

Personal Branding Phenomenon

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Abstract

Personal branding is a planned process in which people make efforts to market themselves. This process involves three phases. The first phase is to establish a brand identity, people have to differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd while fitting expectations of a specific target market. The second phase is to develop the brand's positioning by developing an active communication of one's brand identity through managing behavior, communication and symbolism. The third phase is to evaluate a brand's image and that to fulfill personal and professional objectives, and thus, the practices of personal branding can help to compete in the crowded job market. Individuals involved in personal branding develop their human capital by investing in continuous learning; enhance their social capital through visibility and notoriety and access to financial success and economic profitability.

Keywords: Personal branding, human capital, marketing communication, personal and professional success.

1. Introduction

Personal branding is a new marketing concept related to the marketing strategies that a person adopts in order to promote his self in the market. The popularization of personal branding is generally attributed to the rising number of books on the subject, magazines, web sites, training programs, personal coaches, and specialized literature about how exactly to brand oneself for success in the business world (Montoya, 2002, McNally and Speak 2002, Arruda and Dixson, 2007).

Personal branding is an individualistic approach. The key premise is that people can be considered as brands, everyone has a personal brand and that regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business (Peters, 1997). Everyone has a chance to be a brand worthy of remark, that, personal branding if applied correctly can transform any person into a brand in any field (Rein and al, 2006).

Lair, Sullivan and Cheney (2005) defined personal branding by describing it as involving “...concepts of product development and promotion”...”used to market persons for entry into or transition within the labor market”. Shepherd (2005) defined personal branding as a varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace. Hughes (2007) simply equates people to goods or services and proposes that the current American Marketing Association definition of a brand is simply be extended to include people.

Since the late 1990s, personal branding has become increasingly popular as subjects of self-improvement books, web sites and consultancy services. These discourses of personal branding become popular because they do something useful. Writings on person branding have largely been dominated by advice from practitioners who advocate that anyone can develop a successful brand that will enable them to

compete in the crowded market. The present paper aims precisely to explain what a personal branding is, how one can build a personal brand and why one have to develop his personal brand.

2. Personal branding: the evolution of a concept

The business self-help genre of management communication traces its roots at least back to Dale Carnegie's (1982) *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Key to these self-help management moments is the idea that individuals in the corporate world can achieve success by engaging in a process of self-management. Some authors argued that personal branding was indirectly introduced by Erving Goffman (1959) in his book "The presentation of self in everyday life". Goffman views people as actors engaging in performances, in various settings which are seen by audiences the actor is on stage and acting in ways that will produce the most favorable impression and other's reactions are influenced by this impression.

Individual branding, was first introduced in 1980 in a book titled "Positioning: The Battle for your Mind", by Al Ries and Jack Trout. More specifically in chapter 23, *Positioning Yourself and Your Career - You can benefit by using positioning strategy to advance your own career*. Key principle: Don't try to do everything yourself. Find a horse to ride". The term of personal branding is popularized by Tom Peters (1997) in his article "The Brand Called You," who wrote: "We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You" (Peters 1997). The original idea of personal branding coined by Peters did not focus specifically on the presentation of an online identity, but was more generally applied to individuals and their conduct in business.

Kotler and Levy (1969) argued that persons could be marketed much like products, stating: “Personal marketing is an endemic human activity, from the employee trying to impress his boss to the statesman trying to win the support of the public” (p. 12). Kotler and Levy also noted that “no attempt is made to examine whether the principles of ‘good’ marketing in traditional product areas are transferable to the marketing of services, persons, and ideas” (p. 10). Today researchers recognize that brands can also be human, and has been studied in many area, celebrity brand (Thomson, 2006), athlete brand (Arai and al, 2013), CEO brands (Bendisch and al, 2013), leaders in politics (Hughes, 2007; Omojola, 2008), scholars are also thought as human brands competing for entry in job market (Close and al, 2010) or for occupations and professions (Parmentier and al 2012).

The key premise for personal branding is that everyone has a personal brand (Peters, 1997), but most people are not aware of this and do not manage it strategically, consistently, and effectively (Ramparsad, 2009). A major selling proposition is the fear that if individuals don’t manage their own brand, then someone else will manage it for them: “If you don’t brand yourself, someone else will”, writes Kaputa (2003), who continues: “you’re giving the power to other people to brand you if you don’t do it yourself”.

Personal branding becomes an important marketing task for everyday people and has accelerated in the social networking sites of Web 2.0 (Shepherd, 2005). The rise of social media has formed the need for a deeper analysis of building personal brands not just for professional consumption but rather for social. Personal branding has become increasingly important in the digital age web 2.0, social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Google, Twitter, Blogs, Myspace and many other applications entered the scene and made it virtually impossible for anyone to keep from creating a personal brand, whether they wanted to or not (Vasalou and Joinson, 2009, Marwick and Boyd, 2010, Way, 2011, Labrecque and al, 2011). Individuals not formally trained in the discipline of marketing may often participate in the act of marketing without being aware that they are doing so. Personal style and social interaction inherently lend

themselves to the unconscious marketing of individuals and create platforms for communication and creativity (Way, 2011).

3. How to develop a Personal Brand

In this paper, we define personal branding as the process of establishing a unique personal identity, developing an active communication of one's brand identity to a specific target market and evaluating its impact on one's image and reputation, and that to fulfill personal and professional objectives. This process involves three phases just like other brands. The first phase is to establish a brand identity, the second phase is to develop the brand's positioning, and the third phase is to evaluate a brand's image.

a. Personal brand identity

Personal branding typically begins with establishing an inventory of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a role (McNally and Speak, 2002). Parmentier and al (2012) suggest that people building person brands should differentiate themselves to stand out from a crowd while fitting expectations and needs of their target market. These personal characteristics are then compared and matched up with the target's needs and expectation. The self audit based on a full understanding of one's target market and one's competitors. Personal brand identity is based on inherent internal characteristics in a person to be branded and external elements encompass the person's relationship with other people. Researchers argue that personal branding is essentially an inside-out process that is based on the strengths and uniqueness of the individual in relation to a target market (Motion 1999, Shepherd, 2005, Rein and al, 2006).

b. Personal brand positioning

A people brand needs to be positioned in the consumers' minds. Brand positioning refers to the active

marketing communications efforts of one's brand identity to a specific target market. Personal branding is centered on the promotion of the self. Individuals use brand positioning to highlight their positive attributes that are of value to their target audience while at the same time differentiating themselves from other individuals in the marketplace.

'Everything communicates' is a known fact within the area of marketing and this can be applied to people as well as to products. For personal branding, brand positioning occurs through self presentation (Labresque and al, 2011), nonverbal cues (appearance, manner), verbal disclosures (information about the self), and actions (performance, citizenship) shape others' perceptions of one's competence, character, and ability to meet the cultural standards (Roberts, 2005). Peters (2007) has referred to the importance of social networking for individuals to improve the personal scope of the personal branding campaign and to increase the value of the personal brand for the individual.

c. Personal brand assessment

Personal Branding is about taking control of one's own image, and just like a product or company, a personal brand is established to achieve results. People who construct viable professional images are perceived as being capable of meeting their aims. The mismatches between their self-stated goals and judgments by others represent branding failures (Labresque and al, 2011). As brand is built for the satisfaction of the market, the basic objective of this step is to determine whether the branding efforts had achieved the branding goals and met personal goals. In this way, the incorporation of market feedback is essential. To become a brand requires recognition by the marketplace of such a status.



Figure 0. Personal Branding Process

4. Goals of personal branding

Personal branding is popular because it supplies an individualized approach to dealing with précarité, contingency, and uncertainty economics of the day (Gehl, 2011). According to Lair and al (2005), the emergence of personal branding in the late 1990s was a result of the same economic forces that influenced product branding as a communication method that job seekers began using branding as a method to position themselves in the competitive employment environment the same as marketers presented their products. The individual sees himself as his own manager or entrepreneur, responsible of work-based identities believing that if he invests in establishing a personal brand, he will have a return in human capital, social capital and economic capital, just like any other investor (Du Gay, 1996, Rose, 1998).

•Human capital:

Individuals involved in personal branding develop their human capital by investing in continuous learning. Human capital refers to the fact that human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training, or other activities maximize their competitive potential.

By positioning themselves as having unique characteristics that distinguish them from the competition, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establishing reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence (Montoya, 2002, McNally and Speak 2002, Rein and al, 2006, Arruda and Dixson, 2007).

•Social capital:

The personal branding literature essentially offers a technique for individuals to increase their social capital. Social capital reflects the extent to which one develops a wide network of relationships which incorporates broader contacts with family, friends, work, and community that can provide information, influence, guidance, and support to the individual.

Personal branding represents investments made by individuals to enhance their public image. Notoriety and identification can be a measure of success, in the form of credentials, personal brand provides instant creditability and status for the holders, leading to a successful exchange, maximize visibility and a growing popularity (Gehl, 2011, McNally and Speak 2002, Rein and al, 2006).

•Economic capital:

Personal brands, if cultivated, lead to financial success and economic profitability. Personal branding offers people a way to theorize and negotiate the changing employment landscape of globalized capitalism (Lair, and al., 2005). People position themselves as person brands when entering or career management in specific occupations or professions to compete against others for similar employment opportunities. Branded individuals generate increased worth or value for themselves, maximize their own employability and increase their lifetime earnings (Peters, 1997, Montoya, 2002, McNally and Speak 2002, Arruda and Dixson, 2007).

Conclusion

Personal branding is a new marketing concept related to the marketing strategies that a person adopts in order to promote his self in the market. This process involves three phases. The first phase is to establish a brand identity, people building person brands should differentiate themselves to stand out from a crowd while fitting expectations and needs of their target market. The second phase is to develop the brand's positioning, which occurs through self presentation via nonverbal cues, verbal disclosures, and social networking. The third phase is to evaluate a brand's image; in fact, to become a brand requires recognition by the marketplace of such a status.

The practices of personal branding can help in every area of human relationships: romantic, family, friend, and business. For different person, personal branding has different impacts and different rewards. Advocates of personal branding argue that personal branding leads to financial gain, professional acclaim, and to enhanced personal relationships.

The contemporary personal and professional success requirement for an individual to maximize visibility has been growing in popularity, personal branding phenomenon appears to be here to stay.

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