

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Business Administration

Henri Tuokko

**BUILDING PERSONAL BRAND IN SOCIAL MEDIA, CASE
FINLAND**

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Supervisor: Iivi Riivits-Arkonsuo, PhD.

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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Henri Tuokko

(signature, date)

Student code: 166323TVTB

Student e-mail address: henri_tuokko@hotmail.com

Supervisor: Iivi Riivits-Arkonsuo, PhD:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

.....

(name, signature, date)

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ABSTRACT

Currently we are living in the world where social media and personal brand have increasing effect. In this thesis, the author will study the creation of personal brand in social media and what are the pros and cons for the brand holder. This thesis is qualitative study. Different databases offers many articles and studies which allows to conduct this thesis with literature reviews and semi structured interviews.

There are already many studies focusing on personal branding in different fields but quite a few studies which focuses on the building process of personal brand and its positive effects. The literatures that I have gathered to this thesis have been chosen mainly from data bases of Google Scholar, EBSCO and Scopus using the keywords of “Personal Brand”, “Self-Branding”, “Social Media” and “Marketing”. Using these keywords I selected the most suitable literatures for this thesis.

Aim for the study is to find out how the personal brand can be created in social media and what are the advantages and disadvantages of having a personal brand. In the study, the personal brand is focused only for social media, delimiting the personal brand creation in real life. The results of interviews only partially followed the literature. Finnish personal brand holders did not consciously follow any model and found more advantages than disadvantages of having a personal brand.

Keywords: Personal Brand, Self-Branding, Social Media, Marketing

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, marketers have already identified the advantages of branding products and services but personal branding is relatively new phenomena from academic research. These days, when phone or other electronic device is always present, people can constantly check about their idols and interesting people which they follow on social media. Social media also gives its users (and personal brand holders) ability to communicate with others, create new connections and maintain the already existing ones.

The author chose this topic for bachelor thesis because social media is so present in 2019 and people are being more aware of personal brands in certain fields such as sports, business and politics too. The author of the thesis believes that the personal brand in social media will evolve and develop in the next couple of years and that becomes more important factor of one's intangible asset. The author also wishes to create an own personal brand in order to strengthen his position in labour market. There have already been a lot of studies about branding for products and services and a little bit of personal branding too but not really a study which focuses building the personal brand only in social media, excluding the life outside of Internet. Finding a gap in the study field was interesting and increased even more the author's interest towards the topic and research questions. The purpose of this thesis is to add knowledge about the personal brand building in social media from the perspective of brand holder. The objective is to reveal the elements of building personal brand specifically in social media. The research problem is defined as "Is it necessary to follow brand process while building personal brand?". This research problem will be answered through two research questions.

The research questions are:

Question 1: What are the stages of personal brand building process in social media?

Question 2: What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of having a personal brand?

In order to be able to provide answers for these research questions, this study includes a literature review for a theoretical framework and then interviews from people who have a strong personal brand in different fields such as politics and sports.

The first chapter focuses on personal brand itself; what it is, where it all began, personal brand features and also personal brand process and creation model. With these topics, the author is trying to provide a deep knowledge about the personal brand in social media, the meanings behind it and what are the main ways to create the personal brand. The second chapter brings together the personal brand and social media and starts with the pros and cons. This first topic tells the good things and benefits of the personal brand in social media but also the disadvantages. Social media publicity will cover inner tools of social media such as hashtags and followers. The second chapter will end with channel selection and challenges and risks. Channel selection includes the correct pick of channel and why it the channel should be carefully picked. The last topic of the chapter is risk and challenges. While everyone can comment and share posts in real time, it creates challenges. The famous persons or personal brand holder in social media might face potential risks in real life, outside of Internet and social media. After literature reviews, the author goes through the empirical study which is semi-constructed interviews with people who have a strong personal brand in social media in different fields. The interviews and data is being then processed and results are being discussed with main findings.

As a writer of this study, the author has not have completely straight and clear hypothesis or opinion regarding the process of personal brand creation. More over, the author believes that there are certain things and stages which should be taken into account in order to create successful personal brand in social media. But the features of these stages are currently unknown. Author of the thesis also believes that the personal brand creation differs a lot from product branding since there are much more elements. Author of the study is relatively certain that creating personal brand includes some disadvantages along with the advantages since social media is place where messages spread rapidly and people are able to see them all around the world. The competition is tough on the labour market especially between students who have recently graduated. Linked to the labour market, author wishes to know whether personal brand in social media helps when applying jobs and competing with other. There might also be some potential risks which the author wants to be aware. Lastly, the author of the thesis wants to know if there are some usual, ordinary problems or objects that people make while creating personal brand in social media.

Author of the study look forward to know the stages mentioned before and which are the most common pros and cons of personal brand and its creation process. The writer is also excited to deepen my knowledge of social media and the communication in there in order to successfully create my own personal brand in social media someday. At the end the author will see if his hypothesis and thoughts are met and if the questions can be answered after the study.

1. PERSONAL BRAND

1.1. Definition

There is no clear definition of personal branding in the literature. Peters (1997) although gave the first glimpse by stating that all of us are walking brands, meaning people walk with certain coffee cup in hand and put certain clothes on.. According to Khedher (2013), the personal branding should be conscious, continuous and strategic process which consists self-brand recognition, its active positioning by using different marketing tools and finally evaluate if the aimed personal brand is achieved. Previously people thought that creating personal brand is critical for celebrities such as pop-stars, politicians and movie stars. Today on the other hand, anyone can be a brand (Shepherd 2005). The diversity of personal brand is demonstrated in the picture 1. Every human has a personal brand and if the person is not managing it by himself, there is a risk that someone else will create the personal brand for someone (Shepherd 2005; Kortesuo 2011).

Entertainment professionals such as actors and musicians often have a personal brand. For example David Bowie is known as a celebrity and musician but he also has a strong, even iconic brand features (Eagar and Lindridge, 2014). On the sports field, there are many athletes who have a strong personal brand such as David Beckham and Floyd Mayweather. Thomson (2006, 104-105) states that through political campaign, the aim of these has been to create a personal brand and brand image where i.e. image and message is strongly under the control of parties and consultant. The figure 1 below shows diversity of personal brand, as i.e. Eagar and Lindridge (2014) mentioned earlier about the celebrities. The figure 1 is just an example of how diverse the personal brand is and can be.

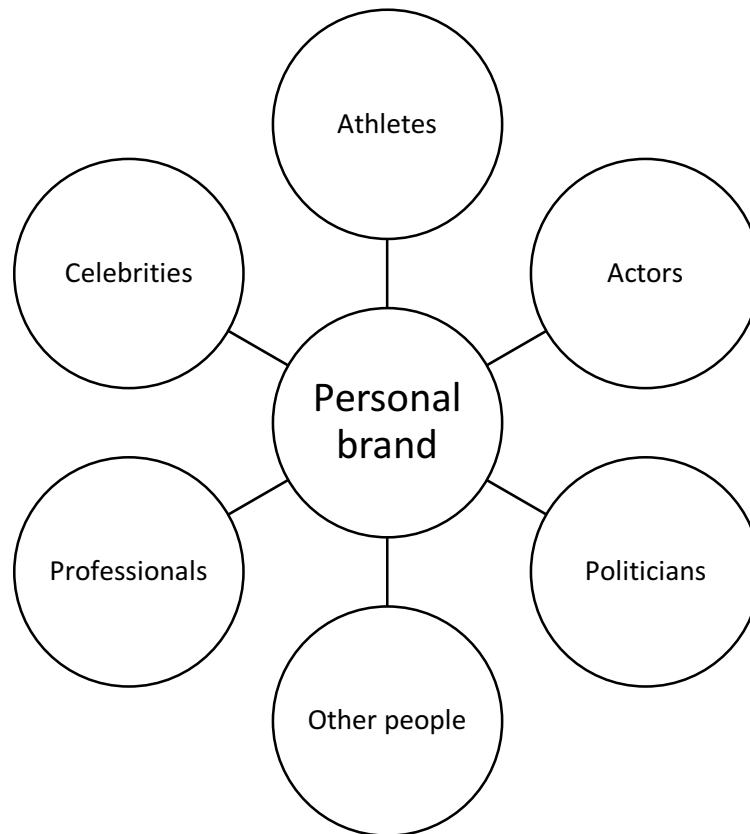


Figure 1. Diversity of Personal Brand (adapted from Eagar and Laidridge (2014) and Thomson (2006))

Rampersad (2008) continues and links different personal brands to different celebrities, for example, Bill Gates to technology and charity work. One aspect of Rampersad’s personal brand is “synthesis” about what people feel when they hear or see your name.

According to Khedher (2012) the personal brand is new marketing phenomenon where a person tries to promote himself on the market. Zarkada (2012) partly agrees with Khedher while writing that personal branding is a new marketing concept that a person embraces in order to promote his or her personal special features.

These days, especially on the business, people have the same need of personal brand just like big, multinational companies. Only for few of us it is possible so how it should be done in practice? It can be started in a smaller scale while following the rough guide lines: go and make yourself familiar to others. This can be done in many ways i.e. writing history of your job, lead a project, keep a lecture of something or write an article for a local newspaper. According to Peters (1997) there are not so many steps from small local newspaper to pages of New York Times.

Vosloban (2014) states that if the company wants to be ahead of competitors, the personal brands of employees are in the key position. The reason behind this is that the employees are always the factor in the market who raises not only his standards but also company's standards. This kind of employee's labour input effects on company's picture and visibility on the market. Same study shows that personal brands help company's performance. Especially for the growing countries, the personal brands of employees are valuable (Vosloban, 2014).

1.2. Shaping the Concept of Personal Brand

Decades before the birth of personal brand Goffman (1959) presented an interesting idea about human interaction. This interaction can be seen and compared to theater, meaning that in every show the actors and actresses choose the correct clothes, scenery and ancillaries in order to fulfill the picture that the audience have on their mind. This means that people are used to move from role to role in order the perform in wanted way and try to ensure an appropriate image of the target audience.

According to Philbrick and Cleveland (2015) there are three main changes in the society that has lead to concept of personal brand and its rise. First one happened in United States during the 70's when large companies started to dismiss many employees. This phenomenon is familiar in other western countries and has lead to the situation where individual cannot trust that the job will stay through the life. When the jobs are hard to find, it is hard to stand out in a crowd and be unique. Second change is that now we understand that the job can be not only a source of income but also personally meaningful and source of satisfaction. Third change is linked to technology development and ability to communicate our personal thoughts online.

Peters (1997) states that large companies have noticed the benefits of branding of products and services a long time ago. When the competition is tough and consumers have many options, it is critical to try to stand out and differentiate. The winners are the brands who offers value for customers. When customer purchases a product, he can be sure that he will receive value in every time. In personal branding, this means that the person should identify his own strenghts; how he can stand out from others? It is critical to be aware of the strenghts and acquaire new ones if needed. After this, person should create a sales pitch for communicating with customers. This is not only the e-mails, job applications or other communication tools but also with dressing,

treatment of colleagues and many other things that we do (Peters, 1997). Peter (1997) also adds that it is important to know what are the factors that motivates you, whether it is money, power or reputation. When you know the goal, you can work towards it persistently.

1.3. Features of Personal Brand

Personal brand can be useful both for company and for the brand holder or individual. Academic literature showed that there are much more benefits in the eyes of brand holder than the company.

Vosloban (2014) believes that the biggest resource for the company is its employees. This kind of human capital cannot be copied by the competitors and this way it can be great advantage. The personal brand is not always just the person itself and usually the personal brand has greater purpose (Martin, 2009). He then continues that the greater purpose can be the way you help others in a way that makes you valuable on the market. This can be seen as a value for the company created by the employee.

One of the key element for personal branding is word-of-mouth or WOM. About the WOM, if you do your tasks carefully and as promised, usually someone will notice it and they will tell it forward. This is personal brand. People are happy to tell forward about the meeting with you or doing business with you and this is why they will remember you.

For personal brand's brand image positioning can be linked many features but usually the best result is achieved when the focusing on critical things and avoiding not coordinated messages to the target audience. One of the main points for positioning is to strenghten the brand image for the audience's mind (this requires that the audience has an image already). Already existing image of the personal brand is usually more effective than creating completely new one. Laakso (2003) reminds that during the planning of positioning the personal brand, one should have the knowledge of audience's already existing image of the brand.

Adding features to the personal brand can be done by marketing. In order to reach the goals of personal brand, the marketing should be clear. The marketer should keep in mind that there are other attributes which affects the creation of personal brand image and the actual positioning happens in audience's mind despites the marketer's intentions. On the other hand, the positioning

can happen completely without marketing since people create images with or without marketing (Laakso, 2003).

According to Rope and Mether (2001), the image of personal brand is based on attitudes and values and therefore it will not show the objective truth. They continue stating that the market effectiveness is based on audience's images and how these images can be affected. Simple model Karvonen (1999) shows the audience's image creation process. There are two parties in the model. First one is the party which the image is created from and the other is the party that is creating the image. First party will send either intentionally or unintentionally information to the second party who creates the image of the brand. This means that image is created with two-way communication (Karvonen, 1999).

Individuals shall control the personal brand of their own since people will remember you because of it (Rampersad, 2008). According to Rampersad (2008) one's personal brand should be strong and most of all genuine. The personal brand should represent what the person really is. Rampersad also states that this is why personal brand has value for other people.

According to Kang (2013) the main benefits of personal brand are respect, networking, new opportunities, success and ability to enjoy the work and life. Vallas and Cummins (2015) continues stating that the personal brand will bring additional value to the individual. A strong personal brand and its conscious use of marketing tools are capable of providing the financial security for individual (Vallas and Cummins, 2015).

Gehl (2011) states that the aims of personal branding are; 1) Personal brand is available for everyone. 2) Making yourself unique 3) The aim of personal brand is to be inseparable brand. This means that personal brand cannot be separate from the person itself. 4) Personal brand should lead towards success.

One of the strengthening feature of well-known personal brand is long-term existence (Aaker, 1996). Aaker (1996) agrees with Laakso (2003) stating that brands which have been on the market for a long time are usually stronger than the newest entrants. Measuring the length of personal brand existence differs from product or business branding and the meaning might not be as highlighted as in personal brand when it comes to publicity creation.

Building a strong personal brand which pleases everyone all the time is impossible (Martin, 2009). According to Martin (2009) there are many celebrity personal brands that many people disagree with i.e. Donald Trump or Paris Hilton. He then adds that even though people don't like every personal brand, they will still remember and give credit to the brand holder about his accomplishments. This means that if you want to create a successful personal brand, you have to be different from others.

1.4. Process of building personal brand

On the literature, there are no one strict way on how to build personal brand. Rampersad (2008) states that there are four different steps when building authentic personal brand. First step is that you have to define your own personal goals. The second step is defining your personal brand. Third step is figure out your own personal balanced scorecard. Fourth and last step is to implement the last three steps together. Professional personal brand builder can bring immense value to the market. Reliability and reputation of these professionals will help them towards the top of the field (Rampersad, 2008).

Gall (2010) has slightly different approach for the building process than Rampersad. He divides the building process of personal brand in five sections which are 1) Do something that you are good at 2) Think long-term 3) Know the target audience 4) Know the message and 5) create relationships.

Building personal brand for student starts by completing couple of personality tests and after the tests the student have a reasonable understanding of their own personality (Wetsch, 2012). After the tests, the student will do a position pitch which summaries his learnings about himself. The student now have a vision about their own attributes. The position pitch is key element. Social media is the next part where the student starts to build his own personal brand. Different social media channels are made familiar for the students. Wetsch (2012) gives an example of a student who received an intership place because he sent Youtube video link to company located in Singapore. Stanton and Stanton (2013) agrees with Wetsch by stating that one of the main idea of the personal brand building is to receive a good job when the competition in the labour market is tough.

Personal brand can be built in different ways. Lee and Cavanaugh (2016) studied that what kind of effects student's CVs has when they are made infographically (in other words, while using personal brand to differ from others). Traditional CV is easier to read but graphically created CV was more interesting to look and it differs from others (Lee and Cavanaugh, 2016).

Martin (2009) states that one of the biggest illusion about the personal brands that people have is that they are consciously made. The personal brand just describes the person and what is real and authentic (Martin, 2009).

1.5. Personal brand creation models

Building a personal brand follows the same brand creation process as i.e. branding a product. But for the personal brand, the social aspects has to be taken into account. One cannot simply copy the creation way for personal brand form the product brand even though there are multiple connections (Preece and Kerrigan, 2015). It is also critical to understand that a person cannot create the personal brand alone. The personal brand will form by interaction with target audience and other stakeholders (Preece and Kerrigan, 2015).

Khedher (2013) summaries the brand creation process for three stages which can be seen on the figure 2. On the first stage the brand identity is developed. On the second state, the brand will be positioned on the market. Evaluating the reached brand image is the final stage. First stage includes human characteristics, beliefs, visions, motivation and experiences. Personal brand creation can be tricky because one have to differ from others and at the same time react on target audience's expectations and needs.

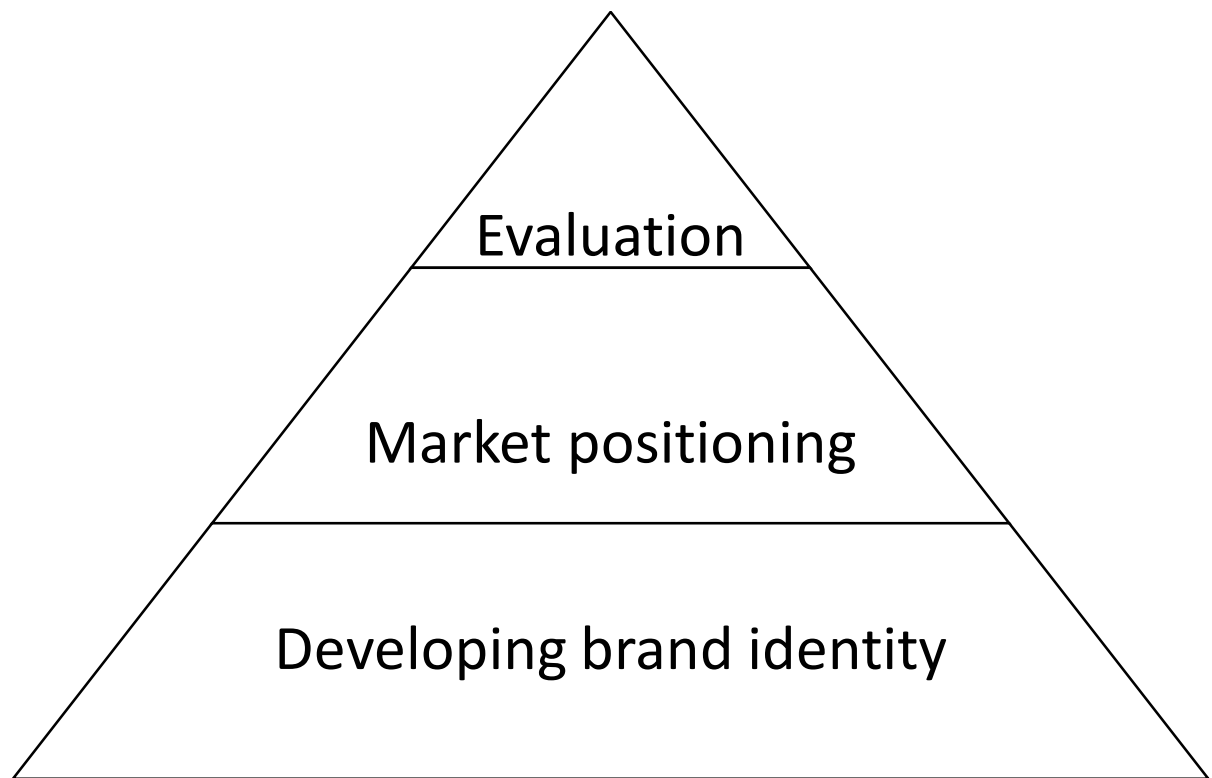


Figure 2 Khedher's brand process (adapted from Khedher, 2013).

On the second stage of brand process the personal brand is positioned on the market. With positioning, the aim is to highlight the person's features which the target audience feel relevant. During this second stage, an active market communication for target audience is necessary. With the positioning, Kheder (2013) believes that person can differ from other competitors.

The last stage is familiar from many other marketing processes' last phase. This is the evaluation part. On this stage we are trying to find out did the audience react as we wanted? If they did, the personal brand creation succeeded. If the building process mainly had negative thought from the audience, then there shall be discussion whether the audience was correct. Khedher (2013) also says that we have to think what shall be done differently on the next time in order to achieve the desired result.

According to Arruda and Dixson (2007) the brand can be created through three phases which are differentiation from others, expression and reflection. On the first phase of personal brand creation process is to defining own personal key attributes which can lead extracting from others. During the first phase, the person should think about how he or she want to build unique and valuable personal brand. Arruda and Dixson (2007) also adds that person should think which features and

traits he wants to underline. The personal brand usually aims to underline the person's best features and strengths, not actually change himself (Labrecque et al. 2011). Focus of the brand creation should be on what makes a person unique. One should also focus on the future and think about the trait that leads towards the dream future. It is important to see the "big picture" rather than small one before starting to create the actual personal brand (Arruda and Dixson, 1997).

The second phase contains the brand promise around one's personal features which is wanted to express for audience. On this phase, there should be plan according how to get visibility and how to achieve the trust of target audience. Usually this target audience becomes brand community. Communication with the audience should be clear (Arruda and Dixson, 2007). Arruda and Dixson (2007) also reminds that the same guidelines apply to personal branding as when creating product and service brands. Very few organisations succeed without the marketing and personal brand has the same idea.

On the last phase of Arruda and Dixson's process, the focus is to make sure that the whole personal brand represents and reflects the wanted brand and it is consistent. It is important to know that even the small elements can shape the brand image. These elements can be for example first expression, clothing and social networks (Arruda and Dixson, 2007).

Arruda and Dixson model and Khedher's model shows some similarities and differences. Both of the models take into account the planning of personal brand image. They also state that it is important to know how the specific personal brand can differ from others and which brand features create the most value for target audience. Carefully planned communication and clever social media channel options will back up the process of creating personal brand.

Both of these models have three different phases and both of them start by thinking of person's features. After that there should be value proposition which is aimed to the target audience. Second phase includes brand positioning and differentiation. The third part differs from each other. In Arruda and Dixson's model, they want all of the brand elements to reflect the wanted brand image whereas Khedher's model speaks about evaluation and if the personal brand creation process was successful.

2. PERSONAL BRAND AND SOCIAL MEDIA

As the information technology improves, the personal branding will get new interesting aspects to study. While the “Web 2.0” rises, the personal brand and its studying has created new research lines. Labrecque et al. (2011) states that when person moves on web and on social media, he leaves a digital footprint which allows other to make observations about his appearance and brand.

Dutta et al. (2014) believes that today’s leaders should use social media because of three reasons. First reason is that in social media, one can build the personal brand conveniently and most of all with low cost. This means that one can start building personal brand without investing it sine social media is free. The second reason according to Dutta et al. (2014) is that the social media is perfect place for networking with stakeholders. Social media offers great learning environment because of the immediate feedback. This is the third and last reason why Dutta et al. (2014) believes that leaders should use social media.

When Geurin (2016) studied the communication of elite athletes in social media, he discovered that only a few of the elite athletes had a strategic plan for controlling the personal brand. Geurin (2016) highlights that if there are no objectives for personal brand controlling, the measuring or following are not convenient to do. According to Geurin (2016) the objectives should follow the SMART-guide lines. SMART comes from the words *specific, measurable, attainable, realistic* and *timely*. This means that the objectives should be clear, measurable and reachable, realistic and limited with time. It is more convenient to set objective i.e. “500 new followers on Instagram during the next two months” rather than just trying to acquire new followers and gain publicity. For measuring the objectives, there are tools in order to help it. For example Google offers data processing and analysing tools for free which are relatively easy to use. Harris and Rae (2011) stated also that one should use Google’s automatic alarms when people mentions your name online. This way it is easier to control the data around the personal brand and make changes i.e. delete pictures or comment on rumours if needed.

One’s personal brand shall be interacted with selected target groups. Social media gives great opportunities for this because the feedback comes quickly (Labrecque et al. 2011). This interaction is not only a one-way communication but a two-way communication with the audience. Thomson (2006) underlines that it is important to emphasize the direct interaction between the personal

brand and the target audience and how to increase this interaction. According to Harris and Rae (2011) the interaction in social media can strengthen the personal brand.

These days people communicate through social media around the globe in real time. Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate (Wincci and Mohamad, 2015). Followers and the network they have created offers new ways to expand networks but at the same time the social media has its drawbacks and tensions (Marwick and Boyd, 2010).

2.1. Pros and Cons of Having a Personal Brand on Social Media

According to Karaduman (2013) the social media create opportunities for both companies and for individuals through the personal brand. Today's society where everyone has access to Internet and social media, being aware what pictures and comments people can see about you. Everything that people write about you should push you towards the goal and which is not harmful but useful for individual (Harris and Raen, 2011). Harris and Rae (2011) also gives weight to Google since you can find good and bad things about someone just by writing their name on Google and search. This means that if your friend uploads a photo of you partying on Facebook or commenting some inside jokes between friends, the external interpreter i.e. future employer might receive a totally different picture of you. The table below (figure 3) shows the main advantages and disadvantages of having a personal brand in social media. Table is conducted from the ideas of authors in this topic.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Labour market advantages	Bad content can spread rapidly
Good content can spread rapidly	Safety issues
Job opportunities	Algorithm issues
Cooperation	

Figure 3 Table of main advantages and disadvantages from literature reviews

Hood et al. (2014) studied how personal brand help student in labor market and getting a job. Their study showed that most of the recruiters use LinkedIn while recruiting students. Teachers could help the students to get a job if they would give different tasks for students regarding personal brand and its creation i.e. building LinkedIn profile. The study also showed that recruiters use

social media while making the decision which candidate will continue and which not (Hood et al. 2014).

All mentioned before, social media has also its own challenges. If the person, who has built the personal brand in specific social media channel, cannot keep up with the change, the audience/followers might switch for other substitute (Labrecque et al. 2011).

Labrecque et al. (2011) continues stating that giving your personal information online in order to build personal brand might feel distressing. This can be if the personal brand holder has given his own address or other information that shows i.e. location of his. The brand holder might feel unsafe if everyone knows where he or she lives. On the other hand, if the brand holder does not provide information such as address, this might seem to be unreliable if necessary information is hidden (Labrecque et al. 2011).

According to Ward (2013) the personal branding is usually being seen as self-congratulatory and needless self-raising. Ward (2013) then adds that this is the wrong image because on the social media era it is more important than ever. Chen (2013) agrees with Ward and states that building personal brand in social media is a growing trend. The brand of a company has been studied wildly but personal brand has not been studied that much even though its importance rises every day (Chen, 2013).

Labrecque et al. (2013) writes that building personal brand in “Web 2.0” is difficult. They add that personal branding is challenging especially if the person has multiple audiences which have to be managed in multiple platforms.

2.2. Social Media Exposure

Many social media users who are planning to build personal brand usually tries to gather up followers in different channels. The more person has followers, the more valuable he is for third-parties i.e. companies who are interested in market. These days i.e. bloggers and vloggers can be extremely expensive for sharing content. If a person has large amount of followers i.e. in Instagram, it gives the person power to influence these followers. In this situation, the follower

might change his opinion negative about the person he is following although this can be avoided if a person is authentic and real.

Hashtags are used in many different social media channels. Page (2012) studied personal branding on Twitter. He states that not only the companies but also individuals can exploit the hashtags when building personal brand. The person can add his own hashtag to every post the tweet he makes which leads to that this person is recognizable and other users are able to identify this hashtag to specific person who is building personal brand and gaining the brand capital (Page, 2012). Publicity in social media has increased because sharing content has become easier and this way the personal brand holder can increase his own audience / followers (Senft, 2008).

In 2019, there are more and more people who can be seen as a celebrity in social media with a large amount of followers. Kozinets and Cerone (2014) published an article about this. This article included an example of a young woman who had an own YouTube vlog channel. She was able to build the group of followers and afterwards launched her own clothing line. This is good example of additional things that people are able to do if they are social media celebrities.

2.3. Channel Selection in Social Media

Today's social media channels offers many different options where one could start building own personal brand. Different channels have different features and tools where one can choose which one to use. Networking services of social media creates opportunities for self-expression and experiments with identity. If the identity appeals to other users, the online identity could become as important and real as the real world identity (Labrecque et al. 2011). Dutta (2010) reminds that while the focus is creating personal brand in social media, one cannot forget that the picture given online and physical presence must match with each other.

Personal brand creation in social media means creating profiles and maintaining them in different platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Sometimes the brand holder has separate web page and a blog. When you are creating personal brand online, you should keep in mind the search engine optimization (or SEO) so that your profile can be found as easily as possible (Labrecque et al. 2011).

In order to find the correct and suitable social media channels, one has to define the clear objectives. One shall also think whether the objectives are linked to personal life or working life. Dutta (2010) states that it is important to know which objectives are more important because of a possible conflicts. Maintaining multiple online identities is hard and on the same time the separation of personal identity and work identity is almost impossible (Labrecque et al. 2011).

According to Kaplan and Haenlain (2010) when a person is choosing the social media channel, he has to take into account limited resources because in selected channel one have to be active. They also add that when you carefully select the correct channels, you are able to reach the target audience better and reduce risks at the same time.

Singh et al. (2008) states that when creating a content, it should be personal, customer focused, authentic and reciprocal because social media allows the interaction with audience and usually the active participation is rewarded. Dijk (2012) continues by saying that one should try to create quality content in order to differentiate from the other information and the audience should find the given content meaningful.

According to Dijk (2012) there are so many social media channels that person can use and only control couple of them. Social media is develops all the time and at the same time new applications of social media comes to the market. Social media platforms are constantly changing. These changes should be reacted rapidly in order to find new opportunities and maintain the personal brand position in social media (Karaduman, 2013).

2.4. Challenges and Risks

One of the biggest challenges of creating personal brand might be the mixing process of personal identity and the created, online identity that one uses in business field. In many companies, this is seen as a problem. Molyneux (2015) states that sometimes when the employee starts to create the personal brand, the company behind him will move in the background. This leads in to the situation where the employee with strong personal brand can leave the company and start looking for other challenges and positions.

According to Labrecque et al. (2011) the consumers reacted very negatively for brand communication if it did not represent the sender's true identity. One of the key creation guide line

should be the strengths that brings value for brand holder. This way the authenticity will remain strong. The chosen brand communication should inspire the brand holder himself (Arruda, 2009). Arruda (2009) continues that the personal brand should help the brand holder to reach the goals when it raises the personal and professional satisfaction.

Dutta (2010) found that the risks that are linked to personal brand and social media are i.e. unthoughtful communication and exposing too much personal information. These risks seemed to be relatively small and created by the personal brand holder by himself. Unthoughtful communication is being seen i.e. criticising other people or parties and presenting extreme opinions on public. Social media is being seen extremely risky environment for unthoughtful communication and messages because of quick share of messages and the size of the potential audience. Dutta (2010) adds that risks that are linked to unthoughtful communication are i.e. commenting old employees, religion, sex or race.

When creating personal brand online, it requires sharing information but on the same time the shared information could pose a risk which could lead to misuse of brand and defectiveness. The misuse of brand has been seen linked to the professional image whereas brand defectiveness is linked especially to the person's social status. Labrecque et al. (2011) also states that brand can be affected by content which is created by third-party. This means that the personal brand holder cannot control every information about himself. Harris and Rae (2011) add that if one is lying and misleading in social media, he will get caught quickly so better way is to act as honest as possible.

Without digital footprint it is hard to differentiate. Philbrick and Cleveland (2015) thinks that one should post meaningful content both consistently and regularly. On the other hand, one should really focus for the communication in social media and develop different strategies to control it (Geurin, 2017). If the social media communication is not carefully planned to be consistent, it might be interpreted contradictory and there is a risk to lose the brand authenticity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was done as a qualitative research and it was conducted through interviews. Three of the interviews were interviewed via e-mail and one via telephone. Next, the author will go through the research methodology, including the design of research, how the interviewees were chosen, and also the reliability and validity of data acquired.

The study's analyse have been inductive as Hirsijärvi et. al. (2005) states: "The researcher intention is to reveal unexpected facts. Because of that, the starting point should not be the testing of theory or hypothesis but a complex and detailed review of the material. The researcher will not command what is important." Interviews conducted for the study focuses on revealing unexpected facts by asking open questions. These questions have been created in a way that they will not include assumptions and that they are as neutral as possible. The aim is to find something that the researcher does not know and does not expect. Interviewees were carefully picked by directly contacting them and interviewing them. These cases have been handled uniquely and the data is being processed the same way.

3.1 Acquiring data and analyse

This empirical part of the thesis was conducted as a semi structured interviews rather than completely open interviews. The author of this thesis used qualitative content analysis. While there are different approaches, in this thesis, the author used conventional analysis. Content analysis includes looking similarities and differences while searching and concluding. Hirsijärvi et. al (2005) adds that usually the interviewees' answers are a much broader comparing i.e. using the open interview method. The semi structured interviews are interviews where the researcher interviews the opponent with questions that are in specific order but still open questions (Hirsijärvi et. al (2005). With the interviews, I would like to get a better knowledge about personal brand in social media. The author of this thesis were comparing survey and interviews in order to get the most authentic and reliable answers regarding the personal branding and ended up for interviews. The author

The reason why the interviews were chosen is that people can answer surveys really fast, without actually thinking the context and question. Aim was to avoid rapid and thoughtless answers which

could lead to inaccurate result. The author also thought that with interviews, he would get better answers if the questionnaire was sent by me and not just a link for the survey. With the interviews, the author believed to get better answers when the answers come straight from the people who has relatively strong personal brand.

The questionnaire was exactly the same for everyone and the order was the same also. The questionnaire was gathered up after carefully reviewing different literature themes. These themes such as challenges, personal brand process and and strategies left room for more questions. When contacting the potential interviewees, the author did not show the questions in the first message. The author did not want to scare them with the questions and wished to get honest answers.

After receiving the answers from the e-mails and phone, the author started to go through them along with the literature. This was done in order to get familiar with the content. The author did not use the specific encoding techniques since the data was already in readable and understandable term. The author went through the data and checked which answers were linked to the research questions. After this, the thesis writer seeked similarities from the different interviewee's answers, which is called clustering. The author of the thesis will analyze the answers later in this chapter.

3.2 Sample

On total, the author of the thesis had four different interviews with people that was approached by directly with e-mail and with direct message in Facebook. These were the most convenient ways to approach these people. In total, the author contacted seven different persons who have a strong personal brand and four of them replied saying "yes" to author's question regarding the interview. One did not answer at all and two said that their schedule is too busy at the moment and they were not able to complete the interview with such a short notice. Three of these interviews were conducted through e-mail and one was conducted in phone call.

The author of the study will use the letters **A**, **B**, **C** and **D** about the persons who took a part in interviews. Two of these gave permission to show their names but while the other two said that they would like to be anonymous, the author decided that all of them are anonymous. This is because mentioning their names will not bring any additional value to this study. The letters A-D are randomly picked and none of them are more important than other.

The person A is former professional ice hockey player. He has acquired quite a large follower list in Instagram and especially in Twitter. He uploads content to Facebook rather rarely. The person A differs from other athletes, former and current, because of his humorous posts. Even when the person A is a former player, he still holds kind of an iconic title of the team that he played before and he also stated that the social media have helped him with that.

The person B is a relatively new politician in Helsinki area but have gathered already a strong follower list who follows him in various different social media platforms. He does not use Twitter a lot but is a strong player in Youtube, Facebook and Instagram. The person B uploads two kind of content; either social content which often focuses on young people's rights or humorous and sarcastic pictures. The person B also replies very often followers messages and comments and at the same time encourage people to discuss about social issues.

The person C is a young real estate broker in Southern Finland. Although he started his career right after graduating from School of Economics in Turku, he now appears in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa areas. He differs from other brokers because of his age but also his ambition and passion to serve customers as good as possible. He is very active in various social media platforms i.e. in LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook. He also writes a blog every now and then. Snapchat is the only social media tool that he uses only with friends and does not add anyone in there. The person C usually posts pictures and short videos about the real estate deals and some times content about expensive material. His style can be seen as arrogant or ostentatious when he posts pictures. He also mentions that he posts the content in order to get new leads and customers.

The person D is the only female in this study. She is a Finnish fashion blogger who focuses on female fashion, travelling and apartment decoration. She has her own blog where she uploads content at least every week. Her primary platform beside the blog is Instagram where she has more followers than any other interviewee in this study. The person D mentions that she likes to post pictures about nice decorations where the colours are strong and fashion when she tries a new outfits. Travelling content on her Instagram focuses on nature and beautiful views. Short videos and quick "hellos" she posts in Snapchat.

3.3 Results

On this chapter, the author of the thesis will go through the results of the interviews and carefully put together similarities and differences about having personal brand in social media and especially in Finland. The aim is to illustrate the effects and factors of having personal brand in social media.

3.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of personal brand in social media

Social media and personal brand have advantages according to the interviews. But the advantages were seen as a bigger and more important factor than disadvantages. Underneath is a chart which shows every interviewees' answer to the question about advantages and disadvantages of social media and personal brand. The person A gave the only neutral answer to the disadvantages question by stating that he believe that the people who don't like him have had that opinion already before the social media when he played ice hockey. He also mentioned that he does not see or count couple of bad comments as a disadvantage of social media and personal brand.

All of the interviewees stated that there are much more advantages than disadvantages in personal branding in social media. According to the interviews, themes of advantages were job opportunities, new connections and friends and cooperation invitations. The person C mentioned that large amount of his deals in real estate business would not have been done without the social media and his personal brand in there: *"I have had many cases already where I closed the deal just because the customers had found me on social media"*. This opinion can be linked to Rampersad (2008) opinion where he states that every personal brand holder should take the control of own brand because people will remember you with it. Because people remember the person C, he can make more deals, thanks to his personal brand in social media. The person B wrote that *"I have also gained multiple opportunities to go and talk in public events which I enjoy greatly"*. One of the latest one focused on e-sports and how it could grow in Finland too even more. Martin (2009) mentions in his study that speaking in public events can strenghten one's personal brand. Person D mentions that she big advantage is to choose who she works with. She also mentioned that *"Also one huge bonus is that I get to decide how to do my work from start to end on my own"*.

Interviewee	Advantages of Personal Brand	Disadvantages of Personal Brand
A	Yes	Neutral
B	Yes	Yes
C	Yes	Yes
D	Yes	Yes

Figure 4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media and Personal Brand

As the table shows above (Figure 4), the interviewees mentioned also disadvantages about the social media and personal brand. The list of disadvantages is far more shorter than the list of advantages. The themes that the interviews brought up were hate comments, privacy and deals or jobs that wasn't received because of social media presence. Interviewees mentioned that the hate comments are rather common and that they receive those mostly in Instagram and Facebook. Person D mentioned that sometimes she is worried about her privacy since people can locate their home address and apartment. Labrecque et al. (2011) agrees with person D completely about the privacy and address. Person B mentions that he did not land a one job; *"Now I can already laugh about this but I did not get a one job some time ago before I entered to politics. I did not receive the actual reason why I was not chosen but I am pretty sure that it was because of my social media presence."* It seems that it depends how one states his or her opinion in social media; whether it is said politically correctly or sharply and provocatively. The person A worried that he has to be careful what to say or comment in social media since one sentence can be separated from the main concept and be used in completely different theme or site. He also continued when asking about risk that *"Not really. Well, someone can see where I live"*. This can be linked to the privacy. Two persons have changed the their ways of speaking in social media since there are more followers now than before. This can be because all of the interviewees were under 32-years old and they all have been in social media quite a long time. For example one does not comment with the haters and use more and more time to think how and what to comment and say.

3.3.2 Building personal brand

According to Rampersad (2008) and Gall (2010) a strong personal brand requires conscious building process. It was unexpected result when people (A-D) did not consciously follow any personal brand building process or model. Everyone answered somewhat in a same way. When asking about the building process, the person A wrote that *"I believe that it has become by an chance*

during the last couple of years". The persons C and D mentioned the same saying *"No, I have not"*. Person B wrote that *"Not really a model but I have followed few politicians in social media. Couple of them are from US, Sweden and of course from Finland"*. One of the reasons behind this might be that Gall and Rampersad have focused on different kind of personal brand holders while my interviewees were relatively small and new persons in social media from Finland.

The results of this study and Kang (2013) differs quite a lot. According to Kang (2013) there is only a one and clear aim which he drives towards while by creating the personal brand. And while examining this, one can see whether the personal brand creation process has been successful or not. This study with four different interviews shows the opposite. Everyone of the interviewees have created their personal brand without clear path towards the aim and they have still been successful. For example persons B and D are very popular and recognizable in their own field even though they have not had a clear aim when they started. The author believes that there are still chance or opportunity to succeed by an accident in these fields.

Martin (2009) states that the biggest illusion of people's perception of personal branding is that they have are specifically made. Martin (2009) continues by saying that the illusion is far away from the truth because the personal brands develops and grows through things which are real, authentic and natural. This study's results agrees with Martins' (2009).

When asking about the strategy for personal branding in social media, everyone of the interviewees mentioned one common thing; uploading and creating content to social media in everyday. The other common thing was that the interviewees uploaded in their own favourite social media platform. No one mentioned Snapchat or Periscope as a part of their strategy. The person C mentioned honesty as a part of strategy *"Yes, be honest. If you lie, you will get caught eventually and that is the end point then. Some people does not like that but I believe that it is the best way to communicate and be presence in social media"*. The other things that came up were uploading content that you can stand beside. The person B mentioned that his strategy is to encourage and motivate younger people to be interested in social issues and discuss about them. Persons B, C and D upload content in various social media platforms at the same time i.e. Uploading the same photo to Instagram and Facebook at the same time.

3.3.3 Channel selection

Under this topic, the author will tell the reasons why the interviewees are in the social media channels which they mentioned earlier and also why they do not use specific channels at all. All of the four interviewees said that they use Facebook. One of the reasons behind this selection is that it is relatively easy to use and content shared in other platform have ability to share it to the Facebook at the same time. On the other hand, person D said that *“I use it less and less these days comparing to other channels”* and believes that Facebook users might start using other platforms in the future. Instagram was mentioned by every one in the interviews. Person C also mentioned Instagram stories that he uses. According the interviews, Instagram and Facebook were the most convenient and easy to use platforms and because of that all of the people used them. Three of these interviewees were in LinkedIn because it was seen as a professional and because it is easy to find people with similar interests especially in business field. Person B mentioned that in LinkedIn, it is easy to network with other people and find new contacts.

Twitter divided the interviewees in half. Persons A and C used Twitter very actively, B uses Twitter rarely and D did not have an Twitter account at all. Person A mentions that Twitter is the most convenient channel for him and since the tweets are short, it is quick to use. Person D said that in Twitter she will not reach the potential readers because it is not visual enough. Person B says that he focuses on other channels but if there is a good or interesting topic in Twitter, he might take a part of it.

The person D was the only one who uses Snapchat very actively. Two interviewees mentioned that they use Snapchat only with friends and one said that he does not use Snapchat at all. Person C said that he does not add any customers or business partners to Snapchat because that is the one channel that he can upload what ever he wants to his friends.

3.3.4 Main findings

Gall (2010) and Rampersad (2008) highlight the importance of creation process of personal brand and that it is necessary part of brand creation. According to the interviews, this is not true. First finding was that none of the interviewees used any models or processes while creating their personal brand. This was unexpected result for the author since the author of the thesis believed that at least one of the interviewees would had followed some model or specific process.

Second finding was that all of the four interviewees stated that they can name a lot more advantages than disadvantages of having a personal brand in social media. Everyone stated many advantages and benefits of personal brand whereas the list of disadvantages was quite short. The biggest advantages, according to the interviews, were job opportunities and new people that the interviewees had met. The biggest disadvantage of having personal brand was without a doubt the hate comments and messages that they receive. Studies from Vallas and Cummins (2015) and Vosloban (2014) showed the same results.

Third finding from the interviews is the channel selection that the personal brand holders use. All of the interviewees uses the channels that are the most convenient and easy to use. The interviews gave insights also about the usability of certain channels. Interviewees stated that they use only the channels that are familiar to them and easy to learn to use and i.e. one mentioned that he is not using the Twitter at all because he does not understand it. Along with the first finding, Finnish personal brands develops without systematic working as a “by-product” from the active use of social media. The next points summarises the main findings of interviews.

- None of the interviewees followed any process or model
- According to the interviews, there are far more advantages than disadvantages
- The channel is often picked by its usability and familiarity
- Main channel selections were Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Very often the personal brand comes as a result of “just trying something fun” or by an accident
- None of the interviewees had clear aim at the beginning

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to find out is it necessary to follow a specific model while building personal brand. The answer is no; it is not necessary to follow any model or process while building personal brand. Even when the literature showed different models and processes, the personal brand holders answered opposite. In addition, this thesis aimed to find different strategies and processes of building personal brand. The topic of the thesis was considered topical as the phenomenon had not been studied as much as personal brand in real life and personal brand holder can differentiate from others in labour market. Social media allows its users to communicate in real time and the amount of users in social media is constantly increasing, not forgetting the appearance of new applications in social media.

This study strengthened the view that personal brand creation process follows mainly the same guide lines than building normal brand. The study helped to understand different factors of using social media which are directly linked to creation and building the personal brand in different parts of brand creation process.

Research questions were 1) “What are the stages of personal brand building process in social media?” and 2) “What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of having a personal brand?”.

According to the interviews, there are no specific stages of building personal brand in social media even though the literature shows opposite. Very often the personal brand becomes as a by-product rather than as a result of strict strategy and building process. The author of the thesis believes that there can still be different opinions and models that people use. In this study, focus was limited to Finland and Finnish brand holders. One of the key element of personal branding is to be active in social media and use two-way communication in order to engage followers.

On this thesis, the author was able to prove that there are more advantages than disadvantages for having personal brand in social media. Multiple literatures are on the same line with the result of author’s research and interviews. The biggest advantages of having personal brand are job opportunities, new contacts and friends, content sharing and labour market benefits. Also, personal brand is relatively cheap to create and electronic-word-of-mouth (EWOM) can be very effective and give visibility for post. Personal branding in social media is trending at the moment. On the other hand, the biggest disadvantages of having personal brand are safety issues, social media

algorithms and also content sharing. On this category, this means that bad content can spread fast and it is hard to slow it down.

Creating a personal brand is influenced by the motives of creation, the features of the personal brand, social media channel choices and the interaction between audience and the personal brand. Social media channels have to be selected carefully while taking into account the goals of the personal brand, the audience, limited resources and features of different channels. One should be active in selected channels since a person can only control limited amount of social media channels. Communication in social media can increase the trust between personal brand holder and his audience.

According to the results of this thesis, anyone can start building their own personal brand in social media or maintaining already existing brand. Social media and interactivity have important roles when thinking of popularity of personal branding in social media.

This thesis leaves room for future research ideas regarding personal branding in social media. An interesting topic for follow-up study could be what impact would it have if people with strong personal brand who uses only a few channels currently and started using the multiple other major social media channels. Another topic could also be study where two people create similar personal brands in two different social media platforms because social media channels are designed for different purposes. This way we could know more about the specific channels as part of the personal brand creation.

There are multiple studies already about the personal brand creation process in individual aspect. This brings up another topic for the future where the aim could be on personal brand creation in collective aspect. This could be interesting to study about creating personal brand as part of the group. Another possible topic for the future could be the benefits for the company when its employees has a strong personal brand. This topic already has some studies but still very little for now.

Last possible future study about personal branding could be focused on relatively young people i.e. students who have graduated or who are about to graduate. It would be interesting to study the specific segment of people and how personal brand affect their position in labour market and which jobs students with strong personal brand will achieve. In this study, one more link could be to study of which job positions or fields the strong personal brand owners will apply or is there any?

Limitations could be specific schools or cities. Separation between sex could also be taken into account and focus either males or females.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The Questionnaire

Question 1: Have you started to build your personal brand knowingly? If not, why?

Question 2: Have you followed any personal brand model? If yes, which or what?

Question 3: Have you followed any personal brand process? If yes, which or what?

Question 4: Have you used personal brand strategy in social media? If yes, what kind of strategy?

Question 5: What are the advantages and disadvantages of personal brand in social media? List as many as you like.

Question 6: Do you see any risks about personal brand in social media? If yes, what risks?

Question 7: Have your social media behaviour changed because of the personal brand? If yes, how?

Question 8: How do you choose the channels that you use?

Appendix 2. Transcripts of Interviews

Person B, Politician in Helsinki, Finland.

Q1: I have followed many bloggers and celebrities to get some understanding how they communicate on line. There are some good ideas I been adapting in my own communication. But at the beginning I did not start to build the actual brand knowingly.

Q2: Not really a model but I have followed few politicians in social media. Couple of them are from US, Sweden and of course from Finland.

Q3 and Q4: Again, not really a process, but before the parliament election there were 3 interesting candidates who created a nice branding process of themselves using Facebook, Instagram and traditional media appearance in evening papers. Those were the ones that people remember afterwards. I don't have any specific strategy but I will check and adapt parts from other people's branding processes if I find them useful. I also want to encourage younger generations to be more interested in politics. We have a great potential with younger people and a major key is to get them to attend discussions about important themes, like climate change and refugee questions.

Q5: Positive things are that you receive followers/loyal clients on your political way of thinking. Also you can open a discussion with your supporters and often receive valuable comments on different issues. You might want to test some of the themes that you feel are important by letting you followers to react on your point of views. I have also gained multiple opportunities to go and talk in public events which I enjoy greatly.

Negative things are when you don't have any control on the discussions referred to your ideas on social media. If you start explaining your words too detailed, you might end up in a big mess. Now I can already laugh about this but I did not get a one job some time ago before I entered to politics. I did not receive the actual reason why I was not chosen but I am pretty sure that it was because of my social media presence.

Q6: Possible risks are as above mentioned. You might lose the control what people are discussing and commenting to you.

Q7: If you have a well-known personal brand in social media you need to think twice how you react to different phenomenon in order to keep your image in acceptable limits. You don't want to be the loudest politician in social media rather than perhaps give a thoughtful answer less often.

Q8: The channels are being chose according to the other successful social media users. When some channel is proven to be good don't change it. Personally I use FB, IG and LinkedIn alongside with Youtube. LinkedIn is without doubt the best place to interact and find connections. That is probably the biggest reason why I use it so much. I also have a Twitter account but use of that is quite poor at the moment. Depends on the topics in there. I don't use Periscope or Snapchat, I might be too old for those.

Person D, Fashion Blogger, Finland.

Q1: Have you started to build your personal brand consciously? If not, why?

No I haven't. I have had a blog since 2010. My blog got a lot of readers in a short time. With more readers the blog and my personal brand have been expanding naturally.

Q2: Have you followed any personal brand model? If yes, which or what?

No I haven't.

Q3: Have you followed any personal brand process? If yes, which or what?

No I haven't.

Q4: Have you used personal brand strategy in social media? If yes, what kind of strategy?

Nope.

Q5: What are the advantages and disadvantages of personal brand in social media? List as many as you like.

With my personal brand I have been able to make my hobby a real job for me. I have come to that point that my business is economically stable. Nowadays I am able to choose with which

companies and brands I want to work with. Also one huge bonus is that I get to decide how to do my work from start to end on my own.

The biggest disadvantage is that you have to update your social media platforms almost every day. Where ever I go, I have my camera and laptop with me. Also sometimes an assistant or a coworker would be needed, but luckily I lot of colleagues.

Q6: Do you see any risks about personal brand in social media? If yes, what risks?

We have to be all the time ready to evolve with the business. If not, you might lose a lot of followers.

Q7: Have your social media behaviour changed because of the personal brand? If yes, how?

Yes! In the beginning of my career I used to share everything on my blog, including my boyfriend's name, where I lived etc. These days I have to be more cautious and I don't share so many personal details on social media.

Q8: How do you choose the channels that you use?

I have to be where my followers are. The most important channels for me at the moment are Instagram, Snapchat and my blog. I also have Twitter but don't use it actively because of the lack of visuals. It doesn't serve at the moment my personal brand in desirable way. I have seen many of my friends and other bloggers to actually abandon Facebook completely and I think people are moving out from it. I use it less and less these days comparing to other channels.

Person A, Former ice-hockey player, Finland.

Q1: Have you started to build your personal brand consciously? If not, why?

No. The brand shaped itself and apparently people like my posts. I believe that it (personal brand) has become by an chance during the last couple of years

Q2: Have you followed any personal brand model? If yes, which or what?

No I have not followed model but I have followed and am still following different persons in social media which are fun.

Q3: Have you followed any personal brand process? If yes, which or what?

I have not followed any brand process.

Q4: Have you used personal brand strategy in social media? If yes, what kind of strategy?

I have not had any strategy. I am just having fun in social media and I am happy if people laugh at my content.

Q5: What are the advantages and disadvantages of personal brand in social media? List as many as you like.

Definitely friends that I have acquired through social media. Time to time someone asks me to come and present something in their event, I cannot say whether this is good or bad thing though. There are probably more good things, I just cannot get them to my head at the moment.

I think people who does not like me, have had their opinion already a long before social media hype. The way I played hockey etc. have probably something to do with it. So I don't see haters as a disadvantage since they are there, no matter what. And I don't stick with their comments about my nose or something else. I don't One bad thing is that social media takes time, sometimes too much. Okay one last annoying thing is that if you say something in social media, usually the press will tell completely different story and the headline says "This person said this and this" when the truth is actual the opposite.

Q6: Do you see any risks about personal brand in social media? If yes, what risks?

Not really. Well, someone can see where I live.

Q7: Have your social media behaviour changed because of the personal brand? If yes, how?

When I think of this, yes. Because now I cannot say what ever I want anymore since I have a large follower list. Years before, I could say what ever came to my mind and nobody gave a sh*t about it. Now when some of my posts or tweets gain publicity, I cannot swear too much or other wise people will probably stop following me. And of course write bad stuff about me to forums.

Q8: How do you choose the channels that you use?

About the usability and easiness. I don't want to waste time to learn different things about the use of some social media. I use those that are familiar with me. Twitter is the best since you don't have to write too much and the tweets are fast to type. I still use facebook, since it is the old school social media. I have created an Instagram account since nowadays everyone are there too. If and when the new channels come up, I will probably wait till it is necessary to sign in..

Person C, Real Estate Agent, Helsinki, Finland.

Q1: Have you started to build your personal brand consciously? If not, why?

Not at the beginning. But when I started to working in real estate company, I decided to use it as an advantage of it. By that time, I started to focus on what to upload and where, what could be effective and so on. I don't know whether the blog is brand building but I used that too. These days the strategy is divided into multiple different fields i.e. content visibility, co-operations and time slots to upload.

Q2: Have you followed any personal brand model? If yes, which or what?

No.

Q3: Have you followed any personal brand process? If yes, which or what?

No.

Q4: Have you used personal brand strategy in social media? If yes, what kind of strategy?

Yes, be honest. If you lie, you will get caught eventually and that is the end point then. Some people does not like that but I believe that it is the best way to communicate and be presence in social media. I have focused on specific channels which I believe most of the customers and potential customers are using. This way the visibility is better in business aspect. I also wrote blog actively, not too much anymore. I upload content in Facebook and Instagram at the same time.

Q5: What are the advantages and disadvantages of personal brand in social media? List as many as you like.

Obviously the biggest advantage is the customer acquirance through social media. I have had many cases already where I closed the deal just because the customers had found me on social media. Many of my customers have said that they really liked my presence and ideas on social media. And when these people start to either sell or buy apartments, they will probably remember me and come to talk with me. Disadvantage of having a brand is haters.

Q6: Do you see any risks about personal brand in social media? If yes, what risks?

Privacy.

Q7: Have your social media behaviour changed because of the personal brand? If yes, how?

Not really, I have been honest pretty much all my life. Maybe I cannot write what ever I want to Twitter anymore but I can do that in Snapchat with my friends.

Q8: How do you choose the channels that you use?

I choose the channels by the mixing possibility i.e. Instagram and Facebook. This way it saves time to post in two places at once. Twitter is simply and easy to use. And I have noticed that in Instagram, the stories are very effective on publicity side. That is why I usually post more content on the stories than on actual pictures. This means that my followers does not have their feed completely full of my pictures.