Identifying and ranking factors affecting personal branding in the food industry based on the network analysis process method

1. Department of Business Management, Shahr-e-Qods Branch, Islamic Azad University,Tehran, Iran,

m.mortazavi_r@ut.ac.ir

2. Department of Business Management, Shahr-e-Qods Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran,

sharif58@gmail.com

3. Department of Business Management, Shahr-e-Qods Branch, Islamic Azad University,

Tehran, Iran

alirezarousta@yahoo.comM. Mortazavi, M. Ahmadi Sharif** , A. Rousta

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to identify and rank the factors affecting personal branding in the food industry. Based on this, the current research is an exploratory research that has two stages. The first stage of this research is based on grounded theory, which is applied in terms of purpose and qualitative in terms of method. In this research, the systematic method of Strauss and Corbin was used, which includes three main procedures of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The second stage is based on the method of the network analysis process, which is applied in terms of purpose and quantitative and descriptive-survey in terms of method. The statistical population of this research is the managers of Iran's food industry, 19 of whom were selected by non-probability sampling of judgmental or deliberate sampling. Using the technique of network analysis process, the relative importance of these factors was investigated and with the help of Superdecision software, these factors were prioritized. The results showed that in the variable of causal conditions, individual characteristics ranked first and business characteristics ranked second. In the context variable, social, economic and political issues, cultural values, dynamic world, opinions and beliefs are prioritized. In the intervention variable, criticisms and suggestions, audience expectation level, difference between virtual space and real world, social norms have been prioritized. In the variable of strategies, adopting a different and distinct method, market research, social responsibility, social networking, suitable tools for visualization, focusing on the goal, identity tools defined in behavior have been prioritized. In the results variable, they are prioritized in the order of advancing the company's goals, attracting and retaining the audience, saving time and space, improving the quality of communication, gaining internal satisfaction, and gaining reputation.

Keywords: personal brand, personal branding, food industry, network analysis process

Introduction

During the last decade, branding has become a top management priority due to the increasing understanding that brands are one of the most important intangible assets of companies (Keller and Lehmann[1], 2006). Nowadays, the main capital of many businesses is their brand. For several decades, the value of companies was measured in terms of real estate, and then tangible assets, machinery and equipment but recently they realized that the main value of the company lies outside the business, and in the minds of potential buyers or consumers (Tuominen[2], 2000). Brands are now used as a strategic platform to interact with existing and future customers to fulfill their "needs and desires" and ultimately create satisfaction and loyalty in addition to validating the specific performance characteristics of the product or service (Boatwright[3] et al., 2009). In this way, brands seek to create a lasting impact on their target audience and consumers to ensure this. If another product or service has the ability to copy its components, design, manufacturing process and distribution channels, the influence and loyalty created by the brand and the brand experience will replace the consumer's intention to switch to another brand. (Kotler and Keller [4], 2009).

The phenomenon of personal branding is a relatively new topic in the field of marketing, and it was created in 1997 by Tom Peters. Peters introduced the concept of "my company", a personal company where everyone is considered as their own manager (Shepherd[5], 2005). What Peters meant in 1997 is that the most important job in "My Company" is to be the chief marketer for your personal brand. Although personal branding is a concept that has gained public awareness for the first time in the last decade (Shepherd, 2005), modern branding emerged around the end of the 19th century in the United States and Great Britain (Melin[6], 1999). At that time, the artisans who wanted to mark their products so that they could distinguish them from others, used the brand. According to Melin in 1999, today the concept of brands has become more than just an identifier. The brand has become a powerful tool that expresses value for both consumers and companies (Guzman [7] et al., 2012). The importance of branding in society has reached a new level and is now used for both companies and individuals. It is important for companies to create a corporate brand so that employees can identify with their company. Corporate brand also affects how external stakeholders perceive the company (Hatch and Schultz[8], 2008). For individuals, the importance of personal branding has increased because it can be a tool to differentiate them from others (Shepherd, 2005).

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[1] **Keller and Lehmann**
[2] **Tuominen**
[3] **Boatwright et al**
[4] **Kotler and Keller**
[5] **Shepherd**
[6] **Melin**
[7] **Guzman et al**
[8] **Hatch and Schultz**

In addition, Montoya in 2002 points out the importance of aligning the personal brand with the company's brand because the personal brand of people in the organization can affect the perception of the company's brand by external stakeholders.

Due to the growing importance of personal branding in differentiating the business environment and its role in the success and improvement of companies' performance, this topic has become an important marketing tool in commercial organizations. Therefore, researchers have begun to investigate this issue and provide its definitions and concepts, and studies have been conducted at the national and world level in this regard. Although a lot of research has been done in the literature of personal branding and the factors affecting it, until now no detailed research has been done on identifying and ranking these factors. The ranking of these factors can provide a clear and logical model in understanding and analyzing personal branding issues, and help managers to take a targeted and effective action related to personal branding in order to grow and improve the performance of companies.

A review of literature and research background

Definition of personal branding

Over the years, there have been various definitions in the field of personal branding (Aaker [9], 2010). To arrive at a specific definition of personal branding, we must first understand the basic meaning of branding. In his 2003 article on brand, Olins[10] defines brand as "the symbolic representation of all information about a company, product or service". In fact, he forgot to add the "individual" component to his definition. A brand does not only include the visualization of information related to companies, products and services, but also people are considered a part of it. On the other hand, theories about personal branding can often be considered as an extension of existing theories about corporate branding (Lair, Sullivan and Cheney [11], 2005). The term personal branding, popularized by Tom Peters in the article "The Brand That Is Called You" (Khadhar[12], 2013), has become increasingly important in the digital age (Labrecque, Markos and Milne [13], 2011). In 1997, Peters[14] defined personal branding as the characteristics that make a person different, unique, and outstanding from others in order to compete in the world of work. Personal branding is managing and influencing the perception that others have about a person. This issue is similar to the definition of brand by Martinez and Polo[15] in 2007, who define brand as an asset that provides opportunities for organizations to relate and exploit their organizational competencies and culture in order to position themselves in Win the hearts and

minds of consumers. Peters in 1997 also defines personal branding as seeing oneself as a business, which allows a person to take responsibility for their future. This enables a person to be more creative, do inspiring work, and connect with the world around them (Montoya and Vandehey, 2009).

[9] **Aaker**
[10]**Olins**
[11] **Lair، Sullivan and Cheney**
[12] **khedher**
[13] **Labrecque, Markos and Milne**
[14] **Peters**
[15] **Martinez & Polo**
[16] **Montoya and Vandehey**

In a contrasting view, Goldsmith in 2009 believes that "Authentic" personal branding is not only the external expression of a person through personal marketing, self-image improvement, appearance, etc., but it should clearly reflect the goals, unique characteristics, passion, professionalism, expertise and values of the person. In 2009, Goldsmith believes that in order to have a strong personal brand, an organic and comprehensive approach should be used to create a strong, distinctive, meaningful and memorable personal brand that is authentic and a true representative of the person. David Acker says: "Each person has a brand that is represented by a name and a face that has a group of different characteristics such as skills and assets, career paths, communication styles, appearance, personality, interests, activities, friends and family, and so on. This brand affects all relationships by influencing the way a person is perceived by others and respected and liked by others. William Arruda[17], who is known as the world's personal branding coach, defines personal branding as "the permission to be yourself, your best self. Personal branding is knowing what is authentic to you, what sets you apart from your peers, connects you to your target audience and convinces them, and then uses that to achieve your goals and add value to your employer. Personal branding is no longer a luxury, but has become an important skill for survival" (Martin[18], 2009). According to Shepherd in 2005, the personal branding industry "is based on the obvious logic of applying the principles originally created for products and companies to people." which Walker in 2000 refers to as "philosophy of life as business".

The importance of personal branding

Personal branding is not a short-term investment and requires time and hard work. Personal branding is a full-time job all days and weeks of the year that requires dedication, tenacity and a lot of attention. But when a person realizes how the branding process works, it becomes a habit and becomes easier. Personal branding is not something that one needs only for work life, but we also need it for personal life. Personal branding gives people self-confidence and helps them understand themselves better, and thus brings good results for the world. There is no optimal formula that suits everyone. This word itself is indicative of its "personality". Branding is the most personal asset of every person.

A Chinese proverb says, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 days ago. The second best time is today." When it comes to wisdom, the Chinese are probably the best. Like a tree, the best time to start personal branding is today, unless one has a time machine to go back with (Wright[19],

2009). Even if many people don't understand or don't care about it, everyone has their own brand. In fact, people have different brands depending on the people they associate with. It is important to understand that the decisions and actions of others affect the brand. If a person is willing to take the time to analyze and understand and plan a personal strategy, they will most likely be able to reach their full potential and dramatically improve their quality of life. (Cooper[20], 2014).

[17] William Arruda
[18] Martin
[19] Wright
[20] Cooper

Having a good reputation (regarding work and field) can bring a better perception by others. Creating a positive reputation means that we spend less time persuading or negotiating with a person. Managing a personal brand helps us to create a kind of value for the brand, which gives more value to personal products. The more defined the brand and the better the personal message is formed, the easier it will be to go through life and follow your dreams. In the long run, personal brand has the potential to change life in extraordinary ways and make a person more successful and happier (Cooper, 2014). As Lincoln says, the goal is continuous and day-by-day improvement.

Iran's food industry

Iran's food industry is one of the oldest industries in Iran, which is historically mainly managed by the private sector, and for this reason, it has a higher degree of competitiveness than other mostly government industries of the country. Active industries in this field have equipped themselves with the latest technologies in the world to compete harder with their competitors.

The peak of the acceleration of the establishment of food industry factories in its modern and modern form, like many other industries in the country, goes back to the arrival of the wave of modernization and the expansion of urbanization in Iran, i.e., the first and second Pahlavi eras because in this era, the traditional methods of food production no longer meet the needs of citizens and are not compatible with the requirements of urban life. Therefore, the expansion of modernization in Iran caused investors to build food industry factories in different parts of the country by following the advanced models in western countries and considering the high potential of the country in the production of agricultural products. Although many of Iran's food industry factories, which are among the most successful and large factories in the country, date back to the 40s and 50s but in the decades after the Islamic Revolution, due to the policies undertaken with the aim of independence and reducing dependence on Western countries, the import of food products to the country was widely limited, many food industry factories were established in the country during this period, and the previous factories were able to expand their activities and export their products to other countries in addition to meeting the needs of Iran's expanding population.

Methodology

In this research, qualitative and quantitative methods were used, so the research method is exploratory. In this research, the systematic method attributed to Strauss and Corbin was used for data analysis. This method (grounded theory) has three main procedures: open coding, axial coding and selective coding based on the selected research method, the non-probability sampling method was used as a sampling method in the present research in the qualitative section, which was performed using a judgmental or deliberate technique; in that case, sampling continues until theoretical saturation is reached; usually, the researcher tries to select samples purposively based on what kind of specific information is needed.

In this research, in the qualitative section, 19 Iranian food industry managers were interviewed; Each interview lasted about an hour depending on the interviewee's interest and knowledge of the subject. In this research, providing feedback to the interviewees and putting them on the research path in a way that does not affect the way they answer was done in order to increase validity. Besides, after conducting each interview, the pattern obtained up to that stage was presented and if the interviewee had any points regarding the pattern, it was discussed. To ensure the reliability of the research, two methods of internal evaluation and external evaluation have been used. Therefore, in this research, the codings were provided to a number of experts to express their opinions about the labels and the coding method.

In the quantitative part of the society under investigation, there are managers of the food industry in Iran. A non-probability sampling method was used to determine the appropriate number of sample people who can represent the statistical population. The tool used to collect information is a questionnaire. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed to rank personal branding structures in the food industry using the opinions of 19 food industry managers in Iran. In this questionnaire, variables were prioritized based on numbers 1 to 9 (lowest priority to highest priority). This stage is called relative weight calculation and by combining the relative weights of each option, its final or absolute weight is determined.

To determine the validity of the questionnaire, by examining the inconsistency of the matrices resulting from the judgment of each of the respondents, it is possible to be sure of the validity of the results of the questionnaire designed to rank the variables. Quantitative validity was measured by SuperDecision software. The reliability of the research was evaluated in the quantitative part by Cronbach's alpha. After collecting the questionnaires and collected information, SuperDecision software was used to analyze and rank the data.

Findings

In this research, the foundation data method was used. Coding in foundational data theory is a type of content analysis and seeks to find and conceptualize debatable issues that exist among the mass of data. In fact, during the analysis of an interview, the researcher will find out that the interviewee uses words and expressions during his speech that highlight debatable issues about the phenomenon under investigation. Coding should be done with an open mind and without resorting to preconceived ideas. The founders of the grounded theory emphasize that one should not prepare ideas in advance and then limit the data obtained from the initial stage of the grounded theory by searching the phenomenon under investigation in order to count its supporting evidence. The results of coding are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Dimensions, components and indicators of personal branding in the food industry

Indicator		Component	Dimensions
Personal interests and tastes	A person's personality and attitude	Individual characteristics	Causal conditions
Innate and acquired abilities	life style		
Knowledge and expertise			
The creative thinking of the commercial brand	Characteristics of the commercial brand	Business features	
Cultural conflict	National culture	cultural values	Background conditions
Individual culture			
Political, economic and social challenges	Discussions of the world day	Political, economic and social issues	
National ideas	Individual opinions	Ideas and beliefs	
Religious beliefs			
Expansion of virtual space	Technology changes	dynamic world	
Negative criticism	Positive criticism	Criticisms and suggestions	Intervening conditions
The difference between online and offline personality		The difference between the virtual world and the real world	
Reducing the power of understanding and recognition in virtual space			
Primary expectations of the audience		Audience expectation level	
Product experience and generalizability			
Limitations and rules of virtual space		social norms	
Social restrictions and rules			
Keeping your true self	The importance of honesty in behavior	Identity tools defined in behavior	Strategy
Adherence to dos and don'ts			
Continuous presence	Introducing the product with famous people	The right tool for visualization	
Product introduction with memories	Accompanying social values with the brand		
Use of incentive methods	Communication with contacts	Social networking	
Use of hashtags	Continuous interaction and stable relationship		
Communication with colleagues	Transferring information and creating awareness		

Communication through questions and answers			
Helping improve society	Importance to the environment	social responsibility	
Importance to Sanitation and Health			
Increasing awareness	Responding to the needs of the audience	Adopting a different and distinct approach	
Focus on competitors' shortcomings	Special behavior and far from imitation		
Provide remarkable service	Post attractive content		
Providing different and quality products			
Fit personal and company brand goals		Focus on the goal	
Avoid presenting scattered topics			
Creating strategy and intellectual policy			
Identify competitors	Choosing the right market	Market research	
Exploitation of virtual space without borders	sales increase	Advancing company goals	Consequences
The right platform for online advertising	Career Success		
Examining the characteristics of potential employees			
Reducing the time and cost of finding a customer		Save time and money	
Reducing the time and cost of branding			
Reducing the time and cost of reporting from the market			
Reduce advertising costs			
Enjoy the feedback		Gain inner satisfaction	
A sense of pleasure and satisfaction from doing work			
Increase followers		Attract and retain contacts	
Increase likes and views			
Influence on the purchase decision of the audience			
Increase loyalty			
Deprivation of peace	Increasing the reputation of the brand owner	gain fame	
Increasing the company's brand reputation			
Increase intimacy in communication			

Involvement of contacts in business development	Improving the quality of communication	
Better evaluation and understanding of the brand owner		
Gaining trust and credibility		

Measuring the validity of the constructs rating questionnaire

Table (2) shows the degree of inconsistency of the main factors and sub-factors, which is obtained based on measuring the inconsistency of the validity of the questionnaire.

Table 2. The degree of inconsistency in the indicators of the main factors and sub-factors of the research

Indicator	Number of dimensions	The degree of incompatibility
Causal conditions	2	0.0000
Background conditions	4	0.0908
Intervening conditions	4	0.0441
Strategies	7	0.0919
consequences	6	0.0594

According to the results obtained from Superdecision software, all matrices had an acceptable inconsistency (less than 0.1).

Measuring the reliability of the structure rating questionnaire

In the present research, to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to validate the compatibility of the components, and according to the main factors of the research, these indices are shown in Table (3).

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha research indicators

Indicator	Number of dimensions	Cronbach's alpha
Causal conditions	2	0/74
Background conditions	4	0/82
Intervening conditions	4	0/81
Strategies	7	0/87
consequences	6	0/84

As seen in table (3), the reliability coefficient of all factors is greater than 0.7, which indicates acceptable reliability.

Implementation of the framework using SuperDecision software

After adjusting the sub-factors of each of the comparative matrices of the main factors, the matrix of the dependence of the main factors on each other and the dependence of the sub-factors of each factor on each other was formed and their compatibility was also controlled.

These steps were explained for the main factors of causal conditions, intervening conditions, contextual conditions, strategies, and consequences. The elements of the primary pairwise comparison matrix of the sub-factors were obtained from the geometric mean of the opinions of the managers of the food industry in Iran.

Pairwise comparisons of subfactors of causal conditions

The initial matrix of sub-factors of causal conditions was calculated according to the results of the questionnaire with the help of SuperDecision software, which can be seen in Table (4).

Table 4. Initial matrix, pairwise comparisons under factors of causal conditions

Causal conditions	Business features	Individual characteristics
Business features	1/0	0/333
Individual characteristics	3/000	1/0

In this step, the final normalized matrix is calculated. The results can be seen in table (5).

Table 5. Normalized and idealized final matrix, pairwise comparisons under factors of causal conditions

Name	normalized	Ideal	rank
Business features	0/249	0/333	2
Individual characteristics	0/750	1/0	1

Pairwise comparisons of subfactors of contextual conditions

The initial matrix of sub-factors of background conditions was calculated according to the results of the questionnaire with the help of SuperDecision software, which can be seen in Table (6).

Table 6. Initial matrix, pairwise comparisons under contextual factors

Background conditions	Ideas and beliefs,	cultural values	dynamic world	social, economic and political issues
Ideas and beliefs	1/0	0/25	0/333	0/5
cultural values	4/0	1/0	2/0	0/5
dynamic world	3/0	0/5	1/0	0/5
Social, economic and political issues	2/0	2/0	2/0	1/0

In this step, the final normalized matrix is calculated. The results can be seen in Table (7).

Table 7. Normalized and idealized final matrix, pairwise comparisons under background condition factors

Name	normalized	Ideal	rank

Ideas and beliefs	0/1037	0/2718	4
cultural values	0/3119	0/8176	2
dynamic world	0/2028	0/5318	3
Social, economic and political issues	0/3814	1/0	1

Pairwise comparisons of intervening condition subfactors

The initial matrix of sub-factors of the intervening conditions was calculated according to the results of the questionnaire with the help of SuperDecision software, which can be seen in Table (8).

Table 8. Initial matrix, pairwise comparisons under the intervening condition factors

Intervening conditions	The difference between the virtual world and the real world	Criticisms and suggestions	social norms	Audience expectation level
The difference between the virtual world and the real world	1/0	0/25	2/000	0/333
Criticisms and suggestions	4/0	1/0	4/000	2/000
social norms	0/5	0/25	1/0	0/5
Audience expectation level	3/000	0/5	2/0	1/0

In this step, the final normalized matrix is calculated. The results can be seen in Table (9).

Table 9. Normalized and idealized final matrix, pairwise comparisons under the intervening condition factors

Name	normalized	Ideal	rank
The difference between the virtual world and the real world	0/1354	0/2794	3
Criticisms and suggestions	0/4846	1/0	1
social norms	0/1047	0/2160	4
Audience expectation level	0/2752	0/5678	2

Pairwise comparisons of strategies subfactors

The initial matrix of sub-factors of strategies was calculated according to the results of the questionnaire with the help of SuperDecision software, which can be seen in table (10).

Table 10. Initial matrix, pairwise comparisons under factors of strategies

Strategies	Adopting a different and distinctive method	focusing on the goal	identity tools defined in behavior	market research	appropriate tools for visualization	social networking	ocial responsibility
Adopting a different and distinct approach	1/0	2	3/000	2/000	2/000	3/000	4/000
Focus on the goal	0/5	1/0	3/000	0/5	2/000	0/5	0/3333
Identity tools defined in behavior	0/3333	0/3333	1/0	0/5	0/3333	0/5	0/5
Market research	0/5	2/0	2/0	1/0	2/000	2/000	2/000
The right tool for visualization	0/5	0/5	3/000	0/5	1/0	0/5	2/000
Social networking	0/3333	2/0	2/0	0/5	2/0	1/0	0/5
social responsibility	0/25	3/000	2/0	0/5	0/5	2/0	1/0

In this step, the final normalized matrix is calculated. The results can be seen in table (11).

Table 11. The final normalized and ideal matrix, pairwise comparisons under factors of strategies

Name	normalized	Ideal	rank
Adopting a different and distinct approach	0/2798	1/0	1
Focus on the goal	0/1098	0/3925	6
Identity tools defined in behavior	0/0573	0/2049	7
Market research	0/1807	0/6457	2
The right tool for visualization	0/1166	0/4166	5
Social networking	0/1213	0/4336	4
social responsibility	0/1342	0/4797	3

Pairwise comparisons of outcome subfactors

The primary matrix of the sub-factors of the results was calculated according to the results of the questionnaire with the help of SuperDecision software, which can be seen in table (12).

Table 12. Initial matrix, pairwise comparisons under outcome factors

consequences	Advancing company goals	Attract and retain contacts	gain fame	Gain inner satisfaction	Improving the quality of communication	Save time and space
Advancing company goals	1/0	4	5/000	4/000	3/000	2/000
Attract and retain contacts	0/25	1/0	5/000	4/000	3/000	2/000
gain fame	0/2000	0/2000	1/0	0/5	0/3333	0/3333
Gain inner satisfaction	0/25	0/25	2/0	1/0	0/5	0/3333
Improving the quality of communication	0/3333	0/3333	3/0000	2/0	1/0	0/3333
Save time and space	0/5	0/5	3/0000	3/0000	3/0000	1/0

In this step, the final normalized matrix is calculated. The results can be seen in table (13).

Table 13. Normalized and idealized final matrix, pairwise comparisons under outcome factors

Name	normalized	Ideal	rank
Advancing company goals	0/3838	1/0	1
Attract and retain contacts	0/2302	0/5998	2
gain fame	0/0460	0/1198	6
Gain inner satisfaction	0/0657	0/1714	5
Improving the quality of communication	0/0991	0/2583	4
Save time and space	0/1749	0/4559	3

Conclusion

In order to rank and evaluate personal branding structures, a personal branding structure prioritization questionnaire was designed from one to nine and it was distributed among 19 managers of the food industry (types of beverages) in Iran, who were the statistical sample of the qualitative part of this research. Based on the process of network analysis (ANP), the ranking of structures obtained from qualitative data was extracted with the help of SuperDecision[11] software, and the results are as follows:

The ranking of causal conditions components was obtained according to individual characteristics and business characteristics. The components of background conditions were ranked according to political, economic and social issues, cultural values, dynamic world, and

opinions and beliefs based on the results. The components of the intervening conditions were raised in the order of criticisms and suggestions, the audience's expectation level, the difference between virtual space and the real world, and social norms. The components of the strategies were ranked according to the priority of adopting a different and distinct method, market research, identity tools defined in behavior, social responsibility, social networking, appropriate tools for visualization, and focusing on the goal. The components of the results are ranked in the order of advancing the company's goals, attracting and retaining contacts, saving time and space, improving the quality of communication, gaining internal satisfaction, and gaining reputation.

[21] Super Decision

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