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## Systematic review: The formation of personal brand

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The rise of personal branding utilisation as a communication strategy within various contexts results in its concepts and elements heterogeneity. On the one hand, its popularity accelerates the development of knowledge regarding establishing a personal brand; on the other hand, it contributes to the variety of its concepts and elements that become dependent on its context. This article aims to illustrate the development of understanding toward establishing the personal brand based on its formative dimensions and also to draw a more general description from the heterogeneity of its elements. The systematic review method is used to identify, analyse, and synthesise the elements that play a role in establishing the personal brand based on the existing literature. Based on the identification and elimination process toward initial literature, twenty-one (N=21) pieces of literature were selected as relevant sources to describe the development of personal brand establishment elements. The results show that values, personalities, and expertise become the most commonly used elements in the internal dimension of personal brand establishment. Process dimensions include the process of reflection, communication, and evaluation. The external dimensions consist of the role of the third party and the setting where the personal branding activity takes place.

**Keywords:** personal brand, dimensions, elements, systematic review

#### **ABSTRAK**

Meningkatnya penggunaan kegiatan pembentukan citra diri sebagai strategi komunikasi di berbagai konteks berdampak pada heteroginitas konsep dan elemen pembentukan citra diri. Di satu sisi hal tersebut mendorong perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan terkait pembentukan citra diri, akan tetapi di sisi lain hal tersebut juga membuat konsep dan elemen pembentuk citra diri yang beragam dan sangat dipengaruhi oleh konteksnya. Kajian ini ditujukan untuk memberikan gambaran terkait perkembangan pemahaman pembentuk citra diri berdasarkan dimensi-dimensi pembentuknya dan membuat gambaran yang lebih umum dari heterogenitas elemen-elemen pembentuk citra diri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kajian sistematik untuk mengidentifikasi, menganalisis, dan membuat sintesis elemen-elemen pembentuk citra diri berdasarkan literatur-literatur yang ada. Berdasarkan hasil identifikasi dan eliminasi literatur-literatur terkait model pembentukan citra diri, didapatkan dua puluh satu (N=21) literatur yang dinilai relevan untuk dijadikan sumber dalam menjabarkan perkembangan elemen-elemen pembentuk citra diri. Berdasarkan kajian yang dilakukan terhadap literatur-literatur tersebut, nilai, kepribadian dan keahlian menjadi elemen yang paling sering digunakan dalam dimensi internal pembentukan citra diri. Dimensi proses meliputi kegiatan refleksi, komunikasi, dan evaluasi. Dimensi eksternal meliputi peran pihak ketiga serta setting dilakukannya kegiatan pembentukan citra diri.

Kata Kunci: citra diri, dimensi, elemen, kajian sistematik

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Personal brand has become widely used over the past two decades. The term "personal brand" was first introduced by Tom Peters (1997) in his article "The Brand Called You." Personal brand refers to a clear, strong, and credible public image (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009). Personal branding activities aim to build an individual's image in the minds of others. These activities serve as a crucial strategy for establishing a distinctive personal brand that is recognised, remembered, and differentiated from competitors within a specific context. The contexts for implementing personal branding strategies are varied, ranging from creating the personal brand of a content creator on social media, an employee in an institution, or a musician to a candidate for a national leadership position among different societal groups within a particular region.

Using personal branding as a communication strategy in various contexts results in a heterogeneity of concepts and elements of personal brand formation. On the one hand, this drives the development of knowledge related to personal brand formation. However, it also leads to diverse concepts and elements influenced by their contexts. This study aims to provide an overview of the development of understanding personal brand formation based on its constitutive dimensions and to create a more general depiction of the heterogeneous elements of personal brand formation. The study employs a systematic review method to identify, analyse, and synthesise the elements of personal brand formation based on existing literature. From identifying and eliminating literature related to personal brand formation models, twenty-one (N=21) relevant sources were selected to describe the development of personal brand formation elements. According to the review, values, personality, and expertise are the most frequently used elements in the internal dimension of personal brand formation. The process dimension includes activities such as reflection, communication, and evaluation. The external dimension involves third-party roles and the settings in which personal branding activities are conducted.

The increasing use of personal branding as a communication strategy contributes to advancing knowledge regarding the dimensions of personal brand formation. However, studies on personal brand formation in different contexts also result in heterogeneous elements of the dimensions of personal brand formation tailored to the context of the study. This heterogeneity in understanding the concepts of personal brand formation indicates a positive development in the study and implementation of personal brand formation concepts across various research areas. Nonetheless, synthesising these varied understandings is necessary to holistically understand personal brand formation concepts. This is evident from the findings of the study by Gorbatov, Khapova, and Lysova (2018), which categorised the concept of the personal brand into seven different concepts: (1) Human branding, (2) Impression Management, (3) Self-Promotion, (4) Image; (5) Reputation; (6) Fame; and (7) Employee branding. Despite these different concepts, they all converge on the common understanding of building an individual's image in the minds of others within a specific work context.

Applying personal branding activities in various contexts results in diverse concepts of brand formation and elements constituting a personal brand. Personal brand formation can be viewed from several dimensions, including (1) The internal dimension, which consists of attributes possessed by the individual engaged in personal branding; (2) The process dimension, which includes the steps taken and media used in personal brand formation; and (3) The external dimension, which encompasses factors outside the internal and process dimensions that can influence personal brand formation. The internal dimension is closely related to various tangible and intangible aspects inherent to the individual involved in personal branding. These attributes vary greatly based on the individual's situation. Similarly, the process dimension is influenced by the goals and context of personal branding activities, affecting the process and media used to build an individual's image in the public's minds. The external dimension is also diverse and depends on social, political, economic, and cultural situations surrounding the individual and the target audience segmentation for personal branding activities.

This study aims to identify the elements within each dimension of personal brand formation based on a literature review. By examining relevant literature, this study provides a detailed overview of the development of knowledge related to personal brand formation based on its

dimensions. Furthermore, beyond detailing the dimensions of personal brand formation, this study aims to draw a common thread from the heterogeneity of each dimension, offering a more general depiction of the dimensions of personal brand formation.

#### **METHOD**

This study employs a systematic review methodology to identify the elements of personal brand formation by examining previous literature. A systematic review is a methodology designed to identify, select, evaluate, analyse, and synthesise data from existing research to generate conclusions about what is known and unknown regarding a particular topic (Dyer & Tranfield, 2009). Furthermore, Dyer and Tranfield (2009) outline five steps in the systematic review method: (1) Formulating straightforward research questions and criteria; (2) Identifying, selecting, and assessing relevant previous studies related to the research questions; (3) Evaluating the criteria of the selected studies; (4) Analyzing and synthesising; (5) Reporting the review findings.

In this study, the researcher searched online for literature related to personal brand formation. The criteria for literature used in this systematic review include sources that provide explicit descriptions of the elements of personal brand formation. Articles that cite elements of personal brand formation from previous literature without contributing new insights about these elements will be eliminated. In such cases, the researcher will only refer to the citation source. The elements of personal brand formation in this review are categorised into three dimensions: (1) Internal dimension, related to the attributes of the individual involved in the personal brand formation activities (actor); (2) Process dimension of formation; and (3) External dimension. Based on the literature search on personal brand formation and the elimination process, the researcher identified 21 relevant sources for the review. These sources will serve as the basis for detailing the elements within each dimension of personal brand formation and synthesising the heterogeneity of these elements.

#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**Table 1 Manning the Dimensions of Personal Brand Formation

- T	Table 1. Mapping the Dimensions of Personal Brand Formation			
No	Author	Internal Dimensions	<b>Process Dimensions</b>	<b>External Dimensions</b>
1	Gardner and Martinko (1988)	Characteristic (physical attributes, attractiveness, status, power, ability); Cognition (self-concept, attributions, cognitive scripts, role expectations, expectations); Reason/drivers; affective state; Personality (self-monitoring ability, Machiavellianism, need for recognition, social anxiety); Self-awareness	Impression management: Self-presentation (verbal, non-verbal, artifactual); Alternative self- presentation;	Environmental condition (physical state, organisational culture)
2	Miles and Mangold (2004)	х	Perception (psychological contact); Interpretation (employee personal brand); Consequences (rejection, employee	Consumer response; Formal (HR system management, public relations (PR) system); Informal (influence of work culture/

			satisfaction, quality service, consumer recall, word-of-mouth communication)	colleagues, leaders/managers)
3	Roberts (2005)	Professional image received; Desired professional image; Authenticity; Credibility	Alignment between received and desired personal brand; Monitoring; Motivation; Formation (combining traditional impression management strategies and social identity)	X
4	Neale, Hughes, and Dann (2008)	Values; Personality; Advantages; Attributes; Individual/personal	х	Х
5	Walsh and Gordon (2008)	X	Determining organisational competencies that are different from their competitors; Interpreting organisational identity; Job-forming values; Interpreting job identity; Choosing groups that provide distinct images and enhance the status	X
6	Rampersad (2009)	Personal ambition (vision, mission, role); Personal brand (SWOT, goals, skills, services, attributes, field of work, brand statement, brand story, logo, and slogan); Personal balanced scorecard (critique, success factors, goals, performance, targets, improvements, actions)	Planning; Dissemination; Action; Challenges	X
7	Harris and Rae (2011)	improvements, actions) x	Personal blog; Video/photo platforms; Responses on blogs and other forums; Social ranking; Social networking; Social object; Social bookmarking; Offline networking	X
8	Haroen (2012)	Character; Skills; Strength	X X	x
9	Parengkuan and Tumewu (2012)	Key component (values, skills, behaviour);	х	Х

		Additional components (appearance, uniqueness, authenticity); Achievements; Strength; Goals		
10	Parmentier, and Fischer (2012)	Professional personal brand (skills); Media persona	Public persona signals; Creating opportunities for audience awareness	х
11	Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman (2013)	<b>Self-identity</b> (human identity);	Х	Stakeholder perspective; Managerial identity; CEO brand identity
12	Baharuddin and Kassim (2014)	Education (qualifications); Skills (communication); Interest (sources, material, subjects)	х	х
13	Gioia, Hamilton, and Patvardhan (2014)	Self-reflection (identity); Interpreting external personal brand; Others' reflection (desired external image)	Changing personal brand; Projecting personal brand	х
14	Speed, Butler, and Collins (2015)	Leaders; Policies; Parties	Х	Х
15	Zinko and Rubin (2015)	Need for positive reputation; Need for self-esteem; Need for belonging; Need for recognition	Strategic self- presentation; Observing deviations from norms (perception of individual behaviour, organisational norms); Gossip	х
16	Evans (2017)	X	Critical self- assessment; Job market trends; Specific career paths; Goals; Skills improvement; Personal brand renewal; Communicating personal brand	Response from others
17	Jones and Leverenz (2017)	Х	Brand identity formation; Positioning the brand; Personal brand evaluation	Response to E- portfolio
18	Rangrajan, Gelb, and Vandaveer (2017)	Desired personal brand; Current personal brand; Employee image consistency	Gap analysis of each element	х

19	Tarnovskaya (2017)	Personal brand profile: (Personality, Typical topics, Tone of voice, Trademarks, Brand product)	Creating a personal brand based on a personal brand profile; Promotional activities on various social media platforms; Maintaining personal brand through audience interactions	Audience interaction; Environment;
20	Gorbatov, Khapova, and Lysova (2018)	Drivers: Individual: role/industry	Sensemaking (Desired Image and accepted Identity as core image, identity extension, and brand value design (personal brand)); Self-awareness; Self-reflection; Positioning and need analysis; Seeking feedback	X
21	Bigname.com (2018)	Identity; Skills; Profession; Reason for trustworthiness; Field of works; Promise	Communication; Positioning; Investment	Audience; Competitors

#### Discussion

A comprehensive mapping of personal brand formation models was conducted using twenty-one (N=21) pieces of literature. This mapping shows that the internal and process dimensions are the two most frequently studied and elaborated dimensions in personal brand formation models in previous literature. Nine (N=9) of the reviewed models provide a general description of elements across all three dimensions of personal brand formation (applicable in various fields) (Rampersad, 2009; Bigname.com, 2018; Gorbatov et al., 2018; Haroen, 2012; Parengkuan & Tumewu, 2012; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Gioia et al., 2014; Neale et al., 2008; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). Meanwhile, twelve (N=12) other models offer more specific descriptions of personal brand formation elements tailored to the context of their study areas (Bendisch et al., 2013; Baharuddin & Kassim, 2014; Evans, 2017; Harris & Rae, 2011; Miles & Mangold, 2004; Jones & Leverenz, 2017; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Rangrajan et al., 2017; Roberts, 2005; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Speed et al., 2015; Walsh & Gordon, 2008).

Among the reviewed models, the internal dimension's most frequently used elements in personal brand formation are values and personality/character (N=9) (Rampersad, 2009; Bigname.com, 2018; Parengkuan & Tumewu, 2012; Haroen, 2012; Bendisch et al., 2013; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Gioia et al., 2014; Neale et al., 2008; Tarnovskaya, 2017). Additionally, elements related to profession and skills are also commonly considered as concepts in personal brand formation (N=7) (Rampersad, 2009; Bigname.com, 2018; Haroen, 2012; Parengkuan & Tumewu, 2012; Baharuddin & Kassim, 2014; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). Values, personality, and skills are inherent and integral to the actor in personal brand formation activities. Using these elements as drivers of the internal dimension in personal brand formation is highly relevant because personal brand formation activities are essentially aimed at presenting who the actor is to the public, thereby establishing the actor's brand positioning in the public's mind.

Some models do not provide specific stages or working mechanisms regarding the process dimension. Based on the model illustrations, researchers observed that in these models, a personal brand is formed by integrating internal and external personal brand elements proposed by the

model. Among various models describing the stages/working mechanisms of personal brand formation, seven (N=7) pieces of literature involve the process of self-reflection either to gain personal brand ideas or to evaluate personal brand in personal brand formation (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Evans, 2017; Gioia et al., 2014; Jones & Leverenz, 2017; Rangrajan et al., 2017; Roberts, 2005; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Walsh & Gordon, 2008). The process of self-presentation or communicating a personal brand is also explicitly described as one of the stages in the personal brand formation models reviewed (N=6) (Rampersad, 2009; Bigname.com, 2018; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Gioia et al., 2014; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Tarnovskaya, 2017). Furthermore, the evaluation process is considered essential to ensure the alignment between the actor's desired personal brand and the personal brand embedded in the audience's minds (N=4) (Evans, 2017; Jones & Leverenz, 2017; Rangrajan et al., 2017; Gorbatov et al., 2018). These three personal brand formation processes illustrate that activities are not merely about identifying and selecting ideas for a personal brand. Personal brand formation involves internal and external reflection and evaluation processes to ensure consistency between the desired and personal brand that will be formed in the public's mind.

Regarding the external dimension of personal brand formation, five (N=5) pieces of literature describe the involvement of others/third parties, such as audiences, competitors, or power holders, as elements that play a significant role in the personal brand formation process (Miles & Mangold, 2004; Bendisch et al., 2013; Evans, 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Bigname.com, 2018). According to these models, third parties are positioned as external factors that either respond to the formed personal brand or are considered when selecting personal brand elements to be communicated to match the actor's brand formation context, making it more readily accepted by the audience. In their impression management model, Gardner and Martinko (1988) consider various audience factors in personal brand formation, such as characteristics, cognition, perceptual selection, motivation, affective state, habits, and audience impressions. Besides third parties, including audiences, competitors, stakeholders, and consumers, the external dimension also includes the setting where personal brand formation activities occur. This setting can be physical, such as the workplace and geographical boundaries, and non-physical, such as work systems and the surrounding culture of the actor and audience (N=2) (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Tarnovskaya, 2017). Based on the reviewed personal brand formation models, the external dimension has not received as much attention and elaboration as the other two dimensions.

#### Development of Personal brand

A personal brand is a mental representation of a specific individual (actor) formed through the process of associating the individual (actor) with various internal aspects (within themselves) or external factors (surroundings) in the minds of other individuals (public). The actor conducts Personal brand formation through internal and external reflection to identify personal brand ideas, which are then communicated to the broader society, allowing the personal brand to be effectively established in the audience's minds. Personal brand formation aims to establish the actor's position in the public's mind, making the actor memorable and distinguishable from competitors, thereby enhancing the actor's competitive value in the public's evaluation process against competitors.

Internally, a personal brand can be formed from various ideas inherent in the actor, such as values, personality, and skills manifested in the actor's social life within the community. Values relate to principles and ideas that are the foundation for the actor's thinking and actions. The actor's personality pertains to how the actor builds relationships through interactions with other individuals. Skills, however, relate to the actor's role within the community. The internal dimension, which is then used as the actor's brand idea in the public's mind, also integrates into promises that shape public expectations of the actor during interactions. The uniqueness of the ideas forming the actor's brand also influences the actor's position relative to competitors in the public's mind.

The three main processes in personal brand formation activities include reflection, communication, and evaluation. Reflection involves identifying and selecting internal and

external ideas to be used as the actor's brand in personal brand formation activities. Reflection is conducted inwardly and outwardly (reflection on the public/audience) to gain insights into which ideas are suitable for personal brands in specific public segments. After self-reflection and determining the ideas to be used as a personal brand, the actor exposes these ideas to the public by communicating them directly (face-to-face) or through mediation using various communication media. After communicating the personal brand formation ideas to the public, the actor evaluates the personal brand formed in the public's mind and assesses the alignment between the formed personal brand and the personal brand intended to be established in the public's mind.

The external dimension in personal brand formation can include the public (audience, competitors, stakeholders), who not only serve as communication targets for the actor but also as groups referenced in determining personal brand ideas and as groups providing feedback on the formed personal brand. Analysis of the audience and their involvement in personal brand design is crucial to maintaining the consistency and alignment of the personal brand. Besides the public, the external dimension can also include the settings/conditions surrounding the actor and the public, significantly influencing personal brand formation. These settings can include the work/competition area and social, economic, political, and cultural situations affecting the interpretation of symbols in a specific context.

Integrating the three dimensions of a personal brand is considered capable of forming an individual's brand in the public's mind. The internal, process, and external dimensions are not isolated. The integration of these three dimensions influences the alignment between the desired personal brand and the personal brand that will be formed in the public's mind. Therefore, paying attention to these three dimensions in personal brand formation activities is essential.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This study provides an overview of the development of knowledge and the heterogeneity of the elements involved in personal brand formation. Based on its dimensions, the elements of personal brand formation can be categorised into three dimensions: (1) Internal dimension, which pertains to attributes inherent in and possessed by the actor in personal brand formation activities, such as values, personality, and skills; (2) Process dimension, which includes the series of stages undertaken to establish an individual's brand in the public's mind, encompassing reflection, communication, and evaluation; (3) External dimension, which involves external parties other than the actor that can influence personal brand formation, such as the audience, competitors, stakeholders, and the settings where personal brand formation activities take place.

The discussion on the dimensions and elements of personal brand formation provides a general framework that can serve as a foundation for personal brand formation. Each actor will have different internal and external dimensions; therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to the processes of reflection and evaluation of these dimensions to form a well-received personal brand. Furthermore, the differences in internal and external dimensions the actor possesses in personal brand formation activities also contribute to the uniqueness of the personal brand that will be formed. This uniqueness can aid in establishing a solid positioning in the public's mind.

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