations are clearly indicated, particularly when the quality of the studies reviewed was not good (Green et al., 2006; White, & Schmidt, 2005).

3.2.7 Ethical considerations

Whenever the subjects or participants are human beings or other creatures that can feel, think and experience distress, researchers should evaluate the implications of the research approach and the effect of it. Most ethical considerations during research fall into the following categories referring to the subjects or participants: protection from harm, voluntary and informed participation, right to privacy and honesty with professional partners. Internal review boards and professional codes of ethics play a critical role to ensure ethical research. Researchers should align with the standards of the different bodies (Bryman, & Bell, 2014; Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014). This section concludes the discussion of the theoretical framework. The following section demonstrates the application of the framework during the analysis phase of the study with reference to research and design strategies applied in previous studies concerning personal branding.

3.3 Methodology

The data extraction was done independently by the researcher and the research supervisor, and the results were compared (White, & Schmidt, 2005). The approach followed two steps to review the relevant methodology systematically. Firstly, a literature search was performed, and secondly, there was a selection of relevant studies guided by the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which are described in the paragraph below. The purpose was to analyse methods used previously in studies relating to personal branding. The searched terms used were personal brand*, individual brand*, professional brand*, self-brand*, and self-marketing. The asterisk allows the search engine to use all variations of the word; thus, including terms such as 'branding', 'brands' and 'branded', as an example. Publications which appeared between 2002 and 2014 were included in the search. The search was initiated on 17 June 2014, and a wide bouquet EBSCOhost and ProQuest database were used. A full list is attached as Annexure A.

The search was further limited to full-text publications in English. Only articles which were identified as peer-reviewed were included. Although it is the ideal to have a complete operational protocol (White, & Schmidt, 2005), it was only developed after some pilot searches. Many clearly promotional titles were found, despite the specification that results should reflect peer-reviewed articles. These were excluded, as Babbie and Mouton (2012), caution that only information or data that is accepted by the scientific community should be included in building the body of knowledge. The initial search also yielded results pertaining to the link between individuals and product brands, such as "Place branding: creating self-brand connections and brand advocacy" (Kemp, 2012). This and similar articles typical of consumer behaviour were excluded. The search was completed on 19 June 2014, using the search engines, inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as search terms as indicated above. In total 56 articles were captured when doing the computer search, after excluding duplications in the reach of the EBSCOhost and ProQuest bouquets. After the researcher had reviewed the list, a total of 36 articles met all criteria.

The elements of research as indicated in 3.1.2 to 3.1.7 were utilised as a framework to analyse the articles and are discussed in section 3.3 below.

3.4 Findings

In total, 56 articles were located given the search strategy. Finally, only 36 articles were analysed (see Annexure B), given the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study. *The Journal of Marketing Education* (N=2) and *European Journal of Marketing Management* (N=2) both published two articles each, but no other journal published two or more articles. No author published more than one article. In the sections that follow the findings will be discussed in terms of the elements of the framework utilised.

3.4.1 Research paradigm

It was possible to identity and report the paradigm reflected as a set of laws, theories, methods and applications that form the scientific research tradition of the articles. In total, only six articles were quantitative, reflecting a positivistic critical-rationalistic approach, which acknowledged that the truth is revealed through a focus on the rejection of the nil hypotheses. The four qualitative articles suggested the presence of hermeneutics. The position papers (in total 25 articles) also relied on hermeneutics. In most cases, the authors of the articles viewed their assumptions about certain elements of the body of knowledge in the way they gave explanations of the phenomenon. It may therefore be stated that the field of personal branding is dominated by interpretive hermeneutics towards knowledge creation, which is seen as the subjective human understanding of the phenomenon personal branding obtained by means of the process of interpretation and dialogue (Gringery et al., 2013; McBurney, 1994; Neuman, 1997). The next paragraph provides insight into the research design strategies identified in the analysed articles.

3.4.2 Research design strategies

The research design describes the general strategy planned and developed to address the research objective (Leady, & Ormrod, 2014). In total, six articles followed a quantitative research approach (inclusive of variables, causal relationships and hypothesis testing), five articles followed a qualitative research approach (captured and discovered meaning from documents, observations and transcripts), whereas 25 articles were position papers (reviewing information and forming a subjective opinion) (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014; Neuman, 1997). The next paragraph offers a reflection of the sampling methods in the different articles that were analysed.

3.4.3 Sampling

Sampling is a process of selecting cases systematically for inclusion in a research project. The framework in Table 3.1 both provides a summary of the identified sampling procedures and shows how it was applied to analyse the sampling approach followed in the articles (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014; Neuman, 1997).

Table 3.1

Frequency of use of sampling techniques

Sampling category	Sampling approach	Article utilisation
Probability sampling	Simple random sampling	N = 3 (Articles 23, 29, 19)
	Stratified random sampling	N = 0
	Proportional stratified sampling	N = 1 (Article 24)
	Cluster sampling	N = 1 (Article 14)
	Systematic sampling	N = 0
Non-probability sampling	Convenience sampling	N = 0
	Quota sampling	N = 0
	Purposive sampling	N = 5 (Articles 7, 15, 19, 18, 21,)
No sampling utilised or indicated per article		N = 27 (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

Based on the summary presented in Table 3.1, it is clear that the sampling method used most frequently was probability sampling, with three cases of simple random sampling and two cases of cluster sampling. A propositional stratified sample was used in one of the articles. When non-probability sampling was used, it was only purposive sampling. This occurred in five cases. No evidence of stratified random, systematic,

convenience and quota sampling could be identified. Most papers were position papers, and therefore no sampling technique was used by 27 articles. This is the most significant feature of Table 3.1. The next section provides an overview of the types of measurement scales utilised in the 36 articles that were analysed.

3.4.4 Measurements scales

Four types of measurement scales are available for obtaining data so it can be interpreted. Table 3.2 simultaneously summarises the framework to analyse the measurement scales used in the articles and reports on the utilisation of nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales (McBurney, 1994).

Table 3.2

Frequency of use of sampling technique

Measurement scale	Article utilisation
Nominal scales	N = 5 (Articles 7, 18, 21, 24, 29)
Ordinal scales	N = 2 (Articles 19, 27)
Interval scales	N = 0
Ratio scales	N = 0
No scales utilised or indicated per article	N = 28 (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31,32 ,33 ,34, 35, 36,)

Although nominal and ordinal scales were utilised in seven articles, ordinal- and ratio measurement scales could not be identified in the articles; thus, its use was very limited. In the next section, a report on the validity and reliability status of the analysed articles is given.

3.4.5 Validity and reliability

The validity of a research project is its credibility, what it means and its correctness. Validity empowers the researcher to draw value-adding and defensible conclusions from the available data. Then again, reliability focuses on the consistency of how a measurement instrument provides results (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

Table 3.3 indicates the framework used to analyse the level of validity of the measurement instruments identified in the articles and the result of the analysis (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

Table 3.3

Frequency of use of validity techniques

Validity approach	Article utilisation
Face validity	N = 0
Content validity	N = 2 (Articles 14, 21)
Criterion validity	N = 0
Construct validity	N = 2 (Articles 15, 27)
No specific validity approach utilised or indicated per article	N = 29 (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

Only four of the six quantitative studies presented information on the validity of their measurements, which included content and construct validity. No evidence of face- and criterion validity could be identified. Furthermore, 29 of the 36 articles did not give any attention to any validity technique.

To ensure accurate measurement, the instruments utilised should provide consistent results. Table 3.4 demonstrates the reliability approaches identified in the articles utilised (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

Table 3.4

Frequency of use of reliability techniques

Reliability approach	Article utilisation
Inter-rater reliability	N = 2 (Articles 18, 19)
Test–retest reliability	N = 0
Internal consistency reliability	N = 1 (Article 29)
Composite reliability	N = 1 (Article 15)
No specific reliability approach utilised or indicated per article	N = 30 (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 13, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

Again, only four of the six quantitative studies presented information on the reliability of their measurements. This included inter-rater reliability, test–retest reliability as well as composite reliability. On the other hand, 30 articles did not specify any reliability approach followed. Paragraph 3.4.6 reports on data analysis as well as the interpretation of the data.

3.4.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Normally, a researcher will look into data analytically to gain new insights and discover new research objectives. Patterns are identified and interpretation for further meaning takes place. Either qualitative (deductive reasoning) data analysis approaches are followed or otherwise quantitative (inductive reasoning) data approaches are followed. Table 3.5 indicates the different data analysis approaches identified.

Table 3.5

Frequency of use of data analysis and interpretation approaches

Data analysis and interpretation approach	Article utilisation
Qualitative (deductive reasoning)	N = 4 (3, 7, 8, 24,)
Quantitative (inductive reasoning)	N = 6 (15, 18, 19, 21, 27, 29)
No data analysis (Positioning paper)	N = 26 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

Again, only four qualitative approaches were followed. Six approaches were quantitative and 25 approaches did not follow any data analysis and interpretation route, as they were pure positioning papers. Based on the information discussed in this section, a summary of the limitations indicated in the articles is presented in section 3.4.7.

3.4.7 Limitations

It is of the utmost importance that during the review of academic articles, the reviewer indicates the limitation identified (White, & Schmidt, 2005). In only four articles, the researchers explicitly report the limitations of their studies. A brief summary of the limitations offered by the articles reviewed follows:

- in Article 29, a low response rate influenced the results negatively (Schults, & Sheffer, 2012);
- Article 27 indicated that the research finding did not present a picture of the entire student population (Rigopoulou, & Kehagias, 2008);
- Article 19 indicated that the basis for the construction of the data set was largely the CVs of 30 scholars in the field, with no standardised format and not all factors were reported on in a consistent manner (Noble, Bently, Campbell, & Singh, 2014); and
- Article 21 indicated that the sample of the study was limited to business students from a single business school (McCorkle et al., 2006).

However, 31 articles did not indicate any specific limitations.

3.4.8 Ethical considerations

Table 3.6 indicates and reports on the ethical considerations reflected/identified in the research described in the articles reviewed (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014).

Table 3.6

Ethical considerations identified in articles reviewed

Ethical considerations	Article utilisation
Protection from harm	N = 0
Voluntary and informed participation	N = 1 (Article 19)
Right to privacy	N = 2 (Articles 19, 21)
Honesty with professional partners	N = 0
No ethical considerations indicated per article	N = 34 (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 34, 36)

Only one article (Article 19) focused on the voluntary and informed participation right of respondents, and one article indicated the right to privacy, whereas no reference was made to internal review boards or professional ethical codes in any of the articles.

For Article 19, the subjects in the sample received a cover letter from the principal investigator describing the nature of the study, ensuring confidentiality and asking for co-operation (Noble et al., 2014). In Article 33, students were assured of anonymity and there were indications that the students would be assisted to look for work opportunities after graduation (McCorkle et al., 2003).

3.5   Conclusion

3.5.1 General summary

Branding the person is becoming more critical for career and organisational success due to the new trend of freelance contract work arrangements as well as outsourcing of non-core services and business activities, and furthermore the growing trend of employing part-time consultants. A personal brand is normally based on an

individual's personal or professional reputation, which could result in personal or organisation revenue from a career management perspective if maintained and sustained according to the market needs. As it is with any business brand, this could be seen as a critical element of life and/or career success.

3.5.2 Summary of methodology followed

An element of silence with regard to the topic of personal branding was identified within the academic world when the researcher conducted a search for published peer-reviewed journal articles. Publications which appeared between 2002 and 2014 were included in the search. A wide bouquet EBSCOhost and ProQuest database were used. It was limited to full-text publications in English, which had to be peer reviewed. The purpose of the study on which this article reports was to conduct a systematic literature review of the research and design strategies used in the journal articles related to personal branding. After a literature review had been done on research and design strategies, a methodological framework was developed to analyse the articles. The framework was inclusive of research elements such as research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity, reliability, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, limitations of studies/research and ethical considerations. The framework was used to structure the reporting of findings.

The literature provided an opportunity to summarise the methodological framework in a workable manner. It was concluded that a paradigm is a set of laws, theories, methods and applications that forms a research viewpoint. Furthermore, a research design can follow a quantitative (objective causal logic with interrelationships resulting in empirical evidence) or a qualitative approach (subjective discovering of meaning). It is also necessary to ensure that the results of a study present the total population researched. It is not always possible to include every respondent and therefore the process of sampling assists the researcher to select a sample of the population, giving a generalised result if truly a representation of the population. The different sampling methods explored in this study included probability sampling (simple random, stratified random, proportional, cluster and systematic sampling) as well as non-probability sampling (convenience, quota and purposive sampling). The researcher further looked into measurement, validity and reliability of data. When developing the framework, four types of measurement scales were included, namely nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio

scales. Furthermore, the validity of measurement analysis included face, content, criterion and construct validity. Then again, analysis of the reliability, which is the consistency with which results are offered, was done based on inter-related, test–retest as well as internal consistency reliability. Furthermore, the researcher evaluated the process of data analysis followed in the articles which could either be quantitative (objective deductive reasoning) or qualitative (subjective inductive reasoning) by nature and in some cases, a combination could be followed. The researcher then went further to identify the limitations of the research articles and evaluated the ethical considerations applied and indicated in the articles.

3.5.3 New knowledge relating to the study based on analyses of the articles

In total, 56 articles were located based on the search strategy. Only 36 articles were analysed following the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The *Journal of Marketing Education* as well as the *European Journal of Marketing* both published two articles each relating to personal branding. No author published more than one article and no South African author published an article. In total, six articles were quantitative by nature following a rationalistic stand and five qualitative articles represented a hermeneutic approach.

The position papers also followed a hermeneutic approach, which suggests that the field of personal branding follows a hermeneutic route to create knowledge. Simple random sampling was used by three research articles, one used proportional stratified sampling and five, purposive sampling. It was interesting to note that 27 of the articles did not follow any sampling process. In total, seven articles made use of measurement scales, namely five nominal scales and two ordinal scales. The search showed that 28 articles did not indicate any utilisation of measurement scales. Surprisingly, 29 articles did not indicate any utilisation of a specific validity approach, two used construct validity and two used content validity. This same trend reflected when it was identified that 30 articles did not report on a specific reliability testing technique, although one referred to composite reliability, one to internal consistency reliability and two to inter-rater reliability. Of the 36 articles, only five authors reported and indicated limitations of the research article and again only five authors reported on the ethical considerations applied.

3.5.4 Notes to future researchers

The results of this study indicate that very limited scientific academic research has been done within the field of personal branding. In addition, the scope of the published research on the topic regarding the fields and elements of the phenomenon is limited. Furthermore, most information available is based on subjective views and reviews by authors without any specific scientific procedure, or in some cases, incomplete scientific procedures that exclude critical elements of the recognised and accredited research processes to be followed.

Based on the outcome of this study, it could be stated that there is a definite need to explore the phenomenon of personal branding. There could be a wealth of knowledge available that refers to individuals who have implemented a personal branding strategy successfully. This knowledge may potentially be studied and formulated into frameworks, models and theories from the perspective of different paradigms. When a recognised and acceptable scientific process and soundly formulated research design is used, it will be possible to identify and study best practices.

The field of personal branding provides substantial opportunities for future researchers due to the lack of well-formulated scientific research at present. It is likely that personal branding could become more important to the individual in future irrespective whether of the concept will be applied from a personal, professional, entertainment, sport or political space or platform. Therefore, the individual would benefit from applying sound principles in managing, aligning and sustaining his or her life and career. One of the options could be to learn lessons from business principles with a specific focus on marketing and branding, to enhance and sustain career and life aspirations and goals. Furthermore, business could benefit from a meaningful understanding and acknowledgement of individuals based on their uniqueness. Personal branding also has the potential to add value on a bigger scale within society from both a skills application and career management perspective.

3.5.5 Limitations of the study

The articles represented international authors and journals. No South African authors and journals could be found.

CHAPTER 4

Developing a personal brand: Systematically exploring popular literature on the topic

The aim of this chapter was to present a synthesis of what it entails to develop a personal brand, including inputs from various sources – mainly because no such analyses have been conducted previously and academic literature is thus very scarce.

4.1　Introduction

Literature on personal branding is found primarily in the popular domain (Mohammed and Steyn, 2016) and presents personal branding as having an implicit link with desirable outcomes such as career success. For example, Arruda and Dixson (2007) name the third chapter of their text-book "Career distinction: Brand yourself for career success" and, along similar lines, Schawbel (2010) names one of the chapters of his book "4 steps to building your future: Life-changing results". A number of authors imply the same link, among them Rampersad (2009), with a chapter entitled "Implement and cultivate your personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard" and Deckers and Lacy (2011) with a chapter titled "Your network is your castle: Build it". This link is implied in other literature as well, by authors including Handley (2009), Gowley and Handley (2007) and Rampersad (2015).

A personal brand may be desirable, but what does it take to have one? This question is difficult to answer, as empirical research on this matter is scarce (Mohammed, & Steyn, 2016). Using popular literature, it was possible by means of scrutinising a number of popular books on personal branding to identify six themes frequently associated with a personal brand. These themes are listed below.

The books used to create the list were authored by Arruda and Dixson (2007), Bates (2012), Chritton (2012), Clark, Osterwalder and Pigneur (2012), Deckers and Lacy (2011), Del Blenco (2010), Gowley and Handley (2007), Fertik and Thompson (2015), Handley (2009), Linne and Sitkins (2015), Rampersad (2009) (2015), Schawbel (2010) (2015), Webster (2016) and Wilson and Blumenthal (2008). All of these authors refer,

in one way or another, to the following as being crucial to the development of a personal brand:

- Understanding the importance of having a personal brand: In this regard, Arruda and Dixson (2007) state that a career distinction mind-set is needed to brand oneself for career success. Bates (2012) refers to the importance of understanding one's brand in a chapter in her book, titled "Why you need a brand and why your brand matters". A further example of this emphasis being placed on personal branding is a chapter titled "Why is personal brand important?" which Chritton (2012) presents in her book. Fertik and Thompson (2015), Linne and Sitkens (2015), Rampersad (2009) and Schawbel (2015) makes similar references.

- Developing self-awareness and awareness of one's environment: Arruda and Dixson (2007) indicate the importance of a person being aware of the unique value proposition that he or she can offer. They also indicate that one needs to "know oneself to grow oneself as well as to define the brand community within which one functions". Clark et al. 2012. confirm the importance of awareness and dedicate a chapter in their book to this matter under the title "Reflect". Similarly, Linne and Sitkins (2015) present a chapter in their book titled "Who do you and they think you are?" Chritton (2012), Fertik and Thompson (2015), Schawbel (2010), as well as Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) espouse similar views.

- Visualising and conceptualising a personal brand: Clark, et al. (2012), suggests that people should reinvent their own work lives by redrawing their personal business model. Schawbel (2010), on the other hand, states that one should command one's own career by creating one's own brand. Del Blanco (2010) devotes a chapter in his book to "First steps: Talent, mission and courage", while Rampersad (2009) titles a chapter in his book as "How to define and formulate your personal brand". Arruda and Dixson (2015), Bates (2012), Chritton (2012), Linne and Sitkins (2015) as well as Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) make similar references.

- Developing a personal brand marketing and stakeholder management strategy: Arruda and Dixson (2007) indicate the importance of communicating one's

brand to one's target audience. This is confirmed by Bates (2012) through a chapter in her book dubbed "Communicate your leadership brand", and also by Chritton (2012), who devotes a chapter to "Communicating your brand to the world". Deckers and Lacy (2011), too, devotes a chapter in their book to "Promoting your brand to the real world", while Handley (2009), Linne and Sitkins (2015), Schawbel (2010) and Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) make similar references in their work.

- Implementing the personal brand: Clark et al. (2012) name a chapter in their book "Act: Learn to make it happen" while Rampersad (2015) puts forward a chapter in his book entitled "Implement and cultivate your personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balance scorecard". Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) devote a chapter in their book to such implementation, naming it "I am ready to commit to my action plan". It is noted, too, that Arruda and Dixson (2007), Bates (2012) and Rampersad (2009) also focus on the requirement to adequately implement the personal brand.

- Measuring, evaluating and improving your brand: Deckers and Lacy (2011) suggest that measurement of the success of the personal brand is important to maintaining and sustaining it. Linne and Sitkins (2015) dedicate a chapter in their book to "Personal brand assessment", while Rampersad (2009) presents a chapter titled "How to formulate your personal balanced score-card". Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) also refer to the value of assessing the success of the personal brand.

As stated above, academic literature on personal branding is scarce. The aim of this research is to present a synthesis of what it entails to develop a personal brand, using the aforementioned structure and including inputs from various sources. Achieving this aim without relying on only a single source, and by incorporating available literature, would make it possible to know what it means to develop a personal brand. It would also be possible to advise those interested in developing a personal brand as to the steps that need to be taken in this process.

No other examples of such inclusive literature were found in academic journals and, as such this, research would present a platform upon which to build a body of knowledge around this topic.

4.2   Literature review

In this section, the focus was on popular literature. The researcher collected 19 books on the topic, based on availability to the South African market via the internet and local book-sellers.

The outcome of this research is a literature review offering strategies to implement a personal brand. Thus, no literature review will be provided here. Rather, the literature review will form the findings of the study.

4.3   Methodology

The requirements of an effective literature review, done in a systematic manner, are well explained by Burton (2011), Kaniki (2009) and Kable et al. (2011). In this research, such a strategy was originally followed, but the sheer scale of the task (in total, 19 books covering 5 379 pages) and the disparate nature of the data forced the use of a different strategy. Qualitative content analysis was conducted resulting in 6 themes (strategies). Firstly, the chapters of the various books were analysed for their content which was then integrated. Then the corpus of the text of each book was analysed, to add more depth to the analysis. After identifying the major steps associated with the development of a personal brand, literature embroidering on these themes was integrated and it is this which is reported upon in the findings section of this research. To facilitate this process, all information was captured on a single spreadsheet and systematically integrated by collapsing categories. The findings are thus subjective but, as they incorporate the views of many writers, can be seen as an improvement on the current standing of the body of knowledge.

A list of the books consulted for this review is presented here:

Arruda, W., & Dixson, K. (2007). *Career Distinction: Stand out by building your brand*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Bates, S. (2012). *Discover your CEO Brand: Secrets to embracing and maximizing your unique value as a leader*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Chritton, S. (2012). *Personal branding for dummies.* London: Nicholas Brealey.

Clark, T., Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur Y. (2012). *Business model you: A One-page method of reinventing your career.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Deckers, E., & Lacy, K. (2011). *Branding yourself: How to use social media to invent and reinvent yourself.* Indianapolis, IN: Pearson Education.

Del Blenco, R.A. (2010). *Personal brands: Manage your life with talent and turn it into a unique experience.* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fertik, M., & Thompson, D. (2015). *The reputation economy.* New York, NY: Crown Business.

Gowley, G., & Handley, J. (2007). *Raise your game: Manage your performance for a win in business (2nd edition).* Cape Town: Tandym Print.

Handley, J. (2009). *Raise your profile.* Cape Town: Tandym Print.

Kaputa, C. (2012). *You are a brand (2nd edition).* London: Nicholas Brealey.

Linne, L.G., & Sitkins, P. (2015). *Brand aid: Taking control of your reputation: Before anyone else does.* New York, NY: Prentice-Hall.

Rampersad, H.K. (2009). *Authentic personal branding.* New York, NY: Information Age.

Rampersad, H.K. (2015). *Authentic personal brand coaching: Entrepreneurial leadership brand coaching for sustainable high performance.* New York, NY: Information Age.

Schawbel, D. (2010). *ME 2.0: 4 Steps to building your future.* New York, NY: Kaplan.

Schawbel, D. (2015). *Promote yourself: The new rules for building an outstanding career.* London: Piatkus.

Veldsman, T.H., & Johnson, A.J. (2016). *Leadership: Perspectives from the front line.* Randburg: Knowledge Resources.

Webster, T.M. (2010). *Personovation: Re-inventing your personal brand.* Braamfontein: Philosophy.

Webster, T.M. (2016). *Personal brand intelligence.* Paarl: Ndalo Media.

Wilson, J.S., & Blumenthal, I. (2008). *Managing brand you.* New York, NY: AMACOM

The books utilised in the analyses were all written in English, and focused mostly on global icons, from around the world. Most included sections on the self, the self in relation to others, and in many cases business or organisation scenarios.

In order to ensure a high degree of truthfulness in the themes (Golafshani, 2003), the researcher and research supervisor were employed to scrutinise the available literature and to construct the syntheses for each of the themes. In addition, efforts were made to substantiate the relevance and commonality of the themes through cross-referencing between the different sources.

4.4   Findings

The findings are presented as per the themes described in the introduction to the research. Under each theme, the necessary activities needed to achieve the outcome are presented. Below is a schematic demonstration, followed by a detailed description:

Figure 4.1: Personal branding: Development, implementation and sustainment
Source: Author / Researcher

Strategy 1: Understanding the importance of having a personal brand.

Awareness as to the importance of a personal brand is presented as the first step to developing a personal brand. Most authors refer to it (see Arruda, & Dixson, 2007; Bates, 2012; Chritton, 2012; Decker, & Lacy, 2011; Fertik, & Thompson, 2015; Gowley, & Handley, 2007; Rampersad, 2009; Schwabel, 2010), but they are silent on how interested parties should develop this understanding. The quoted authors did not provide any particular strategies, choosing rather to simply explain the seeming importance of having a brand. They go only so far as to describe the matter as being important and, by implication, they may be suggesting that their own writings or opinions about the importance of personal branding would create such awareness.

Most people will have both a professional and leadership as well as a personal brand, the professional and leadership brand presenting them in the professional world and the personal brand presenting them in society in general (Del Blanco, 2010). When the individual is interested in getting the best results, branding refers to an outgoing, conscientious effort to "show the world who you are" (Chritton, 2012) and to make the right people aware of it (Schwabel, 2010). According to Deckers and Lacy (2011), successful personal branding refers to an individual creating the kind of emotional response that he or she wants people to associate with him or her. Del Blanco (2010) emphasises the importance of a good reputation, as this will influence critical relationships towards being successful. According to Arruda and Dixson (2007), effective personal branding enables one to profit from the elements that differentiate one from others with the same competencies. Schwabel (2015) posits that one's brand assists here by offering a unique career distinction and by positioning one accordingly in the market. Arruda and Dixson (2017) and Schwabel (2015) confirms that one should be clear about one's value proposition as well as mindful about one's behaviour, relationships and communication, and that one should also innovate strategies to achieve professional success. Based on the views of the authors cited here, one could perceive personal branding to be important simply because, without it, it is difficult to be noticed by the correct stakeholders in what is, after all, a big world.

Having an authentic brand, rather than a superficial brand, seems to be important to most of the authors consulted. Chritton (2012) indicates that personal branding is all about authenticity. Also, Linne and Sitkins (2015) states that personal branding means "showing the world your authentic self". Successful personal brands need to be authentic and reflective of a good reputation (Schwabel, 2010). Rampersad (2009) indicates that one's personal brand should reflect one's true character and should be built on one's true values, strengths, and uniqueness. Schwabel (2015) warns that a false image may offer some short-term success but that, over time, others will see through it, which could result in a negative sense of professionalism. Rampersad (2009) agrees with some of the authors cited, including Bates (2012), Chritton (2012), Deckers and Lacy (2011), Kaputa (2012), Linne and Sitkins (2015), as well as Wilson and Blumenthal (2008), stating that one of the most important criteria for personal branding is authenticity.

Webster (2016) affirms this and states that it is important for one to be thoroughly honest with the brand that one is aspiring to be and that it is equally important to ensure that one is representative of one's ability to realise one's undertaking.

Strategy 2: Developing self-awareness

Developing a contextual awareness of oneself is seen as important to the development of a personal brand. This may entail considering one's ideal position, one's present standing, the need for some change, and the authenticity of the process.

Many authors (see Arruda, & Dixson, 2007; Chritton, 2012; Rampersad, 2009; Schwabel, 2015; Webster, 2010) suggest that, in order to build a personal brand, one needs to start by reflecting on one's ideal future. Chritton (2012), for example, states that without a clear vision of an ideal future scenario, the establishment of a personal brand is undoable. Rampersad (2009) also argues that one needs to define one's purpose in life as well as one's personal ambition to develop a powerful, consistent and memorable brand. Webster (2010) suggests that purpose is essential for brand development and that, in its simplest form, it is defined as the anticipated outcome or intent. Schwabel (2015) further indicates that the first step is for the individual to define and formulate his or her personal goal.

Future states may be multi-dimensional. According to Rampersad (2009), one's personal ambition includes one's personal vision, mission, and key roles related to four perspectives – namely internal and external state, competencies and continuous development, as well as financial perspectives. Arruda and Dixson (2007) state that the key elements of idealising a future includes articulating one's personal vision and purpose, clarifying one's goals, and identifying one's values and passions. Schawbel (2010) refers to it as to the development of a personal value statement, which indicates what the individual stands for and how his or her brand represents it. According to him, it includes a mission statement, vision statement and a value statement, as well as a personal brand statement. In indicating, that the most important state is for the individual to determine what he or she wants to stand for by visualising a clear picture of his or her aspirations, strengths and core values, Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) summarise this well.

Those interested in working on their personal brands need to determine where they want to be versus where they are (Clark, Osterwalder, & Pigneur, 2012). Rampersad (2009) confirms that it is necessary to identify the dissonance between the ideal and current state. For this, self-reflection is necessary. The individual needs to ask him or herself "Who am I and how did I get where I am?" questions (Rampersad, 2009).

Specifically, he or she can focus on his or her background, lifestyle, language patterns, philosophy of life, views on right and wrong, the expression of use, personal fashion style, unique experiences, special areas of expertise, what others respect about him or her, and on his or her reliability, wit and wisdom (Wilson, & Blumenthal, 2008; Clark et al., 2012) suggest a different route, through identifying key partners (those who help the person concerned), key activities (what they do), customers (who they help), customer relationships (how they interact), channels (how their customers know them and how they deliver), costs (what they give) and revenue (what they get) towards the "business of you". Arruda and Dixson (2007) dedicate a full chapter in their book to this matter, titling it "Know yourself to grow yourself". They state that, in order to build a solid reputation that will catapult one towards one's goals, one must understand and be able to articulate what makes one exceptional and compelling, as everyone is unique.

Self-refection can take many forms. According to Arruda and Dixson (2007), self-reflection can occur through writing about oneself, where it is important for the individual to reflect on what differentiates him or her from others. Rampersad (2009) refers to the utilisation of a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) as a technique to assist in self-evaluation. Linne and Sitkins (2015), Schwabel (2015), Deckers and Lacy (2013), and Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) agree with the value of self-reflection, suggesting the use of certain trigger questions to assist in self-reflection, as well as the use of SWOT analysis. Schwabel (2015) specifically refers to assessment tools that could assist in self-reflection. These include Strength Finder, StandOut, MBTI, Career Key and the Job Discovery Wizard by Career Builder.

Self-refection is often insufficient, as personal branding is also about the perceptions of others. Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) state that people's perceptions of one, in the context of building one's brand, really does matter. Linne and Sitkins (2015), as well

as Schwabel (2015), indicate that one can request significant others and key stakeholders to provide honest feedback about how they perceive one. Arruda and Dixson also dedicate a chapter in their book to this. The title of the chapter is "Remember, it's what they think that counts". They indicate that one should not wait for insight from others, but that one should proactively search for it. Chritton (2012) emphasises the importance of getting feedback, stating that those serious about branding work need to be aware of the views of others. Veldsman and Johnson (2016) refer to 360-degree assessment as a popular method of obtaining information about leaders. The comparison between self-reported scores and the scores provided by others can provide valuable self-insight more valuable than a mere self-assessment could be because of its 360-degree nature.

Through the process of self-assessment, the individual may notice that some areas call for his or her attention (Chritton, 2012). Once the gap is identified, definite action is needed to close it and for the individual to position his or her future situation adequately (Schwabel, 2010). Linne and Sitkins (2015) confirm this view by indicating that, to effectively manage one's brand, purposeful and focused action is needed to ensure continuous alignment with one's ideal personal brand. One needs to take action towards closing the gap (Bates, 2012) and self-reflection prepares one for the changes required (Rampersad, 2009).

Strategy 3: Visualising and conceptualising a personal brand

This section deals with focusing on how a personal brand operationalises. Schwabel (2010) indicates that the goal of such conceptualising is to confirm what one has learned about oneself, where one is currently, and where one wants to be in the future. This is an essential step towards determining one's brand and developing a plan to move forward. It has been stated above that personal branding is about how one wants others to evaluate one. Chritton (2012) indicates that personal branding is about authoring one's own life by creating one's life story and articulating it to the appropriate audience based on the required results. Bates (2012) offers a six-part story structure, which includes the set-up, the build-up, the scene, the resolution, the lesson and the audience theme. Schwabel (2010) refers to the term "press release" which, in this context entails packaging all one's work and achievements into an intelligible and

attractive story. Articulating one's life story, to a desirable end, may thus be a useful tool in conceptualising a personal brand (Kaputa, 2012).

An integrated brand should link the past to the idealised future. Del Blanco (2010) states that one's idealised personal brand will assist one in defining one's aims and values. Chritton (2012) argues for a goal-setting strategy that will assist one to achieve clarity about what one wants. Goals needs to be focused and realistic (Handley, 2009). Chritton (2012) suggests that the individual embarks on a goal setting process that includes creating a "big picture" of what he or she wants to accomplish, prioritising the goals by time frame, and developing the goals in a format that is smart, measurable, achievable, and realistic and linked to a timeframe. Rampersad (2009) refers to brand objectives. Schwabel (2010) states in this regard that it is important to be clear as to what one wants to accomplish with one's brand, who one's target audience is and how they will respond to the elements one plans to display. Deckers and Lacy (2011) indicates that, when branding oneself and setting objectives, one needs to ask oneself what one wants to be known for.

Drafting the personal brand profile is a process. It includes the individual's key notions about him or herself and highlights his or her unique promise of value (Rampersad, 2009). Rampersad (2009) argues that the person undertaking this exercise needs to narrow down to his or her specialism, to deliberate on a single core talent, to determine what his or her specific services are, what his or her key characteristics are and what his or her single leading and most powerful attribute is. Schwabel (2010) has similar views and indicates that reflection is needed on matters such as the individual's favourite activities, his or her top personal attributes and top personality features as described by others, as well as his or her insights into what he or she wants to improve.

Kaputa (2012) confirms that focus and specialisation with an adequate value proposition are more essential than a diverse general positioning.

Chritton (2012) indicates that visualisation and conceptualisation can be achieved through writing a mission statement. A mission statement is one's "reason for being" and "beliefs", and it may be key to finding one's path in life. Schwabel (2010) refers to the building of a strong value statement which is one's position on what one stands for. Rampersad (2009) states that conceptualising a brand should include the person

concerned identifying his or her personal vision, mission and key roles, and writing down an ambition statement. Kaputa (2012) recommends thinking up a logo and slogan that represents the brand.

<u>Strategy 4: Developing a personal marketing and stakeholder management strategy</u>

The brand needs to be operationalised and, therefore, the development of a personal brand marketing and stakeholder management strategy is needed (Arruda, & Dixson, 2007; Chritton, 2012; Deckers, & Lacy, 2013; Handley, 2009; Kaputa, 2012; Linne, & Sitkins, 2015; Rampersad, 2009, 2015; Schawbel, 2010; Wilson, & Blumenthal, 2008). A framework developed by Perrault and McCarthy (2002) provides some structure to a marketing and stakeholder management strategy. In addition, Schwabel (2010) indicates that the four P's of marketing (i.e. product, place, price and promotion) are relevant in the personal marketing domain.

The product offered needs to be clear. In this case, it is the individual as a person that becomes the product (Schwabel, 2010; Handley, 2009). A personal brand needs to be a recognisable one, defining one's style, standing out in a crowd and having a mark of originality that is memorable (Handley, 2009). One needs to identify the needs of one's audience as well as what one can deliver (Schwabel, 2010). Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) indicate that what the individual delivers needs to be relevant to his or her customers. Chritton (2012) indicates that one's product offering should be in alignment with some of the consumer's needs, but also true to one's own values and goals. Arruda and Dixson (2007) indicate that, the more successful one becomes, the more important differentiating one uniquely from others becomes. Schwabel (2010) is of the view that one's strengths and weaknesses are the differentiators that allow one to stand out from those around one.

The target market needs to be specified, and it is also possible to find subgroups (segments) who are similar and who might be satisfied with the same marketing mix (Perrault, & McCarthy, 2002). A key objective of marketing is to satisfy the needs of certain groups of customers that the individual serves (Perrault, & McCarthy, 2002). Chritton (2012) states that one needs to evaluate who will buy one's proposition and to whom one will sell it, that is, one needs to visualise the kind of customer or workplace one sees oneself succeeding in. Schwabel (2010) states that it is important to know

one's target market and to strategise how to meet their needs with one's specific value proposition. Stakeholder analysis is an ongoing process aimed at staying on top of the needs, wants and desires of one's audience. In defining one's target market, one should consider one's differentiation points as well as one's unique promise or core benefit (Rampersad, 2009). Positioning requires consistent communication and adaptation to a changing marketplace (Wilson, & Blumenthal, 2008).

A competitor analysis is an organised approach for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of current or potential competitors' marketing strategies. Competitive rivals will be the closest competitors offering similar products or services (Perrault, & McCarthy, 2002). Schwabel (2010) indicates that, after recognising the needs of one's audience and what one can deliver, one needs to assess one's competition. Who one's competition is will depend on one's specific goals. Chritton (2012) also indicates that evaluation of one's key competitors is critical to identifying what makes one different from one's competition.

Schwabel (2010) indicates that price is relevant in the personal marketing domain. Handley (2009) is of the view that competitive advantage in business could lie both in the cost factor and in identifying one's unique selling point by looking at one's professional assets or strengths. Handley (2009) also states that price should be market-related and offer appropriate value. An individual should do research in the industry and determine where the different players in the industry have positioned themselves based on the range of their professional charges.

Place and promotion are concerned with all the decisions involved in getting the right product to the market-place reaching customers through a channel of distribution (Perrault, & McCarthy, 2002).

Regardless of how well constructed an individual's brand is, if he or she fails to promote it and link it to the correct audience, it will have little chance of succeeding (Schwabel, 2010). Deckers and Lacy (2011) indicate that everyone needs authentic self-promotion. Promotion includes personal selling, mass selling and sales promotions (Perrault, & McCarthy, 2002) and it may sometimes be based on where one is physically located or on word-of-mouth referrals. At other times, it could be based on feedback relating to meeting or exceeding performance targets reaching a wider

audience (Schwabel, 2010). Hanley (2009) suggests that one should promote one's brand to every person one meets and that contact, social footprint, follow through, networking, benchmarking, mentorship, alliances and partnerships are needed to promote an individual's brand. When one promotes oneself intelligently, this could enhance visibility and generate positive returns (Handley, 2009; Rampersad, 2009). It is also important for one to identify key stakeholders who could promote one's brand (Chritton, 2012; Schwabel, 2010; Wilson, & Blumenthal, 2008). These are the people who will help one to reach one's goals, and they need to know about the person behind the brand and about what that person can offer (Chritton, 2012).

Creating a powerful personal brand requires the development of an efficient online and offline presence, as there is a movement from mainstream advertising to investing in online options (Schawbel, 2010). As people turn to media online, there is more of an opportunity for the individual to expose his or her brand. This may entail developing a website, blog site or personal web page. Chritton (2012) indicates that one must pay attention to what one's online presence says about one, focusing on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube video clips.

Strategy 5: Implementing the personal brand

Chritton (2012) states that personal branding is about deciding to take an active role in the direction of one's own life and specifically one's own career. Bates (2012) indicates that it is critical to take action, leverage opportunities and become comfortable being a brand. Webster (2016) and Del Blenco (2010) indicate the importance of paying attention to how one goes about living one's personal brand, and that this should be done thoughtfully.

When starting to live one's brand one should be mindful of living its internal foundational aspects, such as presenting not only one's identity, values, competencies and spiritual disposition, but also the external area of one's personal brand that is, one's overall aesthetic from the way one dresses to one's hairstyle, make-up, speech, mannerisms and etiquette (Kaputa, 2012). In this way, one will have a firm grasp on the way one's identity is framed as well as on how to commence constructing a brand that will serve the goals being striven towards (Webster, 2016).

Handley (2009) is of the view that emotional intelligence is an essential component of those who lead and influence with a strong personal branding. Likewise, Webster (2016) refers to the importance of social intelligence, the ability to understand and manage relationships with wisdom and to engage successfully with others in the social environment. Bates (2012) indicates that, during the process of executing one's personal brand, one needs to consistently build and improve one's brand authenticity. One's brand should be positioned as a consistent pattern of behaviour (Wilson, & Blumenthal, 2008) that is authentic to whom and what one is (Chritton, 2012). One needs to adopt a personal branding "mind-set" in the workplace (Clark et al., 2012). Most essentially, the brand needs to be consistently and constantly delivered as per the brand promise as it will be tested (Rampersad, 2009), and it needs to constantly exceed expectations (Fertik, & Thompson, 2015).

Controlling one's brand eco-system and the artefacts associated with it is important. Chritton (2012) stated that the challenge is to make sure it is all aligned to the brand. This implies that one's clothing, one's professional network, one's behaviour inside and outside the professional work space, and every visible aspect of one's life must represent who one really is and what one is capable of doing. Those who meet the person concerned with his or her personal brand should be clear about what that person represents (Handley, 2009). Personal image should thus always be aligned with personal brand (Kaputa, 2012; Handley, 2009; Schawbel, 2015; Wilson, & Blumenthal, 2008). It should not be a façade, but more about communicating one's inside persona to the outside world (Kaputa, 2012).

Handley (2009) states that, for effective personal packaging, the person concerned needs to project to the outer world what the inner holds on offer. What is needed to be transparent and consistent in order for a customer to be convinced by the offering (Rampersad, 2009).

Schwabel (2010) indicates that a key part of branding is visibility. The world should know the value of the person whose brand is being considered (Handley, 2009). Opportunities for advancement and success will arise through visibility, created through the repetition and strategic placement of brand messaging (Chritton, 2012). Rampersad (2009) states that to expand your sphere you must network effectively.

Handley (2009) states, that visibility creates the perception of benefit. For example, if you have a frequent media presence you are able to demand higher fees.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) suggest that the individual needs to take full accountability for his or her career, what he or she does, who he or she associates with and how he or she restrains him or herself. Schwabel (2015) indicates that relationships are key to success in business. These relationships should be analysed in terms of the extent to which they influence one's brand (Chritton, 2012). Almost any place offers networking opportunities (Handley, 2009). Schwabel (2015) warns that one needs to be specific about the people one builds relationships with. Both parties should at least have something in common, some shared interests, perhaps, or they should at least admire the same level of professional accomplishments. Mutualism is a key element and one should always add more value than one will receive (Rampersad, 2009). The most important element is to focus on those relationships that will add value and be authentic (Kaputa, 2012). Furthermore, networking provides the opportunity to become a connector by making introductions and assisting others to benefit from each other (Webster, 2010). Bates (2012) suggests that one needs to take advantage of the media to raise one's profile, as well as of the fact that networking is an effective way to communicate one's brand.

Strategy 6: Measuring, evaluating and improving one's brand

It is important to measure the progress of one's brand (Clark et al., 2012). A personal brand scorecard should translate long-term dreams, hopes, aspirations, values and personal brand into short-term, manageable, measurable, and concrete actions in a holistic and balanced way (Webster, 2016). Measuring entails evaluating progress on personal critical success factors (objectives) and on performance measures, as well as on target and improvement actions (Rampersad, 2009). One needs to ensure that one's measurement approach is directly aligned with one's initial objectives (Clark et al., 2012).

In order for objectives to be evaluated, they need to be clear, concise, specific, results oriented, challenging but realistic, relevant and cost effective (Bates, 2012). Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) indicate that one characteristic of well-positioned objectives is that they do not attempt to be everything to all, but rather that they are focused goals

and objectives that stand for something and not for everything. These objectives should be realistic and are based on one's brand statement (Rampersad, 2009). Chritton (2012) states that personal objectives should describe a result that one wants to achieve in order to realise one's personal ambition and brand direction. The evaluation of such objectives should be quantified through personal performance measures and targets (Del Blanco, 2010). Rampersad (2009) indicates that critical questions here relate to what short term results are desired and which problems one would like to handle better.

To determine if a personal branding initiative has been successful, monitoring approaches are needed (Clark et al., 2012). Measurement is thus important. It is essential to evaluate actions promptly, formally and regularly (Bates, 2012). Rampersad (2009) is of the view that personal measures are necessary to measure the progress of one's personal brand objectives. With these measures, one can assess one's functioning in relation to one's personal objectives (Linne, & Sitkins, 2015). Measurement of success is a powerful technique that can provide an accurate analysis of the scenario (Kaputa, 2012). Performance measures urge one to action, giving one certain direction (Schwabel, 2015).

At the core of measurement are targets. Rampersad (2009) suggests that a personal target is a quantitative objective of personal performance. Performance measures should be specific (formulated so that they can also influence behaviour) measurable (formulated so that they can measure the objective), achievable (they must be realistic, realisable, feasible and acceptable), results oriented (be related to concrete results) and time specific (they must be time constrained) (Rampersad, 2009). Clark et al. (2012) state that one's key task here is to setting specific timetables and deadlines for one's own performance measures. Targets can also be external. Del Blanco (2010) lists achieving above-average income, receiving recognition, being admired, displaying resilience, and attracting high-profile people and associates as indicators of success.

Handley (2009) suggests that to achieve the ultimate score and success is rare. An individual needs to be mostly in a state of continual improvement, striving to better him or herself (Bates, 2012). By analysing reliable data one, can choose to reposition one's brand to capture growth or reinforce current success (Fertik, & Thompson, 2015). This could be done using the SWOT-analysis methodology (Rampersad, 2009). Handley

(2009) also suggests that others be invited to evaluate the brand. Adequate validation of the brand can be achieved by involving one's target audience and testing their response to it (Linne, & Sitkins, 2015). Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) recommend that an individual concerned with his or her personal brand should define a maximum of two performance measures per objective by asking him or herself how his or her personal results can be measured, as well as what makes his or her personal ambition, personal brand objectives and life objectives measurable. Based on these personal targets, one can obtain clear feedback about the progress of one's improvement action, and what is still needed to refine one's personal brand to better manage oneself (Schawbel, 2010).

Targets can, however, move or change. Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) state that one needs to review trends, to size up competition, to conduct brand equity analysis and to speak to customers and others, all to understand the status of brand performance.

Adjusting to customer needs and changes in the environment ensures that one's brand remains vibrant.

Sometimes, certain modifications or small course corrections might be necessary as execution of the plan gets under way (Rampersad, 2009). It is essential to strategically innovate and build new ideas to enhance one's personal brand (Gowley, & Handley, 2007) and a good brand should evolve over time (Clark et al., 2012).

4.5   Discussion

This chapter aimed to systemise information on personal branding through identifying common themes in that literature which is primarily in the popular literature domain. Most such literature is presented in the form of self-help guides and is grounded in the opinions of the authors.

Following a detailed analysis of 19 such books, six themes emerged as central to developing a personal brand. These themes are discussed above and are presented as a process for the development of a personal brand. This provided a synthesis of the knowledge on personal branding, given the assumption that common themes may hold some intuitive merit and despite the fact that the study is not necessarily empirically based. A comprehensive analysis of personal brand literature, not found elsewhere in present literature, is presented.

4.6   Limitations of the study

The primary limitation of the study is the fact that the literature review was subject to bias from the researcher. However, efforts were made to substantiate the relevance and commonality of the themes and the reported text through cross-referencing between the various sources.

4.7   Contribution

The chapter consolidates the opinions of many writers on personal branding with the intent to lessen the confusion amongst scholars on the key aspects necessary for the development and successful implementation of a personal brand. It provides detail on six elements necessary for the building of a personal brand. This research is a first step in consolidating literature on personal branding and, as such is an important step towards establishing personal branding in the academic domain. It also serves as a possible reference work for those interested in studying the topic further.

The findings might also be used, for example, to design a questionnaire which assesses the extent to which a person has invested in personal branding, or the success of interventions aimed at personal branding. At a managerial level this consolidated work may be useful as a comprehensive source for developing the manager's personal brand, training and mentoring of the organisations talent pool, or the shaping of brands (of individuals) that an organisation wishes to portray.

CHAPTER 5

The development and validation of a measure of a comprehensive personal brand

The aim of this chapter was to develop a questionnaire to measure the extent of personal brand development and which would thus serve as a quantitative measure of the effects of the implementation of a personal brand. Achieving this aim was a necessary first step towards testing hypotheses linking personal branding to success in the world-of-work.

5.1 Introduction

Personal branding is often presented as a prerequisite to success in the world of work. However, the literature suggesting this link is seldom based on empirical research and is mostly grounded in the opinions of authors, writing books for popular consumption. The aim of this research was to move personal branding beyond the domain of popular literature and to develop a questionnaire which would measure personal brand maturity. Once the domain (personal branding) can be measured, it is possible to articulate its importance (its effect on career success), as William Thomson so famously advocated (Demmings, 2000).

The process which was followed to identify the construct to be measured will be presented in the literature review below. This will be followed by the stating of the aim of the study, and then a description the methodology employed. The methodology section will elaborate on how the questionnaire was developed and, on the methods, used to improve it. Thereafter, the psychometric properties of the questionnaire will be presented, including how the items correlated, and the solutions of different factor analyses. After the results are reported upon, conclusions will be drawn, and this will entail an evaluation of the results and the proposal of the final questionnaire, now based on the results of this study. Lastly, the limitations unique to this study will be presented and recommendations for future research will be made.

5.2   Literature review

Personal branding is new to the field of professional development. From an academic perspective, Mohammed and Steyn (2016) found that only a limited number of articles on the topic have been published in the academic domain. In their study, Mohammed and Steyn (2016) used the systematic literature review methodology in order to systematise available literature and thus to understand the current body of knowledge regarding personal branding. This methodology was selected as it minimised the effect of selection, publication and data extraction bias (De Vos et al., 2011). Based on the search strategy, Mohammed and Steyn (2016) located 56 articles in academic journals.

However, only 36 of these were analysed following application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Most of those exclusions were made due to the articles concerned not having any empirical basis. Mohammed and Steyn (2016) could not find any widely accepted or coherent model of theory on personal branding in the academic literature scrutinised and, in addition the research methodologies used in the field were also found to be questionable (Mohammed, & Steyn, 2016).

Although models and theories of personal branding have not been adequately narrated, and although empirical research on the topic is scarce, popular literature on the topic is abundant. Mohammed and Steyn (2017) undertook a content theme analysis (Bryman, & Bell, 2011) of 19 books on the topic. The titles of these books varied from *Career Distinction: Stand out by building your brand* to *Branding yourself: How to use social media to invent and reinvent yourself*, and *The reputation economy*. The analyses were driven by the structure and stated purpose of most of these books: namely the development of a personal brand.

Using popular literature, selected mostly on the basis of accessibility, Mohammed and Steyn (2017) identified six stages associated with the development of a personal brand. The primary sources used to create the list were authored by Arruda and Dixson (2007), Bates (2012), Chritton (2012), Clark, Osterwalder and Pigneur (2012), Deckers and Lacy (2011), Del Blenco (2010), Cowley and Handley (2007), Fertik and Thompson (2015), Handley (2009), Linne and Sitkins (2015), Rampersad (2009) (2015), Schawbel (2010) (2015), Webster (2010) and Wilson and Blumenthal (2008).

All of these authors refer, in one way or another, to the following as being crucial to the development of a personal brand:

- *Understanding the importance of having a personal brand*: In this regard, Arruda and Dixson (2007) state that a career distinction mind-set is needed to brand oneself for career success. Bates (2012) refers to the importance of understanding one's brand in a chapter in her book called "Why you need a brand and why your brand matters". A further example of this emphasis placed on personal branding is a chapter called "Why is personal brand important?" which Chritton (2012) presents in her book. Fertik and Thompson (2015), Linne and Sitkins (2015), Rampersad (2009) and Schawbel (2015) all makes similar references.

- *Developing self-awareness and awareness of one's environment*: Arruda and Dixson (2007) indicate the importance of a person being aware of the unique value proposition that he or she can offer. They also indicate that one needs to "know oneself to grow oneself" as well as to define the brand community within which one functions. Clark, Osterwalder and Pigneur (2012) confirm the importance of awareness and dedicate a chapter in their book to this matter under the title "Reflect". Similarly, Linne and Sitkins (2015) present a chapter in their book called "Who do you and they think you are?" Chritton (2012), Fertik and Thompson (2015), Schawbel (2010), as well as Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) espouse similar views.

- *Visualising and conceptualising a personal brand*: Clark, Osterwalder and Pigneur (2012) suggest that people should reinvent their own work lives by redrawing their personal business model. Schawbel (2010), on the other hand, states that one should command one's own career by creating one's own brand. Del Blanco (2010) devotes a chapter in his book to "First steps: Talent, mission and courage", while Rampersad (2009) titles a chapter in his book as "How to define and formulate your personal brand". Arruda and Dixson (2015), Bates (2012), Chritton (2012), Linne and Sitkins (2015) as well as Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) make similar references.

- *Developing a personal brand marketing and stakeholder management strategy*:

Arruda and Dixson (2007) indicate the importance of communicating one's brand to one's target audience. This is confirmed by Bates (2012) through a chapter in her book dubbed "Communicate your leadership brand", and also by Chritton (2012) who devotes a chapter to "Communicating your brand to the world". Deckers and Lacy (2011), too, devote a chapter in their book to "Promoting your brand to the real world", while Handley (2009), Linne and Sitkins (2015), Schawbel (2010) and Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) make similar references in their work.

- *Implementing the personal brand:* Clark, Osterwalder and Pigneur (2012) name a chapter in their book "Act: Learn to make it happen", while Rampersad (2015) presents a chapter in his book entitled "Implement and cultivate your personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard". Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) devote a chapter in their book to such implementation, naming it "I am ready to commit to my action plan". It is noted, too, that Arruda and Dixson (2007), Bates (2012) and Rampersad (2009) also focus on the requirement to adequately implement the personal brand.

- *Measuring, evaluating and improving your brand*: Deckers and Lacy (2011) suggest that measurement of the success of the personal brand is important to maintaining and sustaining it. Linne and Sitkins (2015) dedicate a chapter in their book to "Personal brand assessment", while Rampersad (2009) presents a chapter called "How to formulate your personal balanced score-card". Wilson and Blumenthal (2008) also refer to the value of assessing the success of the personal brand.

This synthesis of many sources in stipulating the way a personal brand is developed is beneficial as most literature is embedded in the individual authors' perceptions or experiences. As mentioned earlier, scientific work on this matter is also limited.

An additional objective of this research is to develop a measure of the level of personal branding, based on the fulfilment of the steps of personal branding, as suggested above and comprehensively described by Mohammed and Steyn (2017), and to test the reliability and validity thereof.

5.3   Methodology

Creating a new measure involves both science and art (Fisher, 1937; Wiggens, 1989). The purpose of this section is to discuss the process used to develop the Measure of Personal Brand Development (MPBD) – a process which necessitated a degree of creativity, but which also took into account that, the development of the MPBD was directed by the ideas of several authors and these are presented below. Thereafter, the process that was eventually used is discussed.

- Gregory (2011) states that the development of an instrument is an evolutionary process and that a first step could be delimiting the scope and purpose of that intended instrument. In addition, selecting an appropriate scaling method may be necessary before commencing development of specific items. He emphasises the need for the developer to have a clear idea of what the test is to measure, how it will be different from tests that have preceded it, and how it will make a useful contribution to the field. Once a preliminary version of the instrument is created, Gregory (2011) suggests that the developer administers it to a modest-sized sample to collect initial data about items characteristics. Through item analysis, decisions can be made as to which to retain, which to revise, and which to eliminate. This may lead to new measures and these will require additional pretesting. Only after the required standards have been met can the test be published, along with a manual illustrating how it can be used.

- Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest alignment with acceptable research principles when designing a questionnaire (measurement unit). They suggest that it should always be born in mind what the research question is - this ensures that the questions relate directly to it. Furthermore, they indicate that it is critical for the researcher to determine what he or she wants to know and to ask the questions as directly and clearly as possible. They also recommend that the researcher anticipate how he or she would answer the relevant questions by placing him or herself in the role of the respondent and reflecting on the different interpretations a question could have for different respondents. They are of the opinion that it is crucial to understand the rules of question-asking to avoid some of the more obvious related pitfalls. They further indicate that it is good practice to avoid ambiguous terms in questions, as well as long questions, double-

barrelled questions, general questions, leading questions, questions that ask two questions, questions that include negatives, as well as questions containing jargon, acronyms and slang or technical terms. Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that it is always desirable to conduct a pilot study to ensure that the research instrument as a whole functions well. The pilot should not be carried out on people who might be members of the sample that will be participating in the actual full study. They recommend that a small set of respondents be found who are comparable to members of the population from which the sample for the actual full study will be taken.

- Leedy and Ormrod (2014) indicate that, when developing a questionnaire, it is important to focus on both the design and the validation thereof. They suggest that the questionnaire should be as brief as possible and that it should solicit only information that is essential for the research effort. They further indicate that the instructions and tasks (answering the questions) should be as straightforward, simple and concrete as possible. Ambiguous language should be avoided. Leedy and Ormrod (2014) also suggest that unwarranted assumptions implicit in the question should be guarded against, and that questions should be formulated in ways that don't give clues as to preferred or more desirable responses. They emphasise the importance of making coding decisions in advance and of following these decisions very consistently. Leedy and Ormrod (2014) further advocate the use of one or more pilot studies to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaires, and to ensure that the final product addresses the original aims. Lastly, they indicate the importance of the attractive and professional presentation of the questionnaire.

- Mc Burney (1994) states that designing a questionnaire is a complex procedure, which involves many considerations. The first issue that should be addressed is what the designer expects to accomplish with the instrument. This is the foremost decision. Other decisions include choices regarding the format of the questionnaires (open-ended or those with limited response alternatives), also based on the aim of the questionnaire. Mc-Burney (1994) elaborates extensively on the design of items. He suggests that, when constructing a questionnaire, each item should address a single question in a clear manner;

the content of the items should not bias the results or invite social desirability response; the response options should be distinctly different from one another; and that, particularly with limited response items, that it should cover all of the possible options. The guidance of Mc Burney (1994) in the development of items contributed substantially to the understanding of questionnaire development.

- Bliss and Higson (1995) declare that questionnaires are complex instruments used for data collection and they indicate the existence of a few specific sets of rules on how to proceed. They state that, before commencing with drafting questions, the researchers need to specify the aims of the questionnaire and what kind of data would be needed to address those aims. They further suggest a respondent-centred approach to questionnaire design, taking into account the needs, interests and problems of respondents. According to Bliss and Higson (1995), the researcher should give sufficient attention to the wording of questions, relying on simple, short, unambiguous, and understandable questions, and avoiding double-barrelled and leading questions. Bliss and Higson (1995) argue for a logical sequence of questions, that is, one which exhausts one topic before shifting to the next. They also argue for a funnel approach, starting out with very general questions and proceeding later to a focus on greater detail. They also state, however, that the repetition of the content of a question – where such content is formulated in different ways and placed in different parts of the questionnaire - is an additional method of checking the veracity of answers and the honesty of a participant. Bliss and Higson (1995) also advise changing the format, direction, and even the response categories, to avoid a monotonous sequence of items and to counter the development of a specific response set, when designing questionnaires. Lastly, in true Bliss and Higson (1995) style, their final argument is that, when administering questionnaires, this should be done in a respondent-centred manner with the scheduling and venue convenient to respondents and the use of language and vocabulary adapted to them.

- Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw (2000) are of the opinion that the principal advantages of the questionnaire are its apparent simplicity, its

versatility and its low cost as method of data gathering. They indicate that, for many research topics, questionnaires provide data which are of good enough quality both to test hypotheses and to offer quality suggestions. This however requires items of high quality. They suggest the use of closed-ended item formats as closed-ended items clarify the response alternatives for the respondent and reduce both the number of ambiguous answers and the number of coding errors made by the administrators. They also caution against common wording challenges which could lead to vague and ambiguous terminology, technical terminology, leading questions, value judgments, context effects, double-barrelled questions, hidden assumptions and social desirability. When the goal of the research or the questionnaire is to identify any underlying dimensions, or putative cause, which might influence responses to a set of items, exploratory data analytical procedures, such as exploratory factor analysis and cluster analysis, should be used. They suggest that the ultimate aim is to collect data confirming the reliability and validity use of the instrument.

- Aguinis, Henle and Ostroff (2001) present a strategy for test development similar to those presented above. They state that from the outset the developer needs to determine the purpose of the measurement, in other words, what will the instrument be used for? Subsequently the attribute which the instrument would measure needs to be defined clearly, stating what will be included and what will be excluded. Aguinis et al. (2001) state that, thereafter, a measurement plan needs to be developed. Such a plan will include details of where the content of the test will be derived from (e.g. specifying a particular theory or subject matter experts), what format the items will be presented in, as well as the way in which the instrument will finally be administered. Only once these conditions have been specified, should the design of the items commence. They suggest writing 60 items, with the prospect of discharging half of them through the development process. This number seems ideal, as Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggest that 30 items are needed to achieve high levels of reliability. Following the design of a draft measure, a pilot study should be conducted on a sample representative of the target population. Seeking information from the respondents in the pilot study can provide valuable information on the effectiveness of the items (Cascio, & Aguinis,

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2011). After the instrument has been administered, item analysis should be undertaken. Of particular importance to this study, Aguinis et al. (2001) also mentioned the use of item discrimination analysis. Item discrimination analysis refers to the relatedness of a particular item response to the responses to other items. Item selection for inclusion should take place next and should take into consideration the frequency distribution of the responses to the various items. A normal distribution is desired. As one of the final steps reliability and validity information should be determined and evaluated against set standards. Only after completing all these tasks should the instrument be used. Aguinis et al. (2001) state, however that this is not the completion of the process. Rather, they suggest that test development is a continuous process and that updates should be applied as new data becomes available.

Ideas of the authors considered above presents a broad scope of activities which could be included in the development of an instrument. It was decided to commence with the development of the questionnaire following a seven step process, aligned to most of the authors mentioned above, but not specifying every detail. The steps were as follows:

Step 0: Decide on the purpose or goal of the measurement. This is marked as Step 0 as this was the initial point of departure which drove the development of the instrument. In this research, the purpose was to develop a measure of personal branding which could be used to test the claimed relationship between personal branding and success, particularly in the workplace. When the research was initiated, no such measures were available, so this represented a worthy endeavour.

Step 1: Specify the nature of the variable to be measured. Ideally this should emanate from some theory regarding the construct, or at least some knowledge gathered from several sources. The variable would be well specified, thus making it clear what is to be included and what is to be excluded when the construct is discussed. In this study, the nature of the variable seems to be ill defined, but this matter was addressed through the literature review.

Step 2: Consider and specify the method which will be used to collect the information. This entails deciding on the nature of the instrument, including the types of items to be created and the administration of the instrument. As mentioned above, there were a

wide array of options in this regard, and they were all considered, taking the aim of the instrument into account, but also practicality and conventions in this regard.

Step 3: Write and rewrite the items. In doing this, the theory underpinning the construct needs to be paramount. The theory should assist the writers of items to construct items which refer to all aspects of the variable to be measured.

In total, 60 items were developed with full cognisance being taken of the guidelines provided by the authors quoted above.

Step 4: Conduct a pilot study – collect preliminary data. The aim of a pilot study is to gather information on the effectiveness of the instrument which the developers perceive to be valid and reliable. The pilot study should be conducted on a sample similar to that upon which the instrument will be used when operational. In an ideal situation, other measures which could point to discriminate and convergent validity could be administered to provide additional information on validity. A pilot study was thus conducted.

Step 5: Analyse the pilot study data. The analysis is aimed at establishing the reliability and validity of the instrument, and usually involves the elimination of items which properties did not meet the initial expectations. In the case of this study, it was decided to eliminate half of the 60 items, to end up with 30 items, five per construct. Two separate strategies were followed to eliminate less well-functioning items and to reduce the total number of items.

- The first strategy was optimistic in nature, trusting that the developed items did indeed measure the six steps proposed. The groups of 10 items designed to assess each step of the branding process were analysed separately. The Cronbach reliability coefficients were calculated as a measure of internal consistency, as is the custom in this kind of research. Thereafter, items were flagged for possible elimination based on (1) their correlation with the subscale score, and (2) their factorial loading on one latent construct, when a single-factor solution was forced onto the 10 items associated with each subscale. The five items with the lowest correlation and/or loading were eliminated (per subscale). The outcome of this process is reported in the results section of this paper. The Cronbach reliability coefficients for the shorter version of the

instrument are also reported as well as the correlation between the subscale scores of the shortened version of the measure.

It was expected that means would correlate significantly, given that personal branding was construed as a coherent construct.

- The second strategy focused on exploratory factor analysis. Following the proposed structure of the data (consisting of six stages), the data was forced into a six-factor solution, assuming that items would load as hypothesized. The five items (per step) with the highest and singular loadings would then be retained for the revised instrument. Should the item loadings not materialise as hypothesised (the six-factors solution), the ideal number of factors to be extracted would be determined through inspection of the size of the Eigen values, the shape of the scree plot, and particularly the ability to attach meaningful labels to a group of items loading on a specific factor. The last-mentioned refers to identifying some coherency in the items which load strongest on a particular factor. Initially six factors, then five, then four, three, two and, eventually, a single factor were to be extracted and the coherency of the items loading on them evaluated. The aim was to retain 30 items based on the results of factor analysis – irrespective of whether or not these results matched the proposed hypothesised "steps of personal brand development" model.

Both strategies were applied with the aim of eliminating items that would not statistically or logically correspond to the hypothesised construct.

Step 6: Operationalise the instrument. This entails making sure that the administration guide is clear, specifying the purpose of the instrument, as well as details of where it could be administered (possible settings), how it should be administered, and in which setting the present data on reliability and validity was generated. Only after this would the instrument be ready for use.

5.2.1 Participants

The participants in this study can be divided into two categories, namely professionals involved in the design of the questionnaire, and those recruited to participate in the pilot study.

<u>Professional participants</u>

Eight professionals participated in the development of the items of the questionnaire. They were the researcher and research supervisor of this dissertation as well as six professionally registered industrial psychologists. The psychologists were all registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), the body that is also responsible for the oversight of psychologists. Their participation was voluntary and involved attending a workshop explaining both the purpose of the study and the role that they would play, which was to propose suitable items for the questionnaire, based on the literature collected (Mohammed, & Steyn, 2017), the required item format, and the length of the questionnaire.

<u>Pilot study respondents</u>

The researcher of this study is employed as a senior manager in a large organisation and is attached to the learning and development division of that organisation. Middle managers in the division, as well as middle management visiting the division as learners, were recruited to complete the pilot questionnaire. The respondents to the pilot study were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out in the Unisa SBL research ethics guidelines. In total, 88 middle managers took part in the pilot study.

5.2.2 Operationalisation

The study was operationalised as per the six-step process discussed above.

<u>Step 0:</u> Decide on the purpose or goal of the measurement. This was decided on by the researcher and is the primary goal of the study. The purpose was to develop a measure of personal branding which could later be used to test the claimed relationship between personal branding and career success.

<u>Step 1:</u> Specify the nature of the variable to be measured. In the case of personal branding, little evidence of empirically grounded theory was found. As such, a systematic review of literature was conducted to describe personal branding and also to specify parts thereof. The findings from the literature review are reported in the introduction to this document. It was hypothesised that personal branding is a six-step process, consisting of Understanding the importance of having a personal brand,

Developing self-awareness and awareness of one's environment, Visualising and conceptualising a personal brand, Developing a personal brand marketing and stakeholder management strategy, Implementing the personal brand, as well as Measuring, evaluating and improving the personal brand. In the process of developing these steps of personal branding, the researcher and research supervisor sequentially and repeatedly looked at the source material, and at the themes developing from it, so as to minimize bias when proposing themes. The nature of the variable and its subsections were thus specified subjectively, given the literature and the discussions between the researcher and research supervisor.

Step 2: Consider and specify the method which will be used to collect the information. In the case of the development of the MPBD it was decided to use a 7-point Likert-type scale (Preston, & Colman, 2000) and to present it as a questionnaire that could be administered to an individual or to a group of individuals.

Step 3: Write and rewrite the items. Eight authors contributed to writing the items. As stated above, six industrial psychologists volunteered, based on collegiality, to assist in the writing of the items. This followed after they attended a workshop explaining the purpose of the study, their role as co-authors of the items, as well as item format and the length of the proposed questionnaire. They were requested to write five items for each of the six steps extracted from the literature. The eight authors initially created 240 items. There-after, they then ranked the items individually on a scale from 1 to 10 regarding relevance of the item, from where the ranking was totalled per item and used to scale the items down based on the lowest scores. These items were considered, per category, by two researchers and reworked to 10 items per step (Aquinis et al., 2001).

Step 4: Conduct a pilot study. A convenient sample of 88 middle managers of a large corporation was persuaded to complete the 60-item questionnaire. Some questionnaires were completed by the managers as part of a group while some were completed individually. Attention was paid to ensuring that the anonymity of the respondents was respected. This was done firstly, by allowing the respondents to complete the questionnaire without any personal identifiers on the answer sheet. Secondly, allowing the respondents to place the completed questionnaires in a pile and informing them that they were free to place their questionnaires anywhere in the

pile contributed to a safe environment for the respondents. No additional questionnaires were completed as part of the pilot study, as the primary purpose of the pilot study was to select an optimal group of items, focusing on convergence among items within the instrument.

Step 5: Analyse the pilot study data. The data was captured on an Excel spreadsheet and then converted to SPSS. As explained above, the data were then analysed using two strategies. Both strategies were applied, and the outcomes thereof are reported in the Results section. Originally, the idea was to use the strategy which revealed the best results for deciding on which items to include in the final instrument. This approach was abandoned, as it became apparent that the first strategy had little explanatory value and added nothing to the pre-set structure of the questionnaire or understanding the concept of personal branding. As such, both strategies were used to reduce the item pool from 60 to 26. The integration of the results of the two strategies is explained in the Discussion section of this document.

Step 6: Operationalise the instrument. The final questionnaire was devised by organising the 26 items in a sequence that, subjectively, made sense to the researcher of this study. The instructions of the questionnaire were revisited and modified, and the entire questionnaire was then submitted again for language editing. The detail of this study should serve as an instruction guide to those interested in administering the instrument, noting that many parts of the process of developing the items were subjective. As Aguinis et al. (2001) note, the process of instrument development is never complete and updates to the questionnaire should be on going as new data becomes available. The researcher of this study echos this statement and are in the process of creating such data.

5.2.3 Ethical considerations

The development of questionnaires is informed by several professional guidelines, of which the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, of the American Psychological Association (2014) are frequently mentioned. General professional standards set out by local oversight bodies, such as the HPCSA, also provide guidelines (HSPCA, 1998). These include that the use of questionnaires is generally guided by the consideration of the best interests of the client, and that the assessment should serve a constructive purpose for the individual assessed (Oppenheim, 1992).

Other requirements include that the administrator has an obligation to protect the confidentiality of information and that respondents give consent after being informed as to the reason for the assessment, the nature of the assessment, the possible consequences of being assessed, and what data will be released and to whom (Oppenheim, 1992). These guidelines pertaining to the development and administration of questionnaires are very similar to the requirements of the Unisa Policy on Research and Ethics (2013). As indicated in the consent form, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, procedures, potential risks and discomforts, potential benefits, payment for participation, participation and withdrawal, and the general rights of research participants. The ethics as proposed in the consent form were not breached when conducting the research.

5.4   Results

Firstly, some demographics of the 88 middle managers and initial reliability coefficients will be presented, followed by a more detailed analysis of the correlation coefficients. The magnitude of the correlation coefficients is then used to present a list of 30 items. The 30 items are the result of applying the first strategy of analysis. The results of several factor analyses conducted on the data are then reported. The report includes the way the labels were allocated to the factors which emerged from the different factor analyses. Lastly, a table presenting the items which featured most often in the different factor solutions is presented. As this was an evolutionary process, the results reported below do not mirror the methodology set out above.

5.4.1 Demographics of respondents

Demographic information on the respondents to the pilot study was not collected. This decision was taken in order to respect their privacy, to minimize any need they might feel to respond in a socially desirable manner, and to solicit voluntary participation in the study. However, organisational data reveals that the average middle manager cohort typically consists of 65% men and 35% women, with ages varying between 30 and 45 years, with a mean of around 37. In total, 88 middle managers completed the questionnaire.

5.4.2 Central statistics

Means (Column 1) and standard deviations (Column 2) were calculated for the 60 items used in the pilot study. These are presented in Table 5.1 Other results, also presented in Table 5.1 are discussed later.

Table 5.1

Descriptive statistics, correlations with total scores, and single-factor loadings, for the pool of 60 items

			Column			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Item / Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with subscale mean	Correlation with total mean	Loading on a single subscale factor	Loading on a single total scale factor
1	5.875	1.275	.647	.554	.603	.565
2	4.386	1.896	.498	.197	.347	.188
3	5.875	1.275	**.699**	.636	**.760**	.646
4	6.034	1.385	**.757**	.691	**.827**	.701
5	6.215	1.334	**.803**	.684	**.868**	.697
6	5.818	1.326	.629	.698	.671	.710
7	5.579	1.411	**.722**	.540	**.762**	.546
8	5.818	1.119	**.667**	.557	**.698**	.553
9	4.840	1.831	.289	.075	.083	.054
10	5.806	1.404	.520	.303	.529	.303
11	5.568	1.229	**.731**	.706	**.759**	.711
12	5.113	1.272	.560	.527	.536	.515
13	5.397	1.309	.651	.512	.663	.507
14	6.136	1.166	**.725**	.691	**.762**	.707
15	5.602	1.160	**.678**	.659	**.702**	.669
16	5.556	1.267	**.697**	.675	**.718**	.670
17	5.238	1.339	.634	<u>.610</u>	.648	<u>.598</u>
18	4.227	1.873	.661	.474	.600	.457
19	5.079	1.634	**.671**	.596	.634	.592
20	5.545	1.507	.661	.584	**.655**	.598

			Column			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Item / Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with subscale mean	Correlation with total mean	Loading on a single subscale factor	Loading on a single total scale factor
21	5.875	1.346	.792	.772	.786	.783
22	5.420	1.491	.662	.618	.633	.617
23	5.625	1.383	**.845**	.793	**.852**	.798
24	5.715	1.123	**.837**	.735	**.846**	.751
25	5.329	1.229	.781	.659	.788	.662
26	5.636	1.242	.744	.685	.740	.693
27	5.715	1.258	**.830**	.756	**.830**	.769
28	5.590	1.237	**.852**	.789	**.862**	.800
29	5.352	1.295	**.815**	.771	**.819**	.772
30	5.625	1.280	.748	.668	.749	.676
31	5.761	1.241	**.768**	.765	**.783**	.757
32	5.647	1.322	**.811**	.738	**.829**	.742
33	5.545	1.133	**.822**	.803	**.852**	.808
34	5.954	1.329	.613	.643	.645	.656
35	5.602	1.300	**.774**	.725	**.807**	.734
36	5.397	1.434	.730	.656	.757	.653
37	5.818	1.273	**.806**	.727	**.853**	.735
38	4.829	1.456	.630	.545	.558	.531
39	4.113	1.663	.417	.274	.287	.254
40	4.693	1.563	.685	.495	.653	.473
41	5.511	1.553	**.728**	.728	**.731**	.720
42	5.681	1.160	.618	.515	.624	.514
43	4.715	1.477	**.741**	.669	**.738**	.657
44	4.511	1.553	.529	.271	.471	.247
45	5.431	1.371	.644	.540	.654	.545
46	4.465	1.589	.605	.415	.565	.393

Item / Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Column 3 Correlation with subscale mean	Column 4 Correlation with total mean	Column 5 Loading on a single subscale factor	Column 6 Loading on a single total scale factor
47	5.977	1.312	.696	<u>.683</u>	**.727**	<u>.688</u>
48	5.636	1.332	**.753**	.736	**.781**	.740
49	4.784	1.614	**.720**	.585	.716	.578
50	5.386	1.409	**.794**	.782	**.812**	.783
51	5.647	1.277	.754	<u>.823</u>	**.772**	<u>.828</u>
52	5.772	1.266	**.815**	.763	**.821**	.773
53	6.056	1.216	.690	.793	.709	.798
54	5.784	1.139	.675	.583	.685	.582
55	5.329	1.379	**.785**	.649	**.786**	.645
56	5.011	1.586	**.789**	.639	**.773**	.637
57	5.250	1.323	.756	.720	.763	.717
58	5.375	1.358	**.792**	.647	**.793**	.636
59	4.909	1.419	**.779**	.565	.764	.550
60	4.681	1.601	.725	.548	.700	.529
S1	5.625	0.864	-	-	-	-
S2	5.346	0.915	-	-	-	-
S3	5.588	1.016	-	-	-	-
S4	5.336	0.953	-	-	-	-
S4	5.210	0.980	-	-	-	-
S6	5.381	1.028	-	-	-	-
T	5.414	0.836	-	-	-	-

<u>Note:</u> In the table, S1 to S6 represent the different subscales (each with 10 items) and T the total score, for all 60 items.

From Table 5.1 it is observed that the mean scores per item were relatively high at 5.414 (on a 6-point scale), with a standard deviation of .836. Statistics not reported

here shows that the data was negatively skew. The rest of the statistics presented in this table are discussed below.

5.4.3 Reliability

The reliability statistics for the 60-item scale is presented in Table 5.2, Column 2. Other results, also presented in Table 5.2, are discussed later.

Table 5.2

Cronbach alphas and inter-subscale correlations for the pool of 60 items

Column									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sub-scale	Cronbach alpha	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	T	Cronbach alpha
S1	.800	1	.748	.717	.747	.647	.652	.846	.854
S2	.854	.703	1	.759	.721	.771	.745	.889	.823
S3	.931	.708	.788	1	.730	.783	.788	.903	.917
S4	.978	.647	.760	.765	1	.791	.750	.885	.900
S5	.870	.474	.715	.750	.753	1	.767	.901	.857
S6	.915	.530	.722	.782	.751	.785	1	.881	.965
T	.970	.768	.895	.918	.894	.863	.882	1	.967

Note: In the table, S1 to S6 represent the different subscales and T the total score. The correlations between the subscales of the 60-item instrument are presented to the left of the diagonal line, while the correlations for the 30-item instrument presented to the right of the diagonal line.

It can be observed that the Cronbach alpha values for all the subscales are acceptable, with .800 being the lowest observed coefficient (Pallant, 2011). The alpha for the total scale was .970.

5.4.4 Results pertaining to strategy one for refining the questionnaire

In an effort to refine the questionnaire, and assuming that items which correlate higher with the total score are more reflective of the measured construct, the five items which correlated highest with the subscale total score were highlighted (see Table 5.1, Column 3). Also highlighted are the five items which loaded strongest on a single factor, when considering the 10 items of each subscale (see Table 5.1, Column 5). Secondary consideration was given to the correlation between the individual items and

the total score for all 60 items (see Table 5.1 Column 4) and the factor loadings of the items on a single factor presented by the entire questionnaire (60 items) (see Table 5.1, Column 6). In most cases the correlation strengths on the subscale totals and the factor loadings corresponded, and these items were selected for inclusion in the shorter version of the questionnaire.

In the cases where items for the correlation and factor analysis differed, the item which correlated highest with the total score (the 60-item score) and the highest with the combined factor were selected.

Using the abovementioned process, 30 items were identified for inclusion in the shorter version of the instrument (See bolded items in Table 5.1 Column 0). As can be observed from the above, the analyses deviated from the proposed methodology. However, this is not seen as a limitation, but rather as an effect of engaging with the material.

In Table 5.2 (Column 9), the Cronbach alphas of the 30-item instrument can be observed, and are consistently acceptable. Also observable in Table 5.2, to the right of the diagonal line, are the correlation between the constructs in the 30 item questionnaire. These are high, with the lowest value at .674, and most of them higher than .700. These coefficients are even higher than those in the initial questionnaire, as can be expected, as items (Q17, Q47, Q51) were selected based on their relatedness to the total construct. The high correlation between the subscales may suggest that a single dimension is measured with the questionnaire (Smit, McCarthy, & Zapolski, 2009).

5.4.5 Results pertaining to strategy two for refining the questionnaire

The next step was to assess whether the presumed theoretical structure was replicated in the collected data. As this was a pilot study, exploratory factor analysis was the preferred method of analysis. The data displayed acceptable properties to allow factor analysis (Floyd, & Widaman, 1995; Kink, 2014), with the Kaiser-MeyerOlkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy at a low-but-acceptable .811, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity having an Approximate Chi-Square of 5024.942 (degrees of freedom = 1770), which was significant (p<.001). Twelve components had Eigen values greater than one, but

very few items loaded significantly on these factors. As proposed in the methodology, it was decided to test the theorised six-stages model, extracting six factors.

The Scree plot (see figure below) shows a small dip around the sixth factor. Six factors declare 63.701 percent of the variance in the dataset.

Five factors declare 60.606 percent of the variance in the dataset, four 57.063 percent, three 52.981 percent, two 48.537 percent and one 41.012 percent. A factor solution declaring more than a minimum of .40 percent of the variance in the data could be deemed as acceptable (Beavers, Lounsbury, Richards, Huck, Skolits, & Esquivel, 2013).
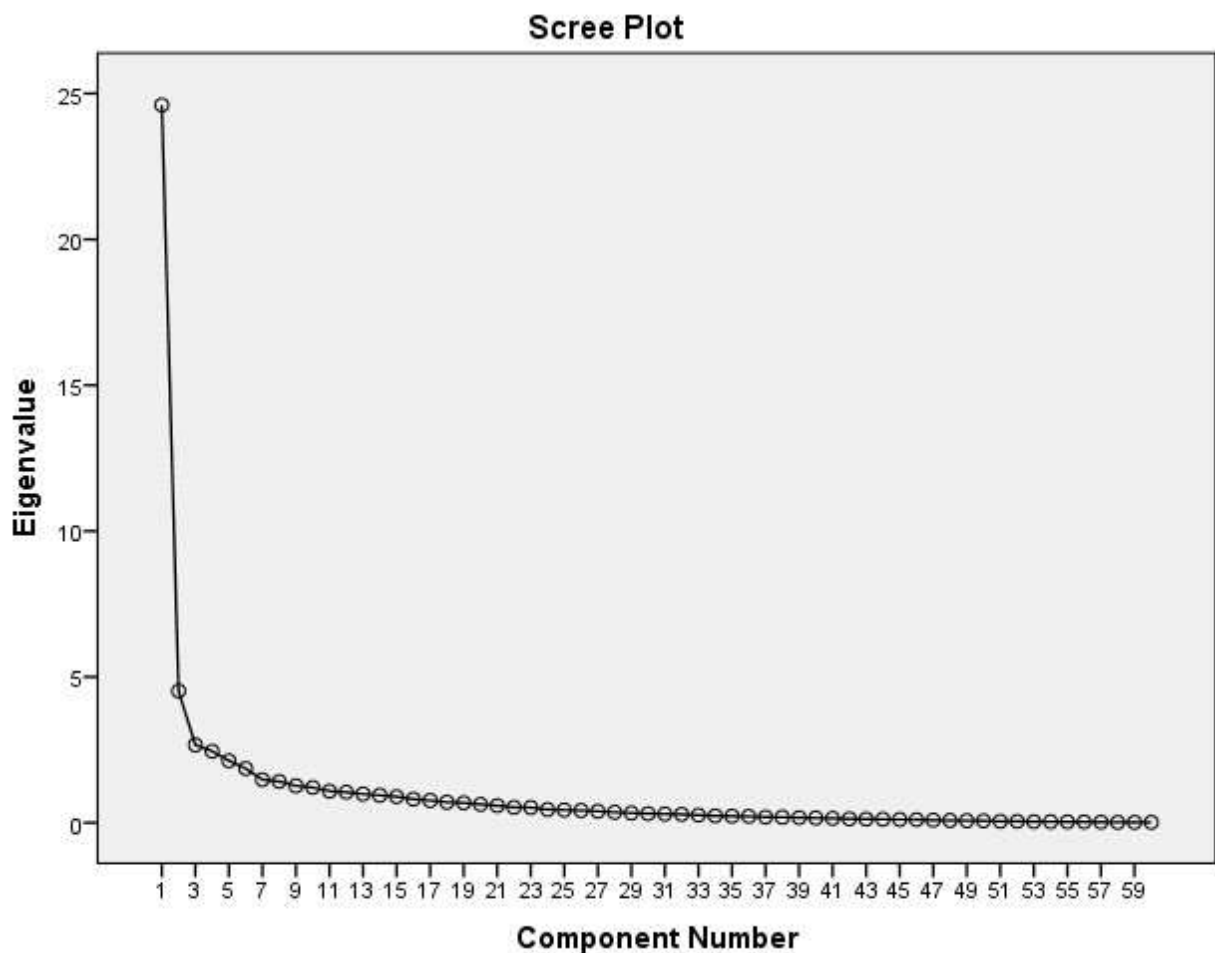
Figure 5.1 Eigen value plot
Source: Author / Researcher

Firstly, and as planned, the replication of the theorised six-component model was tested. Thereafter models with five, four, three, two and one components were tested. The results presented in Table 5.3 are the rotated component matrixes for the six-

factor solution. Bolded in the table are the six items, per factor, which loaded highest per factor.

Table 5.3

Factor loadings for the hypothesised six-factor solution

Item \ Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q60	**.820**	.135	.029	-.009	-.003	.126
Q59	**.784**	.038	.253	-.044	-.237	.062
Q56	**.783**	.264	.133	.024	-.115	.037
Q23	**.693**	.526	.206	.091	.093	.083
Q49	**.658**	.324	.086	.022	-.269	.145
Q52	**.655**	.435	.172	.245	.072	.014
Q25	.650	.354	.135	.165	-.135	-.146
Q58	.644	-.024	.337	.297	.177	.054
Q43	.643	.099	.376	.148	-.153	.197
Q50	.627	.472	.229	.203	-.163	.038
Q38	.617	-.067	.308	.138	.077	.363
Q16	.596	.077	.293	.383	.144	-.060
Q29	.593	.321	.236	.392	-.040	.052
Q55	.562	.159	.403	.125	-.079	.070
Q17	.555	.033	.260	.331	.165	.155
Q28	.547	.515	.259	.248	.040	-.007
Q34	.044	**.753**	.236	.276	-.026	.064
Q47	.125	**.742**	.338	.136	.015	.046
Q45	.189	**.691**	.142	.043	-.246	-.078
Q21	.247	**.664**	.155	.525	.029	.086
Q27	.313	**.632**	.306	.253	.186	.071
Q14	.248	**.582**	.275	.307	.179	-.073
Q24	.491	.565	.146	.275	.164	-.042
Q4	.224	.560	.087	.554	.011	.242
Q15	.130	.543	.424	.244	.026	-.088
Q26	.326	.475	.435	.148	-.103	-.232

Factor Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q30	.456	.473	.229	.181	.108	-.240
Q22	.138	.461	.302	.308	.158	.304
Q1	.147	.451	.238	.292	.423	-.069
Q6	.368	.417	.359	.257	.240	-.045
Q41	.178	.330	**.723**	.178	.035	.163
Q37	.111	.340	**.682**	.349	.159	.002
Q40	.160	.068	**.672**	-.024	.079	.313
Q36	.095	.214	**.649**	.387	-.123	.022
Q35	.238	.388	**.636**	.197	.092	-.111
Q32	.204	.383	**.634**	.236	.126	.147
Q48	.296	.437	.621	.084	.029	-.026
Q46	.266	-.054	.610	-.085	-.416	.237
Q51	.342	.382	.608	.307	.140	.073
Q57	.446	.267	.606	.070	-.161	.055
Q33	.306	.378	.603	.318	.140	.035
Q54	.405	.109	.541	.117	-.088	-.304
Q19	.307	.234	.501	.160	-.142	-.280
Q53	.262	.469	.493	.383	.193	-.089
Q18	.215	.056	.460	.214	-.172	-.128
Q7	.162	.113	.171	**.773**	.066	-.198
Q3	.210	.165	.290	**.704**	.108	.082
Q5	.147	.577	.059	**.662**	.015	.193
Q20	.055	.295	.306	**.661**	-.179	-.247
Q10	-.138	.247	.019	**.605**	-.253	-.133
Q8	.201	.208	.161	**.591**	.063	.132
Q31	.236	.270	.462	.576	.022	.272
Q11	.470	.245	.179	.568	.096	-.001
Q44	.154	.113	.180	.032	**-.631**	.295

Factor / Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q9	-.056	.110	.037	-.038	**.590**	.172
Q42	.197	.487	.174	.201	**-.490**	-.156
Q13	.220	.227	.300	.264	**.317**	-.005
Q39	.425	-.064	.099	-.059	.079	**.627**
Q12	.179	.270	.205	.356	-.129	**.538**
Q2	-.079	.150	.166	.189	.393	**-.417**

Items Q60, Q59, Q56, Q23, Q49 and Q52 loaded on the first factor, items Q34, Q47, Q45, Q21, Q27 and Q14 on the second factor. Items Q41, Q37, Q40, Q36, Q35, and Q32 loaded on the third factor and items Q7, Q3, Q5, Q20, Q10 and Q8 on factor four. At the fifth factor it was not possible to find six items which loaded primarily on that factor.

Only four items were identified, namely Q44(-), Q9, Q42(-) and Q13. Also, at the sixth factor, it was not possible to identify six items which loaded primarily on that factor. Only three did so, and these were Q39, Q12 and Q2(-).

As can be seen from the aforementioned results, the data did not mirror the hypothesised model. This necessitated the labelling of the factors which emerged from the analyses. It was decided that, should it be impossible to create a set of coherent labels from the items, less complex models would be tested. The content analyses, of the items which grouped together are presented below. These are for the model with six factors extracted (the items listed above in Table 5.3), and also for less complex models where fewer factors were extracted.

ITEM SPECIFICATION FOR A SIX FACTOR SOLUTION

With a six-factor solution, the items which loaded on factor one read as follows: Q60:

I have an <u>active</u> development plan in place <u>for each of my brand</u> <u>objectives and goals</u>.

Q59: I <u>evaluate</u> my brand by involving my <u>target audience</u> and <u>testing</u> their response to my brand.

Q56: I <u>measure</u> <u>critical success factors</u> of my personal brand.

Q23: I have a <u>clear</u> vision of my future.

Q49: At present, <u>my brand is more specific than general</u> and is focused on a niche market.

Q52: I <u>take</u> ownership and <u>control</u> of my brand.

The content of these items reflects <u>activity</u> (see Q60, Q59, Q56, Q52) as well as <u>focus</u> (see Q60, Q59, Q56, Q23, Q49). As such, this emergent factor was labelled "active focus".

The items related to factor two read as follows:

Q34: My personal offering should be <u>true to my own</u> values and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.

Q47: Emotional intelligence is an essential component for if I want to lead and influence using my strong personal brand.

Q45: <u>Everything I do</u> communicates my brand.

Q21: My personal brand is an <u>authentic reflection</u> of who I am as a <u>holistic person</u>, taking into account my values, personality, appearance and specialisation.

Q27: The best way to progress is by offering specific, related, relevant, <u>consistent</u> and credible content.

Q14: All people have <u>blind spots</u>. <u>Asking feedback</u> in this regard is to one's own benefit.

The content of these items reflect aspects such as <u>authenticity</u> (see Q34, Q21, Q14) as well as <u>integration / consistency</u> (see Q45, Q21, Q27, Q14). These questions seem to relate to meta-cognition and a need to present a brand true to oneself, without internal dissonance. Only Q47 did not fit this label well. The emergent factor was labelled "integrated authenticity".

The items related to factor three read as follows:

Q41: Mastering and maintaining my personal brand is a <u>significant undertaking</u> which takes time and effort.

Q37: I <u>need to</u> stay <u>connected</u> and relevant to sustain my personal brand.

Q40: In order to make sure that the content of my value proposition stands out from the crowd, my social media voice needs to be well developed.

Q36: My own evaluation of my key competitors in the workplace is critical if I want to differentiate myself from them.

Q35: Creating a powerful personal brand requires the development of a relevant and complementary online and offline presence.

Q32: Stakeholder interaction is an ongoing process aimed at staying on top of the needs, wants and desires of those who are influential in my life story.

The content of these items reflects strategic positioning (see Q37, Q40, Q36, Q35, Q32), as an active process, requiring proactive and continues activity, as emphasized with the first factor. Activity is evident in all the items. As such, this emergent factor was labelled "active strategic positioning".

The items related to factor four read as follows:

Q7: A personal brand can be developed through a structured, conscious process.

Q3: Establishing a clear personal brand will guide, direct and reinforce career enhancing behaviours and actions.

Q5: It is important for me to be thoroughly honest with the brand that I am presenting.

Q20: The comparison between self-reported scores and the scores provided by others can provide valuable self-insight for building a personal brand.

Q10: Having an authentic brand rather than a superficial brand is important when success is my goal.

Q8: Thinking about my brand directs the development thereof.

The content of these items reflects aspects such as personal brand reflection (see Q7, Q3, Q5, Q20, Q10, Q8) as well as authenticity (see Q5, Q20, Q10). Similar themes were identified previously. The emergent factor was labelled "cognitive buy-in".

The items related to factor five read as follows:

Q44(-): To implement my personal brand I need to limit myself to small strategic steps as well as consider a few vital points.

Q9: Personal success is reserved for those who conform and not for those who stand out.

Q42(-): My brand is positioned as a consistent pattern of behaviour that is authentic to who and what I am, which people seems to like.

Q13: I utilise various methods to measure myself in different areas of my life.

No clear themes were identified here. Q42 also seems ill-considered, as it is a double-barrelled question, which may have confused the respondents. The rest of the items do not seem to be related and, as such, the label "residual" was given to this factor.

Lastly, the items related to factor six read as follows:

Q39: Positioning yourself as a brand is determined mostly by <u>market needs</u> and, to a lesser extent, by personal convictions.

Q12: I, more than others, <u>know the environment</u>, and how changes in the environment may affect my success.

Q2(-): A personal brand is a function of who the person is and cannot be consciously developed or sustained.

The content of these items reflects an <u>awareness of the environmental needs</u> (see Q39, Q12, Q2). Q2 may be rephrased as follows: I can adjust to my environment as well as environmental changes, irrespective of my personal attributes. As such, this emergent factor was labelled "strategic alignment".

ITEM SPECIFICATION FOR A FIVE-FACTOR SOLUTION

With a five-factor solution, the items which loaded on factor one read as follows:

Q60: I have an active <u>development plan</u> in place for each of my brand <u>objectives</u> <u>and goals</u>.

Q59: I <u>evaluate</u> my brand by involving my <u>target audience</u> and <u>testing</u> their response to my brand.

Q56: I <u>measure</u> <u>critical success factors</u> of my personal brand.

Q38: I have <u>informed</u> my network of alliances, partnerships, customers, superiors and subordinates of <u>what I am and what I stand for</u>.

Q23: <u>I have</u> a <u>clear vision</u> of my future.

Q43: I am <u>strategically placing</u> <u>my brand message</u> across various platforms and using various networks to implement my personal brand.

The content of these items reflects the <u>directedness</u> of action, towards something specific (see Q60, Q59, Q56, Q38, Q23, Q43) as well as action itself being an <u>active</u> agent in achieving these goals (see Q60, Q59, Q56, Q38, Q23, Q43). The emergent factor was labelled "targeted actions".

The items related to factor two read as follows:

Q5: It is important for me to be <u>thoroughly honest</u> with the brand that I am presenting.

Q4: I am increasingly aware that a good reputation and unique personal attributes are necessary for <u>career success</u>.

Q21: My personal brand is an <u>authentic reflection</u> of who I am as a holistic person, taking into account my values, personality, appearance and specialisation.

Q3: Establishing a clear personal brand will guide, direct and reinforce <u>career enhancing behaviours and actions</u>.

Q31: I need to position myself competitively and comparatively to improve <u>my chances of success.</u>

Q7: A personal brand can be developed through a structured, conscious process.

The content of these items reflects <u>authenticity</u> (see Q5, Q21), as well as a recognition of the value of developing a brand in <u>achieving success</u> (see Q4, Q3, Q31). Although Q7 does not fit achieving successes well, it may be related to reflection, which is visible in all the items. Therefore, the second emergent factor was labelled "authentic branding as a success enabler".

The items related to factor three read as follows:

Q41: Mastering and maintaining my personal brand is a significant undertaking which takes time and effort.

Q37: I need to stay connected and relevant to sustain my personal brand.

Q40: In order to make sure that the content of my value proposition stands out from the crowd, my social media voice needs to be well developed.

Q36: My own evaluation of my key competitors in the workplace is critical if I want to differentiate myself from them.

Q32: Stakeholder interaction is an ongoing process aimed at staying on top of the needs, wants and desires of those who are influential in my life story.

Q35: Creating a powerful personal brand requires the development of a relevant and complementary online and offline presence.

The content of these items reflect active participation in the development of the brand
(see Q41, Q37, Q40, Q36, Q32, Q35) as well as strategic placement and competition (see Q37, Q40, Q36, Q32, Q35). The emergent factor was labelled "considered strategic positioning".

The items related to factor four read as follows:

Q45: Everything I do communicates my brand.

Q42: My brand is positioned as a consistent pattern of behaviour that is authentic to who and what I am, which people seems to like.

Q26: People have complimented me on the way I present myself as a complete and unique person.

Q47: Emotional intelligence is an essential component for if I want to lead and influence using my strong personal brand.

Q30: The personal brand that I portray is sufficient to encourage others to decide to work with me and follow my leadership.

Q34: My personal offering should be true to my own values and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.

The content of these items reflect aspects such as likeability (see Q42, Q26, Q37, Q30) as well as uniformity (see Q45, Q42, Q34). The emergent factor was labelled "pleasant persona".

Only five items related to factor five and they read as follows:

Q44 (-): To implement my personal brand I need to limit myself to small strategic steps as well as consider a few vital points.

Q9: Personal success is reserved for those who conform and not for those who stand out.

Q2: A personal brand is a function of who the person is and cannot be consciously developed or sustained.

Q1: Effective personal branding is necessary if I am to profit from those elements that differentiate me from others with the same competencies.

Q13: I utilise various methods to measure myself in different areas of my life.

Q44 suggests that building a brand is focussed on broad goals, and a broad vision. Then, Q9 and Q1 seem to contradict each other. The other two items did not seem to relate any of the above mentioned. As such no theme was identified for the fifth factor and it was named "residual".

ITEM SPECIFICATION FOR A FOUR-FACTOR SOLUTION

With a four-factor solution the items which loaded on factor one read as follows:

Q5: It is important for me to be thoroughly honest with the brand that I am presenting.

Q21: My personal brand is an authentic reflection of who I am as a holistic person, taking into account my values, personality, appearance and specialisation.

Q4: I am increasingly aware that a good reputation and unique personal attributes are necessary for career success.

Q34: My personal offering should be true to my own values and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.

Q14: All people have blind spots. <u>Asking feedback</u> in this regard is to one's own benefit.

Q53: I can learn valuable <u>lessons from individuals</u> who have become experts at building their own personal brands.

The content of Q5, Q21 and Q34 clearly reflect <u>authenticity</u>, while Q14 could well be related to that – achieving authenticity. Q4, Q14 and Q53 may relate to an interactional element to brand development, which in turn may relate to <u>testing one's own relative position</u>. The factor was labelled "informed authenticity".

The items related to factor two read as follows:

Q60: I have an active development plan in place for <u>each of my brand objectives</u> <u>and goals</u>.

Q59: I evaluate my brand by involving my <u>target audience</u> and testing their response to my brand.

Q56: I measure <u>critical success factors</u> of my personal brand.

Q38: <u>I have informed my network</u> of alliances, partnerships, customers, superiors and subordinates of what I am and what I stand for.

Q23: I have a <u>clear</u> vision of my future.

Q49: At present, my brand is <u>more specific than general and is focused on</u> a niche market.

The content of these items reflect <u>directedness</u> towards goals (see Q10, Q56, Q49), but also a specific audience (see Q59, Q38). Q23 refer to a clear vision, which implies directedness. As such, this emergent factor was labelled "directedness".

The items related to factor three read as follows:

Q41: Mastering and maintaining my personal brand is a <u>significant undertaking</u> which takes time and effort.

Q40: In order to make sure that the content of my value proposition <u>stands out from the crowd</u>, my social media voice needs to be <u>well developed</u>.

Q37: <u>I need to</u> stay <u>connected</u> and relevant to sustain my personal brand.

Q46: I spend a <u>substantial amount of time and effort</u> ensuring that <u>people know</u> about who and what I am.

Q36: My own evaluation of my <u>key competitors</u> in the workplace is critical if I want to differentiate myself from them.

Q32: <u>Stakeholder interaction</u> is an <u>ongoing process</u> aimed at staying on top of the needs, wants and desires of those who are <u>influential in my life st</u>ory.

The content of these items reflects the <u>effort</u> associated with establishing a brand (see Q41, Q40, Q46, Q32), as well as the social aspect associated with that – the <u>social</u> <u>stakeholders</u> (see Q40, Q37, Q36, Q32). As such, this emergent factor was labelled "active stakeholder management".

The items related to factor four read as follows (only four items loaded on this factor):

Q42: My brand is positioned as a consistent pattern of behaviour that is authentic to who and what I am, which people seems to like.

Q45: Everything I do communicates my brand.

Q44: To implement my personal brand I need to limit myself to small strategic steps as well as consider a few vital points.

Q9: Personal success is reserved for those who conform and not for those who stand out.

The content of these items did not seem to match. Q42 and Q9 seems to be opposites of each other, and no general theme presented itself. As such this factor was named "residual".

ITEM SPECIFICATION FOR A THREE-FACTOR SOLUTION

With a three-factor solution the items which loaded on factor one read as follows:

Q5: It is important for me to be thoroughly <u>honest</u> with the brand that I am presenting.

Q21: My personal brand is an <u>authentic</u> reflection of who I am as a holistic person, taking into account my values, personality, appearance and specialisation.

Q4: I am <u>increasingly aware</u> that a good reputation and unique personal attributes are necessary for career success.

Q34: My personal offering should <u>be true to</u> my own values and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.

Q14: All people have blind spots. <u>Asking feedback</u> in this regard is to one's own benefit.

Q53: I can learn <u>valuable lessons</u> from individuals who have become experts at building their own personal brands.

The content of these items reflect aspects such as <u>authenticity</u> (see Q5, Q21, Q34) and <u>refection</u> (see Q4, Q14, Q53). As such, this emergent factor was labeled "reflective authenticity".

The items related to factor two read as follows:

Q60: I have an active development plan in place for each of my brand <u>objectives</u> <u>and goals</u>.

Q59: I evaluate my brand by involving my <u>target audience</u> and testing their response to my brand.

Q56: I measure <u>critical success factors</u> of my personal brand.

Q49: At present, my brand is <u>more specific</u> than general and is focused on a niche market.

Q23: I have a <u>clear vision</u> of my future.

Q43: I am <u>strategically placing</u> my brand message across various platforms and using various networks to implement my personal brand.

The items all reflect targeted effort in the branding process and, as such this emergent factor was labelled "targeting".

The items related to factor three read as follows:

Q41: Mastering and maintaining my personal brand is a <u>significant undertaking which takes time and effort</u>.

Q40: In order to make sure that the content of <u>my value proposition stands out</u> from the crowd, my social media voice needs to be well developed.

Q37: I need to <u>stay connected</u> and relevant to sustain my personal brand.

Q46: I spend a <u>substantial amount of time and effort</u> ensuring that people know about who and what I am.

Q36: My own evaluation of my <u>key competitors</u> in the workplace is critical if I want to differentiate myself from them.

Q32: <u>Stakeholder interaction</u> is an <u>ongoing process</u> aimed at <u>staying on top</u> of the needs, wants and desires of those who are influential in my life story.

The themes from this factor seem to match previously identified themes. One theme is <u>effort</u> (see Q41, Q46, Q32), and the others are <u>competitors</u> (see Q40, Q36) and <u>stakeholders</u> (see Q46, Q32). As such, this emergent factor was labelled "active directed interaction".

ITEM SPECIFICATION FOR A TWO-FACTOR SOLUTION

With a two-factor solution the items which loaded on factor one read as follows:

Q21: My personal brand is an <u>authentic reflection</u> of who I am as a holistic person, taking into account my values, personality, appearance and specialisation.

Q5: It is important for me to be <u>thoroughly honest</u> with the brand that I am presenting.

Q53: I can learn <u>valuable lessons</u> from individuals who have become experts at building their own personal brands.

Q34: My personal offering should be <u>true to my own values</u> and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.

Q37: I need to stay connected and relevant to sustain my personal brand.

Q14: <u>All people have blind spots</u>. Asking feedback in this regard is to one's own benefit.

Q20: The comparison between self-reported scores and the scores provided by others can provide <u>valuable self-insight</u> for building a personal brand.

The themes in these items appear to be <u>authenticity</u> (see Q21, Q5, Q34) as well as <u>self-discovery</u> (see Q53, Q14, Q20). Item Q37 did not fit any of these labels well. The emergent factor was labelled "considered authenticity".

The items related to factor two read as follows:

Q59: I evaluate my brand by involving my <u>target audience</u> and testing their response to my brand.

Q56: I measure <u>critical success factors</u> of my personal brand.

Q60: I have an active development plan in place <u>for each of my brand objectives</u> <u>and goals</u>.

Q43: I am <u>strategically placing</u> my brand message across various platforms and using various networks to implement my personal brand.

Q49: At present, my brand is <u>more specific</u> than general and is focused on a niche market.

Q38: I have informed <u>my network</u> of alliances, partnerships, customers, superiors and subordinates of what I am and what I stand for.

 Q23: I have a <u>clear vision</u> of my future.

The content of all these items reflects directedness and, as such, the factor was labelled "targeting".

ITEM SPECIFICATION FOR A ONE-FACTOR SOLUTION

Only the 12 items with the highest loadings on the component matrix is presented here. These items should be representative of the total personal branding domain given the items which were generated to assess the phenomena. The items read as follows:

Q51: Measurement of the success of personal branding is important.

Q33: My brand needs to be operationalised and, therefore, the development of an individual marketing and stakeholder management strategy is necessary.

Q28: I know exactly what I believe in and what I feel passionate about, what my brand is selling, and what value my brand offers to my customer or target audience.

Q53: I can learn valuable lessons from individuals who have become experts at building their own personal brands.

Q23: I have a clear vision of my future

Q50: I am mindful of my personal brand and how I actively display my mission, vision, values, and strength of character.

Q21: My personal brand is an authentic reflection of who I am as a holistic person, taking into account my values, personality, appearance and specialisation.

Q52: I take ownership and control of my brand.

Q29: I have a clear vision on how to approach the future and the demands it may place on me.

Q27: The best way to progress is by offering specific, related, relevant, consistent and credible content.

Q31: I need to position myself competitively and comparatively to improve my chances of success.

Q24: I know my strengths and weaknesses and how each relates to my future. Several items emerged in this solution which did not emerge in the other solutions. However, the content of the items was not unfamiliar. Inspection of the 12 items reveals three major themes: A clear vision of the future (See Q28, Q23, Q29); an appreciation of the importance of actively getting involved in the branding process (See Q51, Q33, Q52, Q27, Q31); and reflection (See Q53, Q50, Q21, Q24).

The aforementioned match well with the labels given to the multi-factor solutions. These were "active focus", "integrated authenticity", "active strategic positioning", "cognitive buy-in", "strategic alignment", "targeted actions", "authentic branding as a success enabler", "considered strategic positioning", "pleasant persona", "informed authenticity", "directedness", "active stakeholder management", "reflective authenticity", "targeting", "active directed interaction", "considered authenticity", and

three factors labeled "residual". The labeling of the factors revealed some clear similarities and possible overlaps. These similarities may also point to a single latent variable, linking all the items.

Table 5.4 is presented below to provided summative information on the items to be considered for inclusion in the final questionnaire. In this table, the items which are appearing in more than one factor solution are presented.

Table 5.4
Items repeated in the different solutions

Item \ Factor	6 Factors	5 Factors	4 Factors	3 Factors	2 Factors	1 Factor	Count
Q21	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Q23	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Q5	X	X	X	X	X		5
Q34	X	X	X	X	X		5
Q37	X	X	X	X	X		5
Q56	X	X	X	X	X		5
Q59	X	X	X	X	X		5
Q60	X	X	X	X	X		5
Q13	X	X	X	X			4
Q32	X	X	X	X			4

Factor / Item	6 Factors	5 Factors	4 Factors	3 Factors	2 Factors	1 Factor	Count
Q36	X	X	X	X			4
Q40	X	X	X	X			4
Q41	X	X	X	X			4
Q49	X		X	X	X		4
Q53			X	X	X	X	4
Q4		X	X	X			3
Q9	X	X	X				3
Q38		X	X		X		3
Q42	X	X	X				3
Q43		X		X	X		3
Q44	X	X	X				3
Q45	X	X	X				3
Q2	X	X					2
Q3	X	X					2
Q7	X	X					2
Q14	X				X		2
Q20	X				X		2
Q27	X					X	2
Q31		X				X	2
Q35	X	X					2
Q46			X	X			2
Q47	X	X					2
Q52	X					X	2

From Table 5.4 it can be seen that 22 items appeared three times or more in the calculated solutions. These items could be central to the construct of personal branding. They could also represent the outcome of strategy 2.

However, it was decided to combine the results of the different analyses in order to come up with a final list of preferred items. This integration is presented in the discussion section presented below.

5.5   Discussion

In the discussion, the results are integrated, and the final questionnaire is proposed. The integration of the results entailed considering the outcomes of the two strategies used to refine the item pools and making judgments as to which items to include.

5.4.1 Comparing strategy one with strategy two

Strategy one for identifying suitable items was purely quantitative and resulted in the identification of 30 items. These items are presented in Table 5.1 Column 0. The reliability coefficient of the 30 items is high, and the reliability of all the different subscales acceptable. This suggests an improvement on the 60-item questionnaire. The primary drawback of the reversed measure is that the correlations between the different sub-scales are very high (r > .60) (Samuel, & Okey, 2013). In the case of both the 60-item and 30-item questionnaires the correlation between the subscales was around or above .70, suggesting that they all may measure the same construct.

Strategy two focused on factor analysis. The proposed theoretical six-factor solution presented in Table 3 did not fit the hypothesised theoretical model and the items loading on the factors were subsequently named. This entailed a qualitative approach (content analysis) to data (items) grouped together based on a quantitative process. The labels assigned to the six-factor solution were "active focus", "integrated authenticity", "active strategic positioning", "cognitive buy-in" and "strategic alignment" (one factor was not named). Similar themes ("targeted actions", "authentic branding as a success enabler", "considered strategic positioning", "pleasant persona", "informed authenticity", "directedness", "active stakeholder management", "reflective authenticity", "targeting", "active directed interaction", "considered authenticity", "targeting") were identified when fewer factors were extracted, and three time factors were labelled "residual" as the content of the different items was disparate. This labelling process was insightful, as the emergent themes presented different nuances that were not presented when applying Strategy one.

The three-factor solution, which did not have residual items, and declared 52.981 percent of the variance in the dataset, and also declared an adequate amount of variance (Beavers t al., 2013), was accepted as the optimal model, particularly as the items loaded in a very coherent manner. The one- factor solution was also deemed

as important, as it was possible that a single factor may underpin all the items, as is observable in the high correlations reported in Table 5.2.

Given all this complexity, Table 5.5 presents a comparison of the different optimal solutions, achieved with Strategy 1 (Column 0) and Strategy 2 (Columns 1 to 3). In this table, the item that emerged when using all four filters is presented in bold. Items which were identified using three filters are underlined while items identified with only one filter are striked-through.

Table 5.5

Item selection based on different strategies

Column 0	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
30 Items selected in Table 1	18 items which loaded in the three factor solution	12 items which loaded on a the single factor solution	22 Items which loaded on three or more factor solutions
~~3~~	4		4
4	5		5
5			~~9~~
~~7~~			
~~8~~			
~~11~~	14		~~13~~
14			
~~15~~			
~~16~~			
~~17~~			
23	21	21	21
24	**23**	**23**	**23**
27		24	
28		27	
29		28	
		29	
31	32	31	32
32	34	33	34
33	36		36

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Column 0	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
30 Items selected in Table 1	18 items which loaded in the three factor solution	12 items which loaded on a the single factor solution	22 Items which loaded on three or more factor solutions
~~35~~	<u>37</u>		<u>37</u>
<u>37</u>	40		~~38~~
			40
<u>41</u>	<u>41</u>	50	<u>41</u>
<u>43</u>	<u>43</u>		~~42~~
47	~~46~~		<u>43</u>
~~48~~			~~44~~
50			~~45~~
			~~49~~
51	53	51	53
52	<u>56</u>	52	<u>56</u>
~~55~~	59	53	59
<u>56</u>	60		60
~~58~~			

The 26 items making up the final list were selected based on Table 5.5. These were items 4, 5, 14, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 40, 41, 43, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 59 and 60. These were the final items to be included in the questionnaire.

5.4.2 Theme theory of personal branding

It was decided to abandon the original developmental stages theory of personal branding as these stages did not clearly materialise during the pilot study. The items which loaded on a six-factor solution did not match the development stages as proposed. As such a theme theory of branding, based on the themes which emerged from naming the factors, is proposed. Abandoning a developmental model for a theme model, or a single construct model is not uncommon in explanatory research such as this (De Jong, & Den Hartog, 2010; Kleysen, & Street, 2001).

After many hours of deliberation between the researcher and research supervisor, and considering all the information presented above, the following four themes were identified and proposed as central elements of personal branding:

- Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future: Meta-cognition refers to thinking about processes and how the world works while a clear vision of the future relates to ambition and a defined ideal future state.

- Authenticity and internal consistency: This refers to the ideal of presenting the real self (Rogers, 1980) and the avoidance of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

- Strategy / Awareness of environment: This entails being mindful of the environment and specific individuals being able to influence a person's career.

- Activity / Working on brand: This element deals with being active in implementing your brand. It goes beyond thinking or strategising and deals with actively pursuing these plans.

The items, as well as their proposed theme that each represents, are presented below. From Table 5.6 and the labelling of items it will become apparent that multiple labels could be given to each item. However, an effort was made to consider all the items in a very literal manner, focusing on the direct meaning associated with the particular item, and not what could have preceded it or what will flow from it.

Table 5.6

Selected items and themes

Item	Content	Theme
4	I am increasingly aware that a good reputation and unique personal attributes are necessary for career success.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
5	It is important for me to be thoroughly honest with the brand that I am presenting.	Authenticity and internal consistency
14	All people have blind spots. Asking feedback in this regard is to one's own benefit.	Authenticity and internal consistency
21	My personal brand is an authentic reflection of who I am as a whole, taking into account my values, career specialisation, personality and appearance.	Authenticity and internal consistency

Item	Content	Theme
23	I have a clear vision of my future.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
24	I know my strengths and weaknesses and how each relates to my future.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
27	The best way to progress is by offering specific, related, relevant, consistent and credible content.	Strategy / Awareness of environment
28	I know exactly what I believe in and feel passionate about, what my brand is selling, and what value my brand offers to my customer or target audience.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
29	I have a clear vision on how to approach the future and the demands it may place on me.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
31	I need to position myself competitively and comparatively to improve my chances of success.	Strategy / Awareness of environment
32	Stakeholder interaction is an ongoing process aimed at staying on top of the needs, wants and desires of those who are influential in my life story.	Activity / Working on brand Strategy / Awareness of environment
33	My brand needs to be operationalised and, therefore, the development of an individual marketing and stakeholder management strategy is necessary.	Activity / Working on brand Strategy / Awareness of environment
34	My personal offering should be true to my own values and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.	Authenticity and internal consistency
36	My own evaluation of my key competitors in the workplace is critical if I am to differentiate myself from them.	Strategy / Awareness of environment Activity / Working on brand
37	I need to stay connected and relevant to sustain my personal brand.	Strategy / Awareness of environment Activity / Working on brand
40	In order to make sure that the content of my value proposition stands out from the crowd, my social media voice needs to be well developed.	Strategy / Awareness of environment Meta-cognition

Item	Content	Theme
41	Mastering and maintaining my personal brand is a significant undertaking which takes time and effort.	Activity / Working on brand
43	I am strategically placing my brand message across various platforms and using various networks to implement my personal brand.	Activity / Working on brand Strategy / Awareness of environment
47	Emotional intelligence is an essential component in those who lead and influence using strong personal branding.	Strategy / Awareness of environment
50	I am mindful of my personal brand and how I actively display my vision, values, mission and strength of character.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
51	Measurement of the success of personal branding is important.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
52	I take ownership and control of my brand.	Activity / Working on brand
53	I can learn valuable lessons from individuals who have become experts at building their own personal brands.	Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future
56	I have developed specific measures of my short, medium, and long-term targets and goals as they relate to my personal branding.	Activity / Working on brand Clear vision of the future
59	I evaluate my brand by involving my target audience and testing their response to my brand.	Activity / Working on brand Strategy / Awareness of environment
60	I have an active development plan in place for each of my brand objectives and goals.	Activity / Working on brand

The themes are well represented across the different items and it was decided to retain all 26 of the items, despite the overrepresentation of some themes. The final questionnaire, as proposed through this development process can be found in Annexure C. Using the development data, the Cronbach alpha for the 26 items was .968. Only items 40 (r=.449), 59 (r=.579), and 60 (r=.532) had corrected item-total correlations lower than .60. The same items (item 40, 59 and 60) emerged with lower loadings (.518, .584 and .546) when performing a principal component analysis – that

is when "forcing" all items into a single factor. The final questionnaire is thus presented as a uni-dimensional measure of personal branding, with a mean score of 144.750 and a standard deviation of 34.951.

5.6 Conclusion

Literature on personal branding is limited and is largely contained in popular, non-academic articles. Very little is known about the nature of the concept, and less about the measurement thereof. Based on a review of popular literature, a six-stage personal branding model was proposed. The following stages were identified: Understanding the importance of having a personal brand; Developing self-awareness and awareness of one's environment; Visualising and conceptualising a personal brand; Developing a personal brand marketing and stakeholder management strategy; Implementing the personal brand; and Measuring, evaluating and improving your brand. The identification of these stages amounts to a significant contribution to the body of knowledge but was also the focus of a previous study (Mohammed & Steyn, 2017).

Based on this six-stage model of brand development, 60 items were developed by a panel of professionals in order to assess the level of the development of personal branding. The data collected in the 60-item questionnaire were analysed in different ways, and the results were very informative. The data did not fit the six-stage model well and it was concluded that the stage model of personal branding should be shelved and that an alternative model was needed. This resulted in the creation of an element model of personal branding. The elements making up this model were derived subjectively during the labelling of different factor solutions extracted from the data. A relative consistent pattern of themes emerged, even when different numbers of factors were extracted. The elements which are finally proposed are as follows: Meta-cognition / clear vision of the future; Authenticity and internal consistency; Strategy / Awareness of environment; and Activity / Working on brand. This research thus defines personal branding in a manner not previously done. This outcome entails a refinement, and ultimately, a reworking of the stage model initially proposed. The product is a simpler but empirically sounder model of personal branding. This constitutes an important contribution to the body of knowledge.

The final 26-item instrument developed is proposed as a comprehensive measure of a well-developed personal brand. By linking the elements of a personal brand to items, and compiling a questionnaire, theory (the element model) is operationalised (the questionnaire), and this also contributes to the development of personal branding as a subject of academic interest. This further serves as a first step towards quantifying the level of personal branding and, once refined, the use of the questionnaire will allow for testing the validity of claims regarding personal branding as an antecedent to success in the world-of-work.

5.7   Limitations of study

This research could have been conducted in many other ways, but this would have been a matter of preference, and only some aspects will be addressed in this regard. This relates to the use of factor analysis and specifically exploratory versus confirmatory factor analysis. Firstly, it would in most cases be inappropriate to undertake factor analyses with such a small group of respondents. Factor analysis was, however, performed here as it does provide some data helpful to exploring the present data – even if not in a perfect manner.

There seems to be a preoccupation amongst researchers to use confirmatory factor analysis. This was not done in this instance as the research was exploratory in nature. The data was explored and, without this exploration, the development of the themes which eventually emerged, would not have been possible. The researcher thus do not apologise for not using confirmatory factor analysis.

A second limitation of this study may be the pool of items used in the first questionnaire. The concept of "garbage in and garbage out" (Mellin, 1957) may apply here, and the researcher is aware of this. However, rigorous plans were put in place to minimise this risk. Although the development of the long list of items (240) was subjective, as it was developed through a content analysis, the short list of items (60) was development and refined by six industrial psychologists. As industrial psychologists regularly work with psychometric instruments, it was assumed that employing their services contributed to quality of the proposed items. Though not perfect, it was deemed that this approach would reduce bias.

Furthermore, no data was collected on variables which may correlate with personal branding, and as such no test on concurrent or discriminate validity could be performed. The lack of knowledge – as assessed with this questionnaire and as to how personal branding relates to other concept, limits the credibility and use of the instrument. In addition, and particularly data on how personal branding relates to career success, is absent. Given the way in which personal branding is presented and marketed in popular literature, testing the link between personal branding and career success will be of paramount importance. The researcher hopes to address this gap by collecting such data.

5.8 Suggestions for future research

Researchers are encouraged to refer to both the stage model and the elements model when discussing the concept of personal branding. Both models have merits, although this research suggests that the elements model may be better represented by the data collected.

Researchers are also encouraged to use the questionnaire developed in this research, particularly to assess the relationship with career success as anticipated by the popular literature consulted.

It would also be interesting to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between personal branding and self-esteem, self-image, narcissism and similar constructs.

5.9 Acknowledgements

The valuable contributions of the psychologists who assisted in the development of the original 60-item questionnaire is acknowledged, as are the contributions of those middle managers who anonymously completed the questionnaires in the pilot study.

CHAPTER 6

The relationship between personal branding and critical career success factors

The aim of this chapter was to report on the empirical testing of the relationship between personal branding and elements of career success. This was the primary aim of the research.

6.1   Introduction

This chapter reports on the relationship between personal branding and critical elements of career success. Though the concept of personal branding is not new, only limited empirical research which comprehensively explores the concept and how it relates to other variables exists. Though many authors state that the development and sustainment of a personal brand is important to professional and organisational success, little empirical evidence exists to support such claims. To date, no measurement instrument capable of measuring personal branding has existed and it has thus not been possible to quantify the relationship between personal branding and factors such as career success. Now, given the development of the Personal Branding Maturity Measurement, such hypotheses are testable. The core question addressed in this study is, "Does having a personal brand, developed in the manner the literature suggests, empirically relate to professional success?" Stated differently, "Are those who 'comply' with the rhetoric of personal branding more successful as professionals?"

The specific research objectives were to test the relationship between personal branding and proxies of personal career success (e.g. performance appraisal rating, 360-degree leadership evaluation rating and the talent board placement), as well as the relative importance of personal branding, given other variables such as leader-member exchange and employee engagement. These variables were included in the analyses as they may also be antecedents to career success, and contrasting then to personal branding should be indicative of the relative importance of personal branding. Before the testing of the hypothesis on the link between personal branding and

professional success, a review of literature on personal banding and its relationship with career success is provided.

6.2   Literature review

The literature review that follows provides a definition of personal branding and lists the characteristics of a successful personal brand. This is followed by a statement as to why personal branding is important, not only for professionals, but also for organisations. The literature review concludes with a discussion of dilemmas relating to personal branding and highlighting the need for future research.

Poeppelman and Blacksmith (2014) define personal branding as an individual's overall professional reputation, independent of any organisational or other affiliation. It relates to who individuals are, what they do and what they stand for, as well as to the value that they add (Johnstone, 2015). Le Patrick and De Valck (2014) state that the practice of personal branding is broadly defined as using marketing techniques for self-promotion. Johnstone (2015) is further of the view that personal branding should be the validation of excellence, packaged in a visually and emotionally pleasing and memorable format. This refers to the view that the appearance of one's brand is an opinion held in someone else's mind and that one needs to manage it effective and persuasively so as to distinguish oneself from others (Goldsmith, 2009). Rampersad (2008) taking a similar view, states that prosperous personal branding entails managing perceptions effectively as well as controlling and influencing how others perceive and think of one.

Though the definitions of a personal brand are useful, more light can be shed on the phenomenon by considering how a personal brand is displayed when implemented appropriately. There seems to be consensus on what such a brand should look like. Elmore (2010) emphasises that consistency and authenticity are essential characteristics of personal branding. Potgieter, Doubell and Klopper (2017) also emphasise the importance of authenticity as key to successful personal branding. Rampersad (2008) shares similar views concerning personal branding being more than just marketing and promoting oneself: it should be authentic, reflect one's true character and be specifically built on one's values, strengths and uniqueness. Poeppelman and Blacksmith (2014) confirm the view by stating that a personal brand

is a promise that should come from within oneself and that should be rooted in one's values, personality, personal beliefs, and interests.

Goldsmith (2009) also indicates that one's personal brand should be authentic and that it should reflect one's true character. Potgieter, Doubell and Klopper (2017) conclude that the following elements constitute an authentic personal brand: authenticity, consistency, relevance, authority, distinctiveness, integrity, goodwill and persistence. They also state that elements such as age, the industries that individuals work in and the positions they hold within an organisation do indeed influence one's personal brand. Rebuffet (2015) suggests that, to have a clear brand, one needs a clear identity – one which distinguishes one from others, so that others don't view one as "just another" professional. The emphasis is thus on distinguishability. Johnstone (2015) suggests that a strong personal brand is a combination of repute, confidence, responsiveness and accomplishment. He also states that a personal brand includes those professional and personal abilities which differentiate an individual from peers, colleagues, and competitors.

From the aforementioned it is evident that personal branding relates to an authentic and unique way of presenting oneself. Personal branding is also seemingly related to career and professional success. Professional individuals are seen as brands in their own right, which implies that such are linked to and identified with their personal brands (O' Neil, 2016). The most important product a professional will market is his or her own competencies, abilities, services and value which is why personal branding is becoming key to career success (Machaz, & Shokoofh, 2016). Elmore (2010) is of the view that creating a personal brand can be one of the most positive choices one makes in one's career, especially when one aligns relevant professional networks to assist with one's brand and, therefore, with one's career positioning. With a consistent and authentic message, one can open the door to value-adding relationships, additional loyal customers and a satisfying career. Consistent, authentic communication is thus critical for career success (Elmore, 2010). D'Alessandro and Owens (2008) are of the view that the formula for success is to become self-aware, get noticed by people in power and develop qualities that suggest that one is continuously stepping up to the accountability and thus also ahead of the pack. They also recommend developing a reputation as a balanced player who is able to give solid and pro-active advice, who is

worth trusting, and who is not perceived as challenging authority publicly and in a dysfunctional and unprofessional manner.

In the view of Machaz and Shokoofh (2016), successful personal branding fulfils the modern employers' demands and provides individuals with a clear path to career success in a volatile economy. Also, according to Machaz and Shokoofh (2016), personal branding is an essential strategy for success in this digital age in order to differentiate oneself from others by taking control of one's personal brand through an unpredictable economy. Developing one's brand will also enhance one's observed value in the marketplace, build credibility and a solid reputation within one's industry, deepen one's relationships and reveal one's performance potential (Rampersad, 2008).

Some authors are of the view that personal branding is not only related to personal success, but that it also forms a critical part of organisational success given that the individual represents the organisation by which he or she is employed. Chen and Chung (2017) hold the perspective that the behaviour of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organisation is directly linked to the organisation's performance. It is, therefore, essential to manage this behaviour (and hence the CEO's personal brand) when establishing the image and culture of a business. A CEO's personal brand reflects on him or her, but should also enrich the organisation. Chen and Chung (2017) further suggest that a CEOs is responsible for leading and representing his or her organisation with an appropriate level of dignity as his or her reputation could influence organisational culture, organisational performance, employee performance and the attracting of talent (Chen, & Chung, 2017). At a lower level, recommendations from a study by Potgieter et., al (2017) suggest that management in organisations should understand that the personal brand of every employee has a direct influence on the corporate brand and reputation of the organisation. Therefore, organisations should assist employees to understand, develop and implement their personal brands. Management should, furthermore, focus on brand feedback and employee appraisal within the organisational context. It is also to be noted that personal brand could be associated with financial consequences. Loss of reputation on the part of key employees can be devastating to any organisation. Smart organisations go out of their

way to look for employees who will enhance, and not compromise, the organisational reputation.

This means that one of the most important things that one can do for one's career is to establish the groundwork for an attractive personal brand or reputation (D'Alessandro, & Owens, 2008).

From the aforementioned, it is already evident that not all concerned view personal branding and the effects thereof similarly. Some suggest that personal branding is the result of learning, directed development and coaching, and impression management and that these are acknowledged as respected business expertise (Poeppelman, & Blacksmith, 2014). The goal of learning and development interventions could be to create awareness and to build, implement, maintain and sustain an authentic personal brand which is in coherence with one's career goals and ambitions (Goldsmith, 2009). Paradiso (2015) and Le Land (2016) also provide similar steps for building a personal brand. Potgieter et., al (2017) suggest that personal branding development should be an integral part of the learning opportunities offered by an organisation to employees engaged in different professions and also to those in leadership positions. Goldsmith (2009), following a more self-directed approach, states that actively building an authentic personal brand is an evolutionary and gradual process that should arise from one's pursuit for identity and meaning in life. Individuals should reflect actively and clearly upon their own strengths, weaknesses and ambitions in an authentic way so as to attempt to reflect the most positive attributes of their true character (Machaz, & Shokoofh, 2016). Moving away from authenticity, Rebuffet (2015) suggests that, before one begins creating one's brand identity, one need to know one's target market. The intent is to really understand who one's ideal clients are. It is necessary to explore and connect with the needs of the clients, as well as to understand their fears and challenges and to know what is at stake for them. This orchestrated and self-centred brand development is in sharp contrast to the apparently seamless development of brands such as those of the often-quoted Nelson Mandela, Richard Branson and Steve Jobs.

Social media plays a critical role as a communication medium within professional and social milieus and it seems to be an essential element of personal branding. A strong personal brand is an essential asset in today's online, virtual, and individual age,

serving as the key to personal success (Machaz, & Shokoofh, 2016). Paradiso (2015) emphasises that the key to finding one's community online is to identify with the right audience and to participate in online forums with one's target audiences, social communities and groups on the various available social media platforms. While it is important to always explore new ideas, stories and viewpoints on social media, and thereby add value to the "listening" audience (O'Neil, 2016), the Jobvite study revealed that over 90% of hiring managers use social media at some time during the hiring process and that almost 80% have successfully found hireable employees using some form of social media. Personal branding and the effective management of one's social media profile thus seem linked to career success.

While there are many authors who make promises with regard to the outcomes of personal branding – and a great deal of available popular literature does the same – many of the promises they put forward are scientifically unsubstantiated. A few examples of such promises are presented below and will inform the core of this research project:

- "As the market for positions becomes gradually competitive, development of a personal brand is vital to create distinction, which will assist one to develop one's current and future exceptional value and offering to employers, customers and business prospects" (Elmore, 2010:12-14).

- "Personal brands have become collective and indispensable as a personal brand conveys personality, skills, notions and values" (Chen, & Chung, 2017:23-32).

- Rampersad (2008:34-37) suggests that "personal branding is the positioning strategy behind some of the world's most successful people".

Many other authors, including Poeppelman and Blacksmith (2014), Goldsmith (2009), Paradiso (2015) and Black (2007) suggest that personal branding leads to career or organisational success, but they do so without substantiating these claims.

The focus of this research was on testing these unsubstantiated promises. The question is, to what extent do managers who actively engage in activities concerned with personal branding achieve success on indicators of workplace achievement?

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_1: There is no statistically significant relationship between personal branding and individual performance appraisal score.

H_2: There is no statistically significant relationship between personal branding and 360-degree leadership evaluation.

H_3: There is no statistically significant relationship between personal branding and talent board placement.

Testing these hypotheses will enable the answering of questions regarding the presence of the relationship between personal branding and career success, as well as the magnitude of that relationship. To gain some point of reference on the magnitude of the aforementioned relationship (the personal branding/career success relationship), the relationship between known antecedents of career success and indicators of career success were also tested. This was done per antecedent, but also in combination with each other, as well as with personal branding as an additional antecedent.

6.3   Methodology

The study is based on the positivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is organised and that the acquisition of knowledge may be obtained objectively (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2014). This design is thus well suited to test the promises presented in the literature review. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted in carrying out this study. Such a design is typified as the gathering of quantifiable data at one point in time that is then studied with a view to identifying relationships within the data (Cooper, & Schindler, 2003).

As the purpose of the study was to explore relationships between variables, this design is well suited to quantify the relationship between personal branding and career success.

Below are the details of the research method followed during this study:

6.3.1 Participants

The participants in this study comprised senior managers within a large South African organisation. The total number of senior managers was 223 and the intention was to

recruit all 223 to participate in the study. Demographics are reported in the results section of this document.

6.3.2 Research procedure

The unit of analysis was the individual senior manager who could report on their 360 degree leadership evaluation ratings, individual performance ratings and talent board placements for the 2017-2018 financial year. The population consisted of 223 senior managers and a response rate of 20% was expected. Permission to conduct the primary study was first obtained from the Chief Learning Officer at the organisation. The UNISA SBL Research Ethics Committee was approached next and approved the research methodology. Thereafter, a name list of the target population was obtained from the Chief Psychologist of the organisation. An electronic communiqué was developed and sent to the target population in order to explain the research objectives, obtain consent and provide the relevant documentation to be completed (instruments and information relating to the demographic profile as well as the pre-determined professional success factors). The electronic request was followed-up with individual discussions to encourage participation. This approach also assisted in building the necessary trust relationship and to assure participants of the value of their participation in the research project, to themselves and to the organisation. The response rate was monitored and managed and, where required, engagement with the target population took place to improve the response rate. The data obtained from the participants was captured in a consolidated matrix framework from where statistical analysis followed.

6.3.3 Instruments / Measurements

In this study, the variables assessed were personal branding and related critical career success factors. The instruments used were the Personal Brand Maturity Measurement, as well as the following measurements of career success, namely the individual performance rating, the 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation rating and the talent board placement. As control variables, leader-member exchange as well as employee engagement was also measured. In addition, each respondent's gender, age, length of tenure, leadership development training and their involvement with coaching interventions were obtained. An explanation of the instruments used is

presented below. The instruments were presented to the respondents in the form of a single consolidated electronic questionnaire.

Personal brand maturity measurement

The Personal Brand Maturity Measurement (PBMM) was developed by Mohammed and Steyn (2018) and is intended to assess the perceptions of respondents with regard to their own personal branding initiatives. It presents a comprehensive measure of a well-developed personal brand through linking the elements of a personal brand to items, and by offering a questionnaire based on personal brand theory. It presents a first step towards quantifying the level of personal branding in order to allow testing the validity of claims regarding personal branding as an antecedent to success in the world-of-work (Mohammed, & Steyn, 2018).

The questionnaire contained 26 items intended to assess perceptions regarding personal branding. The respondents were requested to read each statement carefully and to rate it on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), based on their level of agreement therewith. Question 1 reads as follows: "I have a clear vision of my professional future." Higher scores here would indicate a stronger perception on the part of the respondent regarding the clarity of his or her vision in this regard. This would mean that his or her behaviour is in line with what is theorised as that of a well branded individual. *Validity:* The instrument was developed with the support of six subject matter experts, focusing on the content and, particularly, on the constructs related to personal branding. During a development study, an exploratory factor analysis was used to test the validity of the stage model of personal branding. These variables were included in the analyses as they may also be antecedents to career success, and contrasting then to personal branding should be indicative of the relative importance of personal branding.

Although the exploratory analysis failed, an elements model emerged from the process. The validity of the personal brand maturity measure is thus mostly content as well as construct related.

Reliability: The Cronbach alpha for the scale was .970 (Mohammed, & Steyn, 2018).

Performance appraisal score

Performance management is critical for all organisations in order to ensure that performance requirements are met. Indicators of high performance are measured through an individual's ability to demonstrate capacity in delivering on job responsibilities at the set performance standards, consistently achieving stretched objectives and targets, upholding and/or exemplifying the espoused leadership behaviours, leadership impact and technical performance (Kaplan, & Norton, 2004). The large organisation from which the study population was drawn utilised the balanced score-card approach, which identifies objectives, key performance areas, specific key performance indicators that is weighted based on level of impact, units of measure and source of evidence.

For this study, the respondents were requested to provide their own performance rating scores. The question reads as follows: "What is your individual performance rating for the 2017-2018 performance year?" The performance appraisal score ranged from 1 to 5. Respondents needed to indicate their score for the previous performance year. The performance rating results in a score ranging from 1 to 5, where a rating of 1 relates to "floor" (very poor performance), a rating of 2 to "kick in" (poor performance), a rating of 3 to "norm" (average performance), a rating of 4 to "stretch" (good performance) and a rating of 5 to "ceiling" (excellent performance). The range thus runs from very poor performance to excellent performance. *Validity:* A standard template is used for all employees within the organisation, based on the balanced score-card approach. This approach is followed in many organisations (e.g. in the South African banking and mining industries). With reference to content validity, face validity, reliability, factorial validity, and convergent and discriminant validity, results indicate that the four Balanced Score Card (BSC) dimensions and related measures represent a valid performance model (Boulianne, 2006).

Reliability: Boulianne (2006) used the Cronbach alpha coefficient to estimate the internal consistency of measures and to analyse the quality of the BSC as a performance-measurement model. The Cronbach Alpha for the four dimensions was low and reported as follows: Financial (0.64), Customer (0.51), Innovation and Internal (0.55) and Learning and Growth (0.58).

Talent board placement

Talent management refers to the commitment in an organisation to recruit, hire, retain and develop the most talented and superior employees available in the job market. Talent management is also a strategy that organisations use to enable and retain their most talented and skilled employees (Wilcox, 2016). The talent board placement matrix was developed over a period of a few years by the Talent Management Department of the organisation. Effective talent management allows for a comprehensive pipeline for succession management, especially in critical, core and scarce skills and the talent board placement matrix measures this potential. In collaboration with Human resources (HR) business partners, business managers prepare for talent board placement through providing input (s) regarding their employee's perceived potential, performance appraisals, alignment to the required leadership brand (360-degree leadership evaluation score), how they are applying organisational values, envisaged developmental gaps and possible initiatives, as well as retention measures. The key skill required for leaders and practitioners in order to practise effective talent management is their own ability to engage in meaningful conversations with those reporting directly to them within the organisational structure.

The respondents were requested to provide their own talent placement ratings. The question read as follows: "Do you know what your talent placement rating is and, if yes – what is it?" The respondents were given the opportunity to indicate one of the following talent board matrix options: (1) Poor performer, (2) Diamond in the rough, (3) Non-solid performer, (4) Solid performer, (5) Heart of the operation (6) Knowledge anchor, (7) Future leader and (8) Ready-made successor. A nine-box matrix (with performance and potential as inputs) is used to segment talent. The 9-box matrix logically feeds into a three-box category wherein talent is grouped into high-flyers, solid performers and poor performers. The high flyers (1, 2, 3) should be deemed as a priority where opportunities exist for selecting individuals for challenging projects. Enabling key networking opportunities for high-flyers will allow them exposure throughout the organisation as well as offer opportunities for collaboration with other leaders who have influence. Consistent investment is needed to maintain and improve the level of performance of middle level performers (4, 5, 6) who could also be mentored or coached by the high-flyers. The lower level placements (7, 8, 9) are the individuals who should be strictly managed from a performance management

perspective, though the process of development and continuous improvement should still be allowed and facilitated. Individuals could move places on the matrix, depending on new positions, projects or specific requirements. *Validity:* The validity of the talent placement is mostly construct related, as those who developed the matrix aimed to address capability building and succession planning in the organisation. Testing the validity of the talent board placement is challenging, as those with high scores are likely to be individuals who will progress successfully within the organisation. *Reliability:* A standard template is used for all employees within the organisation, based on the talent management policy in place. The level of detail and specificity of the template contribute to the validity of the measure.

360-degree leadership evaluation rating

A 360-degree feedback survey provides a rich picture of a person's style and competencies by demonstrating how they are perceived by superiors, peers and subordinates. The 360-degree feedback increases awareness and understanding of managerial and leadership abilities.

It identifies gaps between the individuals' views of their strengths and weaknesses. It enables individuals to obtain views and evaluations from a range of different people who observe their behaviour. The specific 360-degree leadership evaluation was developed by the Assessment Centre of the organisation concerned (professional registered industrial psychologists). The 360-degree leadership evaluation was developed based on the four leadership pillars and describes the detailed characteristics of the leadership brand required by the organisation. The 360-degree leadership evaluation measures the leadership behaviours which will grow the leadership brand espoused by the organisation.

The respondents were requested to provide the results of their 360-degree leadership evaluations. The 360-degree leadership evaluation ranges from 1 to 5. Respondents needed to indicate the outcome of their specific individual results. The rating scale is from 1 (low) to 5 (excellent). The 360-degree leadership evaluation feedback offers talented leaders a development tool to unlock their individual insights towards living the required leadership behaviours which are fundamental to securing the competencies and values required to achieve organisational success. Through role

modelling the brand, talented individuals demonstrate active sponsorship which is congruent with being a key contributor in a high-performance culture. *Validity:* A standard template is used for all employees within the organisation, based on the 360degree behaviour evaluation approach. This approach is followed in many organisations (e.g. in the South African Insurance and Services industries). *Reliability:* The reliability of the 360-degree evaluation depends on the quality of the information submitted by the respondents. One of the barriers to the effectiveness of a 360-degree evaluation is the objectiveness of the reviewers in the process (Jackson, 1994).

Leader-Member Exchange measurement scale (LMX)

The leader-member-exchange measurement scale was developed by Graen and UhlBien (1995). It is based on a strong descriptive theory that analyses work units from the perspective of role theory and social exchange theory, using the frameworks as explanatory mechanisms for the development and maintenance of dynamic leader follower relationships. The dimensions of the LMX include affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect (Alshamasi, & Aljojo, 2016).

The LMX measures the effects of self-effort and the efforts of others on relationship quality (Liden, & Maslyn, 1998).

The questionnaire contained seven items which asked respondents to describe their relationship with their leader. Respondents completed the questionnaire based on the leader to whom they report. The first question reads as follows: "Do you know where you stand with your leader and do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?" The respondents were requested to read each statement carefully and to indicate the degree to which they think the item is a reflection of the relationship with their leader.

There were seven statements in total and respondents were requested to answer all seven questions. Participants were, for example, requested to rate the question from 1) Rarely to 5) Very often. The higher the score, the better the level of exchange between subordinate and leader. Leader-member exchange scores can be interpreted as: very high: 30-35, high: 25-29, moderate: 20-24 and low: 7-14. Scores in the upper ranges indicate stronger, higher-quality leader-member exchanges, whereas scores in the lower ranges indicate exchanges of lesser quality (Graen, & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Validity: The results of research completed by Einarsen, Furunes, Glaso and Mykletun (2015), as well as Hooper and Martin (2008), supported the use of the LMX-7 as indicated by factor structure, high construct validity, sufficient criterion-related validity and discriminant validity. *Reliability:* The results of research completed by Einarsen, Furunes, Glaso and Mykletun, (2015) as well as Hooper and Martin (2008), also supported the use of LMX-7 and indicated internal reliability as measured by a Cronbach alpha above 0.90.

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9)

Work engagement is a prominent variable in organisational research and is typified by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Baken & Salanova, 2006). The questionnaire contained nine items to assess the perceptions regarding work engagement. The first item reads as follows: At my work, I feel bursting with energy? The respondents were requested to answer the nine statements about how often they felt in a particular way about their work. A six-point scale was presented to the respondents ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always).

The higher the score, the higher the level of engagement is within the workplace. *Validity:* The factorial validity of the UWES-9 was demonstrated using confirmatory factor analysis (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). This has been repeated in many other studies and the UWES-9 is generally accepted as a valid measure of employee engagement. *Reliability:* The Cronbach alpha for the total nine-item scale is .80. The short UWES scales (9 items) share more than 80% of their variances with the corresponding longer original versions (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

6.4   Statistics calculated

All statistical calculations were performed using the IBM SPSS 23 software.

6.4.1 Skewness and kurtosis

Skewness and kurtosis are interpreted similarly within the context of SPSS. A normal distribution will have skewness and a kurtosis of zero, and deviations from zero account for some skewness or kurtosis. The researcher needs to take the observed skewness or kurtosis value and divide it by the standard error of the respective statistics so as to determine skewness / standard error of skewness and kurtosis (Weinberg, & Abramowitx, 2008). If the absolute value is greater than 1.96, the deviation from zero is significant at p<.05, if it is greater than 2.58 it is significant at p<.01, and if the absolute value is greater than 3.29, it is significant at p<.001 (Field, 2009). Weinberg and Abramowitz (2008:78) state that, according to convention, ratio values greater than 2 in small and moderate size samples, should be considered as a severe deviation from normality. Field (2009:139) seems more lenient, and "[takes] comfort in that the values are below the threshold of 3.29". Field (2009:139) also warns against using skewness and kurtosis testing in large samples, relaxing these guidelines in samples larger than 200, and suggests a visual inspection of the distribution rather than using significance tests because of their sensitivity.

6.4.2 Reliability

The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951, measures reliability, or internal consistency. Reliability refers to consistency of measurement. Reliability is diminished to the extent that errors of measurement dominate the obtained score and the reliability coefficient can vary between 0.0 and 1.0 (Gregory, 2000). Reliability refers to how well a test measures what it should. It is a good approach to test the reliability of multiple-question Likert scale surveys. A rule of thumb for interpretation is: >0.9 (excellent), 0.9 > 0.08 (good), 0.8 > 0.7 (acceptable), 0.7 > 0.6 (questionable), 0.6 > 0.5 (poor), 0.5 > (unacceptable) (Takavol, & Dennick, 2011).

In this study, reliability was accepted as being satisfactory where the alpha scores exceeded 0.70, with scores above 0.80 being taken as desirable (Pallant, 2011).

6.4.3 Correlation

The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is a method for examining the strength of the linear relationship between two interval or ratio variables. In addition to the strength of the direction can also be determined. A linear relationship implies that the values of

the two variables approximate to a straight line when plotted on a scatter diagram. The coefficient will lie between 0 (no relationship) and 1 (perfect relationship), with a coefficient closer to 1 indicating a stronger linear relationship between the two variables and a coefficient closer to 0 indicating a weaker linear relationship.

Both the Pearson correlation coefficients and the Spearman's rho were calculated as the sample size was relatively small and because the Spearman coefficient is not based on the assumption that the data is normally distributed. Because the sample was small, the statistical significance was set as 5% (Lazaraton, 1991). To establish the practical significance of any identified statistically significant correlations, the recommendations of Cohen (1988) were followed, that is correlations greater than 0.50 were taken as large, those between 0.30 and 0.50 were assessed as medium in strength, whilst anything below 0.10 was considered unimportant.

6.4.4 Regression analysis

Regression was used to predict how the different independent variables, particularly personal branding, predict career success. The regression coefficient provides an estimate of the overall fit of the regression model and is a good gauge of the substantive size of the relationship (Field, 2009). The regression coefficient squared (R^2) can be interpreted as the amount of variation in the outcome variable that is accounted for by the model. R^2 informs the researcher how much of the variance is accounted for by the regression model, whereas the adjusted value is informative as to how much of the variance has been derived from the population from which the sample was taken (Field, 2009). The focus was directed at those variables with betas (β) that indicated distinctive and autonomous contributions to the variance in the respective career success factors.

Independent variables with statistically significant betas were interpreted as contributing both independently and meaningfully to the variance declared.

6.5   Results

The results are discussed under the following headings: Demographics, Descriptive statistics, Reliability, Evaluation of perceptions of the importance of personal branding, Correlations between personal branding and career success, and Personal branding and other predictors of career success: Regression analysis.

6.5.1 Demographics

The target population for this study consisted of senior managers within a large South African organisation. Of the 223 senior managers targeted, 70 responded to the research project. All 70 senior managers who participated in the research project gave their full consent as specified by the ethical clearance requirement of the project. In total, 50 (71,4%) of the respondents were male and 20 (28.6%) female.

A total of 36 (51.4%) respondents indicated that they had completed the psychometric leadership assessment for senior managers, whilst 34 respondents (51.4%) indicated that they had not completed the assessment. Furthermore, 20 respondents (28.6%) indicated that they had a formal relationship with a leadership coach, whilst 50 respondents (71.4%) indicated that they did not have such a relationship. A total of 47 respondents (67.1%) indicated that they had attended the senior management leadership development intervention, whilst 23 respondents (32.9%) indicated that they had not attended the intervention.

6.5.2 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics for all the measured constructs are presented below.

Table 6.1

Descriptive statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean		Std Div	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Stat	Std Err		Stat	Std Err	Stat	Std Err
PA	70	3.2	4.4	3.88	.035	.299	-.336	.287	-.648	.566
360	56	3.0	4.8	3.92	.039	.296	-.030	.319	1.284	.628
Placement	32	3.0	8.0	6.31	.271	1.533	-.509	.414	-.823	.809
LMX	70	1.8	5.0	3.85	.088	.739	-.521	.287	-.289	.566
EE	70	2.3	6.0	4.62	.097	.818	-.580	.297	-.066	.566
Brand	70	2.7	6.8	5.15	.097	.813	-.277	.287	-.412	.566

Of the total of 70 respondents, only 32 (45.7%) indicated that they had received feedback from their superiors with regard to their talent board placement, whilst 38 (54.37%) respondents indicated that they had not received feedback in this regard.

The 32 respondents who received feedback from their superiors with regards to talent board placement reported as follows:

1: Poor performer (0 respondents)

2: Diamond in the rough (0 respondents)

3: Non-solid performer (1 respondent: 1.4% of the 32 respondents)

4: Solid performer (5 respondents: 7.1% of the 32 respondents)

5: Heart of the operation (2 respondents: 2.9% of the 32 respondents)

6: Knowledge anchor (9 respondents: 12.9% of the 32 respondents)

7: Future leader (5 respondents: 7.1% of the 32 respondents)

8: Ready-made successor (10 respondents: 14.3% of the 32 respondents)

With reference to skewness and kurtosis, the data presented in Table 6.1 suggested no serious deviations from normality for any of the measures within the acceptable range and analysis of data therefore continued.

6.5.3 Reliability

The reliability of all three scales that were utilised in this research project was tested. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was the method utilised to analyse the reliability of the instruments. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the personal brand maturity scale (26 items) was .918. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the leader-member exchange measure was .912 (7 items). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for employee engagement (UWES-9) was .900. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for all three scales were within the required range and analysis therefore continued.

The reliability of the career success indicators performance appraisal, talent management board placement and 360-degree leadership evaluation were assumed to be acceptable, given their careful development and long history of use. These were reported as single items and, as such, no Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for them.

6.5.4 Evaluation of perceptions of the importance of personal branding

Respondents were asked whether they thought that investing in a personal brand related to career success. They could choose between two options a) "I think that my personal brand is successful in promoting my career <u>due to conscious efforts</u> I invest into promoting it." and b) "I think that my personal brand is successful in promoting my career <u>irrespective of the conscious efforts</u> I invest into promoting it."

Table 6.2

Personal branding effort

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Irrespective	43	61.4	61.4	61.4
Due to	27	38.6	38.6	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	-

Most respondents (61.4%) indicated that personal branding is not developed as a continuous process. The respondents were asked a similar question which required a response on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "disagree" to "strongly agree" with regard to their perspective on the usefulness of personal branding. The statement read: "I am of the view that my personal brand (professional persona) aids me in promoting my career". Table 6.3, below, presents how the respondents answered the questions.

Table 6.3

Perspective of personal branding as an enabler

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Somewhat disagree	1	1.4	1.4	2.9
Neither A or D	3	4.3	4.3	7.1
Somewhat Agree	15	21.4	21.4	28.6
Agree	34	48.6	48.6	77.1

Strongly agreed	16	22.9	22.9	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	-

The most common response given saw 34 respondents (48.6%) "Agree" that personal branding influenced their careers, with the majority rating the priority of personal branding as an aid as high (71.5% - "Agree" and "Strongly agree"). Given the results reported in Table 6.3, it could be concluded that, though respondents believe that personal branding is important to career success, they are under the impression that personal branding develops independently of cognitive effort.

6.5.5 Correlations between personal branding and career success

Two types of correlations were calculated, namely the Pearson correlation (r) and the Spearman correlation (rho). This approach was chosen as the sample size was small and because rho does not impose strong requirements as far as normality is concerned. The results for the Pearson correlation are presented in Table 6.4, below.

Table 6.4

Pearson correlation coefficient (r)

		Brand	PA	360°	Placement
Brand	Pearson Correlation	1	.165	.089	.345*
	Sig	-	.086	.256	.027
	N	-	70	56	32
PA	Pearson Correlation	.165	1	.249*	.486**
	Sig	.086	-	.032	.002
	N	70	-	56	32
360°	Pearson Correlation	.089	.249*	1	.348*
	Sig	.256	.032	-	.048
	N	56	56	-	32
Placement	Pearson Correlation	.345*	.486**	.348*	1
	Sig	.027	.002	.048	-

	N	32	32	32	-

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Of particular interest in the table are the correlations between personal branding and career success outcomes. In Table 6.4 it can be observed that only the correlation with talent board placement is significant ($r = .345$, $p < .05$). The correlation with performance appraisal score and 360-degree leadership evaluation is non-significant. The size of the correlation with talent board placement was medium. The correlations between the career success measures were also of medium size, which may be indicative of concurrent validity, but also shows the reader that these concepts are distinct in nature (with no large effects).

The Spearman correlation (rho) analysis was also calculated, as previously explained. The results of this less restrictive statistic are presented in Table 6.5, below.

Table 6.5

Spearman correlation (rho)

		Brand	PA	360º	Placement
Brand	Spearman correlation	1	.221*	.114	.398*
	Sig	-	.033	.201	.012
	N	-	70	56	32
PA	Spearman correlation	.221*	1	.337**	.433**
	Sig	.033	-	.006	.007
	N	70	-	56	32
360º	Spearman correlation	.114	.337**	1	.462*
	Sig	.201	.006	-	.012
	N	56	56	-	32
Placement	Spearman correlation	.398*	.433**	.462*	1
	Sig	.012	.007	.012	-
	N	32	32	24	-

The results of this analysis reveal that personal branding correlates with both performance appraisal and talent board placement. The correlation for performance appraisal was (rho = .221, p < .05), while for talent board placement (rho = .398, p < .05). The practical effect of the relationship was small for performance appraisal and medium for talent board placement.

Graphs depicting the relationship between personal branding and the various success indicators are presented below. The scatter diagram exhibits the relationships among variables. The data for personal branding and talent board placement is presented in Figure 6.1, below.
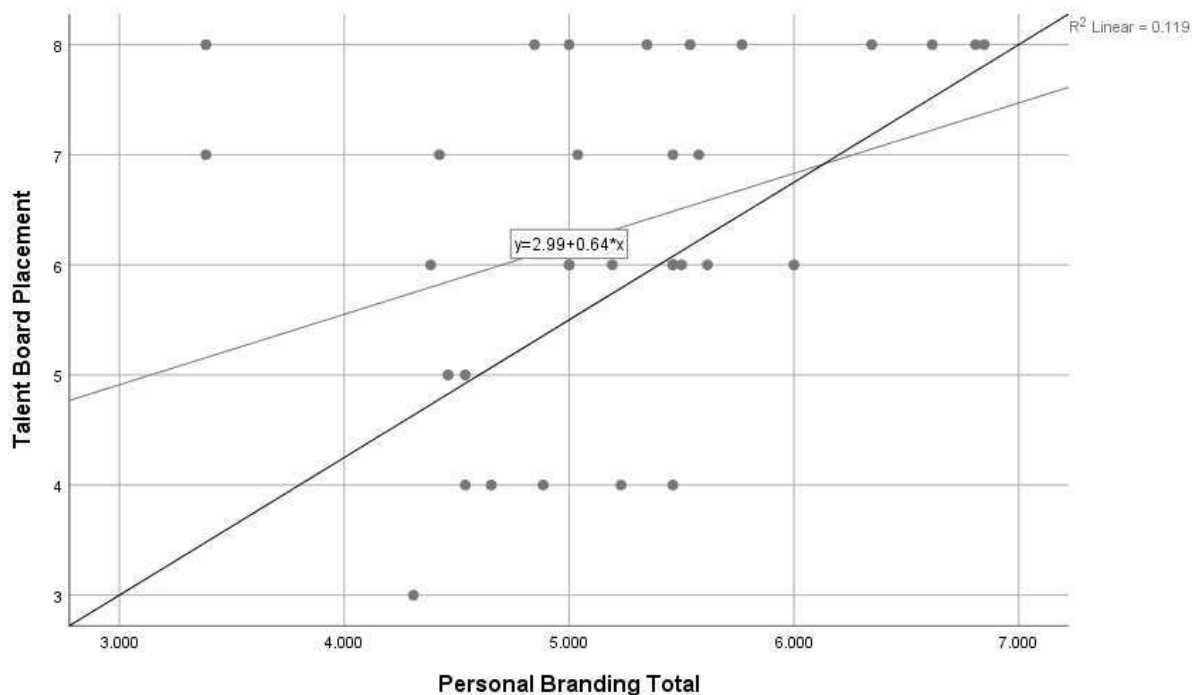

Figure 6.1: Personal brand and talent board placement
Source: Author / Researcher

Figure 6.1 shows that 11.9% of the variance in talent board placement is explained by the level of brand maturity.

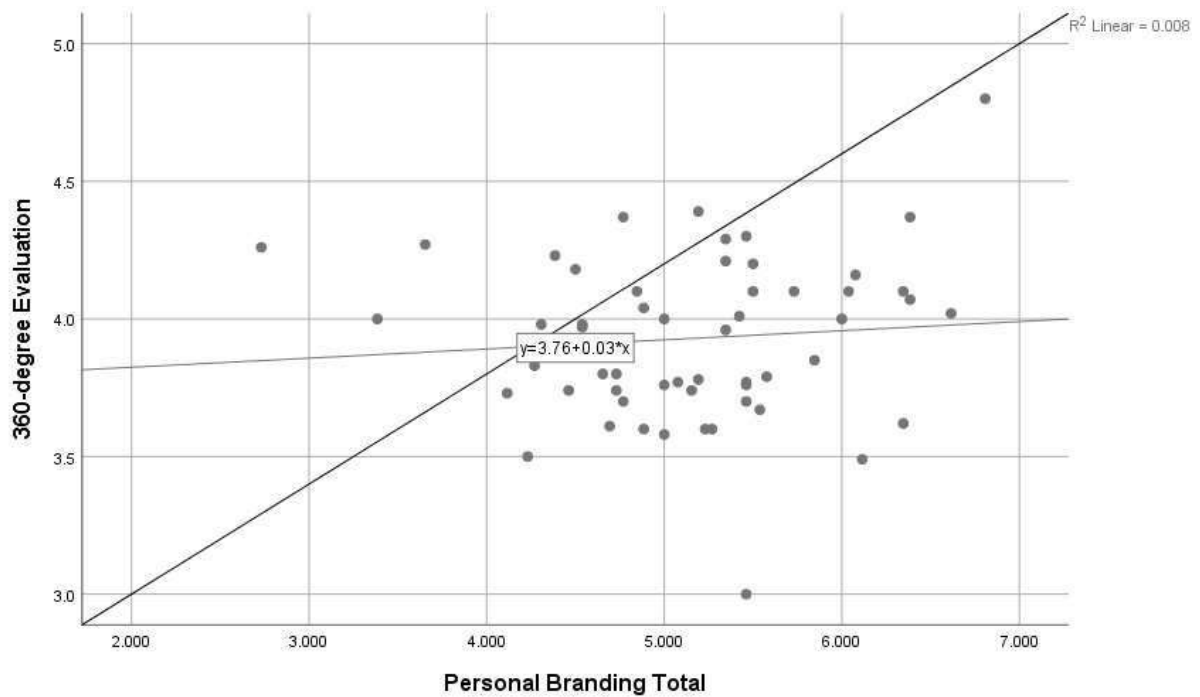The data for personal branding and 360-degree leadership evaluation is presented in Figure 6.2, below.

Figure 6.2: Personal brand and 360-degree leadership evaluation

Figure 6.2 shows that 0.08% of the variance in 360-degree leadership evaluation is explained by the level of brand maturity.

The data for personal branding and performance appraisal is presented in Figure 6.3, below.
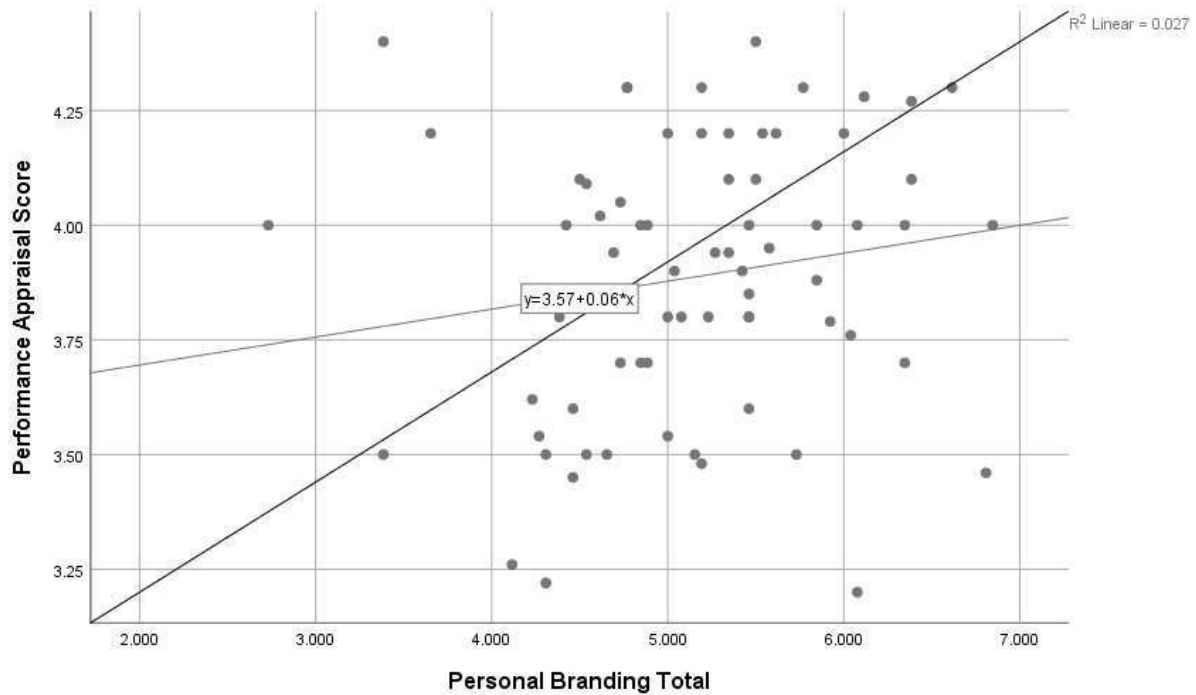
Figure 6.3: Personal branding and Performance appraisal score

Figure 6.3 shows that 2.7% of the variance in performance appraisal score is explained by the level of brand maturity.

6.5.6 Personal branding and other predictors of career success: Regression analysis

Regression was used to predict how personal branding performs against other predictors of career success in predicting such success. Three models are presented below, demonstrating the utility of three variables, including personal branding, in predicting career success indicators. The additional independent variables, were leader-member-exchange and employee engagement. The three variables reflecting career success were performance appraisal score, 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation and talent board placement.

In the first model, personal branding, employee engagement and leader-member exchange were regressed to predict performance appraisal.

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Table 6.6(a)

Model summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.279	.078	.036	.2943	2.101

Dependent variable: Performance appraisal score (PA). Predictors: (Constant) Brand, LMX, EE

Here the researcher examine how effectively personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement predict the performance appraisal scores. The total model summary is presented in Table 6.6(a). From the table, it can be observed that 3.6% of the variance in the performance appraisal score is explained by personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement combined. The model fit is presented in Table 6.6(b).

Table 6.6(b)

Model fit

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.481	3	.160	1.852	.146
Residual	5.717	66	.087	-	-
Total	6.198	69	-	-	-

Dependent variable: Performance appraisal score (PA). Predictors: (Constant) Brand, LMX, EE

From Table 6.6(b), it can be observed that the fit is poor, as indicated by an insignificant F-value (p = .146). Personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement thus do not combine well to predict performance appraisal scores. For the sake of comprehensiveness, the coefficients related to the relative contribution of the various predictors are presented below.

Table 6.6(c)

Coefficients

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.359	.275	-	12.207	.000
LMX	.104	.055	.256	1.895	.063
EE	-.043	.054	-.116	-.785	.435
Brand	.063	.049	.171	1.297	.199

Dependent variable: Performance appraisal score (PA). Predictors: (Constant) Brand, LMX, EE

From Table 6.6(c), it can be observed that none of the variables contributed uniquely and significantly to the declared variance in performance appraisal score. In the second model, personal branding, employee engagement and leader-member exchange were regressed to predict the 360-degree leadership evaluation scores.

Table 6.7(a)

Model summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.224	.050	.004	.2970	1.641

Dependent variable: 360 leadership evaluation score. Predictors: (Constant), Brand, LMX, EE

Here, the researcher examines how effectively personal branding, leader-member exchange and 0 predict 360-degree leadership evaluation. The total model summary is presented in Table 6.7(a). From Table 6.7(a), it may be observed that .4% is the degree of variance in 360-degree leadership evaluation that can be explained by personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement combined. The model fit is presented in Table 6.7(b).

Table: 6.7(b)

Model fit

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.243	3	.081	.919	.438
Residual	4.587	52	.088	-	-
Total	4.830	55	-	-	-

Dependent variable: 360 leadership evaluation score. Predictors (Constant) Brand, LMX, EE

From Table 6.7(b), it can be observed that the fit is poor, as indicated by an insignificant F-value (p = .438). Personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement thus do not combine well to predict 360-degree leadership evaluation score. For the sake of comprehensiveness, the coefficients related to the relative contribution of the various predictors are presented in Table 6.7(c), below.

Table 6.7(c)

Coefficients

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.988	.308		12.962	.000
LMX	.009	.072	.023	.121	.904
EE	-.095	.078	-.242	-1.220	.228
Brand	.069	.055	.184	1.239	.221

Dependent variable: 360 leadership evaluation score. Predictors (Constant) Brand, LMX, EE

From Table 6.7(c), it can be observed that none of the variables contributed uniquely and significantly to the declared variance in 360-degree leadership evaluation score. In the third model, personal branding, employee engagement and leader-member exchange were regressed to talent management board placement.

Table 6.8(a)

Model summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.458	.210	.126	1.434	2.058

Dependent variable: Placement. Predictors: (Constant), Brand, LMX, EE

Here the researcher examines how effectively personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement predict talent board placement. The total model summary is presented in Table 6.8(a). From Table 6.8(a), it can be observed that 2.1% is the degree of variance in talent board placement that can be explained by personal branding, leader-member exchange and employee engagement combined. The model fit is presented in Table 6.8(b), below.

Table 6.8(b)

Model fit

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.314	3	5.105	2.483	.081
Residual	57.561	28	2.056	-	-
Total	72.875	31	-	-	-

Dependent variable: Placement. Predictors: (Constant), Brand, LMX, EE

From Table 6.8(b), it can be observed that the fit is poor, as indicated by an insignificant: F-value (p = .081). Again, the roles of the individual variables are presented for the sake of completeness.

Table 6.8(c)

Coefficient

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.226	1.910	-	1.165	.254
LMX	.499	.399	.233	1.251	.221
EE	-.616	.383	-.372	-1.608	.119
Brand	.945	.411	.509	2.300	.029

Dependent variable: Placement. Predictors: (Constant), Brand, LMX, EE

From table 6.8(c), it can be observed that personal branding contributed uniquely and significantly to the declared variance in talent board placement. This should be seen within the context that the model presented reflected a poor fit (See Table 6.8(b).

6.6   Discussion

The literature revealed that popular literature on personal branding is available. There seems to be consensus that personal branding relates to an independent personal and professional reputation and that such a reputation enables career realisation. There are some disputes about the authenticity of the brand which will be most effective, specifically when some argue that it should be directed at a specific audience. Implicit in most of the literature consulted was that personal brands could be developed, be this through introspection, coaching, or other means. This is somehow in contrast to the development of brand icons, which are often presented as evolving naturally. As personal branding could have a positive impact on organisational success, through the reputation of the individual which represents the organisation, there also seems to be organisational interest in the topic The biggest problems identified in the literature are the preponderance of ex post facto explanations for successes achieved by the "branded" individuals and the inability of the authors to provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of personal branding in achieving career success. During scrutiny of the literature, no empirical evidence could be located which confirms a link between personal branding and career success. In

this study, the hypothesis of a possible relationship between personal branding and career success was tested. The career success factors included performance appraisal score, 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation and talent board placement.

The idea was to assess as many senior managers as possible who may require some personal branding to achieve career success. The target population consisted of 223 senior managers within a large South African organisation. A response rate of 20% was expected. The actual response rate was a satisfying 31%. They were all, by virtue of the inclusion criteria, appointed in a senior management position, with 51.4% indicating that they had completed the psychometric leadership assessment for senior managers. In addition, 28.6% indicated that they have a formal relationship with a leadership coach and 50 respondents (71.4%) indicated that they do not have such a relationship. 67.1% indicated that they had attended the senior management leadership development intervention.

When asked about the importance of personal branding, and of actively working on personal branding towards career success, most respondents (71.5%) agreed that a positive personal brand contributes to career success. A large proportion of respondents (61.4%) indicated, however, that personal branding is not developed as a continuous process. The aforementioned results refer to managers' perceptions on the success of personal branding. The results reflect these managers' opinions on the effectiveness of personal branding and are thus divorced from empirical substance in the same way as the literature presented in the review above.

In the present study, the focus was on calculating the relationship between independent and dependent variables, empirically linking personal branding to career success indicators. It was found that personal branding was statistically significantly related to one of the three career success indicators, namely talent board placement.

This implies insignificant relationships with performance appraisal score and 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation. While performance appraisal score and 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation scores are generated though a very mechanical and systematic process (with safeguards build into it to prevent bias), talent board placement is a much more consultative and subjective process, where top

managers integrate information (including performance appraisal score and 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation scores) to categorise managers. The fact that the results show talent board placement as overlapping with personal branding is thus not surprising, as those who manages their workplace personas are more likely to influence subjective measures than they are objective measures.

The magnitude of the effect of personal brand maturity on talent board placement was, at a practical level, of a medium size, with personal branding declaring at the most 12% of the variance in talent board placement. Based on this specific study, and within the specific context, personal branding is a medium-sized contributor to career success (Cohen, 1988). It is also important to note within this context that it is not performance appraisal scores and 360-degree leadership behaviour evaluation scores which result in promotion, but rather talent board placement.

The following were thus found with regard to the set hypotheses:

H_1: There is no statistically significant relationship between personal branding and individual performance appraisal score. **Hypothesis was not rejected**

H_2: There is no statistically significant relationship between personal branding and 360-degree leadership evaluation. **Hypothesis was not rejected**

H_3: There is no statistically significant relationship between personal branding and talent board placement. **Hypothesis was rejected**

Although the area in which personal branding had a significant impact is talent board placement, it is interesting to note that performance appraisal and 360-degree leadership behaviour were not influenced by personal branding. This may be indicative that personal brands are managed upward, so as to be in favourable standing with senior management, rather than downward. This statement is however speculative and could be tested later in an empirical manner.

Also reported in the study was how other known drivers of career success – leader member exchange and employee engagement – combined with personal branding as antecedents to career success. The findings were surprising, with neither leader member exchange nor employee engagement having the expected large effects. While it is possible that this may be due to the unreliable or invalid measurement of leader-member exchange or employee engagement, this is considered unlikely due to

the trusted psychometric characteristics of these instruments. A more likely explanation may be invalid measures of career success. The psychometric properties of the measures were assumed and, given the diversity at all levels and sectors in the targeted organisation, this possibility is not excluded.

It is recommended that ambitious individuals invest in learning and development interventions that will assist them with the understanding, development and sustainability of a personal brand in relation to talent management board placement. Coaching interventions with the purpose of continuous individual improvement could also be considered.

This research makes a valuable contribution to the existing research on personal branding in quantifying the relationship between personal branding and career success measures. It specifies where personal branding may have its influence and the magnitude of that influence. To date, no other research explored this matter in a quantitative manner. This study has, through provision of empirical evidence, satisfied the purpose for which it was undertaken and has thereby contributed significantly to the body of knowledge.

6.7 Limitations of the study

The results of the study are subject to certain limitations:

- It may not be possible to extend the insights obtained from the research across organisations as the study took place in one large organisation within the South African context. The location, as well as the time that was available in which to complete the study, limits the generalisation of the results.

- Also due to the study being conducted in only one large South African organisation, the sample size and data received were limited. However, it would be difficult to find a larger organisation and to recruit significantly more senior managers. Assessing senior managers across organisations may have improved the study.

- As mentioned previously, the reliability and validity of the measures of career success were mostly assumed. These measures may have affected the results negatively.

- The research was mostly quantitative. Although qualitative research may have enriched the findings, it was the aim of this study to move beyond the subjective and to answer substantive questions on personal branding in a data driven format.

The aforementioned limitations may be addressed by future researchers, should they wish to pursue similar research objectives.

6.8   Recommendation for future research

It will be valuable for future researchers to duplicate this study in different companies and across organisations, as well as within other African and non-African countries. The influence of personal branding on other variables could also be explored, particularly variables with higher reliability and validity than career success. It may also be interesting to test the link between the individual brand, the organisational brand, and the success of the organisation. Empirical research is scarce and thus any research able to quantify this domain will be of use in demystifying personal branding.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

In this chapter, the conclusions, limitations, recommendations and summary are presented.

7.1   Conclusions

Very little information was found to populate the De Vos et al. (2014) structure of academic knowledge and the study concludes that personal branding is a "new entry" in the field of professional development. Based on the search strategy, a total of 56 articles were located and, of these, 36 were analysed according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. No particular journal specialises in articles related to personal branding and not one of the articles found was published by a South African author or in a South African journal. In total, 18 of the 36 articles analysed included a list of key words, with the most common key term being "*personal branding*". A total of 28 of the 36 articles provided definitions relating to personal branding while only six provided hypotheses on personal branding. Six of the 36 articles provided typologies whereas 23 referred to models and theories. Of the 36 articles, six were quantitative and five qualitative and 25 were position papers. It was clear from the above that the body of knowledge on personal branding is very small.

Despite the limited amount of information on this topic, progress was made in systematising the body of knowledge, which allows for a better understanding of the topic. The chapter presents practitioners and researchers with a clear picture of what is known about personal branding in the scientific community. No previous researcher has attempted to do this using this systematic method.

When the research methodology (Babbie, & Mouton, 2001; Bryman, & Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Leedy, & Ormrod, 2013; Neuman,1997) regarding personal branding was explored, it was found that very few practices were shared among researchers.

This is to be expected as the volume of research on the topic is limited. Using the same 36 articles identified above, it became evident that there are no leading researchers in this field with no author having published more than one article. Six of the articles were

quantitative, reflecting a positivistic critical approach, five were qualitative and 25 were position papers which suggested the dominance of hermeneutics. The sampling method used most frequently was probability sampling. Only four of the six quantitative studies presented information on the reliability and validity of their measurements, including content and construct validity. It was concluded that there is a scarcity of research relating to personal branding, with few authors following a quantitative route. In addition, no standard measure of personal branding could be located. Although personal branding has not yet been developed as an academic discipline, it was possible to report on certain methodologies that have been used and to indicate future opportunities for research. Furthermore, most of the data that is available is subjective, without any specific scientific procedure having been followed, or in some cases, with the scientific procedures followed being incomplete.

There seems to be great similarity between the works of writers dealing with the development of personal branding. It was thus possible to consolidate the opinions of many writers on the key aspects necessary for the development and successful implementation of a personal brand. In total, 19 books covering 5 379 pages were analysed (see Chapter 4). Following a detailed analysis of all 19 books, six themes emerged as central to developing a personal brand. These themes could then be organised to present a process for the development of a personal brand. The six themes resulted in six strategies, along with activities that would be needed to achieve the outcome as presented. The six strategies were: 1) Understanding the importance of having a personal brand, 2) Developing self-awareness, 3) Visualising and conceptualising a personal brand, 4) Developing a personal marketing and stakeholder management strategy, 5) Implementing the personal brand and 6) Measuring, evaluating and improving one's brand. It was concluded that these strategies are central to the development of personal branding. The relevance and commonality of the themes were substantiated through cross-referencing between the various books.

This research moves the consolidation of literature on personal branding forward and is thus an important step towards establishing personal branding in the academic domain. The structured approach toward the development and implementation of a personal brand is aligned with the views of authors such as Arruda and Dixson (2007),

Chritton (2012) and Del Blenco (2010). Webster (2016), meanwhile, refers to self-positioning as a level of personal brand intelligence with a focus on specific thinking and behavioural patterns.

Building on the knowledge generated through the analyses described above, it was possible to compile a reliable and valid measure of personal branding following the example of Aquinis, Henley and Ostroff (2001). This was necessary as it is only once the domain (personal branding) can be measured that it is possible to articulate its importance (Demmings, 2000). Through correlation analyses and exploratory factor analyses, a 26-item instrument was developed. It became evident that the stage/phase model of personal branding did not hold up to scrutiny and it was thus decided to present personal branding as a single construct. The Cronbach alpha for the entire instrument was .970. Content analysis revealed that these 26 items represented four elements, namely mega-cognition, authenticity and internal consistency, strategy, and activity. The development of the Personal Brand Maturity Measurement represents a major contribution of the study. The research did not support the stage theory of personal branding development originally proposed, but rather supported the idea of there being elements to a personal brand. This is in line with previous research, where assessments tested on theoretical stages failed but yielded simpler integrated solutions. The elements identified through this research represent an important contribution towards understanding the concept of personal branding. The outcome of this process was a questionnaire consisting of well-constructed items, based on a rigorous process, and which may be used by others to test hypotheses which include personal branding. This provides a method to assess personal branding in a manner not previously used and it constitutes to a first step towards specifying personal branding in the academic domain. Once refined, the questionnaire will allow for testing the validity of claims regarding personal branding as a prerequisite for success in the world-of-work.

The primary goal was also achieved. It was possible to empirically link personal branding to career success indicators. Most respondents indicated that personal branding is not developed as a conscious process, but they did indicate that personal branding both influenced and contributed towards their career success. It was found that personal branding was statistically significantly related to one of the three career

success indicators, namely talent board placement. This overlap was significant (R^2=.13). This implies insignificant relationships with performance appraisal score and 360-degree leadership behavioural evaluation. The talent board placement is a much more consulted and subjective process whereby top managers integrate information to categorise managers. The fact that personal branding overlaps with talent management board placement is thus not surprising as those who manage their workplace persona are better advised to influence the more subjective measures than the more objective measures. Personal branding thus seems to influence subjective measures of career success. This may be indicative that personal brand is managed upward, being in favourable standing with top management, rather than downward. This statement is, however, speculative, and could be explored further. It specifies where personal branding may have its influence and what the magnitude of that influence might be. Up to the present, no other research has explored this matter in a quantitative manner. The study has, through provision of empirical evidence, satisfied the purpose for which it was undertaken and has thereby contributed significantly to the body of knowledge. The unsubstantiated claims of authors such as Bates (2012), Handley (2009) and Rampersad (2015) are not confirmed. The field of personal branding is now much better defined and more thoroughly quantified.

7.2   Limitations

All research is challenged by the threat of subjectivity, ranging from the selection of the topic to deciding on what appropriate statistical techniques are to be used. Particular to this research, subjectivity in compiling the literature review is acknowledged. Conscious of this, the systematic literature review was applied. Subjectivity also played a major role in the identification of the themes relating to the construct of personal branding. This was partially negated through substantiating the identified themes with multiple text references.

In addition, during the more statistical processes, the researcher needed to assign labels to the factors which were extracted from the data. The labelling process could also be seen as subjective and this is acknowledged. Two researchers took part in the labelling process to minimise the possible subjectivity.

In this research, three independent variables (personal branding, leader member exchange and employment engagement) and three dependent variables (performance appraisal rating, 360-degree leadership evaluation and talent board placement) were considered. It is acknowledged that career success is not only dependent on the specified dependent variables and nor are the independent variables a complete list of the antecedents to career success. In this specific organisation the success of the senior managers is measured using the specified three dependant variables.

There were concerns as to the reliability and validity of the dependent variables. Although performance appraisal rating, 360-degree leadership evaluation and talent board placement are often used in practice, the reliability and validity of these measures are often assumed rather than specified. However, the balance score card, 360 evaluation and talent placement methods are utilised by most large organisations which confirms the contribution it makes in talent management and business performance approaches.

The respondents in this study were 70 senior managers with in a single large organisation. Although it can be seen as an achievement to have recruited so many senior managers to participate in this study, those who participated could not be seen as fully representative of the particular organisation or of organisations in general. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in or across other organisations.

Exploratory factor analyses were used during the development of the Personal Brand Maturity Measurement and, while some of these may suggest the use of confirmatory factor analyses, this route was not followed. This is so firstly because this was indeed an explanatory investigation and, secondly, because the sample size does not permit such analyses. A limitation to this study is that exploratory factor analyses were performed despite the small sample size. It was, nonetheless, found to be a very fruitful exercise.

The general limitations related to cross-sectional design correlations interpreted as causality, single-source-and-method and investigator bias are acknowledged.

Although the purpose of this specific study was to move beyond the subjective and to answer questions relating to personal branding in a data driven format, it is

acknowledged that, in a qualitative study carried out through interviews and focus groups, much can be learned about personal branding and its influence on career success.

7.3 Recommendations

The research has several implications for individuals, academics, future researchers and business leaders.

7.3.1 Individuals

The results reported in Chapter 4 are of particular interest to the lay person. Here, a comprehensive study is provided which incorporates information scattered over 19 books on personal branding. It is recommended that these result be considered worth of being studies as they represent a single comprehensive source rather that a wide variety of sources. Lay individuals can utilise the 6 step method to assist with own personal brand development and also career management in general.

Lay individuals could also benefit from Chapter 6, particularly regarding the "real" effect of personal branding on career success. It should be evident to the lay person that the effects of personal branding are minimal when it comes to "objective" measures of career success – especially given that they influence only the perceptions of individuals more senior to one-self.

7.3.2 Academics

Academics interested in the topic of personal branding are encouraged to read this thesis as it provides a summary of the present body of knowledge on the topic, an outline of the research methods common in this area, and a comprehensive synthesis of the popular literature on personal branding. Of particular importance in terms of theory building are the results presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

They are encouraged to consider both the stage model and the elements model when discussing the concept of personal branding.

Both models have their own merits, although this research suggests that the elements model may be better represented by the data collected.

7.3.3 Future researchers

Based on the outcome of this study, it could be stated that there is a definite need to explore the phenomenon of personal branding. Due to the scarcity of empirical evidence relating to personal branding, further exploration of the topic is suggested. Knowledge may potentially be studied and formulated into frameworks, models and theories from the perspective of different paradigms. When a recognised and acceptable scientific process is used in tandem with a soundly formulated research design, it could be possible to identify and study best practices.

The Personal Brand Maturity Measurement scale could be used to assess the extent to which a person has successfully invested in personal branding. With the availability of this measure, testing of substantive hypotheses on the influence of personal branding is possible. Researchers interested undertaking such research is hereby granted permission to use the PBMM as they see fit.

The literature reviewed indicated the implications of personal branding within several professional careers. Very little focus was found on CEO, leadership or managerial branding. A research focus on personal branding relating to specific professions within different industries could have value for business leaders in the future.

Qualitative research may also be used explore this study in order to enrich individual understanding of the topic.

7.3.4 Business leaders

The most important finding of this research was that personal branding has a limited impact on career success and that it is mostly influential in ratings done by those in positions of higher authority. Personal branding does not affect "objective" or performance ratings supplied by peers or those in junior positions. The development of a personal brand within an organisation may thus serve ambitious individuals only.

These were the findings of this research. This research, however, did not consider the importance of personal branding in achieving larger organisation goals. It may still be important for organisations to invest in personal branding as this may indeed provide the organisation with some competitive advantage. This, however, is at present merely speculation and not the topic directly investigated here.

The findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 could be utilised as a framework for managers and professionals to develop their specific brand. Both the "stage model"

and the "elements model" could provide structure in this regard. The same framework could also be utilised to align individuals with the desired brand of the organisation.

Ambitious individuals working in large organisations need to understand that learning and development interventions that stress the importance of developing and sustaining a personal brand relate mainly to influence top management (talent management board placement). In other words, such interventions do not relate directly to operational excellence – something that the individuals concerned should understand prior to invest in them. Personnel employed in learning and development departments should also take cognisance of this fact.

Coaching interventions with the purpose of conscious improvement could also be considered.

7.4 Summary

The goal of this research was to test whether those who have well-established personal brands enjoy higher levels of career success. This goal was achieved through comprehensively addressing the initial three and then the additional two objectives. The contribution to the body of knowledge is centred at a theoretical level, providing a "6-stage" and "4-element" representation of the concept of personal branding. At a methodological level, the contribution lies in the meticulous development of the Person Brand Maturity Measurement which, as far as can be ascertained, is the only method of its kind. At an empirical level, the research contributes by specifying the area and magnitude of the effects that personal branding have on career success.

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ANNEXURE A: DATABASE CONSULTED

The following search engines (data bases) were utilised:

From the Ebsco Host bouquet the following databases were consulted: Academic Search Premier, Africa-Wide Information, Business Source Complete, CAB Abstracts, CINAHL with Full Text, Communication & Mass Media Complete, Communication Abstracts, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EconLit with Full Text, Education Source, ERIC, Gender Studies Database, Hospitality & Tourism Complete, MEDLINE, Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycCRITIQUES, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, Social Work Abstracts, SocINDEX with Full Text and Teacher Reference Center. From the ProQuest bouquet the following databases were consulted: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA) , ARTbibliographies Modern (ABM), British Humanities Index (BHI), COS Funding Opportunities, COS Papers Invited, COS Scholar Universe, Design and Applied Arts Index (DAAI), ebrary® e-books, ERIC, GenderWatch, International Index to Music Periodicals Full Text, Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), MLA International Bibliography, National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Abstracts Database, PAIS International,

Philosophers' Index, PILOTS: Published International Literature on Traumatic Stress, ProQuest Business Collection, ProQuest Central, ABI/INFORM Complete, Accounting & Tax, Banking Information Source, Canadian Newsstand Complete, CBCA

Complete, Hoovers' Company Profiles, OxResearch, Pharmaceutical News Index, ProQuest Asian Business & Reference, ProQuest Biology Journals, ProQuest Career and Technical Education, ProQuest Computing, ProQuest Criminal Justice, ProQuest Education Journals, ProQuest European Business, ProQuest Family Health,

ProQuest Health & Medical Complete, ProQuest Health Management, ProQuest Military Collection, ProQuest Newsstand, ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source, ProQuest Political Science, ProQuest Psychology Journals, ProQuest Religion, ProQuest Research Library, ProQuest Science Journals, ProQuest Social Science Journals, ProQuest Sociology, ProQuest Telecommunications, Snapshots, ProQuest

Dissertations & Theses: UK & Ireland, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer, ProQuest SciTech Collection, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, The Vogue Archive and Worldwide Political Science Abstracts.

ANNEXURE B: ARTICLES ANALYSES

Articles that met the criteria were selected and documented, as per the guidelines of Kable et al. (2011).

Article number, publication date, journal name, and type of paper	Author	Title of article (theme)
Article 1 2005 IIMB Management Review Position paper	Allesandro DFD Owens M	Career Warfare – 10 rules for building a successful personal brand and fighting to keep it.
Article 2 2009 Journal of advancement of Marketing Education Position paper	Batra MM Klein A Byramjee FD	Self-marketing tools for business educators.
Article 3 2013 European Journal of Marketing Position paper	Bendisch F Larsan G Trueman M	Fame and fortune: a conceptual model of CEO brands.
Article 4 2005 Consulting to Management Position paper	Bliss J & Wildrick M	How to build a personal brand.
Article 5 2012 Scientific Conference Position paper	Brandabur RE	Personal branding of a teacher – an approach into e-educational environment.
Article 6 2011 Journal of Media practice Position paper	Bridgen L	Emotional labour and the pursuit of the personal brand: Public relations practitioners' use of social media.
Article 7 2006 European Journal of Marketing Qualitative	Bronn PS Engell A Martinsen H	A reflective approach to uncovering actual identity.
Article 8 2013 Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal Position paper	Cortsen K	Annika Sorenstam – a hybrid personal sports brand.
Article 9 2012 Webology Position paper	Eke HN	Creating a digital footprint as a means of optimizing the personal branding of librarians in the digital society.
Article 10 2007 Tactics Position paper	Elsasser J	The power of personal brand.
Article 11 2012 Journal of Library Administration Position paper	Gall D	Librarian like a rock star: using personal brand to promote your services and reach distant users.

Article number, publication date, journal name, and type of paper	Author	Title of article (theme)
Article 12 2004 Foresight Position paper	Hines A	The personal brand in futures.
Article 13 2010 Manager Position	Hood T	Your reputation rests on your own personal brand.
Article 14 2011 Internal Journal of Business and Social Science Qualitative	Isfahani AN & Aghdaie SFA & Homaei R	Managers' personal brands: The secret of success or failure.
Article 15 2013 SAVAP International Quantitative	Karsudjono A J, Christiannta B Eliyana A	The influence of leader self-mastery, personality, personal branding on achievement motivation and leader candidate performance.
Article 16 2014 International Journal of information Business and Management Position paper	Khedher M	Personal Branding Phenomenon.
Article 17 2005 Management Communication Quarterly Position paper	Lair DJ Sullivan K Cheney G	Marketization and the recasting of the professional self.
Article 18 2007 Cyber-psychology and behaviour Quantitative	Li C	Online chatters' self-marketing in Cyberspace.
Article 19 2014 Journal of Marketing Education Quantitative paper	Noble CH Bentley JP Campbell D Singh JJ	In search of eminence: A personal brand-building perspective on the achievement of scholarly prominence in marketing.
Article 20 2009 Inter-Science Position paper	Martin B	An interview with William Arruda: Communication your personal brand.
Article 21 2003 Journal of Marketing Education Quantitative paper	McCorkle DE Alexander JF Reardon J King ND	Developing self-marketing skills: are marketing students prepared for the job search.
Article 22 2011 The Business Review Position paper	Merdin E	Self-marketing for graduates and professionals as a strategic career management tool.

Article number, publication date, journal name, and type of paper	Author	Title of article (theme)
Article 23 2011 Strategic Finance Position paper	Morgan M	Personal branding: Create your value proposition.
Article 24 2013 Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness Qualitative paper	Peters CO Thomas JB Morris R	Looking for love on Craigslist: an examination of gender differences in self-marketing on line.
Article 25 2008 Performance Improvement Position paper	Rampersad HK	A new blueprint for powerful and authentic personal branding.
Article 26 2007 Accounting History Position paper	Richardson AJ Jones DGB	Professional 'brand', personal identity and resistance to change in the Canadian accounting profession: a comparative history of two accounting association merger negotiations.
Article 27 2008 International Journal of Education Management Quantitative paper	Rigopoulou I Kehagias J	Personal development planning under the scope of self-branding orientation.
Article 28 2012 Business Quest Position paper	Ross D Deck DW	Student guide to Ethical Self-marketing: how to ethically appeal to an ethical employer.
Article 29 2012 Newspaper Research Journal Quantitative paper	Schultz,B Sheffer ML	Personal branding still in future for most newspaper reporters.
Article 30 2005 Journal of Marketing Management Position paper	Shepherd IDH	From Cattle and Coke to Charlie: meeting the challenge of self-marketing and personal branding.
Article 31 2013 Marketing Education Review Position paper	Stanton AD Stanton WW	Building 'Brand me', creating a personal brand statement.
Article 32 2011 Journal of Web Librarianship Position paper	Thomas LC	Building blocks for personal brands.
Article 33 2010 Journal of Accountancy Position paper	Vitberg A	Developing your personal brand equity.
Article 34 2013 Journal of Service Science Position paper	Ward C Yates D	Personal branding and e-Professionalism
Article 35 2012 Journal of Advertising Education Position paper	Wetsch LR	A personal branding assignment using social media.

Article number, publication date, journal name, and type of paper	Author	Title of article (theme)
Article 36 2010 Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship Position paper	Williams AA	Authentic personal branding: a new blueprint for building and aligning a powerful leadership brand.

ANNEXURE C: QUESTIONNAIRE

Personal Branding Development

Personal branding is often presented as critical to success in the world of work. It is, in many cases, referred to as a critical element of career management.

To create appropriate context, it may be important to provide a definition of a personal brand: "Personal branding involves taking cognisance of yourself as a whole, taking into account values, career specialisation, personality and appearance, and presenting all of these to the outside world in an authentic manner in order to achieve success in life."

The questionnaire below is intended to assess your perceptions regarding personal branding. Read each statement carefully and rate it on a scale of 1 to 7 based on your level of agreement thereto.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Indicate your answer with a cross (✓) on the appropriate number. There are 26 statements in total. Please answer all 26 questions. Do not hesitate to ask the administrator for help should you have any difficulty in answering any question or the instructions in general.

Your contribution and cooperation is appreciated.

1	I am increasingly aware that a good reputation and unique personal attributes are necessary for career success.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	It is important for me to be thoroughly honest with the brand that I am presenting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	All people have blind spots. Asking feedback in this regard is to one's own benefit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	My personal brand is an authentic reflection of who I am as a holistic person, taking into account. My values, personality, appearance and specialisation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I have a clear vision of my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I know my strengths and weaknesses and how each relates to my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	The best way to progress is by offering specific, related, relevant, consistent and credible content.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	I know exactly what I believe in and what I feel passionate about, what my brand is selling, and what value my brand offers to my customer or target audience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	I have a clear vision on how to approach the future and the demands it may place on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	I need to position myself competitively and comparatively to improve my chances of success.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Stakeholder interaction is an ongoing process aimed at staying on top of the needs, wants and desires of those who are influential in my life story.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	My brand needs to be operationalised and, therefore, the development of an individual marketing and stakeholder management strategy is necessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	My personal offering should be true to my own values and goals rather than being aimed at the accumulation of perceived success.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	My own evaluation of my key competitors in the workplace is critical if I want to differentiate myself from them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	I need to stay connected and relevant to sustain my personal brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	In order to make sure that the content of my value proposition stands out from the crowd, my social media voice needs to be well developed.	1	2	3		5	6	7

17	Mastering and maintaining my personal brand is a significant undertaking which takes time and effort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	I am strategically placing my brand message across various platforms and using various networks to implement my personal brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	Emotional intelligence is an essential component for if I want to lead and influence using my strong personal brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	I am mindful of my personal brand and how I actively display my mission, vision, values, and strength of character.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	I have a clear vision of my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	I take ownership and control of my brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	I can learn valuable lessons from individuals who have become experts at building their own personal brands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	I measure critical success factors of my personal brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	I evaluate my brand by involving my target audience and testing their response to my brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	I have an active development plan in place for each of my brand objectives and goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7