



LUND UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management

The Authenticity of Personal Branding

Masters Thesis

2011-05-26

Authors:

Graham Hillgren

Karen O Connor

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how authentic online brands are created when the actual brand building process can lead to an inauthentic product.

Relevance for theory and practice:

Authenticity in personal online branding is something of an abstract concept that has been seldom examined on this level. By combining the corporate branding, personal branding and authenticity literature the idea of how to create an authentic personal online brand.

Given that attempting to create an 'authentic' online brand can be viewed as process that essentially creates a less authentic persona, there is a need for an in-depth study showing how a certain level of authenticity can be achieved.

Method:

A netnography was used to conduct this study. Five bloggers had their practices studied through observations as well as their motivations analyzed through in-depth qualitative interviews. The results of the observation and interviews were analyzed through the use of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism, Rampersad's authenticity framework and Aaker's brand personality dimensions.

Findings:

All subjects identified blogging to be the most authentic way to create a personal online brand. Using the corporate and personal brand building literature a process was derived as to how authentic online brands are created when the actual brand building process can lead to an inauthentic product. This is a new development to the field of personal online branding and will help private individuals cultivate an authentic personal online brand.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background.....	5
1.2 Problem Formulation.....	6

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Peter Montoya.....	9
2.3 Tom Peters.....	11
2.4 McNally and Speak.....	12
2.5 Blogs.....	17

3. Theory

3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.2 Definitions.....	21
3.3 Branding.....	21
3.4 Authenticity of personal branding.....	25
3.5 Authenticity and craft consumption.....	31
3.6 Motivation.....	32

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction.....	34
4.2 Netnography.....	34
4.3 Research Subjects.....	35
4.4 Conducting trustworthy online research.....	35
4.5 Conducting ethical online research.....	35
4.6 Observation.....	36
4.7 Interviews.....	38
4.8 Data Collection.....	41
4.9 Data Interpretation.....	41

5. Analysis	
5.1 Introduction.....	44
5.2 Practices.....	45
5.2.1 Blog 1.....	45
5.2.2 Blog 2.....	48
5.2.3 Blog 3.....	53
.....5.2.4 Blog 4.....	56
.....5.2.5 Blog 5.....	60
5.3 Discussion.....	63
5.4 Motivations.....	65
5.4.1 Blog 1.....	65
5.4.2 Blog 2.....	67
.....5.4.3 Blog 3.....	69
.....5.4.4 Blog 4.....	72
.....5.4.5 Blog 5.....	75
5.5 Discussion.....	77
6. Conclusions	80
7. Limitations of the study	83
8. Further Research	83
9. References	85
10. Appendices	91
10.1 Interview Questions	91

Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the last decade a paradigm shift has influenced how practitioners and academics alike interpret the branding process. Theories and practices that had existed for generations of business people have become outdated, as new avenues for creating brands have been developed. Perhaps the most interesting development in branding research has been the rise of the personal online brand. A personal online brand is a brand that is created and developed by an individual as a way of differentiating his/herself in the ever-growing digital marketplace (Schawbel, 2009). Whilst many researchers have previously focused on the role celebrity plays in building an online brand, few have analyzed how someone without notoriety is expected to create a meaningful online brand (Montoya, 2002, Peters, 2007). With the advent of an increasing number of social networking sites and people of all ages becoming more technologically literate it is vital to know the why and how for creating an effective personal online brand.

Much of the literature in this field pertains to how individuals can employ social networking sites in order to create their personal brand. With Facebook recently surpassing Google as the world's most visited website in 2010 (Personal Branding Blog, 2010) it is evident that social networking sites are integral in the creation of a personal brand. However, it is our belief that social networking sites be employed as a tool to complement and connect one's online branding efforts but must not be used exclusively as a brand-building device. In our view the most important resource in creating a personal online brand is blogging. Online branding researchers seem to be in agreement with this statement. HubSpot's 2010 analysis of Inbound Marketing states that blogs are among the most quickly expanding section of

marketers' overall budgets (Personal Branding Blog, 2010). This statistic indicates that although research in this area is critically lacking, marketers are aware of the effect that an authentic online personal brand supported through blogging can yield considerable influence and market power. Research in this area is critical in understanding the effects that blogging can have on personal online brands.

Although blogging is an effective way of creating a personal online brand, the question still remains as to if an *authentic* personal online brand can be created through blogging or any other medium for that matter. The process of branding one's self can be argued to be a process of de-authentication of a human entity. In order to analyze this paradox, we have conducted interviews with bloggers avidly creating online brands in addition to an observational analysis of their blogs to see if their practices in fact match their motivations.

1.2 Problem Formulation

The literature and theory of the burgeoning field of personal online branding leaves several gaps to be analyzed for our purposes. The first problem that arises in reviewing previous research is the lack of consistency between corporate branding and personal branding literature. Authors like Kapferer (2002), at the forefront of corporate branding research, maintain that this literature can be used in all facets when building a brand. His Brand Identity Prism is a framework that has the potential to be used in all areas of branding but thus far has only been employed when discussing corporate branding. It is our belief that this framework can be extended to include personal online branding as well through slight modifications. In terms of the personal branding literature, it is often said that company branding strategies can be employed by individuals looking to brand themselves but often the research stops there without going in depth as to what strategies to

pursue and how they relate to the personal branding paradigm. Through our study we are looking to exploit this gap by testing existing corporate branding theories on personal online brands created through blogs.

The most recent consultancy literature on personal branding comes from an academic point of view but has not been fully realized in previous studies, an important gap to note. Much of the literature is focused on aiding people at a professional level to capitalize on their personal brand through the use of social networking sites. It is useful for academics and practitioners alike to better understand what types of social networks are most suitable for personal brand building as well as how this can relate to corporate branding literature. Significant amounts of research conducted in this area points to social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter and how they can be manipulated to develop a personal online brand (Kaputa 2005, Schawbel, 2009, Shepherd, 2005). Schawbel (2009), a seminal researcher in personal branding, pushes the idea further and introduces blogging as one of the most useful tools in creating an online brand but fails to delve deeper into comparisons between what makes a brand authentic in the consumer's eye. The traditional research focusing on the large social networks fails to account for any level of authenticity in relation to a personal online brand. This study argues that authenticity is lost in a brand when the individual is forced to enter information into pre-determined fields on widely used websites. In order to be authentic one needs to remain consistent with the messaging as well as having a freer reign to manipulate and present information to his/her followers/supporters. Research needs to be conducted at greater lengths in this area in order to better understand this important field, something this study attempts to accomplish.

Continuing on the gaps in the authenticity literature, it is often unclear how one can remain authentic when promoting/marketing themselves as a brand, a construct of how one would like the world to perceive them. It can be said that branding something immediately makes it inauthentic, as it is no longer unique and original but available to the masses. The research fails to show whether or not a personal online brand can be created through blogging with a level of authenticity attached to it. Blogging is primarily focused on because, as outlined above, it is the truest form of self-expression available on the Internet. To better understand the paradox of authenticity in personal branding, motivations as well as practices of people trying to create personal online brands need to be analyzed. It is important to not only see what bloggers write/post in their workspace but also to understand how authentically their blog reflects them as people. Perhaps bloggers are not seeking authenticity in their work but previous research fails to show any signs of this. What we are eager to find in this study is how authentic online brands are created when the actual brand building process can lead to an inauthentic product. In order to delve further into this topic we have observed blogs from people of different ages and walks of life and conducted interviews simultaneously observing to see if their practices match their motivations in creating a meaningful and authentic personal brand

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature behind personal branding is concentrated from the late 1990's and follows the path of reasoning through a social and professional capacity. Many published authors in this area focus on the professional market outlining the importance of this phenomenon while providing useful case theory to support their work. Another group that have taken a keen interest in this area are consultants who pride themselves on creating meaningful steps in supporting a successful personal brand. From an academic angle the marketing literature on this area is quite scattered, where gaps and contradictions are apparent. Also, given that this is a relatively new phenomenon there seems to be little attention given to the evaluation of the practices and motivations that this process promotes. To begin the analysis and discussion of previous literature, we will begin with the pioneers of this area and then consider those practitioners and consultants who are continually examining this phenomenon.

2.2 Peter Montoya

Montoya (2002), an established author in the area of personal branding, has written a number of books on this phenomenon concentrating his efforts on defining, building and strategising in personal branding. His books are based on personal branding and his method to support his work is based on successful personal branding cases. He concentrates on cases of business individuals and celebrities in order to determine their rise to building a successful personal brand. According to Montoya, personal branding is about taking control of the process that affects how others perceive you and managing those processes strategically to help you achieve your goals. He states that you as an individual already have a brand, ' like a pearl inside an

oyster, built from layers of your behaviour and treatment of others, the results of your work and the things you say' (Montoya, 2002). Montoya believes that your personal brand affects your life in more ways than you realise. He states it can affect many areas of your professional and personal life; whether you are considered for a job or other opportunities, the credibility of your input, the amount of attention attracted to you, how competition respond to you, the goodwill or ill will of others, the perceived quality of your service and products offered, whether your unique selling proposition is distinct and valuable in society (Montoya P, Vandehey T, 2002). These realisations can be clearly outlined in Montoya's eight unbreakable laws of personal branding which are considered to be the essential characteristics that should support your identity. These laws include the law of specialisation, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence and the law of goodwill.

Montoya stresses that a great personal brand *'is a personal identity that stimulates precise meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that person stands for'* (Montoya P, Vandehey T, 2002).

Montoya (2002) is one of the pioneers in the personal branding field and has provided extensive knowledge in this area. While his work is highly regarded in the field of personal branding, we must question his method of case analysis based on celebrity and business individual branding. Considering these cases are an inadequate means to justify personal branding. While they are a great measure of success their motivations may not be comparable to an ordinary individual. While many may aspire to be a celebrity or an entrepreneur there are others that may wish to grow their brand through discreet but effective means.

2.3 Tom Peters

In 1997 Tom Peters' article 'The Brand Called You' first appeared in a trendy management magazine Fast Company, where the self help movement crossed over to the marketing and branding management sector. This is where the personal brand was born. Peters' interpretation of personal branding is one, which very much links corporate branding to personal branding. 'Big companies understand the importance of brands. Today, in the Age of the Individual, you have to be your own brand. Here's what it takes to be the CEO of Me Inc' (Peters, 2007). He examines the personal branding concentrating on the visibilities and communication *'Those in quest of a personal brand are encouraged to expose their braggables in every venue available to them by launching a full-on 'personal visibility campaign': 'When you're promoting brand YOU, everything you do – and everything you choose not to do – communicates the value and character of your brand'* (Peters, 1997: 83). In this famous article Peters expresses the need to question yourself every step of the way to ensure your brand equity is growing and strengthening constantly. He states that this can be achieved by the reinforcement of values and actions that represent these expressed feelings. While comparing an individual to a product, he asks, what makes you different? What's your pitch? What's the real power of you? What's loyalty to you? What's the future of you? (Peters, 2007). Peters' latest book [*Brand You 50*] seeks to transform the individual into an instrumental object, a product that is directed by the market. Fundamentally this is a person. Peters explains that this places a premium on those who can shift their needs and personae to accommodate changes in the market (Peters, 1997).

While Peters' work examining the movement of turning individuals into instrumental products is an interesting concept which is supported by many in the field including Montoya, what they have failed to consider is human nature, for example considering brand image and identity in

the corporate world consistency is one of the essential components. Translating this to the personal branding movement, one must consider individual needs to play a number of different roles in their lives therefore possibly conflicting with the brand building process. However this does not eliminate the need for the collaboration of corporate branding and personal branding literature, rather it confirms the consideration of authenticity when creating a personal brand.

2.4 McNally and Speak

McNally and Speak two established personal branding experts have just updated their personal branding book *Be your own brand; achieve more of what you want by being more of who you are*. The updated version was prompted due to the changes in personal branding regarding the use of social media (**McNally, Speak, 2011**). According to McNally and Speak (2002: 62): 'Defining your personal brand dimensions and refining them into a personal brand platform involves identifying the competencies, standards and style that go into each relationship people have with you' (McNally, Speak, 2011). They mirror Peters' and Montoya's transformation from the personal brand to a corporate brand stressing that in order to make a personal brand work; you need to understand how a business brand works. They also acknowledge that the principles and ideas developed and successfully applied in business are readily adaptable to aiding the creation of a personal brand (McNally Speak, 2011). In building a strong brand they offer three components set to secure this, strong brands are distinctive, relevant and consistent.

Again one could argue the relevancy of the consistency component declaring that people command different roles in their life and this consistency found in corporate branding can be hard to transfer to personal branding. Moreover at this point authenticity can be introduced as McNally and Speak introduce this area. While Montoya

and Peters touch on this in their writing, McNally and Speak highlight this area in great detail. Their approach to this area is based on the premises that values are important and they maintain that a successful brand is an accurate, genuine representation of the substance at the core of the originator be it business or individual (McNally and Speak, 2011). However in saying this there seems to be a clear contradiction which can be highlighted from their work and those previously mentioned. While the following scholars have stressed the importance and need for a personal brand delivered through corporate branding practices, explaining that an individual must present themselves as a product, they also have introduced the need for authenticity in supporting your brand which contradicts the validation and relevance of the process.

Other scholars and professional consultants in this area have also contributed to the research area offering definitions of personal branding and useful steps. Many have confirmed the very thought that brand identity in the corporate and product branding circle is similar to the personal branding process in that it entails capturing and promoting the strengths and uniqueness to a target audience (Kaputa 2005, Schawbel, 2009, Shepherd 2005). It is very clear from the literature on personal branding that this area, although new in the sense that there is little research, experts in this field are extremely confident that this phenomenon will be of great importance not only in the professional world but also on a personal level. Shepherd states that many consider personal branding to be concentrated on gaining employment however it is not exclusively used for this purpose; many people self-brand for many social reasons including dating establishing friendships or simply for self expression (Shepherd, 2005).

Personal branding literature investigated is very focused on the professional considerations associated with individual branding. Many authors and consultants have targeted the business executive to be the main focal point of their work, promoting the importance of brand strategy. Scholars have considered the rise of the enterprise culture where many have created the need for personal branding due to the competitive association with the work environment. Paul du Gay states the condition of the enterprise culture examining its connection with personal branding explaining that it creates human virtues that correspond with building your brand such as self reliance, personal responsibility, boldness and willingness to take risks (Du Gay, 1996). This theory is very apparent in other authors' books such as Fisher- Roffer's book 'Make a name for yourself'. She focuses on the corporate attraction of your personal brand. *She states that 'Building a personal brand strategy allows us to wield our truest Selves. Instead of an assault on the marketplace, we come bearing the gift of our own best qualities, packaged in a way to attract precisely the people who need us, and want us, and will appreciate us the most'* (Fisher-Roffer, 2002, p. 8). Kaputa and Wernick also support this adding that a personal brand is the method by which one demonstrates their ability to add value to the company thus providing oneself with at least some degree of security (Kaputa, n.d). This 'persona produced for public consumption' reflects a 'self, which continually produces itself for competitive circulation'and positions itself as a site for the extraction of value (Wernick, 1991). All of the following authors and consultants are focused on the requirement that in order to build a successful personal brand one must consider themselves a product presented for market consumption. However whilst elements of marketing literature can be implemented in the personal branding field, one must highlight the distinction between the literature.

Leading on from this one must consider the social implications pertained to creating a personal brand. Many people do not consider themselves as a brand, but essentially everyone is a brand. According to the personal brand group, an experienced consultancy firm, 'Personal branding is also not an option. Everyone has one; your current personal brand is positive, negative or neutral. The challenge for more professionals is that they lack the discipline necessary to define their personal brands', if you don't pick your own personal brand, others will do it for you' (The Personal Branding Group, 2008).

As the personal branding literature focuses on more of a professional level, the rise of social media has formed the need for a deeper analysis of building personal brands not just for professional consumption but rather for social. These social brands can be experienced on social media sites such as facebook, Twitter or more significantly through blogging. With the increase of the importance of having an online presence one must investigate how this can be achieved. While much of the personal branding literature has not investigated the social media tools available for personal branding, consultants in this area have. One of the most influential personal branding consultants is Dan Schawbel. Tom Peters acknowledges and commends Schawbel on his work in this area 'Dan has taken personal branding to a dimension a million miles from where I was – Tom Peters, (Schawbel, 2011). Tom Peters a pioneer behind the personal branding movement acknowledges the fact that Schawbel has taken this area to a new level introducing social media to the personal brand building process. Schawbel has introduced his book Me 2.0 Build a powerful brand to achieve career success where he concentrates on the use of social media. He incorporates all social media angles and from his research he has discovered that social media can build confidence and personal branding can bridge people with opportunities

(Schawbel, 2009). These opportunities can be often found through the use of facebook, Lnkedin and blogging. Facebook with over 200 million users it has become one of the most important branding tools for corporate and personal existence (mashable, 2011) while another tool supported by Schawbel is LinkedIn, where over 100 million professional use LinkedIn to exchange information and ideas. He also introduces blogging as a means to building a strong online personal brand. While facebook and LinkedIn offer ideal tools for building a strong brand online through their accessibility and visibility, we must consider the authentic nature that supports these tools. *'A strong personal brand is an important asset in today's online, virtual and individual age. Your personal brand should be authentic, reflect your true character; and be built on your values, strengths and uniqueness (Rampersad. H, 2008).* However while formulating and implementing an authentic brand is viable, one must consider the constraints presented online that hinder the existence of true expression or authenticity. As personal branding literature celebrates the freedom and radical individual empowerment involved in creating the personal brand, its numerous edicts and rules seriously delimit the field of possibilities within which any imagined 'authentic self ' might be performed, reducing the self to a set of purely instrumental behaviours and circumscribing its meanings within market discourse. These practices are the epitome of a process Norman Fairclough has called 'synthetic personalization' (Fairclough, 1993). As facebook and LinkedIn harness the structural constraints of these social sites and scholars and consultants in this area support the market driven corporate branding to personal branding movement, we must challenge the authentic contradiction that supports the personal branding literature. In doing this we can explore blogging as possibly an appropriate device that promotes the authentic personal brand development.

2.5 Blogs

'Blogs allow anyone with bright ideas and interesting perspectives to be heard. Blogs are personal, direct and unsanitized by marketing people. Blogs enable a personal conversation with the people directly involved in making it happen' – Don Dodge, director of business development Microsoft.

Blogging is a relatively new phenomenon within the online media sector. In the era of advanced technology, this practice has gone from strength to strength with the information sharing trend set to increase in the future (Emarketer, 2008). Not hindered by the structural constraints that surround other social media outlets, this medium gives individual an objective base to begin with the dissemination of information supporting their personal brand. While Schawbel has focused on social media as a driver for creating a strong personal brand, he has failed to highlight the blogging phenomenon as a possibly the most appropriate authentic method for personal branding exposure.

McNally and Speak express the importance of relationships in personal brand building; the challenge to building a stronger brand is to have the courage to operate authentically, to strive to find alignment with others and to be creative in applying ones special qualities to make a difference as often as possible (McNally, Speak 2011). Social media has offered an accessible method to building relationships, however with the likes of facebook and LinkedIn one must consider is the information we release a good representation of our personal brand or are we simply just giving the market what they want? Schau and Gilly found that personal homepage creators thought of their work as constructed for the public; even if they focused on friends or family, creators 'acknowledge the potential for the audience to be unlimited and undefined' (Schau, Gilly, 2003). In regards to this we are programmed to provide similar information based on the settings provided by the social sites however there are limits on self-expression and with the

market driven focus suggested by many in the field, the question arises do we lose ourselves in social media or is there a way to build an authentic personal brand through the use of the product marketing structure that the scholars in this area promote?

The personal branding literature is quite consistent among authors and consultants in this area. There is a common thread presented in the personal branding literature regarding the connection between the product and corporate branding process and the personal branding process. However while certain elements of corporate branding can be applied to the personal brand, we argue that the challenge of consistency conflicts with role theory. Just as individuals play different roles in their lives, their online presence can possess elements of conflicting roles, as a friend on facebook and a colleague on LinkedIn two different approaches can be expectable in building a personal brand. However, comparing this to corporate branding, consistency in building the brand is essential. Therefore this consideration must be implemented into the personal brand building process. While looking at the construction of personal brands through the corporate branding literature, an obstacle that can be highlighted is the object of authenticity where contradictions are apparent in the literature. There is an unavoidable conflict where on the one hand the scholars imply that an individual must respond to consumer's inline with the marketing principle, turning themselves into a product for consumption, while on the other hand they are advised to construct an authentic brand identity based on their core values, attributes and unique characteristics.

In regards to personal branding online, this is an area that is yet to be completely evaluated. While many consultants are leading the direction of this practice, within the academic society it is yet to be fully explored. The online personal branding literature that is based on social

media concentrates on facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter where structural measures constrain the self-expression of an authentic personal brand. This gap is where blogging could be promoted to direct the future of true authentic personal brands.

Chapter 3: Theory

3.1 Introduction

There are three areas within our theory section that are used to support our problem. These areas include the brand, which highlights the link between corporate and personal branding focusing on Kapferer's (1992) Brand Identity Prism, which is supported by further theory concentrating on Aakers (1997) Brand Personality Dimensions. Leading on from this the section explores theories on authenticity considering Pine & Gilmore's (2007) types of perceived authenticity, which will be used to support Rampersad's (2008) authentic personal brand model. Another theory that is acknowledged to support the study is motivational theories presented through the use of Maslow's (1954) famous Hierarchy of Needs.

The aforementioned theories were selected, as they were the most appropriate and relevant to our problem. While personal branding literature has stressed the use of corporate branding as a base for creating a personal brand, we decided to use Kapferer's brand identity prism as a model to test this. Regarding authenticity our problem seeks to identify the authentic aspirations of personal online branding, so the theory used is an insightful starting point to build our discussion. As our problem surrounds the practices and motivations of personal online branding concentrating on blogging, we have introduced theories that acknowledge motivation. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was chosen based on the fact that we continuously want to satisfy our needs, personal branding is another need that can be explained through the use of the pyramid concentrating on some levels rather than others which will be further elaborated on in the study. The theories mentioned above based on branding, authenticity and motivation all relate to each other when we consider the process of building a personal online brand. The corporate branding literature

can be used as a base, the authenticity theory challenges while acknowledging the support from branding literature and the motivation theory deepens the understanding of the initial process behind the problem.

3.2 Definitions

Brand *A brand may be defined as a name to which a set of associations and benefits has become attached in the consumer's mind. This name could be that of a product, a service, a corporate entity or even an individual"* (Bhalolia, 2004)

What is a personal brand?

A personal brand is the powerful, clear, positive idea that comes to mind when people think of you. It's what you stand for, the values, abilities and actions that people associate with you. It's a professional alter ego designed for the purpose of influencing how others perceive you and turning that perception into opportunity (Montoya and Vandehey, 2003).

Brand identity

Brand identity seeks to clarify and stimulate the meaning of a brand, its aim and inevitably what it stands for, according to Kapferer brand identity must be established before brand image in the brand building process (Kapferer, 2004). In this study brand identity is a key determinant in creating a successful personal brand, as it can be used as the basis for all practices that surrounds the subject area.

3.3 Branding

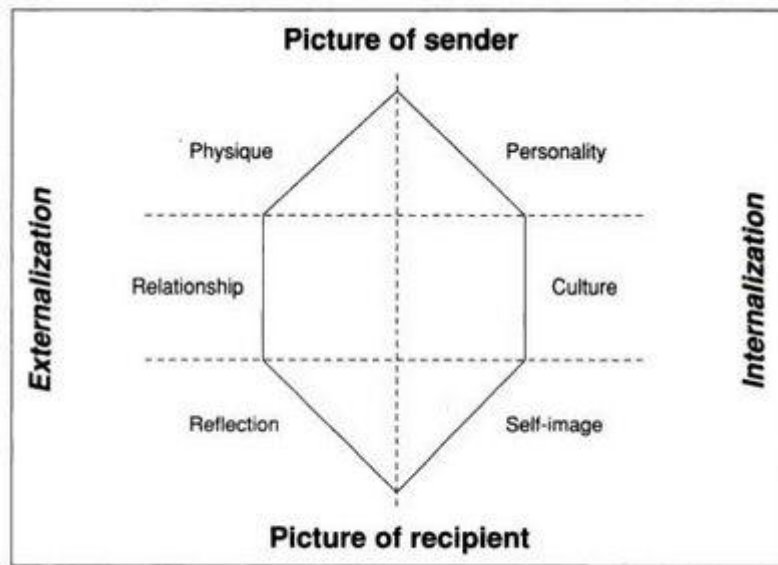
Personal branding is all about marketing yourself. The question must be posed; what channels can be used to effectively project your identity whilst securing the correct image on how you wish to be perceived by the public? In the corporate world brand identity is of great importance and now as we consider personal brand identity it is

acceptable to begin with corporate branding literature to base the understanding of the practices in analysing the means of branding yourself.

According to many personal branding advocates such as (e.g.; McNally & Speak 2002; Montoya & Vandehey 2003; Peters 1999; Roffer 2002;) the personal branding process mirrors the product or corporate branding practices. This is very apparent in the brand building identity process, where the focus is on the unique and distinctive attributes pertained to the product, company or in this case an individual. Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism is used in the academic and corporate world to establish a clear identity for the product or company (Kapferer, 2004). This model can be applied in the personal branding of an individual as some of the facets can be used to establish a clear and attractive personal brand. Arruda, an experienced brand strategist in the field of personal branding, has acknowledged three broad stages in the brand building process, which can be aligned and complemented with Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (Arruda, 2005). These stages include extract, express and exude. Firstly, the individual must look inside him or herself and find their unique attributes, their brand value, then they must construct a brand statement that reinforces their value. Finally, they must create a strategy to uphold this identity in a social, professional and personal environment. Other practitioners such as Roffler and McNally and Speak have also confirmed these stages acknowledging the similarities between the product and corporate identity to the personal individual brand identity. Roffler summaries the stages explaining the process as 'branding for people is about finding your big idea, the core you and putting it out in the universe to fulfil itself' (Roffler, 2002). According to McNally and Speak, 'Every brand, including your personal brand, contains an implicit promise and a brand promise should reflect the desire and ability to meet another specific person's needs and desires

at a particular time' (McNally and Speak 2002: 75). Just like a product or company your own personal brand is established to achieve results. However while it can be said that personal branding can be applied to corporate and product-branding practices, it is a personal benefit obtained that drives the ambition rather than a company or organisational mission. But similar to a company's long term vision McNally and Speak claim: When it comes to building a personal brand, your goal is the same as that of a business – positioning and managing your brand for long-term health and profitability (McNally and Speak 2002: 61). Linking this with Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism, the individual is responsible for their personal brand and their long-term strategy. The prism is an ideal starting point establishing the key characteristics that will steer your plan. Presented below is the prism, where the six facets set to represent you and your brand. Physique according to Kapferer is the basis of the brand, what are the physical components that would describe you. Personality applies to the emotional traits that support you. Relationship is the handshake between consumer and yourself, basically it relates to the interaction and bond built through your identity. In corporate branding, culture symbolises the organisation, this can be transferred to personal branding by acknowledging individual culture and what values the brand you stands for. Reflection is your audience's perception of what your brand stands for and self-image is how you wish to be perceived by society (Kapferer, 2004). The prism helps us decipher products, it defines what and how much to expect from the products bearing its name (Kapferer, 2004). This can be transferred to the personal branding literature as many of the facets can be incorporated into the brand building process of an individual. However aforementioned in the literature review, we must be careful when we begin to assemble the personal brand identity prism, so as not to lose the authentic character of an individual through the commercial based process. While the facets will aid the initial thought

of a personal brand, the authentic nature must surround it in order for long lasting effect of the process.

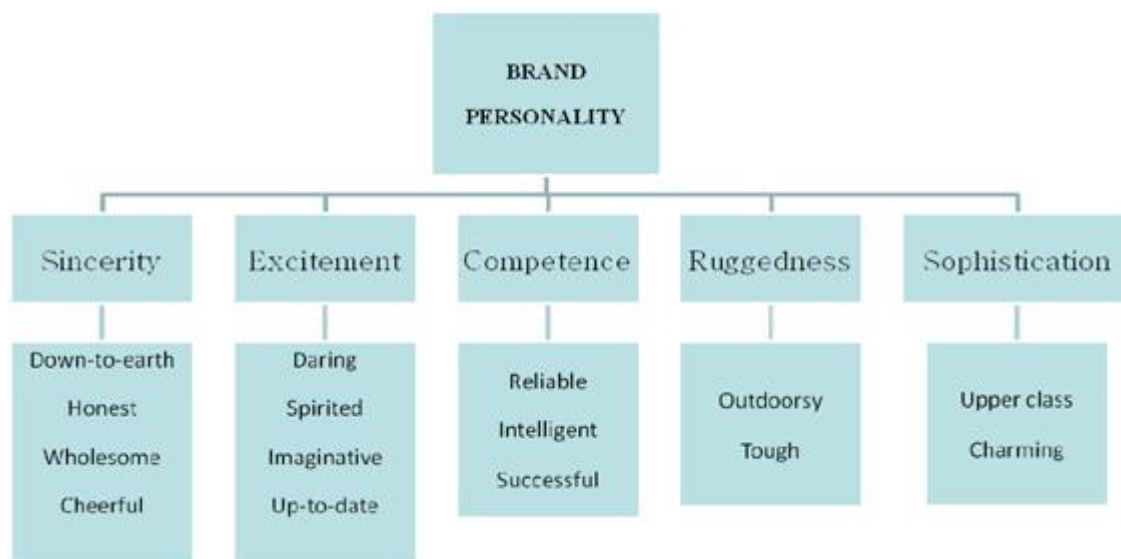


Source: Kapferer, 1992, p 38

(Kapferer, 1992).

Another theory that will support Kapferer's brand identity prism is Aaker's Dimensions of brand personality (Aaker, 1997). The personality brand construct is formally defined here as 'the set of human characteristics associated with a brand and presents the 'big five' dimensions under which personality can be identified. These five facets include sincerity, which is described as being down to earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful. Excitement includes being daring, spirited, imaginative and up-to date. While the next dimension competence offers one to be reliable, intelligent and successful. Another dimension, sophistication, can be portrayed as upper class and charming, while the final dimension ruggedness describes the outdoorsy and tough type of personality. Although human and brand personality traits might share a similar conceptualisation (Epstein,1977) they differ in terms of how they are formed. While the human personality traits can be based off individual's behaviour, physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs (Park, 1986). Contrasting this the brand personality stems from the associations built around the brand and the human contact that surrounds the brand. In this way, the personality traits of the people

associated with the brand are transferred directly to the brand (McCracken, 1989). In the case of this study, elements of both the individual and the brand personality can be identified. The blog can be a brand that is built from individual personality or brand personality based on audience participation and association, or rather it can be a combination of both. While there can be individual attributes driving the brand, it can also be shaped by the association of followers and how they contribute to the personality. Aaker's dimension considers the facets associated to the brand personality, which originate from the individual. Therefore, this theory can be applied to further elaborate the personality of personal brands.



(Aaker, 1997)

3.4 The Authenticity of Personal Branding

Authenticity means 'worthy of acceptance, authoritative, trustworthy, not imaginary, false or imitation, conforming to and original' (Cappannelli, 2004).

Following the branding theories, authenticity is an essential element that is promoted. While brands have always been commercially focused meeting the needs and wants of their consumers, the

authentic trend has arrived which initiates the positioning of brands as 'authentic' emphasising the timeless values desired by consumers while downplaying apparent commercial motives which may result in conflicting desires (Beverland, n.d). This can be a very challenging aspect for brand managers but is a trend that must be seriously considered. Authenticity is a core component of successful brands because it forms part of a unique brand identity (Aaker,1996, Kapferer, 2001, Keller,1993). As this is the case just as the marketing literature has welcomed the authenticity trend, the personal brand literature should further examine this theme. Consumers are continuously searching for authenticity within brands therefore if this is so important to them, one must consider this aspect when it comes to personal encounters and personal branding practices.

Pine and Gilmore stress this in their book 'Authenticity; what consumers really want', where they introduce the concept of perceived authenticity or how a consumer experiences a product, service, environment, communication or person (Pine, Gilmore, 2007). The theory outlines the types of perceived authenticity that can be harnessed by a product, service or individual. This concept can be used in personal branding as it highlights the different types of authenticity that can be perceived by an audience, existential, exceptional, iconic, influential, natural, original, referential, staged or symbolic (Pine, Gilmore, 2007). In identifying the type of authenticity this can be analysed against the identity prism in order to determine the correct direction of an individual's personal brand establishing how they wish to be perceived.

Types of perceived authenticity	An idea or object that . . .
Existential	[. . .] involves the existential self “Being” (Wang, 1999). According to Wang (1999), two dimensions exist: intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity. Intra-personal authenticity refers to the individual’s “bodily feelings” (p. 361) and “self-making” or self-identity (p. 365). Inter-personal or social authenticity refers to the collective self rather than the individual self
Exceptional	[. . .] is completed individually, carefully, and honestly (Gilmore and Pine, 2007)
Iconic	[. . .] is an accurate reproduction of the original (Grayson and Schulman, 2000; Grayson and Martinec, 2004)
Influential	[. . .] influences other entities and pushes people to achieve higher goals (Gilmore and Pine, 2007)
Natural	[. . .] exists in an unaltered manner (Gilmore and Pine, 2007)
Original	[. . .] is an innovative and creative design (Gilmore and Pine, 2007)
Referential, experiential, or indexical	[. . .] is inspired by some elements of the past (Gilmore and Pine, 2007; Grayson and Schulman, 2000; Grayson and Martinec, 2004)
Staged	[. . .] is presented with a certain degree of originality; that is, it also includes some recreated components to evoke the original (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973)
Symbolic	[. . .] permits different interpretations of reality based on the person’s projections on objects (Culler, 1981)

Table I.
Summary of the types of perceived authenticity

(Pine, Gilmore, 2007).

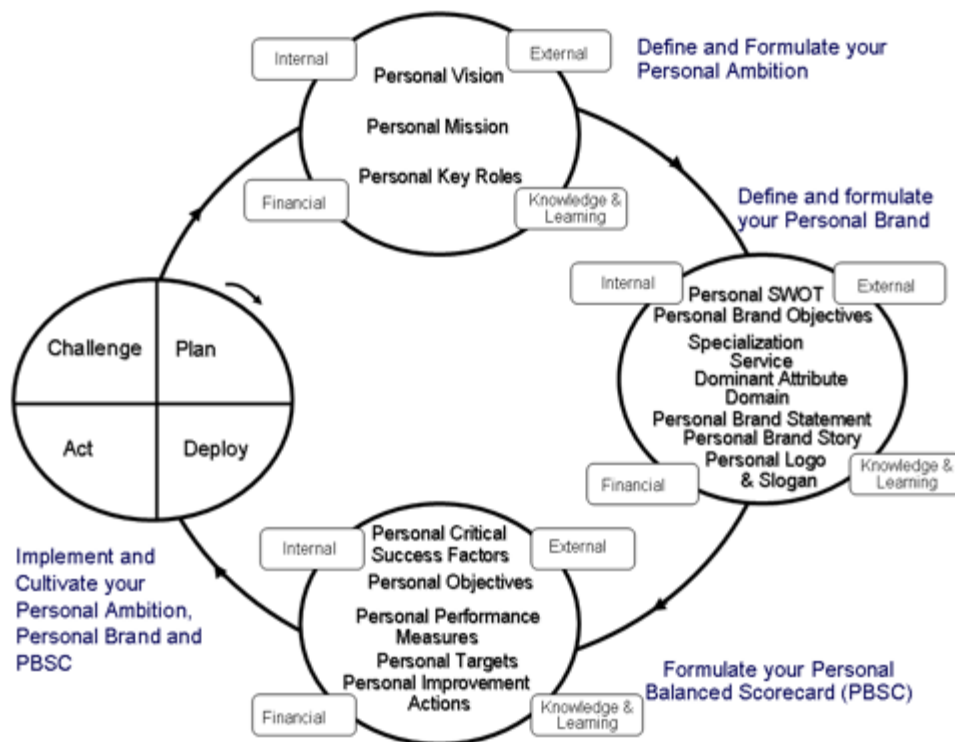
Authenticity is a popular term regarding the topic of personal branding, especially in the situation of online branding through social media. McNally and Speak, suggest that your ‘package’ should be an accurate reflection of what’s inside. They state that being authentic is a moral injunction and an important practice not just for you but society at large. The most intimate relationship you have is with yourself. Consequently, a strong personal brand is a powerful way for the world to see and value the authentic you’ (McNally, Speak, 2002). Montoya develops the notion of authenticity in his book ‘The Personal Branding Phenomenon’ where being brutally honest with one self is stressed. Creating a lasting great personal brand requires absolute authenticity, including the ability to acknowledge weakness (Montoya, Vandehey, 2002). Rampersad most recently released an interesting blueprint for building and aligning a powerful leadership brand concentrating on the authentic nature of a personal brand. His angle on personal branding is somewhat different to those in this field as he focuses more on today’s online world and the authenticity of your brand crossing

over. Rampersad focuses on the online world expressing the need for authenticity in this virtual age where many have the opportunity to be insincere. *'Your personal brand should be authentic, reflect your true character; and be built on your values, strengths and uniqueness (Rampersad, 2008).* He believes that your personal brand should emerge from your search for identity and meaning of life. If you are branded in an organic, authentic and holistic way, your personal brand will be strong, clear, complete and valuable to others (Rampersad, 2008) Alongside his blueprint, he also presents criteria for effective authentic personal branding placing emphasis on the following characteristics: authenticity, integrity, consistency, specialisation, authority, distinctiveness, relevancy, visibility, persistence, good will and performance. Rampersad's blueprint offers a roadmap to create and implement an authentic personal brand.

Rampersad's authentic personal branding model offers a holistic approach to help formulate and manage an authentic personal brand. The model consists of four stages: one, define and formulate your personal ambition. Your life long goals can be the base for which a personal brand can be constructed. It will include your core intentions and forces one to consider who they are what they stand for, how they are unique and what are their values. The model incorporates all of the above under the following a personal vision, a personal mission and personal key roles. Your ambition makes your personal brand unique as it begins with your life long goals, which create an authentic foundation on which your personal brand can be built. The second step is to define your personal brand which is inspired by your personal ambition; here one must prepare a SWOT analysis which will allow for self-evaluation in defining your personal brand. From this the creation of personal brand objectives can be formulated. An individual must also determine their specialization, concentrating on a single core talent, their main specific services and their single most leading

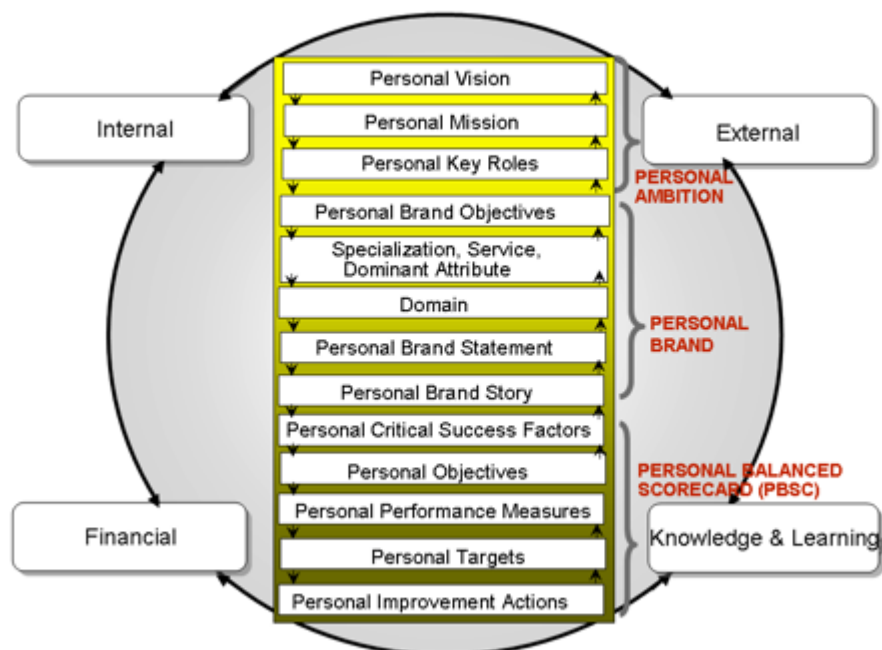
attribute. Next is to determine the audience that will connect with the brand. Once all of the above are defined, a more committed approach commences where an individual must draft their personal brand statement, their brand story, their personal logo and slogan. Step three then focuses on formulating your personal balance scorecard. While personal ambition and personal brand have no value unless action is taken, step three promotes this action that supports an individual's initial branding construction. While your personal ambition and personal brand relates to your heart and the right side of the brain, the personal balanced scorecard relates to your left side mainly having analytical, logical and quantitative functions. Here an individual outlines their critical success factors and their objectives. It also encompasses control measures to support the on-going process of brand building, including, performance measures, personal targets and personal improvement actions. This is an on-going process where evaluating your brand every step of the way is essential to building a strong long lasting brand identity. Finally, step four is implementing and cultivating your personal brand ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard by making it happen, refining who you are and where you're going. Implementation will be a continuous process and guidance comes from Rampersad's book which introduces a secure cycle for complementing the implementation process called the plan-deploy-act – challenge cycle. This cycle reinforces the need for continuous action simultaneously evaluating your personal brand every step of the way. Just like brands in business, there will always be competing brands ready to fill any gaps you leave out. However the more you strengthen, maintain, cultivate and protect your authentic personal brand the more successful you will be according to Rampersad (Rampersad, 2008).

Authentic Personal Branding Model



(Rampersad, 2008)

Authentic Personal Branding Framework



(Rampersad, 2008)

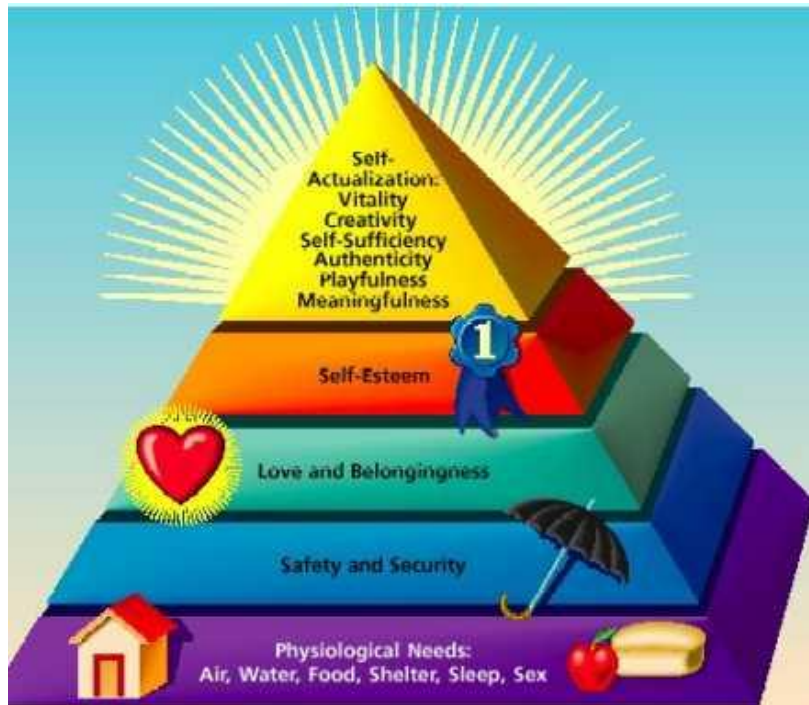
3.5 Authenticity and Craft Consumption

In this ever changing world consumers demand for authenticity has grown dramatically over the last number of years where one of the major issues in marketing is the tension that exists between authenticity and in- authenticity (Brown, 2001). This can also be transferred to personal branding where an audience of millions online search for authentic personas. An area within authenticity that is relevant to mention for this study is the sociology of consumption relating specifically to craft consumption. This theory identifies the connection between bloggers and the method of their work online. The art of blogging can be regarded as a channel for craft creation in some regards, where creative designs, videos and stories all act as a method of authentic practices. The notion of self, self expression and self-development are recently new concepts in terms of the artistic output that is generalised (Corrigan, 1997). In the past in order to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers, artists found conflict in their work, where they had to choose between creating commercial art or persisting with their own self-expression experiments (Corrigan, 1997). However they got around this choice by establishing 'expressive theory of art where artists began to not just make art to order but rather producing work that expressed their superior sensibilities (Corrigan, 1997). In this way they were able to channel their work to reflect who they are, offering their authentic work which was accepted and applauded by the consumers. In relation to bloggers, using their original work and expressing this and presenting this to an audience can be regarded as craft creation, where their blog can be used as a creative stage to expressing their superior sensibilities (Corrigan, 1997).

3.6 Motivation

In order to assume the motivations behind building a personal brand we must consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, this model is successfully used to dissect motives in many academic areas. Whilst it originated in the literature of psychology it appears regularly in marketing literature. Since our problem seeks to identify the motivations for creating a personal online brand, this theory can be used to aid the development of this realisation. As personal branding incorporates our life long goals, ambitions and values many of these needs and wants can be associated with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow states that humans have a core set of needs that must be met in order for growth and self-actualisation to occur (Mobray, 2009). These needs include physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, esteem needs and self-actualisation (Kreitner, 2006). According to Mobray a personal branding expert, in order for one's personal brand to be fully realised, the goal of branding yourself can be met with the results of life and career fulfilment (Mobray, 2009). In other words in order to develop a successful authentic personal brand one must consider where they want their brand to take them. So for some people their personal brand could be fulfilling their love and belonging, while for others the motivation behind creating a personal brand could originate from their self-esteem needs or their requirement for self-actualisation. In regards to the use of social media and aligning this with the Hierarchy of Needs, the levels can be used as an indicator to the motives behind creating an online presence. For example, the physiological needs correspond with our need for existence in the social media circuit. Our safety and security needs promote the comfort of self-expression, while our love and belonging needs are fulfilled through personal connections and engaging with an audience. Our self-esteem needs can capture our necessity to build a solid identity, a perfect image and a mechanism for voicing our opinion.

Finally our self-actualisation needs can be achieved through personal fulfilment, however according to Maslow, it is very hard to obtain, as we always seek more.



(Tuffley, 2008)

Chapter 4 –Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research is to evaluate the practices and motivations of creating a personal online brand. This will allow us to evaluate the authentic nature behind personal online branding. In conducting this research the most appropriate method is derived from a qualitative study given the nature of the problem. Our methodology will follow an abductive research strategy, which focuses on producing systematic and inclusive re-descriptions and understandings of the motives and accounts of the actors directly and intimately involved in social situations. It also involves the complex ways in which these inter-subjectively meaningful motives and accounts inform social interactions (Buchanan, Bryman, 2009). We seek to use a qualitative observational based online research method in this study, which is referred to as netnography. The observational research will be conducted simultaneously to our supporting method in-dept interviews. While the online observation is set to capture the practices of personal online branding, the in-depth interviews will be conducted to assess the motivations for creating an online presence.

4.2 Netnography

To stay current in the research world, scholars have opted to introduce netnography as a method adapted from ethnography to include the Internet's influence on contemporary social worlds (Kozinets, 2009). Netnography is an interpretive and qualitative method constructed for the specific purpose of investigating the consumer behaviour of cultures and communities existing on the Internet (Kozinets, 2009) With technology advances and the rise of social media, it is apparent that the need to follow and study interactions and practices online can be achieved by researchers seeking to analyse practices in this field. This

paper will follow the practices of bloggers analysing their brand and concentrating on the practices that surround the brand building process online.

4.3 The Research Subjects

This study will explore five blogs, exploring five personal brands. We will gather a mix of individuals based on dissimilar characteristics such as gender, age, culture, education and nationality to grasp the overall picture of the practices that harness the trend. Blogs were chosen based on their relevance to the study. We tried to choose blogs that were dissimilar in subject area but rather clear in their brand building process. We want to obtain a great understanding of how these particular bloggers present and manage their identity through their blog.

4.4 Conducting trustworthy online research

It must be highlighted that doing online research requires the same demand of trustworthiness, rigor and ethical consideration that is pertained to offline methods (Kozinets, 2009). Kozinets (2002), has outlined a research procedure for netnography to ensure trustworthy methods and information are extracted. The research procedure for netnography involves (1) making entrée (2) collecting and analysing the data (3) assuring trustworthiness interpretation (4) conducting ethical research (5) enabling cultural members to give feedback (Kozinets, 2009). This study will follow the procedure to ensure that the research will be valid.

4.5 Conducting ethical online research

Online research now offers researchers a much broader opportunity to assess issues from across the globe. However, what is quite problematic in the research field is the lack of ethical assistance in regards to online

research (Kozinets, 2009). Advisory groups although have been created to assess ethical issues associated with conducting online research, while they do not construct a procedure they merely offer the advantages and disadvantages associated. However in relation to this study they do bring a relevant ethical issue to the forefront, how unclear the distinction is between public and private domains (Russell, Purcell, 2009). For example if someone has a blog online and available for researchers to review, is that information in the public domain? While these questions remain unclear one must follow the foundation of all ethical standards results from evaluating what is morally right and legally binding (Russell, Purcell, 2009). In our study permission will be obtained from the proposed bloggers. This will acknowledge the consent needed to obtain entrance in analysing their personal brand, therefore supporting the ethical reasoning.

4.6 Observation

To analyze the practices of online personal branding an unobtrusive observation method known as netnography was deemed the most appropriate avenue to gather information. It was decided that the observation of selected peoples' online identities was the best option for a number of reasons. Obviously there are evident drawbacks that will be analyzed as well once the strengths of this method have been extolled. One primary advantage of the netnography is that it does not interfere with the process of each person's respective online branding as it is conducted unobtrusively without the presence of a researcher affecting the situation (Kozinets, 2009) Information can be gathered anonymously without the subject's knowledge that it is being collected and analyzed. This anonymity aids in accumulating real data that can then be questioned and probed through the qualitative interview. Another significant advantage to this method is that it is far more time efficient at the onset than solely conducting interviews with a wide

range of people. It is more time efficient because all of the information is at the researcher's fingertips meaning that the researchers are more easily able to ascertain the relevancy of information that will support and enhance their study. Also, an abundance of information can be collected from interview and non-interview subjects without the need to transcribe interviews, a sometimes tedious and time consuming process. An additional factor making the observation method so effective when analyzing personal online branding is that researchers are able to view what is actually happening in real time in regards to the online brands. Information can be regularly updated and the change in followers or Internet traffic to a given site can be easily tracked. A final strength of the netnography method for this topic is that different personal online brands can be compared, contrasted and interpreted in real time through the use of multiple browser windows to effectively gauge the impact that the brand is having on its followers. There is no time delay in awaiting new postings because the person creating their personal brand controls it all.

There are some drawbacks to netnography as well. First and foremost, is that tone and intention can be easily lost through printed text online. Researchers without intimate knowledge of the subjects being studied could perceivably misinterpret the message the online brand is attempting to deliver. This weakness of the method is somewhat diminished by the qualitative interviews being conducted to determine the motivations behind the practices. Another difficulty encountered when analyzing online personal brands is that there is no guarantee as to who is actually posting the material online, particularly in cases of larger personal online brands. When an online brand reaches a certain size it is conceivable that staff needs to be hired in order to keep up with the rigours of intense competition in this extremely fragmented medium, especially in the case of blogs. This diminishes the personal

quality of the online brand because it no longer absolutely reflects the thoughts of one person, but rather the approval of ideas from a team of people by the person responsible for the online brand. Furthermore, in order to conduct the research in a timely manner it is impossible to conduct interviews with everyone studied online, especially in the case of social networking sites. As previously mentioned this can result in the loss of the understanding of the intention of the posting whether it is on a blog or a social networking site.

4.7 Interviews

In-depth interviews are one of the most powerful methods in qualitative studies (MacCracken, 1996). This method allows us to explore the mental world of an individual. The interviewing process will follow a semi-structured method as while there are a number of specific questions and areas we need to focus on, there is still the freedom of flexibility pertained to the study. The bloggers will be prompted to answer all questions however they will have the freedom to divulge extra information to express themselves fully, meanwhile researchers are at liberty to direct the interview if they pick up on something interesting during the interview process (Bryman, Bell, 2007).

The qualitative interviews were selected as a method because of the relevance of motivations compared to practices when understanding how people create an online brand. For instance, a blogger may slant his/her writings or postings to condemn an individual or group of individuals. It is important to understand the biases held by a person creating an online brand. It is pertinent that we use interviews as we would like to get to the deep emotional motivations that inspire building a personal brand through blogging. This method is the most appropriate given the circumstances that surround the problem. There are several strengths and weaknesses of the methodology created which will now be discussed in detail.

As previously stated it is of the utmost importance that qualitative interviews are conducted with study subjects so that online practices and postings can be better understood. If only an online observation were to be conducted, the opinions and brand-building efforts would be subject to the biases of the researchers, which could lead to significant misunderstandings, and an inadequate analysis of information. Another distinct advantage to conducting interviews is that it allows the reader to view how the online brands have been created and strengthened over time. The online personalities are able to reflect on the choices made during the brand-building process and ultimately how it has affected their own views of their online brands. Clearly the online brands were not built overnight and it is imperative to give the subjects the ability to reflect on successes and failures that have lead to their current positions. Furthermore, qualitative interviews enable researchers to probe for pertinent information that is more specific to the study (Bryman, Bell, 2007). This means that common information can be sought and accumulated for a more comprehensive analysis on this burgeoning topic. Moreover conducting somewhat standardized interviews permit an easier comparison between online personal brands. With similar questions being asked to each studied individual, comparisons can be made on a more equal playing field. Answers to interview questions can be directly compared to other counterparts to form more direct comparisons. It is implicitly understood, however, that some leniency must exist in the interview method to accommodate new information that could be unearthed as a result of an interview question. These tangents could also guide the direction of future interviews for important information not anticipated by the researchers (Bryman, Bell, 2007).

There are also some important weaknesses of which to be cognizant in using a qualitative interview method. Perhaps the most noteworthy weakness of this method is structuring the questions in a manner that will guide the researchers to only seek and collect information that will better exemplify concrete answers to the problem proposed by the study. To reduce the risk of such an occurrence the researchers have carefully crafted a semi-structured interview where questions can be asked in an open-ended fashion that will allow the answers to speak for themselves. It is vitally important not to lead interview subjects in a predetermined direction (MacCracken, 1996). Asking interviewees about personal experiences and probing for concrete anecdotes that will enable readers to understand exactly how they have created their personal online brand can achieve appropriate results. For example, the researchers have diligently attempted to avoid 'leading' questions that will corner the subject into answering a question in the most desired manner as evidenced in the interview results available in the appendix. While this can be a potential disadvantage or weakness to such a study, the authors feel that fundamental steps have been taken to correct any misgivings about this method.

Overall, the researchers in this study have selected the above-outlined method because they feel it is the most time-efficient and relevant way to conduct this study. It is paramount to analyze not only the practices but also the motivations behind the creation of a personal online brand. While there are some drawbacks to the method, it is believed that the advantages mentioned far outweigh the disadvantages in relation to the method. Observations combined with qualitative interviews provide the most accurate picture available of how people are using their online tools to create a meaningful brand. These methods were selected because they enable the researcher to view and further understand the intricacies of creating an online

personal brand. It is the authors' hope that any oversights and gaps of information that may exist in this study can be corrected through an evolved methodology in this dynamic, burgeoning and ever-evolving area of branding.

4.8 Data Collection

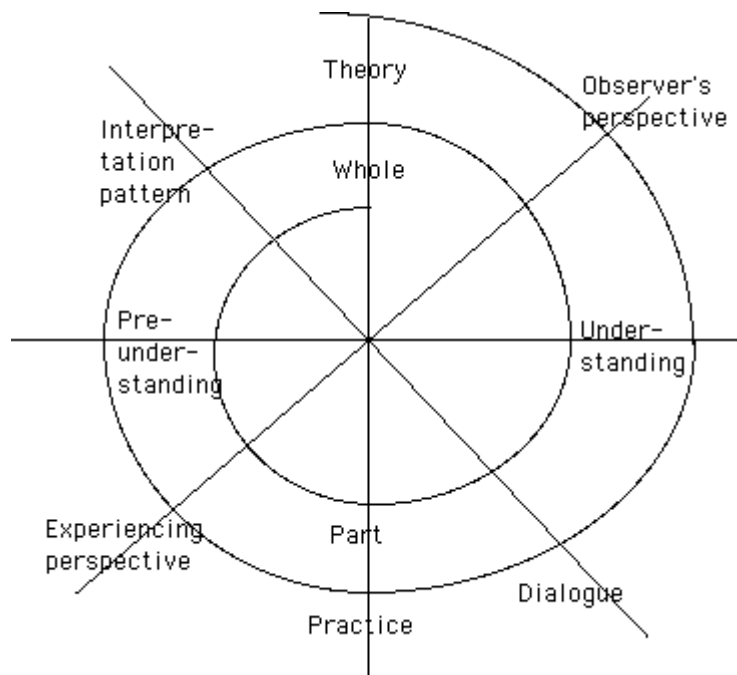
The data collection collaborated the simultaneously gathering of the observational information and the interviews. The observation consisted of analysing five different blogs. The blogs were monitored from the beginning to the most recent posts, collecting the data that supports the study. The blogs were analysed based on the personal branding literature and compared against branding and authenticity models in order to determine the practices pertained to building a personal online brand. Interesting and relevant content was extracted from the blogs in order to determine consistent practices among bloggers.

The interviews then allowed for further explanation of the motivations behind the practices in building an online brand. The five bloggers were interviewed all on separate occasions. The interviews took place in a quiet reserved area in the economics building. The interviews lasted thirty minutes where the interviewee was asked ten open ended questions, where they were given the freedom to express their motivations on creating and maintaining their blogs. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure all relevant information was submitted.

4.9 Data interpretation

Hermeneutics focuses on the problem of interpretation. Hermeneutics provides a theoretical framework for interpretive understanding or meaning with special attention to context and original purpose (**Quinn Patton, 2002**). The Hermeneutic spiral forms a motion where the interpretation moves back and forth through the spiral in order to

achieve a holistic analysis. It incorporates all stakeholders in the data collection, where the theory and understanding play an integral role in the interpretation. This method for analysis is the most appropriate for our study in line with our data collection method and problem. The explorative study will follow a hermeneutic system, moving back and forth between our observation, interview analysis and the theory that supports the study. This will allow us to capture the practices and motivations in a relevant process to ensure that all angles are explored.



(Alvesson, Skoldberg, 2009)

In assessing the credibility of this type of data collection we must also consider the analysis and interpretation of the data, whether it is trustworthy and credible in the eyes of the reader. Techniques for enhancing credibility during data collection include prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation across sources and methods (Wallendorf, Belk, 1989). During our study prolonged engagement and persistent observation will compliment our hermeneutics interpretation. The concentration will be focused on our observation of the bloggers. Our persistent observation will allow us to acquire sufficient dept of understanding to assess the quality of our

data. Along with this the credibility of our work will be further strengthened by our triangulation across sources and methods. Our five bloggers offer a rich source of relevant material that will be supported through the qualitative data collected via the interviews. The number of bloggers is significant to the study and the methods used offer a supporting role for the research to be based on.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Our exploratory study is examining the practices and motivations of bloggers in creating their personal online brand. Our method sets the structure for our analysis where we examine these areas through observation and interviews. The observation sets to identify the practices while the motivations will be analysed during the interview process. Our analysis will be supported by theories related to the topic of personal branding. During the observation analysis, Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism will be used as a means to discover which facets from corporate branding can be implemented in personal branding. Supporting this to determine personality traits, Aakers Personality Brand Dimensions will be researched and applied based on the practices of the bloggers. Moving to the motivations of personal branding through blogging, the interview answers will be investigated using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and will be further scrutinized by Rampersad's authenticity model, where the answers given by the respondents will be analysed against the data gathered during the observational analysis.

Before the data is presented, here is a brief introduction to our bloggers. Five blogs were observed from beginning to the most recent post. The following five blogs were chosen because they were so diverse in subject area, information and structure. Also they are a great mix of different nationalities, cultures, ages, genders providing rich insights into this area. Our first blog is 'out of step with the world' created by Louise Sexton 'an Irish Student specialising in Film studies. Her blog is based on popular culture focusing on the movie genre, but also personal aspects of her life are presented in tangent with her passion. The second blog we will present is 'Changarrodechunches' created by Carlos Naude. Naude is from Sweden and is a project coordinator for a marketing

agency. His personal blog is concentrated on art and design offering an array of creative posters and pictures. The third blog chosen is 'Janine in Sweden' by Janine Hem Lee, a student and single mom from Trinidad. Hem Lee's blog is a detailed account of her life in Sweden and includes the cultural shocks she encounters moving from one country to another.

The next blog is 'Jesus has herpes' created by Gabriela Calheira Diestel. Diestel is Swedish/Brazilian and works in fashion. Her blog can almost be called a confessional diary where she presents provocative subjects through text and visual aid. Contrasting this, the final blog is from Ted Vickey 'MyFitnessCaddy'. Vickey is from the USA but currently lives in Ireland; he is entrepreneur and at the moment he is studying a PHD in The National University of Ireland, Galway. His blog combines his professional and personal interests, golf, fitness and history. He is an expert in this area and has recently published a book inspired by his blog on golf fitness.

5.2 Practices

5.2.1 Blog 1:

Out of step with the world by Louise Sexton

This personal blog began in 2009 where the blogger focused on music; she began with blogging her favourite music. From there it spiralled into other interests that she had, including movies, Hollywood and art. At this stage in her blogging she uses her blog to advocate her interests, what she likes, sharing this with her followers. She posts her favourite movies and reviews them. Also in her first year she uses her blog as a tool to re-blog interesting aspects that grab her attention. Leading onto her second year, here is where it seems to get more personal, where she posts more text about her daily activities, she writes about college, what life is like for students, technology changes and the

generally challenges she is faced with in her life. From the second year on while the blogger still promotes her passions and interests, her use has shifted from a mere interest posting profile to a personal diary expressing and sharing her life experiences. Moving into the third year Louise starts to develop a complementary combination of personal postings and personal interests. Where she began to concentrate on using her passion and interests as an opportunity for self-expression, this is evident in her creation of videos inspired by the movie culture she seeks to support through her blog. During the third year of blogging there is more of a focus on her social life, where she begins to divulge information about her social plans, her excitement and her social connections. While she uses the blog to express her activities she also uses it as a tool to present the challenges she is faced with while embracing the challenges that surround the world. She writes about her financial struggles and her worries, but also acknowledges current events such as the disaster in Japan.

Analysis

This blogger's practices are very much focused on popular culture, where elements of personal life are created around this subject. The progression of her blog successful builds her brand identity through her passions and interests. In observing her activity on her blog, elements of Kapferer's (2002) Identity Prism can be identified which highlights the brand building process. Personality is definitely communicated through the blog, not only through her interest but also through her textual posts about her life. She speaks about her challenges using her blog as almost a personal diary allowing her to communicate the vulnerable side of her personality. The following quote taken from her blog is a great representation of the constant struggle that surrounds her life. Her honesty and expression of her challenges allows her readers to step into her shoes, really understanding who she is as a person.

'So basically, I had to sit in this meeting trying to convince both my tutor and myself (mainly myself) that I do deserve to be in this course despite the fact that there are ACTUAL talented film makers out there who didn't get in. I actually do give a fuck about my reputation in the industry despite the fact that on a dozen occasions I just couldn't be bothered showing up for college' (Sexton, 2011).

Based on observation and theory on brand personality, one could consider this blogger based on Aaker's Brand Personality model to fall under the sincerity dimension, the blog is down to earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful. Another facet that is well represented in the blog is relationship, in corporate branding the relationship is the handshake between company and consumer. In personal branding, specifically in regards to blogging the link is between blogger and audience. This blog has a significant amount of followers not to mention the relationship is quite interactive where followers like, comment and re-blog posts. Also the stories that Sexton posts are very engaging and relevant to the lives of many, inspiring the interaction from frequent followers.

'When fate smashes your wine bottle, you damn well better pay attention! (Sexton, 2011).

Another facet that can be identified through the blog is culture, the values you stand for. Although this blog is very focused on movie culture, elements of personal values can be identified from personal posts, where the blogger considers life and the value of life. This post really identifies Sexton's values, her appreciation for nature, life and love. It captures a moment of thought putting her life into perspective.

Today nothing can make me unhappy because my life has been put into perspective. You don't know what the day is going to bring you. To wake up to a world that is being torn apart by Mother Nature... I am blessed. Let tomorrow bring them same and my heart goes out to all in Japan' (Sexton, 2011).

Self-image is what the blogger thinks of herself. From the observation it is clear that she considers herself to be a movie critic where most of her blog is dedicated to Hollywood. She also promotes her creativity in this sector as she uses her blog as a communicative tool in creating and promoting the art of creation in movie directing. This blogger offers you tube links to her own movies. So whilst she is communicating her personal brand she is also aligning her professional brand, promoting her ideal career and her expertise in this area.

5.2.2 Blog 2:

Changarrodechunches by Carlos Naude

This blog began in April 2009 and has been consistently updated for two years. The main focus of the blog is pictorial art where interesting aspects of photography are provocatively presented. While there is not much text to support this blog, the pictures paint a thousand words. The path of artistic expression has directed the blogger to progress in creating personal meaningful pieces of art. At the launch of his blog the first year presented the work of many artists where he re-blogged interesting pictures and posters and then in the second year with his keen interest in art and design it seemed that this compelled his need to personally design in order to express himself through his blog.

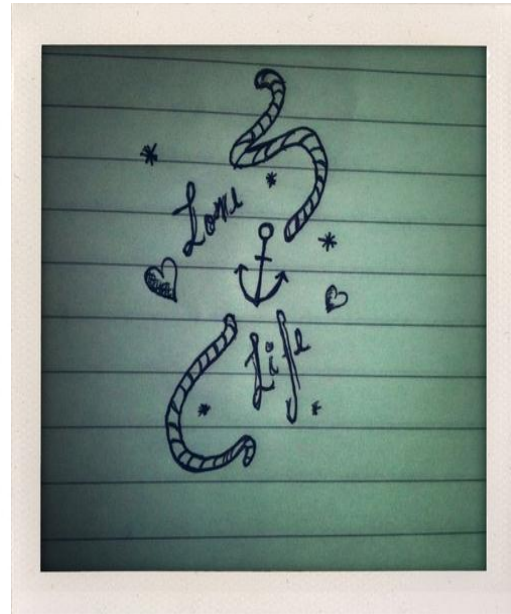
Naude's work has a provocative element that supports the use of sexual content. This is also presented in art form, but with some text to support his expression. He also promotes philosophical notions that are expressed through text, mostly concentrating on motivations of life.

Love and happiness plays a central role in his blog as he communicates this through his designs. What is interesting about his personal designs are there are text included to support the feeling, the moment, aiding the interpretation. While it seems his blog is used for self-expression, one could also observe that it is a promotion tool to enhance and support his choice of career in media and design. His postings represent his personal interests whilst simultaneously supporting his professional life. His blog seemed to be used as a progressive tool in stimulating and enhancing his creativity.

Analysis

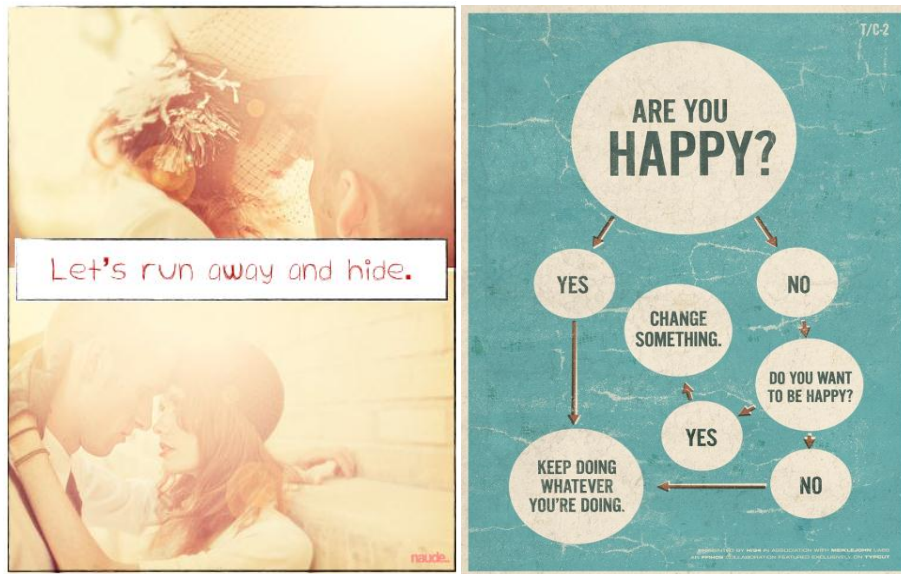
This blog is purely created through art and design. From the observation some of Kapferer's (2002) brand identity facets can be identified. What is challenging about Naude's blog is that pictures are used with little text to express who he is and what he stands for. However there is a clear trend running through his blog surrounding life, love and happiness. Beginning with the personality facet, one can appreciate his passionate creativity and love for art. While expressing his creativity he also uses provocative means to reflect his feelings. What is interesting from his blog is the pictures are very self-explanatory while his text offers clear messages his personality.

'What I create and what I find inspirational graphic design'
(Naude, 2011).



(Naude, 2011).

The above posters taken from his blog are a good representation of his personality based on the observation. These posters combine his creativity and his love for life, his daring character and his open mind. Acknowledging Aaker's personality dimensions Naude seems to fall under the excitement brand personality, describing him as daring, spirited, imaginative and up to date. His self-expression is quite innovative, different allowing one to really understand his creative passion that underline's his personality. He is imaginative and up to date in his works of art, where popular aspects are captured. Regarding the relationship facet, Naude exhibits a relationship not only through the re-blogging of other artists work but also through his own creation of inspiring art where he promotes people to comment on his work. His relationship with the world can also be identified through his pictures where he poses questions to ignite interaction.



(Naude, 2011).

Again these posters are inline with the theme of his blog, re-enforcing his creative interests and his attraction to sharing and interacting with his followers. His efforts in posing questions and answers in his work, is quite engaging and contributes to his personality type where his daring and imaginative character is expressed.

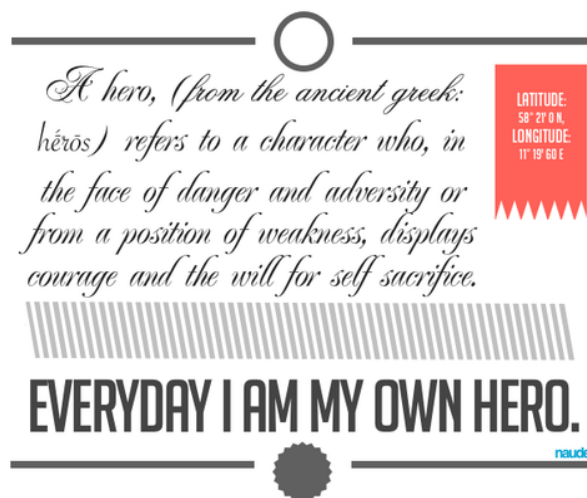
The cultural facet can be identified through the values he communicates in his work. One of the most apparent values that can be established from the observation is his keen interest and appreciation for life, love and the world. The following posters are very interesting as they really capture Naude's values presenting them in an easy going artistic fashion, where many can appreciate the meaning behind the design. The text in the posters is very informative and inspiring allowing the reader to really grasp the values behind the brand.



THIS IS YOUR LIFE.
 DO WHAT YOU LOVE, AND DO IT OFTEN.
 IF YOU DON'T LIKE SOMETHING, CHANGE IT.
 IF YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR JOB, QUIT.
 IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME, STOP WATCHING TV.
 IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE, STOP; THEY WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU WHEN YOU START DOING THINGS YOU LOVE.
 STOP OVER ANALYZING, ALL EMOTIONS ARE BEAUTIFUL. WHEN YOU EAT, APPRECIATE EVERY LAST BITE.
 OPEN YOUR MIND, ARMS, AND HEART TO NEW THINGS AND PEOPLE, WE ARE UNITED IN OUR DIFFERENCES. ASK THE NEXT PERSON YOU SEE WHAT THEIR PASSION IS, AND SHARE YOUR INSPIRING DREAM WITH THEM.
TRAVEL OFTEN; GETTING LOST WILL HELP YOU FIND YOURSELF. SOME OPPORTUNITIES ONLY COME ONCE, SEIZE THEM.
 LIFE IS ABOUT THE PEOPLE YOU MEET, AND THE THINGS YOU CREATE WITH THEM SO GO OUT AND START CREATING.
LIFE IS SHORT. LIVE YOUR DREAM, AND WEAR YOUR PASSION.

(Naude, 2011).

The self-image facet which connects what you think of yourself can be expressed through a blog. From the observation it is clear that Naude sees himself as a passionate creator. It is quite impressive his angle on art, relating it to his life and using it as a channel for self-expression. This poster below is an interesting angle on what Naude's self-image is. This statement 'everyday I am my own hero' sums up really his blog, who he is and how he wishes to be perceived. This is a strong statement proving that Naude is in charge of his life and the direction in which it will proceed.



(Naude, 2011)

5.2.3 Blog 3:

Janine in Sweden by Janine Hem Lee

Hem Lee began her blog in August 2010. It is a mostly text based blog, with few pictures to support the stories. The blog tells of her personal experience of being a single mom and moving from one country to another. The blogger begins her story from the start of her journey across the Atlantic from the USA to Sweden. Her stories are very much humor related and her daughter is featured in many. The stories set to identify cultural differences that become apparent during their integration into Swedish society. She focuses on her daily activities, her college life, raising her child and the challenges along the way. The impressive element of her blog is her ability to turn challenging aspects of her life into humorous stories divulging her secrets and insecurities. She expresses also some engaging topics such as child discipline, single parent issues and university struggles. This blog is definitely used as personal diary where Hem Lee writes about specific events that shape her life. The account of her daily activities offers her followers a chance to really consider the joys and challenges of her life. Her stories are very easily read as the hint of humor entices the reader to want more.

Analysis

From the observation it is very clear that this blogger uses this channel as a personal diary, a means to express the events of her personal life. Again considering Kapferer's (2002) Brand Identity Prism, one can argue that some of the facets are represented in Hem Lee's blog thus aiding to support the reader's interpretation of who she is. To begin, personality is an element that is quite clear as her blog is mainly text based and her writing reveal the events that shape her life; these experiences offer a glimpse of the personality type of Hem Lee. How she dictates what's important in her stories and how she deals with the

good times and the bad clearly allow the reader to identify a strong personality.

Cant feel my legs ...

I finally got the bike fitted with the child seat, so I have been cycling around Lund for a few days now. Gosh....my body is aching! I can't feel my legs, my butt hurts, and my inner thighs are screaming for mercy. I expected that my legs would be killing me...but I really can't understand why my biceps are aching too! JJ is totally enjoying riding on the bike. The first time she got on she said, "Mummy, this is sooooo fun!" She loves going downhill fast and she innocently asked me on the first day cycling, "Momma, why are you pushing the bike up the hill?" If she only knew!!! (Hem Lee, 2011).

From the observation of the blog, this piece of the story sums up the humours flavour running through Hem Lee's work. Her honesty is refreshing and an important indication of whom she really is. Acknowledging Aaker's (1996) Brand Personality Dimensions, from the observation analysis, Hem Lee could be categorised under the personality type of excitement, which considers an individual to be daring, spirited, imaginative and up to date. This quote above is a great representation of this personality type. She has accepted and embraced the challenge of cycling with her daughter and has used her spirited humour to communicate this to her followers.

Another facet that can be represented in the blog is relationship; Hem Lee has seven followers who consistently interact through comments. However it is surprising that she does not have more, as her writing is positively engaging and extremely touching. She expresses her challenges in an interactive way as to initiate relationship building.

So, I survived the first week of school....barely! Classes started on Monday and we already had the first quiz on Friday. Plus JJ got sick and I had to take her to the doctor, the babysitter ditched on me the first day she had to watch JJ, my Internet was down all last weekend, and I completely missed my first class meeting !!! (Hem Lee, 2011).

Although Hem Lee presents her challenges, her blog also seems to act as a tool for inspiring help and advice in dealing with the problems faced. It is almost as if the postings are a subtle cry for help, prompting her followers for feedback. The culture facet can also be identified from the blog in terms of the culture shock faced by Hem Lee and her daughter moving to Sweden. One interesting story that represents this shock was the Swedes' discipline techniques which clearly conflicted with the blogger's ideas.

'I realize the Swedish are big into letting kids learn a lesson. Like this one other woman I had met before at my landlord's apartment has a four year old daughter. The little girl was wearing a life jacket and was always near the lake trying to put her foot in the water. Even JJ was pointing it out to the mom saying that she might fall in and the mom said, well is she wearing a life jacket so she won't drown. She will probably catch a cold, but it's a good way for her to learn a lesson' (Hem Lee, 2011).

Self-image can also be observed in the blog. Hem Lee considers herself to be an inspiring strong person searching for happiness and fulfillment in experiences. This is represented in her strong will to embrace the challenges she is faced with and successfully succeed creating a better life for herself and her child.

You Crazy Woman!!

*I think I must be absolutely crazy for doing this. I had some highs and lows over the last few days as the reality of my situation sets in. How the *bleep* am I going to manage all this? Seriously!!! I must be crazy for real!!! Sometimes I think why didn't you guys stop me when I came up with this plan? Everyone that knows me knows how determined I am, so let me tell you how all these doubts came about' (Hem Lee ,2011).*

In the above quote Hem Lee expresses her fears in moving to Sweden to do her masters while simultaneously raising her three year old alone. The quote is an insightful identification of what she thinks of herself.... Crazy and determined and that can definitely be determined after observing her blog.

5.2.4 Blog 4:

MyFitnessCaddy by Ted Vickey

Ted Vickey created his blog in June 2007. His blog contains a lot of text coupled with links to articles and sites that he finds of interest. The blog focuses on Mr. Vickey's passions of golf, fitness and American history cultivated through his experiences as the former Executive Director of the White House Athletic Centre under the Bush, Clinton and Bush administrations. In 2007, Vickey started his blog by offering readers helpful exercises and articles that will help to improve one's physical conditioning resulting in a better golf game. As time progressed, the blogger took a more intimate approach and included more personal anecdotes of golfing experiences. As his personal online brand started to grow, Vickey also started to use his blog as a way to further his brand by marketing speaking engagements and the availability of his book, '101 Fitness Tips for Golf', that was published as a direct result of his

active blogging and growing amount of followers. As the importance of social media became more pronounced the blogger also made sure to integrate his various social networking platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn and his company website with his blog so that followers were able to follow him in a myriad of ways. Another important practice note is that the blogger writes considerably more during the spring and summer months, the traditional golf season. This allows him to capitalize on the interest in golf during this time so that readers are immediately able to take action based on his postings.

Analysis

From the observation conducted on the blog it is evident that Ted Vickey uses this blog to build and develop his personal online brand. Vickey's blog can be analyzed using Kapferer's (2002) identity prism, providing the reader with a more tangible feeling of his personal online brand. One of the most useful facets of Kapferer's prism to use when examining this blog is that of Relationship. As previously noted, the Relationship facet refers to the bond built through the brand's identity between the brand and the consumer; in this case the consumer will be referred to the follower or the reader. In MyFitnessCaddy, Ted Vickey attempts to create a bond through the reader and his personal brand by providing tips and exercises that will improve the reader's golf skills. If these tips are deemed to be useful by the reader the relationship can become stronger thereby attracting new readers through word of mouth and other viral means. Below is a sample posting of Ted Vickey creating and strengthening his relationship with his blog readers by sharing his personal expertise in the areas of fitness and golf.

'I also introduced my dentist's favorite golf fitness exercise – the 2 Minute Balance Drill. I do it every morning and every evening. I

have an electronic toothbrush that is timed for 2 minutes (it pulses every 30 seconds to remind me to switch locations)

To add some action to while I brush my teeth and to get in my balance exercise for the day – I put all my weight on my left leg, I raise my right foot. This sounds easy, but after 30 seconds of balance, you will really feel those little used muscles begging to relax. At my 30 second reminder, I switch my weight to the right leg and raise my left foot. I repeat another cycle on each side, this time raising my foot even higher and change the foot from the front to the back to the side.

Once you are comfortable with this exercise, try it with your eyes closed. You will be amazed at how much eyesight is important to balance. Do this exercise every time you brush your teeth and your balance will be off the charts'?(Vickey, 2009).

This is a concrete example as to how Mr. Vickey is able to build his relationship with his blog readers. By offering them simple, actionable tips on how to improve their fitness for their golf games he is able to create strong bonds with the readers. The bonds Vickey has created have in fact become so strong that his book, '101 Fitness Tips for Golf', landed in the top ten listings of Amazon's twice. In addition, Vickey was able to become the number one live search result for "Ted V" on www.google.ie. Using Aaker's (1996) Brand Personality Dimensions, the blogger is able to strengthen his relationship with his readers by showing them the competence of his brand. Aaker's competence dimension refers to the brand being identified as showing intelligence, reliability in success in the brand's field. With Ted Vickey's previous experience in his position at the White House and the stature that comes with being a noted author in his field he is able to exude these

qualities to the readers thereby strengthening the deep bonds they share.

Furthering the analysis of Ted Vickey's blogging practices, it is also possible to view his personality in his blog as outlined in Kapferer's (2002) Brand Identity Prism. The blogger is able to show his personality by including personal anecdotes of his life as well as sharing golf related humour with his followers. The breadth of information enables readers to learn more about the person behind the brand resulting in a stronger personal brand image because followers of the blog feel as if they are getting to know the blogger, not just his company brand. An example of how the blogger is able to show his personality is listed below with a story about returning from the British Open in St. Andrews, Scotland.

'I have a 30 minute drive to catch an early ferry back to Ireland. Drove past this little place and thought I would give it a try.

I have heard that if a bird does their droppings on you then your luck is directly proportional to the size of said dropping. If that is the case then I have enough luck for all of us. Damn seagull. He wins arse of the day'. (Vickey, 2009)

This caption, coupled with a picture that shows the restaurant at which the blogger ate, provides readers with a glimpse into the life of Ted Vickey. In this way, he is not just embodying a brand, but rather a more authentic personal online brand with which readers can form a bond. Postings like these may also prompt readers to provide their own anecdotes to the blogger making it a more interactive online environment and brand experience. Using Aaker's (1996) brand personality dimensions the personality of the blog can be described as sincerity. Aaker maintains that sincerity in a brand exists when the

brand is down-to-earth, wholesome, cheerful and honest. Vickey's willingness to poke fun at his misfortunes proves to readers that he does have a personality even though he is an expert in his field and takes golfing and fitness seriously.

5.2.5 Blog 5:

JESUSHASHERPES by Gabriela Diestel

Diestel began her blog in July 2009. Her blog is extremely diverse in nature with a lot of text about events in her life, interesting pictures she takes/finds on the internet and even recommended playlists of her favourite artists and songs of the moment. The blog speaks of her everyday life in a highly confessional and honest manner. She tries her hardest to portray her everyday life no matter in the most honest way possible. Often the blogger posts self-portraits (nude and non-nude) and speaks openly about her finances, relationships and feelings about a variety of traditional and taboo subjects. JESUSHASHERPES is definitely used as a personal diary where readers are invited to share in what most people would consider to be intimate secrets. Diestel's humorous and open stories about her everyday life and opinions invites the reader to participate at an unprecedented level in her life, whether as strictly an observer or an active participant through leaving comments and having their pictures posted online as well. There is a great deal of humour in her blog (as evidenced by the name) that while amusing to some could be viewed as highly controversial to others. Due to the controversial nature it can be derived that Diestel is seeking some sort of shock value in many of the postings she creates.

Analysis

Upon observation of JESUSHASHERPES it can be seen that the blogger has absolutely no qualms about exposing every facet of her life with

the world. Using Kapferer's (2002) Brand Identity Prism as a framework it is clear that she strives to showcase her personality to her readers. Through promoting different musical artists, speaking plainly about her relationships and informing her readers of her deepest emotions, Diestel's strong and unique personality is evident in every posting.

'There's truly something to ponder on when you first decide to date a photographer, then decide to let them take a naked/sexual picture of you, and then care when they decide to publish it.

I don't really seem to care that much about my nudity nowadays so why do i always feel a bit embarrassed when these pictures leak out on the Internet? It's not like anyone hasn't seen a cunt and a belly with cum all over before' (Diestel, 2009).

This is an extremely indicative post as to the type of confessional posting the in which the blogger engages. Also accompanying this post is the picture graphic picture in question. She could not possibly be more open and honest with her blog audience. Using Aaker's (1996) Brand Personality Dimensions to further understand the personality presented in the blog, JESUSHASHERPES falls under the excitement category, which implies that she is a daring, spirited, imaginative and up-to-date person. The above quote is a perfect example of this type of brand personality. By acknowledging that she allows nude photos to be taken of herself and claims to be only a "bit embarrassed" when they are published online, it can easily be argued that Diestel is a spirited individual.

Another facet of Kapferer's (2002) Brand Prism represented in this blog is relationship. The relationship is so easily constructed in this case due to Diestel's use of brutal honesty and the confessional quality with

which she writes. It provides the reader with not only a glimpse into her life but also about her opinions on everything from her relationships with her family and everyday occurrences in her life.

'In my confused mind I really thought I had to go to work today but as I was lying in bed yesterday I looked at the schedule and non monsieur, no shift as far as the eye could see. FUCKING A! Plan is to pay bills, paint fingernails, fuck and make a new tattoo' (Diestel, 2010).

A post such as this aids in creating relationships with people because they are able to monitor the happenings in her everyday life. By continuously posting updates about her life (sometimes several times per day) the reader is able to maintain a real-time grasp as to what is happening each day and her thoughts about the day's events. Kapferer's (2002) culture dimension can also be used to describe Diestel's personal online brand. Through her postings of party stories, her limited desire to work and her openness with her sexuality, the blogger represents the Generation Y culture to the fullest. She also frequently references current popular culture something that certainly can endear her to younger readers.

'It (the hair) was supposed to turn out purple(or lavender as I pretentiously want to call the bloody color) but Tone freaked out and washed out the bleach too soon so we never got to the stage of the fabulous grunge saga of dying your hair in the 'my little pony rainbow' of light blue, green purple and pink. I actually like it this way, Imagine growing her hair out and having even darker roots.. LOVES.

Now if there's someone that is good at smizing, it's her. And don't tell me you've never watched America's Next Top Model or you'd be lying straight to my face' (Diestel, 2010).

All of the above posts also present the reader with an idea of the blogger's self-image as well. They show someone who is open, honest and is willing to laugh at herself and admit things that embarrass her because she knows others have been in the same situation.

5.3 Discussion

In the analysis of the observation, practices were extracted from the blogs to examine the authentic nature behind the information posted. Using corporate theory and authenticity literature, the practices can now be evaluated further to identify the similarities and differences between blogging practices in order to ascertain the real authentic methods that can be used to support a personal brand.

From the observation of the five blogs, there were similarities when examining Kapferer's (2002) Brand Identity Prism in terms of the facets that can be applied in the personal branding process. Across the five blogs, the personality facet, relationship, culture and the self-image facet proved to be useful in the personal branding process in developing an online brand through blogging. While the four facets could be acknowledged from each blog, every blog was quite dissimilar in their brand connection. However, what was evident were the similarities in their approach in communicating their brand. In expressing who they were, all of the bloggers showed signs of the four facets through their work, while some used stories as an indication of personality others used visual aid to represent this. An interesting aspect that was formed from the use of the prism was the authentic nature that surrounded the blogs, every blog appeared to be different. All blogs were completely different in subject area, but showed authentic

practices through different mediums. For example with our first blogger, Sexton, her authentic personality was presented through her use of video media, where she personally posted and directed movies in which she starred. Other bloggers were noticed to use a creative element which reinforced the authentic nature of their brand. Both Naude and Diestel used images in their blog to express who they are. While Naude developed artistic posters that expressed his inner thoughts, Diestel focused on the use of photography, posting revealing pictures of herself. This creation of original work can be deemed authentic in the eyes of the audience. Considering the authenticity literature, this can be linked to Campbell's (1983) case of what he calls 'the specialist of the self, the modern artist' (Corrigan, 1997). This expressive art was an approach by individuals/artists to capture themselves, engaging in commercial craft consumption but rather emphasising the authentic notion of themselves in their work. These elements are apparent in the bloggers work while they wish to satisfy the needs and wants of their fan base, they do not want to lose their authentic self in their projections. The other two bloggers mentioned Hem Lee and Vickey also used creativity in their writing through stories and anecdotes. This creative appeal expressed their authentic approach in their blogging, as the stories told were original, expressive and emotional capturing personality attributes at every point. From the observation of practices, the most authentic blog could be proven to be one which incorporates both creative methods coupled with expressive text.

Another interesting aspect that could be noticed from the observation of the practices was the use of the blog. For example while the bloggers were all very open and honest in their blogs, the female bloggers seemed to consider a more confessional approach, using their blog as almost a personal diary. While the male bloggers though honest and expressive, it was clear they used their blog more as a

strategic tool to enhance themselves personally and professionally. Naude and Vickey both aligned their brand with their chosen career, the female bloggers used more of a subtle approach in introducing their professional careers, Sexton, for example, creates her page in line with her interests which happens to be her chosen academic path, movie culture, however the difference is, she does not hesitate to venture off the subject.

What could also be noticed from the practices were the different personality traits that reinforce a brand. Using Aaker's (1996) Brand Personality Dimensions, it was evident that the different blogs commanded different personalities, sincerity, excitement, competence were among the most popular dimensions associated with the brands. The dimensions were measured against the bloggers interests and information provided through text. These different personality types observed offers an authentic realisation of who the bloggers really are. All though some bloggers fell under the same personality dimension, their method of communication proved to be very dissimilar.

5.4 Motivations

5.4.1 Blog 1:

Out of step with the world by Louise Sexton

Sexton began blogging in 2009. From the observation it is clear the love and passion she feels for popular culture. Her aforementioned blog concentrates on the arts mainly music and movie culture. The interview began with introductory questions regarding the blog and followed with in depth questions in order to really understand the reason behind the blog. Sexton answered the following questions: why did you begin blogging and can you identify your personal reasons for blogging? Her answers were very clear. Her inspiration to blog came from her academic major, she is studying film studies. In order to express her love

for movies and in seeking exposure and triggering interest from followers she began to blog (Sexton, 2011). Sexton also shared her personal reasons for blogging saying;

'I feel that I can express myself by combining what I like and what I am interested in and use this to build relationships through my blog' (Sexton, 2011).

In relation to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Sexton seems to be motivated through love and belonging which can be fulfilled through the connections she makes as well as that, she also seeks self-esteem needs, building her confidence allowing her to build a solid identity. In her blog she writes about her social life and the challenges she faces. Her exposure of these items leads to the interpretation that she seeks advice and approval from her followers. This need for belonging was observed from her blog and confirmed through the interview process.

When we consider the authentic nature of her personal brand through the use of Rampersad's (2008) model, it is clear that Sexton has defined and formulated her personal ambition through her blog. It is very clear she is passionate about movies and this surrounds her personal brand. Her personal brand is focused on every element of this specialization which incorporates the second step. *When asked how do you choose the information you upload to your blog?* Sexton answered with no hesitation that she uploads what she likes, whether it is to do with her social life or academic career. An interesting point that she made was that her followers do have an input in her blog, if she sees that a particular person or group of people enjoyed something, this encourages her to an extent to upload more on the subject area. This proves to be quite significant point in her work. Another topic that can be examined under authenticity and was discovered through the observation and supported by the interview, the question of what

would you say your blog says about you and what would your followers say about you? Here Sexton gave an insightful answer which supported our initial observations.

'I think my blog says that I am interesting, creative, down to earth and very interested in Hollywood' (Sexton, 2011).

'My followers would say I am a little bit crazy, social and real' (Sexton,2011)

Finally to support our study we asked Sexton her opinion on social media being used as a tool for personal branding. The question implied the following, *what do you think is the best social media tool to promote yourself on the internet'?* Sexton claimed that:

'Blogging is the only social media tool that allows you to truly express yourself; it gives you the freedom to put the information how and where you want it. She also acknowledged facebook as another tool but says she spends more time on her blog as she feels it's more personal' (Sexton, 2011).

5.4.2 Blog 2:

Changarrodechunches by Carlos Naude

In April 2009, Carlos Naude created his brand. As mentioned above the blog is filled with artistic features such as, photos and posters. Our observations lead us to believe that he was simply expressing himself through creative design, however through the interview his motivations were highlighted which was quite insightful. When asked *why he began blogging?*, Naude stated;

'I began blogging as I was very interested in art and design, I wanted to create a blog so that I could share my likes and dislikes with the world' (Naude, 2011).

To further enhance this answer he was asked *'Can you identify your personal reasons for blogging?' Here, Naude gave an extensive answer that captured his motives for continuing to manage and update his blog. He expressed that what began as a pastime grew into a great love and interest. During this time he began to work in the area of marketing and graphic design where his passion for creativity promoted the continuous work on his blog. Artists that he posted inspired him to create himself through art, and this is when he began to create his own posters (Naude, 2011). While the observation study suggested much of Naude's creative work is concentrated on life, love and belonging his motivations are found to be in line with this theme. This can be associated with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs seeking for love and belonging. His creative nature is inspired by people, love and a sense of belonging linked between his professional and personal life. This was further supported through the interview especially in regards to the question on *how do you choose the information you upload to your blog?* This question proved to be very easy for Naude stating,*

'What I create and what I find inspirational graphic design'
(Naude, 2011).

This was very apparent from the observation as well, as one could notice everything and anything can be found on the blog, a mix of beautiful graphics supported by beautiful poetry or on the other hand a provocative picture supplemented by risky language.

Considering Rampersad's (2008) authenticity model, the four steps outlined form the method for creating an authentic personal brand. Naude's personal ambition is to show his creativity through his blog which is associated with the first step, his formulation, the second step is quite unique but due to the pictorial base that surrounds it, it may be hard to extract. His specialization and dominant attribute is clear; his brand statement is evident, however his personal brand story is quite difficult to depict due the creative concept where pictures are used instead of texts. However the interview allowed for the elaboration of the personal brand. Also the interview did open up the discussion of the third and fourth step where when asked *what would you say your blog says about you?* Naude confirmed exactly what was observed. He stated,

'My blog says that I am creative, open and daring. I use pictures and posters to show my creativity as I think people perceive more from visual aids rather than text' (Naude, 2011).

5.4.3 Blog 3:

Janine in Sweden by Janine Hem Lee

Hem Lee participated in our interviews offering fruitful information regarding the motivations behind her blog. The aforementioned Hem Lee began blogging in August 2010 and provided the reasoning in the interview for creating the blog.

'I started blogging so that I could improve my chances of getting employment in the Public Relations Industry in the United States. I wanted to show potential employers that I have excellent writing skills, good work ethic, the ability to handle multiple tasks at, show my personality and also that I can use social networking. I include my blog on resumés specifically for this purpose' (Hem Lee, 2011).

In relation to Maslow's theory on motivations, Hem Lee's motivation stems from the need for safety and security in her life. She uses her blog as a tool to enhance her personal brand in the professional work environment. She feels that expressing her experiences is a perfect way for employers not only to better understand who she is but rather highlighting her ability to commit herself in everything she does. What is interesting is that Hem Lee links her blog to her resumes indicating that it is a strong representation of who she is, and what she can do.

When asked about the content of her blog Janine expressed how she chooses what to blog, this was interesting as from the observation it is clear that Hem Lee presents her challenges and positive experiences

'I post about anything that is interesting or different and can also show how I handle difficult situations. I also post about my positive experiences that can show my character' (Hem Lee, 2011).

It is clear that Hem Lee gives a great deal of thought to what she blogs, she considers her target audience and divulges just enough information in order to control her personal brand image. Following Rampersad's (2008) authenticity model, Hem Lee does define her personal ambition through her blog; she seeks to gain employment while she does not explicitly provide a mission and vision she does direct her blog based on her ambitions. The second step of the model is also apparent from the blog and interview where she formulates her personal brand which can be extracted from her stories. She presents indirectly a SWOT analysis through her experiences therefore creating and implementing her personal brand.

The next few interview questions acknowledge the final two steps in the authentic branding process. Hem Lee was asked *'what would you say your blog says about you?'*

'I think my blog says I am hard-working, I can multitask, I am a great writer that can connect with the readers, and I am extremely motivated' (Hem Lee, 2011).

Here Hem Lee has identified the third step and formulated her personal balanced scorecard, she has highlighted her personal critical success factors and the observation did confirm the above. Her writing gives a great insight into her life and the challenges and opportunities presented where she has expressed her dealings showing her strong character. She does consider her audience and believes that they understand who she is. When asked how her followers perceive her, she confirmed that they would agree with how she describes herself through her blog.

Finally step four, implementing your blog, can be connected with our final questions where we asked the blogger...

Is your blog connected to any other social networking site, if so, do you feel that these sites contribute to the popularity of your blog?

Hem Lee stated that she does not connect her blog with social media sites however she does include it in her resume as she feels it is a good representation of who she is. One question that was very interesting and concluded the interview was the following; *What do you think is the best social media tool to promote yourself on the internet?*

'I think blogging and facebook are excellent social tools to promote yourself, but I feel blogging offers more control about how you want to present yourself. I would say facebook has a more personal network especially with friends, but blogging can be used in a more professional setting to present yourself' (Hem Lee, 2011).

5.4.4 Blog 4:

MyFitnessCaddy by Ted Vickey

We were granted an interview with Ted Vickey who provided valuable information as to why he created his blog and what he hoped to achieve through building a personal online brand. According to Vickey,

'Blogging was a way for me to connect with those with similar interests. I like to connect and interact with similar folks' (Vickey, 2011).

Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it can be deduced that Vickey blogs with the intention of securing loving and belonging in his life. This step in the hierarchy is determined through friendship as well as sexual intimacy. Although sexual intimacy is most likely not Vickey's main motivation for blogging the intimacy that can be shared through common interests between individuals is what he is seeking. The bloggers are able to create and build a network of people who share common interests and thus can create virtual friendships and given enough interaction between blogger and reader, perhaps more intimate and personal relationships. Another indication that Vickey is attempting to create friendships and belonging in a community can be gleaned from what he hopes his readers think of him. He comments that he aspires to be viewed as "fair, insightful and funny" (Vickey, 2011) by his followers.

When asked about his reasons for blogging, Vickey admits;

"In person, I have a friendly and outgoing personality. I hope that my blog conveys the same personality type" (Vickey, 2011).

In this vein it appears that Vickey is attempting to create an authentic personal online brand. Using Rampersad's (2008) model on authenticity it appears that he has defined and formulated his personal brand by formulating his personal brand objectives. However, Vickey also presented a somewhat contradictory view of his level of authenticity during the interview.

"I try not to say anything on my blog that I wouldn't say in person, thus what my blog says is a more cautious me. What I might say to one person in person might only be heard by that person, but on a blog, it could be heard by millions (and have a permanent record for all to see)" (Vickey, 2011).

This is where the lines between his personal and professional brand are intersecting. He is unable to remain truly authentic to his readers for fear of tarnishing his professional reputation. In this way, readers are not receiving a truly authentic version of the blogger but a projected self image that where he is promoting virtuous qualities and not necessarily all of the qualities that make him, or anyone else, human. He has taken a degree of authenticity away by trying to create a strong personal brand image. Moving on to the fourth step of Ramersad's (2008) model it is clear that Vickey has a sound implementation scheme for developing his personal online brand by integrating it with his various social networking accounts. The blogger describes that when appropriate he provides links to his LinkedIn, facebook and Twitter pages so that followers can access information about him whenever the mood should strike (Vickey, 2011).

It is obvious that although Vickey is attempting to create an authentic personal online brand, he censors himself so as not to alienate potential readers. While this can be viewed as sound business or

marketing strategy it is not necessarily conducive to creating an authentic online version of him. He is more concerned with potential stakeholders in his brand than he is with presenting any deeply held values or perhaps controversial emotions.

5.4.5 Blog 5:

JESUSHASHERPES by Gabriela Diestel

Diestel participated in an interview to discuss the motivations behind her blog postings in her typically honest and sometimes shocking manner. She started to blog because she moved to Berlin in 2006 after high school and in her words her blog describes

'Primarily my daily escapades, shown with the aspirations of being 100% honest. Secondly, I blog about things, people and music I am interested in' (Diestel, 2011).

It can be argued that Diestel is trying to achieve the highest two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Esteem and Self-Actualization. While the upper most level, Self-Actualization, is nearly impossible to reach, Diestel is attempting to attain this state by demonstrating spontaneity, an acceptance of facts and an overreaching lack of prejudice. While few individuals ever arrive at this level of enlightenment, it is undeniably what the blogger is at the very least trying to promote, if not achieve. In addition, Diestel deals with the Esteem level of the Hierarchy by exuding a great deal of confidence in her choices as well as seemingly trying to win the respect of others through her devastatingly honest posts.

When asked how she chooses the information to post or upload to her blog, Diestel iterated;

'I put a lot of time and effort in making it interesting, vibrant, cohesive and hopefully well written but the point was actually not to choose, just to upload without inhibition and fright about what others might think of it' (Diestel, 2011).

While the blogger claims not to 'choose' information to put on her blog the above quote clearly demonstrates Rampersad's (2008) first step in creating an authentic personal brand by defining and formulating her personal ambition. Her ambition is to upload without inhibition so that she can portray herself in the most honest light possible.

Through the interview it also became apparent that Diestel has also indirectly utilized Rampersad's (2008) third step in his authentic branding framework and that is creating a Personal Balanced Scorecard. Although, the blogger claims not to actively choose information present on her blog she has taken great pains in analyzing herself in the creation of her blog.

'I went in with a brutally honest attitude trying to show every side of me. Good, bad, evil, depressed, high on life, my anxiety attacks, love, sex, partners, fights, fashion, music. Every single little side which more often than not shocked a lot of people' (Diestel, 2011).

Clearly she has undertaken a great deal of self-assessment in order to reach a conclusion such as this one. Lastly, the implementation of the blog does not as closely resemble the final implementation step of the authentic brand framework but the blogger has determined why this is for her. When asked if her blog was connected to her other social networking accounts she had this to say:

'I was connected to facebook and bloglovin' for more hits but it did not do as well as I expected so I quit reminding my readers to read. It spread like wildfire on its own anyway, specially the posts that were a bit more explicit' (Diestel, 2011).

Clearly, a blog with a shock factor such as this is going to be able to spread rapidly in a viral way across the internet as people share her latest outrageous exploits with each other minimizing the need to connect her social networks into one cohesive collection. Further, because the blogger does not integrate her social media networks does not mean that she does not understand the importance in having a variety of consistent personal brand messages as evidenced in the last question of the interview.

What do you think is the best social media tool to promote yourself on the internet?

'Nowadays I definitely believe it's the all-around-bubble that you need to create for your name/brand/cause. You have to be on twitter, facebook, having a homepage with a blog, a video account and constantly building hype around you and make the thing that you're trying to market human and graspable. Make it possible for your fans to contribute and communicate with you, then you've won the game' (Diestel, 2011).

From this response, Diestel shows her understanding of sound implementation of a personal online brand, even if she is not participating in it. Part of the reason she is not attempting this implementation strategy is that she feels with the advent of newer social networking sites such as Twitter and several video hosting websites, that it is too time consuming for her to maintain all of these

accounts. The blog is her preferred method because it allows her to show a significant degree of self-expression and communicate with like-minded bloggers and readers who are looking to do the same. Although Diestel does not precisely follow every step of Rampersad's (2008) framework, it can be argued that her blog is still extremely authentic. She portrays herself in all possible lights and even though her attempt has not been to create an online brand, it seems she has developed an authentic online version of herself with thousands of followers.

5.5 Discussion

The interviews with the bloggers not only enlightened the motives behind their blogging, it also was used to further enhance the study identifying and elaborating on the findings from the observation of the practices. The interview process began with questions pertained to the motives behind the existence of the blog while Maslow's (1954) theory on motivation was used to evaluate and support the findings. The questions then focused on the authentic patterns that could be obtained through the blogs. Rampersad's (2008) model of authenticity was used to identify and highlight steps that were evident in the blog building process between the five chosen bloggers.

Differences appeared regarding the motives of blogging, while some of the bloggers used their blog for more basic needs such as safety and security and love and belonging, others strived for a more, seeking self-esteem needs and even striving for self-actualisation through their blog. The very clear motives communicated by the parties in their interviews acknowledged the authentic development of their brand. An interesting aspect to note is that those bloggers that wished to strive for self-esteem and self-actualisation needs proved provide an overall more authentic approach in their work compared with those whose motives applied to safety and security and love and belonging needs.

Those bloggers that strived for the upper level of the pyramid seemed to deliver a more real and emotional method while those seeking the lower levels of needs concentrated on using their blog to achieve friendship or work. These conflicting motives really identify the more authentic brand, as for those considering the upper levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there is no ulterior motive associated with their brand. They are simply striving to satisfy their need for expression, assurance and esteem.

Rampersad's (2008) theory on realising your personal ambition as a starting point to base your personal brand confirmed that based on their ambitions, their motives arose. This was an important aspect when it comes to the authentic nature of a personal brand as everyone will have a unique goal or ambition to fulfil. For example, with Vickey's blog he wished to build a network surrounding his expertise in the area of golf, while Diestel simply wanted to express herself and ignite the shock factor among her followers, promoting the use of the 'real self'. However while the authentic aspect surrounds their work, one must consider is this an exaggerated self portrait or is it you? The interviews really allowed us to understand the person behind the blog and it was very clear that all bloggers allocated time to think about what to post on their blogs. From this it is clear that although authentic aspects can be highlighted in blogs, there are sometimes ulterior motives that can become apparent when you examine the personal brand deeply. Although one can be authentic in their subject area and personal representation, sometimes communicating this creates one to consider the audience therefore possibly not being true to one self. However this does not diminish their authentic nature rather it supports the fact that in life we sometimes put on an act to save face and this can be transferred into the virtual world.

When we examined Rampersad's (2008) steps in building an authentic brand, it was apparent that not all steps were evident from the observation, the first two steps could be seen, the definition and formulation of the brand however the interview clarified some of the further steps. The definition and formulation of their personal brands was visual in their blogs where Kapferer's (2002) Brand Identity Prism aided realisation of these steps. The final steps including the measures and continuous implementation of the brand could be obtained from the interviews where some of the bloggers expressed their need to link their blog to other personal branding sites, while others proclaimed that their blog was enough to sustain without any promotion. However what was evident from the interview across all bloggers was their promotion of blogging as the most authentic method in personal branding. All bloggers also stressed that linking your social media profiles was an ideal method to enhance and support your brand online. It was very apparent from the interviews that the bloggers seriously considered their brand, their strategy and their implementation process.

6. Conclusions

This study set out to identify how authentic online brands are created when the actual brand building process can lead to an inauthentic product. Much of the literature has highlighted the connection between the corporate brand and personal branding, however we argue that this relationship is contradictory given that when you turn yourself into a brand this can command an inauthentic nature where you lose yourself, the real you, in branding practices. In saying this we have taken the corporate literature, personal branding literature and authenticity literature and merged them in order to evaluate the most authentic method in building an online presence.

With the rise of social media and advancement in technology we have recognised the need for the management of personal brands. Our study focused on blogs as we argue that this is the most authentic social medium in communicating personal brands. Blogs offer an unrestricted path in the communication process, where other online social mediums are bound by structural constraints. The study analysed five blogs, where the practices were evaluated through intense observation while the motivations were identified through in-depth interviews so as to really understand the personal online branding process. The main findings from the analysis provided rich information relating to the authentic nature of the personal brands. To begin with, the corporate branding literature, the use of Kapferer's (2002) brand identity prism created a base for which all blogs were evaluated in order to determine which facets could be used to capture the authentic dimensions of the brand. Four facets were confirmed to be useful in the personal brand building process, the personality facet, the culture facet, self image and relationship facet. Personality differences among bloggers were an interesting find in terms of their expressive approach to showcase their brands. Their process's proved to be very creative and authentic, where all of them used 'expressive theory of

art' (Corrigan, 1997). The most authentic findings on the blogs were those who created and posted their own original work. This authentic orientation promotes the expressive behaviours that support the use of blogs as an ideal tool for self-expression and self-promotion. Another interesting finding that came from the analysis was that of the expressive approach that surrounded the brands. While the female bloggers used their blog as a confessional diary the male bloggers concentrated their efforts on the strategic direction of their blog/brand. This subject also leads us to another finding that was focused on motives that surrounded the participants in creating and implementing their online brand. These were established at the interview stage and analysed against Maslow's (1954) theory of motivation, where we found that those who strived to fulfil self-esteem and self-actualisation needs, maintained blogs that reflected this and proved to be more authentic than those who simply created their blog for social needs. Those bloggers focusing on social needs seemed to be more conscience about their audience while those that concentrated on the higher levels of the pyramid were found to express more about and for themselves rather than giving the followers what they want. Finally from the analysis we could also acknowledge the opinions of the creators of the personal brands, where the bloggers stressed the importance of blogs to your personal brand. All of the participants in the research were completely in agreement that blogging sourced to be the most appropriate and most effective tool in building an authentic personal brand online. However we must also recognise the use of other social media options as supporting elements for the on-going promotion of a personal online brand.

Previously literature on personal branding has concentrated on creating and building a personal brand around the corporate branding literature. This study has used the corporate literature rather

as a tool to highlight the most authentic aspects of business models that fit the personal branding process. We have combined the corporate and authenticity theory in order to uncover the existence of authentic personal brands online. Prior literature has presented the steps in building a personal online brand; however the evaluations of these methods have not been fully realised. This study has allowed for the evaluation of personal branding methods as well as enriching findings pertained to authentic attributes that can enhance a personal brand online. Our findings have also supported our argument which upholds blogging to be the most authentic method of personal online branding.

This study has contributed to the literature studied in a variety of ways. First, the use of Kapferer's seminal corporate branding framework in analyzing a personal online brand is a new and valid approach to bring to his work. It enables people to identify the desired values to represent their personal online brand as determined through Rampersad's authenticity model. Consultancy literature has also received a significant contribution. By combining personal branding consultants' frameworks with academic theories and reasoning, it provides credence and depth to a field that is often overlooked by more academic writers.

The study created a more integrated and advanced framework for people to better understand how authentic online brands are created when the actual brand building process can lead to an inauthentic product. In order to create the most authentic personal online brand possible one must first use blogging so that potential followers are able to listen and understand thoughts and passions that would not be easily translatable to a traditional social networking site. Secondly, using Rampersad's authenticity framework the blogger must choose

the personality traits/passions they wish to promote through their blog so that the truest form of an online self can be conceived. Thirdly, the blogger must take the identified personality traits from the previous step and fit them into the four appropriate facets of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism. By combining these two models, bloggers are able to understand the difference between their personal attributes and how that relates to their online brand identity. We argue that if all of these steps are followed than the resulting blog will be the most authentic version of their personal online brand.

7. Limitations of the study

One limit that pertained to the scope of this study was one of time constraints that resulted in only five blogs being analyzed. While the blogs were diverse and there is a great breadth In subject matter, it would have been helpful in providing additional insight if more blogs could have been analyzed. Another limitation of the study also induced by time constraints is that avid followers of the blogs could not be interviewed. Interviewing the blog followers could have gleamed greater insight into the practices of the bloggers in the observation portion of the study. Lastly, Rampersad's authenticity model could prove to be slightly complex for the person attempting to create a meaningful online brand. If a blogger is not familiar with personal branding literature it could be difficult to accurately identify their main personality traits.

8. Future Research

An interesting pathway left open for future research are the other social networking mediums not analyzed in this study. Using the same/similar framework to this study it would be useful to try and determine the level of authenticity obtained through the other networks to provide a direct comparison with blogging. In addition,

interesting future research could also be performed in making one comprehensive authenticity framework for online personal branding, not just providing the combination of different models. Future research able to develop such a model would provide a clear framework for academics and practitioners alike to better understand the world of personal online brand management.

9. References

Books

Aaker (1996) *Building Strong Brands*; New York: The Free Press.

Alvesson, Skoldberg (2009), *Reflexive Methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*, SAGE publications.

Bryman, Bell (2007) *Business Research Methods*. 2nd edition. Oxford University Press.

Buchanan, Bryman (2009) *The SAGE Handbook of organizational research methods*, SAGE publications LTD.

Cappannelli (2004) *Authenticity; simple strategies for greater meaning and purpose at work and at home*, Emmis Books.

Carnegie (1981) *How to Win Friends and Influence People* .New York: Simon and Schuster.

Corrigan (1997) *The sociology of consumption; An Introduction*, SAGE publications.

Du Gay (1996). *Consumption and identity at work*. London: Sage.

Epstein (1977) *Traits are alive and well in personality at a crossroads*, New York; Halsted, Press/Wiley.

Fisher –Roffer (2002) *Make a Name for yourself*, Broadway Books.

Gad (2001) *4-D Branding: Cracking the Corporate Code of the Network Economy*. London: Prentice Hall.

Goffman (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Graham (2001). *Build your own life brand!: A powerful strategy to maximize your potential and enhance your value for ultimate achievement*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Grazian (2003) *Blue Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kapferer (2001) *Strategic brand management: Creating and sustaining brand equity long term*, 2nd Edition. Milford, CT, Kogan Page.

Kapferer (2004). *The New Strategic Brand Management*, London: Kogan Page.

Kaputa (2005), *UR a Brand! How Smart People Brand Themselves for Business Success*, Davies-Black Publishing, Mountain View, CA .

Kreitner (2006) *Management*, Cengage Learning.

MacCracken (1996) *The Long Interview*, SAGE.

McNally, D. and Speak, K.D. (2002) *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out from the Crowd*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

McNally, Speak (2011) 2nd Edition, *Be your own brand: Achieve more of what you want by being more of who you are*, Berrett-Koehler.

Monbray (2009) *The 10k's of personal branding: create a better you*, published by !Universe.

Montoya (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*. USA: Personal Branding Press.

Montoya, Vandehey (2003) *The brand called you; The Ultimate Brand-Building and Business Development Handbook to Transform Anyone Into an Indispensable Personal Brand*, Personal Branding Press.

Peters (1999). *The brand you 50*. New York: Knopf.

Pine, Gilmore (2007) *Authenticity; what consumers really want*, Harvard Business School Press.

Russell, Purcell (2009) *Online Research Essentials; implementing and designing research studies*, John Wiley and Sons.

Schwabel, (2009) *Dan Schwabel, Me 2.0: A Powerful Way to Achieve Brand Success*, Kaplan Publishers, New York .

Walsh (2007) *Clear Blogging: how people blogging are changing the world and how you can join them*, Apress publishing.

Wernick (1991) *Promotional Culture*. London, Thousand Oaks,CA,New Delhi: Sage.

Journals

Aaker (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, (August), 347-356.

Beverland (n.d) Brand management and the challenge of authenticity, *journal of product and brand management*, Vol. 14, No. 7, pp. 460-461.

Bhalolia, N. (2004), 'Personal Branding-Me Inc'. MBA 2004: Indian institute of foreign trade. New Delhi: India

Fairclough, Norman (1993) 'Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities', *Discourse and Society* 4(2): 133–68.

Keller (1993) Conceptualising, measuring and managing customer based brand equity, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57, No.1, pp. 1-22

Kozinets (2002) The field Behind the screen; using netnography for market research on online communities, *journal of marketing research*, Vol 39, pp. 61-72.

Lampel, Bhalla, (2007)The Role of Status Seeking in Online Communities: Giving the Gift of Experience, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* **12** (2) (2007).

Medintz, Scott (2006) 'Talkin' 'bout MySpace Generation', *Money* 35(2): 1.

Papacharissi (2002) The presentation of self in virtual life: Characteristics of personal home pages. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 79(3): 643–60.

Schau, Gilly (2003) We are what we post? Self-presentation in personal web space. *Journal of Consumer Research* 30(3): 385–404.

Shepherd, (2005) Ifan D.H. Shepherd, From Cattle and Coke to Charlie: Meeting the Challenge of Self Marketing and Personal Branding, *Journal of Marketing Management* **21** pp. 589–606.

Websites

Alexander, Kevin (2007) 'Fast Times at Make Believe High', *Boston Magazine*, January, available from www.bostonmagazine.com/articles/fast_times_at_make_believe_high/ Accessed on the 8th February 2011.

Daniel et al (2005) Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self : The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding, *Management Communication Quarterly* available from <http://mcq.sagepub.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/content/18/3/307.full.pdf+html> accessed on 08/04/11

Kaputa, (n.d.). *The art of branding*. available from www.selfbrand.com/ArtBrandingYourself.html accessed on 15/05/11

LinkedIn (2011) Join LinkedIn today, available from http://www.linkedin.com/home?trk=hb_home accessed on 25/04/11

Peters (1997) The Brand Called You, *Fast Company* available from <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/10/brandyou.html?page=0%2C1> accessed on 09/04/11

Madden et al, (2007) Mary Madden, Susannah Fox, Aaron Smith and Jessica Vitak, Digital Footprints: Online Identity Management and Search in the Age of Transparency, *Pew Internet and American Life*

Project (2007) available from www.pewinternet.org accessed on the 08/05/11

Mashable (2011), How to build your personal brand on facebook, available from <http://mashable.com/2009/04/02/facebook-personal-brand/> accessed on 25/04/11

Mashable (2011) How to: Build your personal brand on linkedIn, available from <http://mashable.com/2009/07/27/linkedin-personal-brand/> accessed on 24/04/11

Schawbel (2011) your personal brand expert, available from <http://danschawbel.com/> accessed on 25/04/11

The Personal Branding Group (2008), Personal Brand Engineering, available from http://www.thepersonalbrandinggroup.com/pb_engineering.htm accessed on 14/04/11

Tuffley, David (2008), A Life Well-Lived: a Guide to Self-Actualisation, *Griffith University*, available from <http://www.ict.griffith.edu.au/~davidt/self-actualisation.htm> accessed on 11/04/11

Blogs

Hem Lee, (2011), Janine in Sweden, available from <http://www.swedishjanine2010.blogspot.com/> accessed on 10/04/11.

Naude (2011), Changarrodechunches, available from <http://changarrodechunches.tumblr.com/> accessed on 10/04/11.

Sexton (2011), Out of step with the world, available from <http://out-of-step.tumblr.com/> accessed on 10/04/11.

Diestel (2011), JESUSHASHERPES, available from <http://www.jesushasherpes.blogspot.com/> accessed on 10/04/11.

Vickey (2011), MyFitnessCaddy, available from <http://www.myfitnesscaddy.com/blog/> accessed on 10/04/11

10. Appendices

10.1 Interview questions

1. What is your blog about?
2. When did u begin blogging?
3. Why did you begin blogging?
4. How often do you update your blog?
5. Can you identify your personal reasons for blogging?
6. What would you say your blog says about you?
7. What would your followers say about you?

8. How do you choose the information that you upload to your blog?

9. Is your blog connected to any other social networking site, if so, do you feel that these sites contribute to the popularity of your blog?

10. What do you think is the best social media tool to promote yourself on the internet?