The Power of Storytelling as a Marketing Tool in Personal Branding

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Abstract: Brands and products are becoming partially human (regarding names, concepts, and the message they transmit) and people are mostly seen as brands. The job market itself is saturated to the point that people must find countless ways to differentiate themselves from other millions of competitors. Thus, the main goal of this research is to understand how regular individuals can build their brands by using storytelling as a marketing tool. To fully comprehend this matter, the concepts of personal branding and storytelling were described in detail. In terms of method, 9 interviews were conducted with people with different profiles and professions. To conclude, the interviews and the literature review allowed us to comprehend that storytelling is an important tool when building a personal brand with the following features: authenticity, consistency, charisma, purpose, strong personality, creativity, adaptation, convincing, memorable, distinctive, and clear.

Keywords: Personal Branding; Branding; Storytelling; Personal Marketing; Self-Marketing.

1   Introduction

Brands have been telling us stories for ages now. Coca-Cola conquers our Christmas with highly emotional and nostalgic family advertisements. Apple has been telling us how sophisticated and edgy its' technology will make us feel if we buy it. Nike makes us feel like anything is possible, even if we do not feel like getting up from that sofa and going for a

run. Porsche will transform us into kings and queens because their advertisement is almost no advertisement at all and who doesn't like a bit of mystery? But behind those highly successful brands are people. Creative, emotional, sophisticated, edgy, powerful people. People tell stories through brands and products. At the very end of the day, we do not buy the products, we buy the emotions and the sensations that their stories make us believe in.

The world is shifting – the way we work, live, love, and are. Whilst products and brands communicate with very human language and techniques, individuals started looking at themselves and each other as brands and products. We are no longer just people, nor can we be, considering our time.

The truth is we are surrounded by highly talented and extraordinary people. With the technological progress that occurred in the last couple of decades, the possibility for people to have access to all kinds of knowledge became almost unlimited. Unfortunately, achieving the desired professional recognition and personal satisfaction, in a society where it is extremely hard to stand out, feels almost like an impossible task and demands approaching ourselves from a variety of different angles. Thus, it is becoming clear that personal branding is also a differentiator factor in an increasingly crowded marketplace – "With hundreds of thousands of organizational brands and millions of product brands already competing for attention, the tens of millions of individuals seeking to carve out a personal business niche in the marketplace face a daunting prospect" (Shepherd, 2005, p. 596). If individuals aim to be in front of the pack, nurturing their brand will ensure that it happens (Arruda, 2003). As Shepherd (2005) mentions, personal branding is an attention-getting device, and it is frequently used to help people gain a competitive advantage when achieving specific professional goals.

Therefore, the main aim of this research is to understand how regular individuals can build their brands using storytelling as a marketing tool. In terms of theoretical contribution, this article helps to fill the gap in the literature regarding the relationship between personal branding and storytelling. In terms of practical implications, it can help professionals from all areas to take advantage of this tool to improve their image and better communicate their personal and professional messages.

2   Literature Review

A literature review was conducted of the two main concepts mentioned and studied throughout the pages: personal brand and storytelling. To begin with, it was important to analyse the personal branding phenomenon: what it is, how to build one, what are the advantages of having a well-managed brand and how it differs from traditional branding and marketing approaches. Next, the process dives in into the concept of storytelling, by trying to understand its origin, techniques, and advantages of having a well-guided narrative. After, a connection between both concepts is made, explaining why storytelling can be a powerful tool, outside traditional marketing approaches, to help individuals build a solid personal brand.

2.1 Personal Brand

Nowadays we are just like those brands we see on TV. The difference between us and Apple, Mercedes, or Facebook is that we are human, and our motivations are "individualistic". Whether positive, negative, or neutral, the fact is we all have our own brand. Rangarajan (2017) mentions that literally, everyone has a first impression of us, whether we are MBA students, executives, freelancers, self-employed, or a housewife. Your personal brand is a result of many aspects gathered, such as first impressions, personality traits, the way you communicate with other people, and the way they communicate with you. It is "a mix of reputation, trust, attention, and execution. A personal brand includes the professional and personal qualities which distinguish a person from their peers, colleagues, and competitors, and which imply or promise something of value" (Chen & Chung, 2016, p. 308).

Today branding still offers the very same benefits as many years ago, though on a slightly different scale - "A personal brand definitively identifies an individual and allows others to become instantly familiar with that person's personality and values" (Chen & Chung, 2016, p.306), by using similar branding techniques used previously on regular products.

As Gander (2014) mentions, a personal brand is composed of our biography, experience, knowledge, appearance, behaviours, and even name. The one thing that sets up apart from the rest is our differentiator factor or, as Shepherd (2005) likes to call it: a sign of distinction – a skill, a feature, or a specific knowledge that we have acquired throughout the time. Gander (2014) mentions that:

> Your personal brand then will let people know what you offer above what your CV says – after all, many people have degrees and skills training, but you need that je ne sais quoi that will differentiate you. You need a strategy to effectively manage your personal brand because this is about how people perceive you and how you can influence that perception. (p.99)

We need this distinctiveness to beat the existing competition out there. In our days, being an executive, a regular sales manager or a professional doesn't cut it in the new world of work anymore (Rangarajan et al., 2017). Chen and Chung (2016) state that "a personal brand is not related to creating an image, but to understanding the combination of attributes that is unique to a person. Therefore, a personal brand comprises the personality, strengths, skills, values, passions, lifestyle, public image, and character that differentiate a person and guide their decisions" (Chen & Chung, 2016, p.309), and can be built and strengthened as part of a broad career-development perspective (Te'eni-Harari & Bareket-Bojmel, 2021).

The term personal branding first started with Tom Peters' Fast Company article – "The Brand Called You", where the author explicitly mentions that "regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be

in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You" (Peters, 1997).

Arruda (2003, p.04) adds that branding isn't just for gigantic corporations or the grocery-store shelf anymore – "In the new millennium, everything is a brand", and declares that "successful personal branding is authentic". That means you use your values, passions, and strengths to distinguish yourself from others so you can get the resources you need to advance in your career" (Arruda, 2003, p.07). A personal brand includes "the professional and personal qualities which distinguish a person from their peers, colleagues, and competitors, and which imply or promise something of value" (Chen & Chung, 2016, p.308). As Peter Drucker (1999) mentions "If you've got ambition and smarts, you can rise to the top of your chosen profession, regardless of where you started out" (p. 100).

Vanderford (2017) says that "building your brand involves a variety of strategies that range from traditional resumé design to a more modern active presence on key social media platforms. In today's digital age, managing how your brand is portrayed online is critically important" (Vanderford, 2017, p.119).

The digital world opened new doors for us. According to Turkle (1995) and Wynn and Katz (1997) "digital spaces allow increased open communication through anonymity and the eradication of real-world boundaries, such as appearance (e.g., race, gender), physical ability, and socioeconomic status, which may inhibit identity" (apud Labrecque et al., 2011, p.38). Also, as it is mentioned by Karaduman (2013) "social media, with its ideological and technological structure, gives the opportunity to people to promote themselves as brands in a relatively cheap and efficient manner" (Karaduman, 2013, p.466).

2.2 Storytelling

As Fisher would say (1984) "humans are essentially storytellers". Storytelling "is the act of telling a story, in some type of chronological order, of fictional or real events" (Westby & Culatta, 2016, p.01) and has been gaining more and more relevance in the construction of brands "whether it is organization brand or product or personal brand"(Frunza, 2019, p.129).

When we think in-depth about our ecosystem, we realize that ours is the only species that is fully dependent on socialization. So dependent that we created our own way of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Besides regular socialization, what people really need is to feel connected to their surroundings. As Whitler (2018) mentions storytelling helps people to develop a deeper connection with their audience. Sharing stories is part of our human experience and is almost omnipresent in postmodern society (Grad, 2021). In fact, it was a method cavemen used to communicate, educate, share and connect with each other. Kelliher and Davenport (2007) also say that:

> Telling stories is a fundamental part of what makes us human, arising from the desire to transform the fragmented chaos of our daily lives into a patterned, coherent and shareable narrative. This process of testifying to our

life experiences in a reflective manner helps us understand and convey who we are as individuals and as members of a larger, cultural society (p.926).

Stories have been giving us the meaning of life since we all can recall and it is truly the only way we know how to be people (Fog et al., 2005). We are learning that life, in its' full beauty, comes to us in the form of stories, given to us through storytelling (Alasuutari, 1997).

Among many variations of homo, we are also homo narrans, as telling stories is a fundamental part of our existence (Fisher, 1984). We can say that stories are the foundation of human identity (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). The ability to produce personal narratives requires "the individual to synthesize a series of experiences and beliefs into a compelling story as a means to make an emotional connection with the reader" (Fischbach & Guerrero (2020, p.134) and is highly "important for social and psychological well-being because the sharing of personal events is a major component of all social interactions and thus relates to the ability to function in natural contexts" (Schank, 1995, p.19).

The 21st century is the century of the sharing economy, added value and, reputations. Reputation is considered to be today's currency for transactions and it helps to build trust (Pera et al., 2016).

Sharing compelling stories is a way to connect long-term with the audience and spread it beyond the network. The most genuine storytellers are "the disparate amateur photographers, home moviemakers and scrapbook enthusiasts who document their life experiences for their future grandchildren, an imagined posterity, or simply to keep a record of their life lived" (Kelliher & Davenport, 2007, p.927).

In addition to all the mentioned above, storytelling is a very powerful method that allows people to engage and inspire others – it all depends on the way a story is told (Denning, 2006). More than that, it is a way people have found to influence others' behaviour and thinking. Marketers have understood that this kind of content is becoming imperative in the marketing sphere (Whitler, 2018). Therefore, if individuals have the right storytelling skills, the charisma, and the potential to make their stories viral, they have the power to instantly influence millions of other people (Lund et al., 2018). Our story will make sense to those people that highly identify themselves with one's narrative (Buitelaar, 2014). Largely because someone's life story is a highly effective tool for introspection and communication with others.

Ultimately, "storytelling isn't just a creative approach to marketing. It gives your consumers a totally different entry to your brand" (Whitler, 2018).

2.3 Storytelling in Personal Branding

It is accepted among scholars in the literature that storytelling plays, in fact, a very important role in branding a product or company and it is considered to be one of the most used marketing tools. As Lund et al. (2018, p.04) mention "stories come with many touchpoints to the lives of the listeners, facilitating an emotional connection and

communicating brand values but without a great story attached, nothing is differentiating about a brand". Marketing is no longer about solely capturing attention, instead many marketers are now highly focused on engaging through dialogue (Lund et al., 2018), improving relationships and trust. According to Pera et al. (2016), self-storytelling helps individuals increase self-understanding and to inform others about their true identities. People often stop communicating what they want because they believe their message is similar to others. Sometimes the problem is not the message, it is the room where you are talking. Powerful storytelling allows individuals to position themselves attractively when compared to others and to increase their positive reputation (Pera et al., 2016) but your knowledge of people guarantees all the rest.

To complement this thought, Pera et al. (2016) mention in their article that, "similar to product branding, storytelling is interpreted as a means to personal reputation that helps in promoting one's uniqueness to an assumed audience" (Pera et al., 2016, p.45).

3   Methodology

In terms of method, 9 interviews were conducted with people with different backgrounds, profiles, and professions. After a thorough read through the methods used by other authors, it was opted to implement the Qualitative Research Method. This study focused mostly on the method of semi-structured interviews with the support of a couple of structured interviews. As one of the purposes of this research is to study and understand the experiences, views, and beliefs of the respondents, the interviews were the best method to implement - "Interviews are appropriate in those scenarios where you have basic knowledge about the research topic and you want to establish a deeper understanding of it" (Bhasin, 2019). Before moving on to the interview process, it was necessary to test the questions on the script. For this purpose, two test interviews were held. It was not necessary to make any changes to the script. Seven interviews carried out with the chosen research method were held via Skype and lasted between 25 and 55 minutes. As not every participant had the opportunity to meet in person or to have a call, it was suggested to them to answer the questions in a written form – a structured interview. In total, nine interviews were conducted with individuals that were carefully selected to share their understanding and knowledge regarding this subject (7 held via Skype and 2 in a written form). As previously mentioned, the interviewees have different professional and educational backgrounds as demonstrated in Table 1.

4   Presentation and Results' Discussion

The first question aimed to understand what the respondents think of personal branding and what characteristics are important for them in a positive managed personal brand.

The majority of the interviewees (8 out of 9) highlighted authenticity as being the most important feature. This characteristic was one of the most important ones, which is also supported by Arruda (2003, p.07) "successful personal branding is authentic. That

means you use your values, passions, and strengths to distinguish yourself from others so you can get the resources you need to advance in your career". Authenticity, in fact, enhances the message receptivity and the quality of the relationship that results from it (Labrecque & Milne, 2011).

Table 1. Interviewee's Profiles

ID	Age	Sector	Job Function
Interviewee 1	26	Tech Sector	Project Manager
Interviewee 2	48	Video Industry	Video
Interviewee 3	35	Auto Parts Industry	Head of Digital Marketing
Interviewee 4	30-40	Personal Project	Copywriter
Interviewee 5	30-40	Personal Project & Automotive Engineering Software	Graphic Designer
Interviewee 6	39	Personal Project	Marketing
Interviewee 7	45	Personal Project	Recruitment
Interviewee 8	35-45	Personal Project	Storytelling
Interviewee 9	25-30	Corporate and Personal Gifts	Founder

Interviewee 1 says that "it is a very abstract concept, but it has a lot to do with the identity of each professional and I believe personal branding should be based on 3 components: authenticity, consistency and, related-factor". Interviewees 4, 5, 7, and 9 believe that personal branding is what differentiates people from one another, especially when talking about professional activities. Interviewee 6 says that "personal branding is similar to professional branding" and should be taken just as seriously as the traditional form of marketing.

Regarding the importance of personal branding (question number 2), all the interviewees seemed to understand the crucial importance of a well-work personal brand, especially from a point-of-view of work. Nolan (2015) mentions there are way too many qualified people for one job and the best way we all must impress the recruiters is to stand out with the help of our "unique" and "authentic" selves, which highly supports the opinions of all 9 participants on this research. Interviewee 8 had a very interesting point of view:

"It's tremendous! Especially in a world that is permanently changing and adapting; where you have more consultants, coaches, freelancers, and people who work from home. It becomes fundamental, for someone who moves inside this ecosystem, to build a solid, congruent, coherent, and trustworthy personal brand. It is necessary to see and to be seen. But, more important than that, it is necessary to listen. A lot. Constantly. Understand what people want and need to adapt and to get the things they want to achieve".

A personal brand should have a purpose, to create awareness and be highly consistent. Both Shepherd (2005) and Gander (2014) highlight how important it is, to begin with, a purpose and introspection because individuals must have a clear vision of who they are, their weaknesses, strengths, and the value they give. That helps to build a proper message to the right audience. Success comes to those who truly know themselves, their

own strengths, values, and how they perform the best – this was Drucker's (1999) opinion on this subject.

Interviewee 1 adds that "Personal branding here comes as a way of standing out. Like a personal trait. Something that distinguishes us from others, instead of being just another well-formatted CV". Interviewee 5 adds that "now more frequently than ever, people start managing their personal brand. No matter the job, especially in areas such as marketing and design and so on". On the other hand, interviewee 9 says that it is something we give too much importance - "Having a hundred likes and a dozen of shares or having X followers on a social media channel, does not make someone a personal branding guru. It is important to distinguish good communication from a personal brand". Interviewee 2 adds that "without hurting any feeling, I think there is a vulgarization of the term of personal brand. I feel like everyone wants to be known, famous, an influencer and a guru very quickly, without first building any foundations. That is the negative part of the personal brand".

When the participants were confronted with the third question (if personal branding is a term that applies to everyone) they all gave a positive answer. No exception - "everything is a product" (Vallas & Cummins, 2015).

The truth is not everybody communicates who they are the same way. Some businesses or people have different approaches. This interviewee in specific followed Peter Drucker who mentions that:

"Manners are the lubricating oil of an organization. Manners - simple things like saying "please" and "thank you" and knowing a person's name or asking after her family - enable two people to work together whether they like each other or not. Bright people, especially bright young people, often do not understand this. If the analysis shows that someone's brilliant work fails again and again as soon as cooperation from others is required, it probably indicates a lack of courtesy - that is, a lack of manners" (p.101).

As interviewee 6 says "creativity is one of the most important factors of personal and professional marketing today because it allows us to share something from a different perspective. Content today is more of the same. A word here, a word there, but it is like that".

Working on a personal brand is not easy and not everyone gets how to manage it properly. Interviewee 4 mentions that:

"Today we lack purpose. I really think you need a purpose. People really need to know what they are doing, for what reason and to whom because if not, at some point, you are running everywhere".

Interviewee 7 also adds that vision is very important. Goals should be very clear, short-term but also long-term. Individuals must understand very clearly where they want to get and how they want to get there. Interviewee 5 says "that is why it so important we develop our own personal brand, make our career management, our own marketing, our

brand, and online presence. We make sure the other person comes to us, and not the other way around".

Considering we live in such a technologically developed time when asking the participants to name the best ways to communicate a personal brand, the social media channels were almost intuitively included in the answer of all of them. Online is the obvious channel in our times but as some of them mentioned, it takes effort and a lot of commitment, which supports the thought of Labrecque: "Online personal branding requires information to be available to others; by the very nature of the online world, this availability puts people at risk in terms of misdirected and insufficient branding" (Labrecque & Milne, 2011, p.49).

Gander says that "A starting point for managing your personal brand is to reflect on what messages your current brand is sending" (Gander, 2014, p.100) and that is what helps people to build a compelling personal brand statement. This is also a way to fully comprehend what exactly differentiates them from others – skills, abilities, knowledge, personality traits and so on. Only then, they can finally identify what kind of strategic marketing plan they are going to apply to themselves and how they will manage the brand behind the value. Success comes to those who truly know themselves, their own strengths, values and how they perform the best (Drucker, 1999). This is a crucial point for not just knowing what to communicate but also how to do it.

Although the interviewees see the full value of online resources for brand communication, most of them also mention how important face-to-face communication really is. Interviewee 1 says that "interpersonal contact is the best. Conversations". Even though everyone agrees that social and public media gives visibility to people – as interviewees 3 and 7 say "it's a stage and it gives us the chance to get to more people" – but the fact is everyone prefers real communication.

The technology is a support tool we have. It makes people's life easier and more convenient, but it is only through face-to-face interaction that individuals can really see how genuine and true the person behind the screen is.

When the participants were asked to describe their brand in 3 words, many of them felt struggled and found it challenging to put their own brand in just 3 words. As expected, they described their brand with the characteristics they named in the first question. The mentioned characteristics are mainly authenticity, consistency, charisma, purpose, strong personality, creativity, adaptation, convincing, memorable, distinctive, and clear.

From this moment on, the focus shifted onto the storytelling subject. To begin with, the participants had to answer what they thought of storytelling and the relevance it has on personal branding. These answers are the ones that will add complementary value to the little literature that was found in the correlation of both concepts. Interviewee 1 highlighted that "a client doesn't buy a product, period. A client buys a story or an experience that he or she may have with a certain product".

Understanding storytelling is also about understanding how to work with it and how to take the most advantage out of it. Because the participants in this research were all

aware of the concept and that they all use it in their professional activities or daily regular lives, it was crucial to clarify what methods or tools they could recommend. Interviewee 4 says that it is important for the reader to feel like a hero as if the story is about him and his problems and his situations. She tries to open up about problems, but she also leaves the stories open for further discussion – "I try to give space to dialogue. Leave the thing open and allow people to interact with my story, to give their opinion". This way, the reader feels connected and part of something. It also helps to create engagement and future relationships with the author. As was mentioned in the literature, storytelling is a very powerful method that allows people to engage and inspire others – it all depends on the way a story is told (Denning, 2006).

Interviewee 3 states that: "I believe the impact of storytelling is gigantic because there is no personal brand without a story. This storytelling thing has to do with everything you are building in your life." Interviewee 6 says that "we all have stories to tell. Creativity is present in all things, and I like to reinforce it. There are several ways for us to tell stories, right? I believe that emotional ones work the best. Today people like everything that is connected to emotion". Interviewee 8 also adds that:

"I can't even imagine a personal branding strategy that doesn't involve the elements of storytelling. I can't even think that people can develop a personal branding statement without telling stories, without a narrative, without conflicts, without solutions and lessons learned. It is a way to show to others that we are just like them".

So really, "storytelling isn't just a creative approach to marketing. It gives your consumers a totally different entry to your brand" (Whitler, 2018) as it happens with Interviewee 5.

Interviewee 9 says it is important to share real events that happen within the company or other personal stories that might motivate other people to take courage and change their lives – "The fact I left a multinational company at 23 years old and started being an entrepreneur. The important thing is being true and real". He also adds:

"I am not a storytelling lover, at all. Not that I do not use it with some frequency because I do, but because I think we've come to a point where we hear more fake stories than real ones. Storytelling is a good tool to get attention".

All their input supports what Lund says, "stories come with many touchpoints to the lives of the listeners, facilitating an emotional connection" (Lund et al., 2018, p.04). Marketing is no longer about solely capturing attention, instead many marketers are now highly focused on engaging through dialogue (Lund et al., 2018), improving relationships and trust. Interviewee 9, a professional who works with storytelling, shared that he uses 3 classical and fundamental ingredients to tell a good story: characters, conflict, and a clear message. As he also says:

"In a story, the primordial goal is to get closer to the reader. I try to guarantee that the characters, the action, and the message are as clear as possible. Another thing I try to do is to make the story easily perceptible. I try to use a language that is simple enough so that

a 5-year-old kid or a 90-year-old person can easily understand it. This was the most important thing I've learned as a journalist, with the help of 2 people that occupy very important seats in television today – Rodrigo Guedes de Carvalho and Bento Rodrigues. Whatever we say should be clear. Simple. Easy to understand. Relatable. Pure. True. Something that is said with meaning".

People need stories to connect and to feel empathy. It generates trust and trust generates sales.

To conclude, the last question allowed the interviewees to discuss the two sides of personal branding: the authenticity of a brand and the need to adapt the brand to the needs of the market.

The participants all agreed that both being authentic and adapting to new realities is possible without affecting the performance of the personal brand. Interviewee 1 mentioned that this was the most interesting question of the interview, considering it makes people wonder seriously about this matter. She also says that:

"In my point of view, this is not a dichotomy, and I will tell you why. You adapt to the timings. I do not consider that it breaks a person's authenticity. The authenticity should be clear in that you are a person who will keep on learning and having challenges throughout different stages of life, and you adapt to them. It doesn't mean you lose your content".

What really matters is the consistency of the message people tell each other and if the facts remain the same. She also adds that "I think it is perfectly possible for you to acquire new knowledge and experiences… because those are the experiences that will feed your storytelling. Otherwise, you will be always telling the same things and you won't have new stories to share". This question was very important to show how learning new things and having new experiences allows people to work even better in their personal brand using updated storytelling.

5   Conclusions

No matter the age, sex, education, or profession, all people have a brand they bring everywhere with them. Unfortunately, not everyone is aware of the power they have within themselves. As it was already mentioned at the very beginning of this paper, personal branding is everything we are. Everything we do, from the way we talk to the way we move our body, builds a perception in people's minds about us. That perception is what we call a personal brand. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of people in this world invest their efforts, time, and money into developing, improving, and promoting their personal brand, generating engagement and trust.

People are just like regular brands. They must be studied, fully analyzed, and properly developed. Communicating a personal brand implies the same efforts as in traditional marketing, only it requires people to be more open-minded and more focused on their personal goals. Everything people do, from the way they wear to the way they talk

and communicate with others, says something about the person they are. Both verbal and non-verbal language are important parts of this process. It is important to underline the fact that even if people do not actively work on their brand, it will still exist and communicate no matter the efforts.

Investing in improving a personal brand is allowing doors to be open. In such a crowded world like ours, where people are more capable of more stuff, it is necessary to stand out in the eyes of the recruitment department and the customers. As many of the participants mentioned in the interviews, we coexist in a very saturated job market. Thus, the need to be different is urgent and enormous to be valued by others.

Many people do not work on their brands because they feel like they are selling their image and services, and unfortunately, not many people are great sellers or feel comfortable enough promoting what they do.

It was also possible to conclude that although we live in the digital era, the best way to communicate our brand is through personal contact: networking events, lectures, and consistent real-world communication. Individuals must understand that there are no barriers to what is online or offline. The communication, message, idea, and values should be consistent in both worlds.

With the help of the interviewees, it was also allowed to conclude what characteristics are the most valued and important in a positive personal brand. They are authenticity, consistency, charisma, purpose, strong personality, creativity, adaptation, convincing, memorable, distinctive, and clear.

As already debated, a personal brand is something intrinsic to all of us, so it tells stories. People have been connecting to one another for centuries by simply sharing stories with each other.

Although telling stories is something very natural to us, when developing a personal brand, it is necessary to build our story in a way that brings value to both parties: the storyteller and the target.

Working in a personal brand demands time, effort, and being always up to date. Professionals who value their job will constantly keep on sharing new information and knowledge. Thus, instigating life events, investing in new skills, and trying different activities are part of creating new stories to tell and, therefore, to stay valid and interesting to the rest of the ecosystem. It is possible to be constantly learning and evolving and being true to the inner self because both factors play an important role in the way people see our brand.

Storytelling is, in fact, something we do every day. As people who live in the 21st century, we all share content online daily. We communicate with our peers; we come home to our families and share everything that happened to them. We have other part-time activities, and we are constantly telling a story about ourselves to society.

Being able to stay concise and balanced is crucial. The digital came as a tool to make people's lives easier and to erase many barriers, but it also allowed many of them to pretend

something they are not. In fact, the best way to interact with others and to let people get familiar with what you do and who you are is through personal direct contact.

From the points of view of the interviewees, it was possible to understand that inevitably personal branding is something that we all have. We can either control it and work with it to our advantage or we can let other people do it for us.

It is expected this work contributes to helping people pay more attention to the things they say, how and when they say them because eventually, everything we do becomes a part of our identity and, therefore, of our brand. Storytelling is a very powerful marketing tool when properly and consistently used.

In terms of limitations of this research, the biggest is the limited number of interviews. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the results that were generated with the help of the participants are subjective and vary from person to person. The questions were made to people who are familiar with both concepts and that already implement both in their personal and professional lives.

As a suggestion for future research, it would be very interesting to conduct a focus group with different generations to analyse how the understanding of both concepts and their importance varies from generation to generation. Some concepts started to be applied and more valued with the huge influence of millennials and the technology that is so intrinsic to this generation. Additionally, it could be interesting to conduct interviews with specific profiles: profession, social status, gender, and so on.

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