

Veronica Ioana ILIES

*Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising
Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Studies
Babes - Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca*

STRATEGIC PERSONAL BRANDING FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Case
Study

Keywords

*Personal branding,
Strategic personal branding,
Model,
Students,
Young professionals*

JEL Classification

M12, M13

Abstract

In a society dominated more than ever by a competitive environment, self-development can play a key role in gaining the wanted job or internship program for students and young professional. Learning how one can develop a personal branding program in a strategic way is, in this context, an important acquisition. The present study leads to the development of a simple model that young adults can use to create a personal branding process. Following some simple steps, young people aspiring to a successful professional life can have more opportunities and a better start in their professional activity. The study will first follow a literature review of relevant works in personal branding theory. The second objective of the study is to present the model developed by the author and that is used in the activity of creating a personal branding plan with students studying communication and public relations in a university of Romania. The study is based on a cross-sectional observation research method, conducted on a sample of 286 students from a faculty of communication, public relations and advertising in Romania, over a five-year period, students who attended a personal branding course. The results identified the needs and aspirations of students interested in personal development through personal branding strategies and led to the creation of a simple model of personal branding that can be followed by students and young professionals.

INTRODUCTION

In a society dominated, more than ever, by a competitive environment, students and young professionals meet the need of creating a good reputation and a management of self-presentation, both in the academic area and in the professional market. Starting to be aware of the necessity of a better understanding of the self and of pointing out objectives of self-development as early as possible, they will assure a clearer fulfilling professional trajectory for a young adult. In this context, we consider that the most appropriate moment in the life of a young adult to think about personal branding strategy is during the academic studies. As a student, one can benefit of time of reflection and learning about self-knowledge, self-development, market and environmental job needs and expectations and can work on developing oneself according to these needs and based on personality, skills and individual reality. Another benefit that young people can enjoy during academic studies is that more and more universities offer today self-development, personal branding and career orientation programs for students. Students studying business administration, communication, public relations, economic studies, public administration studies, management, psychology, sociology and many others are willing to work in environments in which reputation and a good image will help to establish good networking and relationships between people. This is the way in creating a personal branding in a strategic manner that will provide the basis that can bolster these relationships. Special attention is also paid to researches done in Romania lately, which show that employment opportunities increase by 37% for those people who have a well-built personal brand (Valoria Business Solutions).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND ARGUMENTS

The main objective of this study is to provide a grassroots model of how a student or young professional can work on to create a personal brand.

The arguments for such a study are as follows:

1. As a university professor at a communication, public relations and advertising program, we have identified, using a cross-sectional observation research method, a need of students to better understand how personal branding can be a good strategy for self-development, both in private and professional life. Students attending the personal branding course, asked for a basic model of using personal branding as a strategic tool.

2. There are a lot of young professionals with strong personalities and great potential for succeeding in their professional life that encounter difficulties in creating a good reputation, social networking and positive outcomes about themselves in the working environment, because of the lack of knowing their strengths and how they can highlight these strengths in social contexts.
3. Students and young professionals need to understand how can they position themselves better in social groups and job environments
4. Students and young professionals need to understand that the core element of self-development is being honest about their abilities and strengths, constant and coherent in all aspects that they present about themselves and that a strategic way of seeing personal branding can contribute to their success.
5. Yet, it is important that students and young professional understand that personal branding may be the starting point of a successful career. Making the effort of working on a personal branding strategy may reap results for a long time

This paper aims to advance in the theory and practice of personal branding as a strategic tool. It draws upon the literature on personal branding and related concepts such as self-branding, people as brands, self-promotion, self-positioning, self-development, self-reflection, self-marketing. The work will lead to a simple model that students and young professional can follow in developing a personal branding strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Both scientifically and practically the *brand* concept has been of a great interest in late years. Most products, services and goods that companies sell today are subject to be branded, in order to become more competitive on the market, better positioned and sold. The opportunity to brand people have lately been seen in political situations, in the world of entertainment and celebrities, but also in the area of recruitment and human resources, leadership, organizational contexts, entrepreneur and freelance once. Individuals concerned about their personal and especially professional development are demonstrating that transferring parts of the theory and practice of branding in the life of a person can help build a strong identity, a good reputation, a better position in the work area and a successful career. Rein, Kotler, Hamlin and Stoller (2006) have seen the opportunity that people have on borrowing marketing techniques from business and apply them to their life. According to them, currently, high visibility is one of the aspirations of any

person seeking a successful career (Rein et al., 2006). Personal branding, can thus be a key element for high visibility: “when a person succeeds in sculpting a distinctive brand, that person is well-known to the target audience, has long-term staying power in the marketplace, is clearly and meaningfully differentiated from competitors and enjoys a corresponding pay premium for his or her well-knownness” (Rein et al., 2006). According to Peters (1997) all people have a personal brand, but not all of them see the opportunity of using it as a strategic tool for their professional and personal development. This is the reason why authors tried to argue that “personal branding strategies are clearly aimed at developing reflexivity because they encourage actors to engage in careful and critical self-assessment about their relative strengths and weaknesses. The ultimate goal is for an actor to make use of this self-knowledge to better influence how he/she is perceived” (Wee & Brooks, 2010).

In the framework of personal branding a lot of authors can be integrated. Starting back in 1937 when Napoleon Hill offered a new perspective on people’s life developing his *Think and grow Rich* book and continuing with Tom Peters (1997) that enriched the literature of personal branding with *The brand called you* book, emphasizing that all people have a personal brand and can develop it for personal and professional success. Other authors were also interested in contributing to the scientific literature and the practical applications of the personal branding theory. In their major contribution to the *positioning* topic, Ries and Trout (2001) dedicated a chapter to personal branding, adapting their product positioning from the business environment to personal and professional life - *positioning yourself and your career*. Montoya and Vandehey (2002, 2009) have explored the way people can use their abilities and personality for full potential in career and personal life. Roffer (2002) teaches women to follow eight steps of the professional brand strategy for a successful career. Hodgkinson (2005) projects a 5P’s dimension of leadership that can develop a personal branding strategy for leaders, relying on the idea that people have control over the way they promote themselves in the job environment. Later, in 2013 Karaduman also presents personal branding in the context of top-level executives. In the same respect, Bendisch, Larsen and Myfanwy (2013) argued about how CEO’s personal brand influence the image of a company through image transfer that occurs between the CEO and the company he/she represents.

Arruda (2003) comes with the idea of a *unique promise of value* to people who want to grow themselves in personal and professional life. Herbst (2003) discussed in his work about people as brands, peoples image and peoples brand

management. More recent work on personal branding is based on values and competence that can be used in a strategic way to create a personal branding strategy (Rangarajan et al, 2017). With their significant amount of information Kucharska and Confente (2017), present a complex overview of the literature on personal branding and adds evidence of the use of social-media for personal branding strategy, centuring on the relationship between selfie and personal branding. Focusing on YouTube, Grzesiak (2018) combines the scientific part of the personal branding with the practical side of it. In 2018, from a managerial perspective, personal branding can be used in sales force in the context of emerging markets (Amoako and Okpattah, 2018), on women entrepreneurs who develop an authentic personal branding in their business environment (Thompson et al, 2018) and on how entrepreneurs can develop personal branding through LinkedIn (Reed, 2018).

Broadening their knowledge about personal branding will help *students* and *young professional* to reappraise their personal development way of thinking. Personal development is considered to include a variety of elements, both personal and professional. Aubrey (2010) underlines that personal development refers to the identity of a person, can speak about talents that people possess and the potential they may have in the professional life. Personal development may also be a winning pawn in employability activity. Nevertheless, it can bring a higher quality of life, helping people understand the methods, tools and techniques that may facilitate the improvement and performance in a job. Merdin (2011) explains how graduates should understand how to use self-marketing as a career management tool and offers an example of a self-marketing plan that graduates can follow. In the same respect, the work of Gander (2014) adds important arguments to the theory and practice of personal branding, focusing the discussion on higher education context. Sport students were also subject to personal branding strategy, Lee and Cavanaugh (2016) proposing a new way to help sports students create a personal branding through a technology-integrated pedagogical approach. In the digitized world a storytelling and e-Portfolio can be an optimal tool for students in creating personal branding and personal identity (Jones and Leverenz, 2017).

Even if the literature on personal branding is a work in progress for many authors, in the present study, there is emphasized that the efforts of providing research, examples, case studies and models in the scientific and academic environment should not be neglected. In this paper, it is believed that specialists in branding, marketing, sociology, psychology, communication, public relations and business management should join forces in embedding personal branding in a solid scientific

community. The arguments for this idea are twofold. On one hand, there is the increasingly crowded labor market, with rigorous selection of employees, based on increased demands of skills to solve multiple tasks and deal with frequent organizational changes due to business and market dynamics. In such context personal branding can help both companies and people aspiring to a good job and a successful career to easily understand requirements, better positioning in the job environment and efficient selection. On the other hand young professionals of today's society are willing to learn more about personal development and to enrich their abilities to create a better image and reputation in social work groups and personal life. Personal branding can be framed in good practice models, providing young professionals with clarity about what branding means, how it can be used, and what results it can bring. Moreover, it should not be avoided in the academic area of university studies and career counseling programs, where students may have the opportunity to focus on it in the early stages of their personal development.

The personal branding concept is sensibly differently addressed by the literature. Under the umbrella of personal branding, the authors have investigated concepts such as self-branding, people as brands, self-promotion, self-positioning, self-development, self-reflection, self-marketing, the core of all being the way a person can create and manage a good image and reputation in personal and professional life. The present study uses the generic concept of personal branding, considering that is the most complex of all that incorporates all the others, because in a personal branding strategy one can refer to self in multiple ways: positioning, promoting, developing, reflecting, marketing, gaining knowledge about the self, everything for a better quality of both personal and professional lives.

METHODOLOGY

The starting point of this paper was a cross-sectional observation research method on students' needs regarding the topic of personal branding. Being part of the research groups that have been studied, having a teaching role, the researcher was allowed to be involved in the studied activities. This method was chosen in order to interact directly with the analysed groups and identify their expectations about personal development and personal branding that will allow later to create a model based on students' needs. 286 students from five consecutive generations who studied the personal branding course at a Romanian communication and public relations faculty were studied, each generation being observed in the year

in which studied personal branding. The analysed period was 2013-2018. In the cross-sectional observation method there were followed variables that refer to students' expectations about a personal branding course, expectations students have about their future professional life, the image students what to have in their professional and personal life, interest they have about social perception, the motivation that students have in order to achieve their professional goals and main tools that they find useful in a personal branding strategy.

Premise

It was claimed that students that have chosen to study personal branding are willing to learn about personal development, self-knowledge and identification of solutions that will lead to internship and job opportunities and development.

Research questions

Thus, the research questions focused on students' needs regarding the personal branding process and how it can offer support in students' professional and personal life.

Q1: What are the students' needs and expectations about personal branding process?

Q2: How can personal branding help students in their personal and professional development?

FINDINGS

In their process of understanding personal branding it was observed that students are willing to have a dynamic and fulfilling professional and personal life. A routine-dominated professional activity is not a good option for them. They expect to learn how they can find their values, mission and vision about the real expectations in life. An important aspect for them refers to the image they want to have and the way they can create it without departing from their personality and real feelings. The main concerns of students refer to the techniques about ways of self-knowledge, about identification of strengths and abilities to use in all aspects of life. Additionally, students show great interest about methods that might help them understand what other people's opinion is about them and the way they are perceived in different social groups. Moreover, students are interested in ways of changing negative habits and weaknesses. Similarly, there is a need to acquire abilities related to time management. Students need to find motivation in everything they do. Thus, they are interested in ways to find motivation for completing multiple tasks. They are also interested in how social media and digital communication can smartly be used in personal branding. Choosing the right internship or appropriate volunteering is at their concern. Three other aspects regarding a good

image are key elements for them: knowledge about business etiquette, fashion style they should adopt in professional life and ways to improve public speaking.

The above results of the cross-sectional observation methodology allow the researcher to define the main needs and expectations of students studying personal branding for better develop their professional and personal life:

- Students are expecting from the personal branding course to find all intrinsic and extrinsic, tangible and intangible aspect of the personal branding process
- Students wish to learn self-knowledge techniques
- Students wish to learn about techniques to find out the way they are perceived in social groups
- Students are willing to learn how to use personal branding as a tool to improve their professional life and to increase their chances to a higher quality lifestyle
- Students would prefer to follow a model, with simple steps that help them shape a personal branding strategy

Items previously exposed, clearly emphasizes the way personal branding can help students in their journey to a professional and personal fulfilled life. These items are the basis of the following *strategic personal branding plan*.

STRATEGIC PERSONAL BRANDING PLAN FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The plan has four steps and follows four parts of the life of a person that are considered by this research as being the most important for personal development: emotional, physical, mental and spiritual parts of the life of a person, being the foundation of the strategic personal branding plan. Table 1 explains what each element consists of.

Step 1 - establishment of mission, vision, values, roles and personal goals – before starting to build a personal branding structure, a person needs to clear out the fundamental elements to live a conscious life, based on clear existential aspects that the person will follow in all the professional and personal activities will carry out

- Mission** - answers to two questions: *what do I want to be? Which is my existential goal?*
- Vision** - answers to the question: *which is my vision of my professional, personal and social life, both presently and in the medium and long term?*
- Values** - answers to the question: *which are the values I refer to within the activities I develop in different social groups?*
- Roles** – answers to the question: *which is my role in the work I do in groups I belong to?*

e. **Goals** – answers to the questions: *do I have clear goals established? What are my current goals?*

Recommendation: answering the questions of the five above items will help the person to clarify the basic elements that are needed to be considered in building a personal brand. They will represent the structure of all personal development decisions the person will take.

Step 2 - personal introspection, self-knowledge, self-esteem and social perception - self-knowledge, increased self-confidence and knowledge about social perception, will help the person in designing achievable personal development goals

Personal introspection and self-knowledge - refers to the careful, intentional, conscious and permanent observation of owns' feelings, emotions, actions and results of the actions taken. The ultimate goal of this technique is to conduct a SWOT assessment with strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of one's own life. The goal is to keep what is appropriate and to eliminate or change what the person realizes is not useful. In the same respect the role of personal introspection is to capitalize on the opportunities that arise from the informational, educational and social background that the person has. Own aspirations, passions, competences, distinctive elements that may position the person differently in social groups, the present level of personal development, the level of emotional maturity and the personality type, are essential techniques in self-knowledge.

Recommendation:

- apply **SWOT analysis** – projects strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (instructions can be retrieved online from https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm)
- **Self-test**– helps project goals to be reached for improving the future positive perception of the self (Table 2 presents a **personal view** of the author of this research on self-test)
- **Personality Quest Enneagram Test** - assess personality type (can be retrieved online from https://www.academia.edu/30605530/QUEST_Quick_Enneagram_Sorting_Test)
- **Self-esteem Rosenberg Scale** - measures the level of self-esteem (can be retrieved online from <https://www.wvnorton.com/college/psych/psychsci/media/rosenberg.htm>)
- **Emotional maturity Friedman scale** - measures the level of emotional intelligence (can be retrieved online from <https://onlycuriosity.wordpress.com/2015/01/22/emotional-maturity-test-friedman-scale/>)
- **The Cube Personality test** - help improve self-knowledge (can be retrieved online from <https://www.personality-and-aptitude-career-tests.com/cube-personality-test.html>)

- **16 personalities test** - assess personality type (can be retrieved online from <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>)
- **The Demartini Value Determination Process Test** – to find out the most dominant thoughts one has, that represent the most tangible reality of that person (can be retrieved online from https://drdemartini.com/icampaign/Values_icampaign.pdf)
- **Make a list with all important projects or activities done since present** – remembering all successful projects done will help self-esteem increases
- **The social perception Test (an author's of this research personal view of such an evaluation)** – students are asked to interview people (college or work colleagues, teachers, friends, other people who can provide references about that person) asking them questions about them, so that they can see how they are socially perceived by people around them. Interviews are based on questions that relate to strengths, qualities, weaknesses, abilities, skills, and ways of acting in stressful situations, ways of decision making, personality, and character.

All these techniques will lead to a better self-knowledge, both intrinsic (personal opinion about him/her self) and extrinsic (the opinion of others about the person analysed).

Step 3 - Identification of personal uniqueness – after the self-knowledge stages has been attended, the person should have the ability to identify those elements that could differentiate and favourable position it in the professional life and in social groups. These will refer to the strengths and abilities the person has and that could lead to a successful professional activity.

Recommendation: the personal uniqueness must be interconnected with all elements established in Step 1 (mission, vision, values, roles and personal goals).

Step 4 – self-communication - refers to the identification of online and offline channels that might be used to communicate about him/her self and that can establish social and professional networks that could be used in order to be visible in the professional and social environment.

Recommendation: making a two minute creative and original self-presentation video to be posted online, create a blog, use all social networks available online (examples: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter) and offline, attending conferences and events dedicated to a person's professional environment, participation in internships and volunteer activities. Combine all this elements in a coherent way to communicate unitarily in all identified channels.

Other aspects that should be considered in the strategic building of a personal brand

- The personal branding plan should be organized for the long term; personal branding requires time and other resources
- Personal branding speaks about quality, not about quantity; there is no need for the person to be known by everyone, but by those people who might be valuable for his/her professional development
- The messages communicated about the self, should be consistent, coherent, thoughtful and should never be untrue, unreasonable or inconsistent
- Priorities in life, regarding professional and personal aspect, should be clarified
- A personal branding strategy requires a lot of work and strategic decisions
- The effect that a personal branding leaves on other people's mind should be positive
- Personal branding speaks about authenticity
- Personal branding requires improving the following dimensions of public appearances: visual, verbal, vocal (voice tone), nonverbal
- Personal branding asks for a 30 seconds way of self-presentation (the **elevator test** can be useful as an exercise technique).
-

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The idea of the present study began from a personal desire to provide students participating in the personal branding course of a communication, public relations and advertising faculty from Romania, the most appropriate personal branding techniques for a positive beginning of their professional life. It started from the premise that students that have chosen to study personal branding are willing to learn about personal development, self-knowledge and identification of solutions that will lead to internship and job opportunities. The research questions were focused on students' needs and expectations about personal branding process and on the way it can help students in their personal and professional life. It then continued with a cross-sectional observation research method, developed on 268 students from 5 consecutive generations who studied the personal branding course. The research led to important results on students' expectations and needs. The results were followed by generating a *simple to apply model of strategic personal branding*, that is used in the teaching process of personal branding at the faculty mentioned before. Although the research has been applied to students, the model can be extended to young professionals who do not

study a personal branding course but want to advance career and increase their quality of life.

The present study does not claim to be the perfect recipe, because in personal branding authenticity is the main working tool. Nor is the perfect scientific validated model, because one of its limits is that it has not yet been validated over time. But, it is believed that aspects regarding self-knowledge, social perception, abilities to work with self, time management, online and offline networking could be easily managed by students and young professional if they have some simple steps to follow and a clear starting point. Once the strategic personal branding process starts, it can be adjusted and readjusted every time a person feels it is needed. Yes, people are different and authenticity is the key factor of a sustainable personal branding strategy, but there is a long way of introspection, self-discovering and environmental knowing till one can identify personal uniqueness and find the appropriate ways and contexts to communicate about it.

As, a final advice it is worth emphasizing what various professionals observed. The authentic, correct and honest personal branding efforts will always be built on truth, on the reality of the person and will always be improved by lifelong learning. The study is not safe of limits. First, limits refer to the methodological design of the study. The cross-sectional observation method is mostly used in medical research and not so often in social science. The primary motivation of choosing this method was linked to its low costs, but also for the utility it showed for the type of information the researcher wanted to find out over the years from her students. Also, the model presented was used with students coming from a single faculty in Romania, so it cannot yet be considered scientifically validated. Limits are found also related to the proposed self-knowledge and social perception tools and techniques, thus having a high rate of subjectivity. Some of the instruments come from the psychological sphere and have been scientifically validated over time, but the researcher uses in the teaching act, and proposes in the presented model, other tools, personally designed, these being still scientifically unproved. But, the usefulness they have shown in the teaching process, allows them to be presented in the academic and scientific environment, for further investigation.

Based on the above information, the present study brings a significant amount of data, both theoretical and empirical. It contributes to the enrichment of the scientific research on personal branding. Additionally, it can be useful for university teachers in personal branding courses and can be subject to improvement.

REFERENCES

Journal article

- [1] Amoako, George; Okpattah, Bernard. (2018). Unleashing salesforce performance: The impacts of personal branding and technology in an emerging market, *Technology in Society, In Press, Corrected Proof, Available online 2 February 2018*, pp. 1-7.
- [2] Arruda, William. (2003). An Introduction to Personal Branding: a revolution in the way we manage our careers, retrieved from www.reachcc.com, accessed on 9.05.2017.
- [3] Bendisch, Franziska; Larsen, Gretchen; Myfanwy, Trueman. (2013). Fame and fortune: a conceptual model of CEO brands, *European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 47 Issue: 3/4*, pp. 596-614.
- [4] Gander, Michelle. (2014). Managing your personal brand, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, Vol. 18, No. 3*, pp. 99-102.
- [5] Jones, Beata; Leverenz, Carrie. (2017). Building Personal Brands with Digital Storytelling ePortfolios, *International Journal of ePortfolio, Vol 7, No 1*, pp. 67-91.
- [6] Karaduman, Ilkay. (2013). The effect of social media on personal branding efforts of top level executives, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, No. 99*, pp. 465-473.
- [7] Kucharska, Wioleta; Confente, Ilenia. (2017). Selfie and personal branding phenomena in the context of the network economy. A literature review, *Handel Wewnętrzny, 6 (371)*, pp. 161-169.
- [8] Lee, Jason; Cavanaugh, Terence. (2016). Building your brand: The integration of infographic resume as student self-analysis tools and self-branding resources, *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, No. 18*, pp. 61-68.
- [9] Merdin, Ezgi. (2011). Self-Marketing for Graduates and Professionals as a Strategic Career Management Tool. *The Business Review, Cambridge, 19(1)*, pp. 104-109.
- [10] Rangarajan, Deva; Gelb Betsy; Vandaveer Amy. (2017). Strategic personal branding – And how it pays off, *Business Horizons, Vol 60, Issue 5*, pp. 657-666.
- [11] Thompson-Whiteside, Helen; Turnbull, Sarah; Howe-Walsh, Liza. (2018). Developing an authentic personal brand using impression management behaviours: exploring female entrepreneurs' experiences, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, Vol. 21 Issue: 2*, pp.166-181.
- [12] Wee, Lionel; Brooks, Ann. (2010). Personal Branding and the Commodification of Reflexivity, *Cultural Sociology, Vol (4)*, pp. 45-62.

Book

- [1] Aubrey, Bob. (2010). *Managing Your Aspirations: Developing Personal Enterprise in the Global Workplace*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing.
- [2] Grzesiak, Mateusz (2018). *Personal Brand Creation in the Digital Age: Theory, Research and Practice*, Palgrave Pivot.
- [3] Hill, Napoleon. (1937). *Think and Grow Rich*. The Original, USA. Free Digital Download PDF eBook Edition, Re-published by: www.think-and-grow-rich-ebook.com.
- [4] Hodgkinson, Susan. (2005). *The Leader's Edge: Using Personal Branding to Drive Performance and Profit*. Lincoln, NE, iUniverse.
- [5] Montoya, Peter; Vandehey Tim. (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, Personal Branding Press Publishing.
- [6] Montoya, Peter; Vandehey Tim. (2009). *The brand called you. Create a Personal Brand That Wins Attention and Grows Your Business*, eBook, McGraw Hill, USA.
- [7] Peters, Tom. (1997). *The brand called you*, Fastcompany.com; retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/10/brandyou.html>, accessed on 9.05.2017.
- [8] Reed, Chris. (2018). *Personal Branding Mastery for Entrepreneurs*, Evolve Global Publishing.
- [9] Rein, Irving; Kotler, Philip; Hamlin, Michael; Stoller, Martin. (2006). *High Visibility: Transforming your personal and professional brand*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- [10] Ries, Al, Trout, Jack. (2001). *Positioning: the battle for your mind*, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., USA.
- [11] Roffer, Robin Fisher. (2002), *Make a Name for Yourself: Eight steps every woman needs to create a personal brand strategy for success* New York, NY: Broadway.

Book chapter

- [1] Herbst, Dieter. (2003). Wenn Persönlichkeiten Wirken: Das Image, Herbst, D (Ed). *Der Mensch Als Marke*. Göttingen: Business Village.
- [2] Herbst, Dieter. (2003). Zehn Thesen Zu Der Mensch Als Marke, Herbst, D. (Ed.). *Der Mensch AlsMarke*. Göttingen: Business Village.

Other references:

- [1] Valoria Business Solutions, <https://valoria.ro/>

ANNEXES

Table 1: Important four parts of the life of a person for personal development - the foundation of the strategic personal branding plan (author`s personal view)

<p>Emotional part → refers to the management of a person`s emotions and the way they can be controlled through <i>emotional intelligence</i> that may improve the quality of a person's life. Recommendation: Daniel Goleman, <i>Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ</i>, Bloomsbury, 1996</p>	<p>Physical part → refers to the body and the way one should improve the diet and the sport activity for a healthy life. It also includes aspects related to rest and sleep. All elements related to the body will influence all other tree parts. Recommendation: follow <i>World Health Organization</i> advices for a healthy eat, sleep and sport management</p>
<p>Mental part → refers to the power of concentration, memory, attention, flexibility in thinking, open mind, speed of decision making. Recommendation: reading at least 30 minutes every day, playing chess, brain games</p>	<p>Spiritual life → refers to the immaterial part of the human being, which is profound and helps self-knowledge, establishes behaviours, values, and how to act and react in different life situations Recommendation: meditation, yoga, religion</p>

Table 2: Self-test (author`s personal view)

<p>Self-test description: the so called self-test is an instrument that was developed for didactic use for students studying personal branding at a Communication, Public Relations and Advertising faculty from Romania. The test is based on the levels of the self, which can easily be transformed into a test that evaluates the present perception of the self and can project goals to be reached for improving the future positive perception of the self Instructions: First step - write a word or sentence describing the present situation for each type of self. Second step - you will write a word or sentence describing the desired situation in every self. Step three - you will turn the desired situation into goals to be achieved in order to improve your self-esteem and self-perception</p>
<p>The present self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical self - your body image - Cognitive self - personal beliefs - Emotional self - personal feelings and emotions - Social self - social relation - Spiritual self - existential values, aspirations, skills
<p>The future self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical self - your body image - Cognitive self - personal beliefs - Emotional self - personal feelings and emotions - Social self - social relation - Spiritual self - existential values, aspirations, skills