



Title: Investigating the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates entering employment in the advertising industry.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the value of personal branding on LinkedIn as a professional social networking site specifically for marketing graduates entering the advertising industry. Evidence suggests that most graduates are currently not utilising the full potential that LinkedIn offers for their personal brand (McCabe, 2017). The study seeks to enlighten marketing graduates about the expectation's recruiters have about their personal brand on LinkedIn by evaluating if there are similarities between their perceptions and recruiters' expectations. The researcher achieved this by conducting in-depth interviews with recruiters and analysing LinkedIn profiles of marketing graduates which helped gain in-depth understand of the research problem. The findings are that marketing graduates take the effort to develop a personal brand on LinkedIn but do not take the extra measures to promote themselves on the platform.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter one comprises of an introduction and background that contextualises the study and provides evidence for the researchers reasoning behind the choice of the research topic. The researcher tackles the real world problem by addressing the problem statement and highlighting the purpose of investigating the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates entering employment in the advertising industry.

1.1 Background and orientation

Brands have evolved over the past decades and no longer are products, services, companies and organisations the only things that can be branded but also people (personal branding) (North, 2011). As such, the personal branding phenomenon aligns with the notion of a brand being a social construct. Therefore, brands exist in society and society co-exists with brands.

As a concept, a personal brand is the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions it creates in the minds of others when they see or hear a person's name (Rampersad, 2008). And media gives individual's brands a platform for exposure which creates an opportunity for people to promote their personal brand and its identity (Waller, 2020).

With the multitude of traditional and contemporary media channels currently available, social media is by far the most ideal channel to promote a personal brand in the digital world (Ekhlassi, Moghadam & Adibi, 2018). Researchers confirm that LinkedIn is the most dominant social media networking site for professional personal brand development (Carmack & Heiss, 2018).

Consequently, the use of LinkedIn by professionals for personal branding has disrupted the recruitment process and has also almost entirely changed the traditional recruitment process through digitisation (McCabe, 2017).

As recruiters digitalise their processes, it is vital for students, graduates and young professionals to build a strong brand in order to ensure that their personal brand on LinkedIn stands out (Peter & Gomez, 2019).

1.2 Rationale

This study was intended to investigate the value of using LinkedIn to promote the personal brand of marketing graduates to create an appealing brand perception at the start of their professional careers. The study is relevant for graduates since LinkedIn is a social networking site that is critical for young adults and professionals (Hood, Robles, & Hopkins, 2014). With the job market expanding, there is an increase in different types of careers, competition is getting tough (Peter & Gomez, 2019) and recruiters might have expectations that graduates are not meeting and this is reflected on images that young adults and early career professionals have on social media. The study contributed to the body of knowledge in the marketing fraternity and the contribution was linked to the value of LinkedIn for marketing graduates, the perceptions marketing graduates have about promoting their personal brand on LinkedIn and the expectation recruiters have about marketing graduates' personal branding efforts for professional development.

1.3 Problem statement

LinkedIn assists in the recruitment process and helps promote an individual's personal brand through networking opportunities (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). LinkedIn also helps individuals in connecting with alumni and job and internship opportunities for graduates (Carmack & Heiss, 2018); however, most graduates are currently not utilising the full potential that this social network site offers for their personal brand (McCabe, 2017).

This study's main objective was to unpack the value of personal branding of LinkedIn as a professional social networking site specifically for marketing graduates entering the advertising industry.

1.3.1 Why is the problem worth investigating?

The problem was worth investigating as it helped enlighten marketing graduates about the expectation's recruiters have about their personal brand, and a deeper understanding was gained about how marketing graduates perceive LinkedIn as a personal branding social networking site for professional development. The recruiter's expectations assisted marketing graduates to utilise LinkedIn to its full potential when job hunting and promoting their personal brand for professional development on social media.

1.3.2 Purpose statement

The purpose of the study was to explore the value of personal branding as it relates to LinkedIn for marketing graduates; by determining perceptions of marketing graduates and expectations of advertising recruiters using Rampersand Authentic Personal Branding model.

1.3.3 Research questions

- What perceptions do marketing graduates have about personal branding on LinkedIn?
- What are expectations of advertising industry recruiters about marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn?
- Is there a similarity between marketing graduates' perceptions of personal branding on LinkedIn and advertising recruiters' expectations of a marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn against Rampersand Authentic Personal Branding model?

1.3.4 Research objectives

- To determine the perceptions marketing graduates, have about personal branding on LinkedIn
- To understand the expectations that advertising industry recruiters, have about marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn

- To evaluate if there is similarity between marketing graduate's perception of personal branding on LinkedIn and advertising industry recruiters' expectations of a marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn against Rampersad Authentic Personal Branding model.

1.4 Conceptualisation (key concepts)

1.4.1 *Brand theory*

The researcher adopted the definition of brand by Enslin and Klopfer (2011) which states that; a brand is a social construct and it is subjectively formed by society in all its interactions.

With a brand being a social construct, branding, therefore, becomes the process of building, managing and cultivating a brand for the society, and the expectation is that society will shape consumer's' perceptions of the same brand (Heidi Cohen, 2011).

1.4.2 *Personal branding*

The researcher adopted Rampersad's (2008) definition of personal branding for the purpose of this study. According to the researcher, a personal brand is the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions created in the minds of others when they see or hear your name. This assertion is further backed by the adopted definition of a brand which defines a brand as a social construct Peter and Gomez's (2019) and the foundation of their theory suggests that a personal brand is the sum total of perceptions that society creates about a person which denotes it being a social construct.

1.4.3 *Personal brand identity*

The brand identity definition adopted for this study was by Keller (2008) who indicates that a brand's identity presents its DNA, and this aligns to Rampersad (2008) definition of a personal brand.

1.4.4 Social network

Academicians have put forward many social media definitions, Marketing Terms (2019) and most of them define social network as "the process of creating, building, and nurturing virtual communities and relationships between people online." This definition has been adopted for the purposes of this study.

1.4.5 Digital recruitment

Digital recruitment, which can also be referred to as social recruitment or online recruitment, is defined by study.com (2020) as a process that happens when human resources professionals use technology as a tool to attract and hire the best candidates for an open vacancy. The researcher adopted this definition for the purpose of this study as it helps situate the research.

1.5 Overview of research methodology

The researcher adopted the interpretivism paradigm for this study which is discussed in more detailed together with all its five assumptions. From the paradigm, the researcher then adopted the qualitative research approach which aligns with the interpretivism paradigm, the qualitative research design, the data collection methods and tools which were used to collect data and data analysis methods used to analyse the data collected.

1.6 Structure of the paper

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: Literature review,
- Chapter 3: Research methodology,
- Chapter 4: Findings and discussions; and
- Chapter 5: Conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review aspect of the study involved an integrated review of literature relevant to the research problem and included a processes of searching for, reading, evaluating and summarising literature that relates to the research topic with the aim of gaining in-depth understanding of existing research and debates by other researchers (Howard, 2014). The approach further aided the researcher in building an argument and gaining an informed understanding of the research problem.

Furthermore, the literature highlights important concepts regarding the researcher's real-world problem. Furthermore, it is a means of demonstrating the researcher's knowledge about vocabulary, theories, key concepts, phenomena, methods and history within this field of the study (Randolph, 2009). The concepts which are reviewed include branding theory, personal branding, personal brand identity, personal branding on social media, personal branding on LinkedIn and digital recruitment.

2.1 Brand theory

There are numerous definitions of a brand that are recorded in branding history. The American Marketing Association (1960) defines a brand as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. Furthermore, other researchers and known authorities in branding such as Aaker (1991), Armstrong, Adam, Denize, and Kotler (2015) have also defined a brand in line with the definition by the American Marketing Association.

A brand is also seen by Kapferer (1992) as an indicator of identity; and also, a as an image that people have a perception of – which is reflected by the association held in consumer's memory (Bick, 2011). Given the different definition of what a brand is, Goodyear (1996) is of a completely different approach and categorises brands into six development stages namely: unbranded goods, brand as reference, brand as personality, brand as an icon, brand as a company and brand as a policy. Whilst there is a lot of interest in this definition, it is not adopted for purposes of this study.

As such, the personal branding phenomenon which is at the centre of this study aligns with the notion of a brand being a social construct. In line with this theoretical foundation a brand has evolved over the past decades and is no longer about products, companies and service organisations (North, 2011). New theory suggest that branding should extend to people or what is generally referred to as personal branding and this will result in a brand being formed by society in all its interactions (North, 2011)

2.2 Personal branding

Shepherd (2005 cited in Gorbatov, Khapova, & Lysova 2018) is of the view that Kotler is the first to expand the field of marketing beyond the product into personal branding and North (2011) noted that the personal branding concept was popularised by Tom Peters in the late 1990s while Waller (2020) stated that personal branding was actually introduced by Trout and Ries in 1980.

Over the decades personal branding has been defined in numerous ways, Manai and Holmlund (2015) view it as a means for an individual to communicate their offerings, Peter and Gomez (2019: 8) define personal branding as “a perception that society creates about a person”. And Lair, Sullivan, Cheney (2005 cited in Waller 2020: 3) highlight that “it involves concepts of product development and promotion when used to market persons for entry into or transition within the labour market”.

Gorbatov *et al.* (2018) have broadened the definition even much further to personal branding being a strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based in a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery.

In light of the literature reviewed, the researcher also reviewed different personal branding theoretical frameworks and highlights the theoretical framework adopted for the study and its relevance for the research problem. All of this provides firm grounding and direction for this study.

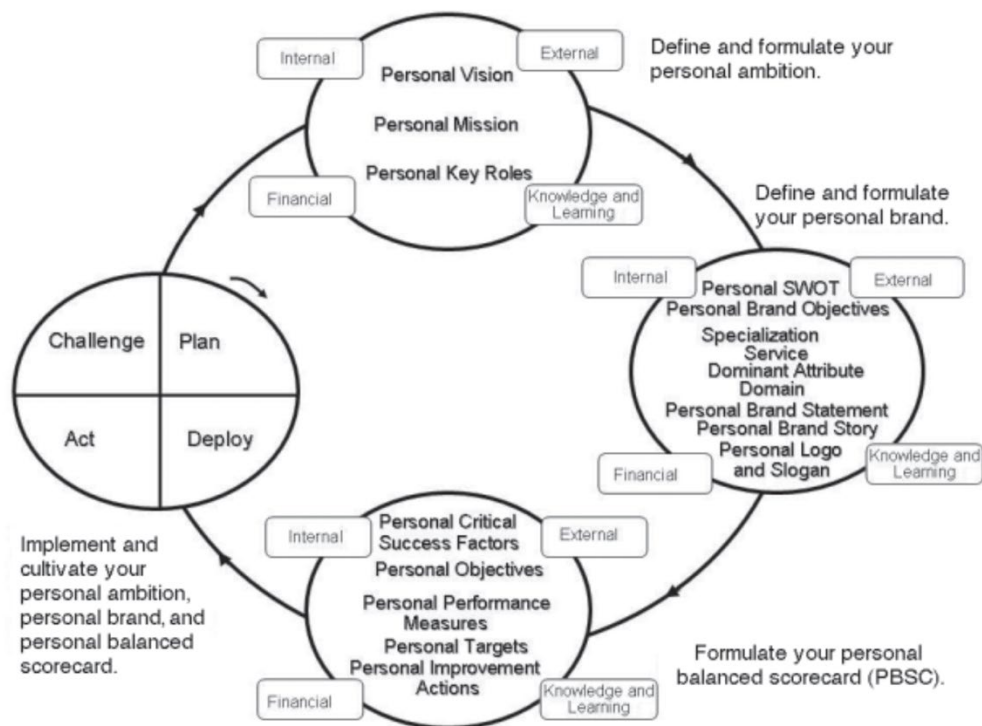
The different frameworks the researcher reviewed include Arruda and Dixon (2007) extract, express and exude, Rampersad (2008) authentic personal branding model, McNally and Speak (2002) three-step model (identify areas where competencies matter, examine standards and define your style), Gad and Rosencreutz (2002) brand me code and Everett (2016) seven steps to develop a personal brand.

Given the myriad of personal branding theoretical frameworks reviewed, the researcher adopted the Rampersad's authentic personal branding model (2008) as the ideal framework for the study as it aligns to the adopted personal branding definition of the study. The framework will help address the research problem; as it has been proven to yield results for professionals who want to build an effective personal brand that they can project when looking for employment (Rampersad, 2008).

Rampersad (2008) distinguishes his framework from ones which view personal branding only from a personal marketing (selling) standpoint and highlights that some frameworks, models and concepts about personal branding mainly focus on individuals promoting themselves, and becoming famous, which can turn into an ego trip. The authentic personal branding framework by Rampersad (2008) focuses on authenticity that reflects individual's character, values, strengths and uniqueness.

The Rampersad (2008) authentic personal branding model follows four phases for building a personal brand: 1) define and formulate your personal ambition, 2) define and formulate your personal brand, 3) formulate your personal balanced scorecard and implement and 4) cultivate your personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard.

Figure 1. Rampersad's Authentic Personal Branding Model (2008)



The framework will help build a trusted personal brand image that is a manifestation of a personal brand identity. The last phase of the framework (Implement and cultivate your personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard) can further assist in managing a persons' brand awareness and knowledge of one's authentic brand.

To build an effective brand that resonates with its target audience or brand admirers, Wijaya (2013) argues that its brand image dimensions should include brand identity, brand personality, brand association, brand attitude and behaviour, and brand benefit and competence.

As people are now also brands, for them to build an effective personal brand that is positively perceived by the society in all its interactions, one of the most important personal brand dimensions to consider is the personal brand identity which is vital because a personal brand combines factors that society views a person by, when they see or hear a name.

2.3 Personal branding identity

As a result of a brand being defined as a social construct formed by society, amongst many other definitions – Enslin (2011) highlights that brand building involves a conscious development of a particular and unique meaning that holds value and connects with people. The distinct, unique, exclusive meaning of a brand or its identity advocates for its existence (Enslin, 2011). Kapferer (1997: 92) explains that “a brand’s identity defines its particular vision and aim, and what it wishes to achieve and be associated with”. Interestingly, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000: 33) are of the premise that “a brand’s identity frames its strategy” - which emphasises the importance of brand awareness.

Similar to brand identity of a corporation, personal brand identity reflects an individual’s uniqueness (Arruda & Dixon, 2007). Waller (2020) further points out that personal brand identity allows an individual to analyse and define themselves by using their unique personalities, associations, and traits to construct an idealised self. Essentially, a personal brand identity is based on an individual’s internal characteristics, strengths and core self, thus following an inside-out process to the target audience (Khedher, 2015), determines the value it adds to people’s lives (Enslin, 2011) and the deployment of a personal brand identity is predominantly for career and employment functions (Brooks & Anumudu, 2015).

According to Enslin (2011), a brand identity for a corporation consist of properties that assist it in sharing a brand’s reason of being which include the brand vision, a brand purpose and positioning, a brand personality, brand value set and visual and verbal language.

In terms of a personal brand identity, the properties are comprised of characteristics outlined by North (2011) which include personality, profession, accomplishments, dedication and quality of work, possessions, appearance, lifestyle and hobbies, abilities, skills and creativity, interests, leisure time activities, friends, and how an individual relates to people, Arruda and Dixon’s (2007). Additionally, vision, purpose, goals, passions, attributes, strengths and skills are also included in the broad

definition. To expand the list even further, Waller (2020) also adds personal brand name, visual identity, association while also aligning with North (2011) by including personality.

Lastly Rampersad's authentic personal branding model (2008) (which is the chosen framework for the study) personal brand identity characteristics aligns with some of Arruda and Dixon (2007); North (2011) and Waller (2020) except for the following brand areas which they did not cover in their exploration i.e. personal mission, personal key roles, personal objectives, personal brand statement, personal brand story, personal success factors and personal objectives.

Once the personal brand identity is developed, it is essential to communicate it through a variety of media channels (Rampersad, 2008). Media gives an individual's brand a platform for exposure which creates an opportunity to promote their personal brand (Waller, 2020) and social media is one of the low-cost media channels that can be used to increase personal brand awareness and leverage professional connections (McCabe, 2017). It is worth noting that some of these connections may lead to career progression (McCabe, 2017).

2.4 Personal branding on social media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) defined social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". Social media is now viewed as the most ideal approach to promote a personal brand in the digital world and social media networking sites are well known to such an extent that when individuals need to investigate a specific person's brand identity they will do as such by utilising it (Ekhlassi, Moghadam & Adibi, 2018).

The most widely utilised social media networking sites for personal branding are Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter (Chen, 2013; Waller, 2020; Vitelar, 2013). Through the use of YouTube and Instagram, individuals are permitted to create awareness about their personal brands by exhibiting substantial traits of their

character through their visual identity (Waller, 2020). Twitter is the most ideal to reach large audience with over 150 million users worldwide constantly sharing content about their personal brand and 55 million tweets everyday (Deckers & Lacy, 2011). Given the number of tweets shared daily Twitter is arguably an ideal platform for journalists to promote a personal brand (Christensen, 2018; Hedman, 2017).

While there are other social network sites that are intensely professional, Facebook is more of a personal tool for a personal brand as it exists to connect friends and families and keeps them in touch (Johnson, 2017; Deckers & Lacy, 2011). However, Hood, Robles, and Hopkins, (2014) are of the view that graduates building their personal brand, should maintain a consistent professional brand identity across all major social networking sites regardless of the use of a specific social media network site.

Even if it is beneficial to have a consistent personal brand identity across the different social media network sites, Waldman (2011) established that for professional reasons of building a personal brand 80% of recruiters used LinkedIn for recruitment and hiring purposes compared to 50% of Facebook; Deckers and Lacy (2011) further add that LinkedIn is a way to promote the professional side of a personal brand and personal matters should be directed towards Facebook.

Given the characteristics highlighted about the different social networking sites and their characteristics; for the purpose of the study, the researcher has chosen LinkedIn as opposed to other social media network sites which aligns to the purpose of the study which is to explore the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates; by determining perceptions of marketing graduates and expectations of advertising recruiters using Rampersand Authentic Personal Branding model.

2.5 Personal branding on LinkedIn

Besides aiding the recruitment process, LinkedIn can also help promote an individual's personal brand through networking opportunities, connecting with alumni, job and internship searching for graduates (Carmack & Heiss, 2018); however, most graduates are currently not utilising the full potential that this social network site offers

for their personal brand (McCabe, 2017). Graduates continue to constantly upload photographs of themselves partying or taking part in faulty conduct (Johnson, 2017).

To ensure personal branding success on LinkedIn Deckers and Lacy (2011) urge individuals to upload professional pictures, connect to real friends and colleagues, keep profile current, delete spam, craft a compelling summary, avoid using it like Facebook and Twitter, accept invitations and check spelling and grammar. Waller (2020) adds that uploading a professional picture creates trust and authenticity which increases chances of connecting with other professionals and job seekers who also have a higher chance of being found by recruiters if they have a profile that is complete and up to date (McCabe, 2017).

Skilbeck (2019) echoes Rampersad's (2008) view of what personal branding is, specifically on LinkedIn by also highlighting that employers want to know and get a feel of the real you and when assessing a persons' brand on to assess if you are good fit for their company culture, therefore, there is great value in promoting an authentic personal brand on LinkedIn.

In South African, a majority of the users are based in Johannesburg, followed by Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and then Polokwane (Kok, 2018). Users mainly use LinkedIn for networking, connecting with colleagues and keeping up to date with industry related news and seeking employment (Kok, 2018). Kok (2018) further adds that LinkedIn offers a portal, an opportunity, a hope for businesses and individuals to connect, learn, enable themselves and ultimately find like-minded individuals to build futures with.

Waller (2020) further emphasises the importance of LinkedIn and states that employers are increasingly aware of the digital recruitment process as a way to screen applicants before the first round of interviews. The personal brand audit of an imminent employee may involve filtering the applicant's profile on LinkedIn for quality and authenticity and users need to be constantly aware and mindful of this pre-selection and filtering tool.

2.6 Digital recruitment

LinkedIn has changed how professionals present themselves online in efforts of promoting their personal brand, and has created a pool full of potential talent for recruiters Skilbeck (2019). The use of LinkedIn by professionals has disrupted the recruitment process (McCabe, 2017).

In South Africa, LinkedIn has over seven million users, 75 000 jobs and 30 000 companies (Kok, 2018) which gives even more reason for graduates to promote their personal brand, as majority of career opportunities are advertised through the professional networking sites (Carmack & Heiss, 2018).

According to Oberholzer (2019), 87% recruiters in South African use LinkedIn as a vetting tool, which helps them narrow down the list of potential candidates for a specific position. Oberholzer (2019) further agrees with Skilbeck (2019) and Rampersad (2008) on the point of promoting an authentic personal brand by noting that if a persons' LinkedIn profile isn't painting a picture of what they are about and how well they can get the job done, they could miss out on opportunities, without even knowing. All assessments suggest that recruiters do use LinkedIn for vetting and assessing if a person's brand is the right fit for their company.

Recruiters assess the following sections when vetting a potential candidate: an incomplete profile, profile picture, discrepancies (correct dates, previous positions and qualifications), powerful summaries, great headline, jargons and inflated headlines and inappropriate language (Oberholzer, 2019). However, Zide, Elman and Shahani-Dennin (2014) argue that there is limited research that investigates the most important sections of an individual's profile for recruiters; But, to be on the safe side McCabe (2017) stresses that the entire LinkedIn profile must be up to date with no exclusion to specific sections.

As recruiters digitalise their processes and the South African unemployment rate constantly increasing, it is vital for students, graduates and young professionals to build a strong brand on LinkedIn because recruiters extensively use LinkedIn, the job

market is expanding, competition is getting tough and there is an increase in different types of careers (Peter & Gomez, 2019).

In summary, the literature reviewed shows that the theoretical framework the researcher utilised aligns with the research problem and highlights the key concepts discussed and adequately situates the study.

The branding theory aligns with the notion of personal branding being a social construct which is the definition the researcher has adopted, and this further assures all that the personal branding phenomenon is worth researching. Rampersad's (2008) definition of personal branding focuses on authenticity that reflects an individual's character, value, strengths and uniqueness which further guides the approach for personal brand identity.

And LinkedIn is the most appropriate and valuable social networking site for graduates to build a personal brand (Hood, Robles, & Hopkins, 2014) with more recruiters utilising it in their hiring process (Peter & Gomez, 2019).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research methodology is to highlight how the data for investigating the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates entering employment in the advertising industry was collected and how once collected was the data analysed.

The researcher thoroughly focused on the following topics; the research tradition, the research design, the population and sampling, the data collection method and data analysis method.

The detail provided on this section assisted the researcher to justify why the methods used were best in addressing the research problem, answering the research questions and achieving the research objectives for the study.

Furthermore, the research methodology section clarifies the purpose of the research and why the researcher embarked on the journey to investigate the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates entering employment in the advertising industry.

3.1 Research paradigm

There are three distinguished research paradigms, namely: positivism (find causal, cause and effect), interpretivism (in depth understanding of phenomenon) and critical realism (empower people through knowledge) (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Rehman and Alherthi (2016) describe a research paradigm as a basic belief system and each research paradigm is characterised by five assumptions, namely: ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and axiology.

The research paradigm the researcher has chosen for this study determine how the personal branding phenomenon was observed and studied; thus had an influence on the research approach, research design, data collection method and data analysis method (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

To investigate the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates entering employment in the advertising industry, the researcher chose the interpretivism research paradigm which helped with an in-depth understanding of the personal branding phenomenon and describing meaningful social action and experiences of marketing graduates (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Furthermore, the research paradigm aligned with the research objectives of the study - being to determine the perceptions marketing graduates have about personal branding on LinkedIn and to reveal the expectations advertising industry recruiters have about marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn.

As research paradigms are characterised according to assumptions, the first interpretivism assumption that the researcher discusses is epistemology; which Gall, Gall and Borg (2013: 13) clearly define as "the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated".

The nature of interpretivist knowledge is subjective. The epistemological assumption of interpretivism therefore aligns with the study as it aims to determine perceptions and uncover expectations; which will result to subjective data collected from the sample to acquire in-depth knowledge about the personal branding phenomenon instead of generalising or measuring cause and effect.

While epistemology studies the nature of knowledge, the second interpretivism assumption which is ontology studies being, existence or reality and interpretivists believe that reality is a social construct, the social world is what people perceive it to be and deeper understanding of people can be gained by observing them in their natural social context (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Interpretivism is therefore ideal for this study as the ontological assumption aligns with the definition of personal branding the researcher adopted. Interpretivism's nature also helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and further correlated with the interpretivist's ontological assumption because the reality of personal branding is then the one that people who are experiencing, make it to be.

The third interpretivism assumption; metatheory is basically theory about another theory or theories (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Interpretivism metatheory assumption tells a story, describes, and interprets how people living in a particular context conducts their daily lives (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Interpretivism metatheory aligns with the study as it aided in collecting data that is rich in detail, valuable and full of meaning which further assisted the researcher in gaining deeper understanding of marketing graduates' perceptions and recruiters' expectations.

The fourth assumption, methodology; which is the guiding system for solving research problems looks at the procedures and tools to collect data. As previously stated, interpretivisms' aim is to gain in-depth knowledge and as such a research approach that emphasises words over numbers (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) was used by the researcher which guided the data collection process and data analysis; and helped the researcher to further learn more about the participants life experiences.

The axiological assumption is the fifth and last interpretivism assumption; and the interpretivism research paradigm allowed the researcher to conduct research that is full of value and meaning that shapes marketing graduates' perceptions and recruiters' expectations. And was further ideal when dealing with the complexity of a phenomenon that is socially constructed.

3.2 Research approach

There are three research approaches that a researcher can choose from when conducting research, namely: qualitative, quantitative and mixed method which is a combination of the two.

The researcher opted for qualitative research approach which is the most appropriate approach that not only allowed the researcher to collect data that is rich in value, meaning and depth of human experience (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014), but also correlates with the interpretivism research paradigm as it is focused on in-depth understanding of the personal branding phenomenon and human experiences.

In reference to the interpretivism epistemological assumption; knowledge is defined as subjective and such deeply aligns with qualitative research in that the interest of qualitative research is in understanding subjective experiences which allowed the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the multiple realities of the personal branding phenomenon from the participants' responses.

It should be noted that qualitative research was chosen because it emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014), which also aligns with interpretivism ontological assumption that highlights that reality is a social construct.

The researcher's interpretivism research paradigm, which aligns with the qualitative research approach, guided the phenomenological research design that the researcher opted for in order to meet the objectives of this study.

3.3 Research design

There are five main research designs under the qualitative research orientation, namely: conceptual, ethnographic, case study, action research and phenomenology research design which is the one the research chose for this study.

Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019: 91) define phenomenology as "an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it".

The phenomenological research design helped the researcher understand the marketing graduate's perception and perspectives about personal branding on LinkedIn. It further helped the researcher gather unique perspectives, gained detailed understanding of the personal branding phenomenon.

The choices the research made, from the point of selecting interpretivism as a paradigm, qualitative research as an approach and phenomenology as a research design created a thread that helped the researcher collect the correct data, using the right tools and an appropriate data analysis method to tackle the research real world problem.

3.4 Population and sampling

Following the research design, the researcher chose a population and sampling method which was guided by the qualitative research approach and interpretivism paradigm.

Before the population was narrowed down to participants which the researcher drew information from, the researcher first discussed the unit of analysis; which is the major entity being analysed in this study (Trochim, 2020).

With the title of the study being to investigate the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates entering employment in the advertising industry; the study unit of analysis is LinkedIn, because the researcher analysed and presented findings about it at the end of this study.

With the unit of analysis stipulated above, the unit of observation; which is the population or the total group of people from whom information for the study was required (Pascoe, 2014). Aligned with the research objectives of the study, the researcher sort to determine the perceptions of marketing graduates and reveal the expectations of advertising industry recruiters. Therefore, there were two populations for the study, namely: the marketing graduates and advertising industry recruiters.

The two populations the researcher stipulated, both had unmanageable elements for the researcher to analyse within the timeframe that the research should have been conducted. Thus, the researcher had to reduce the size of the accessible population to a number that is manageable (Pascoe, 2014).

However, reducing the size of the population is not an easy exercise that can be carried out randomly, the researcher had to reduce the population by drawing a sample (Pascoe, 2014). Pascoe (2014:135) defines a sample as “a subset of a population that is considered to be representative of the population”.

The researcher used non-probability sampling to draw a subset of the population because not all individuals in both populations were easy to access and drawing a sample to generalise results to the entire marketing graduates and advertising industry recruiters is not the goal of the study. Furthermore, non-probability sampling methods are most often used in qualitative studies which then aligns with the research approach of this study stipulated on section 3.2 of this chapter (Pascoe, 2014).

There is a total of six non-probability sampling methods, namely: accidental sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and volunteer sampling. According to Pascoe (2014: 142) “these methods can be used when findings of a study do not need to be generalised to the larger population”.

To sample the two populations (marketing graduates and advertising industry recruiters), the researcher used the same non-probability sampling method; purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Crossman, 2020). The researcher purposively pulled the sample based on a list of predefined parameters.

Instead of accidental sampling that does not use a sampling frame, convenience sampling that can be heavily bias, snowball sampling which depends on referrals, and volunteer sampling which is reliant on participants to volunteer to be part of the study which can be unreliable (Pascoe, 2014). The purposive sampling was appropriate for the study because the researcher studied both the populations, the research question and research objectives; and was able to stipulate characteristics that are important for the study which also inform the sample parameters.

Sample parameters can clearly be defined as characteristics that the population shares or have in common (Pascoe, 2014). The following sample parameters were used by the researcher during the purposive sampling, even though the sampling method was the same for both unit of observations (population) the sample frames differed because both populations possessed different sample parameters.

The sample frame of the marketing graduates consisted of the following sample parameters:

- **LinkedIn Search team:** Graduate or intern.
 - The researcher used two search terms since both terms are used interchangeably but represent the same position.
- **Interests:** Advertising agency
 - LinkedIn has four interests' categories: influencers, companies, groups and schools; to align with the study the researcher has focused on marketing graduates who have are interests in advertising agencies for employment.
- **Employer:** Individuals who are employed by an Advertising agency listed under the advertising and marketing industry on LinkedIn as either graduates or interns.
- **Title:** Graduates with marketing graduate, marketing intern strategy intern, accounts intern or brand graduate or intern title on their LinkedIn profile.
- **Qualifications:** Bachelor's Degree or diploma in Marketing, communications, branding or advertising.
 - Because advertising agencies employ graduates who have studied a variety of qualifications within the marketing stream, the researcher has opted to focus on the four types of qualifications mentioned above.
- **Qualification year of completion:** The researcher observed if a qualification was completed within the past five years, which informs the number of years the individuals has been a graduate in the industry.
- **Profile picture:** The LinkedIn profile picture is a photograph that humanises an individual's profile. In section 2.5 of chapter 3 (personal branding on LinkedIn), Deckers and Lacy (2011) have urged that individuals must upload professional pictures on their LinkedIn profile and Waller (2020) adds that uploading a

professional picture creates trust and authenticity which increases chances of connecting with other professionals and job seekers.

- **Endorsed skills:** LinkedIn Endorsements add validity to a person's profile by backing up their work experience, when other people endorse them for a set of skills (Liwanag, 2019).
- **LinkedIn connections:** A connection on LinkedIn is a contact that an individual has a certain degree of connection with and forms part of their professional network (LinkedIn Corporation, 2020).
- **LinkedIn Summary:** The LinkedIn summary is an open-ended space (2,000 characters max) an individual can give an overview of their professional life (Reilly, 2019).
- **LinkedIn activity:** Activities shows all recent posts shared, and changes made to LinkedIn profile, determines the type of content displayed on LinkedIn feed which is visible to an individual's LinkedIn connection (LinkedIn Corporation, 2020).
- **Education:** Individuals who studied at the following institutions
 - AAA School of Advertising
 - Vega School of branding
 - Red & Yellow
 - IMM Graduate School
 - Varsity College
- **Location:** Gauteng, South Africa because in South Africa, majority of the LinkedIn users are based in Johannesburg, followed by Cape Town and Durban (Kok, 2018)
- **Gender:** Either male or female.

Secondly, the parameters of the advertising industry recruiters consisted of the following:

- **Location:** Gauteng, South Africa
- **Gender:** Either male or female.
- **Employer:** Individuals who are employed by an advertising agency listed under the advertising and marketing industry on LinkedIn.
- **Experience:** Over three experience of recruitment in the advertising industry
- **Qualification:** Bachelor's Degree or diploma in human resource management or industrial psychology.
- **Profile picture**
- **LinkedIn Summary**

The sample size for the marketing graduates for this study was ten individuals, while the advertising industry recruiters sample size was two individuals. The data collection methods that were used to collect data from the sample will be discussed in the next section and the researcher will detail the process undertaken to access the sample, the data collection method selected and data collection tools utilised.

3.5 Data collection

Both field and unobtrusive data collection methods were used by the researcher to increase credibility of the study.

3.5.1 Field data collection method

To access the advertising industry recruiters the researcher used the sample frame, and filtered individuals using LinkedIn filters by following the sample parameters listed above.

To collect data from the advertising industry recruiters, the researcher opted for field data collection method which is the most fundamentally and widely used qualitative research approach method of collecting data (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The field research data collection method aims to observe, interact, and understand participants while they are in the field or their natural environment and participating in a certain action (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The data collection method is appropriate for this study because it helped the researcher collect data that is subjective, rich with meaning and in-depth.

Within field research, the researcher had an option to either conduct a focus group or in-depth interviews as a data collection tool and opted for in-depth interviews. The researcher's choice to opt for in-depth interviews (general interview approach) as data collection tool over focus groups under field research data collection method was informed by the fact that interviews allowed the researcher to pose questions to participants with the aim of learning more about their views, opinions beliefs and expectations about marketing graduate's personal branding efforts on LinkedIn (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Once the individuals that fit all the sample parameters were identified the researcher invited them as LinkedIn connections; then once they have accepted to connect with the researcher, the researcher sent them a LinkedIn message inviting them to take part in the study. Once an individual accepted to take part in the study, the researcher

proposed a time and date to conduct the in-depth interview, a Zoom meeting invite was sent to the participant as opposed to meeting with them live due to the current state of the country as mentioned on section 3.7 under limitations of the study, a consent form was also sent together with the invite before the interview took place. Only one participant responded to the researcher in time, and an in-depth interview was conducted with one participant instead of the planned two, as per the sample size mentioned on the section above.

To conduct the interviews the researcher developed an interview schedule (available on appendix C) that outlines questions the researcher posed to the participants. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to collect data that answered the research questions stipulated on section 1.4.

3.5.2 Unobtrusive data collection method

As a result, in field research the researcher might affect the results of the study because of presence in the social setting. The researcher also used unobtrusive data collection method to fortify validity, reliability, trustworthiness and credibility of the research. In unobtrusive research the researcher was not directly involved in the participants' environment but studied social behaviour without affecting it (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Within the unobtrusive data collection method there are three main tools of collecting data namely: qualitative content analysis, historic analysis and analysis of existing data.

The researcher opted for deductive qualitative content analysis as it is effective when analysing narratives such as visual media. Thus, its effectiveness in collecting data from LinkedIn profiles of the marketing graduates.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1278 cited in Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:191) define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”.

In doing deductive qualitative content analysis, the researcher was working in an interpretative paradigm which is the paradigm the researcher opted for. And the goal of providing in-depth meaning of the social reality mirrored in the texts (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:190)

The researcher again used the sample frame, and filtered marketing graduates LinkedIn profiles by following the sample parameters listed above on section 3.4.

To compress the filtered LinkedIn profiles to ten marketing graduates who are a representation of some of Gauteng's top advertising and marketing institutions. The researcher narrowed down the profiles by considering six key criteria; each LinkedIn profile had to have a profile picture, a summary, 250+ connections, with either marketing graduate, marketing intern strategy intern, accounts intern or brand graduate or intern stipulated on their profile, qualification had to fall under the list of qualifications listed under the sample parameters, and the institution had to align with the institution listed on the sample parameters.

The researcher's choice for the key criteria was informed by the following reasons; firstly, having a profile picture and summary on LinkedIn creates credibility and increases chances of connecting with other professionals and recruiters (Waller, 2020). With one of the objectives of the study being to determine the perceptions marketing graduates, have about personal branding on LinkedIn and how they are using the social networking site to promote their personal brand; the researcher saw it fit to only focus on marketing graduates who took the time and effort to craft a compelling summary and upload a professional picture of themselves.

Secondly, as mentioned in the literature, beyond aiding the recruitment process LinkedIn can also be used to promote an individual's personal brand through networking opportunities by connecting with alumni, industry thought leaders and influencers (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). The researcher opted for individuals with a minimum of 250 connections because it serves as an indication that the individual might actively be using the social networking site to promote their personal brand.

Lastly, considering the unit of observation of the study mentioned on section 3.4 which is marketing graduates and one of the delimitations of the study stipulated on section 3.7 which the field of specification is marketing, instead of graduates across multiple disciplines. The qualification and institution had to be one of the ones stipulated under the sample parameters.

It is exciting to note that the criteria yielded the following results:

Table 01: Deductive qualitative content analysis sample, as per sample frame

Institution	Results	Industries: advertising and marketing	Search terms: graduate and intern	Qualification	Profile picture, summary and 250+ connections	Male	Female
AAA School of Advertisin g	2800	1200	22	15	5	2	3
Vega School	4400	1400	36	31	9	3	6
IMM Graduate School	3000	651	10	9	2	0	2
Red & Yellow	793	347	13	13	1	1	0
Varsity College	15000	896	21	13	2	1	1
Total					19	7	12

As per the key criteria mention above, the profiles were narrowed down to nineteen, seven male and twelve females across the five institutions stipulated in the sample parameter. Because the researchers initial sample size was five profiles the criteria was further narrowed to marketing graduates who recently graduated from university within the past five years or less as per the sample parameter.

A total of 2 profiles were disqualified (one from Vega School and another one from AAA School of Advertising) as a result of the additional criterion and a total of seventeen profiles remained.

The researcher narrowed the profiles even further by including an additional criterion. Which is the employer sample parameter to filter out profiles of marketing graduates who did not list an advertising agency as a company of interest under their LinkedIn interests' section, which brought down the sample size to eight profiles from the ten the researcher planned to analyse.

The unobtrusive data collection method using deductive qualitative content analysis is summarised by the table above (table 01), however a full codebook is available under appendix E with a complete breakdown of the data that was collected from the eight profiles.

Once the data was collected the researcher then analysed it before findings were drawn from it, and the following section (3.6 data analysis) outlines the steps the researcher undertook to analyse both the field research and unobtrusive data collection.

3.6 Data analysis

The researcher used both thematic content analysis and deductive qualitative content analysis to analyse the data that was collected. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the in-depth interviews the researcher conducted with advertising industry recruiters which assisted with identifying patterns of themes in the interview data. While deductive qualitative content analysis was used to analyse LinkedIn profiles of marketing graduates.

3.6.1 Thematic content analysis

The researcher followed these steps while analysis data through thematic content analysis:

During the first step, the researcher got familiar with the data by transcribing the audio recording of the interviews. The transcription is available on appendix D. The first step also involved marking preliminary ideas for codes that described the content. On step two, the researcher then started assigning preliminary codes to the data, which the researcher colour coded the codes on the transcription on appendix D.

Step three then involved searching for themes. The researcher looked at the list of codes, their association and tried to allocate them into the themes that are informed by the research framework and which were then listed on the notes section of the transcription. The research further went on to review the themes on step four.

Then on the fifth step the researcher named and defined the themes identified in the previous steps, which included the following:

- Differentiation: Entails differentiating yourself from other people.
- Personal selling: Selling your personal brand to your target audience.
- Personal attributes: Characteristics or personality traits of an individual
- Perception: How other people see you
- Personal milestones: Personal objectives and measurable milestones and improvements
- Positioning: How you position your personal brand in the eyes of recruiters
- Networking: Connecting with like-minded people to increase your social capital
- Activities: Action taken to enhance personal brand
- Accomplishments: Accolades accomplished to help differentiate your personal brand

On the last step, the researcher then produced a report, which takes into account the framework the research opted for. The table below summarises the report with the categories being the key concepts derived from the framework:

Table 02: Miles and Huberman's Qualitative Data Analysis Table, deductive thematic content analysis report.

Category: Personal ambition		
Themes	Frequency	Verbatim
Personal attributes	4	"I always believed that when we hire, we hire for potential because we believe that the skills can always be taught"
Category: Personal brand		
Themes	Frequency	Verbatim
Differentiation	6	"Ok, for me what comes up is what differentiates you from the rest."
Personal selling	7	"When I think of personal branding is how are you selling yourself out there"
Positioning	1	"So, they already positioning themselves in advance"
Perception	3	"Personal branding is the right perception that is being created by you"
Category: Personal scorecard		
Themes	Frequency	Verbatim
Accomplishments	3	"What are your achievements, what are the things you have done, what are the things you are doing outside of work"
Personal milestones	3	"There are marketing graduates who are doing online free courses, maybe Google certified or

		Facebook certified and showcase them as part of your personal brand.”
Networking	5	“So, for me I am looking at who are you networking with, which doors have you opened for me to consider you”
Category: Implementation and cultivating		
Themes	Frequency	Verbatim
Activities	6	“What are the things that you are posting online”

3.6.2 Deductive qualitative content analysis

During the deductive qualitative content analysis of the marketing graduates LinkedIn profiles. The data was prepared based of the sample parameters stipulated on section 3.4 and the coding categories analysed were taken from Rampersad’s Authentic Personal Branding Model (2008) which is the framework the researcher used for the study.

The researcher followed the Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) eight steps to analyse data through deductive qualitative content analysis.

The first step was to prepare the data, and the detail process of the data preparation process was capture on section 3.5.2 Unobtrusive data collection method, with table 01 summarising the key criteria of the selected LinkedIn profiles and the codebook on appendix E breaking down the details of each profile.

The second step involved defining coding units to be analysed, which are guided by the framework used in the study - Rampersad’s Authentic Personal Branding Model (2008). The researcher analysed the following coding units from the framework which can also be referred to as concepts: personal ambition, personal brand and personal scorecard and implementation and cultivation.

Step three then involved developing categories within each concept analysed on step two, again the researcher looked to the framework to inform the categories and they included the following; personal ambition (personal vision, personal mission, personal roles), personal brand (personal brand objectives, personal brand statement, specialisation, dominant attributes), personal scorecard (personal critical, success factors, personal targets and personal improvement action) and implementation and cultivating.

After the researcher defined the coding units and developed categories, step four involved testing the categories and step five was when all the text was coded, the researcher used line-by-line coding which involved marking word for word or verbatim phrases that are relevant to the study. After all the text was coded the researcher went further on to check for coding consistency which increased the credibility of the data.

The last step involved interpretation of the themes identified, which was a breakdown of the relationship found from the data, where all the information from the text analysed was taken into account.

The findings of the data analysis as discussed on the next chapter (chapter four) in more detail. And the researcher goes on to sum up the conclusions of the study which are drawn from chapter three: data analysis and chapter four: findings.

To sum up the deductive qualitative content analysis, that followed the Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) eight steps; the following tables summarises the data that was analysed, the code units chosen, categories for each code unit which were aligned to the LinkedIn profile sections.

Table 3: Personal ambition

Personal ambition					
			Personal vision	Personal mission	Personal key roles
Profiles	Institution	Gender	LinkedIn summary		LinkedIn headline
Profile 1	Vega School	Female	Kind hearted strategist who prides herself in promoting charitable acts.	Independent professional who is strategically driven and has a creative flare.	BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication student
Profile 2	Vega School	Male	Brand strategist with a creative heart and Storytelling	Marketing & Communication are some of the things that keep me up at night.	Bachelor's of Arts in Strategic Brand Communications.
Profile 3	Vega School	Female	I am eager to learn anything new in the industry of Brand and Marketing.	My passion, entrepreneurial and creative flair is what drives me	Brand strategist
Profile 4	Vega School	Female	A creative team player with the ability to communicate and relate to people from different cultural backgrounds.	Passion for baking, cooking, family and community.	Junior Account Executive at Carat
Profile 5	Vega School	Female	Leadership interest and aspiration to complete a master's degree in the near future.	Passionate about strategy, digital brand building and seeing the creative world adapt	Hybrid Strategist. BA (Hon) Strategic Brand Communication. Assertive Defender - ISFJ-A
Profile 6	Vega School	Female	As a Veganite the possibilities in Marketing	Digital Marketing is my field and	Digital Marketing Graduate

			and Advertising are endless.	Strategy is my specialization.	Phakama Woman 2018Class
Profile 7	AAA School of Advertising	Female	MORE THAN JUST A MOTHER.	Account and Brand Management graduate.	Brand Representative at Joe Public United
Profile 8	AAA School of Advertising	Female	Passion lies in developing strong conceptual ideas.	History of working in the marketing and advertising industry.	Events & Experience Manager Creative Strategist

Table 4: Personal brand

Personal brand					
Profiles	Institution	Gender	Endorsed skills	Experience	Position/role
Profile 1	Vega School	Female	12/7	0 – 2 years	Intern
Profile 2	Vega School	Male	2/3	0 – 2 years	Brand strategy intern
Profile 3	Vega School	Female	11/3	3 – 4 years	Strategy intern
Profile 4	Vega School	Female	16/3	3 – 4 years	Marketing intern
Profile 5	Vega School	Female	3/3	0 – 2 years	Graduate intern
Profile 6	Vega School	Female	22/3	5 + years	Digital strategist intern
Profile 7	AAA School of Advertising	Female	0/3	3 - 4 years	Account Manager Intern
Profile 8	AAA School of Advertising	Female	8 / 3	Intern	5 + years

Table 5: Personal scorecard

Personal scorecard					
Profiles	Institution	Gender	Connections	Accomplishments	Certificates
Profile 1	Vega School	Female	373	0	No
Profile 2	Vega School	Male	347	0	No
Profile 3	Vega School	Female	385	2 projects, 3 Languages, 5 honours and awards	No
Profile 4	Vega School	Female	403	0	No
Profile 5	Vega School	Female	500+	0	11
Profile 6	Vega School	Female	500+	0	No
Profile 7	AAA School of Advertising	Female	411	0	No
Profile 8	AAA School of Advertising	Female	450	0	No

Table 6: implementation and cultivation

Implementation and cultivating						
Profiles	Institution	Gender	Activities	Articles	Header image	Profile picture
Profile 1	Vega School	Female	N/A	0	No	Professional
Profile 2	Vega School	Male	27 Likes, 3 Loves and 1 Comment	0	No	Professional
Profile 3	Vega School	Female	5 + comments, 10 + posts		Yes	Professional

Profile 4	Vega School	Female	N/A	0	No	Semi professional
Profile 5	Vega School	Female	20 + likes, 2 comments	0	No	Casual
Profile 6	Vega School	Female	2142 followers, 20 + likes, 20 + comments	0	No	Semi professional
Profile 7	AAA School of Advertising	Female	411 followers, 20 + likes, 3 Comments	3	No	Semi professional
Profile 8	AAA School of Advertising	Female	451 followers, 20 + likes, 5 comments	0	No	Casual

3.7 Limitations and delimitations

3.7.1 Limitations

During the research study, there were constraints or limitations which were out of the researchers control that were encountered; however, they do not signify the study to be a total failure (Enslin, 2014).

Firstly, the limitation that the research encountered is due to the Coronavirus pandemic where people are required to follow strict social distancing; which means the researcher was limited to doing in-depth interviews online instead of in person.

As such, the first limitation brings up the second one, which is technological constraints that might be an effect of conducting online interviews such as poor internet connection hindered the online in-depth interviews.

Thirdly, as an effect of the Coronavirus pandemic the South African economy is plummeting (Gibson, 2020); therefore, the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of the research participants might have been a limitation since they might have been influenced by the increase in the unemployment rate due to the plummeting economy.

Lastly, the time at which the researcher was required to be conducted was a limitation in that the researcher only had two months to collect the data, analyse it and come up with findings and recommendations which was not sufficient time given that the researcher needed to gather in-depth information from the population – which required significant amount of time.

3.7.2 Delimitations

Unlike limitation that are beyond the researchers' control, delimitations which are ideally self-imposed limitations; resulted from the parameters, borders and choices the researcher made when deciding on the scope of the research study (Enslin, 2014).

The first delimitation was the population of the study; graduates with active LinkedIn profiles currently looking for jobs in the advertising industry in South Africa.

Secondly, the field of specification was marketing and advertising, instead of graduates across multiple disciplines.

Lastly, the social media network site was LinkedIn because it is the most dominant social media platform for personal branding (Ekhlassi, Moghadam & Adibi, 2018; LinkedIn, 2015; McCabe, 2017).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter covers the researcher's discussion of the findings that were derived from the data that was analysed on chapter three, using the thematic content analysis method and deductive qualitative content analysis data analysis methods. The researcher discusses the findings in line with Rampersad's Authentic Personal Branding Model (2008) which is the framework for the study. Rampersad (2008: 35) states that "building an authentic personal brand is an evolutionary and organic process consisting of four phases" the researcher focuses on the four phases on the following headings, which are personal ambition, personal branding, personal scorecard and Implementation and cultivation.

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Personal ambition

Rampersad (2008) states that defining and formulating a personal ambition is about identifying yourself and figuring out what your dreams are, who you are, what you stand for, what makes you unique and special, why you are different from others, what your values are, and identifying your genius . Rampersad (2008) further goes to stress that people are twice as likely to accomplish their personal brand if their personal ambition is expressly mentioned.

Based on the analysis conducted and data collected on chapter 3, according to a recruiter in the advertising industry, in terms of personal ambition. One participant stated the following:

"What are your skillset, your passion that will actually make me want to read more or learn more about you".

The advertising recruiter looks to find out the skillset and passion that a marketing graduate has which will make them read more or learn more about the individuals' LinkedIn profile.

And, based on the deductive qualitative content analysis that was used to analyse LinkedIn profiles of marketing graduates. The researcher found that majority of the marketing graduates analysed have personal ambitions that cover Rampersad's (2008) personal vision, personal mission and personal key roles that are in line with the framework for the study and the advertising industry recruiters' expectations of a marketing graduates' personal brand ambition. With profile one quoting "Leadership interest and aspiration to complete a master's degree in the near future" and another one "Marketing & Communication are some of the things that keep me up at night".

And to align with Rampersad (2008) all of them have their brand ambition written down under their LinkedIn summary "about" section.

4.1.2 Personal branding

According to Rampersad (2008) the second phase involves defining and formulating an authentic, distinctive, relevant, concise, and persuasive personal brand promise, and use it as the focal point of behaviour and actions. Rampersad (2008:35) further goes to emphasise that as a professional, "it is at this point that you need to determine your specialisation, concentrating on a single core talent".

The interviewed participants quoted that "When I think of personal branding is how are you selling yourself out there". Some of the recruiter's view is however, misaligned with the personal brand definition adopted for this study. Except for the part that touches on perception, which is in line with the definition adopted for the study that states a personal brand is the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions it creates (Rampersad (2008)).

The data analysed from the marketing graduate's profiles, outlines that marketing graduates did not take the time to formulate an authentic brand promise. The chapter above shows majority of them mostly focused on stipulating their work experience, endorsed skills and position/roles they held or currently occupying, but it does not say much about how their personal brand promise.

4.1.3 Personal scorecard

According to Rampersad (2008) formulating a personal scorecard translates personal ambition and personal brand into manageable and measurable personal objectives, milestones, and improvement actions in a holistic and balanced way. Furthermore, the personal scorecard can be used to keep track of progress, define new career paths, build a network of contacts, and quantify and report key accomplishments (Rampersad, 2008).

Three main themes that came up from the advertising industry recruiters, namely: accomplishments, personal milestones and networking which fall under the personal scorecard key concept from the research framework. And networking was the frequently mentioned with a recruiter stating “So, for me I am looking at who are you networking with, which doors have you opened for me to consider you”.

From the marketing graduate’s perspective, the eight profiles analysed highlighted that five out of the eight profiles have over 400 connections, only one marketing graduate showcased accomplishments (projects, language, honours and awards) and again another one from the eight only showcased certificates.

This was not in line with recruiters’ expectations and how Rampersad (2008) defines personal scorecard. The recruiter goes to mention that “There are marketing graduates who are doing online free courses, maybe Google certified or Facebook certified and showcase them as part of your personal brand”.

4.1.4 Implementation and cultivation

Rampersad (2008) states that implementing and cultivating the personal brand ambition, personal brand and personal scorecard a person must get the word out through a variety of media channels, market your personal brand frequently, and build a strong network.

Only one marketing graduate from the eight analysed was not active on LinkedIn, with the most active graduate having 451 followers, 20+ likes and 5+ comments in the past three months. However, only one marketing graduate had published an article on LinkedIn, one had a header image but all of them had profile pictures with three having professional ones, two semi-professional and two casual ones.

4.2 Trustworthiness

In order to enhance the trustworthiness and rigour of the study. The researcher considered the following factors: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

- Credibility: the use of both field and unobtrusive data collection methods enhanced the credibility of this study.
- Transferability: the researcher provided detailed descriptions of the study to the participants context to ensure that their behaviour, experiences and exposure are meaningful and can at least provide for the findings to be applied in a similar situation.
- Dependability: The researcher was transparent about the methods which were used to collect the data and steps for analysing it to a point of reporting the research findings.
- Confirmability: the researcher kept a trail for when collecting, analysis and interpreting the data which thoughts during the research were captured.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to sum up the rest of the document, the researcher concludes the study by discussing the overall findings of the study against the research questions and if whether the research does indeed address the world problem.

5.1 Concluding answers to the research question

To answer the first research question “what perceptions do marketing graduates have about personal branding on LinkedIn?”. Based on the data analysed and findings uncovered the researcher concluded that marketing graduates perceive LinkedIn to be of value as they do have a profile that is up to date, even though they don't take extra measure to promote their personal brand on the platform.

Where else with the second research question “what are expectations of advertising industry recruiters about marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn?”. The recruiters expect marketing graduates to be active on LinkedIn by sharing articles, posts about things they are passionate about and following industry thought leaders which is not the case with the marketing graduates.

Lastly, the question regarding “the similarity between marketing graduates' perceptions of personal branding on LinkedIn and advertising recruiters' expectations of a marketing graduates' personal brands on LinkedIn against Rampersand Authentic Personal Branding model?”. The researcher concludes that there is similarity in terms of the personal ambition and personal brand concept of the framework. However, the marketing graduates fall behind in terms of developing and keeping a scorecard and implementing and cultivating the personal ambition, personal brand and personal scorecard.

5.2 Implications of findings for future practices

The first contribution of this study will be the understanding about perceptions graduates have about personal branding on LinkedIn. More specifically marketing graduates as they were the focus for this study and thus contribute to the marketing fraternity with regards to how marketing graduates apply the branding theory taught at graduate level.

Secondly, the findings will inform future researchers and recruiters in the brand, marketing and communication industry about the usage of LinkedIn in South Africa, activities graduates undertake and common trends to consider when considering LinkedIn for vetting job candidates for recruitment

Lastly, given the multitude of personal branding theoretical frameworks, the researcher believes that Rampersad's authentic personal branding model (which is the framework for this study) was well tested against the research problem and contribute towards its effectiveness regarding personal branding on LinkedIn.

5.3 Conclusions.

Based on the data collected and analysed, the research findings have successfully shown that the perception marketing graduates have about personal branding on LinkedIn greatly differs from recruiter's expectations.

Marketing graduates do consider using their personal brand on LinkedIn. However, they don't actively promote their personal brand through LinkedIn activities such as liking, sharing and commenting on posts that resonate with their personal brand. Furthermore, they don't take time to write articles about what they are passionate about, share their accomplishments or even follow and connect with industry thought leaders to grow their knowledge. Marketing graduates are merely treating LinkedIn as an online CV which they just put and hardly visit; instead of a professional social media platform for interacting with like-minded people and potential recruiters.

Where else, recruiters expect marketing graduates to be more active, as it aids them in understanding the type of person a particular graduate is by looking at the posts they share, comments they make on other posts, people and companies they follow and their overall connections. Over and above having a LinkedIn profile that is complete, being active gives recruiters and the general public more clarity and credibility.

Therefore, it is of great interest to the researcher to conduct research in the future, to uncover the motive behind marketing graduates' lack of activity on LinkedIn.

5.4 Ethical consideration

The researcher was aware that research ethics are important to the research study and serve as a fundamental aspect of the research design. As such the researcher considered the following ethics when conducting research: confidentiality, consent, data protection, and the researcher's objectivity.

The participants identity will be kept private, confidentially and responses anonymous while participation was voluntary. If participants didn't feel comfortable with continuing with the study, they had the right to withdraw at any time.

Even though participation was voluntary, the respondents participated in the study from the basis of consent. Every participant was issued a consent form to complete by the researcher, the researcher further provided sufficient information before every in-depth interview to give the participants a choice to either continue or not.

In terms of the participants data collect, the researcher adhered to the South African Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 ("POPIA"). The data is kept in a computer that is password protected, saved in a folder that's is synced with a cloud storage facility (Google Drive) which is also password word protected, only the researcher and supervisor have access to the password protected folder and data will only be available through a request via the Independent Institute of Education. After a period of the five years of the data safe keeping the research will destroy the folder with the data.

Lastly, the researcher obtained the highest level of objectivity in data analysis, discussions and conclusions. Furthermore, any misrepresentation of primary data findings was avoided and all communication with the participants was conducted with transparency and utmost honesty.

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Appendices:

A: Ethical clearance form



15 July 2020



Student name: Lerato Caphus Monareng

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Bordeaux



Re: Approval of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Strategic Brand Communication Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.



There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,

Helena van Wyk
Supervisor



Dr. Helena van Wyk
Campus Postgraduate
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CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

The Independent Institute of Education Pty Ltd, its associated companies, employees, contractors, representatives and directors, are indemnified against all claims which may arise in connection with or as a result of any loss, damage or injury to you as a researcher entering into an agreement with a participant in the course of your research, provided that such loss, damage or injury is caused by the gross negligence or intentional act(s) or omission(s) of The Independent Institute of Education Pty Ltd, its associated companies, employees, contractors, representatives and directors.

Wishing you the very best of luck.

Yours sincerely,



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator – RESM8419

Dr. Ria van Zyl

National Post-graduate Coordinator – IIE-Vega

The Independent Institute of Education

B: Consent form

Study title:

Investigating the value of personal branding for marketing graduates

Consent to take part in research

I Esnath Simon voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a password protected cloud storage (Google Drive) that is synchronised with a password protect computer until the exam board confirms the results of the research report.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from date of exam board results.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant



7/08/2020

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study



7/08/2020

Signature of researcher

Date

C: Interview schedule

Advertising industry recruiters	
Section One	
Introductory remarks	
Introduce yourself and provide information that may be relevant to the interviewee & provide a brief description of your research	Good day, my name is Lerato Monareng and I am a Vega honours student currently studying my BA Hons in Strategic Brand Communication and an avid persona branding advocate. I am currently doing a study on the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates looking for employment in the advertising industry. And I have reached out to you because, I am interested in growing the body of knowledge about the personal branding phenomenon and trust you will share valuable information that will help me with my research.
Establish purpose of project	The purpose of my study is to explore the value of personal branding on LinkedIn; by uncovering advertising industry recruiters' expectations and if their expectations align with marketing graduates' perceptions of personal branding on LinkedIn.
Establish how you will use this information	I hope to use the information you will share with me to help marketing graduates looking for employment in the advertising industry and better equip them with the relevant information at the start of their careers. Furthermore, I hope to contribute knowledge about personal branding on LinkedIn in the marketing fraternity.
Section 2: The body of interview	Research question

Set the stage for the interview: ask a few questions to establish credibility: 1. Biographical questions 2. Background questions	1. How many years of recruitment experience do you in the advertising? 2. Between the traditional and digital recruitment process, which one do you have more experience in?
Central question Concept 01: Personal branding	3. How important is a marketing graduates' personal brand when applying for a job? RQ1 4. What is your definition of personal branding? RQ1 5. What would you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of a graduate having a personal brand well managed? RQ1 6. What are your expectations of a marketing graduates' personal brand? RQ2 7. Are there any specific steps marketing graduates should follow to build and promote their personal brand? RQ2
Central question concept 02: Personal brand Identity	8. Is the image an individual portrays more important than their skillset and qualifications, why? RQ2 9. How do you ensure that the identity an individual portrays is a reflection of who they truly are? RQ2 10. Does a marketing graduates physical identity have to align with their digital identity, why? RQ2
Central question concept 03: Personal branding on social media	11. Do you review marketing graduates' LinkedIn profiles in your recruitment process? RQ2 12. What do you or would you look for when assessing a graduates LinkedIn profile? RQ2 13. Would you say marketing graduates are utilising the full potential of LinkedIn to

	promote their personal brand for potential employers? RQ2 14. Have you heard or experienced any LinkedIn shortcomings, in terms of recruiting for marketing graduate positions? RQ2
Central question concept 04: Digital recruitment	15. Are there any career implications for not maintaining a good personal brand that graduates should be aware of? RQ2 16. Do you feel there is an alignment between marketing graduates use of LinkedIn and recruiters' expectations? RQ2 and RQ1
Section three: Closing remarks	
Establish that the interview is coming to an end	As we are about to conclude the interview, is there anything you would like to add about your personal branding expectations of marketing graduates on LinkedIn
Provide the participant with a specific example of how their insights have contributed towards your data or insight.	Your insights have greatly contributed to my understanding of recruiters' personal branding expectations and how its value is expected on LinkedIn for professional development.
Thank them for their time	Thank you for agreeing to speak to me today, it has been a pleasure finding out more about your view of personal branding.

D: Transcription

Participant A

Time: 12:00

Date: 07 August 2020

Place: Microsoft Teams

Time	Interview	Notes
00:00 – 00:59	Interviewer: Thank you very much for taking the time to assist me with my with my study, like I mentioned on LinkedIn so the title of my study is investigating the value of personal branding on LinkedIn for marketing graduates who are looking for employment in the advertising industry and really why marketing graduates because they know we've been taught branding we've been taught personal branding.	
00:59 – 01:59	Interviewer: Basically just to accept if whether we are applying what we have been taught at school from a theoretical perspective if whether we are applying it in a practical manner but above all of that it also to see whether that the perception that we are marketing graduates have about personal branding on LinkedIn is it what employers are expecting us to you know position ourself in that manner so that we can reach a common ground and ideally the purpose of the research to you know help other marketing graduates who are upcoming so that you know we better position ourselves in a way that recruiters are expecting us to position ourself within you know when we are starting up in the job market because we don't want to even except that LinkedIn is this amazing thing only to find that recruiters don't even look at that	

	for that matter so I'm just trying to reach a common ground where I can go back with the findings and to also try to inform the marketing fraternity as whole to say	
01:59 – 02:59	Interviewer: You've been taught these from a personal branding and branding perspective this is what recruiters expecting of you so that you can better position yourself or for the world of work so hence why I reached out to you seeing that you are you know talent management and recruitment space so that I believe you can better inform most of my understanding and inform the research as a whole. Participant A: I will try Interviewer: also it's not really formal I have a list of 15 questions and what I have experienced is that Participant A: Ok I have a clock or 20 minutes I don't know if we will be done. Interviewer: We should be done, because in most cases people tend to answer three questions and one go so it's not really much of a challenge. so you know just to start off with and create a bit of context.	
2:59 - 3:46	Interviewer: I would just like to know how many years of recruitment do you have basically in the advertising and communications space. Participant A: I have just over eight years' experience in advertising, and I am still in advertising, so my role has been that if an HR generalised where I attach recruitment talent management and other HR functions.	

	Interviewer: Fantastic and then in terms of personal branding, what is the first word that comes to mind when you think of personal branding on just high level Participant A: Ok, for me what comes up is what differentiates you from the rest.	Theme 01: Differentiation
3:50 - 4:49	Participant A: When I think of personal branding is how are you selling yourself out there, what are your skillset, your passion that will actually make me want to read more or learn more. Interviewer: ok alright alright, And then and then what would you say some of the from a marketing graduates perspective what would you say are some of the advantages or disadvantages of me having or not having a personal brand or not maintaining or managing it well accordingly.	Theme 02: Personal selling Theme 03: Personal attributes
4:49 - 5:39	Participant A: When I think of personal branding for me I'm looking at what is it that you can offer to our business because personal branding is the right perception that being created but when I'm looking at candidates on LinkedIn or if I receive for example a CV or application with 5 marketing graduates or looking at profiles.	Theme 04: perception
5:49 - 6:49	Participant A: For me I am looking for the things that are going to make you stand out Interviewer: Ok, Participant A: The advantages of personal branding is that, it shows me - one that you know exactly what your career plan is, you know where you one to go, it shows the things that	Theme 05: Personal ambition

	you are passionate about because if I know your personal branding, those are the things that will make you stand out. So those things will help me to say, ok I am looking at this person right. How can they and what is it that they bring to the business, what value do they offer Interviewer: Ok, so what value add is their personal brand going to brand to the business. Participant A: So, for me personal branding literally highlights you, before I even speak to you or something it's my it's my spark interest. It's the thing that differentiates you and if you know that ok cool for me. If you want to be in advertising how are you linking your interest your passions your experience in relation to.	
6:49 - 7:49	Participant A: The prospective employers so for example, marketing is broad, advertising is broad. So for me if you know that you want to be in digital, I have seen a candidate who are following agencies in the digital space, who are doing online free courses, maybe Google certified or Facebook certified and showcase them as part of your personal brand. When I see that already I am like mmmhh this person already doesn't have a job but they understand what we are doing as a business. Participant A: So, they already positioning themselves in advance. So, for me when searching for candidates I look at what they have studied right, apart from school and who are they following,	Theme 06: personal milestones Theme 07: Positioning
7:49 - 8:44	Interviewer: In that case would you say that there's a certain set of listed framework or	

	model that myself the marketing graduate I have to follow when I want to build my personal brand is there like set model or is it just a spray and pray to say let me just open a LinkedIn hear open Facebook there are there any expectations from recruiter to say, no this actually a model that you must follow so that we can consider you. it is there any set. Participant A: So, for me it's more than important that for people who don't have work experience, we are talking about their qualifications, what did you study if you are a marketing graduate. While they are study studying, have they taken up unpaid internships. Because now there's learnerships but usually people want someone if they are junior to have some sort of experience	
8:49 - 9:34	Participant A: Even a year's experience, so for me I am looking at who are you networking with, which doors have you opened for me to consider you or do you have experience because for me sometimes if I see that someone. What I would recommend is people study qualification in line with where they want to go. So firstly, I would look at qualification, I would look at experience whether its unpaid internship Interviewer: Any form of practical application of what a person has learnt basically. Participant A: Yes, But for me I would recommend that, that qualification is in line with where you want to go. Interviewer: Ok, definitely	Theme 07: Networking

9:40 - 10:33	Participant A: So for example, someone who is just doing an internship in a company that's not even relevant, so for example who are the companies that you are following, because on LinkedIn we can see the companies that you are following , what are the things that you are posting online, sometimes even when people don't have experience but if I see you posting articles that you have read, activities. I am like ok cool this is someone can start following or whatever the case might be. Or actually when I am trying to connect with people and you that one day you might need a job. Who are the people you have started connecting with? So, for me its about connections on LinkedIn, activities on LinkedIn, news subscriptions, do you know what is happening in your industry.	Theme 08: activity
10:40 - 11:40	Interviewer: So, having my ear on the ground industry-wise basically. Participant A: Yes, are you keeping yourself up to date, which news articles are you following. Another important thing is that when you receive a call what is your elevation pitch on the phone. Interviewer: Ok, that's a very important one that I never took note of. Participant A: And also, with marketing right for example if you have done like if you're doing like your own honours you can share you own article, show your article so that we can see what you have done Interviewer: So, in that would you say the way a person portrayed themselves or possibly their personal brand more important than their skills	

	and qualification, so let's take I am C student or a D student but how I present myself it's to the best level but qualification-wise	
11:40 - 12:38	Interviewer: I'm an average student I just passed with no A's and stuff like that is how I portray myself or qualifications which one is more important or does the boat have to be in line. Participant A: Okay cool so you know like everything compliments each other and I can tell you for a fact with me when we hire we not going to say did you get 50% or 60% what we are looking at is if someone completed their qualification, because you see other people who are very learned very good with books good with theory but they can't apply their theory. So more than ever when it comes to personal brand it's how are you selling yourself and like I said how do you differentiate yourself how are you leveraging on social media, what is your activity, who are you following on LinkedIn.	
12:40 - 13:40	Interviewer: And then in that case you know from a recruiters perspective how would you ensure that the image that I'm portraying to you coming to an in to an interview or the image that I portray online is a true reflection of who I truly am because you know I can come up with a totally different image on social media can be all ties and suits but out how do you sure that image is authentic. Participant A: So, for me if you are coming to an interview, its one, you are selling yourself.	

	So, it's research, if you come to an interview a turn off would be when I am interviewing you and asking you about our business you can't even tell me what we do, so for me its research. So, when you come you showing interest that you know what we do, you understand what we do as a business, you understand the people that we are and some of our campaigns that we have done. is	
13:40 - 14:38	Participant A: Yes, you can sell yourself but for what's important is when I get to see you need to have done your research. Interviewer: so really basically that means that my personal brand has to sort of fit with the company culture in a way if I'm correct Participant A: Yes, that is correct because I always believed that when we hire for potential because we believe that the skills can be taught , we can always teach how to write a marketing campaign but we cannot teach you great attitude and how you show up. You should also do your research, so for me when I see a CV. Because I remember recently there was a guy the hiring manager was like "Oh! My God, if I had seen the CV I wouldn't hired the guy"	
14:40 - 15:15	Participant A: Until he spoke to the guy and even made him an offer. And what that guy told us is that "I am a learning student, I am forever learning" and I remember actually when I looked at the CV and the person they were both totally different if only we looked at the CV we would have hired him. But I spoke to him and that	

	showed that what's important is not just how your LinkedIn profile looks like	
15:15 - 16:49	Interviewer: So, it's not only how I look like on paper, so having the opportunity to meet the person. We can even call it brand experience so having to experience the person gives more credibility to what is already on paper. Participant A: Yes, exactly, so for me I would say that how you CV is structured right, what are your achievements, what are the things you have done, what are the things you are doing outside work, who are you following in terms of are going to conferences and webinars that relate to you industry. So that I can see from your profile which webinar you have attended, which free LinkedIn learning courses, even though you've completed your honours, you need to showcase what you have done beyond that pages you follow on LinkedIn, people that you follow and companies. And for me those are the things that will make me think that this person I want. It doesn't have to end there people need to take it a step further and say ok cool now I am going to meet either Ogilvy or I am going to meet Wunderman or VML, So I need to research on the role so that I can understand. And for people who don't have experience they need to link the theory to what's happening in real life so people need to take it a step further to research on their future employer.	Theme 09: Accomplishments
16:50 – 17:54	Interviewer: And then in that case in your experience over the years would you say	

	marketing graduates or marketing professionals are utilising the full potential of LinkedIn. Participant A: Yes, I would say that. Because for me most of the graduates that I have seen are because marketing you can talk about marketing without mentioning social media because that's where brands are, so for me I would say they are utilising LinkedIn. Interviewer: And then also from a recruiters perspective, would you say that in these shortcomings, from your experience with, you know, using LinkedIn where it's not giving you the full, you know, a full overview of what a person is online? Is there any way LinkedIn might be leaking from, you know, recruiters, a recruitment perspective?	
17:55 – 18:20	Participant A: Not necessarily, because for me, I always believe that the onus is on the person to sell themselves. Yeah, yeah. Well, many times it's a great CV. It's a great profile. And I mean, like, what just happened to be interviewed by the CV looks great. What just happened. So, yeah, I think for me, LinkedIn most of the roles that I've recruited for with a junior or senior team has played a really good role like when it comes to recruitment.	
18:20 – 20:04	Interviewer: All right. So in that case, then I guess you'll agree with me when I say there is an alignment between how much marketing graduates are using LinkedIn and what you as recruiters are expecting from a personal branding perspective on LinkedIn.	

	Participant A: So, I wouldn't say yes and no because I in terms of the activity and what I'm seeing, I haven't really gone through to check in terms of marketing graduate and say, yes, there is alignment. Yeah, but me, I would like just to be like a situation that me when people are only doing what he is, what they are following, if they've done courses, if they uploaded those courses and which pages, which pages. So for me, it's a matter of making it relevant, you know, about your passions and experiences in line with what your future employer offers. If I can go and really wait, which is right about me and one person that, you know, like I'm passionate about. Right. And any had that experience. So for me, I don't think I've seen that as yet. Coaching for, like senior marketing right now for me to be able to say they are doing it or they are not doing so.	
20:05 – 20:27	Interviewer: So OK. All right. Yeah. So like I mentioned that we've been kind of going through all the questions and really as we are about to conclude them, you know, the interview, is there anything you'd like to add about, you know, the topic of personal branding expectations basically from recruiters over and beyond the question that we quickly just going through anything, any suggestion for marketing graduates, anything that we should keep in mind for recruiters.	
20:27 – 20:20	Participant A: So for me, I would say my suggestions is people need to find mentors. OK, you know, when I say mentors I mean people	

	that have gone through the same career because we believe that will be able to show you the ropes. Yeah. Able to you and you connect with people on LinkedIn within the years, they would be probably link you up with your next employer to tell you about marketing new initiatives or that are happening. Someone out that is marketing graduates should actually make connections with the people with the same industry where they want to go. Yes. So they've got people guiding them to say, how do I go about it? Interviewer: So a bit of handholding in a way. Participant A: Exactly, I wish I could do it, you know, and, you know, like, how can you leave me with someone looking for a job is going to do it. And so for me, I think people would need to use that video and follow just the need to be intentional about following people who are going to put in their lives. Interviewer: Right Participant A: So in my role, I a lot of people that I'm following are P your chief learning officer, your learning gurus, because they are forever posting interesting activities. Interviewer: And it keeps you informed also, I believe, informed. Participant A: You know, what's happening in your industry. So for me, that's what I would recommend, that all linked in the message is used to say people must find me, but they must use linked into their own advantage.	
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20:20 – 23:40	Interviewer: And I totally agree with you on the mentorship bid because, you know, they see if you know better, you do better. And the only way to know better is, you know, as people who have been there to talk, to know, to sort of guide and. Yeah, and as I mentioned, that we've reached the end of the interview. You know, I'd like I'd like to thank you very much for the time you've taken your insights has greatly contributed to my understanding of, you know, linked in personal personal branding, recruiters perspective from talent management perspective, and also like the whole of our advertising, communication and digital industry. And, you know, I thank you very much for agreeing to speak to me today. It has been a pleasure finding out more about your views. And it really means a lot now. It's a bit clearer. And trust me, there's been a trend that's been a theme from some of the people I've even interviewed. This seems to be networking seems to be the main theme that's coming out of LinkedIn, modern more than just people looking for jobs, but a building social capital, if I can call it that. So I'm just glad that, you know, the it's connecting now. I'm seeing that OK is the trend. And it really helped me inform my findings and conclusions. Ideally, recommendations which can, you know, contribute towards the marketing fraternity, as I mentioned in the beginning.	
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23:40 - 24:00	Participant A: Yeah, absolutely. And it's about, you know, like how do you best utilize your network to your advantage? Yeah. And also just how to leverage on on the network, on LinkedIn. So. So, yeah.	
24:00 – 24:05	Interviewer: All right. Thank you very much.	

E: Codebook

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
	LinkedIn profile	Profile picture	Summary	Connections	LinkedIn activity	Headline	Header Image	Endorsed skills	Recommendations	Certificates	Accomplishments	LinkedIn Articles	Interests: Companies	Employer	Position/Role	Volunteer experience	Years experience	Industry	Qualification	Qualification completion	School	Gender	
1	Profile 1	Professional	strengths, roles, personality	373	N/A	BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication student	No	12/7	0	No	0	No	Ogilvy, TheMediaShop, Joe Public, Creativ Unboxed	Sorted Design and Advertising	Intern	N/A	0 - 2 years	Advertising & Marketing	BBA Brand Building and Management, BA Hons Strategic Brand Communication	2018	Vega School	Female	
2	Profile 2	Professional	Role, Skills, passion	347	27 Likes, 3 Loves and 1 Comment	Bachelor's of Arts in Strategic Brand Communications	No	2/3	0	No	0	No	Havas, TBWA, Yellowwood, Joe Public, Ogilvy, M&C Saatchi, Omnicom, Metropolitan republic, Dentsu	McCann1886	Brand Strategy Intern	Media PR Intern, Summer inter	0 - 2 years	Advertising & Marketing	BA Strategic Brand Communication, Higher Certificate in Creative Development	2019	Vega School	Male	
3	Profile 3	Professional	Strengths, passion, personality, ambition, unique skills	385	5 + comments, 10 + posts	Brand strategist	Yes	11 / 3	0	No	2 projects, 3 Languages, 5 honors and awards	No	Ad Dynamo, Joe Public, BRANDTRUTH, Brand Spaza, Pacinamix	Brand Spaza, Joe public, Keswa Branding, Pacinamix	Strategy Intern	N/A	3 - 4 years	Advertising & Marketing	BBA Brand Building and Management, BA Hons Strategic Brand Communication	2017	Vega School	Female	
4	Profile 4	Semi Professional	Strengths, passion, hobbies	403	N/A	Position	No	16 / 3	0	No	0	No	Ogilvy, Carat, TLC marketing, Dentsu Aegis, Diesel Brook, Fogg agency	Dentsu Aegis Network, Carat	Marketing Intern	N/A	3 - 4 years	Advertising & Marketing	Bcom Marketing, BA Hons Strategic Brand Communication	2016	Vega School, University of pretoria	Female	
5	Profile 5	Casual	Qualification, interests, aspirations, passion	500+	20 + likes, 2 comments	Position, qualification, personalitu	No	3 / 3	0	11	0	No	BBDO, Carat, Isobar, The King James Group, Network BBDO, Dentsu Aegis, TBWA	Carat	Graduate Intern	N/A	0 - 2 years	Advertising & Marketing	BA Hons Strategic Brand Communication	2018	Vega School	Female	
6	Profile 6	Semi Professional	Career specialisation, work experience, education	500+	2142 followers, 20 + likes, 20 + comments	Position, Company, specialty	No	22 / 3	2	0	0	0	Ogilvy, Joe Public	FCB Africa	Digital strategist intern	N/A	5 + years	Advertising & Marketing	Bcom digital Marketing, Brand Building practice	2018	Vega School	Female	
7	Profile 7	Semi Professional	Accomplishments, education, qualification	411	411 followers, 20 + likes, 3 Comments	Position, company	No	0 / 3	0	0	0	3	Leo Burnett, DDB, FCB Global, Joe Public	Joe Public	Account Manager Intern	N/A	3 - 4 years	Advertising & Marketing	BA Integrated Marketing	2019	AAA School of Advertising	Female	
8	Profile 8	Casual	Position, experience, passion,	450	451 followers, 20 + likes, 5 comments	Position	No	8 / 3	0	0	0	0	The King James group, FCB Global, The MediaShop, HelloComp uter, Joe Public, Jupiter Drawing Room,	Joe Public	Intern	N/A	5 + years	Advertising & Marketing	BA Brand Communication	2015	AAA School of Advertising	Female	
9																							

