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# The BrandYou Method: A Guide to Leverage Personal Brands

Juliana Damasco dos Santos Silva

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Maria Estarreja.

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**Author:** Juliana Damasco dos Santos Silva

## 1. Abstract

In a competitive society, individuals try to stand out to achieve career success. A topic that gained notoriety in this context is personal branding, which focuses on developing the personal brand of individuals who aim to establish differentiator points to build competitive advantage.

However, there are few methodologies that offer practical processes and efficient personal branding frameworks. In this sense, this dissertation aims to provide and validate a new method, which will be entitled as the BrandYou method. This method was built based on the summary of the literature review, and it will be further presented in the literature framework. It is a process containing the main aspects and chronological sequence for the development of personal brands. The method was evaluated through an intervention carried out with selected participants for 2 months and the results were analyzed before and after the intervention.

Personal brands of individuals were examined in the study by observing the impact that the method had on the internal and external perception of specific attributes, such as authority, recognition, and authenticity. The selection of attributes was based on the findings from the literature review.

In conclusion, the results showed that the BrandYou method positively and significantly impacts the perception of some attributes, internally and externally, in the short and medium-term. Therefore, this dissertation has theoretical and managerial contributions since it provides new data and discoveries that help in filling the gaps in the literature while it offers an additional tool for personal brands.

**Keywords:** personal branding, self-brand, self-marketing, self-promotion, career management, self-knowledge, coaching, self-development, branding, professional development.

## 2. Resumo

Diante de uma sociedade em que o mercado profissional se torna cada vez mais competitivo, indivíduos buscam formas de se destacarem para atingirem sucesso nas suas carreiras. Um dos temas que ganha notoriedade neste contexto é o de *personal branding*, que foca em desenvolver marcas pessoais, com o intuito de que esta seja percebida da forma que deseja, melhorando a sua imagem e desenvolvendo-se como pessoa e profissional.

Existem poucas metodologias que ofereçam um processo prático e eficiente de *personal branding*. Nesse sentido, esta dissertação tem como objetivo validar o BrandYou method, que foi construído tendo como base o resumo da revisão de literatura, representado pela *literature framework*. Ele contém os principais aspectos e sequência cronológica necessários ao desenvolvimento de marcas pessoais e foi avaliado através de uma intervenção efetuada com participantes selecionados durante 2 meses. Os resultados foram analisados antes e depois da intervenção.

As marcas pessoais foram examinadas através do impacto que o método gerou na percepção interna e externa de atributos previamente selecionados, como autoridade, reconhecimento e autenticidade. A seleção de atributos foi baseada nas evidências apresentadas na revisão de literatura. Como conclusão, os resultados mostraram que o BrandYou method impacta positivamente e significativamente a percepção dos atributos selecionados, interna e externamente, no curto e no médio prazo. Portanto, esta dissertação tem impacto na literatura e no âmbito dos negócios, já que a mesma adiciona novos dados e descobertas à literatura sobre *personal branding*, enquanto oferece uma ferramenta adicional para profissionais que buscam alavancar suas marcas pessoais.

**Palavras-chave:** personal branding, marca pessoal, marketing pessoal, autopromoção, gestão de carreira, autoconhecimento, coaching, branding, desenvolvimento profissional.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Problem Definition and Relevance**

It has never been so important for professionals to differentiate themselves from others in the competitive professional environment that it is faced nowadays, with high unemployment rates over the world and too many qualified people as never before (*Aubrey, 2010*). In this context, personal branding, which means the management of an individual's own brand (*Peters, 1997*), is becoming a relevant tool to help individuals leverage their careers. The popularization of personal branding is generally attributed to the rising number of books on the subject, magazines, websites, training programs, personal coaches, and specialized literature about how to brand someone for success in the business world (*McNally & Speak, 2002*).

Even though there are few academic publications regarding the topic, the demand for personal branding is increasing, accentuated with the advent of social media. Those new platforms made it possible for individuals to increase their visibility and share content about their lives in a more controlled environment since they have the power to decide which information they want to be public or not (*Labrecque et al., 2011.*) Besides that, when it comes to recruiting processes, if before HR professionals would check resumes and recommendations, now they have a new way of gathering information of future candidates.

According to a survey done by CareerBuilder in 2018, 70% of employers use social media to screen candidates during the hiring process, and 43% of employers use social media to check on current employees. Of those that do social research, 57% have found content that caused them not to hire candidates. Besides that, the survey stated: "According to employers who use social networking sites to research potential job candidates, some of what they're looking for when researching candidates is if the candidate has a professional online persona (50%) and what other people are posting about the candidate (34%)."

Apart from the importance of exploring social media platforms strategically, individuals need to develop a self-brand that brings value to the market and that helps them achieve their career goals. The combination of actions in the online and offline environment will leverage individuals' brands.

## **1.2. Objectives and Research Questions**

This research examines the impact of the BrandYou method (represented in figure 1) on the internal and external perception of individuals' personal brand attributes. Therefore, the first research question aims to analyze the impact of the BrandYou method on the perception of specific brand attributes in individuals.

**RQ1:** Will the BrandYou method positively impact the overall internal and external perception of each of the selected personal brand attributes on individuals?

The second research question intends to analyze if the positive impact from the BrandYou method on the perception of attributes would still persist on the medium-term after the intervention.

**RQ2:** Do the effects of the BrandYou method on the perception of attributes persist on the medium-term after the intervention?

## **1.3. Dissertation Structure**

After this chapter, the present study proceeds to chapter two, which introduces the literature review of the most relevant studies about personal branding and correlated topics and flaws in the literature, ending with a summary of the literature review represented in a framework. In the next chapter, the methodology is presented. Chapter four presents the analysis and results from the pre-post study. In chapter five, it is possible to find the key conclusions and both theoretical and managerial implications. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the limitations of this study. In chapter seven, future research is suggested to encourage other researchers to continue with the investigation. The last chapters are devoted to presenting the appendices and references of this dissertation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Definition of Personal Branding**

The term “Personal Branding” was first introduced by the branding expert Tom Peters, who wrote the article “The Brand Called You” for the magazine *Fast Company* in 1997.

According to him: “Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You” (*Peters, 1997*).

Years after Tom Peter’s publication, several authors (*Kotler, 2003; Hamlin et al, 2006; Morton, 2012; Khedher, 2014*) discussed the topic in the academic field, and as a consequence personal branding became a popular tool among individuals interested in promoting their image to stand out in their professional environment. The demand for knowledge around the theme intensified within the last decade with the emergence of new technologies, such as social media platforms, which is used by billions of people around the world and has fast become one of the defining technologies of the current time (*Appel et al, 2020*), offering great opportunities to spread awareness of personal brands on the Internet (*Zabojnik, 2018*).

## **2.2. The importance of self-knowledge in the management of a brand**

Personal branding is about influencing others, by creating a brand identity that associates certain perceptions and feelings with that identity (*Rampersad, 2008*). The term “identity” is commonly used among different experts of the field and it seems to have an important role in the management of a brand. For individuals to have a clear understanding of their identities, they must have a developed sense of self-perception. Self-reflection is presented as an important first step to improving the self-knowledge of an individual and, consequently, defining one’s brand identity. Personal branding strategies are aimed at developing reflexivity because they encourage actors to engage in careful and critical self-assessment about their relative strengths and weaknesses. The ultimate goal is for an actor to make use of this self-knowledge to better influence how he/she is perceived (*Wee & Brooks, 2010*). Hence, individuals can't manage their brand without first understanding all aspects intrinsic to them. Self-knowledge is not only an essential part of personal branding but the foundation of it.

### **2.2.1. How to develop self-knowledge to leverage personal brands**

According to Rampersard (2008), “Personal branding 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”. Therefore, several authors suggested different practices for individuals to access and develop their self-knowledge.

A common exercise suggested by different authors to increase self-knowledge is the SWOT Analysis, which is a strategic matrix used to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of brands (*Leigh, 2009*). It is a common exercise used in personal branding processes, in which individuals can identify the key internal and external aspects of their brands, being a strong tool to develop brand identity (*Rampersad, 2008*).

Besides that, reputation is an important aspect of a personal brand (*Marshall & Redmond, 2015*). Individuals need to be aware of how they are externally perceived, comparing the results with their internal perception, which means the perception they have of themselves. One more time, techniques can be borrowed from traditional corporate branding strategies to help individuals in the process (*Hamlin et al, 2006*). For instance, the analysis of corporations' reputations considers questions such as “Can identities as internal perceptions and images as external perceptions differ if the second are derived from the first, and if so, how do they differ?” and “Are perceptions aggregated by different groups in one reputation?” (*Verčič & Verčič, 2007*).

Storytelling exercises can also be used by individuals who want to invest in self-knowledge. Besides being an excellent tool for individuals to develop their self-identity, storytelling also helps brands connect with their audience, increasing their value and consequently, selling more (*Smith & Wintrob, 2013*). Storytelling can be an essential part of the individuals' communication strategy, since their story will help them to develop their positioning, connect with their audience, and to bring value to their brands, producing a positive emotional reaction (*Rampersad, 2008*).

A last relevant exercise for self-knowledge is the definition of career goals. Personal branding and career achievements are terms that have been extensively discussed together in the literature (*Irving et al, 2006; Rampersad, 2008; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; McNaly and Speak, 2002; Peters, 1997; Khedher, 2014*). Besides being presented as a causal-effect relationship (successful personal brands leading to career achievements), several authors believe that defining career goals is an important step in personal branding strategies (*Peters, 1997*).

### **2.3. Strategic positioning for personal brands**

Once individuals can identify the intrinsic aspects of their brand through a self-knowledge development process, it is important to move forward to the next step of building a self-brand: the positioning strategy (*Khedher, 2014*). Positioning refers to how customers think

about proposed and/or present brands in a market. Through a brand's positioning, a company concentrates its efforts to build a sustainable competitive advantage on product attribute(s) - tangible or intangible - in the mind of the consumer. This advantage is designed to appeal to one or more segments in that product category. (McCarthy & Perreault, 1999). Kotler (2003) defined positioning as “an act of designing a company’s offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive position in the target market’s minds.”

Even though the term positioning was first introduced in a business context as a strategy for corporations, it can also be adapted to personal brands. Most of the branding techniques applied to individuals borrowed and adapted concepts from branding for corporations. There is some overlap in the development of a personal brand with traditional branding practices (Close et al, 2011).

Hence, the same idea of occupying the target’s mind in a specific category applies when it comes to personal brands. Rampersad (2008) once affirmed: “When we think of Oprah Winfrey, we think of warmth and women’s empowerment. Bill Gates brings to mind gadgets, geeks, and philanthropy. J. K. Rowling is the professional writer behind the Harry Potter series. Einstein was a great and gentle genius. Mother Teresa brings to mind helping the poor and saintly behaviors. Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player today. Tiger Woods is the greatest golfer in the world”. According to Tom Peters (1997): “Everything you do from the way you handle phone conversations to the email messages you send to the way you conduct business in a meeting is part of the larger message you’re sending about your brand”. A personal brand is also shaped by those with whom they associate (i.e., friends and friends' friends) and the comments and pictures they post on social media (Kotler, 2003).

### **2.3.1. How to create positioning strategies to leverage personal brands**

Positioning is an important step towards the success of a personal brand (Labrecque et al, 2011; Khedher, 2014). Different authors suggest several topics that deserve attention to develop, maintain and reinforce a brand positioning. Some of them are target identification (Kotler, 2003; Kapferer, 2012; McCarthy & Perreault, 1999), competition analysis (Khedher, 2014), the definition of the unique value proposition (Rampersad, 2008), naming strategy (Danesi, 2011), image and style (Peters, 1997), brand visual identity (Phillips et al, 2014; Rampersad, 2008), and verbal and non-verbal communication, which highly impact first impressions (Todorov, 2017).

As mentioned before, defining a target is necessary to define a positioning strategy (Kotler, 2003; Kapferer, 2012; McCarthy & Perreault, 1999). Individuals need to define their audience and what their greatest needs are (Rampersad, 2008) to be able to develop a strategic personal brand. Besides defining the target, many authors believe that analyzing the competition is crucial since distinguishing one from the competition is the main premise of brand positioning (Khedher, 2014). In this way, individuals can establish their differentiator points, which will give them a competitive advantage in the market.

The author and professor Hubert Rampersad (2008) believes that a personal brand statement is necessary for the positioning strategy, and it entails the total of an individual's personal ambition, brand objectives, specialty, service-dominant attribute, and domain. It also includes a unique value proposition (Rampersad, 2008).

Another relevant topic for brand positioning is naming. Brand names stick to the mind in the same way that the meanings of ordinary words do. They become a part of people's semantic memory system (Danesi, 2011). Since consistency is a very important aspect of a brand's success (MCNally & Speak, 2002) the establishment of a single name is necessary for the success of a positioning strategy.

The positioning of individuals can also be perceived in their images and styles (Holloway, 2013). Individuals need to strategically think of dress, appearance, and clothing (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992), since those aspects will indirectly reinforce their positioning, helping them build the images they want. Dress, so defined, includes a long list of possible direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewelry, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body as supplements. The word clothing is most frequently used to emphasize enclosures that cover the body. Appearance includes the body structure, height, skin color, ethnicities, facial traits (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992).

Style can be an important cue in forming an impression of another person. Moreover, an individual's dress style can also influence the nature of the behavioral reactions that will be directed toward him or her (Chavasse & Giles, 1975). In an article published in Forbes in 2012, the psychologist Dr. Jennifer Baumgartner, who is also an expert in the field of dressing and appearances, recommends the basics when trying to project a classic, powerful and positive image: "The little black dress, the blazer, the pumps". On the other hand, the doctor also exemplifies when individuals look powerless: "Anything where it looks like you didn't take the time or make the effort comes across badly". Her statement shows that when individuals do not dress strategically, they take the risk of being perceived as someone they wouldn't like

to be. Therefore, after understanding the symbology behind elements of dress, clothing, and appearance, individuals can strategically select elements to add to their image and style, communicating what they want and having more control of how they are perceived by others.

Several authors also highlight the importance of brand visual identity for brand positioning, which is essential for individuals who want to produce marketing materials such as business cards, social media posts, and professional websites. Individuals can design a personal logo, a single graphical symbol that represents their personal brand (*Rampersad, 2008*), by selecting symbols, fonts, images, colors, and any other imagery aspects to represent their brands. The brand's visual identity is important since nonverbal elements play a prominent role in branding (*Phillips et al, 2014*) when done consistently (*MCNally & Speak, 2002*). The consistency of those imagery aspects will lead to brand recall, which is the customer's ability to recall a brand when some cues related to the brand are given, requiring that consumers correctly generate the brand from memory (*Keller, 1993*).

Lastly, aspects of verbal (accent, tone of voice, vocabulary, and expressions) and non-verbal communication (body language) play an important role in the interpretation of a message in the mind of the receptor and therefore has an impact on the perception of individuals' positioning (*Holloway, 2013; Peters, 1997*). According to the author Alexander Todorov: "The time a person takes to observe a person, detect traces of trust and unconsciously assimilate if the person is trustful or not is equal to one second. Even before a person starts talking, someone has already decided if we are reliable or not" (*Todorov, 2017*).

#### **2.4. The importance of visibility**

Once a brand is strategically positioned, it needs to be promoted to the public. Visibility is considered a key variable in the development of personal brand (*Chen, 2013*). One must not only do a good job, but one must be seen doing it (*Marshall & Redmond, 2015*). This idea shows that if individuals are not able to promote themselves and impact other people's perceptions of them, the efforts of personal branding will be ineffective. Hence, once a self-knowledge process is established to find an individual's identity and main attributes, and a strategy is defined to position the brand, it is essential to find best practices to promote the brand to the target.

The creation of visibility can be divided into two categories: First, there is on-field visibility, meaning that visibility emerges in the original field of practice and the profession of the branded individual. Alongside it, there is off-field visibility, created outside of the

professional field, in the sense of building a mainstream media persona (*Parmentier & Fischer, 2012*). Before the advent of social media, individuals could promote themselves by being active and having influence in their work environment. Besides that, they could invest in their network, attend social events, appear in traditional media (contributing by writing content, giving interviews, etc), participate in clubs, debates, and other social activities. However, with the advent of social media, it has become easier for individuals to be perceived the way they want (*Zabojnik, 2018*). In an online context, self-branding is done by maintaining a consistent image and when deciding what to reveal and which personal information should be public (*Labrecque et al., 2011*).

Individuals that can promote themselves online and offline, generating the brand perception that they aim for and reaching high visibility, will probably develop a successful personal brand (*Hamlin et al, 2006*). Consequently, they will have higher chances of achieving their personal and professional goals, either if it is a job promotion for an employee, more followers and brand partnerships for digital influencers, more patients for doctors, etc.

#### **2.4.1. Tools to increase visibility to leverage personal brands**

The success of a personal brand relies on the level of individuals' visibility in their field (work environment) and outside of it, as in media mainstreams and social media (*Parmentier & Fischer, 2012*). Therefore, individuals can explore the possible tools available to promote themselves, gain visibility, create more connections, and strengthen their brand positioning through communication.

As mentioned before, social media has become an important topic within personal branding studies (*Zabojnik, 2018*). Developing a personal brand in the social media world is now a rapidly growing trend (*Chen, 2013*) and it has become increasingly important in the digital age, since social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Google, Twitter, Blogs, and many other applications entered the scene and made it virtually impossible for anyone to keep from creating a personal brand, whether they wanted to or not (*Labrecque et al, 2011*). Hence, creating a social media strategy seems to be a relevant practice to leverage personal brands. For instance, influencers take advantage of the multiple ways of exposing themselves on social media to promote themselves and to generate business (*Appel et al, 2020*).

Not only is the online environment relevant for individuals to promote their brands, but the offline is also equally necessary. Building a strong network is important for the success of a personal brand (*Rampersad, 2008*) since it can help individuals achieve their career goals and

leverage their brands. After working on their personal brands, defining their positioning strategy and goals, individuals need to communicate their new reformulated brand to the public and their main target.

Therefore, networking plays an important role in personal brands' external perception. When new connections are established, individuals present themselves and communicate more strategically, increasing the chances of being perceived by others with the attributes defined in their positioning. Moreover, they can use it as a competitive advantage, since having a strong network can be a strength in their field. "Today's most valuable currency is social capital, defined as the information, expertise, trust, and total value that exist in the relationships you have and social networks to which you belong" (*Ferrazi, 2014*).

Besides social media and networking, another topic presented in the literature as a relevant tool to increase visibility is the press release. Individuals can benefit from digital and non-digital types of media to promote themselves, such as in magazines, blogs, television shows, radio, and other media channels. "PR is essential because all aspirants in the visibility-marketing process need distribution of their image. The role PR plays in the visibility industry involves enabling, designing, managing, and protecting the brand image" (*Hamlin et al., 2006*). Therefore, individuals can select the media channels that are related to their field and resonate with them, contact journalists, and forward content they created to be published.

Other tools are presented as possible ways of increasing visibility and strengthening personal brands, such as websites. According to an article from the magazine *Medium* published in 2018, a website can be a great platform for autonomous professionals to present themselves, tell their stories, share media appearances, testimonials from past clients, pictures of recent work, etc. Websites can increase visibility and strengthen attributes such as credibility, authority, and any others that individuals would like to promote (*Zhang, 2018*).

## **2.5. The impact of personal branding efforts on individuals' attributes and careers**

Most authors believe that the main consequences of a strong personal brand can be seen in individuals' reputations, by stating that individuals who take control of their brands can change the way others perceive them (*Rampersad, 2008*). Some believe that because of that, individuals with strong brands will have higher chances of succeeding professionally (*Peters, 1997*). Several studies show that the management of a personal brand can impact the way individuals are perceived. Depending on how they position themselves, specific attributes can be perceived in individuals by others. Different authors suggest that by working on a personal

brand, individuals can be perceived (in different levels of intensity) by attributes such as uniqueness and authenticity (*Arruda, 2003*), credibility and strong reputation (*Rampersad, 2008*), a high value in the marketplace (*Rampersad, 2008; McNally & Speak, 2009*), integrity (*MCNally & Speak, 2009*), visibility (*Chen, 2013; Hamlin et al, 2006*), competency (*Vandaveer et al, 2017*), authority (*Rampersad, 2008*), and recognition (*Hamlin et al, 2006*).

According to Rampersad (2008), “Developing your personal brand will help improve your perceived value in the marketplace, build credibility and a solid reputation within your industry, enrich your relationships, and unlock your performance potential”. Branded individuals generate increased worth or value for themselves (*MCNally & Speak, 2009*). By following positioning strategies to leverage their personal brands, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establish reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence (*Montoya, 2002; McNally & Speak 2002; Rein et al, 2006; Arruda and Dixson, 2007*). Another example is visibility, which is essential for the success of individuals’ careers. As David Marshall stated (2015): “Doing a good job is not enough to succeed. Professionals need to be seen working, they need to show their worth”.

Once considered a strategy only for celebrities, politics, and entertainment industries (*Hamlin et al, 2006*), nowadays professionals from any field (freelancers, lawyers, doctors, designers, executives, veterinarians, etc) can benefit from personal branding techniques, aiming for career success. Personal branding is a powerful career management tool (*Morton, 2012*). Hence, it is all interconnected: individuals who aim to succeed in their careers should strategically manage their brands.

## **2.6. Current methods and their flaws**

After covering the main areas of personal branding, existing frameworks, and methodologies present in the literature were investigated. There are a variety of approaches to professional development, including consultation, coaching, communities of practice, lesson study, mentoring, reflective supervision, and technical assistance (*Buyss, et al, 2008*). When it comes to personal branding, the approaches are very similar, and professionals provide different types of services to help individuals manage their brands. However, each of them follows a different methodology, and most of the time they use frameworks or methodologies created by themselves, which were validated in previous experiences with past clients. In the academic field, there are few methodologies published to help individuals to leverage their

brands. Nevertheless, some of them seem to be pertinent in the field, being constantly cited by other articles and researchers.

The first one was published in an article for the renowned *International Journal of Information, Business, and Management*. Manel Khedher presented a framework of three phases. The first step in creating a self-brand is to establish a brand identity because one should be able to distinguish among the crowd. But it is also important to fit the expectations and needs of their target audience. The second stage is to develop a brand positioning that lies on self-presentation on different platforms. The third and last stage is to evaluate a brand's image regularly, taking into consideration that it is important to be recognized by the public and marketplace (Khedher, 2014).

Similarly, another framework was created by William Arruda, in which he advises that self-branding should follow three extensive stages: extract, express and exude. The first step is for individuals to look inside themselves and find which attributes make them unique. The following action is to create a persuasive brand statement around their unique characteristics. Lastly, a strategy of communication is shaped, to make their brand visible to the outside world (Arruda, 2003).

Even though the two frameworks cover the most important touchpoints of personal branding, they seem incomplete and inefficient to help and guide individuals in the management of their brands. First, Khedher does not consider the need for a strategy that increases visibility nor suggests marketing strategies for individuals. Second, Arruda provides an incomplete first step, in which he says that individuals need to find which attributes make them unique, without considering the necessity of the self-reflection process to identify other factors such as their weaknesses and strengths.

Other frameworks and practical guidance are presented in the academic field to help professionals to manage their brands (Aubrey, 2010; Close, 2011; Morton, 2012; Rein et al, 2016). However, it was not found a methodology that covers all essential aspects mentioned in this present literature review. The only consistent pattern identified within most frameworks is the personal branding chronological order. Most frameworks generally follow the same reasoning, which means that first, individuals need to understand who they are, secondly, they need to position themselves, and third, they need to find a strategic way of promoting themselves and, consequently, increasing their brand visibility.

## **2.7. Literature Framework**

The framework below summarizes all information gathered from the literature review, including important aspects to develop a personal brand. Besides that, the phases order took into consideration the pattern identified in the chronological sequence of pre-existent personal branding frameworks. For the sake of simplicity, the framework below was named as “BrandYou Method”. The BrandYou method will be further tested and analyzed with a qualitative method in this present dissertation.



Figure 1

### 3. Methodology and Data Collection

As mentioned before in the literature review, different authors suggest that by strategically managing a personal brand, individuals can be perceived (in different levels of intensity) by certain attributes such as uniqueness and authenticity (*Arruda, 2003*), credibility and strong reputation (*Rampersad, 2008*), a high value in the market (*Rampersad, 2008; McNally & Speak, 2009*), integrity (*MCNally & Speak, 2009*), visibility (*Chen, 2013; Hamlin et al, 2006*), competency (*Vandaveer et al, 2017*), authority (*Rampersad, 2008*), and recognition (*Hamlin et al, 2006*). Since the list of such attributes diverges from one author to another, an online survey was held to confirm and guarantee if the attributes found on this literature review were indeed correlated with successful personal brands. The results from the quantitative analysis are summarized on Appendix 1, 2, 3, and 4, and they confirm that the attributes found on the literature are highly associated with successful personal brands. Besides confirming that those attributes are highly correlated with individuals with successful personal brands, the results also showed that respondents would like to be associated with such attributes in the future.

After the online survey was done and attributes were confirmed, the main methodology of this present dissertation began: the qualitative. This method was applied towards the main goal of this research, which is to analyze the impact of the BrandYou method on individuals' personal brand attributes. A pre-post study design (Thiese, 2014) was applied and the BrandYou method was tested with selected participants. The experience of the method was the intervention of the pre-post study, while interviews were its method of analysis. To evaluate the impact of the intervention, interviews were held during different periods of the study (one week before the intervention, a couple of days after the intervention, and 45 days after the intervention). The figure illustrated below summarizes the research design of this dissertation:

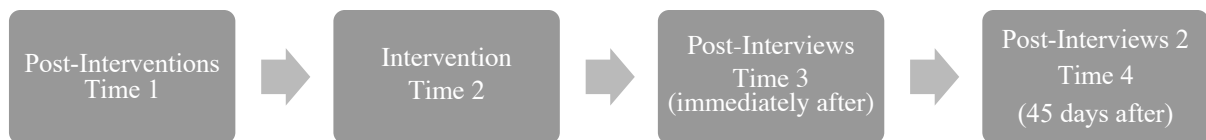


Figure: Research Design

In “time one”, pre-interviews were held, divided into two blocks of segmented groups. The first block of interviews was done with the participants of the intervention. The goal was to understand how they perceived specific personal brand attributes in themselves. For instance, participants were asked if they think they are authentic, unique, and whether they considered to have a high visibility in their work environment.

The second block of the pre-interviews in “time one” were placed with selected individuals who had a close relationship with the participants of the intervention. They belonged to different social circles in which the participants were part of, and they helped in understanding the external perception of personal brand attributes of the participants of the intervention. Therefore, the goal of this block of interviews was to gather information about the external perception of the participants, which means to identify which attributes the participants were perceived by the interviewees. In summary, pre-interviews collected data to evaluate the personal brand attributes of participants before the interviews. In this way, in “time three”, the researcher was able to compare the same individuals' personal brand attributes, before and after the method BrandYou was applied.

In “time two”, an intervention took place with selected participants. In the intervention, the BrandYou method was applied during a specific period of time with each of the participants, following an identical and structured process in chronological order.

In “time three”, post-interviews were held to analyze the impact of the BrandYou method on the participants' personal brands. The interviews followed the same structure as the pre-interviews, with two blocks. In the first block, participants were asked the same question, but this time considering the experience they had with the BrandYou method. In the second block, the individuals from the participants' social circles were asked the same questions as in “time one”. The goal was to compare the information gathered in the pre-interviews, considering whether their perceptions shifted or if additional attributes were associated with the participants' personal brands. The BrandYou method would be successful only if the results on individuals' personal brands included a positive impact on the personal brand attributes.

In “time four”, new interviews took place, following the same structure. The purpose of gathering information in this period was to analyze the medium-term impact (45 days after the intervention) of the BrandYou method on participants' internal and external perceptions of attributes. In this way, the research provided a more holistic set of results, and the BrandYou method and its effects were analyzed throughout time.

There are several reasons why the follow-up interviews happened 45 days after the intervention was completed. First of all, the data collection efforts should be implemented to maximize sample retention and data validity (*Hill et al, 2016*). With the goal of avoiding missing data, the researcher of this present dissertation contacted each of the interviewed to schedule a date for the last round of interviews. Since in the academic field there is no specific information regarding how long it takes for individuals to observe the effects of personal branding efforts, the selection of the interviews' date was based on the period with the most available individuals, which meant 45 days after the intervention. The table “BrandYou Method Intervention's Schedule” presented on Appendix 5 summarizes the methods that were applied, the periods and main objectives of each of them.

### **3.1. Qualitative Methods: Pre-Post Study**

After the literature review was done, a literature framework was presented. This framework summarizes all main points presented in the literature review, meaning that it contains the most important topics that need to be covered by individuals who want to leverage their brands. Besides that, the literature presented a lack of complete methodologies, processes,

and frameworks of personal branding available for individuals who aim to leverage their brands. Therefore, with the goal of providing a complete framework to the literature, this research aims to test a new method, evaluating if it can be a valuable resource for personal brands. Named in this dissertation as BrandYou, this method is based on the literature framework, which means, the method is the summary of the findings from the literature review.

In the context of this research, the intervention was the application of the BrandYou method in selected participants. The application of the method was based on a mentoring process, which was done with 8 online sessions between the researcher and each participant (described in Appendix 5). Since the researcher of this present dissertation has been a personal branding expert for 4 years, she was able to act as a mentor during the intervention.

To analyze if the intervention had a positive impact on individuals' personal brand attributes, interviews were held before, right after the intervention, and 45 days after the intervention. Participants were asked different questions, as for instance how they rate attributes that they perceive in themselves using a Likert-scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The selection of attributes to be analyzed was based on the findings of previous literature review. Interviews were held both at immediately after and 45 days after the intervention, and similar questions were made in both periods. The response shift from both periods would indicate the changes caused by the BrandYou method, that means the impact of the intervention.

To analyze the personal brand attributes of participants, it was important to gather information about their external perceptions to cover the gaps between internal and external perceptions of the brands (*Davis & Chun, 2002*). Restricting the analysis of results to the self-perception of participants would not provide enough data to infer significant changes in their personal brand attributes, since changes would be limited observed on their self-interpretation. Thus, with the goal of collecting data of external perception of the participants' personal brand attributes, 24 individuals were interviewed pre and post-study. The criteria to choose them will be explained in the further sections of this chapter.

### **3.1.1 Samplings of the Pre-Post Study**

As mentioned before, the results from the pre-post study were analyzed through interviews with two different groups: the participants, who participated in the intervention and in the interviews, and the selected individuals, who participated in the interviews. The interviews with the participants of the intervention were held to analyze the internal perception

of personal brand attributes of participants, while the interviews with selected individuals were placed to analyze the external perception of personal brand attributes of participants.

### **3.1.1.1 Participants**

The sample universe was characterized by being more heterogeneous than homogenous. All participants had different professions and worked in different fields. Their career goals were diverse and their set of attributes and skills were also different from each other. Men and women were included in the sample and the youngest participant was 25 years old, while the oldest was 42 years old.

The homogeneous aspects were that, first of all, all participants were from Brazil. According to Robinson (2014), the best way of justifying the use of convenience samples in qualitative research is by defining the sample universe as demographically and geographically local and thus restricting generalization to that local level, rather than attempting decontextualized abstract claims. Besides that, the sampling was homogeneous concerning psychological and behavioral aspects, since all participants were internet savvy and interested in investing in their social media accounts. They were all employed, ambitious, and aimed for career growth; they were interested in developing themselves personally and professionally and they engaged in personal branding related activities at least once before in their lives (some examples of those efforts were: social media content production, self-knowledge exercises, self-promotion, etc).

There were 6 participants in total, characterizing the idiography aim of the research. Interview research that has an idiographic aim typically seeks a sample size that is sufficiently small for individual cases to have a locatable voice within the study, and for an intensive analysis of each case to be conducted. For these reasons, researchers using this approach are given a guideline of 3–16 participants (*Robinson, 2014*).

The sampling was categorized as convenience sampling and it followed a purposive sampling strategy (*Robinson, 2014*). That is why, for instance, only professionally ambitious individuals were recruited for the intervention. Since ambition is a universal motivation for achievement both in career and in personal success (*Brewer, 2018*), the lack of it would probably impact the motivation of the participants to remain dedicated to develop their brands during the intervention. The ambition level was accessed through an informal chat that the researcher had with various potential participants before the intervention. Besides the informal chat, an introductory form was distributed to help the researcher select potential participants

for the intervention. The form served as a triage for the pre-post study and it will be further described in detail. Besides the form, each participant was carefully selected taking into consideration the heterogeneous and homogeneous aspects previously mentioned.

Participants were sourced using two techniques: online advertising and incentive. The author of this present dissertation is also a personal branding consultant with over one hundred thousand followers on online platforms and since the focus of her content is to educate people around the personal branding theme, most of the followers are characterized by being interested in the topic. Therefore, given the convenience of the available channels presented, the followers were invited to participate in the selection process of this intervention. In return for their participation, they would have the opportunity of accessing the researcher's services for free.

In the intervention, the BrandYou method was applied (detailed description in Appendix 5), helping professionals to develop their brands and to achieve their career goals. According to Robinson (2014), making clear the potential benefits of the research to others can act as an incentive for many adults. The combination of online advertising and the offer of free service incentives had a great response. Over 70 individuals claimed that they wanted to participate in the intervention. However, after having the informal chat and filling the introductory form, six individuals were selected for the intervention.

### **3.1.1.2 Selected Individuals**

As mentioned before, to analyze the impact of the intervention on participants, interviews were held before and after the BrandYou method was applied. Besides interviewing participants, it was also essential to interview selected individuals to collect data related to the external perception of the participants' personal brand attributes. The research wouldn't present enough evidence to validate the BrandYou method if it only relied on the participants' own perceptions and interpretations.

Hence, each participant selected 4 people to participate in the interviews, using the following criteria: one superior professional in the same company or work environment (for instance, the boss or manager of the participant's team), a work colleague, a close friend, and a family member. Besides mixing the social circles, it was important to select two individuals from different hierarchies in the work environment (a superior and a colleague, with the latest being on the same level as the participant). This composition of individuals made it possible for the researcher to collect data in a more holistic approach, considering the possible changes in participants' behaviors depending on the context they were in.

The sampling was categorized as convenience sampling, following a purposive sampling strategy. Regarding the demographic aspects, men and women were included in the sample and the youngest one was 20 years old, while the oldest was 65 years old. All of them were Brazilians, living in different cities from Brazil. Besides that, they all had a close relationship with the respective participants.

The sampling was sourced through the following process: participants were asked to select and forward the contact of the individuals to the researcher. The researcher confirmed if all criteria from the sampling matched with the profile of the individuals, and after contacting them, the interviews took place. In total, 24 individuals were interviewed (4 individuals selected by each participant, considering that there were 6 participants).

All participants were advised not to disclose any information about the intervention to anyone. Before selecting the individuals for the interviews, participants were asked if any of the individuals they selected was aware of the intervention. Only after the researcher reaffirmed that no one but the participants knew about the intervention, the interviews took place.

### **3.1.2 Structure of Intervention**

As mentioned before, the intervention was done with 6 participants in total. The total period was 60 days with each participant, from November to December of 2021. The interventions were held individually, there was no interaction between participants and they were not informed about the existence of each other. During the process, the researcher met each participant with intervals of 7 days, in meetings of one hour and a half. In total, there were 8 meetings with each participant, which represented a total of 42 meetings. The video conference software *Zoom* was used for the meetings.

Regarding the role of the researcher in the context of the intervention, she had to act as a mentor, being responsible for teaching, guiding, and helping participants to apply all concepts and techniques from the BrandYou method to their professional lives. A mentoring program is a process in which a mentor, who is a more experienced and knowledgeable person, teaches and nurtures the development of a less experienced and knowledgeable person (*Hart, 2009*). Since the researcher of this present dissertation was also a formal professional in the personal branding field for over 4 years, she acted as a mentor during the intervention, since she previously assured that the participants had less knowledge about the topic than the researcher.

### 3.1.3 Controlled Variables of the Intervention

One of the biggest challenges of the pre-post study design is that the researcher usually does not have control over other elements that are also changing at the same time as the intervention is implemented (*Thiese, 2014*). However, one way of diminishing this challenge is by controlling variables that might influence the results of what it is to be investigated.

Some variables needed to be controlled so that the effect of the BrandYou method on the personal brand attributes could be analyzed. Those variables could indirectly impact the reputation of individuals, and consequently their personal brand attributes. The controlled variables were: the creation of a social media account or a significant change in content production on it (*Chen, 2013*) and/or in any other digital marketing platform, as for instance websites and blogs (*Rampersad, 2008*); a significant press release feature, such as appearances or interviews for television and magazines (*Rein et al., 2006*); job promotions (*Bartz & Brink, 2017*), award-winning (*Hepburn, 2005*), or any other significant work-related activity that could impact the professional reputation of the individuals (for example, the development of new business, personal project, etc).

To control for those variables, an introductory form was distributed to the potential participants to fill (the form is presented on Appendix 6) . The purpose of the form was to serve as a triage, controlling the variables that could ultimately impact the personal brand attributes of participants during the time in which the intervention took place.

### 3.1.4 Pre-Post Study Method of Analysis

The methods of analysis of the pre-post study were interviews. As mentioned before, interviews were held to collect data before, a couple of days after and 45 days after the intervention, which took place with 2 different groups, totalizing 6 blocks of interviews. In total, there were 24 interviewed. Each meeting had a duration of approximately 45 minutes through the Videoconference Zoom platform. Research interviews seek to explore “the views, experiences, beliefs and motivation of individuals on specific matters” (*Gill et al 2008*).

The questions were done in an open and semi-structured manner, giving time and space for the interviewed individuals to feel comfortable to reflect and analyze their perceptions of the participants’ personal brand attributes. Semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allow the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (*Gill et al, 2008*).

Since the goal was to understand the interviewer's perceptions, it was important to let them feel comfortable, giving a conversational and informal tone to the interview. The questions of the interviews can be seen on Appendix 7.

The method used to analyze the data of the interview was thematic analysis, which is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in detail" (*Brand and Clarke, 2006*). Since interviewees were asked to rate several attributes in the pre and post-interviews using a numerical scale, inferential statistics could be made from the data.

#### **4. Analysis and Results**

The analysis of the pre-post study was based on data gathered from selected individuals and participants. For a better understanding of the results and the context of the study, each of the participants was described (Appendix 8), followed by a short description of their selected individuals for the interviews. The participants' names were substituted by codenames to protect their anonymity.

After running the intervention with all the participants and finishing the interviews, a thematic analysis was done. The process of thematically analyzing the data involves reading and re-reading the data several times looking for common concepts and coding them throughout the text, whether similar or contrasting (*Rubin & Rubin, 2011*). The codes are then grouped together into similar clusters to create a meaningful theme. A theme is the product of thematic analysis, it is a word or a phrase that captures something important or the essence of the data in relation to the research question (*Braun & Clarke, 2008*). Themes are usually something that captures the attention of the researcher and can be abstract or descriptive as long as they capture the concept of what the respondents said about their experiences and their reality (*Boyatzis, 1998*).

##### **4.1.1. Scale Reliability**

Since some of the questions from the interviews were quantitative (Appendix 7), it was possible to calculate the changes in perceptions more precisely. To understand the impact of the dependent variable (BrandYou method) on the independent variable (personal brand attributes), it was necessary to analyze each of the attributes from an internal and external

perspective, collecting data from participants of the intervention to analyze the internal perception and from the 24 individuals (4 individuals selected by each participant) to analyze the external perception. The latter will be referred to as “selected individuals” for the sake of simplicity of this present study.

Participants and selected individuals were asked in the interviews during the 3 periods to evaluate the perception of the 10 personal branding attributes from 1 to 5 (Likert-scale). Therefore, it was necessary to evaluate the scale reliability of the question. Before proceeding to the actual analysis, Cronbach's Alpha was computed in order to verify the constructs' validity and reliability (*Malhotra, 2018*). Since all values were above 0.7, Cronbach's Alpha is considered good to continue this investigation. For the analysis, Paired T-Tests and p-values were calculated to evaluate if the perceptions of attributes significantly changed after the intervention when compared to before it happened.

#### **4.2. Results from Pre-Post Study**

To answer research question 1 (“Will the BrandYou method positively impact the overall internal and external perception of each of the selected personal brand attributes on individuals?”), answers was collected from the following question: “From 1 to 5, evaluate how much you perceive yourself with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation?”.

This same question was asked in the pre-interviews and in the 2 interviews that took place after the intervention. In this way, the researcher was able to gather enough data in different periods to analyze the response shift, which would indicate the impact of the BrandYou method on the perception of each of the personal brand attributes.

The analysis of results took into consideration calculations of each attribute separately, but with both the internal and external perceptions being examined together. This happened because it is not possible to run statistical calculations separately for the internal perceptions of each attribute since there were only 6 participants rating internal perception (characterizing a small sample). However, when internal and external perceptions were analyzed together, data was collected from 30 respondents (24 selected individuals and 6 participants), making it possible for the researcher to run Paired T-tests, which indicated if the differences in perceptions were statistically significant or not.

Following to the analysis of each attribute, the perception of “uniqueness” (*Arruda, 2003*) significantly and highly changed, with a p-value of 2,40047E-13. Both the participants

and selected individuals rated uniqueness with a higher number after when compared to before the intervention, without exceptions. As supporting evidence, selected individuals were asked why they rated with a higher number this specific attribute after the intervention. Daniel's Crossfit coach stated during the post-intervention interview:

“Daniel always stood out for being the best athlete in his category. However, this was not enough to close sponsorship deals with big sporting brands... He didn't know how to build his image... He didn't know how to position himself. He was very shy. But recently it seems that he changed. Now he is dressing differently... He is engaging on social media, participating in events, and networking with brands and people in sports. He is building his name in a very authentic way. If before people remembered him because he was a good athlete, now they also because his brand represents much more than the sport itself”.

The perception of the attribute “authenticity” (*Arruda, 2003*) significantly and highly changed, with a p-value of 1,39485E-12. The information that additionally supports this evidence was observed in passages from interviews. To illustrate that, Laura felt before the intervention that she was paying enormous attention to other people's opinions about her. Because of that, she was behaving in a certain way to please others and she felt as being two different persons, one in the personal and another in the professional environment. However, in both interviews that took place after the intervention, Laura affirmed that she was changing, becoming a more confident person, not afraid to reveal her true personality to colleagues at work. She stated:

“When I did the BrandYou method, I learned a lot about myself. I had to do several exercises that helped me understand how special and unique I am. After that, I learned how to use this information for my own benefit. I learned how to position myself and how to communicate who I am in a confident way. To my surprise, people at work started to respect me more than before... I used to avoid disagreeing with them to stay away from discussions. I started to feel more confident because for the first time I was the same person at home (where I used to feel comfortable in my skin) at work”.

Laura's perceptions of herself were not only perceived by her, but also by all individuals she selected for the interviews. They rated with at least one point more their perception of the attribute “authenticity” in Laura after the intervention. Both her boss and a colleague from work stated that she was becoming more authentic, always showing her opinion in the meetings at work.

The perception of the attribute “credibility” (*Rampersad, 2008*) significantly and highly changed with a p-value of 5,0944E-11. Supporting evidence was found in several post-interview answers, for instance, a response from Jacob’s brother. He said:

“My parents are conservative and wanted him to follow a safer career. However, Jacob wanted to have his own business. Even though he has been a successful businessman, my parents always said that he should give up on his project and look for a job. This was intensified by the fact that Jacob used to behave very immaturely. However, I’ve seen a difference during the last couple of months. He seems to be much more focused, responsible, and engaged in his business. He had a long talk with my parents and they seemed quite impressed with the way he changed. When I asked my parents what changed, they said that they trust Jacob more, and they used the word credibility to describe him”.

The perception of the attribute “strong reputation” (*Rampersad, 2008*) significantly and highly changed with a p-value of 2,69049E-12. Supporting evidence from the interviews can be identified from different phrases mentioned by João’s selected individuals, for instance. All of them rated the attribute with at least one point more than before the intervention. For example, in the post-interview, his superior stated: “After João started to expose himself on social media, everybody in the field started talking about him. It’s incredible to see how his work on social media changed his image for the better”. His work colleague also noticed the positive changes: “João and I work together in the same company and to be honest, he was never the topic among the conversations. Now, everybody talks about him and most importantly, in a very positive way”.

The overall perception of the attribute “high value in the market” (*Rampersad, 2008; McNally & Speak, 2009*) positively and significantly changed, with a p-value of 0,00068208. However, the difference was not as big when compared to the previous attributes. This happened because when the participants were asked how they would rate their perception of this attribute after the intervention, 4 out of 6 rated it with the same number as before the intervention. Hence, 4 participants considered that their value in the market as professionals didn’t change, with the exception of Anna and Daniel and their respective selected participants. The selected individuals by the other participants rated the attribute with the same number as before.

After analyzing the two cases of Anna and Daniel, it was possible to understand why those two participants had different results when compared to the others (results are presented in Appendix 9 and 10). During the post-intervention interview, Anna mentioned that she accepted a job opportunity while she was participating in the intervention. As a consequence

of her promotion, all the individuals that she selected also rated the attribute with a higher number after the BrandYou method was applied. According to her work colleague, Anna built an outstanding personal brand that caught the attention of various organizations.

Besides Anna, another exception was observed in the case of the athlete Daniel. He was a very dedicated participant, always applying his learnings. While he was participating in the intervention, he closed 3 new deals with sporting brands for sponsoring projects. According to his coach, although Daniel was not being benefited from a higher income right after the intervention, he noticed that Daniel was more confident and responsible. The coach observed several changes in the participant's behavior, such as an efficient communication and a high commitment with sponsors and projects. The coach was optimistic that new brand partnerships would arise and he believed that the change in Daniel's behavior would be soon reflected in a much higher income. His forecast was correct, since after 45 days of the intervention when Daniel was asked again about how he would rate the perception of the attribute "high value in the market", he added 1 point more to it. He explained that after 45 days he was able to see even clearer the consequences of his improvements due to the intervention.

"Integrity" (*MCNally & Speak, 2009*) was the only attribute not positively impacted by the BrandYou method, with a p-value of 0,325581988. Even though previous authors linked the perception of the attribute "integrity" with personal branding efforts (*MCNally & Speak, 2009*), the findings of this present study show that this attribute did not change after the BrandYou method was applied. Integrity seemed to be an intrinsic attribute to the participants, characterized by its inherent aspect of someone's personality. Neither the selected participants nor the participants rated this attribute with different numbers before and after the intervention. Most respondents said that their perception of this attribute wouldn't change in such a short period of time. For instance, Isabel's mother stated:

"Integrity is not something that changes in a couple of months. In my opinion, you are born with integrity and you learn how to keep it with the education the parents give to you. The integrity of Isabel would only change if something traumatic or very intense happened in her life. Otherwise, her integrity is stable and does not change, as for anyone else."

Isabel's boss and work colleague seemed to have the same opinion as to her mother. When asked the reason why he rated "integrity" with the same number before and after the intervention, Isabel's boss stated: "Either you have integrity or not. It is not a volatile attribute.

Adults don't change their level of integrity as they would change their clothes. I hired Isabel because she is a woman of full integrity. 5 out of 5".

The perception of the attribute "visibility" (*Chen, 2013; Hamlin et al, 2006*) positively changed after the intervention. After running the Paired T-test, a p-value of 4,29037E-14 was found. After analyzing the justifications of the ratings for this attribute within the selected individuals, common words and ideas were shared. Most of the respondents commented that they have seen a greater presence of the participants on social media, with relevant content across different platforms. A common comment made by the participants' colleagues at work was how the participants' networking efforts increased, which also led them to increase their visibility.

Besides the general ideas that were shared among the respondents, there was a specific case that stood out in the analysis. After 45 days after the intervention had been concluded, new interviews took place with selected individuals. When selected individuals were asked how they perceived Anna with the attribute "visibility", they mentioned that she had recently participated in a live interview that was broadcasted on a very famous television channel. According to the interviewees, she spoke to a big audience about career transitioning and career coaching. They stated that this event gave her a lot of visibility. When Anna was interviewed during the same period, she affirmed that she would never get this opportunity if it wasn't for the process she had been through (referring to the BrandYou method).

The perception of the attribute "competency" (*Vandaveer et al, 2017*) was positively impacted with a p-value of 9,86985E-09. A shred of supporting evidence was found within the answers from participants, who explained that the knowledge acquired from the BrandYou method process was important for them to be more capable of thriving in their professions since they could control, manage and leverage their personal brands. A common idea found in the answers from all participants was that they perceived themselves as more competent because they learned valuable knowledge that would help them achieve success.

The perception of the attribute "authority" (*Rampersad, 2008*) was positively impacted, with a p-value of 6,75564E-09. Among all participants, the case of Isabel stood out in the analysis. All selected participants rated with at least one point higher their perception of the attribute "authority" after the intervention. A selected participant said that everybody who knew Isabel was aware that she was a good doctor, but few knew she was an outstanding doctor. This changed once she started sharing more about her job's routine, her knowledge in the area of expertise, etc. She was always putting herself available, offering help in different sets of situations. This somehow made people perceive her more intensely as an authority. Even

though none of the selected individuals rated her before the intervention with low numbers, it was possible to observe a significant and positive change after she took part in the BrandYou method's process.

The perception of the attribute "recognition" (*Hamlin et al, 2006*) significantly and highly changed after the intervention. After the Paired T-test was calculated, a p-value of 8,05301E-08 was found. An interview passage from Jacob, the entrepreneur, is a supporting evidence:

"I feel more recognized today than before the intervention. Before, I used to struggle a lot at home with my parents. They didn't take my entrepreneurial projects seriously and didn't recognize me as a successful businessman, even though my business was thriving. Today it is completely different. I feel that as well with friends and colleagues that work in the same field as me. People come to me to ask for advice, others with entrepreneurial proposals, new opportunities, etc. I feel that I am more recognized today than before the intervention and I am sure that this is happening because my personal brand is much better today."

The Appendix 11 presents a table that summarizes the T-Test results, with calculations from answers of each attribute, containing the calculation of the means, standard deviations, p-values and whether the change in attributes were statistically significant or not.

To answer research question two ("Do the effects of the BrandYou method on the perception of attributes persist on the medium-term after the intervention?"), Paired T-tests were calculated with the results from the same question as before ("From 1 to 5, evaluate how much you perceive yourself with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation?"). However, two sets of data were compared in this specific case. First, the ratings from the interviews that happened 45 days after the intervention were compared to the ratings from the pre-intervention interviews. After the Paired T-test was calculated, a p-value of 2,60364E-73 was found, which means that the impact of the BrandYou method persisted through time, and both the internal and external perceptions' changes could still be observed in the medium term. The answers collected in this block of interviews are presented in Appendix 9 and 10.

Then, the second set of data was compared, with the ratings from the post-intervention interviews and the ratings from the interviews that happened 45 days after the intervention. The p-value was 5,6756E-06, meaning that the BrandYou method had a further positive impact on the perception of attributes that could be seen only after 45 days after the intervention was

concluded. Therefore, it was concluded that the BrandYou method promoted results that could be seen in the short and the medium term, with a gradual and positive change.

Even though the p-value from the calculation of the second set of data had a high value, there was no substantial change in the perceptions of attributes between both periods (post-intervention and 45 days after interviews). Even in the exceptional case of the attribute “integrity”, which received the exact same ratings in the previous interviews, the consistency was maintained, presenting the same numbers after 45 days of the intervention.

However, there were 2 attributes responsible for the significant change between the two periods. The first one was the attribute “visibility”, which presented a minor change that was exclusively seen in Anna’s case. As mentioned before, a couple of weeks after the intervention was finished, Anna was invited to participate in a notorious television program. She was interviewed by a famous host and talked about her career transitioning and coaching knowledge. Her appearance increased her visibility as a brand, and it was the reason why her selected participants rated this attribute with a higher number than in the post-intervention interviews. Anna believes that she was only able to get this invitation because of the intervention, which helped her leverage her personal brand.

In contrast with that, a major change was observed in the attribute “high value in the market”. The majority of the interviewees rated this attribute with a higher number when compared to the post-intervention interviews’ numbers. When asked the reason why their perception changed, a common answer among the interviewees was that the participants were achieving more professional success than before. For instance, Isabel’s colleague stated that the doctor’s demand for appointments increased a lot, and patients were competing for an available slot in her agenda. Jacob’s boss mentioned that the entrepreneur was receiving “speaking gigs” invitations to share his experience and knowledge with young entrepreneurs and that this was a new source of revenue for Jacob.

Anna’s friend said that the career coach is reaching her goals, selling courses as never before and promoting new mentoring programs. Laura mentioned that her boss was considering a promotion to her for the next year due to her excellent performance in the last couple of months. Daniel explained that he was receiving proposals for brand partnerships every week and that he has never been that stable and happy in regard to his finances.

#### **4.2.1 Extra Analysis from Pre-post Study**

Besides questions related exclusively to the perceptions of personal brand attributes, interviewees were asked about different topics with the goal of understanding, in a broader and more holistic way, the effects of the BrandYou method. Consequently, the researcher was able to improve the analysis with more meaningful insights and discussions.

When participants were asked how they would rate their personal brands (using a Likert-scale level of quality from 1 to 5) before and after the intervention, all of them rated their personal brands at least 2 points higher after the intervention. Furthermore, the intervention enhanced the participants' knowledge regarding personal branding. Before the intervention, they considered their comprehension of the topic as 1 or 2. After the intervention, they rated their understanding at least 2 points higher, which connotes the educational influence that the intervention had on the participants.

Before the intervention, all participants considered personal branding as being important for their careers. This opinion didn't change after the intervention was done. However, what changed was how prepared the participants felt to face new challenges in their careers after the intervention. The 6 participants felt readier than before. For instance, Anna, the career coach, felt insecure and afraid of facing new challenges before the intervention. However, after the BrandYou method process, she considered herself as a more confident professional, and she felt excited and optimistic about the future of her career.

Regarding the feedback the participants gave in regard to the BrandYou method, all of them mentioned that the intervention was very positive and helpful. Some of them added extra attributes that they perceived to be enhanced by the intervention. All participants mentioned the attribute "confident" which was not included in the analysis of this present dissertation. Besides confidence, other attributes were mentioned in specific cases, such as "popularity" for the athlete Daniel, and "powerful" for the entrepreneur Jacob. The latest stated that after the intervention, he felt more powerful because he learned how to dress strategically, aligning his style to his goals.

When asked if they would change something in the BrandYou method, different opinions emerged. Half of the participants said they wouldn't change anything in the process and they felt satisfied with the methodology and its results. On the other hand, João argued that the BrandYou method could be more effective if it was personalized for different target groups defined by different working fields, instead of offering a standard process that can be applied to every professional from any field of work. Another opinion was from Jacob, who mentioned that the process should take longer, and the periods between sessions should be extended, so

he could apply the concepts he learned in the sessions in a more profound way. Anna had the same point of view as Jacob.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

This dissertation's main purpose was to examine the impact of the BrandYou method in the internal and external perception of individuals' personal brand attributes. The BrandYou method was defined based on the literature framework, which represented the summary of the findings from the literature review. Those findings included each step that needs to be taken by individuals who want to leverage their personal brands. Based on qualitative analysis, the research questions stated in this present dissertation were answered.

The first research question (RQ1) aimed to understand if the BrandYou method would positively impact the overall internal and external perception of each of the selected personal brand attributes on certain individuals. The results showed that the answer for this question is positive. However, the same was not confirmed once attributes were evaluated separately. The internal and external perception of the attribute "integrity" didn't significantly change after the method was applied. The latest finding goes against previous research (*MCNally & Speak, 2009*), and it presents evidence that this attribute is not sensitive to the BrandYou method, being considered by the respondents as an inherent and not changeable characteristic of human beings.

Regarding the second research question (RQ2), it was analyzed whether the BrandYou method would positively impact the perception of personal brand attributes on the medium-term after the completion of the intervention. After the calculations, the answer to the question was positive and it was concluded that the benefits of the BrandYou method could still be seen in the medium term. Most of the attributes were still perceived in the same way as right after the intervention, with the same findings such as the lack of change from the attribute "integrity".

However, after 45 days of the intervention's completion, it was observed that the attribute "visibility" had a minor positive change and "high value in the market" had a high and significant change. If it wasn't for the interviews that happened during this period, it wouldn't be possible for this study to fully evaluate the impact of the BrandYou method, since the change in perception of "high value in the market" was mostly observed in this period. It was necessary for more time to see the consequences of the method in people's careers and their value in the market. This finding supports previous evidence that personal branding efforts

can increase a person's value in the market (*Rampersad, 2008*).

In conclusion, the BrandYou method had an overall positive impact on the internal and external perception of attributes of individuals. Therefore, it was proven that the method is a useful, consistent and efficient tool for individuals who want to leverage their personal brands. From a theoretical and managerial standpoint, a number of implications can also be drawn, as discussed next.

### **5.1. Managerial Implications**

This research's findings have useful implications for professionals who want to leverage their personal brands to achieve career success. The BrandYou method can help anyone develop different branding strategies since it covers key touchpoints such as self-knowledge, positioning and visibility strategies. Personal branding is a useful tool for career management (*Morton, 2012*) and the BrandYou method provides practical guidance for individuals who would like to be better perceived by others and by themselves. By following the steps from the BrandYou method, individuals can learn how to leverage their brands in the professional environment, being more prepared for the competitive market they face nowadays.

Through an online survey, this research confirmed which attributes are highly correlated with successful personal brands. By gaining awareness of them, individuals can align their strategies to strengthen the internal and external perceptions of themselves taking into consideration such attributes. Besides that, managers and human resource teams can train their employees to develop the skills correlated to those attributes in workshops, intensive programs, online courses, etc.

Additionally, personal branding experts (such as mentors, consultants and professors) can take advantage of the findings from this research to give foundation for their further investigations in the area. They can take advantage of the BrandYou method and adapt it to their realities, while exploring the insights generated in this dissertation for future methods and frameworks they might create.

### **5.2. Theoretical Implications**

Several authors (*Rein et al, 2006; Rampersad, 2008; Arruda, 2003*) have stated in previous articles that personal brand attributes can lead individuals to be perceived with

positive, rewarding attributes, such as recognition, authority, and uniqueness. However, when the literature review was done, it was concluded that there was little statistical evidence that such attributes could be linked to personal branding efforts. Thus, quantitative analysis was done to provide robust evidence that such attributes' perceptions could indeed be enhanced if certain personal brand techniques were applied. Hence, this study contributed to theoretical findings, with supporting evidence in regards to personal brand attributes.

In addition to that, the main flaw identified in the literature review of this present dissertation was in regards to the personal branding methodologies and frameworks created by previous authors. After analyzing the most known and relevant ones, it was concluded that none of them provided a complete process covering the necessary aspects that need to be considered by individuals who aim to leverage their brands. This conclusion was the start point for the researcher to develop the main objective of this study.

After the literature review was done, all important aspects that needed to be considered in personal branding development were gathered, and a literature framework was created to summarize the review. This framework was named as BrandYou method, and a pre-post study was applied to validate if the method could be used as a resource in the real world. The results of the study confirmed that the BrandYou method was an efficient method for individuals who would like to positively change their internal and external perceptions of specific attributes on themselves. Therefore, this research focused its contribution on providing a more complete and effective method as a resource for individuals who want to leverage their brands.

## **6. Research Limitations**

This research presents some limitations that need be highlighted. For instance, the sampling of both online survey and pre-post study was geographically limited to Brazil. Therefore, assumptions need to be made taking into consideration the geographic limitation and the possible variables that might impact the results, such as the Brazilian culture, its work environment, and how relationships are established there. The decision of restricting the sampling to this country was because, first of all, the researcher had easier access to potential participants in this area, characterizing the sample as a *convenience sample*, hence the researcher aimed to restrict generalization to a local level, rather than attempting decontextualized claims (Robinson, 2014). Another limitation was identified in the attempt to control for specific variables in the introductory form, in which respondents were asked, for

instance, if they had a job promotion within the last “couple of months”. This question was made to discard the possibility of a job promotion impacting the participants’ personal brand attributes. However, it is difficult to predict when exactly a job promotion might impact the perception of attributes in a person, given the intangible nature of the results and the numerous variables that might influence the time that humans take to change their perception of others and of themselves. Therefore, the purpose of the introductory form was not to exclude but to diminish the possible influence of variables on the participant’s personal brand attributes.

Lastly, the dependence on the participants’ interpretations could impact the analysis of results. It is possible that a participant ignored or judged as irrelevant an activity that was explained during the process. This could compromise the results since it wouldn’t be possible for the researcher to measure the BrandYou method’s impact in an isolated manner, that means, separating it from the level of willingness of individuals to apply the concepts of the method in their lives.

## **7. Future Research**

There are several future researches that can be developed from this dissertation. First of all, a longer study could provide information in regards to the long-term effects of the BrandYou method on the perception of personal brand attributes of individuals. In this way, it would be possible to provide more complete evidence of the impact of the method, covering different periods such as the short-term (right after the intervention), medium-term (some weeks after the intervention), and long-term (months after the intervention).

A second suggestion is for future researchers to investigate if the external perception of attributes could change depending on the social circle that the participant is in. There is a chance that the social context might influence the behavior of individuals, which could impact the way they are perceived by others. According to Tony Watson (2008), “In organizations, people are required to take on various corporate personas, which are likely to differ from the ones that they adopt in other parts of their lives and, indeed, may come into tension with them [...] They face the need to understand themselves both as managers at work and as private persons at home”. Unfortunately, because of the size constraints of this dissertation, it wasn’t possible to investigate patterns between the answers from selected individuals (family, friends, superiors, and work colleagues) in regards to their perceptions of attributes.

A third suggestion is related to the sampling of the study. It would be interesting to expand the nationality beyond Brazilians, investigating if the BrandYou method would have a different impact on individuals from different origins.

Lastly, it would be interesting to evaluate other variables that could be positively impacted by the BrandYou method, beyond the perception of personal brand attributes. In fact, there are several ways in which a personal brand can be leveraged. For instance, a study could compare the career progression of individuals who applied the BrandYou method to their personal brands and the ones who didn't.

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Online Survey - Qualtrics

Hi! Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey which is part of my master's program dissertation. I hope you enjoy answering the questions.

What is your age?

Under 18

18 - 24

25 - 34

35 - 44

45 - 54

55 - 64

65 - 74

75 - 84

85 or older

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

Where are you from? (please select the country you lived most of your life in case it is different from the country you were born).

Brazil

Germany

United States of America

Portugal

Other (please specify)

What is your professional level?

Entry-level

Mid-level

Senior-level

Retired

What is your professional status? You can select more than one if necessary.

Autonomous professional (I am my own boss and I prospect my clients)

Employee in a company

Entrepreneur owning my own company

Unemployed and looking for work

Unemployed and not currently looking for work

Intern

Student

Retired

In which category below your profession belongs?

Health

Engineering

Administrative and Business

Athletics

Marketing and Sales

Finance

Arts (actor, musician, dancer, performer)

Marketing & Communications

Sales & Business Development

Law

Government and Public Administration

Creative Industry (designer, photographer, video editor or copywriter)

Education & Training (professor, coach, consultant, mentor)

Content Creator (digital influencer, blogger or vlogger)

Information Technology (IT)

Science

Architecture & Design

Other (please specify)

Do you consider yourself as an ambitious professional?

Not at all 1      A little ambitious 2      An average ambitious 3      I am quite ambitious 4      I am very ambitious 5

Slide the bar to the statement that corresponds to your answer

How well do the following statements describe your opinion?

Not well at all 0      Not so well 1      Moderately well 3      Very well 4      Extremely well 5

I understand the Personal Branding topic.

Personal Branding is very important for my career.

The professionals I admire the most have strong personal brands.

I don't explore the full potential of my brand.

If you had to grade your own personal brand, which grade would you give to it? Please consider 1 = worse and 5 = better.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Evaluate your Personal Brand

What are the most important factors you take into consideration when evaluating a job opportunity? Rank in priority order.

- Reputation of the company
- Money (salary, bonus, profits)
- The learning curve (personal and professional development)
- Security (having a stable job and salary)
- The purpose, impact of the work and my contribution to the world
- The level in which the work completes me personally
- Work Conditions (comfort, benefits, work environment, people)
- Work-life balance (working hours, travel time)
- Career growth (possibility of promotions inside the company)

Which of the following attributes do you think you have? Mark the statements that represent them.

In terms of recognition, I am seen as a reference in my field.

I am an authority in my specialty.

I am a very unique professional and I have clear differentiation points.

I consider myself an authentic person.

I am very competent and I get things done.

- I am a confident person and professional.
- People tend to trust me and see me as a reliable person with integrity.
- I believe that the money I earn today corresponds OR is higher than the value I bring as a professional.
- I have good image and reputation.
- I have good visibility in my work and/or I expose myself in other ways to gain visibility.
- I am an inspiring person and people look up to me.

Which of the following attributes would you like to have in the future? Mark the statements that represent them.

- In terms of recognition, I am seen as a reference in my field.
- I am an authority in my specialty.
- I am a very unique professional and I have clear differentiation points.
- I consider myself an authentic person.
- I am very competent and I get things done.
- I am a confident person and professional.
- People tend to trust me and see me as a reliable person with integrity.
- I believe that the money I earn today corresponds OR is higher than the value I bring as a professional.
- I have a good image and reputation.
- I have good visibility in my work and/or I expose myself in other ways to gain visibility.
- I am an inspiring person and people look up to me.

Is there any other attribute you didn't mention before that you would like to have? If yes, write below. If not, follow to the next question.

In your opinion, which attributes a successful professional need to have? Please show the importance of each by selecting the number of stars (the more important it is, the more stars it should have).

- Recognition ☆☆☆☆☆
- Authority ☆☆☆☆☆
- Uniqueness ☆☆☆☆☆
- Authenticity (originality) ☆☆☆☆☆
- Competency ☆☆☆☆☆
- Credibility ☆☆☆☆☆
- Integrity ☆☆☆☆☆
- Prestigious job ☆☆☆☆☆
- Good image ☆☆☆☆☆
- Visibility ☆☆☆☆☆

Now, rank in order of priority the previous attributes that successful professionals should have.

Recognition  
Authority  
Uniqueness  
Authenticity (originality)  
Competency  
Credibility  
Integrity  
Prestigious job  
Good image  
Visibility

## Appendix 2: Sampling Characterization of Online Survey

**Total number of answers:** 251

**Gender:** 73% women and 26% men.

**Age:** 25 to 34 years old (46%), 29% between 18 to 24 years old, 12% between 35 to 44 years old. Only 11 respondents were over 55 years old and 4 were under 18 years old.

\*The ones under 18 were automatically excluded from the survey, since they are considered to have little or no professional experience, and therefore were not considered in this dissertations' research.

**Location:** 127 respondents from Brazil, 31 from Portugal, 30 from Germany, and the remaining ones were from different countries, such as Spain, Hungary, India, Colombia, Denmark, Italy, the US, the UK, Romania, Egypt, Chile, etc.

**Professional Level:** 45% affirmed to have an entry-level position, 33% had a mid-level, and 21% had a senior-level. \*Only 2 respondents were retired.

**Professional Status:** 38% of the respondents were employees in a company, 27% were students, 18% were autonomous professionals, 7% were entrepreneurs, 5% were interns and a very small percentage of the respondents were retired or unemployed.

**Professional Field of Work:** 85 respondents work with Marketing, Sales, and Communications. The second area with the most respondents was Administration and Business, with 32 respondents, followed by the Health sector, with 22 respondents.

Appendix 3: Table with Summary of Key Results from Online Survey

<b>Multiple Choices – Answers Options</b>	<b>Counts Q1*</b>	<b>Counts Q2*</b>
I am very competent and I get things done.	124	44
I consider myself an authentic person.	122	42
People tend to trust me and see me as a reliable person with integrity.	121	48
I am a confident person and professional.	92	58
I have good image and reputation.	83	56
I am a very unique professional and I have clear differentiation points.	57	64
I am an inspiring person and people look up to me.	45	92
I have good visibility in my work and/or I expose myself in other ways to gain visibility.	39	58
In terms of recognition, I am seen as a reference in my field	21	99
I believe that the money I earn today corresponds OR is higher than the value I bring as a professional.	14	50
I am an authority in my specialty.	11	85

**\*Q1:** Which of the following attributes do you think you have? Mark the statements that represent them.

**\*Q2:** Which of the following attributes would you like to have in the future? Mark the statements that represent them.

In your opinion, which attributes a successful professional need to have? Please show the importance of each by selecting the number of stars (the more important it is, the more stars it should have).

Recognition	☆☆☆☆☆
Authority	☆☆☆☆☆
Uniqueness	☆☆☆☆☆
Authenticity (originality)	☆☆☆☆☆
Competency	☆☆☆☆☆
Credibility	☆☆☆☆☆
Integrity	☆☆☆☆☆
Prestigious job	☆☆☆☆☆
Good image	☆☆☆☆☆
Visibility	☆☆☆☆☆

Field	Mean	Std Deviation
Recognition	3.93	0.97
Authority	3.71	1.10
Uniqueness	3.88	1.00
Authenticity (originality)	4.21	0.95
Competency	4.79	0.49
Credibility	4.68	0.55
Integrity	4.66	0.74
Prestigious job	3.20	1.12
Good image	3.96	1.01
Visibility	3.80	1.06

#### Appendix 4: Sources of Questions from Survey Table

QUESTIONS TOPICS	SOURCES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding of personal branding</li> <li>2. Importance of personal branding</li> <li>3. Recognition of personal brands</li> <li>4. Own investment in personal brand</li> <li>5. Ambition level</li> <li>6. Evaluation of own personal brand</li> <li>7. Attributes perceived in themselves</li> <li>8. Attributes they would like to have</li> <li>9. Most important factors in a job</li> <li>10. Attributes associated with successful professionals</li> <li>11. Priority order of attributes of successful professionals</li> </ol>	<p>Chakrabati (2014); (Tschopp et al, 2015); (Rampersad, 2008); Mercer (2021); ManPower Group (2020); Delloite (2016); Arruda (2003); Rampersad (2008); MCNally &amp; Speak (2009); Chen (2013); Rein et al (2006); Vandaveer et al (2007).</p> <p>Likert Scale of 5 points - Level of Agreement</p>

#### Appendix 5: BrandYou Method Intervention’s Schedule

Session	Duration	Tasks

1	1h30	<p>0 to 10min: Introduction to Intervention</p> <p>10 to 20min: Personal Branding explained</p> <p>20 to 30min: BrandYou Method explained</p> <p>30 to 40min: Phase 1 - Self-Knowledge phase explained</p> <p>40 to 60min: Explanation of SWOT Analysis exercise with examples</p> <p>60min to 80min: Explanation of Reputation Analysis exercise</p> <p>80 to 90min: Q&amp;A from session 1</p>
2	1h30	<p>0 to 30min: Discussion of SWOT Analysis exercise done by individual</p> <p>30 to 60min: Discussion of Reputation Analysis exercise done by individual</p> <p>60 to 80min: Explanation of Storytelling exercise</p> <p>80 to 90min: Explanation of Career Goals exercise</p>
3	1h30	<p>0 to 45 min: Discussion of Storytelling exercise done by individual</p> <p>45 to 60min: Discussion of Career Goals exercise done by individual</p> <p>60 to 80min: Phase 2 - Positioning explained</p> <p>80 to 90min: Target Identification explained and request to individual research about own target</p>
4	1h30	<p>0 to 15min: Discussion of Target research done by individual</p> <p>15 to 30min: Competition Analysis explained and request to individual to research about own competition</p> <p>30 to 45min: Positioning definition explained</p> <p>45 to 60min: Naming explained and request to individual to research about naming strategies for him/herself.</p> <p>60 to 90min: Image &amp; Style explained and request to individual to create styling moodboard with inspirations</p>
5	1h30	<p>0 to 60min: Discussion of the following researches/exercises: competition analysis, naming research and ideas, analysis of moodboard for style and image.</p> <p>60 to 90min: Brand Visual Identity explained and research together to guide individuals in creating their own brand visual identity.</p>
6	1h30	<p>0 to 60min: Verbal and Non-verbal communication workshop</p> <p>60 to 75min: Discussion of final version of the individual's brand visual identity.</p> <p>75 to 90min: Phase 3, Visibility explained</p>
7	1h30	<p>0 to 30min: Workshop of social media strategies for personal brands</p> <p>30 to 75min: Creation of social media plan for individual</p> <p>75 to 90min: Networking importance and best practices explained</p>
8	1h30	<p>0 to 20min: Press Release for Personal Brands explained</p> <p>20 to 40min: Digital Marketing Tools for personal brands explained</p> <p>40 to 60min: Recap from all sessions</p> <p>60 to 90min: Q&amp;A</p>

## Appendix 6: Introductory Form

Did you get a job promotion on the last couple of months?

Yes

No

Have you earned an award that could have impacted your image as a professional on the last couple of months?

Yes

No

Have you started a business or a personal project during the last couple of months?

Yes (please specify what and when you started)

No

Have you engaged in public speaking activities with a big audience over the last couple of months?

Yes

No

Engaging in public speaking activities with a big audience is something that you have been doing for longer or you started it on the last couple of months?

I have been doing it for longer than a couple of months

I have started it on the last couple of months

Have you started a new social media account (and since then you have been actively posting on it) at any point over the last couple of months?

Yes

No

Have you changed the way you produce and post content on social media on the last couple of months?

Yes (please specify how)

No

Have you started a new blog, website or other digital channel (please specify which) over the last couple of months?

Yes, a blog and/or website

Yes, a digital channel (please specify)

No

Have you done a significant change on a new blog, website or other digital channel of yours over the last couple of months?

Yes (please specify what)

No

Have you been featured in a famous media vehicle (magazines, TV, and/or other channels) over the last couple of months?

Yes

No

Being featured in a famous media vehicle is something that you has been happening for longer than a couple of months or on the last couple of months?

Longer than 3 months

Only on the last 3 months

Were you engaged in any other activity that could bring value to you as a professional on the last couple of months?

Yes (please specify

Maybe (please explain)

No

Were you engaged in any other activity that could bring value to you as a professional on the last couple of months?

Yes (please specify

Maybe (please explain)

No

## Appendix 7: Interview Questions

- Pre-interviews with participants:

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your marital status|?
4. Tell me about your education and background.
5. What is your occupation?
6. From 1 to 5, how do you evaluate your personal brand today? Why?
7. From 1 to 5, how do you evaluate your knowledge of personal brand today? Why?
8. How important do you think personal branding is for your career? Explain why.
9. Can you tell me about actions you made in the past and/or currently to develop your self-knowledge?
10. Have you ever thought about positioning yourself in a strategic way? Have you put any effort into that? If yes, what have you done? Please describe with examples.
11. Do you think that positioning yourself would impact your reputation?
12. Do you think that being perceived by others by certain attributes is important to achieve career success?
13. What have you done to increase the visibility of your image and/or of your work?
14. How prepared do you feel today to face new challenges in your career?
15. Do you think that your behavior and the perception you generate are different depending on the environment you are in?
16. From 1 to 5, evaluate how much you perceive yourself with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation.

- Post-interviews with participants:

1. From 1 to 5, how do you evaluate your personal brand today? Why?
2. From 1 to 5, how do you evaluate your knowledge of personal brand today? Why?
3. How important do you think personal branding is for your career? Explain why.
4. Do you think that positioning yourself would impact your reputation?
5. Do you think that being perceived by others by certain attributes is important to achieve career success?
6. Do you think you understand personal branding better today than before the experiment? If yes, how?
7. How prepared do you feel today to face new challenges in your career when compared to how you felt before the experiment?
8. From 1 to 5, evaluate how much you perceive yourself with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation.

- Post-interviews (after 45 days) with participants:

1. From 1 to 5, how do you evaluate your personal brand today? Why?
2. From 1 to 5, evaluate how much you perceive yourself with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation.
3. Do you think that the BrandYou method had a positive impact on your personal brand attributes during the last 45 days? If yes, in which way? If not, why?
4. Now that almost 2 months passed since you participated in the intervention, would you change something else in the process?

- Pre-interviews with selected individuals:

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your marital status|?
4. Tell me about your education and background.
5. What is your occupation?
6. How would you describe your relationship with *the person*?
7. From 1 to 5, how much do you perceive “the person” with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation? Please explain why.
8. Is there any characteristic that you find negative in *the person*? If yes, which and why?
9. Is there any other attributes that you think best describe *the person*? If yes, with what intensity from 1 to 5?

\**The person* was substituted by the name of the participant related to the selected individual that was interviewed.

- Post-interviews with selected individuals:

The same questions from the pre-intervention will be made. However, new questions will be added. The following questions will be made at the beginning of the interview:

1. How frequently did you see and/or talk to *the person* over the last couple of months?
2. Have you noticed any difference in the behavior of *the person* during the last couple of months? If yes, describe it in detail.

- Post-interviews (after 45 days) with selected individuals:

1. How frequently have you seen and/or talk to *the person* on the last 45 days?
2. Have you noticed any changes in regards to “the person” during the last couple of months?
3. From 1 to 5 evaluate if you perceive yourself with the following attributes: recognition, authority, uniqueness, authenticity, competency, credibility, integrity, value in the market and strong reputation.
4. Are there any other attributes that you think best describe *the person*? If yes, with what intensity (from 1 to 5)?

## Appendix 8: Description of Participants

Laura, Trainee at a Multinational Consumer Goods Company: Laura is 26 years old and she is finishing her master’s program in Marketing. She became a trainee four months before starting the experience of the intervention. She wants to finish her trainee program and work in the Sales or Marketing department. The individuals she selected to participate in the interviews were her boss from Nestlé, a trainee from a different department who is also her friend, her mother, and her best friend from her master’s program.

João, Finance Analyst at a Fintech Company: João is 30 years old and he works as a financial analyst in a fintech for three years. He wants to build his own business as a part-time commitment to his current job. He would like to be more active on social media and invest in financial education, selling courses, and mentoring programs online. The individuals he selected to participate in the interviews were his superior and a close friend who is also an analyst in the same company. Besides that, he selected a friend from high school and his father.

Jacob, Entrepreneur in E-commerce and Retail Services: Jacob is 28 years old and he is the owner of a medium-sized company, which focuses on the e-commerce and retail market. He is mostly responsible for the business development of his company and considers his personal brand as part of the brand of his company. He would like to improve the way he communicates and present himself in front of his clients. Besides that, he wants to strengthen his personal brand in order to reinforce the brand of his company. The individuals he selected were the partner and main investor of his company, the co-founder of the company, his best friend, and his brother.

Daniel, Professional Athlete: Daniel is 25 years old and a CrossFit professional athlete. Even though he is one of the best athletes in Brazil, his income is low and insufficient. He would like to diversify his sources of income and invest in his brand for future brand partnerships, new businesses, etc. The individuals he selected were his trainer, a CrossFit professional athlete who trains with him, his best friend, and his father.

Isabel, Ophthalmologist: Isabel is 42 years old and a doctor. She works in a private clinic in a small city and she has a strong and long relationship with her patients. She wants to increase the demand (number of patients per month), and improve her image and reputation in the city she works in. The individuals she selected were the owner of the clinic (who is also a doctor), a colleague from work, who is a nurse, a friend, and her sister.

Anna, Career Coach: Anna is 36 years old and she just finished a career transition. She worked as a lawyer for 12 years and she is currently a career coach. Because she was a remarkable lawyer, she is having difficulties repositioning herself in the market to sell her services as a career coach. The individuals she selected were her teacher and mentor (the person who gave

her support during the career transition), a colleague from work (who provides a similar service as Anna), her best friend, and her mother.

Appendix 9: Table with selected individuals' answers to question "From 1 to 5, how much do you perceive "the person" with the attribute (...)?"

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Pre-intervention rates</b>	<b>Post-intervention rates</b>	<b>45 days after intervention rates</b>
Laura (1)	Boss	Recognition	1	2	2
1	Colleague work	Recognition	1	2	2
1	Friend	Recognition	1	1	1
1	Family	Recognition	1	1	1
1	Boss	Authority	3	4	4
1	Colleague work	Authority	3	5	5
1	Friend	Authority	4	5	5
1	Family	Authority	3	4	4
1	Boss	Uniqueness	3	5	5
1	Colleague work	Uniqueness	3	5	5
1	Friend	Uniqueness	3	5	5
1	Family	Uniqueness	4	5	5
1	Boss	Authenticity	1	3	3

1	Colleague work	Authenticity	1	2	2
1	Friend	Authenticity	2	3	3
1	Family	Authenticity	2	4	4
1	Boss	Competency	3	5	5
1	Colleague work	Competency	3	3	3
1	Friend	Competency	2	2	2
1	Family	Competency	2	2	2
1	Boss	Credibility	1	4	4
1	Colleague work	Credibility	2	3	3
1	Friend	Credibility	2	4	4
1	Family	Credibility	2	3	3
1	Boss	Integrity	3	3	3
1	Colleague work	Integrity	3	3	3
1	Friend	Integrity	3	3	3
1	Family	Integrity	4	4	4
1	Boss	Value in the Market	2	2	3
1	Colleague work	Value in the Market	2	2	3
1	Friend	Value in the Market	4	4	4
1	Family	Value in the Market	3	3	3
1	Boss	Strong Reputation	2	4	4
1	Colleague work	Strong Reputation	1	5	5
1	Friend	Strong Reputation	1	3	3

1	Family	Strong Reputation	2	4	4
1	Boss	Visibility	1	3	3
1	Colleague work	Visibility	2	5	5
1	Friend	Visibility	2	4	4
1	Family	Visibility	2	3	3
João (2)	Boss 2	Recognition	2	4	4
2	Colleague work 2	Recognition	3	4	4
2	Friend 2	Recognition	3	3	3
2	Family 2	Recognition	3	3	3
2	Boss 2	Authority	1	3	3
2	Colleague work 2	Authority	2	4	4
2	Friend 2	Authority	2	2	2
2	Family 2	Authority	2	2	2
2	Boss 2	Uniqueness	2	4	4
2	Colleague work 2	Uniqueness	2	5	5
2	Friend 2	Uniqueness	1	2	2
2	Family 2	Uniqueness	2	3	3
2	Boss 2	Authenticity	1	3	3
2	Colleague work 2	Authenticity	1	2	2
2	Friend 2	Authenticity	2	5	5
2	Family 2	Authenticity	3	4	4
2	Boss 2	Competency	2	5	5
2	Colleague work 2	Competency	3	5	5
2	Friend 2	Competency	3	4	4
2	Family 2	Competency	2	5	5

2	Boss 2	Credibility	3	4	4
2	Colleague work 2	Credibility	2	5	5
2	Friend 2	Credibility	3	4	4
2	Family 2	Credibility	1	3	3
2	Boss 2	Integrity	4	4	4
2	Colleague work 2	Integrity	4	4	4
2	Friend 2	Integrity	4	4	4
2	Family 2	Integrity	5	5	5
2	Boss 2	Value in the Market	3	3	4
2	Colleague work 2	Value in the Market	3	3	4
2	Friend 2	Value in the Market	3	3	3
2	Family 2	Value in the Market	3	3	3
2	Boss 2	Strong Reputation	2	5	5
2	Colleague work 2	Strong Reputation	2	4	4
2	Friend 2	Strong Reputation	2	3	3
2	Family 2	Strong Reputation	3	4	4
2	Boss 2	Visibility	1	4	4
2	Colleague work 2	Visibility	2	5	5
2	Friend 2	Visibility	1	3	3
2	Family 2	Visibility	2	3	3
Jacob (3)	Boss 3	Recognition	2	4	4
3	Colleague work 3	Recognition	3	5	5

3	Friend 3	Recognition	2	3	3
3	Family 3	Recognition	2	3	3
3	Boss 3	Authority	3	5	5
3	Colleague work 3	Authority	4	5	5
3	Friend 3	Authority	2	4	4
3	Family 3	Authority	2	4	4
3	Boss 3	Uniqueness	3	4	4
3	Colleague work 3	Uniqueness	3	4	4
3	Friend 3	Uniqueness	4	5	5
3	Family 3	Uniqueness	3	5	5
3	Boss 3	Authenticity	3	5	5
3	Colleague work 3	Authenticity	2	3	3
3	Friend 3	Authenticity	4	5	5
3	Family 3	Authenticity	3	5	5
3	Boss 3	Competency	5	5	5
3	Colleague work 3	Competency	5	5	5
3	Friend 3	Competency	3	5	5
3	Family 3	Competency	5	5	5
3	Boss 3	Credibility	3	4	4
3	Colleague work 3	Credibility	3	4	4
3	Friend 3	Credibility	1	3	3
3	Family 3	Credibility	2	5	5
3	Boss 3	Integrity	5	5	5
3	Colleague work 3	Integrity	4	4	4
3	Friend 3	Integrity	4	4	4
3	Family 3	Integrity	4	4	4

3	Boss 3	Value in the Market	2	2	3
3	Colleague work 3	Value in the Market	3	3	3
3	Friend 3	Value in the Market	2	2	3
3	Family 3	Value in the Market	3	3	4
3	Boss 3	Strong Reputation	4	5	5
3	Colleague work 3	Strong Reputation	4	5	5
3	Friend 3	Strong Reputation	3	5	5
3	Family 3	Strong Reputation	2	5	5
3	Boss 3	Visibility	1	3	3
3	Colleague work 3	Visibility	2	4	4
3	Friend 3	Visibility	2	4	4
3	Family 3	Visibility	4	5	5
Daniel (4)	Boss 4	Recognition	3	5	5
4	Colleague work 4	Recognition	4	5	5
4	Friend 4	Recognition	4	5	5
4	Family 4	Recognition	4	5	5
4	Boss 4	Authority	4	5	5
4	Colleague work 4	Authority	2	3	3
4	Friend 4	Authority	2	4	4
4	Family 4	Authority	2	4	4
4	Boss 4	Uniqueness	2	5	5
4	Colleague work 4	Uniqueness	3	5	5

4	Friend 4	Uniqueness	2	5	5
4	Family 4	Uniqueness	4	5	5
4	Boss 4	Authenticity	3	5	5
4	Colleague work 4	Authenticity	3	5	5
4	Friend 4	Authenticity	4	5	5
4	Family 4	Authenticity	3	4	4
4	Boss 4	Competency	4	5	5
4	Colleague work 4	Competency	3	5	5
4	Friend 4	Competency	2	5	5
4	Family 4	Competency	2	5	5
4	Boss 4	Credibility	2	5	5
4	Colleague work 4	Credibility	2	4	4
4	Friend 4	Credibility	1	1	1
4	Family 4	Credibility	2	5	5
4	Boss 4	Integrity	4	4	4
4	Colleague work 4	Integrity	4	4	4
4	Friend 4	Integrity	5	5	5
4	Family 4	Integrity	5	5	5
4	Boss 4	Value in the Market	2	4	5
4	Colleague work 4	Value in the Market	2	4	5
4	Friend 4	Value in the Market	2	5	5
4	Family 4	Value in the Market	2	5	5
4	Boss 4	Strong Reputation	2	3	3

4	Colleague work 4	Strong Reputation	1	2	2
4	Friend 4	Strong Reputation	3	5	5
4	Family 4	Strong Reputation	3	5	5
Isabel (5)	Boss 4	Visibility	1	4	4
5	Colleague work 4	Visibility	1	3	3
5	Friend 4	Visibility	2	3	3
5	Family 4	Visibility	2	3	3
5	Boss 5	Recognition	3	5	5
5	Colleague work 5	Recognition	4	5	5
5	Friend 5	Recognition	4	5	5
5	Family 5	Recognition	4	5	5
5	Boss 5	Authority	3	4	4
5	Colleague work 5	Authority	3	5	5
5	Friend 5	Authority	4	4	4
5	Family 5	Authority	4	4	4
5	Boss 5	Uniqueness	2	4	4
5	Colleague work 5	Uniqueness	2	5	5
5	Friend 5	Uniqueness	3	5	5
5	Family 5	Uniqueness	4	5	5
5	Boss 5	Authenticity	2	4	4
5	Colleague work 5	Authenticity	2	5	5
5	Friend 5	Authenticity	4	5	5
5	Family 5	Authenticity	4	5	5
5	Boss 5	Competency	4	5	5

5	Colleague work 5	Competency	3	4	4
5	Friend 5	Competency	3	5	5
5	Family 5	Competency	4	5	5
5	Boss 5	Credibility	3	5	5
5	Colleague work 5	Credibility	3	5	5
5	Friend 5	Credibility	3	4	4
5	Family 5	Credibility	3	4	4
5	Boss 5	Integrity	5	5	5
5	Colleague work 5	Integrity	5	5	5
5	Friend 5	Integrity	1	1	1
5	Family 5	Integrity	5	5	5
5	Boss 5	Value in the Market	4	4	5
5	Colleague work 5	Value in the Market	4	5	5
5	Friend 5	Value in the Market	5	5	5
5	Family 5	Value in the Market	5	5	5
5	Boss 5	Strong Reputation	2	5	5
5	Colleague work 5	Strong Reputation	2	3	3
5	Friend 5	Strong Reputation	3	4	4
5	Family 5	Strong Reputation	3	5	5
5	Boss 5	Visibility	1	5	5
5	Colleague work 5	Visibility	2	5	5
5	Friend 5	Visibility	1	3	3

5	Family 5	Visibility	2	3	3
Anna (6)	Boss 6	Recognition	1	2	2
6	Colleague work 6	Recognition	1	2	2
6	Friend 6	Recognition	1	4	4
6	Family 6	Recognition	1	1	1
6	Boss 6	Authority	1	3	3
6	Colleague work 6	Authority	1	2	2
6	Friend 6	Authority	1	4	4
6	Family 6	Authority	1	4	4
6	Boss 6	Uniqueness	1	5	5
6	Colleague work 6	Uniqueness	1	4	4
6	Friend 6	Uniqueness	1	3	3
6	Family 6	Uniqueness	1	2	2
6	Boss 6	Authenticity	3	5	5
6	Colleague work 6	Authenticity	2	3	3
6	Friend 6	Authenticity	1	2	2
6	Family 6	Authenticity	1	4	4
6	Boss 6	Competency	1	3	3
6	Colleague work 6	Competency	1	3	3
6	Friend 6	Competency	4	5	5
6	Family 6	Competency	3	5	5
6	Boss 6	Credibility	1	4	4
6	Colleague work 6	Credibility	1	4	4
6	Friend 6	Credibility	1	2	2
6	Family 6	Credibility	1	5	5
6	Boss 6	Integrity	3	3	3

6	Colleague work 6	Integrity	3	4	4
6	Friend 6	Integrity	4	4	4
6	Family 6	Integrity	5	5	5
6	Boss 6	Value in the Market	1	3	4
6	Colleague work 6	Value in the Market	1	3	4
6	Friend 6	Value in the Market	1	4	4
6	Family 6	Value in the Market	2	3	3
6	Boss 6	Strong Reputation	1	3	3
6	Colleague work 6	Strong Reputation	1	4	4
6	Friend 6	Strong Reputation	3	5	5
6	Family 6	Strong Reputation	2	3	3
6	Boss 6	Visibility	1	4	5
6	Colleague work 6	Visibility	1	3	4
6	Friend 6	Visibility	2	4	5
6	Family 6	Visibility	3	5	5

T-test result considering pre-interviews and post interviews: 2,80342E-56

Appendix 10 - Table with participants' answers to question "From 1 to 5, evaluate how much you perceive yourself with the following attributes:"

Participant	Attribute	Pre-intervention answers (self-perception)	Post-intervention answers (self-perception)	45 days after Post-intervention answers (self-perception)
Laura	Recognition	1	3	3

João	Recognition	2	3	3
Jacob	Recognition	1	5	5
Daniel	Recognition	2	4	4
Isabel	Recognition	4	5	5
Anna	Recognition	1	4	4
Laura	Authority	1	3	3
João	Authority	3	4	4
Jacob	Authority	4	5	5
Daniel	Authority	3	3	3
Isabel	Authority	5	5	5
Anna	Authority	1	4	4
Laura	Uniqueness	3	5	5
João	Uniqueness	2	4	4
Jacob	Uniqueness	4	5	5
Daniel	Uniqueness	2	5	5
Isabel	Uniqueness	2	5	5
Anna	Uniqueness	1	3	3
Laura	Authenticity	2	4	4
João	Authenticity	2	3	3
Jacob	Authenticity	4	5	5
Daniel	Authenticity	2	4	4
Isabel	Authenticity	4	4	4
Anna	Authenticity	2	5	5
Laura	Competency	3	4	4

João	Competency	3	4	4
Jacob	Competency	3	4	4
Daniel	Competency	3	5	5
Isabel	Competency	4	5	5
Anna	Competency	2	4	4
Laura	Credibility	2	5	5
João	Credibility	3	4	4
Jacob	Credibility	3	5	5
Daniel	Credibility	1	4	4
Isabel	Credibility	4	4	4
Anna	Credibility	1	3	3
Laura	Integrity	5	5	5
João	Integrity	5	5	5
Jacob	Integrity	5	5	5
Daniel	Integrity	4	4	4
Isabel	Integrity	5	5	5
Anna	Integrity	4	4	4
Laura	Value in the Market	3	3	4
João	Value in the Market	3	3	4
Jacob	Value in the Market	4	4	5
Daniel	Value in the Market	2	4	4
Isabel	Value in the Market	3	3	3
Anna	Value in the Market	1	3	4
Laura	Strong Reputation	3	4	4

João	Strong Reputation	3	4	4
Jacob	Strong Reputation	4	5	5
Daniel	Strong Reputation	3	4	4
Isabel	Strong Reputation	4	5	5
Anna	Strong Reputation	1	3	3
Laura	Visibility	1	4	4
João	Visibility	1	5	5
Jacob	Visibility	3	5	5
Daniel	Visibility	2	5	5
Isabel	Visibility	4	5	5
Anna	Visibility	2	4	5

Appendix 11: T-Test Calculations for RQ1

Attribute	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention		P-Value	Statistically Significant?
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD		
Recognition	2	1,21	3,50	1,46	8,05301E-08	YES
Authority	2,53	1,17	3,90	0,92	6,75564E-09	YES
Uniqueness	2,43	1,01	4,40	0,93	2,40047E-13	YES
Authenticity	2,43	1,04	4,00	1,02	1,39485E-12	YES
Competency	3,00	1,05	4,40	0,93	9,86985E-09	YES
Credibility	2,07	0,91	3,97	0,96	5,0944E-11	YES

Integrity	4,13	0,94	4,17	0,91	0,325581988	NO
Value in the Market	2,67	1,09	3,43	0,94	0,00068208	YES
Strong Reputation	2,40	0,97	4,13	0,90	2,69049E-12	YES
Visibility	1,80	0,85	3,97	0,85	4,29037E-14	YES

\*The means and correspondent standard deviations were calculated with the sum of all answers (from both participants and selected participants together).

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