Is Personal Branding pushing the epistemological boundaries of marketing?

Anna K. Zarkada

Department of Business Administration
Athens University of Economics and Business

Postal address: 76, Patission Str. GR10434 Athens Greece
email: azarkada@aueb.gr
Telephone: +302108203445
Mobile: +306979978952

Short Bio
Anna K. Zarkada is an Assistant Professor of Marketing in the Department of Business Administration of the Athens University of Economics and Business. She holds a B.Sc. in Business Administration (Marketing) from the AUEB, an M.Sc in the International Marketing of Services from the University of Manchester (1993) and a Ph.D in Marketing Ethics from the Queensland University of Technology (1998). She has lived in Greece, the UK, Japan and Australia where she taught Marketing, Business Ethics, Research Methods and Cross-Cultural Communication.
Her research has focused on foreign market entry, consumer behavior on the internet, sales negotiation and B2G ethics in Australia, Greece, the UK, USA, Japan, Indonesia and Russia. She has won best paper awards in the International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management, and international Conferences. She is currently working on country of origin effects and the pricing of services.

Is Personal Branding pushing the epistemological boundaries of marketing?

Abstract

Personal branding, a fast-growing body of popular literature, is so far ignored or scorned by academics. Utilising discourse analysis, this paper reviews definitions of personal branding, identifies the epistemological issues they raise and highlights the inconsistencies that point towards its interpretation as a frantic attempt by marketers to expand the market for their services. It re-defines the concept and positions it within the service-dominant logic of marketing and the corporate branding literature thus relieving the tensions caused by the product-based orientation of the extant literature.

The value of the work lies in the positioning of personal branding as an analytical tool for understanding people as the common ground between theory and practice. It suggested that the time is ripe for marketing scholars to re-examine both themselves and the role of marketing as a tool for satisfying the emotional needs of people living in a world of flux.

Keywords:

personal branding, discourse analysis, corporate branding theory, literature review, conceptual model, service-dominant logic

Introduction

Marketing has, so far, been very successful in incorporating methods and constructs from other disciplines into a coherent system for satisfying needs through fostering exchange relationships. Following social changes and the evolutionary stages of the world economy, new marketing disciplines, such as branding, have emerged through practice and developed into distinct academic fields. Still there is a considerable gap between branding theory and application development (Hughes, 2007), what Keller (2006) has described as the small b approach academics take as opposed to the large B one practitioners adopt.

It appears that practitioners really taken a very large B approach to personal branding as well. Since Peters (1997) coined the term, there has been an increasing proliferation of 'self-help books, career advisors and Web pundits' (Shepherd, 2005, p. 602). In February 2010 a Google search on came up with over 1million hits of which about 30 were books and other types of self-teaching material. One of these books (Thomas,

3

2007) claimed to rank in the top ten per cent in terms of sales volume through Amazon. In a search of the term 'personal branding' on Google books 529 items were found to have a mention of it somewhere in the text of which 58 had it in their title. Exactly a year later, Google books listed 612 books with personal branding in the title. On the demand side, over 50,000 people followed the top 30 out of about 250 Facebook and LinkedIn pages and contributed to over 200,000 chats. These statistics however are quickly rendered meaningless as one new item on personal branding is added somewhere on the web every minute. If popularity and plentiful supply are indicators of a topic's interest then personal branding merits a closer look. Academics, however, have so far either ignored the phenomenon (Hughes, 2007) or severely criticised on the grounds of low quality (Conley, 2008) or dubious morality (Rosen, 2004).

What is here proposed, however, is that before throwing personal branding out, the bathwater should be examined in case there is a baby in the ever-expanding tub of marketing theory. This stance is suggested not only because the most ardent critics of personal branding join their voices with the loudest proponents in concluding that '[a]ccessible and affordable personal branding is here to stay' (Conley, 2008, p. 178) but also, because research has demonstrated that this

'potentially crucial idea' (Shepherd, 2005, p. 602) already constitutes a 'sociocultural institution' (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005, p. 311).

Plutarch's Lives[1]: branding and personal branding

The personal branding literature has been summarily dismissed on the grounds of low quality and described as a 'regimented diet of canned optimism and connect-the-dot formulas' (Conley, 2008, p. 181) backed by questionable quantities of substance and sold to 'naive customers' by 'experts [that] range somewhere between corny and culty' (Conley, 2008, p. 178). The branding of inanimate objects and corporations literature, however, has also been described as theoretically shallow and resembling 'mythology' rather than 'science' (Kay, 2006, p. 743).

Branding people has also been criticised on moral grounds. Even in the music industry where artists are at the core of multibillion dollar global brands and mass marketing is accepted as a fact of life personal branding is seen as responsible for debasing culture and compromising personal

---

[1] Biographies of famous men, presented in pairs to illustrate their common moral virtues or failings, written by Plutarch in the 1st century. The Full title of the book is *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, also known as *Βίοι Παράλληλοι* (Parallel Lives).

ethics and artistic integrity (Kubacki & Croft, 2004). Personal branding has been described as a blatant manifestation of the rampant cynicism of commercialism in the post-Fordism economy (Conley, 2008; Hearn, 2008; Klein, 2002, 2008; Lair, et al., 2005; Rosen, 2004) that equates 'complex human beings' with 'something like Kleenex' (Conley, 2008, p. 185) thus resulting in 'a crude attempt to provide regulated forms of self-exposure' (Rosen, 2004, p. 185). It has also been described as 'a form of self-presentation singularly focused on attracting attention and acquiring cultural and monetary value' (Hearn, 2008, p. 213) through a valorized imposition of hyper-individuality and image over substance and self-awareness (Lair, et al., 2005). Mainstream branding, however, has also been morally aphorised for being based on the assumption that 'the customer is not intelligent or even human' (Bazos, 2009, p. 59) and portrayed as the 'industrial-strength Raid' with which evil multinationals spray innocent cockroach-minded consumers (Klein, 2002, p. 9).

At a first glance, the imagery and narratives of the popular personal branding literature point towards the easy conclusion that it is but a by-product of flux in a stagnant world economy which is being violently restructured or the frantic attempt of marketers whose careers are threatened to create jobs for themselves and for anyone, e.g. unemployed coaches, career

counsellors, and outplacement experts, willing to pay the $797 a Personal Brand Strategist Certificate costs[2]. One would expect such a fad to be quickly superseded by the next one, a prophecy also made for the branding movement which was pronounced dead - or as good as dead - in 1993 (Klein, 2002, p. 213).

It is, indeed, hard to take this method of managing ones' self and life seriously, especially when it is presented as the one and only guaranteed way of achieving not only professional success (Aruda, 2003; Flemings, 2007a; Glasscock, 2008) but also happiness[3] (Hodgkinson, 2005; Honaman, 2008; Al Reis in his Foreword to Kaputa, 2006, p. XIII; Mobray, 2009; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009 in which the word 'happiness' appears 23 times!; Schawbel, 2009a). Moreover, claiming direct and wholesale applicability of packaging and promotion techniques to people, especially to those that are not vying for a spot on every lounge via the television screen, could be taken as a case of marketing macropia in the sense that the market segment for marketing is expanded so far 'beyond

---

[2] William Aruda's Online Identity Certification program which claims has been used by people in over 20 countries found at http://www.reachpersonalbranding.com/certification/online-identity-certification/

[3] In Rampersad (2009) the word 'happiness' appears 23 times!

experience or prudence' (Baugman (1974, p.65) quoted in Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998) as to be rendered useless.

As the analysis of the definitions presented in this paper demonstrates, the popular literature on personal branding combines terms lifted from disciplines as diverse as war studies, philosophy, psychoanalysis, cognitive science and metaphysics with self-help techniques and presents the concoction as marketing theory. If taken seriously, this approach would constitute a fully fledged attack on the epistemological boundaries of the marketing discipline, pushing them way beyond the acknowledgment (Kotler & Levy, 1969, p. 12) of personal marketing as an 'endemic human activity' performed either intuitively by amateurs such as employees trying to impress the boss or systematically by professionals on behalf of professional attention-seekers such as 'Hollywood stars [who] have their press agents, political candidates [who] have their advertising agencies, and so on'.

A note on the method of inquiry

There is a theory of space, time, matter and causality embedded in the way people put thoughts and feelings into words (Pinker, 2007; Sollors, 1995) thus constructing a model of reality. Our choice of words provides insights into our makeup as well as

into how a common understanding of reality is constructed and relationships between people are negotiated (Pinker, 2007). During episodes of communication people acting as message senders adopt basic cognitive structures and apply frames of reference to represent reality and to guide the attention of the receivers to the parts of reality they want noticed. People acting as receivers decode the transmitted messages using their own frames (Goffman, 1974; Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Indeed, framing the same problem in different ways has been experimentally shown (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981) to result in reversals of people's preference in, not only real choices regarding monetary outcomes, but even in questions pertaining to the loss of human lives. The deconstruction of the definitions presented in this paper seeks to illustrate the frames in which the personal branding literature message is cast.

In earlier societies, or in cultures defined by their value systems, structures such as religion, fame in collective memory or honour provided clear-cut frames for uttering strong evaluations or for making sense of the presuppositions about human nature and a person's position in the world (Taylor, 2007/1989). In the contemporary '*pastiche* and collage' perspectival reality which is stripped of general legitimation systems (Kvale, 1995, p. 23) there is no framework that 'is shared by everyone, can be taken for granted as *the* (*sic*)

framework tout court [and] can sink to the phenomenological status of unquestioned fact' (Taylor, 2007/1989, p. 34/17). Essential elements of our collective modern framing, such as 'predestination', 'fate' and 'human nature' have been substituted by the newly minted or repositioned terms 'life-project', 'vocation' and 'identity' respectively (Bauman, 2008) thus, making meaning dependent on individual powers of expression (Taylor, 2007/1989) and ability to co-produce interpretations of reality based on individual and collective experiences (Pinker, 2005, 2007).

It is expected that the examination of the language of a stream of literature, which is part of 'the total symbolic myth and code system of society that governs meaning and signification', will provide insights into the sets of beliefs, paradigms, 'preconceptions and presuppositions of both a substantive and structural variety' (Samuels 1990, p. 7). Thus the knowledge base of the stream of literature is delineated and the literature can be positioned within or beyond the scope of a given discipline.

Aims the study and techniques used

It is here proposed that, in order to be able to accurately assess the potential academic interest and practical value of personal branding in the context of the marketing discipline it is

necessary to develop an understanding of its evolving discourse, that is, to explore the mechanisms (the structural units of text, such as words, sentences and patterns within and between sentences) employed in the texts to direct the readers' sense-making process and their situated uses (that is the linguistic forms and structures as well as the texts' contexts) (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997).

The question is if, and then, how, is it possible for marketing to provide meaningful inputs to the personal branding process. This paper unearths the conceptual foundations of the personal branding literature and proposes a framework for resolving the multitude of inconsistencies it contains in order to provide a basis for the construction of a coherent theoretical framework for this fascinating social phenomenon.

Employing the methods of discourse analysis, researchers have shown the knowledge base of marketing to have spread to societal sectors that do not easily lend themselves to the direct application of the concept of market exchanges or to the adoption of the entire marketing management toolkit (Skålén, Fougère, & Fellesson, 2008). Following this emergent stream of interpretive marketing research and utilising the discourse analysis methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2007) this paper examines the ability of the marketing concept to meaningfully encompass human beings and their everyday lives. The data

utilised for this analysis is the definitions of personal branding from books (in paper and electronic format) published after Shepherd's (2005) literature review.

Review of definitions of personal branding

Nowhere is the conceptual foundation and theoretical grounding of a term clearer than in its definition. Aristotle defined a definition as the statement of an object's essential attributes that form its essential nature (Aristotle, 2007). Deleuze defined essenses as time-dependent difference-creating powers (Colebrook, 2006). When examining the - rarely provided - definitions of personal branding, however, it is easy to agree with Bertrand Russel's (2004/1946, p. 192) description of the very essence they try to capture as a 'hopelessly muddle-headed notion'.

The predominant conceptual framework of the popular personal branding literature appears to be a concoction of psychotherapy-based personal development tactics mixed with the popularised metaphysics of *The Secret* (Byrne, 2006) and sprinkled with aggression ususlly found in the genre of management books spawned by the *Art of War* (Sun Tzu, 2002). This edifice is particularly apparent in the following

definition offered by one of the most visible[4] personal branding brands on the web who describes himself as the The Global Leader in Personal Branding and claims to be 'dubbed the personal branding guru by the media and clients alike' (Aruda, 2010):

'[personal branding is] understanding what is truly unique about you (...) and using that to differentiate yourself and guide your career decisions. Through unearthing the true you and consistently and constantly living your personal brand, you attract what you need to achieve your goals without having to "wrestle with the universe" to acquire it' Aruda (Aruda, 2009).

The main idea of this definition has been summarised as 'unearthing what is truly unique about you and letting everyone know about it' (Schawbel, 2009a, p. 2) with the purpose of determining if the person will 'conquer' the professional arena or if she will be 'defeated by it' (d' Alessandro, 2004, p. 6).

A conceptually and structurally very similar (only leaning more on Alfred Binet's measures of intelligence and extending into economics and theology) definition of personal branding is that of '[u]nlocking your inner genius and connecting it to your passion and addressing a specific problem that can lead to

---

[4] His name in quotation marks generates 1400 hits on google

profitability - emotionally, mentally, psychological (sic), spiritually, and economically' (Flemings, 2007b) to the point of achieving the most prized position in classical Athenian society, that of attaining *υστεροφημία* (posthumous fame) as 'your brand is how you live in the hearts and minds of those in your market' (Hodgkinson, 2005, p. 113)..

Another stream of definitions echoes traditional marketing thus adding support to Hearn's (2008, p. 213) evaluation of a personally branded person as 'product, producer, and consumer (…) captive to and conditioned by the controlling interests of global flexible capital'. This observation is best illustrated in the following definition of personal branding as being 'all about delivering something of value to a customer, and delivering it in such a way that it creates an emotional connection with that customer' (Thomas, 2007, p. 19). Hughes (2007, p. 1115) simply equates people to goods or services and proposes that 'the current American Marketing Association definition of a brand is simply be (*sic*) extended to include people' thus concluding that a 'personal brand therefore would also easily identify a product or service and is a seller's promise to deliver consistently a specific set of features, benefits and services to buyers' through its 'four important characteristics; attributes, benefits, values and personality'.

Such an approach implies that people have the means and the knowledge to elaborate and implement a full-blown marketing plan. It implies that they can research their target markets to great depths, assess not only existing and explicit needs (such as those articulated in a job advertisement) but also identify emerging and implicit needs and plot themselves in a perceptual map alongside all persons competing for the attention of the same market. Finally, it is also assumed that each person to be sold can easily be fashioned so as to display the attributes desired by the target market, can be clearly positioned as a deliverer of benefits, taught to personify those values that are deemed important by the potential customers and equipped with a personality they find attractive. The impossibility of achieving such a task is evident. The fundamental assumption of full information about the market and the competition is hard enough to meet with respect to products. In the fluid labour or fame markets for individuals it is totally unsustainable. For these reasons, as well as on the basis of a moral objection (Conley, 2008) to the 'commodification' of humans (Lair, et al., 2005, p. 338), product branding appears to be an inappropriate framework for marketing people.

There is also a stream of definitions that are left purposefully vague with respect to the person to be branded and focused on

the market's reaction. Examples of this stream include definitions of personal branding as 'a proactive behavior that influences your ability to be sought after, mentioned, valued and given a second, third and fourth look' (Mobray, 2009, p. 114), or 'an attempt to manage or control what people think of you and magnify the positive traits' (Brown, 1995) or 'those varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace, usually, (though not exclusively) for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment' (Shepherd, 2005, p. 590).

It is this confusion of disciplines and airport self-help paperback hype that gives the impression that personal branding is all about marketing the concept and its practitioners rather than the actual people that are to become brands. All the definitions, analysed here as characteristic examples of the many that are fashioned on the same lines, fail to serve the only purpose of an explanation which is to 'remove or to prevent misunderstanding' (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 45e).

Ordo ad chao[5]: Personal branding as a process

Personal Branding has been described as an 'arcane activity' (Shepherd, 2005, p. 590), a strategic process (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002), a process (Schawbel, 2009a), 'a programmatic approach' and a proactive response (Lair, et al., 2005, p. 309 quoted in Hughes. 2007), an indeterminate kind of 'proactive behavior' (Mobray, 2009, p. 114) and a 'powerful tool' (Post, 2005, pp. 33-34).

It is here proposed that simply labelling personal branding as a process is parsimonious and consistent with current approaches to marketing that challenge the assumed formality and full rationality of analysis, planning, implementation and control (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Like any process, it has inputs, a method and intended outcomes. The vocabulary used in the popular personal branding literature is summarised in Table 1 below and discussed in the rest of this section.

= = = = = Insert Table 1 about here = = = = =

---

[5] 'Ordo Ad Chao' is a parody of the Latin 'ordo ab chao' (order from chaos) which was used by the Norwegian black metal band 'Mayhem' as the title of an album they released in 2007.

The inputs to the process: identity

Reading the popular personal branding literature, and considering advances in bionics, restorative cyborgisation, organ and tissue transplantation and the rapidly falling prices (Vorhaus, 2011) of direct-to-consumer genomics, one would be inclined to believe that the world is but a 'container of items and spare (separable and exchangeable) parts' and that sooner rather than later 'you would (...) be able to select *yourself* (*sic*) from a shop shelf' and 'once bored dump yourself and buy another "self", currently more fashionable and so more attractive and yet less boring' (Bauman, 2011, pp. 88, 89).

The issue of inputs to the branding process and its potential confusion with the outcomes is not particular to the personal branding literature. In their seminal review of place branding theory Hanna and Rowley (2011) also identify a number of words that are used as both inputs and outputs, such as personality and its assortment of functional, symbolic and experiential attributes, public perception, or image, and conclude that it is the term 'brand identity' that provides a coherent frame for articulation of the meanings co-produced and reified by a multiplicity of stakeholders.

It is here suggested that the amusing or irksome contradictions illustrated above can be resolved by defining the input as

identity without any loss of meaning as the term encompasses all the terms listed in Table 1 above. Identity encompasses characteristics strictly related to the person (gender, sense of body, cognition and traits that make a person definable and recognisable) as well as aspects of the person's relationship with other people and the world (such as ethnicity, traditions, history and continuity with what has passed and what will transpire after the person's passing). A communicated identity is a person's image as other people perceive and decode it using the frame in which it was cast thus co-producing meaning. These instinctive procedures of identification that humans have, over millions of years, socially agreed to rely upon for recognising each other have served the species well in its attempt to survive and adapt to the world (Eco, 1994).

For the purposes of this analysis a definition of identity as 'what prevents me from being identical to anybody else' (Maalouf, 1996, p. 10) is sufficient. The construct is the crux of the individual's ever-present struggle to overcome feelings of alienation and to limit the angst of existence (Cooper, 1999; Erickson, 1974), or in the context of current employment conditions in the western world, the angst of being able to stay in gainful employment and maintain the standard of living one is accustomed to. The identity of an ego also functions as the anchor-point for another, critical but confusingly dealt with,

issue in the personal branding literature 'the unity of an individual life-story' (Habermas, 1972, p. 153).

What is here proposed is that identity, the product of a transcendental experience of self-reflection and self-ascertainment of the consciousness (Habermas, 1972), as well as the mechanisms and tools for its creation, negotiation and maintenance (Pinker, 2007) fall way beyond the epistemological domain of marketing. Identity, despite its being a context and frame dependent (Bauman, 2008; Bouchard, 1990; Gergen, 1995) process of constantly becoming (Cooper, 1999), can only be taken as a given in the personal branding process. Marketing theory cannot make people into what they are or change them into what they would like to be. It is here proposed, however, that it can provide helpfully familiar abstractions and metaphors, a vocabulary to which people seem to be accustomed to and a set of techniques for making the most of what people have (or even what they are) through effective communication.

The method: communication

The inwardly orientated methods - regardless of their being based on the assumption that the substance of the brand is not there so it needs to be created (d' Alessandro, 2004; Lair, et al., 2005; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002) or that it exists so it needs

to be found (Aruda, 2009; Flemings, 2007b; Rampersad, 2009; Schawbel, 2009a) – belong to the realm of philosophy and psychoanalysis. The outwardly orientated methods, however, are all aspects of the one function to which marketing can significantly contribute meaningful tools: communication.

Communication, a concept at the heart of marketing, includes both episodic and relational levels of metacommunication (Wilmot, 1980). Metacommunication, regardless of its not being acknowledged as such, is a favourite of personal branding manuals which are jam-packed with recipes for using clothes and hairdos, personal logos and colour schemes, handshakes and thank-you-notes, elocution and vocabulary as well as cars and sexual partners to build and sustain the brand. As one cannot not communicate (Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas, & De Avila Jackson, 1967), it is important that we exclude from the discussion communication through what one does not do, despite its often being as important as what one does (Yalom, 1995), and that we focus on specific acts of communication which are thought out and intended to produce a predetermined reaction in other people in order to develop and maintain service exchange relationships.

The outcome of the process: service exchange relationships

What the self-help or consultant-based personal branding literature gives as the reason for embarking their bandwagon is particularly problematic as the same terms often appear (occasionally even in the same text) as starting and ending points of the process and sometimes as mechanisms as one can see in Table 1 above. This, together with the colourfulness of the vocabulary supports the impression that it is marketing and marketers rather than their clients that are really being marketed.

Following the existential bend identified above, personal branding is offered as the cure to the primordial fear of being eaten by predators and is presented as a mechanism for effectively facing fears of exclusion, like being ignored, misunderstood, underpaid or left behind (Aruda, 2009; Kaputa, 2006; Post, 2005; Schawbel, 2009b; Selfbrand, 2006). These, of course, are but phobias and identity problems that are best dealt with on the couch (Taylor, 2007/1989). Strong evaluations for discriminating between aspirations that are 'higher' or 'lower' (as defined by Taylor, 2007/1989, p. 14/14) fall within the realm of philosophy.

The role of marketing is to bring together two parties interested in an exchange of service that creates value for both parties

through mutual satisfaction of needs and desires. Obviously, a potential employer and a prospective employee or an entertainer and a person looking for entertainment can be helped by marketing techniques in their search for each other as well as in establishing and maintaining a mutually profitable and satisfying service exchange relationship. This outcome has been acknowledged in the personal branding literature only in the form of entry or transition within labour markets (Aruda, 2003; Chamberlin, 2007; Post, 2005; Schawbel, 2009a). It is here suggested that the epistemological boundaries of marketing can comfortably accommodate all human relationships that are delineated as service exchanges within the economic system.

Framing personal branding: S-D logic and corporate branding

The objective of this paper is to explore the conditions under which personal branding can be 'reclaime[d] (...) from the enthusiasts' (Shepherd, 2005, p. 602). It is here proposed that a coherent theoretical framework can be based on the service dominant logic of marketing and on the corporate branding theory. As demonstrated through the preceding deconstruction and discourse analysis of the dominant streams of definitions of personal branding, it is the framing of people as products (both in terms of the product as opposed to a service dominant logic

and in terms of applying product branding concepts and techniques to personal branding) that leads to irresolvable moral and methodological problems. The moral dimension has been largely resolved by Vargo and Lusch (2008) who reframed the purpose of commercial exchanges from making and selling more product to mutually serving. Through the prism of service, people do not look at all like bottles of shampoo (Bence, 2008), thus they need not be thrust upon and pushed towards unwilling buyers. They just communicate to other people their availability to co-create value through the exchange of service.

In the context of ketchup and automobiles a purely contrived signification process is perfectly achievable. The complete product experience package can be conjured up from scratch and then formed into an autonomous value set and staged-managed as a consumable experience. In the case of human beings this is simply not possible. When the brand consultant or self-help manual starts work on the brand, the complete identity, attribute and value set is already fully formed: a grown person with a face and body, a history, a personality, some affiliations and a reputation already established.

The debate (Friedman, 1970) over corporate anthropomorphism, which dates back to the early 17th century, has been resolved legally (Laufer, 1996; Micklethwait &

Wooldridge, 2005), practically (French, 1996; Paine, 1994) but also to develop as moral agents (Logsdon & Yuthas, 1997) and empirically (Kusku & Zarkada-Fraser, 2004). A few key points on the reverse argument of corporate-human equivalence however, need to be made to illustrate the applicability of corporate branding theory to the problem of theoretically grounding personal branding. 'Corporate branding comprises three discrete yet overlapping concepts: identity; personality; and image.' (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002, p. 145) and these will hereby provide the basis for the discussion of the applicability of corporate branding theory to personal branding.

Identity

Both people and corporations perform exactly the same function within 'the division of labor and specialization that creates the interdependent interactions that we call society and civilization' which is that of service provider. This can be done by devoting time and skills to 'deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity' or by rearranging matter in a manner that results in 'economically exchanged, tangibilized services' commonly referred to as goods (Vargo & Morgan, 2005, p. 51). In the corporate branding literature, the service offering is explicitly positioned as part of the company's identity (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004) a concept that is obviously applicable to people in the

25

domain of labour (as in the labels of doctor or farmer) or society (mother or saint).

Corporations are identified by the industry they operate in, that is, by the economic function they perform, and so are people to a considerable extent. Identity, as the input to the creation of a personal brand signifies the service the person offers in a manner similar to a corporation's mission statement which summarizes its *raison d'être*. This is not to say that people exist only in order to perform some economic function but to highlight the argument that, from all the possible choices of purpose to one's life, it is his service-related identity that is the only identity which can be reasonably managed within the realm of personal branding using marketing thought and techniques.

Personality

There is much more to both people and corporations than their service offerings. A person has values, manners of behaving and a set of intrinsic qualities that may, or may not all be evident in the context of production and so does a corporation. In the case of corporations, their personalities are often strongly associated, shaped by or even concurring with the personality of a very prominent founder or strong leader (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004).

26

The attempt to address the daunting diversity of human behaviours by organising personalities into a small number of discrete types is nothing but new. From Hippocrates's humours to Avicenna's primary temperaments to Jung and Myer-Briggs and over to Florence Littauer's Personality Plus and Hartman's Color Code, people have always tried to reduce the uncertainty caused by other people's (as well as their own) unpredictability of using a qualitative approach. From a quantitative perspective there have also been numerous attempts at explaining human personality as an interplay of a small number of relatively stable over time and situations traits which organise and control behaviour. Traits are used as predictors of people's reactions. As they are possessed in varying degrees by different people they account for 'the endless variety of human personalities' (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart, & Roy, 2008, p. 558).

It has been convincingly argued that the 'unrepeatable worth' of a personality lies in this singularity and uniqueness' which cannot be reduced to separating those of one's attributes that are marketable from those that are deemed difficult to market as such an approach would lead to the reduction of humans into 'higgledy-pigledy' aggregates of traits (Bauman, 2011, p. 87). Recent trends in fields such as arts (Kubacki & Croft, 2004), political (Kubacki & Croft, 2004; Lloyd, 2005), place (Skinner, 2008) and not-for-profit (Stride & Lee, 2007) marketing

support the applicability of corporate branding theory as a vehicle for the final shift from traditional engineering-driven features-and-benefits marketing to experiential marketing (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Schmitt, 1999). This approach strongly advocates behaving authentically and excelling at rendering, rather than just trumpeting, authenticity as an identity statement.

All human enterprise is ontologically fake and identity is anything but constant (Eco, 1994) but fidelity to one's past and an openness towards future possibilities brings one as close to authenticity as possible in the fake-fake and real-real continuum (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Upholding one's values and behaving in a manner consistent to their explicit elaboration in speech and text (for example in a curriculum vitae or interview) is also an integral part of celebrating the totality of one's personality rather than advertising isolated attributes that are deemed to be in vogue. Failing to do so has been demonstrated (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004; d' Alessandro, 2004; Flemings, 2007a; Fournier & Herman, 2004; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rein, Kotler, Hamlin, & Stoller, 2006) to have cost dearly in terms of brand equity to corporations, iconicised leaders or branded persons.

Image

People as well as corporations are visible, relevant and interdependent with a constellation of individuals and organisations that extends well beyond the actual and potential buyers of the service offered for sale. It has already been ascertained that corporate-level branding can also be applied to countries, regions, and cities and that corporate brands are 'fundamentally different from product brands in terms of disciplinary scope and management, [and] have a multi-stakeholder rather than customer orientation' that calls for a 'radical reappraisal' of the traditional marketing framework (Balmer & Gray, 2003, p. 976). The answer to the question 'what do all constituencies think of who you are and who you tell them you are' is a corporation's − and hereby suggested a person's − image (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004, p. 369).

Finally, both people and corporations have distinct histories on which their image is based. Histories are an integral part of the articulation of the brand and a criterion for the elaboration of brand architecture (Hanna & Rowley, 2011) but they cannot be changed through branding. Image is also the result of constituencies' interpretations of observed (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004, p. 369) or rumoured (Wanjiru, 2006) behaviours. Unlike the brand, image and reputation cannot neither be communicated nor controlled (Argenti &

Druckenmiller, 2004). They can only be managed by repeated credibility transactions, that is behaviour which is consistently congruent with pronouncements about the covenanted identity of the brand (Schmitt, 1999).

Towards a coherent theoretical framework for Personal Branding

Definition

Following the above discussion, personal branding is defined in a manner similar to Balmer's (2001, p. 281) explanation of a corporate brand as:

> The conscious decision to make known a person's professional identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition underpinning efforts to communicate in order to differentiate the person from other providers of the same service and to enhance networks' perception of the person's ability to fulfill the expectations the branding proposition raises.

Elements of a theoretical framework

Covenanted identity

The key issue of corporate branding is the communication of a covenanted identity (Otubanjo, Abimbola, & Amujo, 2010), the

critical identity type which underpins the corporate brand and comprises a set of expectations (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004) of the service the organisation will deliver (Balmer & Gray, 2003). From the infinite number of elements that comprise a human identity, it has been convincingly argued, that what makes the difference between a person that is considered to be doing something well and a successfully branded person is the latter's ability to represent qualities, values and a culture on a grander scale (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002) or, in a manner similar to 'great cultural leaders', to 'echo the cultural values of their societies' (Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999). Indeed, values and representation of culture have been empirically found to be deciding elements discriminating between very high-achievers and adequately performing managers in cross-cultural and cross-sectional studies of non-results based managerial performance measurements using a 360° methodology (Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 1999, 2003). This observation is highly congruent with current branding thought that advocates the creation of 'powerful symbolic products, having considerable social impact' (Kay, 2006, p. 746) and giving shape and colour to 'a set of ideas or values that a society deems important' (Holt, 2004, p. 1). In the case of products the embodied values are 'mainly contrived' (Balmer, 2001, p. 281) whilst in corporate

branding these are actually the values held by people (owners, founders and employees).

This approach enables the shifting away from the iconicity that turns products into symbols (Holt, 2004) and positions the role of personal branding to the provider of ready-made inferences (Kay, 2006; Keller, 1993) about the branded person. These inferences relate to:

1. the person's values, what Kapferer (2004, p. 22) conceptualised as the brand's moral dimension which he defined as consumers' 'satisfaction linked to the responsible behavior of the brand in its relationship with society';

2. the covenanted potential to have a positive impact on the service receiver's life or the world at large and

3. the person's ability to act as 'a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed' (Balmer & Gray, 2003, p. 974).

The latter point being the critical one, as the magnitude of the halo effect has been empirically ascertained in social psychology (Nisbett & DeCamp Wilson, 1977), human resource management (Fraser & Zarkada-Fraser, 2001) and brand equity measurement (Leuthesser, Kohli, & Harich, 1995).

Communication issues

In a manner similar to corporate branding, it is here suggested that the critical function of personal branding is communication, whilst other, potentially useful, marketing functions are delegated to the peripheral role of informing and assisting the person to select what to communicate and how best to do it. It follows that, like any other act of communication between individuals (whether direct or mediated), the message unavoidably acts on four signification producing levels (Schulz von Thun, 2004):

1. factual information;

2. self-revelations;

3. relationship, that is, how the sender and the receiver relate to each other; and

4. appeal which is what the sender actually wants the receiver to do in response to the communicated brand significations.

For the brand significations to be perceived in an engaging way (Sternberg, 1995) that will form the basis of meaningful and permanent 'associative representations' (Kay, 2006, p. 743) what is required is communication of:

1. images, which in the case of people are provided by people nature (aided by cosmetology and various medical specialisations)

2. symbols which are embodied in material possessions (such as clothes, cars or gadgets) and affiliations (national, religious, political or hobby-based) and

3. narratives which comprise behaviour and life-stories.

Narratives not only convey information but also position teller and listener in social space, forge bonds and uphold the values and order of communities (Kvale, 1995). They are circulated and propagated by four different categories of 'authors' (Holt, 2004):

1. the owner of the brand, that is the branded person herself;

2. the cultural industries that would, a few years ago, be involved only in the case of celebrity brands but are now within reach of anyone having access to the internet or the nerve to expose one's intimate life details on reality television shows;

3. intermediaries which includes all those that know the branded person or have at least heard of him (what Montoya and Vandehey (2002) call the audience); and

4. customers who in the case of personal brands the people with whom the branded person enters into exchange

relationships (loosely equated to what Montoya and Vandehey (2002) call the domain).

Service exchange relationships

If the communication process is successful, then the chosen identity is well received, the targeted segment of the audience will be turned into a domain and the needs of the person that has embarked on the personal branding adventure will be met through the response the brand will elicit. So will, of course the need of the other party to the exchange episode which, with the aid of marketing tools, can be turned into a mutually satisfying long-term exchange relationship the stage of development of which can be ascertained and its value can be measured (Ford, 1990) in terms of:

1. trust;
2. adaptation; and
3. commitment

Concluding thoughts

In a stagnant world economy, with cost-cutting and downsizing hard on the corporate survival agenda and a job market for marketing professionals expected to be increasingly competitive (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2009) it is indeed a good tactic for marketers to attempt to redefine their target

market to include other marketers, all sorts of consultants that are hard-hit or threatened by unemployment and various categories of wannabes – that is exactly as Tom Peters envisaged it in 1997 when he wrote *The Brand Called You* : practically everybody regardless of age position or line of business.

A lot has been written about the commoditisation of humans which is evident even on the title and cover of many personal branding tool-kits (e.g. Bence, B. 2008). It is here argued that what is being turned into a commodity by the personal branding literature, however, is not really people but hope: the hope of standing out in the crowded spaces of urban modernity, the hope of being acknowledged, feeling unique and worthy of attention and most of all, the hope of finding meaning now that traditional values have been eroded and conspicuous consumption is fast losing ground as a panacea to obscurity and loneliness.

The deconstruction of the personal branding literature has demonstrated that showed that the market need for personal branding is also linked to identity crises and insecurity that are commonly dianosed in people who see themselves in the

middle of a *bellum omnium contra omnes*[6], 'dog-eat-dog, 21st-century world' living amongst 'bastards [to be] outrun' (d' Alessandro, 2004, p. 146) and spending one's life 'jockeying for position and trying to knock [others] off in the process' (Chamberlin, 2007). Marketing is not equipped to deal directly with this kind of inner tensions but it has the tools, and it can be argued, the responsibility to assist economic actors to identify service needs and develop ways to fulfil them to the satisfaction of the parties to the exchange relationship.

In the end, one comes to wonder if branding is not just another image which is going through the full cycle of the historical path of all images: from a reflection of basic reality, to masking and perverting basic reality, to masking the absence of reality, to finally bearing no relation to any reality whatsoever, thus becoming its own pure simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1983). This appears to be the path that the concept of corporate identity appears to be taking in its coming of age through interdisciplinarity, internationalisation and identification with corporate branding (Balmer, 1998). The issue of setting the

---

[6] War of all against all, a description of the human experience Tomas Hobbes offers in the 'Leviathan' that has led to social contract theories.

epistemological boundaries of the marketing concept (Kotler & Levy, 1969) is not relevant anymore.

The issue of the 21st century is framing the marketing concept so that it can be efficiently applied in order to make the world a better place. As Bevolo and Brand (1999, pp. 33-34) put it, '[w]hat is required is a deeper level of insight, one that enables us to become a driver of change by anticipating the emerging values in society'. Marketers need to find new uses for themselves, but these cannot include haphazardly tackling existential problems and curing phobias. They can, however, seek the cross-fertilisation of marketing with other disciplines in order to develop a set of techniques that can help people position aspects of their identities, and most importantly, communicate more effectively in the context of their working lives. At the end of the day, if there is a chance that personal branding could contribute to convincing people of the value of authenticity and personal integrity and if the promised rewards can motivate them towards consciously improving themselves, then, it is the marketing academics' responsibility to embrace it and to earnestly develop it.

References

Argenti, P., & Druckenmiller, B. (2004). Reputation and the Corporate Brand. *Corporate Reputation Review, 6*(4), 368-374. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.crr.1540005

Aristotle. (2007). Posterior Analytics   Retrieved from
http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a8poa/

Aruda, W. (2003). An Introduction to Personal Branding: A
Revolution in the Way We Manage Our Carrers. In R.
C. C. Inc. (Ed.): Reach Communications Consulting
Inc.

Aruda, W. (2009). Personal Branding - 1-2-3 Success! - The
Keynote Presentation Retrieved 04/02/2010, from
http://www.reachcc.com/reachdotcom.nsf/

Aruda, W. (Producer). (2010, 04/02/2010). Personal Branding
Guru William Aruda. Retrieved from
http://www.williamarruda.com/

Balmer, J. M. T. (1998). Corporate Identity and the Advent of
Corporate Marketing. *Journal of Marketing
Management, 14*(8), 963-996. doi:
10.1362/026725798784867536

Balmer, J. M. T. (2001). Corporate identity, corporate branding
and corporate marketing - Seeing through the fog.
European Journal of Marketing, 35(3/4), 248 - 291. doi:
10.1108/03090560110694763

Balmer, J. M. T., & Gray, E. R. (2003). Corporate brands: what
are they? What of them? *European Journal of
Marketing, 37*(7/8), 972 - 997. doi:
10.1108/03090560310477627

Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations (Simulacres et simulation)*
(P. Foss, P. Patton & P. Beitchman, Trans.). New York:
Semiotext(e).

Bauman, Z. (2008). Identity in the Globalizing World. In H. S.
Shapiro & D. E. Purpel (Eds.), *Critical Social Issues in
American Education: Democracy and Meaning in a
Globalizing World* (3rd ed., pp. 437-448). Mahwah, NJ:
Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Bauman, Z. (2011). Selves as objects of consumption. In K. M.
Ekström & K. Glans (Eds.), *Beyond the Consumption
Bubble* (pp. 85-98). New York: Routledge.

Bazos, L. (2009). *Rebranding Branding*. Master of Fine Arts,
California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA.
Retrieved from
http://www.brandchannel.com/images/papers/491_lbazo
s_rebrandingbranding.pd

Bernstein, D., Penner, L. A., Clarke-Stewart, A., & Roy, E. J. (2008). *Psychology* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin.

Bouchard, D. (Ed.). (1990). *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Brown, S. (1995). *Postmodern marketing*. London: Routledge.

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2007). *Business Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bureau of Labour Statistics. (2009). Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition. *Advertising, Marketing, Promotions, Public Relations, and Sales Managers*. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos020.htm

Byrne, R. (2006). *The Secret*. New York: Atria / Beyond Words.

Chamberlin, L. (2007). Brand Phobia: How to fight your personal brand demons and win *Brandchannel, 2007*(April 9). Retrieved from http://www.brandchannel.com/brand_speak.asp?bs_id=161

Colebrook, C. (2006). *Deleuze: A Guide for the perplexed*. London, New York: Continuum.

Conley, L. (2008). *OBD: Obsessive Branding Disorder*. Philadelphia, PA: Public Affairs.

Cooper, D. E. (1999). *Existentialism: a reconstruction* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

d' Alessandro, D. F. (2004). *Career Warfare: 10 Rules for Building a Successful Personal Brand and Fighting to Keep It*. New york, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Eco, U. (1994). *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Erickson, E. K. (1974). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. London: Faber & Faber.

Flemings, H. E. (2007a). *The Brand YU Life* Canton, MI: The Third Generation Publishing.

Flemings, H. E. (2007b). Operating in your Genius. In H. E. Flemings (Ed.), *Hajj E. Flemings- The Brand YU Life (Personal Branding)*: Hajj E. Flemings.

Ford, D. (Ed.). (1990). *Understanding Business Markets: Interaction, Relationships and Networks, The Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group*. London: Academic Press.

Fournier, S. M., & Herman, K. (2004). Taking Stock in Martha Stewart. *SSRN eLibrary*. Retrieved from http://ssrn.com/paper=610423

Fraser, C., & Zarkada-Fraser, A. (2001). Perceptual polarisation of managerial performance from a human resource management perspective. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 12*(2), 256-269. doi: 10.1080/713769605

French, P. A. (1996). Integrity, intentions and corporations. *American Business Law Journal, 141*(2), 141–156. doi: 0.1111/j.1744-1714.1996.tb00693.x

Friedman, M. (1970). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *The New York Times Magazine, Sept. 13*, 32-33, 122-126.

Georgakopoulou, A., & Goutsos, D. (1997). *Discourse analysis : an introduction*. Edinburgh Edinburgh University.

Gergen, K. (1995). The Healthy, Happy Human Being Wears Many Masks. In W. T. Anderson (Ed.), *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World* (pp. 136-144). New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam.

Gilmore, J. H. B., & Pine, J. (2007). *Authenticity: what consumers really want*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Glasscock, G. (2008). Branded Yourself Yet? 2 Keys to Personal Branding Success *Mentoring, Tools & Strategy To Succeed*: AW WebBiz & Social Media Blog.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and Human Interests*. London: Heinemann.

Hankinson, P., & Hankinson, G. (1999). Managing Successful Brands: An Empirical Study which Compares the Corporate Cultures of Companies Managing the World's Top 100 Brands with Those Managing Outsider Brands. *Journal of Marketing Management, 15*(1), 135 - 155. doi: 10.1362/026725799784870487

Hanna, S., & Rowley, J. (2011). Towards a strategic place brand-management model. *Journal of Marketing Management, 27*(5), 458 - 476. doi: 10.1080/02672571003683797

Hearn, A. (2008). `Meat, Mask, Burden`: Probing the contours of the branded `self`. *Journal of Consumer Culture, 8*(2), 197-217. doi: 10.1177/1469540508090086

Hodgkinson, S. (2005). *The Leader's Edge: Using Personal Branding to Drive Performance and Profit*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.

Holt, D. (2004). *How Brands Become Icons*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Honaman, J. (2008). *Make It Happen!: Live Out Your Personal Brand*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.

Hughes, A. (2007, 3-5 December 2007). *Personal Brands: An Exploratory Analysis of Personal Brands in Australian Political Marketing*. Paper presented at the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) Conference 2007, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Kapferer, J.-N. (2004). *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term* (3rd ed.). London: Kogan Page Publishers.

Kaputa, C. (2006). *U R A Brand: How Smart People Brand Themselves for Business Success*. Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Kay, M. J. (2006). Strong Brands and Corporate Brands. *European Journal of Marketing, 40*(7/8), 742 -760. doi: 10.1108/03090560610669973

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualising, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of*

Marketing, 57(1), 1-22. doi:
http://www.jstor.org/stable/1252054

Keller, K. L. (2006). Branding and Brand Equity. In B. Weitz
& R. Wensley (Eds.), *Handbook of Marketing*
(paperback ed., pp. 151-178). London: Sage.

Klein, N. (2002). *No Logo* (paperback ed.). New York,NY:
Picador.

Klein, N. (2008). Threats and Temps. In H. S. Shapiro & D. E.
Purpel (Eds.), *Critical Social Issues in American
Education: Democracy and Meaning in a Globalizing
World* (3rd ed., pp. 365-390). Mahwah, NJ: Taylor &
Francis e-Library.

Kotler, P., & Levy, S. J. (1969). Broadening the concept of
marketing. *Journal of Marketing*(January), 10-15. doi:
http://www.jstor.org/stable/1248740

Kubacki, K., & Croft, R. (2004). Mass Marketing, Music, and
Morality. *Journal of Marketing Management, 20*(5),
577 - 590. doi: 10.1362/0267257041324025

Kusku, F., & Zarkada-Fraser, A. (2004). An empirical
investigation of corporate citizenship practices in
Australia and Turkey. *British Journal of Management,
15*(1), 57-72. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8551.2004.t01-1-
00400.x

Kvale, S. (1995). Themes of postmodernity. In W. T. Anderson
(Ed.), *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-
constructing the Postmodern World* (pp. 18-25). New
York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam.

Lair, D. J., Sullivan, K., & Cheney, G. (2005). Marketization
and the Recasting of the Professional Self: The Rhetoric
and Ethics of Personal Branding. *Management
Communication Quarterly, 18*(3), 307-343. doi:
10.1177/0893318904270744

Laufer, W. S. (1996). Integrity, diligence and the limits of good
corporate citizenship. *American Business Law Journal,
34*, 157-181. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-1714.1996.tb00694.x

Leuthesser, L., Kohli, C. S., & Harich, K. R. (1995). Brand
equity: the halo effect measure. *European Journal of
Marketing, 29*(4), 57 - 66. doi:
10.1108/03090569510086657

Lloyd, J. (2005). Square Peg, Round Hole? Can Marketing-Based Concepts Such as the 'Product' and the 'Marketing Mix' Have a Useful Role in the Political Arena? *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 14*(1), 27 - 46. doi: 10.1300/J054v14n01_03

Logsdon, J. M., & Yuthas, K. (1997). Corporate social performance, stakeholder orientation, and organizational moral development. *Journal of Business Ethics, 16*(12/13), 1213-1226. doi: 10.1023/A:1005741931995

Maalouf, A. (1996). *In the Name of Identity* (B. Bray, Trans.). London: Penguin.

Micklethwait, J., & Wooldridge, A. (2005). *The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea*. London: Phoenix.

Mintzberg, H., Ahlstrand, B., & Lampel, J. (1998). *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Mangament*. New York: The Free Press.

Mobray, K. (2009). *the 10ks of Personal Branding: (K)reate a better you*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.

Montoya, P., & Vandehey, T. (2002). *The Personal Branding Phenomenon: realize greater influence, explosive income growth and rapid career advancement by applying the branding techniques of Oprah, Martha and Michael*. Beaverton, OR: Personal Branding Press Publishing.

Nisbett, R. E., & DeCamp Wilson, T. (1977). The Halo Effect: Evidence for Unconscious Alteration of Judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35*(4), 250-256. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.35.4.250

Otubanjo, O., Abimbola, T., & Amujo, O. (2010). Conceptualising the notion of corporate brand covenant. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19*(6), 410 - 422. doi: 10.1108/10610421011085721

Paine, L. S. (1994). Managing for organizational integrity. *Harvard Business Review,* (March-April), 106-117.

Peters, T. (1997). The Brand Called You. *Fast Company, 1997*(August 31). Retrieved from http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/10/brandyou.html?page=0,0

Pinker, S. (2005). *Comprendre la nature humaine* (M.-F. Desjeux, Trans.). Paris: Odile Jacob.

Pinker, S. (2007). *The Stuff of Thought - Language as a Window into Human Nature*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin.

Post, K. (2005). *Brain Tattoos: Creating Unique Brands that Stick in your Customers' Minds*. New York, NY: AMACOM.

Proctor, T., & Kitchen, P. (2002). Communication in postmodern integrated marketing. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 7*(3), 144-154. doi: 10.1108/13563280210436754

Rampersad, H. K. (2009). *Authentic Personal Branding: A New Blueprint for Building and Allligning a powerful Leadership Brand*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Rein, I., Kotler, P., Hamlin, M., & Stoller, M. (2006). *High Visibility: Transforming Your Personal and Professional Brand* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Rosen, J. (2004). *The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age* New York: Amazon Kindle Edition.

Russell, B. (2004/1946). *History of Western Philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Samuels , W. J. (1990). *Economics as discours : an analysis of the language of economists*. Boston: Kluwer Academic

Schawbel, D. (2009a). *Me 2.0*. New York, NY: Kaplan.

Schawbel, D. (2009b). Personal Branding Interview: Robert Kiyosaki. In D. Schawbel (Ed.), *Personal Branding Blogg*.

Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management, 15*(1), 53 - 67. doi: 10.1362/026725799784870496

Schulz von Thun, F. (2004). Das Kommunikationsquadrat. Retrieved from http://www.schulz-von-thun.de/mod-komquad.html

Selfbrand. (2006). Press Release for the book "U R A Brand": Davies-Black Publishing.

Shannon, C. E., & Weaver, W. (1949). *The mathematical theory of communication*. Urbana, ILL: University of Illinois Press.

Shepherd, I. D. H. (2005). From Cattle and Coke to Charlie: Meeting the Challenge of Self Marketing and Personal Branding. *Journal of Marketing Management, 21*(5/6), 589-606. doi: 10.1362/0267257054307381

Skålén, P., Fougère, M., & Fellesson, M. (2008). *Marketing Discourse: A Critical Perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Skinner, H. (2008). The emergence and development of place marketing's confused identity. *Journal of Marketing Management, 24*(9), 915 - 928. doi: 10.1362/026725708X381966

Sollors, W. (1995). The idea of ethnicity. In W. T. Anderson (Ed.), *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World* (pp. 58-65). New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam.

Sternberg, E. (1995). The Economy of Icons. In W. T. Anderson (Ed.), *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World* (pp. 82-85). New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam.

Stride, H., & Lee, S. (2007). No Logo? No Way. Branding in the Non-Profit Sector. *Journal of Marketing Management, 23*(1), 107 - 122. doi: 10.1362/026725707X178585

Sun Tzu. (2002). *The Art of War*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

Taylor, C. (2007/1989). *Πηγές του Εαυτού (Sources of the Self - The Making of the Modern Identity)*. Athens / Cambridge, MA: Indiktos / Harvard University Press.

Thomas, S. (2007). *Career Smart: Five Steps to a Powerful Personal Brand*. Chandler, AZ: CareerCoaching360.

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice. *Science, 211*(4481), 453-458. doi: 10.1126/science.7455683

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36*(1), 1-10. doi: 10.1007/s11747-007-0069-6

Vargo, S. L., & Morgan, F. W. (2005). Services in Society and Academic Thought: An Historical Analysis. *Journal of Macromarketing, 25*(1), 42-53. doi: 10.1177/0276146705275294

Vorhaus, D. (2011). 2011 Personal Genomics Preview: It's Déjà Vu…. *Genomics Law Report*. Retrieved from http://www.genomicslawreport.com/index.php/2011/01/10/previewing-personal-genomics-in-2011-its-deja-vu/

Wanjiru, E. (2006). Branding African countries: A prospect for the future. *Place Branding, 2*(1), 84-95.

Watzlawick, P., Beavin Bavelas, J., & De Avila Jackson, D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication: a study of interactional patterns*. New York: W & W Norton & Company.

Wilmot, W. W. (1980). Metacommunication: A re-examination and extension. In D. Nimmo (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 4* (pp. 61-69). New Brunswick, NJ: International Communication Association.

Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical Investigations* (4th, paperback ed.). London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Yalom, I. D. (1995). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (4th ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Zarkada-Fraser, A., & Fraser, C. (1999, December 1-4). *Managerial performance elements discriminating 'high-performing' from 'under-performing' technical managers.* Paper presented at the Australia New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM99), Hobart.

Zarkada-Fraser, A., & Fraser, C. (2003). Investigating the effectiveness of managers through an analysis of stakeholder perceptions. *Journal of Management Development, 22*(9), 762-783. doi: 10.1108/02621710310495766

Table 1: Terms used in the personal branding literature to describe its inputs, method and processes

Process component	Category	Terms used	Source
INPUTS	Related to the person	true you	(Aruda 2009),
		identity	(Hodgkinson, 2005; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Zara, 2009)
		uniqueness	(Schawbel, 2009a)
		inner genius	(Flemings, 2007b)
		character	(d' Alessandro, 2004; Mobray, 2009)
		purpose in life	(Rampersad, 2009)
		personality	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002),
		passions	(Mobray, 2009; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009)
	Related to other people	perceptions	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		expectations	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		legend	(d' Alessandro, 2004)
		image	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009)
		reputation	(Hodgkinson, 2005; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		hard to shake perceptions	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		instant labels	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		consensus	(d' Alessandro, 2004)
METHOD	Inwardly orientated	unearthing	(Aruda, 2009; Schawbel, 2009a)
		revealing	(Flemings, 2007a; Rampersad, 2009)
		unlocking	(Flemings, 2007a)
		understanding	(Aruda, 2009)
		connecting to one's passions	(Flemings, 2007a)
		strategically taking control	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
	Outwardly orientated	differentiating	(Aruda, 2009)
		waving one's flag and relentlessly telling one's story	(Chamberlin, 2007)
		creating	(d' Alessandro, 2004)
		delivering	(Mobray, 2009)
		bottling and marketing	(Chamberlin, 2007)
		letting everyone know	(Schawbel, 2009a; Shepherd, 2005)

Process component	Category	Terms used	Source
OUTCOME	Benefits for the branded person	to be given more than one look	(Mobray, 2009)
		become special, memorable and desirable	(Post, 2005, p. 33)
		become, or appear to be a distinctive leader	(Hodgkinson, 2005; Post, 2005)
		conquering the professional world	(d' Alessandro, 2004)
		keep customers returning	(Brown, 1995)
		increase one's worth	(Schawbel, 2009b)
		emotional, mental, psychological and spiritual gains	(Flemings, 2007b)
		economic profitability	(Flemings, 2007b; Post, 2005)
		'worth extra money in the bank'	(Post, 2005, p. 33)
		learning how to be the diner and not the *entrée*	(Jay Conrad Levinson, author of the Guerilla Marketing books in Selfbrand, 2006)
	Other people's impressions	image	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009)
		stereotypes	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009)
		reputation	(Brown, 1995; Hodgkinson, 2005; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009)
		personal mark	(Mobray, 2009)
		consensus	(d' Alessandro, 2004)
	Fulfillment of higher aspirations	leading a life of value	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Thomas, 2007)
		creating a transcendent self	(Graham, 2001; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002
		providing value	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Thomas, 2007)
		making a difference	(Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		putting one's gifts to their highest use in the service of others	(Graham, 2001; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002
		being remembered by friends and family, after dying	(Hodgkinson, 2005; Honaman, 2008; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Rampersad, 2009)
		helping others	(e.g. Montoya & Vandehey, 2002)
		giving to charities	(e.g.Mobray, 2009)