Introduction

Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Richard Branson, Philip Knight, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, J.K. Rowling, Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Princess Diana, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods. What do all these people have in common? All of these individuals used their journey towards success as a basis to build, implement, maintain and cultivate an authentic, distinctive and memorable personal brand. However, what lessons – personal or professional – could be learned from the way these prominent individuals built their brands? Moreover, what exactly does personal branding mean? How can the concept of personal branding assist different individuals within different professions to realise their potential and to reach life and career success. Furthermore, how can academic and scientific research contribute to this topic, thus learning from the marketing field and implementing the lessons to actualise career and life success and satisfaction.

Note: This article was originally presented as a paper at the 2016 International Conference on Business and Management Dynamics (ICBMD).
Kheder (2014) refers to personal branding as the:

process of establishing a unique personal identity, developing an active communication approach of one’s brand identity to a specific target market and evaluating its impact on one’s image and reputation, to fulfil personal and professional objectives. (p. 33)

Furthermore, (Karsudjono, Christianta & Eliyana 2013):

personal branding is defined as a personal perception or emotion about a person. It is a reflection of who we are, what we believe, what we do, and how we do it. It is authentic and natural and therefore it avoids one from competition but establish a sincere focus on the value of uniqueness. (p. 628)

Thomas (2011:142–143) suggests that four critical building blocks are needed to support personal brand and to develop it into a credible, recognisable, representation of a person and their work. The four essential building blocks for personal branding are:

1. name of the brand
2. message: what the brand stands for, definite understanding of value, purpose and uniqueness
3. channel: multiple information streams to develop a value adding presence that builds value adding bridges
4. development of relationships of value, connection, partnerships and growth.

Personal branding as a topic of particular interest is evident from the large number of popular entries found on Google: at least 1 820 000 results, whilst Google Scholar shows at least 249 000 results. Amazon Books lists 2110 books when personal branding is entered into the search field. Personal branding is thus definitely a topic of interest within the public domain.

Surprisingly, when a search was done, utilising a specified search protocol, for published journal articles with regard to personal branding, only 56 articles were found of which 36 met the criteria of inclusion for analysis. It is evident that a definite limitation exists with regard to research of personal branding. This is confirmed by the fact that of these 36 articles, only 5 represented a qualitative research approach and another 6 a quantitative approach, whereas the rest (25) were position papers.

This article reports on an investigation into the current research and design strategies related to personal branding by means of a systematic literature review. A methodological framework was developed to analyse the 36 identified articles and applied to synthesise the data. The framework is inclusive of traditional research elements such as the research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity, reliability, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations. The findings may provide practitioners and academics with insight into the limited available research material, but above all indicate the status of the research approach towards personal branding.

Although personal branding has not yet been developed as an academic discipline, it is possible to report on some methodologies that have been used and to indicate future opportunities for research. A detailed explanation follows in the next paragraphs.

**Literature review**

According to Wetch (2012), the development of a personal brand begins by creating a ‘positioning pitch’ that includes all the information a person knows, understands and accepts, which then becomes the foundation of their personal brand and demonstrates an understanding of their real image and identity. Personal branding requires clear understanding of one’s own profile including personality, strengths, weaknesses, achievements, passions and how one is perceived by others. Personal branding can only be successfully achieved if aligned with a specific life or career plan followed with a well-executed plan.

The literature review reflected in this article focused specifically on the elements which should be discussed in the methodology section of an empirical report. The subheadings which follow represent common elements included in textbooks on business research, and guidelines to authors, as presented in esteemed journals (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Bryman & Bell 2014; Creswell 2013; Neuman 1997). Apart from providing these elements (research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity, reliability, measurement scales, data analysis and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations) each element is discussed with reference to the general concept as well as to specific ways in which it can be presented. The latter was done in order to guide the researcher to identify common and less common ways by which the phenomenon (personal branding) is researched, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2013). The elements discussed below were utilised as a framework to analyse the research and design strategies used by researchers in the area of personal branding.

**Research methodology**

The research methodology is the scientific approach the researcher follows to pursue the research project. Below is a description of the elements that formed an integral part of the framework and applied to analyse the research and design methodologies of the articles related to personal branding. The traditional conventional academic scientific approach was structured in a framework utilised to analyse the research strategies followed by the authors in the 36 articles identified. These traditional research elements include research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, limitation and ethical considerations (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Bryman & Bell 2014; Creswell 2013; Glesne 2011; Leedy & Ormrod 2013; Neuman 1997). Below follows a description of the traditional research elements used to analyse the 36 identified articles. Thus the research design of this article included all mentioned elements as described below:
Research paradigm

A paradigm is a set of laws, theories, methods, applications and a whole system of thinking that forms a scientific research tradition. It includes basic assumptions, questions to be answered and problems to be solved (Gringery, Barusch & Cambron 2013; McBurney 1994; Neuman 1997).

Within the business environment, paradigms may either objectively view the organisational processes and structures or see the organisation subjectively, as constructed by individuals. Four possible paradigms for the study of business or an organisation are suggested by Bryman and Bell (2014). The authors refer to a functionalist approach of problem solving which leads to rational explanation as a dominant approach within an organisation. Using the interpretative approach, the researcher questions whether the organisation exists beyond the social domain based on the experience of those working there. Then again, the radical humanist approach looks at the organisation as a social setup where research is seen as the initiation of change. Lastly, the radical structuralist assumes that the organisation is the result of structural power where relationships could end in conflict.

These four paradigms are not aligned with one another, as they are based on fundamentally opposing views. According to Bryman and Bell (2014), a paradigm influences the choice of research design and data collection as either qualitative or quantitative, or even a multiple approach. Choice of a paradigm is thus used as a starting point in research which leads to the research design as indicated by Mouton (1996) and discussed in the next paragraph.

Research design

Research design is the approach followed to investigate the problem at hand, inclusive of a structure to collect and analyse data. This research strategy could be qualitative or quantitative research or, in some cases, a combination, as indicated by Leedy and Ormrod (2013). Quantitative research focuses on theoretical explanations, concepts, variables and the interrelationship based on the testing of formulated hypotheses in an empirical manner. To ensure future replication, measures and intended procedures are predeveloped and standardised. Analysis normally takes place by using statistics, tables and charts (Neuman 1997). Qualitative research captures and discovers meaning whereas measures are setting-specific. Data may be obtained from documents, observations and transcripts. Research procedures are specific, and replication is normally rare. Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalisations from evidence and organising data to present a coherent and consistent picture (Neuman 1997).

Sampling refers to the process where a researcher will select a subset or sample of the population so that the results could be used to provide general results relating to the entire population. Two major categories of sampling exist, namely, (1) probability sampling and (2) non-probability sampling. The type of sampling a researcher will select will depend on the aims and methods of the research as well as other characteristics, such as the time and resources available. Probability sampling allows each person an equal possibility to be chosen. It uses random selection, which allows for minimum error (Leedy & Ormrod 2013). Types of probability sampling are simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, proportional stratified sampling, cluster sampling as well as systematic sampling (Bryman & Bell 2014; Leedy & Ormrod 2013). With non-probability sampling, however, it is not possible to predict or guarantee that elements within a particular population will be represented, which means that some members have little to no opportunity to be sampled for a specific study. Convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling are all non-probability sampling types (Neuman 1997).

To ensure that data of any topic can be interpreted and compared to a specific qualitative or quantitative standard, the data should be limited through measurement. The following paragraph explains the measurement scales used to order data during a research project.

Measurements

Measurement is the assignment of numbers to events or objects according to rules that permit important properties of the objects or events to be represented by properties of the number system. Four types of measurement scales are common: nominal scale, ordinal scale, interval scale and ratio scale (Leedy & Ormrod 2013; McBurney 1994).

Reliability and validity are central issues in scientific measurements. Different techniques are followed for quantitative and qualitative studies. Reliability refers to an indicator’s dependability, indicating that the information provided by indicators does not vary as a result of characteristics of the indicator, instrument or measurement device itself. It is expected that measuring instruments will offer consistent results (Leedy & Ormrod 2013; Neuman 1997). In business or social research, focus is placed on inter-rater reliability (that will evaluate the same item with the same judgement), test–retest reliability (that the same results will occur on different occasions), equivalent form reliability (that different instruments will produce the same outcome) and internal consistency reliability (for all items, the same instrument will produce the same results as indicated by Leedy and Ormrod (2013).

Both reliability and validity reflect the degree to which error is possible in measurement. Measurement can only be accurate if measured consistently. When the reliability of a measurement instrument is increased, the validity also increases (Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

The validity of a measurement instrument is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. The validity of a measurement instrument can take
different forms that include face validity (on the surface it looks like measuring as expected), content validity (it reflects the various parts of the content domain in appropriate proportions), criterion validity (results correlate with results from another instrument) and construct validity (it measures patterns of a characteristic that cannot be directly observed) (Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

When conducting qualitative research, external reliability, internal reliability as well as internal and external validity are recommended (Bryman & Bell 2014).

In qualitative research, validity is sometimes referred to as ‘trustworthiness’, which could be described as engagement and persistent observation over a longer time to facilitate trust. When applying multiple data collection methods, sources, investigators and theoretical approaches, triangulation occurs. It includes peer review and debriefing to ensure additional independent evaluation. Other techniques used to bring about trustworthiness include a search for negative cases to un-confirm the proof, explicit clarification of research bias and subjectivity, verification of thoughts and documentation as well as external independent review. Lastly an adequate research context is ensured through thick and rich writing (Bryman & Bell 2014; Creswell 1998; Glesne 2011).

Data analysis and interpretation

‘Data analysis’ refers to a search for patterns in data. Once a pattern is identified, it is interpreted of with regard to a theory or the setting within which it occurred, thereby providing a possible deeper interpretation of its meaning (Neuman 1997).

Although qualitative data analysis is less standardised than quantitative data analysis, it requires more effort by the researcher who is required to read, reflect and compare in a logical way through conceptualisation as well as open, axial and selective coding (Glesne 2011; Neuman 1997).

Quantitative researchers, in contrast, follow an approach of deductive reasoning, beginning with a premise and then drawing logical conclusions from that. Objectivity is maintained through predetermined statistical procedures with objective criteria to evaluate the outcomes. Data is typically reduced to means, medians, correlations and summarising statistics. One or a few variables are identified with the intention to study and collect data relating to those variables, with a focus on the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments (McBurney 1994).

Five types of main variables are relevant within quantitative research. These include dichotomous, nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio variables. Univariate analysis refers to one variable at a time, whilst bivariate analysis refers to analysing the relationship between two variables. Univariate analysis use frequency tables and diagrams. Measures of central tendency use the arithmetic mean, median and mode, whereas measures of dispersion use the range and standard deviation. Bivariate analysis uses contingency tables, and the techniques include the Pearson’s correlation coefficient $r$, Spearman’s $\rho$ as well as $\phi$ and Cramér’s $V$. Furthermore, to verify the level of statistical significance techniques, the chi-square test is used. Some researchers manage to combine elements of both approaches, in which case the research is referred to as having a mixed-method design (Bryman & Bell 2014; Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

Limitations

Authors should acknowledge the weak points of their own studies and should indicate areas where they can be improved. The reviewer has the responsibility to ensure that the limitations are clearly indicated, particularly when the quality of the studies reviewed are not good (Green, Johnson & Adams 2006; White & Schmidt 2005).

Ethical considerations

Whenever the subjects or participants are human beings or other creatures that can feel, think and experience distress, researchers should evaluate the implications of the research approach and the effect thereof on these subjects or participants. Most ethical considerations during research fall into the following categories referring to the subjects or participants: protection from harm, voluntary and informed participation, right to privacy and honesty with professional partners. Internal review boards and professional codes of ethics play a critical role to ensure ethical research. Researchers should align with the standards of the different bodies (Bryman & Bell 2014; Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

This section concludes the discussion of the theoretical framework. In the following section, the application of the framework during the analysis phase of the study is demonstrated, with reference to research and design strategies applied in previous studies concerning personal branding.

Methodology

Data were gathered by broadly using the search guidelines set by Kable, Pich and Maslin-Prothero (2011). The data extraction was done independently by two authors, and the results were compared (White & Schmidt 2005).

The approach followed two steps to review the relevant methodology systematically. Firstly, a literature search was performed, and secondly, there was a selection of relevant studies guided by the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which are described in the paragraph below. The review was performed by both authors.

The purpose was to analyse scientific methodology (research strategies) used previously in studies relating to personal branding. The searched terms used were personal brand*, individual brand*, professional brand*, self-brand*, and
self-marketing. The asterisk allows the search engine to use all variations of the word; thus, including terms such as ‘branding’, ‘brands’ and ‘branded’, as an example. Publications which appeared between 2002 and 2014 were included in the search. The search was initiated on 17 June 2014, and a wide bouquet EBSCOhost and ProQuest database were used. A full list is attached as Appendix 2.

The search was further limited to full-text publications in English. Only articles which were identified as peer-reviewed were included. Although it is the ideal to have a complete operational protocol (White & Schmidt 2005:57), it was only developed after some pilot searches. Many clearly promotional titles were found, despite the specification that results should reflect peer-reviewed articles. These were excluded, as Babbie and Mouton (2012) caution that only information or data that is accepted by the scientific community should be included in building the body of knowledge.

The initial search also yielded results pertaining to the link between individuals and product brands, such as ‘Place branding: creating self-brand connections and brand advocacy’ (Kemp, Childers & Williams 2012). These and similar articles typical of consumer behaviour were excluded. The search was completed on 19 June 2014 using the search engines, inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as search terms as indicated above. In total 56 articles were captured during the computer search, after excluding duplications in the reach of the EBSCOhost and ProQuest bouquets. After both authors had reviewed the list, a total of 36 articles met all criteria.

The elements of research as indicated under the sections research methodology, research paradigm, research design, measurements, data analysis and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations were used as a framework to analyse the articles and are discussed in the Findings below.

Findings
In total, 56 articles were located through the search strategy. Finally, only 36 articles were analysed after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study. The analysed articles are presented in the reference list. The Journal of Marketing Education (N = 2) and European Journal of Marketing Management (N = 2) both published two articles each, but no other journal published two or more articles. No author published more than one article. In the sections that follow, the findings will be discussed with regard to the elements of the framework utilised.

Research paradigm
It was possible to identify and report the paradigm reflected as a set of laws, theories, methods and applications that form the scientific research tradition of the articles. In total, only six articles were quantitative, reflecting a positivistic critical-rationalistic approach that acknowledges that the truth is revealed through a focus on the rejection of the nil hypotheses. The five qualitative articles suggested the presence of hermeneutics. The position papers (in total 25 articles) also relied on hermeneutics. In most cases, the authors of the articles viewed their assumptions about certain elements of the body of knowledge in the way they gave explanations of the phenomenon. It may therefore be stated that the field of personal branding is dominated by interpretive hermeneutics towards knowledge creation, which is seen as the subjective human understanding of the phenomenon personal branding obtained by means of the process of interpretation and dialogue (Gringery et al. 2013; McBurney 1994; Neuman 1997). The next paragraph provides insight into the research design strategies identified in the analysed articles.

Research design strategies
The research design describes the general strategy planned and developed to address the research objective (Leedy & Ormrod 2013). In total, 6 articles followed a quantitative research approach (inclusive of variables, causal relationships and hypothesis testing), 5 articles followed a qualitative research approach (captured and discovered meaning from documents, observations and transcripts), whereas 25 articles were position papers (reviewing information and forming a subjective opinion (Leedy & Ormrod 2013; Neuman 1997). The next paragraph offers a reflection of the sampling methods in the different articles that were analysed.

Sampling
Sampling is a process of selecting cases systematically for inclusion in a research project. The framework in Table 1 both provides a summary of the identified sampling procedures and shows how it was applied to analyse the sampling approach followed in the articles (Leedy & Ormrod 2013; Neuman 1997).

Based on the summary presented in Table 1, it is clear that the sampling method used most frequently was probability sampling, with three cases of simple random sampling and two cases of cluster sampling. A propositional stratified sample was used in one of the articles. When non-probability sampling was used, it was only purposive sampling. This occurred in five cases. No evidence of stratified random, systematic, convenience and quota sampling could be identified. Most papers were position papers, which is the reason for the absence of any sampling technique in 26 of the 36 articles. This is the most striking feature of Table 1. The next section provides an overview of the types of measurement scales used in the 36 articles that were analysed.

Measurements scales
Four types of measurement scales are available for the limiting of data so that it can be interpreted. Table 2 simultaneously summarises the framework to analyse the
The validity of a research project is anchored in its credibility, its meaning and its correctness. Validity empowers the researcher to draw value-adding and defensible conclusions from the available data. Reliability, on the other hand, focuses on the consistency of how a measurement instrument provides results (Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

Only four of the six quantitative studies presented information on the validity of their measurements, which included content and construct validity. No evidence of face and criterion validity could be identified. Furthermore, 32 of the 36 articles did not give any attention to any validity technique.

To ensure accurate measurement, the instruments utilised should provide consistent results. Table 4 demonstrates the reliability approaches identified in the articles used (Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

Again, only four of the six quantitative studies presented information on the reliability of their measurements. This included inter-rater reliability, test–retest reliability as well as composite reliability. On the other hand, 32 articles did not specify any reliability approach followed. The paragraph ‘Data analysis and interpretation’, under the heading ‘Findings’, reports on data analysis and the interpretation of the data.

Data analysis and interpretation

Typically, a researcher will look into data analytically to gain new insights and discover new research objectives. Patterns are identified and interpretation for further meaning is performed. Either qualitative (inductive reasoning) data analysis approaches are followed or otherwise quantitative (deductive reasoning) data approaches are followed. Table 5 indicates the different data analysis approaches identified.

Again, only five qualitative approaches were followed. Six approaches were quantitative and 25 approaches did not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5: Frequency of use of data analysis and interpretation approaches.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis and interpretation approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative (inductive reasoning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative (deductive reasoning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data analysis (positioning paper)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leedy & Ormrod 2013
follow any data analysis and interpretation route as they were pure positioning papers. Based on the information discussed in this section, a summary of the limitations indicated in the articles is presented in Limitations.

Limitations
It is of the utmost importance that during the review of academic articles, the reviewer indicates the limitation identified (White & Schmidt 2005). In only four articles, the researchers explicitly report the limitations of their studies. A brief summary of the limitations offered by the articles reviewed follows:

• Article 19 indicated that the basis for the construction of the data set was largely the CVs of 30 scholars in the field with no standardised format, and not all factors were reported on in a consistent manner (Noble et al. 2010).
• Article 21 indicated that the sample of the study was limited to business students from a single business school (McCorkle et al. 2006).
• Article 27 indicated that the research finding did not present a picture of the entire student population (Rigopoulou & Kehagias 2008).
• In Article 29, a low response rate influenced the results negatively (Schults & Sheffer 2012).

However, 32 articles did not indicate any specific limitations.

Ethical considerations
Table 6 indicates and reports on the ethical considerations reflected or identified in the research described in the articles reviewed (Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

Only one article (Article 19) focused on the voluntary and informed participation right of respondents, and one article indicated the right to privacy, whereas no reference was made to internal review boards or professional ethical codes in any of the articles.

For Article 19, the subjects in the sample received a cover letter from the principal investigator describing the nature of the study, ensuring confidentiality and asking for cooperation (Noble et al. 2014). In Article 33, students were assured of anonymity, and there were indications that the data set was largely the CVs of 30 scholars in the field with no standardised format, and not all factors were reported on in a consistent manner (Noble et al. 2010).

The literature provided an opportunity to summarise the methodological framework in a workable manner. It was concluded that a paradigm is a set of laws, theories, methods and applications that form a research viewpoint. Furthermore, a research design can follow a quantitative (objective causal logic with interrelationships resulting in empirical evidence) or a qualitative approach (subjective discovering of meaning). It is also necessary to ensure that the results of a study present the total population researched. It is not always possible to include every respondent, and therefore the process of sampling assists the researcher to select a sample of the population, giving a generalised result if truly a representation of the population. The different sampling methods explored in this study included probability sampling (simple random, stratified random, proportional, cluster and systematic sampling) as well as non-probability sampling (convenience, quota and purposive sampling). The authors further looked into measurement, validity and reliability of data. When developing the framework, four types of measurement scales were included, namely nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales. Furthermore, the validity of measurement analysis included face, content, criterion and construct validity.

Conclusion
General summary
Branding the person is becoming more critical for career and organisational success as a result of the new trend of freelance contract work arrangements as well as outsourcing of non-core services and business activities, but also the growing trend of employing part-time consultants. A personal brand is normally based on an individual’s personal or professional reputation, which could result in personal or organisation revenue from a career management perspective if maintained and sustained according to the market needs. As with any business brand, this could be seen as a critical element of life and/or career success.

Summary of methodology followed
An element of silence with regard to the topic of personal branding was identified within the academic world when the authors conducted a search for published peer-reviewed journal articles. Publications which appeared between 2002 and 2014 were included in the search. A wide bouquet of EBSCOhost and ProQuest databases were used. It was limited to full-text publications in English, which had to be peer reviewed. The purpose of the study on which this article reports was to conduct a systematic literature review of the research and design strategies used in the journal articles related to personal branding. After a literature review had been conducted on research and design strategies, a methodological framework was developed to analyse the articles. The framework was inclusive of research elements such as research paradigm, research design, sampling, measurements, validity, reliability, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, limitations of studies and/or research and ethical considerations. The framework was used to structure the reporting of findings.

The literature provided an opportunity to summarise the methodological framework in a workable manner. It was concluded that a paradigm is a set of laws, theories, methods and applications that form a research viewpoint. Furthermore, a research design can follow a quantitative (objective causal logic with interrelationships resulting in empirical evidence) or a qualitative approach (subjective discovering of meaning). It is also necessary to ensure that the results of a study present the total population researched. It is not always possible to include every respondent, and therefore the process of sampling assists the researcher to select a sample of the population, giving a generalised result if truly a representation of the population. The different sampling methods explored in this study included probability sampling (simple random, stratified random, proportional, cluster and systematic sampling) as well as non-probability sampling (convenience, quota and purposive sampling). The authors further looked into measurement, validity and reliability of data. When developing the framework, four types of measurement scales were included, namely nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales. Furthermore, the validity of measurement analysis included face, content, criterion and construct validity.

TABLE 6: Ethical consideration identified in articles reviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical considerations</th>
<th>Article</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection from harm</td>
<td>N = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary and informed participation</td>
<td>N = 2 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to privacy</td>
<td>N = 2 (19, 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty with professional partners</td>
<td>N = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ethical considerations indicated per article</td>
<td>N = 34 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leedy & Ormrod 2013
Then again, analysis of the reliability, which is the consistency with which results are presented, was performed based on interrelated, test–retest as well as internal consistency reliability. Furthermore, the authors evaluated the process of data analysis followed in the articles, which could either be quantitative (objective deductive reasoning) or qualitative (subjective inductive reasoning) by nature and, in some cases, a combination could be followed. The authors then went further to identify the limitations of the research articles and evaluated the ethical considerations applied and indicated in the articles.

**New knowledge relating to the study based on analyses of the articles**

In total, 56 articles were located based on the search strategy. Only 36 articles were analysed following the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The *Journal of Marketing Education* as well as the *European Journal of Marketing* both published two articles each relating to personal branding. No author published more than one article, and no South African author published an article. In total, six articles were quantitative by nature following a rationalistic stand, and five qualitative articles represented a hermeneutic approach.

The position papers also followed a hermeneutic approach which suggests that the field of personal branding follows a hermeneutic route to create knowledge. Simple random sampling was used by three research articles; one used proportional stratified sampling and five purposive sampling. It was interesting to note that 26 of the articles did not follow any sampling process. In total, 7 articles made use of measurement scales, namely 5 nominal scales and 2 ordinal scales. The search showed that 29 articles did not indicate any utilisation of measurement scales.

Surprisingly, 34 articles did not indicate any utilisation of a specific validity approach, 2 used construct validity and two used content validity. This same trend emerged when it was identified that 32 articles did not report on a specific reliability testing technique, although one referred to composite reliability, one to internal consistency reliability and two to inter-rater reliability. Of the 36 articles, only 5 authors reported and indicated limitations of the research article, and, again, only 5 authors reported on the ethical considerations applied.

The results of this study indicated that limited scientific academic research has been conducted within the field of personal branding or on elements of the topic. Furthermore, most of the data available is subjective, without any specific scientific procedure being followed, or in some cases, with incomplete scientific procedures utilised.

Based on the outcome of this study, it can be stated that a definite need exits to explore the phenomenon of personal branding. An opportunity has emerged to look into best practices following a recognised and acceptable scientific process and adequately formulated research process. This could result in a better understanding of the topic, a theoretical framework, and lessons learned from role models so that the framework can be continually improved to apply to different professions within the South African context.

**Notes to future researchers**

The results of this study indicate that very limited scientific academic research has been done within the field of personal branding. In addition, the scope of the published research on the topic regarding the field and elements of the phenomenon is limited. Furthermore, most information available is based on subjective views and reviews by authors without any specific scientific procedure, or in some cases, incomplete scientific procedures that exclude critical elements of the recognised and accredited research processes to be followed.

Based on the outcome of this study, it could be stated that there is a definite need to explore the phenomenon of personal branding. There could be a wealth of knowledge available that refers to individuals who have implemented a personal branding strategy successfully. This knowledge may potentially be studied and formulated into frameworks, models and theories from the perspective of different paradigms. When a recognised and acceptable scientific process and soundly formulated research design is used, it will be possible to identify and study best practices.

The field of personal branding provides huge opportunities for future researchers because of the lack of well-formulated scientific research at present. It is likely that personal branding could become more important to the individual in future irrespective of whether the concept will be applied from a personal, professional, entertainment, sport or political space or platform. Therefore, the individual would benefit from applying sound principles in managing, aligning and sustaining his or her life and career. One of the options could be to learn lessons from business principles with a specific focus on marketing and branding to enhance and sustain career and life aspirations and goals. Furthermore, business could benefit from a meaningful understanding and acknowledgement of individuals based on their uniqueness. Personal branding also has the potential to add value on a bigger scale within society from both a skills application and career management perspective.

**Limitations of the study**

The articles represented international authors and journals. No South African authors and journals could be found.

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http://www.icbmd.org


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van Schaik, Pretoria.


van Schaik, Pretoria.


