

Personal Branding

- a case study on how individuals can develop themselves
as their own personal brand

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PREFACE

This Bachelor's thesis was written during spring 2010. During this period, we have experienced a lot of different emotions. Not only have we had long day of hard work but also many great laughter that have made us through this challenge. Now the last day of May 2010 has reached and not only is the thesis finished, but we have also succeeded in conducting a case study and gained deep knowledge about Personal Branding. We believe that this period in our life will be an experience that will be followed throughout our lives with great guidance for the future. We hope that the readers of this thesis not only will find it interesting but also beneficial. We also hope that more students will find this area interesting and inspiring to develop and base further research on.

Further we want to give a special thank to our supervisor Tim Foster, at the Department of Industrial Marketing and e-Commerce. With his help and great advice along the way he made this thesis possible. Finally we also want to take the opportunity to thank our participants Julia Eriksson and Erik Hedbrant students at LTU that together with interviews has contributed with essential data for our study.

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ABSTRACT

Today's competitive society has made it hard to distinguish ourselves from others and to reach our professional goals. We thought it could be interesting to see what you are able to do in order to make the best out of you, which made us chose personal branding. Therefore the purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how individuals can develop as their own personal brand. The study has a qualitative approach and via two interviews we have collected the data needed in order to accomplish this thesis. The interviewees were two students currently attending Luleå University of Technology.

The findings and conclusions of this study indicates that the main objective to actually develop a personal brand is more or less to gain employment where a personal brand will help you stand out among your competitors. As there have been quite limited research within this area previously we were not surprised to discover that personal branding is not yet practiced to the extent that is could be. Yet we have discovered the interest among people for this phenomenon as it is more a matter of lack of knowledge about personal branding among individuals that limits them.

SAMMANFATTNING

Dagens konkurrenskraftiga samhälle har gjort det svårt för individer att särskilja sig från mängden och nå ens professionella mål. Vi tänkte därför att det kunde vara intressant att undersöka hur man kan göra det bästa av en själv vilket fick oss att välja personlig varumärkning. Således är vår avsikt med denna uppsats att få en bättre förståelse av hur individer kan utvecklas som deras egna varumärken. Studien har en kvalitativ tillvägagångssätt och via två intervjuer har vi samlat den data vi behöver för att utföra denna uppsats. De två intervjuade är studenter som för närvarande studerar på Luleå Tekniska Universitet.

Slutsatsen av vår studie indikerar på att huvudmotivet att utveckla ett personligt varumärke är mer eller mindre att få ett arbete där ett personligt varumärke hjälper dig att stå ut från dina konkurrenter. Litteraturen inom detta område har varit ganska begränsad och vi blev inte överraskade när vi upptäckte att personlig varumärkning inte praktiseras till den utsträckning den skulle kunna. Dock har vi upptäckt att det finns ett intresse hos folk för detta fenomen då det är endast brist på kunskapen inom området som begränsar individerna.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of the introduction will start by giving you a general insight of our thesis. This will be followed by the problem discussion where we dig deeper into personal branding that will eventually utilize in the purpose and the research questions.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Dave Dolak (2008), writes that, "If you ask ten different marketing people or brand managers, how they would define the word 'brand', you would probably get ten different answers even though most answers received will have similar themes" (Dolak, 2008 p.1). According to Dolak, (2008) there is only one definition that with a few words exactly describes the word "brand", which compiles when used as a noun, refers to a company name, a product name, or a unique identifier such as a logo or trademark. Even though the fact that Dolak (2008) claims that there is only one "right" definition, there is one other author that seem to agree with him.

Ghodeswar (2008) is one of the authors who also describes "brand" as a "*distinguishing name and/or symbol, such as a logo, trademark, or package design intended to identify the goods or service of either one seller, or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from the competitors*"(Ghodeswar, 2008 p.4).

The concept of branding has been developed from when craftsmen back in the days wanted to mark or put an identifier on the work they have done in order to separate theirs from others. By using their initials, symbols, or other unique marks they could easily identify their work (Dolak, 2008).

Today the meaning of brand goes beyond just being an identifier, as Dolak (2008) announce that it is more like an identifiable entity that makes specific promises of value. A simple way of putting it is that a brand is nothing more or less than the promise of value offered to you. These promises can be implied or explicitly stated but nonetheless value of some type is still promised (ibid). Brands and branding as we refer to in today's society have a much larger meaning, and not just in the area of the consumer business and industry or as a way of identifying a product or a company (ibid).

Kaputa, (2005) refer to branding as the "image" created in the minds of people when you think of a name, a product or a person. It is your feelings and perceptions about the brand's attributes, how it performs and what it is worth. (ibid) A brand also represents all the tangible and intangible qualities and aspects of a product or service. This often includes the feelings of an individual and perceptions about the quality, image, lifestyle and status of the product or person. (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)

Even if we manage to make an elaborate evaluation between features like, prices, options or perceptions, people tend occasionally to base their final decision on emotions towards the product or service rather than these features. These symbolic images that are perceived by the consumers are therefore more important than the products actual physical attribute and characteristics. (Graeff, 1996)

Ghodeswar, (2008) states that good-branding strategies stands for inspiring and awake powerful feelings within individuals that guarantees that their brand provides safety.

[INTRODUCTION]

In today's society branding has reached a new level and is not just something companies apply in order to cultivate their brands but something you should do for yourself in order to cultivate your brand. This has been labeled personal branding or self-marketing, and has today become essential if not vital, to professional success. (Arruda, 2002)

Even though self-marketing has not been around for longer than a decade it has been practiced by both movie, sports and pop stars as well as leaders in business and politics all over the world (Shepherd, 2005). Celebrities are often considered as “products” by their managers in order to successfully promote their names. Therefore every public appearance and utterance is extremely important as their image all depend on this (Koku, 1995). According to Klein (2001) Nike's campaign with Michael Jordan was the kick-start of promoting yourself as a brand called the Jordan brand.

“A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person. You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well”.

- Flemings, H.E (2006, p.142)

According to Montoya and Vandehey (2009) this is similar to strong corporate brands, strong personal and leadership brands that are embedded in powerful exchange of genuine value linked between a service supplier and a buyer. Without a strong brand, marketing is generally ineffective; therefore creating a strong brand is the foundation for all marketing. Other different aspects of a products identity, is also dependent upon - its logo, how its ads are written and who its spokesperson is. All this is based on the brand. (ibid)

Shepherd (2005) points out that personal development has today become an industry with increasing attention which encourages and advises individuals to market and brand themselves. He indicates that this industry applies the same fundamental principles for marketing and branding products and corporations, as for marketing and branding individuals (ibid). This logic is supported by Runebjörk (2004. p.74) who also sees the familiar traits between the classical structure of branding products and personal branding.

1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION

"A personal brand is like a piece of classical music on the page, it may be finished, but it's not fully realized until it reaches the ears of its audience through performance"

- (Montoya, 2002, p. 15)

As mentioned earlier, a brand is not only used to identify a product or an item. Identifying means establishing and launching its identity and describing what it actually stands for and how it is differentiated from another. Ideally the brand you have in your market is the identity or reputation you have chosen yourself. In other words, the way you want to be perceived, experienced and appreciated by others. (Wee & Brooks, 2010)

Today branding is not just something companies, Hollywood celebrities, or highly paid athletes apply, but rather something that even the most common person can and should take advantage of (Kaputa, 2005). We can, through use of the same fundamental principles as the big brands, ask us ourselves the same question they would ask: *"What is it that my product or service does that makes it different?"* (Peter, 1997 p.2). Peter (1997 p.1) also highlights the fact that *"everyone has a chance to stand out and to be a brand worthy of remarks"*.

Shepherd (2005) refers to the term personal branding as self-marketing, which according to him contains several activities practiced by the individuals in order to obtain beneficial employment. Personal branding is a strategic process that intentionally takes control of how others perceive you and how you manage those perceptions strategically so that it helps you to achieve your goals (Montoya & Vandehey 2002). The fact is that everyone already somehow has a personal brand, for example, in our family, social circles or professions as our names stand for something even though we might not always be aware of it. A person's total achievements, attitudes, actions and treatment of others over time, all have great impact on the individuals and are therefore important to be well managed. (Dolak, 2008) All these factors are important and includes whether we are considered for jobs or other opportunities as it determines how credible our opinions and ideas are. It determines how much help other people will give you, how seriously your competitors take you, and the tolerance people allow in their dealings with you (Montoya & Vandehey 2002).

Personal branding can finally be defined as a way of clarifying and communicating what makes you different and special. By understanding your attributes, strengths, skills and values, be able to use them in order to separate you from the competitors (Arruda, 2002, p. 6).

Elmore (2010) emphasizes how important a personal brand is in today's ultra-connecting, fast moving and competitive world as a person's tendency to jump from job to job has become more like a rule than an exception. You, yourself are to some extent in charge of gaining vital relationships and making winning impressions on prospects, customers and potential employers if you send the right message and stay focused. Elmore (2010) continues to point out that by having a strong brand you can communicate and promote your unique values to your current or future employers. This will in turn increase your chances to get that promotion or job as you will stand out if it is done successfully. (ibid)

In order to get noticed by your colleagues at work or eventually superiors, Elmore (2010) encourages people to take advantage of different social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or even by writing a blog. Be aware, because even though these social networks seems like something only your friends will take part of, your "status" on Facebook for example might as well be read by your employer. A case in England where an office worker was complaining about her job on Facebook actually made her lose her job as this was brought to the attention of her employer (www.dailymail.co.au). It is vital to remember that everything you do and do not do matters as it will communicate the value and character of your personal brand (Peters, 1997).

As you can see most advocates have somehow the same idea of what personal branding is even though they express it in different ways. The below definition summarizes personal branding quite well:

"Personal branding describes the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition, whether professional or personal, and then leverage it across platforms with a consistent message and image to achieve a specific goal. In this way, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establishing reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence. "

- (Schawbel, 2009 p. 4)

To further clarify the meaning of personal branding, Brown (2010) has established how to distinguish terms such as reputation, personal brand and character as these often are confused as being synonymous. Even though all these factors are of great importance while creating your personal brand, it is important to be able to separate them. Whereas characteristics describe more of whom you are, reputation is merely what other people think of you. Even if you want it or not, your branding and reputation is somewhat based upon your character. On the other hand, if you want your personal brand to become something that does not come naturally for your character you will have to put a great deal of effort in to it in order to create this and make it truthful. If you manage to align your inner character and values to your outer personal brand you will be somewhat in charge of your reputation. Your personal brand is your public face, which means that everything on the inside will show in your personal brand. This will as well directly influence your reputation. If you design your personal brand with the right message you can to some extent control what people think and talk about you behind your back. The relationship between these three factors, character, personal brand and reputation is illustrated in figure 1.1 below. (Brown, 2010)

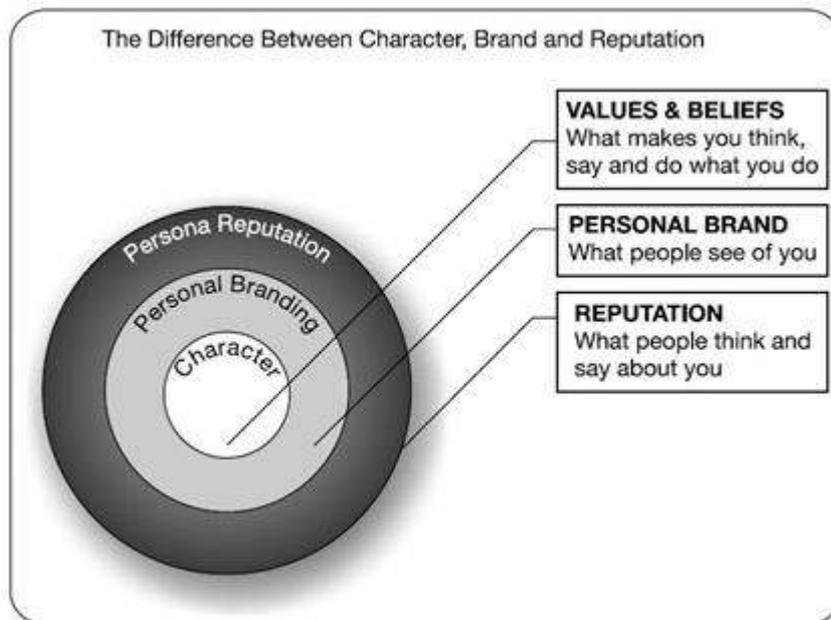


Figure 1.1: The difference between, Character, Brand and Reputation.
Source: Adapted from Rob Brown, 2010, p. 58

1.3 PURPOSE

The purpose of our thesis is to provide a better understanding on how individuals can develop as their own personal brand.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ 1. How can the objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand be described?
- RQ 2. How can the strategy used to develop a personal brand be described?

1.5 OUTLINE OF STUDY

Our thesis consists of six chapters including: *Introduction*, *Literature review*, *Methodology*, *Data presentation*, *Data analysis* and finally our own *Findings & conclusions*. In our introduction we will present our topic briefly and thereafter provide you with our problem discussion, which will result in our research questions. In chapter two, we will look deeper into the literature we have found and connect the theories to our research questions we have established. In chapter three labeled methodology, we will provide you with information on how we are planning on collecting our data and how we will treat it. Chapter four will present you the data we have found for each of our research questions, which also will be further analyzed, in chapter five. Finally in chapter six, we will introduce our own findings and conclusions, and also our suggestions we have made for our research and possible further research.

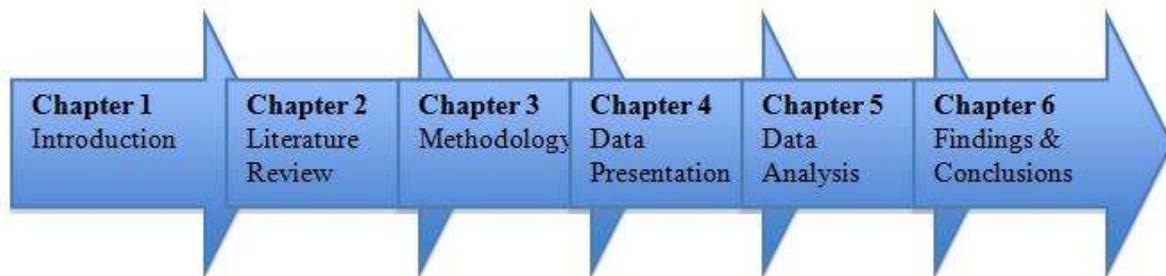


Figure: 1.2 Outline of the thesis

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we will look at relevant theories, which support our two research questions: How can the objectives of developing a personal brand be described? and how can the strategy used to develop a personal brand be described? Finally we will finish up with a conceptual framework, which will guide the study to the next chapter.

2.1 OBJECTIVES OF PERSONAL BRANDING

"Sooner or later, most marketing and business students realize that today's job market is competitive, challenging and requires substantial effort in order to pursue successfully."

(McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon & Kling, 2003, p.196)

2.1.1 Objectives

Many authors have discussed the fact that we need to differentiate ourselves in today's competitive work environment. As we have been reviewing theory in regards to objectives we came across McCorkle et al., (2003) study which highlighted the objectives of self-marketing and have especially focused on developing job search skills in order to reach your professional goal. The study indicated that a typical employer would change careers three to seven times during his or her lifetime. This means that the need for self-marketing and job search skills is an organic process that will be needed throughout the rest of the individual's life. (ibid)

A skill can be described as *"an underlying ability that can be refined through practice, such as communication, analysis, creativity, intuition, leadership, decision making and planning"* Waller & Hingorani, (2006, p.2). There are quite a few skills which a variety of researchers have pointed out as important for business students including: problem solving, analytical, computer/work skills, decision-making skills, communications skills (both written and oral), critical thinking, interpersonal skills and real-world skills to mention a couple (ibid). A study was done in order to determine which skills and attributes business students perceived would be important for their future work with the objective to gain employment. The study was done on 283 students studying marketing as part of their business qualification. The result is showed in the matrix below, where 1 means that you believe it is not at all important for your future work and 5 means that you believe it is extremely important for your future work. They all scored above the midpoint of 3, which indicates that all skills are important more or less. As you can see in table 2.1 the result of the study indicated that the most important skills are: Oral communication (4.55), Team-Work skills (4.5), Relationship Building (4.46), Decision-making (4.42) and Problem Solving (4.36). (ibid)

Table 2.1: Matrix over Business Skills

Skills		Mean
COLLABORATION Mean= 4.36	Leaderships skills	4.30
	Project management	4.19
	Teamwork skills	4.50
	Relationship skills	4.46
RESEARCH Mean= 3.64	Information search	3.73
	Research skills	3.79
	Understanding theoretical Concepts	3.52
	Technical report writing	3.53
COMMUNICATION Mean= 4.27	Presentation skills	4.29
	Oral communication	4.55
	Written communication	3.97
PROBLEM-SOVLING Mean= 4.33	Decision- making skills	4.42
	Creative thinking	4.22
	Problem solving	4.36
TECHNICAL Mean= 3.8	Analytical skills	4.28
	Statistical analysis skills	3.32

Source: Adapted from Waller & Hingorani, 2006, p. 5

Another study accomplished by McCorkle et al., (2003) involving job search skills was mainly done on marketing students, yet most of the skills mentioned would be of great importance for anyone. McCorkle et al., (2003) divided skills into two categories: discipline related and support skills. Discipline related skills from a marketer's point of view can be described as the knowledge achieved for example via market planning, segmenting a market, developing a pricing strategy etc. These skills can be developed through class projects, part-time jobs or volunteer work. Having these skills in your baggage will definitely provide you with a strong selling point for any marketing job. (ibid)

Supporting skills on the other hand are more general for any student graduating and can be further divided into subcategories such as: communication, interpersonal, creativity and decision making among a few. These skills can basically be achieved via the same methods as discipline related skills. Even though this particular study was focused on marketing students these support skills are something anyone would take advantage and benefit from, regardless of major. (ibid)

There has been a great discussion of which skills are the most important to have regardless which business you are in. One study indicated the below rank as being the most beneficial for marketers:

1. Communication
2. Sales
3. Analytic/statistical
4. Leader/manager/self-starter
5. Direct marketing
6. New product introduction

Communication skills have overall been in the top three best skills to have according to quite a few studies. Yet while examining one particular study conjoint weight distributions rather than rankings showed that employers put more weight on problem-solving skills while the student put more weight on communicating skills. (ibid)

By using skills like mentioned above and combining these with your strengths, values and passions you will be able to differentiate yourself and allowed to guide your career decisions. A Personal brand will distinguish you from your colleagues and competitors in the same manner as corporate business does. (Arruda, 2003)

2.1.2. Benefits

McNally & Speaks (2002, p. 12) consider the primary benefits the fact that you get to be more of who you are and what you are, not less. You get to live your values, be acknowledged and receive credit not only for what you do but also for what you believe. The authors continue by stating that your attitude towards life will in general improve as you are being true to yourself, which they consider being the most vital part in personal success. (ibid) Building and nurturing a winning brand will benefit you in many ways as it will allow you to:

- Understand yourself better
- Raise your confidence
- Increase your visibility and your compensation
- Thrive during economic downturns
- Expand into new business areas
- Attain more interesting jobs and assignments. (Arruda, 2002)

Clare, (2002) also adds a couple of benefits to the list if you will manage your personal brand effectively he means that you will beside the above mentioned, differentiate yourself from your peers and achieve your own personal and professional goals.

According to Montoya & Vandehey (2002), influence is really what personal branding is all about. A personal branding will furnish you with power to influence people's decisions, purchases or even attitudes. The authors have created a list of what they consider being the most beneficial of having a great personal brand:

- Confers "top of mind" status: If a project or opportunity comes along your name will be one the first that comes in mind among the candidates considered.
- Increases the authority and credence of decisions: If you have a great personal brand your statement or decisions are more likely to be believed.
- Places you in a leadership role: People want to put you in charge, as your strong personal brand will encourage them to do so.
- Enhances prestige: You will be able to gain prestige through accomplishments, positions, knowledge or even your own personal style. Your actions will mean more and your visibility will be enlarged.
- Attracts: Which according to the authors is one of personal branding's strongest powers. This is due to the fact that you will have the ability to create a personal appearance that will attract the people you wish to attract.

- Adds perceived value to what you are selling: If your personal brand appears honest, knowledgeable and intelligent it will facilitate sales as the customer perceives that the relationship with the person adds value.
- Earns recognition: The authors describe recognition as a matter of credit and opportunities which you should take advantage of. Anonymity is not a favorable goal, as you want your brand to be seen.
- Association with a trend: You can be able via your personal brand associate yourself with hot business methodology or technology that is highly appreciated by others at the moment.
- Increases earning potential: If you are able to incorporate some of the above benefits or even all, having a personal brand can push for promotions, boost sales or increase the perception of your expertise so you can demand greater compensation.

2.2 STRATEGY

As we have mentioned before, if you are well aware of how business brands work, you can take advantage of this in order to develop your own personal brand. According to McNally & Speaks (2002) the principle and ideas developed and successfully used in business over many years are rapidly adaptable to building a personal brand. Shepherd (2005) supports this argument as he proclaims that it is a blurred dividing line between the selling of a person and the selling of a product or organization.

The majority of advocates agree that the personal branding process does mirror the product or corporate process (Shepherd, 2005 p.590) Arruda (2002) briefly summarized three broad stages your personal brand will face which can also be applied in the corporate world. These are: *extract*, *express* and *exude*. The first stage promotes the individual to look inside them in order to identify their key attributes: “*your unique promise of value*” (Shepherd, 2005, p 590). Having this established, a personal brand statement will be constructed with your attributes as a base. The last stage will involve getting your brand visible to the outside world (ibid).

In today’s society it is even encouraged to consider yourself as a product and actually discover and develop your unique qualities as a product and use those qualities as selling points (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). Clare (2002), emphasizes the fact that the only way to be able to succeed in today’s competitive environment and achieving your professional goals is to differentiate yourself. “*It’s all about understanding how to build and communicate the unique brand that is you*” (Clare 2002, p.2). By taking advantage of your strengths, skills, values and passion you will be able to stand out from the crowd. If you truly understand “*the true you*” and consistently and constantly live your brand, you will attract the people you wish to attract in order to achieve your goals (Clare, 2002).

Even though a personal brand needs to be strong and believable, the most important is to begin with a solid foundation in order to keep it persisting. According to Montoya & Vandehey (2002, p 45) these three essential elements are:

1. *Emotional impact* - Which is important in decisions where, emotional reactions and rational thinking play an important role. This could be in situations like hiring someone for a job where it matters how the decision maker feels about the person and a great personal brand

generates a positive and strong response in people in areas like confidence, admiration, trust, and fondness.

2. *Repetition* - The main goal with a personal brand is to place its meaning and characteristics in the minds of people. It is therefore important to make sure that people perceive your brand as reliable; to make sure that it remains effective. When making this kind of impression on people it also necessary to repeat its exposure so people keep getting the same message and meaning, which in turn will have a large value for people.

3. *Time* - We frequently come across and react to personal brands. Natural perceptions, associated with the personality traits, values or abilities that the person represents becomes automatic and strong enough to drive our actions. Aiming for a long-term exposure is for that reason a long-term solution for creating a strong and stable perception.

When creating a stable foundation, which is similar to all individuals, it is now important to know how to differentiate yourself from others. Goldsmith (2009) describes four different phases which an individual needs to go through, when building a strong believable brand.

Phase 1: *Creating and defining* your personal ambition. Developing self-awareness and identifying your dreams, including who you are; what you stand for, what makes you unique and what your values are. Thus first phase means assessing your personal vision and mission and expressing them and making them visible for others.

Phase 2: *Formulating* your personal statement based on all your ambitions, brand objectives, specialty attributes and domains. In this way your brand gets more personal and at the same time gives people a clear view of yourself and your personality.

Phase 3: *Developing a well-balanced* action plan including the two phases mentioned before, translating and transforming your ambition, into a convenient and measurable personal milestones, where improvements can be considered and easy to follow.

Phase 4: *Implementing* your brand, creating and maintaining your brand effectively. A personal brand is not worth anything unless you make it reality.

Montoya & Vandehey, (2002) has also defined a successful way in building your brand, which he labeled “The Eight Unbreakable Laws of Personal Branding”. Montoya & Vandehey (2002) does not consider these “laws” as integral parts of the process of building a personal brand or a personal brand statement but rather something that serves as eight yardsticks against which you can measure a personal brand as it evolves. The author summarizes these rules like following:

1. *The law of Specialization*. Focus your brand on one area of achievement.

2. *The law of Leadership*. You must be acknowledged as one of the most knowledgeable respected or skilled people in your field.

3. *The law of Personality*. A brand must be build around one’s personality in all aspects, including flaws.

4. *The law of Distinctiveness.* Once you have created your personal brand, you must express it in a unique way.
5. *The law of Visibility.* To be effective our personal brand must be seen repeatedly.
6. *The law of Unity.* Your behaviors behind closed doors much match your public brand.
7. *The law of Persistence.* Once you have established your personal brand, give it time to grow, stick with it and ignore fads.
8. *The law of Goodwill.* The more you are perceived as well-intentioned or embodying valued ideas, the more influential your brand.

2.2.1 Attributes

According to Montoya & Vandehey, (2002) a person's attributes are the most important building block of personal branding. The author defines attributes such as distinctive, compelling characteristic that communicates an intellectual or emotional benefit to a person's brand domain. The most common for a person is to have about 3-6 attributes and between these distinguish which one your leading attribute is.

Montoya & Vandehey, (2002 p.18) describes this leading attributes as a "*perceptual label that enters a person's mind instantly when he encounters a personal brand*". Attributes are obviously something subjective since all people are different. If you take Michael Jordan for instance some of his attributes would be: great athlete and ultra – competitive champion and his leading attribute would not surprisingly be "the greatest basketball player of all time". As you might understand there are more favorable attributes depending on what industry you want to enter when you reach the enterprise.(ibid) Werner-Runebjörk (2004) means that your values in life might even change and this over time, which could somewhat modify your attributes, as personal branding is an organic and ongoing process. She also agrees with Montoya & Vandehey (2002) that each individual have about 3-6 attributes each. (ibid)

A study was performed in order to establish which business attributes student found important for their future work. The study described business attributes as the characteristics or qualities associated with work. The attributes presented was: can defend a point of view, team player, strategic thinking, leader, punctual, interview ability, neat, appearance, personable, well-spoken, persuasive, ambitious/striver, keep big picture in mind, qualitative, detail demon, hard worker, creative, informed on my company, informed on my industry, understand advertising, problem solver, wants job very much, "street smart"/savvy, organized, will stay with us, fits in, persuasive, sense of humor, good reference, school projects, experience, writes well, dependable, mature and right chemistry. These attributes was later modified with skills and the five attributes that was ranked highest were *Reliability, Being Hardworking, Honest & Integrity, Showing initiative* and *Strategic thinking*. (Waller & Hingorani, 2006)

Since your brand is the perception maintained in someone else's mind a central issue is how other sees you. This perception can be manage effectively and designed your way if you approach personal branding the right way (Goldsmith, 2009). Even if it is corporate or personal brand in order to create a strong brand, it need to be so clearly defined that its intended audience right away will understand what it stands for. If your brand is not clearly defined, your brand will define you instead. In business the audience will be the company's

customer, while the personal brand will communicate to those we have or want to have relationship with. People will therefore base their decision about you as a brand upon the total experience of having a relationship with you. (McNally & Speaks, 2002)

Arruda (2002) often refers to successful personal brands as being authentic. This means that you use your values, passions, and strengths to distinguish yourself from others in order to gain the resources you need to advance in your career. If you do understand these attributes it will help you be focused and your brand will translate into professional success and personal satisfaction. Effective branding is based in authenticity- what's true, genuine and real. Arruda continues to compare authentic personal brands with strong corporate brands as he means that these brands are not created, they are uncovered, strengthened and nurtured. Goldsmith (2009) continues on the same track as Arruda (2008) as he defines strong brands as well as being authentic; “*it is about getting a clear view on what you want, giving it all your positive energy, doing what you love, and improving yourself continuously*”.

Werner-Runebjörk (2004, p.74) define a strong personal brand more to the extent of how many people that know of you. If you are famous and spoken about in a positive way outside your closest circle you often have a strong brand. She also states that a strong brand does not demand any medial acknowledgment as long as your brand is well spoken about, within your branch or company. (ibid)

There are several ways of determining the strength in a personal brand. McNally & Speaks (2002 p.13) argue that a strong brand is characterized by three key components, which are:

Distinctive: They stand for something. They have a point of view.

Relevant: What they stand for connects to what someone else considers to be important.

Consistent: People come to believe in a relationship based in the consistency of behaviors they experience or observe.

Rampersad, (2009) also mentions a few criteria's for a successful and effective personal brand. These include:

Authenticity: Meaning that you are your own brand and it should therefore reflect your character, values, vision and behavior and all are associated with your personal ambitions.

Consistency: Even though it takes a lot of courage, you need to always be consistent in your behavior. People want to be able to trust and depend on you, it is therefore good to make and do relevant things and live up to different expectations.

Specialization: People often have a specific area that they are mainly good at or better in compared to other ones. Therefore you need to be precise and concentrate on that single talent or skill. Since it is what makes you, unique, it is vital to focus and make it clear.

Relevant: What you do and what you stand for should be relevant and consider important by your target audience.

Distinctiveness: Your brand needs to be expressed in a unique way, distinguished from others, and at the same time add value, and give people a quick and clear description of what it stands for. In that way people will be able to connect themselves with it.

Performance: The most important element after making people aware of your personal brand is to constantly improve and perform you.

2.2.2 Communication tools

Depending on what you want to achieve with your personal brand, you need to have some kind of strategy so you will have something to strive for to know what direction to go. Using the right communication tools are therefore one of the most important stages in personal branding. If you have a large desire for developing a strong personal brand, you need to have a more developed strategy than those people who do not have the same intentions (Werner-Runebjörk, 2004). There are quite different tools to approach when implementing your personal brand. Below we will describe the most common ways.

Word-of-Mouth marketing

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is a powerful tool when promoting your brand. Peters, (1997) even state that this is the most powerful vehicle you got. Schawbel (2009) strongly support this as he also argue that this is the most vital part in the process of getting your brand out as it contains what your most important contacts such as friends, family, business partners and acquaintances are hearing about you. WOM is a type of marketing which involves how to get people talking about you, your product or your business. If you want to build trust fast or gain more exposure WOM is a proven way in doing so. Usually business tends to succeed or fail based on referrals and in today's increasingly connected world, WOM almost determine if people become famous or infamous. (Schawbel, 2009 p.8)

Networking

Another way of differentiating your personal brand and making it more noticeable is by using different social networks and blogs by using the internet (Elmore 2010). Schawbel (2009), describes networking like an occurrence, where we come across with friends, family and colleagues in our everyday life.

Blogs - writing a blog for example, provides you with a great way of showing your colleagues, superiors and friends what your ideas and values are. When writing a blog, it's helpful to write about ways of solving different problems and/or challenges. By doing this it contributes to give people an impression of what you know and can, which people can connect with in their daily lives.

Virtual resume - By putting up all your previous accomplishments on your home website or blog will provide people with a better view of your earlier experiences and knowledge. It is also important to regularly update your resume and make it easy to find, by combining it with other social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. In this way people will be able to follow you up. Through virtual resumes, you also add videos or even diplomas, which will allow people to get a real feeling of who you are. (Elmore, 2010)

By using these different types of communication, it will be easier for you to promote your unique values to not only other people but also current and future employers (ibid).

Schwabel (2009) mention a couple of ground rules in order to apply successful networking. By networking the author mean physically interact with people and he summarizes the steps as:

Rule 1: Make a strong and favorable first impression.

Rule 2: Try to remember at least three facts about each person you meet, including their name.

Rule 3: Be conscious of people's feelings when talking.

Rule 4: Find creative ways to give value or promote other individuals, and they will reciprocate.

Rule 5: Be an active listener and take a genuine interest in what others have to say.

Like Schwabel (2009) mention in his first networking rule "make a strong and favorable impression", this can also be further explained as how you dress, speak and act which are all important components in your brand identity (Flemings, 2006). Brand identity stands for the entire message carrying interactions concerning the brand, between the brand strategists and the brand stewards (Madhavarani et al., 2005). The way people, aspires to be and how they want to be perceived. (Ellis)

Making a good impression is therefore also necessary on any occasion. When you meet someone for the first time that person will form an instant impression of you. (Arruda & Dixon, 2007) Your smile, facial expressions, postures, the way you use your hands and eyes, everything matters as it all communicates something about you. The tone of your voice, the way you dress even the environment people find you in, it all contributes to your brand identity (Wee & Brooks, 2010). It is therefore important that the "package", the person see, is the precise reflection of your personality and what you stand for. In another word, the impressions you are creating are the ones you want to be creating. (ibid)

Studies that have been made by Arruda & Dixon, (2007), has showed that it will take an additional 18 encounter, to change someone first impressions of you. Making the best impression at that first meeting is therefore critical, which also communicates something about you. (ibid)

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous part we have provided relevant theories regarding our two research questions. We will now take all these theories in consideration, as we will distinguish the concepts among these theories that are most relevant to our study. This will be presented in our conceptual framework. Huberman & Miles, (1994, p.18) explains that a conceptual framework can either be presented graphically or in narrative form. The most important things to be studied are key factors, constructs and variables and the presumed relationships among them. We will start by providing the concepts regarding our first research question, which is the objective/benefits of having a personal brand. This will be followed by our second research question concerning the strategy used to develop a personal brand.

2.3.1 Conceptualizing RQ 1

The concepts most relevant regarding the objectives of having a personal brand have been quite limited in the literature yet the literature found all agrees that it is quite beneficial to

develop and nurture one. In order to answer the first research question we have decided to use the following theories as a foundation to compare our gather data.

For objectives we will rely on Waller & Hingorani (2006) study in regards to differentiate your personal brand with various skills. It is a relatively new and concrete study, as well as it has more skills presented then the other theories. Even though that Oral communication, team-work skills, relationship building, decision-making and problem solving scored the highest point in Waller & Hingorani (2006) study we have chosen to involve all skills from the study in order maintain a proper interview. Yet only the five skills mentioned will be analyzed further chapter five due to the size of this thesis.

Differentiate yourself with skills:

Collaboration

- ✓ Leadership Skills
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Teamwork skills
- ✓ Relationship building

Research

- ✓ Information search
- ✓ Research skills
- ✓ Understanding theoretical concepts
- ✓ Technical report writing

Communication

- ✓ Presentation skills
- ✓ Oral communication
- ✓ Written communication

Problem-Solving

- ✓ Decision-making skills
- ✓ Creative thinking
- ✓ Problem solving

Technical

- ✓ Analytical skills
- ✓ Statistical analysis skills

A couple of theories in regards to which benefits you will gain by developing a personal brand have been presented in the literature. Yet Montoya & Vandehey's (2002) will be the one we will rely on due to it is extensively and the fact that the authors are well spoken about, in most of the literature we found.

Influence on your current or future workplace:

- ✓ "Top of mind"
- ✓ Increase the authority and credence of decision
- ✓ Place you in a leadership role

- ✓ Enhances prestige
- ✓ Attract
- ✓ Adds perceived value to what you are selling
- ✓ Earns recognition
- ✓ Associate with a trend
- ✓ Increasing earning potential (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)

2.3.2. Conceptualizing RQ 2

Many authors have the same idea of what strategy to approach when developing a personal brand, even though they express it a bit differently from each others. In order to answer our second research question, which is how the strategy used in developing a personal brand can be described we have chosen following theories to rely on and compare this with our collected data.

- **Process**

For the process we will rely on Goldsmith (2009) four phases. The four phases is the most recent theory on the process and will synchronize well with our second research question. It summarizes the process more accurate than Montoya & Vandeheys (2002) and have a better approach to just our research question.

1. Creating and defining your personal ambitions- *Who are you and what do you stand for*
2. Formulating your personal statement- *Attributes and domains*
3. Developing a well-balanced action plan- *Translate and transforming your ambitions into a personal milestone*
4. Implementing your brand- *Make your brand reality*

- **Attributes**

As your attribute plays a quite vital part of your personal brand we will rely on Montoya & Vandehey (2002) statement which supports this. Also the fact that they say that each individual have 3-6 attributes each will be something we will rely on as this argument is also supported by Werner-Runebjörk (2004).

In order to distinguish which attributes that weight the most for each individual we will rely on Waller & Hingorani (2006) study, as it gives a very extensive and accurate list with attributes individuals value the most and reckons is important for future employment which are:

- ✓ Reliability
- ✓ Being hardworking
- ✓ Honest and Integrity
- ✓ Showing initiative
- ✓ Strategic thinking

- **Communications tools**

Regarding the communication tools, we have mentions three main theories and we will rely on all three of them as they bring up different aspects of communication.

- ✓ WOM (Schawbel 2009 and Peter 1997)
- ✓ Networking (Elmore, 2010)
- ✓ Your "package" (Flemings, 2006 and Wee & Brooks, 2010)

Our research questions does not totally differ from each other as skills blends in with both research questions 1 and 2. This is why skills will be put in the middle between the two research questions. Skills can help you achieve the professional goals you wish for which comes under objective, research question 1. A skill can on the other hand be a way to strategically build your brand which will fall under research question two.

Based on the information above we have summarized our conceptual framework below:

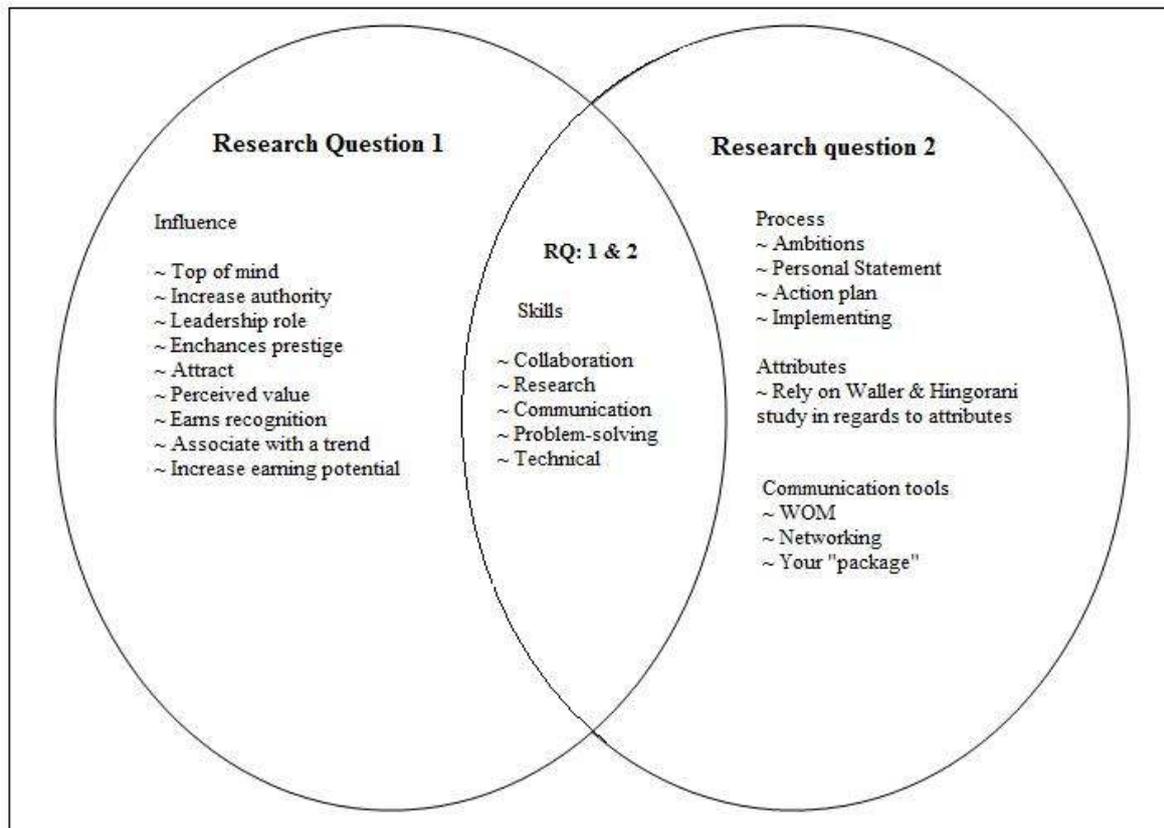


Figure 2.1: Conceptual frame of reference

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter we will present our research methods, in which way we are going to collect our data to answer our research questions. We will start with our purpose of research and research approach and then we are going to follow up our research strategy, with a discussion on our data collection and sample selection. Finally we are going to end the chapter with how we will analyze our data. Figure 3.1 below will show you a presentation of the methodology.



*Figure: 3.1: Methodology for the thesis work
Source: Adapted from Foster (1998, p. 81)*

3.1 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Gummesson, (2000) distinguishes between three different types of purposes a case study can have: *exploratory*, *descriptive* and *explanatory*. Since our study, concerns all three methods, we will briefly describe all of them further below. Yet the main purpose with our study is *descriptive*, as it will synchronize best with our research questions mentioned in chapter one.

Exploratory

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, (2007 p.133) a exploratory study, is a valuable means of finding out "what is happening" and to seek a new insights: to ask questions and to assess the phenomena in a new light. When applying an "explorative" approach to your research, you are often dealing with defining and formulate problems expressed in hypotheses (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). Yin (2008) also supports this statement as he defines exploratory as search and discover. When conducting an exploratory study, there are primarily three main ways of achieving this study; either through a search of the literature, interviewing experts within the area, or building a focus group to interview. (Saunders et al., 2007)

Descriptive

Miles & Huberman (2001 p.45) states that "*A description study is the foundation upon which qualitative research is built*". A descriptive approach to a case study have purpose "*to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situation*" (Saunders et al., 2007). Due to this it is therefore vital to have a clear vision of the phenomena on which you wish to collect you data on. If you for example want to see what happens when a new product is developed and

launched on the market a descriptive case study would be appropriate (Gummesson, 2000 p.85).

Explanatory

Explaining implies analyzing causes and connections based on hypotheses. In the same way as the descriptive research methods, explanatory has to be specified and begin with a precise explanation of what the situation is and for whom it concerns. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul 2006). Explanatory research answers questions like, "how" and "why". These types of questions are more likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories and experiments as the preferred research methods. (Yin, 2008)

As we stated above, we are in our study primarily going to answer our research questions by describing them. Therefore we are mostly going to use a descriptive research method. Yet additionally since our study is a fairly new area, we are also "exploring", and making conclusions from our own perspective in order to gain a deeper understanding of our research area. At the same time as we are answering our questions by explaining, the different phenomenon's, the study is also slightly explanatory.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

After deciding our purpose of research, we need to establish our research approach. There are two different ways to approach a study depending on which information that is being investigated which are *Qualitative* or *Quantitative*. (Saunders et al., 2007)

Qualitative means "*any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1996, p.11). It can refer to research about person's lives, lived experience, behaviors, and social movements to just mention a few (ibid). A qualitative study does not serve the purpose of generalize the problem but instead it will allow you to get a deeper understanding of the problem (Saunders et al 2007). Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul (2006) support this statements and also adds that a qualitative study often is presented verbally where as a quantitative study only deals with numerical data.

When making a qualitative research, it can sometimes be confusing as it can be confused with quantitative approach. Even if you gather data that would normally be associated with quantitative research it is the actually interpretation and how you carry out, which serves the purpose of discovering concepts and relationship in the raw data collected that will go under the term qualitative.(ibid)

One main reason for doing a qualitative research is the preferences and/or experiences of people by example doing face to face interviews which allows you to get closer to your case study (ibid). This is one of our reasons of using this approach, to provide a better understanding about peoples own personal branding by looking deeper to how they build their unique brand, using their own preferences and experiences.

"Qualitative methods can be used to explore substantive areas about which little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understanding."

- (Strauss & Corbin, 1996 p, 11)

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The purpose with our research was to investigate how to provide a better understanding on how individuals can develop as their own personal brand. With this purpose in mind we established two research questions:

1. How can the objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand be described?
2. How can the strategy used to develop a personal brand be described?

There are different strategies to apply when collecting data and analyzing empirical evidence. Yin, (2006) describes five different strategies you can use which is explained further below in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Relevant situations for Different Research Strategies

Research strategy	Forms of research question	Requires control over behavioral events	Focuses on contemporary events
Experiment	How, why	YES	YES
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much	NO	YES
Archival analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much	NO	YES/NO
History	How, why	NO	NO
Case study	How, why	NO	YES

Source: Adapted from Yin, 2008, p. 8

Even though there are various methods of strategies they should not be mutually exclusive as sometimes two methods might be considered equally attractive. You can due to this use multiple methods in any given study example given: a survey with a case study or a case study within a survey. (Saunders et al., 2007)

Yin, (2008) describes a case study as when a "how" or "why" questions is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control. According to Saunders et al., (2007 p. 139) a case study is "*A strategy for doing a research which involves an empirical investigations of a particular contemporary phenomenon, within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.*" A case study will be particularly suitable if you wish to gain a deeper understanding of the context of the research as well as the process being enacted. Due to this we will compose a case study as it will be the most suitable for our research. (ibid) According to Saunders et al., (2007) the strategy most appropriate for "How?" questions is case studies which is how we have phrased our research questions which also supports our decision of using case study as our strategy.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

In order to answer our research questions we need to establish what type of data we are going to rely on. You can either reanalyzing already excising data that have been collected for another purpose or you can collect new fresh data for that specific purpose. Most research questions are yet answered with a combination using both primary and secondary data. In our study we will only rely on primary data. (Saunders et al., 2007)

Once you have established to rely on primary or secondary data there are six sources of evidence to use when working on a case study, these different sources are: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2008). To only rely on one source of evidence which is referred to: individual source of evidence, is even discourage by Yin, (2008) as a case study should be seen as an opportunity to use many sources of evidence. Yin (2008), continues to state that each source of evidence has its own strength and weaknesses, and by combining and using multiple sources of evidence, it contributes to a major strength of the case study collection. This is called triangulation which Saunders et al., (2007 p. 139), defines as *“the use of different data collection techniques within one study in order to ensure that the data are telling you what you think they are telling you”*. By applying triangulation a case study’s finding or conclusion will be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information (Yin, 2008).

The data collection which will be used for this study is interviews and observations. The interviews carried out will help us collect the primary data we need in order to answer our research questions. We will use an interview guide (Appendix A and B) as a guide during the two interviews. As mentioned before all sources of evidence have its own strength and weakness as will be describes further in table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2 Sources of evidence: Strengths and weaknesses

Source of evidence	Strengths	Weakness
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted-focuses directly on case study topics • Insightful-provides perceived causal inference and explanations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias due to poorly articulated questions • Response bias • Inaccuracies due to poor recall • Reflexivity-interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear
Direct observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality-covers events in real time • Contextual-covers context of “case” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-consuming • Selectivity-broad coverage difficult without a team of observers • Reflexivity-event may proceed differently because it is being observed • Cost-hours needed by human observers

Source: Adapted from Yin, 2008 p. 102

As you can see there are quite a few weaknesses when doing interviews yet an interview is one of the most important sources of a case study (Yin, 2008). An interview take place between two or more people which serve the purpose of gather valid and relevant data that will fit the research questions. Briefly an interview can either be greatly formalized with standardized questions or informal with is more like an unstructured conversation. The first

option will be suitable if your aim is to collect a great deal of data from a large selection of respondents. When an informal interview occurs the researcher will interfere as little as possible more than introduce the theme or subject and then let the interviewee lead the interview with his/her thoughts and ideas. Between these two options you will find the semi-structured interview which is the type of interview we will use. When a semi-structured interview is performed the researcher will have a list of themes and questions gather in an interview guide yet the researcher will be quite flexible of the sequence of the questions. All the answers all open and emphasis is on the interviewee's feedback. (Denscombe, 2009) An interview can either be audio-recorded or notes can be carried out throughout the whole interview (Saunders et al, 2007). This is the reason why we chose semi-structured interviews.

The most common type of semi-structured interviews is personal interviews which mean a meeting between researcher and a respondent (Denscombe, 2009). The author points out four advantages with personal interviews:

- Easy to arrange as only two people need to be available at the same time
- The perceptions and comments only derives from one source: the respondent
- They are easy to control as there are only one person's ideas to dig into and explore
- When you will print out the tape recording it is a lot easier to focus on only the one responded and not several as it can be hard to distinguish the voices.

To use personal interviews will fit our profile quite well as we will only interviews one person at a time as we don't want to risk the fact that if we had used a focus group with several respondent they might be influence by each other's and their answers might not be genuine. (Saunders et al., 2007)

According to Lundahl & Skärvad (1999), observations are often being used when conducting different behavior example given consumer behavior. According to Yin (2008), a case study will automatically give you the opportunity for direct observation. Yin, (2008, p, 109) defines *direct observation* as "*A case study that should take place in the natural setting of the "case" you are creating the opportunity for direct observation.*" Direct observation will enable you to actually see what is happening with your eyes and not just listen to what is being said (Denscombe, 2009).

3.5 SAMPLE SELECTION

Saunders et al. (2007), claims that it is nearly impossible to collect or analyze all the data available to you owing to restrictions of time, money and often access will come in the way. Sampling is therefore a great way to limit case or group members that we will collect our data from. (ibid)

In order to decide who to interview we have used judgmental sampling which Saunders et al. (2007, p.230) defines as "*when you use your own judgment to select cases that will best enable you to answer your research questions and to meet your objectives*". We have also applied partly snowball sampling in order to get our second interviewee which Saunders et al., (2007) defines as when the case identify further members of the population who the identify further members and so on.

Two interviews will be carried out with two students at Lulea University of Technology (LTU), one male and one female. This is because we don't want any segregation and want to

have both genders represented. One of the interviewees have recently launched a new second-hand shop online called "My student store" and was also a guest speaker at "Framtidskvällen" which is an arrangement to benefit entrepreneurship. He also recommended our second interviewee. They are both in their third year at LTU and are attending the master program in industrial and management engineering. The two objects for our interviews were Erik Hedbrant and Julia Eriksson. The reason we have chosen student that have been studying a while is due to the fact that they will sooner or later jump on the platform of enterprise and will be forced to differentiate themselves from other with the same degree.

We are well aware of the fact that this is a fairly new and unexplored area and the idea of having a personal brand might not even have been brought to individual's attention yet. As well the fact that we live in Sweden which is embossed with "Jantelagen" where no one is better than anyone else might make it difficult for people to actually try to make the best of themselves as it nearly related to be referred to "ego".

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Yin (2008), a case study should always start with a general analytical strategy where priorities for what to analyze and why will be defined. This will be carried out in order to conclude the analysis in a successful way. The author further claims that there are four different general analytical strategies:

1. *Relying on theoretical proposition:* Theoretical propositions will lead you to your case study where the researcher have been developing research question, reviews of the literature and new hypotheses or propositions will be presented. According to Yin the most preferred strategy of them all.
2. *Developing a case description:* If there is limited of literature regard your subject this method will be preferred as the researcher will then use a descriptive way of presenting the data.
3. *Using both qualitative and quantitative data:* This strategy is more suitable for advanced student and scholars as you will need certain skills such as certain statistical techniques. Case studies that includes substantial amount of quantitative data even though qualitative data remains the central approach in the study will use this strategy.
4. *Examining rival explanations:* This strategy will be used when doing case study evaluations and its object is to try to define and test rival explanations.

You will need to choose one of these four strategies that are most appropriate for your research and after collecting your data you will start to go through the data in an analytical way (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In a qualitative analysis there will be three concurrent flows of activities in which Miles & Huberman (1994) have defined below:

Data reduction: Refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying and transforming the data that appear in written –up field notes or transcriptions. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10) Data reduction occurs continuously during the life of any qualitatively project, even before the data are actually collected. This usually appears in the same context as when the

researcher decides and chooses the research questions, and which conceptual framework to work within (ibid)

Data display: This is the second major flow, of analysis activity. The display, works as it organizes, compress and assemble the information that permits conclusion drawings and action. By using displays it helps us to gather information and gain a better understanding of a happening. (ibid)

Conclusion drawing: This is the third and the final analysis activity. In this situation the researcher starts to decide the meaning of different patterns, flows and propositions, at the same time as holding the conclusions lightly to maintain openness and skepticism. (ibid)

We will in our case study rely on already existing theory in our two first chapters and will therefore rely on the first and most common analytical strategy. The last three chapters of our thesis will follow Miles & Huberman's (1994) three flows of activities.

3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Saunders et al., (2007, p.614) define validity as the extent to which data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure. In another word, if the research answers and conclusions are really about what they profess to be about (ibid). Yin (2008) distinguishes between three types of validity tests, which you get a brief description of below. Followed by this, you will be provided, by table 3.3 showing the case study tactics and phase of research in which tactic occurs within the different tests.

Construct validity – Stands for identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. (ibid)

Internal validity – Is often used for explanatory or case studies only and not for descriptive or exploratory studies. Internal validity seeks to establish a causal relationship, whereby clear conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from false relationships. (ibid)

External Validity – Means defining the field to which a study's finding can be generalized. (ibid)

Reliability – Demonstrates the operations of a study, such as the data collection procedures can be repeated, with the same results. (ibid) Reliability can also be referred as to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis measures will yield consistent findings Saunders et al. (2007).

Table 3.3: Case study tactics for four design tests.

TEST	Case Study Tactics	Phase of research in which tactic occurs
Construct validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use multiple sources of evidence. • establish chain of evidence. • have key informants review draft case study report. 	data collection data collection composition
Internal Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do pattern matching • do explanation building • address rival explanations • use logic models 	data analysis data analysis data analysis data analysis
External Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use theory in single-case studies • use replication logic in multiple-case studies 	research design research design
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use case study protocol • develop case study database 	data collection data collection

Source: Yin, 2008, p.41

In our research methods, we used interviews while taking notes. When implementing an interview it is common to record the conversation. So it is easy to go back and listen again if any misunderstanding appears. In our case no recording was used, we were therefore aware of the errors that might occur with the specification of what each interviewee exact might have said. Due to this we were both careful with taking notes and following our interview guide we made in advance. We also introduced our research area and our intentions, to provide the interviewee with enough information to be able to answer our questions as precise as possible, but without influencing their answers.

Beyond this we also made sure that the persons getting interviewed knew that if any uncertainties would occur while collecting our information. We would get in contact with them again for a further and more descriptive explanation.

When it comes to our reliability, we were aware of that might occur bias in the language interpretation. Since our research was made in English so was our interview guide. We had to translate the guide and also compose the interview in Swedish. We were also aware of the differences in the individual's perception of our research area that might influence the reliability. We therefore interviewed two individuals, to be able to compare the findings and avoid bias.

4. EMPIRICAL DATA

In the previous chapter we introduced the methodology of this thesis. This following chapter will present the empirical data collected in order to answer our two research questions. The data was collected as two interviews were carried out. An interview guide with the conceptual framework as a base was being used and was followed in both of the interviews.

4.1 CASE PRESENTATION – UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT LTU

For our two interviews, two students were chosen one male and one female both attending their third year at Luleå University of Technology. They are both studying the master program in industrial and management engineering. The interviews were carried out in the library cafeteria at LTU on two occasions as they were not interviewed together. Each interview took roughly one hour. At first the both interviews began with a short introduction to the phenomenon personal branding to then carry on asking question based on our interview guide (Appendix A and B). A separate presentation of the comments was offered as there are only two interviews and due to the unique answers both interviewees gave. Below will show you the comments we received during both our sessions.

4.1.1 RQ 1- Objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand

Respondent 1

After introducing the subject of personal branding to respondent 1 the broad question was asked, “*What would you consider being the objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand?*” The first thing that was mentioned was the ability to stand out towards your competitors. By having a personal brand would then also help you to truly understand yourself, your strengths and weaknesses and use them the best way.

The discussion continued by asking questions about the different skills that would be considered important for your personal brand in order to gain employment. Being committed and always be eager to learn new things was mentioned from the top of the respondents mind.

With help of the interview guide, a discussion about the different skills was followed in the order of: *collaboration, research, communication, problem-solving and technical.*

Regarding *collaboration* and especially teamwork skills, these were something the respondent considered being very important, as you will have to be able to work together with someone even though you might not like them. It is very hard to join a new working team and not be able to work with them as this could really damage your reputation and people might not like you for this. This can result in people not wanting to work together with you which can even go so far that you will get fired. Regarding leadership skills she consider this being important but not vital as it really depends on, what industry you will enter, but it is always a good thing to have control over things and this was also something that came quite natural for the respondent.

Project management was considered being on the same level as leadership skills according to the respondent and relationship building was also discussed being very important as this is really how you work with your networking. To meet new people and build relationships is

always a positive thing and with a good first impression, people will become aware of you and hopefully speak good things about you.

The next skill that was discussed was *research*, but this was not considered as important as collaboration as she did not think this would add to much value in her personal brand. Things can always be solved in other ways than research and according to her it is always much better if you are already furnished with the information than have to look it up.

Concerning *communication* skills and particularly oral communication the respondent thought this is very important, to be able to talk. Especially as it communicates who you are, and if you are striving for a leading role it is quite vital. Social skills was also something that was brought up and thought that this would really benefit you and your personal brand as this will help you increase your network.

Concerning *Problem-solving* skills the respondent really encouraged creative thinking as this shows that you will be able think outside the box and not just do things the way they have always been done. Also that you can take a problem, solve it and hopefully even see positive angels of what from the beginning was a problem. If you can show this in your personal brand it would be a major strength. As for decision-making skills, this was also considered important as it indicates that you are not afraid to stand for what you believe is right, make a decision and back it up.

The last skill that was discussed was *technical* skills. The respondent consider this being quite vital for your personal brand as if you lack the technical skill you need, a particularly job and it will be quite transparent that you have exaggerated your technical skills on your resumé.

While finishing talking about the different skills, a discussion about the overall objectives of developing a personal brand was brought up. The answer was more or less to benefit your work wise. If you stand out you will gain employment easier and by thoroughly consider your skills and ambitions you will stand out which will lead you, to getting a job easier.

To carry on, a discussion about other benefits that a personal brand might generate was brought up and started out by just asking the broad questions to the respondent. The first thing that popped into her head was the benefit you will have when you are applying for a job as you will be able to stand out from the competitors. With a strong personal, you will be more unique and people will easily notice you. The respondent herself have been active at STUK which is a non-profitable organization at LTU. By being a member of this, she will be able to put this on her resume in order to differentiate herself. She stated that volunteer work during her time at the university is a great way to get ahead of her competitors as it gives the impression that she is dedicated to what she does and do not always need money as a compensation.

Also the fact that she will be able to show her skills in a way that she might not have been able, if she were not aware and took advantage of them. On the other hand the respondent saw a negative side of personal branding as well. When talking about “*top of mind*” she stated that it might corner you. If people know that you are really good within just a specific area they might just think of this skill, when they think of you and not you in a wider perspective. Yet the benefits weight much higher than this and should not stop you from developing a personal brand. If no one knows who you are you will not be visible for the world.

The respondent stated that a personal brand will benefit you, as in *increase the authority and credence of decision*. If people know you can deliver, people will also have faith in you and trust you. A personal brand might not place you in a *leadership role* as the respondent figured. You need to have the ability to control and speak as well, which might not always come naturally for everyone. A personal brand will *enhance prestige* as the respondent once again pointed out the fact that you will become unique and in that way *attract* the people you wish to attract, which the respondent pointed out to be very important.

The fact that a personal brand would *add perceived value* to what you are selling was discussed as well. Regardless of what industry you are in, if you for instance always greet in a polite manner and give the impression that you will go the extra mile for this person, your personal brand will definitely increase. People will speak well about you and people will feel that, they get a little extra care in the hands of you. If this is known by your boss, it is a positive thing as otherwise you might not get the promotion that you deserve. So it is very vital that your boss knows who you are so you earn the recognition you deserve. *Associating with a trend*, was also briefly discussed as this was not something the respondent felt would be to important, more than you should always stick to what you believe in and not just go for a trend because someone else likes it as it will not be genuine.

The last question with the help of our interview guide in regards to benefits was if it would *increase earning potential*, which the respondent agreed upon. If you play the cards right and make a positive energy around your personal brand you should definitely gain more compensation for that.

To finish up research question 1, the respondent was asked, if she had anything to add to the discussion regarding objectives/benefits with personal branding. She commented by saying: as long as you are yourself to the possible extend you will become your own personal brand. She also added that you need to be careful if you are a person that always wants to be in charge, as this might actually lack collaboration skills more than having great leadership skills. If you have a personal brand and you are nurturing it well, you will be more coveted and at the same time a stronger competitor. Sometimes even to the extent that you will become headhunted. She also talked about the boundary between a great personal brand and bragging as according to the respondent the difference is subtle, especially in Sweden where no one considers themselves better than anyone else. If you are letting your skills and ambitions be visible it might come across as bragging instead. The respondent also added: what would happen if everyone had a personal brand? Would the whole concept of personal branding then lose its meaning?

Respondent 2

After introducing the subject of personal branding to respondent 2 a broad question was asked, “*What would you consider being the objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand?*” The first thing that popped into the respondents mind was the benefits you would get towards your competitors. You would have the ability to show what you are really good at and what it is, that makes you better than everyone else. You will also stand out among your competitors and become unique.

Then we talked about the different skills that would be considered important for your personal brand in order to gain employment. The respondent mentioned that leadership skills would be very vital for him, as this is what he wants to strive for later. He has always considered

himself as a leader and it always comes quite natural for him to find himself taking that position, even though he has not really seen it like a skill before. Leadership skills indicate responsibility and he feels that it is easier to have control if you have an eye on everything. It is easier to maintain what he refers to as his “spider web” which means the social network he constantly increases from a leader's point of view.

With the help of the interview guide, a discussion continued regarding the different skills in the order: *collaboration, research, communication, problem-solving and technical*.

As for *collaboration*, leadership skills had already been mentioned. A discussion about project management was brought up, but even responded to equalized this with leadership skills, which he mentioned was very important. Continuing with teamwork skills, the respondent found this very vital as it really tests your ability to work in a team. If you are not able to do this it will damage your reputation in that way that no one wants to work with you anymore. That is why it is so important to be a good team player and even if you think your own way always is the best way you must consider others' suggestions and ideas and respect them as well. Regarding relationship building the respondent considers this vital as well. And he pointed out that it is very important to be able to “read” a person when you meet them the first time, see what their strengths are and if you somehow can take advantage of their strongest skills. Maybe they are really good at something you lack, but you have something they lack and instead of competing, work together and use each other's qualities. It shows that you cannot be best on everything which a lot of people will appreciate and probably like you more for, than acting and pretending as you know everything.

When discussing about *research* skills, the respondent said that he always uses his network if he needs to do any research. If there is something he is not able to do himself he always checks with who he knows and whom will be able to help him. He uses others' knowledge and in turn offers them something that he might be better on. This he thinks really makes his personal brand stronger as he knows what he is good at and what he can offer others in return. He said he seldom uses the internet to look up things as he always tries to use his own network to find alternative ways of doing things than just the regular “Google search”. The respondent then adds that he really emphasizes on his network when promoting his personal brand and that he will be able to find all facts with the help of his network.

The interview continued with *communication* skills, where the respondent thought oral communication was the most vital form of communication. He said that you have to take advantage of what you can which will help you to stand out. If you are quiet but at the same time really good at something it might not provide you with the attention you deserve. You will have to find a balance to it because you always need to adapt to the situation. You do not want to be too “loud” as this might come across as bragging or just plain annoying to some. He adds that though, you have the ability to communicate you will come far in life and easily interact with people. Obviously your written communication is the first step towards a job as this is the first thing a future employer will see in the form of your resume and personal letter. This is also what helps the employer to base his final decision on, whether to consider you for a further meeting or not.

The next skill discussed was *problem-solving* which is very important for your personal brand as well. The respondent almost straight away started to discuss creative thinking. The respondent is a very innovative person and he mentioned that he always wants to literary show his previous accomplishment if physically possible will say. He states that this will add value

to his personal brand by showing that he can deliver and be innovative. If he cannot solve a problem himself he will once again rely on his network in order to see if someone will have the experience he lacks, so they can cooperate to succeed the goal. As for decision-making skills, the respondent always pushes for the leading role as he introduces himself. In a professional way he also lets people know of his previous experience and that his decisions have taken him to where he is today.

As for the last skill discussed, which were technical skills, even these came across as being important to be aware of. To have analytical skills shows that a person can think for themselves and can come with their own opinions and not always rely on what the book says is true or not. As well as being able to see solutions even though your teacher never showed you the specific way of solving a problem.

To finish up talking about skills, a discussion about the objectives was asked as what the overall purpose of getting a personal brand would be which, the respondent answered that it all actually comes down to gaining employment. If you are able to stand out, show what you are good at and are unique you will be able to get a job easier. The skills he found most vital in order to make his personal brand stronger were leadership and oral communication.

Other benefits a personal brand might generate were then discussed. It was started out by just asking the broad question to the respondent. The first thing the respondent said was earn more money. He also added that with a personal brand you will show the world “this is me” and these are my abilities and skills. Once again, as mentioned before, it will make you stand out more against your competitors. The respondent continued to say that if you manage to have a strong brand you will automatically increase your network and as well experience things that you normally would not have done if people did not know of your existence. He also state that another benefit of having a personal brand is for your own winning as it can help you feel happier, more confident and strong.

Based on our interview guide, the respondent, started out with describing “*top of mind*”, which he mentioned most of the time to be seen as a positive thing. But the respondent saw one negative side of this as well. Let say you will get chosen for a project, because you did really well on a previous project, though it was a completely different one. In this case it might occur that you are not able to deliver the same result as you did before. This contributes to, that the respondent would rather keep a low profile if there is something he is not as good and secure about, as it will damage his personal brand if he fails to deliver the expected results.

When discussing about benefits a personal brand might benefit, it was also brought up that having a personal brand could *increase the authority and credence of decisions*, which the respondent agreed upon. If a strong leader implies security and if he/she tells you to do something you will do it, but you probably won’t get the same response if the leader was not as powerful, which may indicate weakness. A strong personal brand will definitely put you in a leading role as people will feel secure to trust you.

The respondent noted that a personal brand will generate *prestige*, as he always tries to more or less make a project or assignment interesting or even funny in order to really try to make the best out of it. This will in turn reflect on your personal brand and people would feel the desire to work with you. But obviously this depends on what project it is, but no matter what, he will always try to maintain a positive attitude.

A personal brand will definitely *attract* people and due to this you will be able to create new contacts. If you are a good talker, dress well and distinguish yourself, you will attract people in one way or another. This will generate curiosity among others and the respondent said that it is rewarding when people come to him and ask for help. This as well *adds perceived value* to what you are selling or offering as if you do it good people will come back to you as they know that you can deliver results. This will hopefully come to the attention of your boss or colleagues and give you the recognition you deserve. So a personal brand will definitely provide you with recognition, if you are able to stand out. The respondent refers this to a person's front-edge competence, which is the particularly skill you are good at, and makes you unique.

When discussing if, *associating with a trend* would be rather beneficial for your own personal brand, the respondent added that he always tries to adapt his clothes to the situation. He always tries to give a professional impression throughout his clothes. But due to this, he still do not believe that by following trends, would provide your personal brand with any benefits. Just as long as you stay true to yourself and do what you believe is right.

The last benefit discussed was if a personal brand would increase earning potential the respondent highly agreed on this. It will easier gain you employment as well. The respondent had nothing to add in regards to benefits when we asked him.

4.1.2 RQ 2- Strategy used to develop a personal brand

Respondent 1

In this part the question, "*how would you describe the strategy used when developing a personal brand*"? was asked, and the first thing the respondent stated, was that it is important to truly understand who you are and what you want to achieve. More importantly, to know that you will not be able to develop your brand over night as it is an ongoing process over an undefined period of time. Your personal brand will be anything from how you act to which qualifications you have.

Process

A discussion about the process with the help of our interview guide was brought up, and the respondent agreed upon that the first step should really be, about defining yourself. If there are things you need to work extra on example given: that you are shy or maybe cannot control your anger you need to work extra hard on these issues. The respondent had never considered to actually writing down her skills or attribute. But thought it could be a good idea as it is not something that you normally would do. If you constantly use your skills and attributes you will always have them fresh but as soon as you do not, you might forget about certain skills and by having them written down, it might help you remember them more or less. Or at least once in a while practice them. As well for developing a well-balanced action plan, this was not really considered before by the respondent. She did mention that it is very important to develop classical millstones as even though you are aiming for the stars you will not get there straight away.

As for implementing your brand the respondent mentioned that you need to live your brand in order to get it visible for the outside world. The respondent does have a blog, but considers them quite anonymous, as you can through a blog denote yourself for someone you are not. It

also depends on what your goals are. Do you want your personal brand to be visible within your friend circle, the people in your city, country or even abroad?

The respondent thought that all steps taken in order to implement your personal brand are somewhat aware but you might not always consider them as implementing steps. The respondent herself is member of the board in her program. Which is a form of a volunteer work, that will look good on her resumé even though it was not her main intention, from the beginning. It still contributes to showing that she has ambitions and ability to work well with others.

The respondent added that if you have a certain vision and aiming for something, your personal brand will eventually fall into place. You will need to emphasize on what makes you different from others and take advantage of this. The respondent claims that the most important step would be to identify your own ambitions and skills and always be consistently. Otherwise you might come across as dishonest and not serious of what you want to accomplish. The respondent continues saying that you should always consider yourself as a product. If the product is supposed to be a certain way you will expect it to have that standard, which works the same way for a person.

Attributes

A discussion was brought up, about which attributes the respondent would consider being important for a personal brand. Curious and talkative (social) was mentioned. Curious as it is always good to be keen on learning new things as it indicates your interest in a particular job and that you do not want to stop developing. Talkative or social because it is always a good way in order to connect with people to be able to have a proper conversation with them. With the help of the interview guide we asked about which attributes she found most important. The respondent was asked to grade the five different attributes below, where 1 is not important and 5 is very important and this was the result:

Reliability 5,
Honest & Integrity 5,
Showing Initiative 5,
Being Hardworking 4,
Strategically Thinking 3.

Showing initiative, Reliability and Honest and Integrity was attributes the respondent found most vital. If you don't show initiative you will not be able to contribute with your best. Without being reliable you cannot deliver and people will not trust you. These go hand in hand with being honest and never lie in order to get advanced in life as it will always shine through. Being hardworking receive a slightly lower number even though the respondent thought this was quite important as well.

Communication tools

The last question that was discussed was which communications tools are important in order to make your personal brand visible to the world. First of all, as briefly was discussed in the beginning of RQ 2, the fact that you will have to live up to your reputation and deliver what you have promised. You will have to be very careful with your actions as they might damage your reputation in a second.

The respondent did not think internet was the best way of communicating with your personal brand such as blogs or Facebook as she did not find those tools genuine. She considered her blog more like an online diary for her closest friend and not something to be judged after. She would though be careful about what she writes on Facebook and what pictures she keep on her profile as you never know who will check your profile.

Your “package” was also discussed as this also communicates who you are. The respondent did not think that clothes were extremely important as long as you keep it balanced and kind of adapted to the situation. But of course you should be aware, since it also sends signals and communicates things about who you are.

Respondent 2

In the same way as respondent 1, the broad question, “*how would you describe the strategy used when developing a personal brand*”? was asked to respondent 2 and the first thing that came to his mind was to socialize with as many people as possible and remember that relationship is always about give and take. The people you work with should know what you are good at and what you have to offer but not in a way which makes you appear like a person who “knows it all”. You should really emphasize on what makes you unique and stick with that.

Process

The interview carried on with the process which according to him is all about the people you hang out and socialize with, as he had mentioned before. With the help of your network you will be able to get your personal brand more visible as people will start talking about you, your accomplishment and what you have to offer. A key factor in order to get people to talk to you is to highlight what really makes you special, your front-edge competence. In order to figure out which your front-edge competence is, you will have to establish what you can offer, what your skills are and which attributes that defines you. The respondent considered himself as very practical as, he always want to show what he have accomplished. If someone drops by his place, he always wants to show them things he has created or things he is working on.

As we continued to discuss, in which way he implements his personal brand he once again started talking about creating something as he stated that this is the best way of showing your skills and ambitions. If he gets his friends, acquaintances and colleagues to talk about him after he have showed them something he will be pleased, as this is what he is striving for.

Attributes

To continue, a discussion about which attributes the respondent considered being important was formed. He stated: positive and always happy, dedicated, extrovert and creative. The respondent figured that if you always greet people with a smile you will somehow provide them with positive energy as well. To be dedicated and committed to what you do will show how genuine you are with what you want to deliver. Extrovert is never a negative thing as it shows that you are not afraid to talk to new people and will easily help you increase your network. The last attribute the respondent found very important is to be able to be creative. To be able to think outside the box and not be afraid to try “your own way” even though you might fail.

With the help of the interview guide, the respondent was asked about which attributes he found most important. We asked the respondent to grade the five different attributes below, where 1 is not important and 5 is very important and this was the result:

Reliability 5,
Being hardworking 5,
Honest & integrity 5,
Strategically thinking 5,
Showing initiative 4.

All attributes discussed were according to the respondent more or less important and none of them should be excluded. You will have to be reliable as otherwise no one will trust you. Being hardworking is definitely something you should be, as if you truly want something and know you can do. You will have to work hard in order to get it. Being honest and show integrity was obvious attributes to the respondent as if you are not, no one will believe your brand, as in not trusting you. Strategically thinking also received a high score as it indicates that you are thinking before you act, and not just go ahead and do things, as you will have a “mental map” before putting this to practice. Showing initiative received a little lower score yet it was considered very important to the respondent as you will do things people do not expect which is highly appreciated, most of the time.

The respondent started to talk about respecting people, and as soon as you stop respecting people your whole appearance and your personal brand will reach rock bottom. When asking the respondent if he had anything to add, he said that, honestly, always last in the long run. As well that you need to be careful that you do not step on anyone’s toe along the way and always try to be a decent person.

Communication tools

This was only discussed briefly since it had already been covered quite well. What people say about you is vital for your personal brand as this is how others perceive you. The respondent yet mentioned that he most of the time is aware of how he looks and dress, before going somewhere as he always wants to dress properly and make a good impression. If it is a presentation he will always have a suit in order to give the professional look that he wants to communicate.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

In previous chapter we mentioned our empirical data, which we in this chapter are going to compare and present against our conceptual framework from chapter two. We apply data reduction as we will combine our two interviews and compare it against the framework through a within-case analysis. In order to draw conclusions in chapter 6 we will therefore answer our two research questions in this chapter.

5.1 RQ 1- Objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand

The study done by Waller & Hingorani (2006) in regards to skills showed that *oral communication, team-work skills, relationship building, decision making and problem solving* were skills considered being the most important skills to furnish your personal brand with, in order to get employment.

Over all, mutually the respondent agreed that certain skills will add value to your personal brand which will help you with your employment. Both the respondents agreed that *oral communication* is vital for your personal brand and will help you increase your network as well as make you visible for others.

Regarding the skill, *team-work* it is also very important according to the two respondents. They both agreed that if you lack the ability to work in a group you will have a really tough time getting people to collaborate with you. Respondent 2 also adds that it is about respecting people. If you are working in a group you will have to respect their thoughts and ideas and not make them feel as their opinion does not matter.

Concerning *building relations* both the respondents agreed that it is an important skill but they had a different view of the effect of building a relationship will have. Respondent 1 highlighted the fact that a new relation will hopefully generate good reputation as in, more people know of you and can speak well about you. Respondent 2 more saw the opportunity to take advantage of new relationships as they might have skills and ambitions to offer you, that you lack.

Decision-making skills are also considered important for both the respondents. Respondent 2 pointed out that the ability to make decisions indicates leader which according to him is vital as he is striving for a leading role.

Regarding *problem-solving* skills both the responders instantly started to talk about creative thinking instead which they both found very vital for your personal brand. It points to your ability to think outside the box. Respondent 2 adds that being creative and innovative are essential parts of this personal brand.

We also relied on Montoya & Vandehey (2002) list of benefits a personal brand will generate. These include: *"Top of mind", Increase the authority and credence of decision, Place you in a leadership role, Enhance prestige, Attract, Adds perceived value to what you are selling, Earn recognition, Associate with a trend, Increases earning potential.*

As for the benefit *"top of mind"* both the responders actually saw some negative angles of this factor. Respondent 1 saw the fact that it might corner you. She saw the scenario when you will have created awareness throughout skills in a certain area which result in that people will

only associate you with these skills, and not give you the chance to try other challenges. Respondent 2 on the other hand saw a different negative effect, as in if he would be consider for example an assignment which would include having skills he lack he would not be able to contribute as much as he would like to be and would rather lay low instead.

None of the respondents could disagree with the benefit of that a personal brand would *increase the authority and credence of decision* as they could not see any negative sides with this. If people see that you can deliver you will easily get the authority you deserve and people will have faith in that you will make a good decision.

Both our respondents will eventually strive for a *leading role* and also agreed that a personal brand will help you get the attention you need. Mutually the respondents stated that a strong and confident leader implies security and generates trust. They also added that it is quite vital in order to get the leading role you strive for to have a strong brand that reflects what you can do.

“*Enhance prestige*“ and “*attraction*” was also a benefit Montoya & Vandehey (2002) considered a personal brand will generate. According to respondent 1 these two benefits go hand in hand. If you are able to define what makes you unique you will have prestige coming to you which will help you attract the people you wish to attract. Your actions will then become more visible. This is in accordance with theory. Respondent 2 always tries to make an assignment funny or interesting even though it might be quite the opposite as he states that this indicates prestige to his personal brand as people would like to continue working with him. This is also in accordance with theory.

The next two benefits that the author’s claims a personal brand will generate is “*adds perceived value to what you are selling*” and “*earns recognition*”, which was in accordance with the empirical data collected. Both the responders agreed that if you have a strong personal brand people will see that you will go the extra mile for them which will add value to what you have to offer. Earns recognition was also something the two responders agreed on as if you do not push hard on your personal brand you might not be as visible as you should be and not get the recognition you deserve.

Respondent 1 did not think that if you associate with a certain trend that it will benefit you in any way. She highlighted that it is always important to stick with what you believe in and not just go for a trend because someone else likes it. This she claims is also a way to distinguish you. This is not in line with theory as it claims that it if you associate with a trend will benefit your personal brand. Respondent 2 on the other hand saw it rather beneficial. It would encourage people to look up to you. He also said that it is important to give a professional impression through his clothes even though it does not always have to mean following the latest trends.

Finally, “*Increase earning potential*”, none of the responders could argue with this as it really what they both thought a personal brand will hopefully generate. This is in accordance with theory.

In order to summarize our analysis for the first research question we will be using a table in form of a matrix. The matrix below, table 5.1 will show the theory stated compared to the data which can coincide with theory, partly coincide with theory or not coincide with theory at all:

Table 5.1 Within-case analysis, objectives and benefits

THEORY	FEMALE	MALE
Oral communication skills will benefit your personal brand	+	+
Team-work skills will benefit your personal brand	+	+ also adds that it is very important to respect people when working in a team
Relationship building skills will benefit your personal brand	+ will hopefully generate good reputation	+ take advantage of new relationship as they might be furnished with skills he lack.
Decision making skills will benefit personal brand	+	+
Problem-solving skills will benefit personal brand	+/- creative is really what she thought this was about which is very important to be and will help benefit your personal brand	+/- creative is really what he thought this was about which is very important to be and will help benefit your personal brand
Being "Top of mind" will benefit your personal brand	-	-
A personal brand will increase the authority and credence of your decision	+	+
A personal brand will place you in a leadership role	+	+
A personal brand will result in enhancing your prestige	+	+ will enhance prestige by making his assignment funny and interesting which will make him a fun team player to work with
A personal brand will create "attraction"	+	+
A personal brand will add perceived value, in the things you are doing	+	+
A personal brand creates recognition	+	+
If you associate with a certain trend your brand will benefit	-	+
A personal brand will contribute to, increasing your earning potential	+	+
		You will be able to show what you are really good at
	You will be able to stand out toward your competitors	You will be able to stand out toward your competitors

+ = findings coincide with theory

+/- = findings partly coincide with theory

- = findings do not coincide with theory

5.2 RQ 2- Strategy used to develop a personal brand

Goldsmith (2009) states that in order to build a personal brand there are four phases that an individual have to go through: *Creating and defining your personal brand, formulating a personal statement, developing a well-balanced action plan and implementing your brand.* Both the respondents agreed that a personal brand is not built over night and that it is an ongoing process during an unlimited period of time. This is in line with the theory yet none of the responders had ever thought of it in these specific steps before. Respondent 1 did mention that the first step is about identifying what makes you special which is in accordance with the theory.

Respondent 2 on the other hand, when asked how the process would appear, said that it is all about whom you hang out with and that your social network will help you get your personal brand visible. He does not disagree that you will need to identify what he refers to as your “front edge competence” (step 1 according to theory) quite the opposite, even though this was not mentioned by the respondent as the first step.

To actually write down either mentally or in words your personal statement which includes your attributes and domains was not at all something none of the responders practiced, which would indicate a disagreement with the theory. On the other hand as personal branding is a quite new phenomenon both of the responders thought this was a very smart idea as it will help you keep track on your ambitions and if necessary help you remember to practice them.

As for developing an action plan which theory told us means to translate and transforming your ambitions into personal milestones was something respondent 1 discussed and found very important, especially developing milestones as a personal brand will not just appear overnight. This is partly in accordance with theory as it yet again does not fall under a specific step according to respondent 1. According to respondent 2 who also somewhat agreed that this would be a good idea as well. However he does not practice it himself, as due to his creativity always have something new happening for him which makes it hard to put up milestones in advance. This would not lay in line with theory for respondent 2 even though he did not think that it would be a bad idea for other. The last step which Goldsmith (2009) refers to as implementing your brand was something none of the responders could disagree with. If you want to be seen you have to make it visible somehow even though the responders had different ways of doing so.

Schwabel (2009) and Peters (1997) mutually agree that the most effective tool in order to get your personal brand visible is by WOM, word-of-mouth. According to respondent 2 the best way to get his personal brand reality and visible is to socialize, meet new people and especially show them what he is good at so he leaves them with something to talk about. This is definitely in accordance with theory. Respondent 1 was not to convinced that the WOM technique would be the best technique as one small little step could damage your reputation for ever and you do not want the wrong people talking about you which would not be in line with theory. She would rather live her brand as in always deliver what she has promised and always be genuine to people. According to respondent 1 all steps you take, even though if they are not intended steps, all contributes to your personal brand.

Elmore (2010) defines a couple of ways to get your personal brand visible online as in creating a blog or sign up for social networks such as Facebook. Respondent 1 did not agree with theory as she did not find those tools genuine. She also defines them as quite anonymous as you really do not know who is sitting behind the computer as you do not physically see them. She is also very careful with how she updates her status on Facebook and what pictures she has on her profile. She has a blog but her intention to get her personal brand visualized via this tool was never the point as it was more of an online dairy for her closest friends. Respondent 2 on the other hand had no problems with using the internet as a tool to get his personal brand implemented as he more saw for instance Facebook as an excellent way of connecting with people and increase his network which will go hand in hand with Elmore’s (2010) theory.

Respondent 2 considered his overall appearance as in which clothes he is wearing to how he greet people as being very vital for his personal brand as he always want to be taken

seriously. Even if it is just a presentation in school he would always wear a suit. He will of course adapt to situations. This is in accordance to Flemings, (2006) and Wee & Brooks, (2009) theory to always make a good first impression on people via your clothes, body language and how you greet people. Respondent 2 did not think that your clothes would be as extremely vital as long as you keep it balanced and adapt to the situation.

According to Montoya & Vandehey (2002) your attributes have a major contribution to your personal brand. None of the responders could disagree with this as it really defines what kind of person you are which will be in line with the theory. Strong attributes will definatly help your personal brand be more visible. Reliability, being hardworking, honest & integrity, showing initiative and strategically thinking were all attributes that a study done by Waller & Hingorani (2006) carried out. Both the responders consider them all to be important even though these were not attributes that they come to think of when they were asked the question. Respondent 1 added two attributes that she defined as the most important attributes to her which was curious and talkative. Respondent 2 added a couple as well which were positive and always happy, dedicated, extrovert and creative.

In order to summarize our analysis for the second research question we will be using a table in form of a matrix. The matrix below, table 5.2 will show the theory stated compared to the data which can coincide with theory, partly coincide with theory or not coincide with theory at all:

Table 5.2 Within-case analysis of strategies

Theory	Female	Male
Creating and defining your personal ambitions	+	+
Formulating a personal statement	+/- Even though the respondent did not practice this now she thought it was a good idea for the future.	+/- Even though the respondent did not practice this now he thought it was a good idea for the future.
Developing a well-balanced action plan	+	-
Implementing your brand via WOM	-	+ The empirical data also identified another way to get your personal brand visible that was not included in the theory which is to socialize with people and try to meet as many new people as possible.
Implementing your brand via network (internet)	-	+
Implementing your brand via your “package”	+/-	+
Implementing your brand via your attributes	+ The respondent added two attributes which was not in the theory which were curious and talkative.	+ The respondent added a couple of attributes which was not in the theory which were positive and always happy, dedicated, extrovert and creative.

+ = findings coincide with theory

+/- = findings partly coincide with theory

- = findings do not coincide with theory

6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter we analyzed the data we collected from our interviews and compared it with theory. In this chapter we are going to present our findings and conclusions, from the five previous chapters. We are going to start off by answering our research questions and thereby reaching our overall purpose which is to provide a better understanding on how individuals can develop as their own personal brand. Eventually we will finish up with our recommendations which include: implications for theory, practitioners and future research.

6.1 RQ 1- How can the objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand be described?

The study has indicated that there are several significant objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand, yet the overall purpose is to differentiate yourself in order to stand out against your competitor, and by that gain employment. This will then increase your chances to get the job you wish for. It has been uncovered that regardless of gender the main intention to develop a personal brand is to get a job easier as it will allow you to stand out from competitors with the same university degree. These objectives can be described as external factors.

It has been noticed that via different skills this can be accomplished. Oral communication skills have been discovered to be quite vital regardless of gender or what job or position you are trying to achieve. The ability to talk will help you gain prestige to your personal brand which allows you to stick out and attract the people you want to attract. Creativity is another important skill that has been uncovered during this study, both from a male and female perspective. It points out that you are able to think for your own and does not always have to follow the book, but can come up with own ways to, for example deal with problems. A couple of other important skills that are also quite vital for gaining that extra attention are team-work skills, relationship building and decision making as they all provide the individual with the ability to be more interesting. Our study indicated that the more relationships you engage in, the more reputation it will generate and make you more visible.

Another objective for developing a personal brand is if you are striving for a leading role after you graduate. It will definitely increase your authority and credence if you are able to work your brand right and take advantage of your skills the best way.

Another finding is that personal brand is not so much developed due to internal factors such as increasing your confidence or self-esteem. We discovered that developing a personal brand for your own winning is therefore not the main objective that we would have thought from the beginning.

Beyond this we also believe that by developing a personal brand, it may increase your trust in other areas as well. You will show people what you are able of, as it will increase the value of what you are doing and the decision you are making. Other than this, another thing we discovered that was equal between both genders was the fact that a personal brand might develop a negative factor among individuals. This was the fact that if you will always get associated with specific skills you might be limited in other areas. This could stop you from widening your potential to the extent you wish for. Yet if you nurture your personal brand well, this should not be an issue.

We also discovered during our study that your personal brand will not benefit from following the latest fashion as it will not have any major effect on your personal brand. On the other hand dressing professionally will generate a serious appearance for your personal brand.

As we mentioned before personal branding is a fairly new phenomenon. This contribute to that few people are aware of the grounds and the personal benefits that it actually can add. We do believe that more and more people in the future will be aware of this phenomenon and later on put it into practice.

We also believe that, even though more people will perform this in the future there it will still be difficulties for us in Sweden to distinguish ourselves compared to other countries like United States. We believe that the difference between the peoples mentality within these countries are slightly different that it can contribute to a rather tough way of seeing the benefits and the actual objectives of having a strong personal brand.

In conclusion, below are the most important issues regarding the objectives/benefits when developing a personal brand:

- ❖ By investing in a personal brand regardless of gender, will increase your chances to get a job.
- ❖ The better communication skills you have, your probability to get a leading position will enhance.
- ❖ The more relationships you build, the more your reputation will increase.
- ❖ The higher the level of creative skills you have, the easier it is for you to stand out among your competitors.
- ❖ When developing a personal brand external objectives have more impact than internal objectives.
- ❖ By following the latest trends, your personal brand will not benefit.

6.2 RQ 2. How can the strategy used to develop a personal brand be described?

The most significant finding was that the strategy used when developing a personal brand does not follow any specific order and that the process is over an indefinite period of time. However the study indicates that regardless gender the first step should always be about defining and figure out what makes you unique and what your front edge competence is. Are you for example striving for a leader role it is quite vital that you have the ability to orally communicate with whoever you are working with or delegating to. Regardless what your front edge competence might be you should highlight this in order to get noticed. Yet the study indicated a negative angle to this as if you are only associated with your core competence it might limit you in other areas. Therefore it is important to remember to your domain that you are capable of more and not bound to your core competence.

After accomplish what makes you unique there are different routes to take to actually implement your brand and make it come alive. It has been discovered that from a female perspective it is quite vital to executing milestones as your personal brand will not come alive

[FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS]

over night. There have been on the other hand brought to our attention that it is not as vital for the male gender as they find it quite hard to maintain milestones in advance. As it is a very distinctive and individual process, people may emphasize on different factors when implementing their personal brand. Depending on your personality you might try to verbally tell the world “this is me” and constantly try to interact with people in order to maintain a good reputation which we have discovered a pattern more common for males than females.

It has also been brought to our attention that the use of internet as a communication tool is not as commonly used as we thought from the beginning. Our study indicated that it can be perceived as being inauthentic as you do not know who is actually behind the computer. The person might come across in a different way online than in real life.

Our study indicates that your social network and the people you hang out with will help you get your personal brand visible. The more you socialize the more people will know of you and can talk about you. Yet the study indicated that this was more commonly used from a male’s perspective as females have the tendency to be more carefully so not the wrong type of people will talk bad things about you and ruin your reputation. It was also highlighted that if you are true to your friends and colleagues you will come across as honest and genuine which this study indicated will make you last in the long run.

After collecting and analyzing the empirical data, this study also discovered the fact that the strategy used when developing a personal brand can sometimes be described as unconscious steps taken for another purpose than for developing your personal brand. We believe that this is due to the fact that this is a fairly new area and that people have not yet started to take their own personal brand into practice and as well depending on what stage you are in life you might need personal branding more or less. Pure lack of knowledge about personal branding will also contribute to individuals not actually taking advantage of this phenomenon.

In conclusion, below are the most important issues regarding the strategy used when developing a personal brand:

- ❖ Regardless if individuals are aging, the development of your personal brand will never stop.
- ❖ Your need for personal branding might differ depending on what stage in life you will be in.
- ❖ Regardless of gender, a personal brand’s development will always start by defining what makes you unique.
- ❖ If you are a male your tendency to show your skills are much higher than if you are a female.
- ❖ Social communication is a much more favorable communication tool in order to implement your brand than using the internet.
- ❖ Lack of knowledge about the concept of personal branding leads to individuals unconsciously developing their brand.

- ❖ The more professionally you dress, the more seriously you will communicate your personal brand.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Our purpose with this study was to explore and gain a better understanding about how individuals can develop as their own personal brand. We have done this by exploring, mainly describing and beginning to explain through following a conceptual framework. By answering our two research questions we have been able to describe the objectives/benefits of having a personal brand and also the strategy used in develop a personal brand. Due to the fact that personal branding is fairly new area, the literature has been quite limited. This has lead us to be explorative as well, as we have made conclusion made from our own perspective. We have started to explain as we have answered our research questions.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Implications for practitioners, is suggestions that we have come up with help from our data and findings and also previous research.

In today's current situation, very few people are actual aware and spend time working on their own personal brand. Yet we still believe that the number of people that will perform this phenomenon will increase in a near time. People will become more and more conscious of the strong competition occurring when it comes to for example getting a job or distinguish themselves from others. Creating a strong personal brand is therefore becoming more necessary.

The most important factor is to remember that is not too hard to develop a personal brand and it is not too time consuming either. As people are not aware of that you can develop as your own personal brand it is therefore not practiced. As long as you can identify the unique you and find a communication tool that will suit you best, you will be able to stand out.

This study has identified one great communication tool that will easily increase your network and make your brand visible is by socializing and try to meet as many people as possible. However you will have to remember that everything you say can affect your brand, both in a positive or negative way. Always try to make a good first impression as this is what you leave people with after meeting them. If you leave people with a positive feeling about you, they will most likely speak well about you in front of others.

Social network online are also a good way to get in contact with new people even though you will have to be careful doing so. Be watchful when you update your status on for example Facebook as you can never know for sure who is actually reading your profile. Let say your future employer will check your profile before hiring you and he finds for example inappropriate photos of you, this might affect his judgment when hiring you.

If you approach yourself as a personal brand and practice all the different skills and ambitions you have in your baggage your personal brand will become stronger and you will maintain the standard of your brand and keep it up to date.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

During our research we have uncovered areas that were not in line with our study. There are many interesting aspects to personal branding for other researchers which is why we have included these as implications for future research. Even though we have started to look at personal branding from a gender perspective there are still a lot of research to be done on it.

- ❖ Differences between genders regarding the objectives of developing a personal brand could therefore be a topic.
- ❖ As well as the strategy used when developing a personal brand from a male's perspective and a female's perspective might differ.
- ❖ Depending on which stage you are in life, the need for developing your own personal brand might differ, e.g. undergraduates, graduates, unemployed etc.
- ❖ Another area of research that could be interesting is to see if the mentality between countries might differ in regards to personal branding.
- ❖ If it would be harder to implement a personal brand in Sweden, Scandinavia due to our unwritten law "Jantelagen" where no one is better than anyone else, compared to the personal branding country of origin, USA.
- ❖ The use of internet, especially blogs and social networks such as Facebook as a communication tool could be a topic. Is it a good way to implement your personal brand?
- ❖ The process of developing a personal brand is an ongoing process through life, including different steps. This could be interesting to distinguish which these specific steps are taken by an individual.
- ❖ Are there any negative effects of developing a personal brand, for example given will it limit you if you are only associated with a specific skill or ambition?

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Interviews:

Respondent1: Julia Eriksson. Luleå university of technology May 20th 2010

Respondent 2: Erik Hedbrant. Luleå university of technology May 20th 2010

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide- English version

Name of the respondent:

Program:

Years you have been studying:

Background Information - Do you know what a personal brand is?

(Brief explanation to the respondent.)

RQ 1- Objectives/benefits

1a) What would you consider being the objectives/benefits of developing a personal brand?

1b) What skills would you reckon be important for your personal brand?

Collaboration

- ✓ Leadership skills
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Teamwork skills
- ✓ Relationship building

Research

- ✓ Information search
- ✓ Research skills
- ✓ Understanding theoretical concepts
- ✓ Technical report writing

Communication

- ✓ Presentation skills
- ✓ Oral communication
- ✓ Written communication

Problem-Solving

- ✓ Decision-making skills
- ✓ Creative thinking
- ✓ Problem solving

Technical

- ✓ Analytical skills
- ✓ Statistical analysis skills

1c) What other benefits do you think a personal brand will have?

- “Top of mind”
- Increase the authority and credence of decision
- Place you in a leadership role
- Enhances prestige
- Attract
- Adds perceived value to what you are selling
- Earns recognition
- Associate with a trend

-
- Increasing earning potential (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)

1d) What would the overall objective of developing a personal brand be?

1e) Is there anything else you would like to add regarding objectives/benefits?

RQ 2: Strategy used in developing a personal brand

How would you describe the strategy used when developing a personal brand?

2a) How do you think the process goes as you develop a personal brand?

2b) Which steps do you think a person should take in order to develop one?

Creating and defining your personal ambitions
(Who are you and what do you stand for)

Formulating a personal statement
(Attributes and domains)

Developing a well-balanced action plan
(Translate and transforming your ambitions into a personal milestone)

Implementing your brand
(Make your brand reality)

2c) Which attributes do you consider important to have?

2d) Grade below attributes from 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important for your personal brand and state why.

Reliability, Being hardworking, Honest & Integrity, Showing initiative and Strategic thinking

2e) Which communication tools would you use in order to implement your brand?

WOM, word-of-mouth
Networking,
Your “package”

f) Is there anything you would like to add in regards to the strategy used in developing a personal brand?

APPENDIX B

Intervju Guide – Svensk version

Respondentens namn:

Program:

Antal år av studier:

Bakgrunds information - Känner du till begreppet "personligt varumärke"?

(Kort beskrivning om personligt varumärke)

RQ 1- Motiv/Fördelar

1a) Vad anser du vara motiv/fördelarna med att utveckla ett personligt varumärke?

b) Vilka färdigheter anser du vara viktiga för ditt personliga varumärke?

Samarbete

- ✓ Ledarinstinkt
- ✓ Projekt hantering
- ✓ Förmåga att arbeta i grupp
- ✓ Skapa relationer

Forskning

- ✓ Information sökning
- ✓ Forskningsförmåga
- ✓ Ha förståelse för teoretiska koncept
- ✓ Skriva tekniska rapporter

Kommunikation

- ✓ Presentations kunskaper
- ✓ Muntlig kommunikation
- ✓ Skriftlig kommunikation

Problemlösning

- ✓ Beslutsfattande kunskaper
- ✓ Kreativt tänkande
- ✓ Problemlösande

Tekniska

- ✓ Analys kunskaper
- ✓ Statistiska analys kunskaper

1c) Vilka fördelar tror du ett personligt varumärke har?

- "Top of mind"
- Större befogethet och förtroende för beslutsfattande
- Tilldelas en mer ledande roll
- Ökad prestige
- Dragningskraft
- Ökad värde på det man "säljer"
- Möjliggör igenkännande
- Förknippas med trender

-
- Ökar förvärvande potential (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)

d) Vad tror du de huvudsakliga motivet är med att utveckla ett personligt varumärke?

e) Finns det något mer du skulle vilja tillägga gällande motiv/fördelarna?

RQ 2: Strategier för att utveckla ett personligt varumärke

Hur skulle du beskriva strategier för att utveckla ett personligt varumärke?

a) Hur tror du utvecklingen av ditt personliga varumärke går till?

b) Vilka faser tror du en person, måste vidta för att utveckla sitt personliga varumärke?

Utveckla och definiera personliga ambitioner/mål
(Vem du är och vad du står för)

Formulera ett personligt uttalande
(Egenskaper och domän)

Utveckla en välbalanserad handlingsplan
(Tyda och utforma ambitioner)

Implementera ditt varumärke
(Förverkliga ditt varumärke)

b) Vilka egenskaper anser du vara viktiga att ha?

c) Betygsätt nedanstående egenskaper från 1 till 5 där 1 är inte viktigt för ditt personliga varumärke och 5 är jätte viktigt och förklara varför?

Reliability, Being hardworking, Honest & Integrity, Showing initiative and Strategic thinking

d) Vilka kommunikations sätt skulle du använda för att implementera ditt varumärke?

WOM
Nätverk
Ditt yttre

e) Finns det något du skulle vilja tillägga gällande strategier för att utveckla ett personligt varumärke?