Personal branding in the corporate workplace
Does gender bias against females exist?

Hilma Jónsdóttir

Leiðbeinandi: Þórður Sverrisson, aðjunkt
Umsjónarmaður: Dr. Þórhallur Örn Guðlaugsson, dösent

Júní 2017
Personal branding in the corporate workplace

Does gender bias against females still exist?

Hilma Jónsdóttir

Lokaverkefni til BS-prófs í viðskiptafræði
Leiðbeinandi: Þórður Sverrisson, aðjunkt
Umsjónarmaður: Dr. Þórhallur Örn Guðlaugsson, dósent

Viðskiptafræðideild
Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands
Júní 2017
Personal branding in the corporate workplace

Does gender bias against females still exist?

Ritgerð þessi er 12 eininga lokaverkefni til BS-prófs við Viðskiptafráðideild, Félagvísindasviði Háskóla Íslands.

© 2017 Hilma Jónsdóttir

Ritgerðina má ekki afrita nema með leyfi höfundar.

Prentun: Háskólaprent

Reykjavík, 2017
Acknowledgements

The following is a 12 ECTS unit thesis towards a B.Sc. degree in Business Administration from the University of Iceland. The writing of this thesis took place from January 9th, 2017 until May 12th, 2017. This has been an educational experience filled with laughter and the occasional crying – who knew writing could get this emotional? First and foremost, I want to thank my family for all their support and love throughout this process, you are always there when I need you. I also want to thank my advisor, Þórður Sverrisson, for his inspiration and guidance. My friends get special thanks for all the late nights and encouragement, I am lucky to have you. Finally, I want to thank all my participants, particularly the three women who shared their stories with me, without you there would be no thesis.
Abstract

Personal branding is the process by which an individual differentiates himself by identifying his strengths and uniqueness, while leveraging those qualities consistently across all platforms. The individual positions himself in the minds of others and influences their perceptions of him. The objective of this thesis was to find out if personal branding is important in today’s corporate workplace. Furthermore, the author wanted to examine whether gender bias against females still exists, resulting in women having to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders and serve in management positions.

In addition to using existing literature the author conducted research using a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. The participants were three high-level women who all serve in management positions and 481 people of the general public. The findings revealed that all three women believed personal branding to be important, although only one of them had consciously built and managed her brand as the literature suggests. Majority of the public didn’t know if it was important, yet just over a third claimed it was. All participants strongly agreed that equality has not yet been attained in the corporate workplace. The three women had all first-hand experience of gender discrimination and a clear majority of the public believed that due to their gender, women must work harder than men to prove they can be leaders and serve in management positions.
# Table of contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 9
2. Methodology .................................................................................................................. 10
3. Marketing ....................................................................................................................... 11
   3.1 The marketing process .............................................................................................. 11
4. Branding ......................................................................................................................... 14
   4.1 History and definitions .............................................................................................. 14
   4.2 Building a brand ......................................................................................................... 15
      4.2.1 Identity, image and personality ........................................................................ 16
      4.2.2 Name, logo and slogan .................................................................................... 16
      4.2.3 Brand equity ...................................................................................................... 17
         4.2.3.1 Brand awareness ....................................................................................... 18
         4.2.3.2 Brand associations .................................................................................... 18
         4.2.3.3 Perceived quality ....................................................................................... 18
         4.2.3.4 Other proprietary brand assets ................................................................ 18
         4.2.3.5 Brand loyalty ............................................................................................ 19
5. Personal branding ........................................................................................................... 20
   5.1 History and definitions .............................................................................................. 20
   5.2 Building a personal brand ........................................................................................ 21
      5.2.1 Authenticity ....................................................................................................... 21
      5.2.2 Target audience ................................................................................................. 22
      5.2.3 Differentiation ................................................................................................... 22
         5.2.3.1 Positioning .................................................................................................. 23
         5.2.3.2 Personal SWOT analysis ............................................................................ 24
   5.3 Communicating a personal brand ............................................................................. 25
      5.3.1 Online and offline networking ........................................................................... 25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Maintaining a personal brand</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Career development and success</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Leadership brand</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.1</td>
<td>Female leaders – women in management positions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Research method</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Research limitations</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Qualitative data</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.2</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.3</td>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.4</td>
<td>Gender bias</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Quantitative data</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1</td>
<td>Have you heard of the concept personal brand?</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2</td>
<td>Is personal branding important?</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.3</td>
<td>Do you think of yourself as a brand?</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.4</td>
<td>Gender inequality</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Final words</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I – Interview inquiry</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II – Interview questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III – Internet questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of figures

Figure 1. The research process ................................................................. 10
Figure 2. The marketing process ............................................................. 11
Figure 3. Aaker's model on brand equity ............................................... 17
Figure 4. The differentiation process .................................................... 22
Figure 5. Leadership brand .................................................................. 28
Figure 6. Gender .................................................................................. 38
Figure 7. Age ...................................................................................... 39
Figure 8. Education .............................................................................. 39
Figure 9. Have you heard of the concept personal brand? ..................... 40
Figure 10. Is personal branding important? ........................................... 40
Figure 11. Do you think of yourself as a brand? .................................... 41
Figure 12. Gender inequality and gender bias ....................................... 42

List of tables

Table 1. Management positions in Iceland 2015 by gender and age ............ 29
1 Introduction

In the past decades, the phenomenon of personal branding has become evident in the corporate workplace. Personal branding is a process where an individual differentiates himself by identifying his strengths and uniqueness, while leveraging those qualities consistently across all platforms. The individual positions himself in the minds of others and influences their perceptions of him (Schawbel, 2014, p. 18-19). In recent years, personal branding has been closely linked to career development and success (Kasprzak, 2014, p. 15).

When studying abroad the author had the opportunity to hear female entrepreneurs talk about personal branding in relation to their career development. It arose interest as well as curiosity to find out how Icelandic women in management positions perceive the subject. According to Statistic Iceland (2015b) women only account for 21.9% of all managers in the country. These statistics further raised the question if gender bias against females still exists in the corporate workplace, resulting in women needing to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders and serve in these positions. This thesis is meant to answer two research questions:

➢ Is personal branding important in today’s corporate workplace?
➢ Do women need to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders?

To answer the research questions in the best possible way, it is important to understand branding and its relation to personal branding. The history of brands will be traced and the process of building a strong brand is explained. The personal branding phenomenon is discussed and a demonstration on how one can build, communicate, and maintain such a brand according to existing literature is presented. Furthermore, personal branding in relation to career development is considered. Finally, a leadership brand and female leaders are reviewed. A research was conducted using a mixed methods approach (Flick, 2015, p. 216). The research participants were three high-level women who all serve in a management position and 481 people of the general public. The findings from this research will be presented, interpreted, and discussed.
2 Methodology

While writing this thesis, the author primarily followed the research process by Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 103), see figure 1.

After considering several viewpoints and perspectives on branding, a research objective for this thesis was selected and two research questions were formulated:

➢ Is personal branding important in today’s corporate workplace?
➢ Do women need to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders?

Next, a research plan was developed, a crucial tool to keep track on the work process and timetable. When collecting data, both secondary and primary data was used. Secondary data is defined as data that has been gathered previously by someone else and for another purpose (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 122). This included books, articles, and research papers. To obtain data that did not already exist, the author conducted research. All information gathered from that research is classified as primary data (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 122). After gathering all data, an analysis began. The analytical tools used were thematic analysis and the statistical computer program Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Finally, the research findings were presented, interpreted, and discussed.
3 Marketing

Marketing is all around and it can be seen in nearly anything that meets the individual’s eye during a normal day. Marketing is a concept that refers to the process by which a company creates value for its customers so it can capture value from those customers in return (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 5). The American Marketing Association defines it as “The activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, n.d.a). The famous management consultant Drucker (1961, p. 31) wrote “Marketing is not a specialized activity at all. It encompasses the entire business. It is the whole business seen from the point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer’s point of view”. He emphasized that marketing is all about the customer. If there is no customer, there is no production.

3.1 The marketing process

The marketing process can be explained with a simple five-step model, see figure 2. The goal of the process is to create superior value for customers so the company can in return capture value from them. Throughout the first four steps of the model, the company works to understand its customers and their needs and wants, create customer value, and build relationships. If these steps are followed and executed successfully it can move on to step five and reap the rewards of creating customer value (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 5).

![Figure 2. The marketing process (Created by author, based on Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 5)](image)

The first step requires marketers to understand the marketplace they operate in, as well as the needs and wants of their customers. This knowledge is the core of the marketing process and ultimately the key to a company’s success (Þórdur Sverrisson,
This step involves analyzing the market environment, both the microenvironment as well as the macroenvironment. In addition, marketers conduct marketing research to gain vital customer insight, including customer behavior and their decision-making process. Customers are satisfied through various market offerings, such as products, services, and other entities (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 6).

Once fully understood, marketers move on to step two where a customer-driven marketing strategy is designed. The task in step two is to choose the desired target market; those the company decides to serve and build profitable relationships with. It is near impossible for it to serve everyone so it selects those individuals it can serve with excellence. The marketing strategy also requires choosing a value proposition that states how the company will serve its target market. This involves differentiating and positioning the company’s products and services by promising to deliver values that satisfy the customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 8-9). A company can’t gain a legitimate competitive advantage without differentiating itself from others competing in the same market (Þórður Sverrisson, 2013, p. 41).

When the customer-driven marketing strategy has been outlined, marketers move on to step three. There, an integrated marketing program is developed that delivers the values to the target market decided in step two. This step essentially involves transforming the strategy into action. The set of marketing tools used to implement the strategy is called a company’s marketing mix. The marketing mix consists of the four P’s: Product, price, place, and promotion. In this step marketers start branding their products to emphasize the differentiation and positioning. It is important to understand that marketing and branding are two different, yet interacting concepts. Branding is a strategy while marketing encompasses tactical goals. Branding represents a message that showcases a product’s identity, image, attributes, and associations. Marketing refers to all tools utilized to deliver that message (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 12).

When the implementation is in place, marketers turn their heads to step four, building profitable customer relationships. These relationships are the building blocks in reaching the goal of value exchanging seen in step five. To do this, customer relationship management (CRM) is established. CRM refers to a process in which
relationships are built and maintained by making sure that superior value is being delivered (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 12).

All the steps in the five-step model are greatly important. A company can’t provide and deliver superior value unless it fully understands its marketplace and customers, outlines a well thought out customer-driven marketing strategy, and does a superb job implementing it (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 12).
4 Branding

In this chapter, the history of brands will be traced and several definitions of the concept will be identified. Furthermore, a guide on how to build a brand is presented. Finally, brand equity will be explained.

4.1 History and definitions

Brands have existed for centuries. The history of branding can be traced back to ancient Egypt where brick makers marked their bricks with a symbol for identification. In addition, trade guilds in Europe required these marks on products to assure customers of quality, as well as to afford the producer legal protection in an exclusive market. The ideology of brand names appeared later or in the early 16th century. At the time, whiskey distillers labeled their barrels with the producer’s name. By doing this the brand became visible to the customer. It also prevented producers of cheap whiskey from selling it as quality whiskey (Farquhar, 1989, p. 24).

The brand concept and purpose of branding has evolved tremendously over the years. It went from focusing solely on a product, to using the brand to enhance the product’s perceived value through associations. In harmony with these developments, brand strategies have also changed (Farquhar, 1989, p. 24).

It is quite a common mistake to confound the concepts of a product and a brand. It is important to distinguish between the two. A product is anything that can be offered to a market and might satisfy the needs or wants of customers. This does not only apply to tangible goods, but also intangibles such as a service, event or even an idea. A brand is much more than a product because it has elements that differentiate it from other products that are produced to satisfy the same needs or wants (Keller, 2013, p. 31). To put this in perspective, a computer is a product, but an Apple computer is a brand. There are numerous definitions of a brand including the following four:

➢ “A brand represents everything that a product or service means to consumers” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 243).
➢ “[A brand is] a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (AMA, n.d.b).

➢ “A brand is a perception or emotion, maintained by a buyer or a prospective buyer, describing the experience related to doing business with an organization or consuming its products or services” (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 4).

➢ “[A brand is] far more than a name and logo, it is an organization’s promise to a customer to deliver what the brand stands for not only in terms of functional benefits but also emotional, self-expressive, and social benefits. But a brand is more than delivering on a promise. It is also a journey, an evolving relationship based on the perceptions and experiences that a customer has every time he or she connects to the brand” (Aaker, 2014, p. 1).

A company creates perceived differences among products through branding. By doing so, it is creating value for customers that in return translates to financial profits for it. A brand is therefore beneficial for both parties, the company and the customer (Keller, 2013, p. 31).

4.2 Building a brand

In the late 1980’s a concept emerged that transformed the practice of marketing. It altered perceptions of brand management and radically changed the studies. This was the concept of brands as assets. The idea was indeed that strong brands are assets, have equity, and that they drive business strategy and performance (Aaker, 2014, p. 7).

Building a strong brand has several significant benefits for a company. It offers legal protection for unique features and aspects of a product, it signals a certain level of product quality, and it stimulates customer loyalty providing the security of sustained future revenues. A strong brand is also of value to customers. It can alter perceptions and experiences with a product, it signals product characteristics, it simplifies the decision-making process, and it reduces many different types of risks that occur when customers buy and consume a product (Keller, 2013, p. 34-36).
4.2.1 Identity, image and personality
A new brand will develop an identity, image, and personality, often referred to as the building blocks in a brand’s foundation. These elements are not all created in one setting; they are hierarchical and gradually form over time (Johansson & Carlson, 2015, p. 6-7). Brand identity concerns everything a brand is, says, does, and shows. The identity should be clear and unique, while combining the physical, social, and mental components of a brand. It covers many aspects including a brand’s name, logo, age, nation, and product or service category (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 111).

Brand image is the impression that the public has of a brand. It is shaped by all information and knowledge that has compiled in the minds of customers in relation to a brand. Essentially, the image is how the public and customers perceive a brand. Therefore, unlike the brand identity, which is based on facts and can be controlled by brand managers, the image is determined by the outside world. Managers will however try to affect the image by providing certain cues through advertising and marketing communication which will in a way unconsciously affect the public’s perception (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 241-242).

Brand personality emerges from all customer’s interactions with a brand and is based on their experience. Being the last building block, brand personality goes further than the identity and image in two ways. First, the personality is the subset of image associations that are characteristics. Second, the personality is affected by the personality traits of the typical brand customer. In fact, a research has shown that like human beings, a brand personality consists of five major traits: Sincerity, excitement, distinction, competence, and ruggedness (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 236; Johansson & Carlson, 2015, p. 9).

When the identity, image, and personality have been formed the brand’s foundation is set. It is important that all the elements are solid because a direct link can be found between the building blocks and a brand’s strength. The strength is dependent on the integration between the three (Johansson & Carlson, 2015, p. 81).

4.2.2 Name, logo and slogan
A new brand needs a suitable name that evokes the desired associations about the brand identity, image, and personality. Choosing the right name can be a challenge and
the availability of names is the number one problem. Due to this a unique name is a necessity. In addition, it should be easy to hear, spell, pronounce, understand, and remember. Finally, it is important that the name is legal in all potential markets and it should be screened for multilingual suitability (Trout & Rivkin, 1996, p. 111-119).

Logos are meant to give a visual representation of a brand. The logo design has no limits although it should be unique to distinguish it from other logos and thereby prevent confusion. Some logos are stylized lettering of a brand’s name, for example Coca Cola, while others are simply an image related, or completely unrelated, to the name, for example Apple. In either case, the logo should be cautiously designed because in many purchase situations a brand’s primary effect comes from the logo. A slogan is a short and memorable one-liner used to further communicate the brand to customers (Johansson & Carlson, 2015, p. 87-89).

4.2.3 Brand equity

Strong and powerful brands are those that have managed to build up brand equity (Aaker, 2014, p. 10). Brand equity has through the years been defined in different ways for different purposes, and no common viewpoint on how to define or measure it has emerged among scholars in the field (Keller, 2013, p. 57). A widely-recognized approach to brand equity is a model created by Aaker (1991, p. 15). He defined brand equity as “A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm/or to that firm’s customers”. According to Aaker’s model, the basis of brand equity can be grouped into five categories, see figure 3.

![Figure 3. Aaker’s model on brand equity (Created by author, based on Aaker, 1991, p. 15)]
4.2.3.1    Brand awareness

Brand awareness is how easily and how often a brand is evoked by customers under various situations; to what extent is the brand top of mind. Awareness provides a brand with a sense of familiarity, giving customers the ability to recall and recognize it. This ultimately results in them believing that the brand is reliable and of good quality (Aaker, 1991, p. 16; Keller, 2013, p. 108). The depth of awareness amongst customers measures how likely it is for a brand to come to mind, while the breadth of awareness measures the range of usage and purchase situations in which it comes to mind (Keller, 2013, p. 108).

4.2.3.2    Brand associations

Brand associations are everything that is linked to a brand such as its personality and customer’s feelings towards it. Associations are critical factors in differentiating and positioning a brand (Aaker, 1991, p. 17). Marketers can create favorable associations by convincing customers that a brand possesses attributes that can satisfy their needs. Not all associations are equally important to customers and they will not view all of them as favorable, or even value them at all. The importance of each association can also vary between situations; it can be valued in one situation, but not another. Brand associations can be situation-dependent or context-dependent and they vary according to what customers are trying to achieve with the brand’s purchase and consumption (Keller, 2013, p. 78).

4.2.3.3    Perceived quality

Perceived quality is how customers perceive a brand’s overall quality. A brand’s quality is closely linked to its differentiation and positioning, and provides customers a reason to buy it. Perceived quality can also attract channel member’s interest, grant easier brand extension, and support a higher price (Aaker, 1991, p. 17).

4.2.3.4    Other proprietary brand assets

Other brand proprietary brand assets are assets that can provide the brand with strong competitive advantage such as patents, trademark, and channel relationships (Aaker, 1991, p. 19).
4.2.3.5 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is characterized by the intensity customers have with a brand, as well as their level of activity. Loyalty can be divided into four categories: Behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community, and active engagement. Behavioral loyalty is the most common one and refers to customers’ repeated purchases. Attitudinal attachments are customers’ strong, personal, and positive feelings towards a brand. Sense of community takes on the broad meaning of customers conveying a sense of community with other people associated with a brand. Finally, active engagement occurs when customers go “all in” and are willing to invest their time, money, or any other resources in a brand beyond those spent during purchase or consumption (Keller, 2013, p. 120-121). Brand loyalty is important for a company. Not only does it reduce marketing cost, but it also leverages trade because keeping existing customers is cheaper than attracting new ones (Aaker, 1991, p. 18).
5 Personal branding

In this chapter, the history of personal branding will be traced and several definitions of the concept will be identified. A demonstration on how to build a personal brand will be presented, as well as how to communicate and maintain it. Then, personal branding in relation to career development will be discussed. Finally, a leadership brand is introduced with a special emphasis on female leaders.

5.1 History and definitions

The history of personal branding can be traced back to an article written by Tom Peters in 1997. In this article, Peters wrote: “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. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc.” (Peters, 1997). Some might think that personal branding sounds odd, but the truth is that nearly anything can become a brand, including services, retailers, organizations, sports, arts, events, destinations, ideas, and of course people (Keller, 2013, p. 37-48). A few definitions of a personal brand are:

- “A clear, powerful, compelling public image – that’s the very definition of a personal brand” (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009, p. 4).

- “Personal branding describes the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition, whether professional or personal, and then leverage it across platforms with a consistent message and image to achieve a specific goal. In this way, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establish reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence” (Schawbel, 2014, p. 18-19).
“[A personal brand] is a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you” (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 4).

A personal brand represents who the individual truly is and he expresses it in everything he says and everything he does. It is essential to take note that an individual’s brand is based on how other people perceive him and their relationship with him. In fact, all these perceptions reflect a personal equivalent of the same brand relationships marketers strive for in the marketing process (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 5-6).

5.2 Building a personal brand

Building a personal brand is a lot more than just a weekend project (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 11). It is a challenging, ongoing process that requires dedication because once the decision of building it has been made there is no turning back. From that moment on, everything said and done in an individual’s professional and even private life, will affect his brand (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009, p. 14). According to Peters (1997) there is actually no one right way to build a personal brand and there is no single path that ensures it will succeed. Therefore, numerous ways exist to go about when building it. However, it is crucial that the brand answers two questions. On the one hand “Who are you as a person?” and on the other hand “What do you specialize in doing?” (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009, p. 4).

The primary benefit of building a personal brand is that an individual is enabled to be completely himself. He can use his qualities and strengths to the fullest, while living by his own values. He gets acknowledged and receives credit for being his true self. This results in him feeling a whole lot better about life in general (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 12).

5.2.1 Authenticity

Above all else, a personal brand needs to be authentic. The brand is meant to showcase who the individual truly is and what he stands for (Schawbel, 2014, p. 17-21). The brand should emerge from an individual’s identity and represent his values, personality, and strengths, and emphasize the qualities that make him unique. Authenticity is the soul of
a personal brand. It encompasses an individual’s dream, vision, mission, and key roles. By being authentic, the strongest characteristics and attributes automatically shine through and it attracts an audience that relates to the brand (Rampersad, 2009, p. 16-19). In the simplest matter, an individual should not try to maintain a deception, but rather be genuine and stay true to himself (Schawbel, 2014, p. 17-21).

5.2.2 Target audience
Just as a branded product needs a target market, a personal brand requires a target audience (Kaputa, 2006, p. 3). The target audience may be defined as anyone who engages with the brand. It may be individuals, for example a boss, or groups, for example work colleagues (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 415). Despite personal brand being a perception maintained in someone else’s mind, it is vital to acknowledge that appealing to everyone is near impossible. The focus must be on a certain group of people that one wants to build relationships with. As the brand grows that group gets increasingly larger and the audience’s needs and wants might change. Therefore, the ongoing process of audience analysis is vital for the brand to stay relevant (Schawbel, 2014, p. 126). In fact, regardless of how powerful a brand is, if it isn’t linked to the right audience, it is unlikely that it will survive or succeed (Schawbel, 2014, p. 165).

5.2.3 Differentiation
It was Godin (2003, p. 2) who said that everything built needs to be like a purple cow; something unique, interesting, and remarkable. Like a traditional brand, a personal brand needs differentiation. Being different from others is powerful. There are many people competing with each other in this world so standing out from the crowd is a necessity (Kaputa, 2006, p. 15-16). Trout and Rivkin (2000, p. 67) created a four-step process to differentiation, see figure 4.

![Figure 4. The differentiation process](Created by author, based on Trout & Rivkin, 2000, p. 67-69)

The first step requires an individual to make sense in the context. He and his message of value must be relevant to the target audience. It involves finding out the
perceptual strengths and weaknesses of oneself and the competitors in the minds of the target audience. The objective is to see how the message is being received and if it is really a good fit. Finding the differentiating idea means finding something that separates the individual from his competitors (Trout & Rivkin, 2000, p. 67). This requires identifying the strengths, qualities, or characteristics that are distinctive from those of others using a personal SWOT analysis. It is asking the question “What is my greatest strength?” (Peters, 1997). To build a logical argument for a difference, one must have the credentials to support it, make it real, and believable. It is simply not enough to state the differentiating idea, one must proof it. Claiming to be an excellent problem solver is a long way from showing it through hands-on, on-the-field problem solving. The final step in the four-step process is communicating the difference; making people aware of it. Every aspect of communicating a personal brand should reflect this difference and an important thing to remember is that overcommunicating a difference isn’t possible (Trout & Rivkin, 2000, p. 68-69).

5.2.3.1 Positioning

The core purpose of differentiation is positioning. In the second step of the marketing process, when designing the customer-driven marketing strategy, marketers strive for differentiation based on a product’s strength and uniqueness. By doing this, the product gains a special place in the minds of customers; it has a specific position in their minds (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 8-9). Personal branding uses the same technique. A personal brand is essentially based on other people’s perceptions and what an individual does when building his brand is affecting these perceptions by differentiating and positioning himself in the minds of others (Trout & Rivkin, 2000, p. 73). Creating a brand’s position is designing the brand so it holds a distinct place in the mind of the target audience. It clarifies who the personal brand is for, what is has in common with other brands, and most importantly how it is different and unique. This requires determining the target audience, main competitors, points-of-parity (POPs) and points-of-difference (PODs). Identifying the target audience often defines the nature of the competition because others have also decided to target that same group of people. An individual should make sure he is not defining the competition too narrowly, as it can
lead to failure of recognizing the most compelling threats and opportunities in his environment (Keller, 2013, p. 81-82).

POPs are associations that a personal brand shares with other brands. POPs are easier to achieve than PODs, but they are only achieved when enough people think that the individual is competent on a particular dimension, for example in communication. PODs are associations and benefits unique to an individual and are not found among others. PODs are important as the target audience values those highly and actual brand choices often depend on this uniqueness (Keller, 2013, p. 82-84).

5.2.3.2 **Personal SWOT analysis**

The personal SWOT analysis is an intensive look at the individual’s strengths and weaknesses, along with those opportunities and threats that stand before him. It is a deep self-examination where the aim is to maximize the strengths and reduce the weaknesses, zero in on opportunities and stabilizing threats. For the personal brand to stay relevant to its target audience, a periodic SWOT analysis is recommended (Kaputa, 2006, p. 22).

The first two parts of the analysis, strengths and weaknesses, focus on the individual himself. The strengths are an asset that should be built on. There is no limit on what can be considered as a strength, whether it is a certain skill, experience, or accomplishments. Personality traits can also be a strength, for example being positive. Weaknesses are areas that are not outstanding and should be avoided. However, knowing one’s weaknesses is just as important as knowing the strengths, as some weaknesses should be improved and developed (Kaputa, 2006, p. 22).

The second part of the analysis, opportunities and threats, concentrates on things that could affect the individual in the future. Living in an ever-changing world, new opportunities and threats are created every day (Kaputa, 2006, p. 22). It is vital to keep tabs on these changes because to progress and gain new skills one needs the opportunity to do so. Threats are anything that can make a personal brand irrelevant or outdated. They come in all shapes and sizes; some can be avoided, while others need to be faced. By building on the strengths, developing the weaknesses, and seizing the opportunities, threats can be anticipated and as a result negated (Schawbel, 2014, p. 218).
5.3 Communicating a personal brand
Nothing is more important than communication. With communication, anything is possible. Without it, nothing is possible (Ries & Trout, 2001, p. 66). A key part in communicating a personal brand is visibility; displaying one’s value and uniqueness to the target audience. It is evident that if no one has heard of the individual his brand will too go unnoticed (Schawbel, 2014, p. 32-33). It doesn’t matter how unique and powerful a brand is, if it isn’t communicated in good manner it won’t succeed. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, visibility is the single factor that explains the difference between a skilled employee and one who earns millions and appears at events inside and outside of the workplace (Rein, Kotler, Hamlin, Stoller, 2006, p. 6). Keep in mind that all visibility matters. Everything that an individual does, and everything he chooses not to do, communicates the value and character of his brand (Peters, 1997). According to Kaputa (2006, p. 51) it is impossible to have a powerful personal brand without visibility. Marketers strive for their brand’s visibility because it leads to brand awareness, one of Aaker’s (1991, p. 15) categories of brand equity. The same goes for a personal brand; by being visible, the brand becomes top of mind.

5.3.1 Online and offline networking
A powerful personal brand communicates online and offline and has a strong presence on both platforms. An online brand presence is a digital presentation of the individual on the Internet. Communicating online is necessary in today’s world driven by technology. There are countless online venues one can take advantage of for promotion, including blogs, podcasts, and professional networking sites like LinkedIn. In addition to these, social networking sites have become a vital part of the online presence. In fact, if an individual isn’t active on social networking sites, he is at a competitive disadvantage and in danger of being out of the loop. It is important to consider which sites are relevant and can best promote the personal brand. The more online networks joined, the more maintenance it requires as each profile needs to be current and up to date. One should also keep in mind that when a brand goes online, it can be found just about anywhere, by anyone, and at any time (Schawbel, 2014, p. 276-304).
It is relatively easy for an individual to represent himself online. The real task is doing it offline, in person. As with online networking sites, there are lots of venues and events to make an offline presence. These can be events such as special interest groups, conventions, and professional organizations. One should always be on the lookout for events and make an appearance on those that match with the personal brand. These venues provide the individual an opportunity to network and promote his brand (Schawbel, 2014, p. 305-306).

It is important that a brand’s online and offline presence are in sync. Creating a false expectation online results in others being disappointed when interacting with the offline brand. This shows yet again that being authentic and true to oneself on all platforms is the only way for a personal brand to succeed (Schawbel, 2014, p. 310-311).

### 5.4 Maintaining a personal brand

A personal brand is a representation of who an individual truly is. As he progresses through life, grows, matures, and develops, so will his brand. It is important that a brand is redefined based on new passions and discoveries. Maintaining a personal brand entails performing routine maintenance where all accessible information on the brand is revised and updated. A brand maintenance is necessary. However, when updating it one should be aware that the brand’s reputation is on the line and through major changes it is easy to lose face (Schawbel, 2014, p. 343).

The major purpose of a personal brand maintenance is staying relevant to the target audience. Without relevancy, it will not survive nor achieve success. A good approach to relevancy is constantly striving to gain new skills. Ideally, one should work towards acquiring all the different skills and techniques that match the requirements of a possible career position (Schawbel, 2014, p. 343).

Consistency is a hallmark of all strong brands. This means doing things again and again and again; establishing dependability of behavior. If the target audience experiences consistent, trustworthy behavior from the individual, they will over time learn that they can indeed trust him. They come to believe that they can count on him to behave in a similar way again. Every time an individual behaves in a way expected by the target audience, his brand automatically strengthens and trust between them grows (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 17-18). Having a consistent personal brand requires hard
work and dedication, and it is certainly not easy. However, if an individual manages to build a personal brand that relates to his target audience and he is consistent in his behavior, endless opportunities for success will open up (Schawbel, 2014, p. 311).

### 5.5 Career development and success

It has always been beneficial to distinguish oneself, but now it is no longer an option but a necessity. Personal branding rules the new world of work and building, communicating, and maintaining a personal brand is a great tool for career development and career success (Kaputa, 2016, p. 33). However, a career success can’t be conceptualized. A career means gathering new skills, gaining new expertise, and developing new capabilities. This is not a standardized process and it varies between individuals (Peters, 1997). Success is also not something that the world can define and make it fit for everyone. It is essentially how an individual defines it in his vision and dreams; how he pursues his dreams and fulfills them (Rampersad, 2009, p. 31). What can be agreed on is that the single most important ingredient in a career development and an individual’s success, is his ability to maximize his strengths and uniqueness through personal branding (Kaputa, 2016, p. 33).

Think of the concepts of a brand and a product. A branded product is viewed as better than its generic counterpart of an unbranded product. It is perceived as higher in quality and generates more demand. The same goes for a branded person and an unbranded one (Kaputa, 2016, p. 51-52). Think of an individual who does brand himself and one who doesn’t. Both are up for promotion, but there’s only one position available. It goes without saying that the position is offered to the one who’s fully aware of his strengths and weaknesses, is always gathering new skills through various projects, is highly visible within the company, and is networking excessively; the one who brands himself (Kasprzak, 2014, p. 15).

### 5.6 Leadership brand

By building a strong personal brand, an individual can establish himself as a natural leader. When doing so, a great method is to apply the five P’s model to the brand. This model is rooted in the classic four P’s of a marketing mix: Product, price, place, and promotion, that the best companies have employed for decades to remain market
leaders. The five P’s model enables an individual to build a powerful brand for himself as an exceptional leader. The five P’s are persona, product, packaging, promotion, and permission, see figure 5 (Hodgkinson, 2005, p. preface).

![Figure 5. Leadership brand (Created by author, based on Hodgkinson, 2005, p. preface)](image)

 Persona is the emotional connection and reaction that an individual evokes among his target audience with his personal energy and style. It is how vision, values, attitudes, and behavior affects the audience, the general public, and their perceptions. To succeed, it is important to modulate the style, though without losing authenticity, to ensure positive feedback from these parties. Product is the sum of all qualifications, experience, expertise, skills, ideas, and other entities that an individual has delivered over time. Packaging is the wrapping around the product, including personal appearances and tangible surroundings, such as an individual’s home, work office, and car. It also refers to how he presents his skills and ideas in reports and other written material. Promotion is how the target audience is informed about the individual’s values and impact; how he communicates his message of differentiation and uniqueness. Permission is the individual’s sense of validity; his internal confidence and belief that he has valuable contributions to make (Hodgkinson, 2005, p. preface).

5.6.1 Female leaders – women in management positions
According to Statistic Iceland (2015a) women are nearly half the labor force in Iceland or 47.7%, but as seen in table 1 only account for 21.9% of all managers (2015b). This
means that men hold 78.1% of all manager positions in the country. When examining chairman positions, women account for a slightly larger portion or 24.1%. When board of directors are considered, women account for 25.9%. In all the positions, most women are 25 years old or younger.

Table 1. Management positions in Iceland 2015 by gender and age (Statistics Iceland, 2015b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years and younger</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 years and older</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairmen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years and younger</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 years and older</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years and younger</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 years and older</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics from United States of America tell a slightly better story. Women are also nearly half of the labor force or 46.8%, and they are just over a third or 39.2% of all managers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Why women account for such a small share of management positions across the globe is a question not so easily answered. Hundreds of research papers exist on this topic and several viewpoints have been examined, including men’s and women’s perspective on the matter. Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) were among the first to introduce the concept of a glass ceiling. An article they wrote stated that those women who managed to rise steadily up the corporate ladder, eventually crashed into an invisible barrier; the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling is “viewed as a natural consequence of gender stereotypes and the expectations they produce about what women are like and how they should behave”. Years later, this phenomenon still existed. Heilman (2001, p. 657-674) proposed that the scarcity of women in management positions is based on gender bias in evaluations. She stated that stereotypes and the expectations they produce about women affect how women in
business are perceived. Being competent did not ensure that a woman would advance to the same organizational level as an equivalent man. A research by Elsesser & Lever (2011, p. 1555-1578) on gender bias showed that a cross-sex bias existed in the corporate workplace. Men judged their female bosses more favorably and women judged their male bosses more favorably. Another research by Sonja Sófusdóttir (2016) examined men’s perceptive on why women account for such a small portion of all managers in Iceland. The findings revealed that they believe they have better access to management positions than women. This is partly due their excessive networking inside and outside of their company. Another reason mentioned was that women often lack confidence and self-belief, and neither make themselves visible nor display interest in the positions. This same research showed that men don’t have prejudice against female leaders.
6 Research

In this chapter, the research conducted by the author will be explained in detail. The research method used is presented and the participants introduced. The data collection phase will be described, as well as how the data was analyzed. Finally, common research limitations are discussed.

6.1 Research method

The research method applied is called a mixed method, where the two major research methods of social science, qualitative and quantitative, are combined (Flick, 2015, p. 216-217). The mixed method research is ideal for this thesis because it gives several perspectives on what is being studied. The author wanted to get perspectives from women in management positions, as well as receiving the public’s point of view. The two major methods can be combined in several ways, but a triangulation design was used for this research. The purpose is to “obtain the different but complementary data on the same topic”. Such design is used to bring together the differing strengths and overlapping weaknesses of the two methods, and where both methods have equal weight. The methods are implemented during the same timeframe, not sequentially. By using the triangulation design the researcher can directly compare the quantitative data with the qualitative data. The findings are usually first presented separately and then emerged for interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 62-64).

A qualitative research means collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what participants say and do. Only a few participants are selected purposively and they are analyzed extensively. The research is not standardized, but rather free form and designed to be open ended. The aim of a qualitative research is to get the participants’ point of view and gain a deeper understanding of the subject. It is less about testing what is known, but rather to discover new aspects in the situation (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 146; Flick, 2015, p. 11). In the qualitative research for this thesis, interviews were conducted. The reason is that semi-structured, in-depth interviews provide information that help the author to understand the participants’ opinions and the reasons for them.
Interviews have both their advantages and disadvantages. The researcher has the option of asking additional questions based on the participants’ answers. This generates a further discussion which can lead to deeper, richer responses. However, as the interviews become more “flowing” there is less structure in the process. This requires the researcher to be trained to ask probing questions as the interviews continue (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 158).

A quantitative research is a research that involves posing structured questions with a predetermined response option to many participants. These participants are referred to as the research sample and are a sizable piece of the population. The purpose of the research is specific and it is clear what exact information is needed. The data format and sources are well defined and the data gathering process is largely numerical. The aim of a quantitative research is to make the sample represent the population (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 146; Flick, 2015, p. 9). Surveys are a type of quantitative method. In this thesis, an Internet questionnaire survey was used due to its nature of being convenient and inexpensive. In addition, such a questionnaire provides standardization and responses are easily analyzed. However, there is always skepticism about the anonymity; are the participants truly who they claim to be (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 191; Flick, 2015, p. 201).

6.2 Participants

A purposive sample was used in the qualitative research. A purposive sample requires a judgement as to who can best give answers to the research question; the researcher chooses those types of individuals he feels best constitute the sample (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 256). The author reached out to three high-level women (see appendix I) who all agreed to participate. Giving their career and good reputation, these women were believed to be excellent representatives. They will remain anonymous and will only be referred to by their title. The first woman is a highly successful businesswoman who currently serves as a manager in a company she co-founded 10 years ago, as well as being the manager for its subsidiary. Through the years, she has served in several high-level positions, along with being a politician and an author. In addition, she has been a board of directors member for many Icelandic professional organizations.

The second woman is a CEO for one of the largest company in Iceland and has served in the position for 20 years. When promoted to CEO from manager, she became a
pioneer for women in management. She started working at a young age, taking on various positions related to her education, as well as being a teacher for a few years. This woman has extensive board experience, serving as a board of directors member for countless organizations. Still today, she serves for some of these organizations.

The third and final woman is a local manager, and has been for a year, for a large Icelandic company. She served for four years within the company before being promoted to local manager. Previous job experience includes positions related to sales and marketing at well-known companies, as well as other management positions. This woman has been very active in various non-profit organizations and social interest groups, serving as a chairman for one of them. In addition, she founded a professional organization, where the focus is on women in the industry she works in.

The participants in the quantitative research were not chosen specifically by the author. The Internet questionnaire was published and anyone willing to participate could do so. Total number of participants were 481, but 479 gave significant answers used for the analysis.

6.3 Data collection

The interviews took place between March 15th, 2017 and April 24th, 2017. The interviews were structured with 24 open-ended questions (see appendix II). These questions were chosen carefully as each of them contributed vital information needed to answer the two research questions. Despite the structured interviews the author knew that different answers would perhaps result in further questioning and discussion. All three women were emailed the questionnaire beforehand, giving them the opportunity to prepare. Two of the interviews took place face-to-face at the women’s workplace and one was conducted through a phone. The interviews ranged from 23 to 57 minutes and all of them were recorded to simplify the analysis process.

The Internet questionnaire (see appendix III) was published via Google Forms on April 5th, 2017 and was closed 20 days later on April 25th, 2017. It was distributed using the social media Facebook and an email was sent to all undergraduate students at the University of Iceland. The questionnaire was composed of nine questions all with predetermined response option. Three of the nine questions were background questions that provide information about the participants. The five remaining questions
all contributed to answering the research questions. Participants were not obligated to answer all questions and were able to exit the questionnaire at any time.

6.4 Data analysis
Following the procedure of Creswell’s and Clark’s (2007, p. 62-64) triangulation research design, the data collected was analyzed separately. A thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data. The author listened to all the interviews three times in search for a theme or a pattern across the data. Four distinctive themes were identified and they used as categories for the analysis. To analyze the quantitative data the statistical computer program Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used. When sorting through the data, the author decided on one rule: A participant needed to answer at least five out of the nine questions. This left 479 significant answers. All answers were coded and then uploaded to SPSS. The program provided descriptive statistics, including frequency and crosstabs that revealed relationships between different variables.

6.5 Research limitations
There are several data collection issues that can occur during a research and affect the data quality and findings. These issues can be divided into two groups: Sampling errors and non-sampling errors. Sampling errors refer to all errors related to the sample plan and sample size. Non-sampling errors however, are all those unrelated to the sample. These errors include all types of nonresponse errors, data gathering errors, data handling errors, data analyzing errors, and interpretation errors. Errors that occur during the data gathering can lie with both the researcher and participants, and can be either intentional or unintentional. The most common error with the researcher is leading the participants by trying to influence their answers through wording, voice inflection, or body language. The researcher can also unintentionally affect the participants with his characteristics such as accent, gender, and looks. Common errors with participants are intentionally giving false answers or refusing to answer. In addition, they can easily start guessing, lose interest, and get distracted. Finally, it is worth noting that people are different from one another. Quality issues can occur even though neither party notices it, such as through misunderstanding and misinterpretation among them (Burns & Bush, 2014, p. 292-297).
7 Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the qualitative and the quantitative data analysis are presented. This includes themes discovered in the three interviews and statistics from the Internet questionnaire.

7.1 Qualitative data

A thematic analysis allowed the author to examine and record patterns in the qualitative data collected. These patterns are referred to as themes, and they provide information useful to answering the two research questions. Four themes were identified in the three interviews: Authenticity, people, visibility, and gender bias. The themes are very closely linked and interact with each other. In some cases, certain findings matched with two or more themes, but those findings were categorized with the one that best explained them.

7.1.1 Authenticity

The three women were asked if they thought of themselves as a brand. Only one of them, the manager, did so and had been doing it for about 10 years. The businesswoman and the CEO said that despite not thinking in terms of personal branding, their emphasis was on being themselves. They don’t put on a mask or step into another character when they arrive to work. The CEO said:

I would never function in Hollywood, I can’t act. You just have to be yourself. I think being yourself is the only thing that is normal and will work in the long run. If you try to put on a look or act in a way that isn’t really you, everyone will notice.

All three women were aware that their actions in their private and professional life affected people’s perceptions of them. Despite this, the businesswoman said that overthinking it is a huge risk:

When an individual’s image in the minds of others is becoming dominant in everything that he does and says, and even in all his decision making, the personal brand is getting to excessive.
All three women mentioned authenticity at some point during the interview, whether it was something that characterizes a good manager, how one can communicate a personal brand, or how one can develop one’s career. It is evident from the interviews that an individual doesn’t get any far if he isn’t true to himself. Despite knowing that all his actions affect the way people perceive him, it is important that he doesn’t lose face and tries to act in a way that isn’t him just to try to please everyone.

7.1.2 People
All three women talked about the manager’s job in terms of people; how important it is to be aware of the people surrounding them. The businesswoman said that she thought of a manager’s job as a service job; she is serving the needs of other people. A manager must listen to his employees, consider their needs, and provide guidance. When asked what characterizes a good manager, all three women mentioned that it requires one to be a leader for the people. The CEO said:

Be more of a leader than a manager. I feel like a manager should mark the way for his people. A manager should not be on people’s shoulders; I’m not breathing down people’s neck. I want my employees to be able to do their own stuff ... I want them to have a certain freedom in their work. This way we use their education and specialization in the best way possible.

The businesswoman emphasized that a good manager is the one who strives for his people’s success. He is not focused on himself, but on those around him. The manager agreed: “A large company like this one would never succeed if the people within it weren’t succeeding in their own work and their individual projects”.

7.1.3 Visibility
When asked how individuals can communicate their strengths, a common word in the interviews was visibility. All agreed that one must be unafraid to participate in various activities within a company, including speaking up in meetings and having opinions on matters being discussed. In addition, the businesswoman said that it is vital to show that one cares about the work being done: “It is more than just to show up for the paycheck”. The CEO said that her goal at the time wasn’t to be promoted to CEO, she was just doing her job and doing it well:
I cared about what was happening in the company ... I wasn’t afraid to take on challenges and new projects ... I was able to show my strengths by exploring unbeaten paths and take responsibility for it, and it caught the owner’s attention.

The manager emphasized the importance of networking and interaction with coworkers to increase visibility. She said: “I always come back to the point of networking. If you’re going to grow in your career, or do any kind of career development in your work environment, you need to make sure that you are visible”. She added that being visible is more than just to show up:

When people approach you, it is important [to act on it]. I have for example been asked to do interviews and participate in events, and I often wonder if I’m really the best person to do it. You are not supposed to think like this, you should rather take the opportunity and say yes ... By doing it you make yourself not only visible, but you show that you can take on [responsibilities].

According to the three women, it goes without saying that an individual doesn’t succeed if he doesn’t communicate his strengths and uniqueness. He must be visible; express himself and make sure people know who he is, and that he is capable of great things.

7.1.4 Gender bias

When asked if they thought gender inequality existed in the corporate workplace, all women replied without hesitation that indeed it did. They also all believed that women must work harder than men to prove they can become leaders and serve in management positions. The CEO said:

I don’t think [gender inequality exists], I just know it does. It is completely crystal clear ... I realized it even before I graduated university that my degree was worth less than the same degree a boy next to me had. I had experienced it so many times before I entered the labor market [as a graduate] ... What helped me was already knowing that I wasn’t considered equivalent to men ... But I took those threats and turned them into opportunities to get ahead.

The businesswoman said that even though Iceland has come far in the battle for equal rights, there is still a long way to go. The CEO and the manager mentioned similar points regarding why gender bias against females exists. The CEO talked about a known theory that suggests that a manager hires people that he relates to, for example he
hires someone who shares a similar background or values. According to this theory, men relate more to other men and vice versa. As a result, as men account for a larger portion of all managers, more men are hired to serve in top management positions. This interacts with the manager’s point on the importance of networking. Men network a lot more than women so when it comes to hiring, they are more often chosen. She didn’t want to believe that lack of female managers was solely due to gender discrimination:

When you have two candidates and they have the same skill set, I’m going to allow myself to doubt that employers are looking at the gender of these candidates – rather, in the end, it’s more of a gut feeling which one of the two fits the job better.

The three women, who all serve in a top management position, had all experienced gender discrimination. It varied whether it was among co-workers, subordinates, or others outside the workplace that the company was doing business with. In all cases, this got better as time went by and trust was gained. The CEO said: “I don’t think it’s done on purpose and in a mean way; [people] are just not used to having to deal with a female manager”.

7.2 Quantitative data

The quantitative data collected was analyzed using the analytical program SPSS. Out of 481 participants, 479 gave significant answers. There were three background questions: Gender, age, and education.

478 participants answered the question regarding gender, see figure 6.

![Figure 6. Gender](image)

A clear majority of participants were women or 77%. Men accounted for 22.6% and 0.4% entitled themselves as neither a man nor a woman.
As with gender, 478 participants gave up their age, see figure 7.

![Figure 7. Age](image)

Most participants were 20-25 years old or 55.9%. 15.9% were 26-30 years old, 12.8% were 31-40 years old, 7.4% were 41-50 years old, 4.4% were 51-60 years old, 2.3% were older than 60 years old, and only 1.3% were younger than 20 years old. SPSS revealed that the average age of participants was between 26 and 30 years old.

Only 477 participants answered their highest level of education, see figure 8.

![Figure 8. Education](image)

Majority of participants or 62.3% had a college degree, 17.8% had an undergraduate degree, 10.7% had a graduate degree, 5.5% had finished elementary school, and 3.8% had finished industrial studies.
7.2.1 Have you heard of the concept personal brand?
Figure 9 shows if participants had heard of the concept personal brand.

![Pie chart showing 51.4% Yes and 48.6% No](image)

Figure 9. Have you heard of the concept personal brand?

All 479 participants answered the question. A small majority of 51.4% had heard of the concept while 48.6% said they had not. A crosstab in SPSS revealed that 48.9% of all female participants answered the question with a yes and 60.2% of all male participants.

7.2.2 Is personal branding important?
Figure 10 shows if participants believed personal branding was important in today’s corporate workplace.

![Pie chart showing 53.9% Yes, 37.7% No, and 8.4% I don’t know](image)

Figure 10. Is personal branding important?

Total of 477 participants answered the question. Majority didn’t know if personal branding was important in today’s corporate workplace or 53.9% and 8.4% said that it wasn’t. Just over a third or 37.7% claimed it was important. However, a crosstab in SPSS between the variables “Have you heard of the concept personal brand?” and “Do you
think personal branding is important in today’s corporate workplace?” revealed that 17.8% of those who believed it was important had never heard of the concept.

7.2.3 Do you think of yourself as a brand?
Figure 11 shows whether participants thought of themselves as a brand or not.

![Figure 11. Do you think of yourself as a brand?](image)

All 479 participants answered the question. Total of 75.2% did not think of themselves as a brand, 7.7% didn’t know, and 17.1% did so. A crosstab in SPSS between the variables “Do you think personal branding is important in today’s corporate workplace?” and “Do you think of yourself as a brand?” revealed that 91.3% of those who believed personal branding was important think of themselves as a brand.

7.2.4 Gender inequality
Figure 12 shows results from three questions related to gender inequality and gender bias in the corporate workplace. The questions were as follows: Is there gender inequality in the corporate workplace? Do men need to work harder than women to prove they can be leaders? Do women need to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders?
Out of 479 participants, 478 answered the question regarding inequality in the corporate workplace. Majority of participants or 75.1% believed that was the case, while 14.4% claimed there was not. 478 participants also answered if men need to work harder than women to prove they can be leaders. Near everyone or 93.3% claimed they did not, 4.8% didn’t know, and 1.9% thought they did. When asked if women had to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders, 789 participants answered. 81% believed they had to work harder, 14.2% said they did not, and 4.8% didn’t know.
8 Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the two research questions formulated:

➢ Is personal branding important in today’s corporate workplace?
➢ Do women need to work harder than men to prove they can be leaders?

When emerging findings from both the qualitative data and the quantitative data these questions can be answered. It can be assumed that personal branding is important and certainly a helpful tool when individuals are trying to establish themselves in the labor market, but it’s not necessarily a necessity as the literature states (Kaputa, 2016, p. 33). This is supported by the fact that only one of the three women thinks of herself as a brand, and even though 37.7% of the public believe personal branding is important, only 17.1% think of themselves as a brand. There was also some discrepancy in the quantitative data as some of those who believe personal branding is important have never heard of the concept. This is a typical non-sampling error where participants give an answer they think are expected of them. It shall be noted that even though two of the women don’t think of themselves as a brand, their interviews compliance the literature. Important aspects such as authenticity, people or target audience, visibility, networking, and career development were mentioned. This makes the author wonder if personal branding is too big to be conceptualized and if it sounds too theoretical to the average person. If the interview findings are compared to the existing literature on personal branding, it is indisputable that all three women are branding themselves, despite two of them denying it. It is all a near perfect match. What is lacking on their behalf is the extreme emphasis on being different from others. All agree that individuals must make their strengths visible in action, but no mention is on those strengths needing to be different from those of others.

The author believes it can be argued that everyone is branding themselves, it’s just a question whether their doing it consciously or not. In addition, there are undoubtedly many factors that affect whether an individual decides to brand himself or not. Someone who is already in a top management position, such as the CEO who assumed
her position around the time Peters (1997) first introduced personal branding, might not think it is necessary. Likewise, someone who is serving in a management position in his company, such as the businesswoman, might not think it is necessary. The author also believes that the size of the labor market matters. Icelanders are perhaps not branding themselves abundantly as the labor market is quite small resulting in lesser competition.

It is evident from all data collected that gender inequality does consist in the corporate workplace. All three women agree that despite improvements, Iceland still has a long way to go in the fight for equality. Gender bias against females still exists, as 81% of the public believes that women must work harder than men to prove they can be leaders. The three women have also all experienced gender discrimination in their management positions that was displayed in a lack of trust among co-workers, subordinates, or other business partners. These findings compliance previous studies on gender bias. Why gender bias against females still exists in corporate workplaces in Iceland, is a difficult question and it requires a research far greater than this thesis. However, the author strongly believes, as do the three women, that gender bias is based on gender stereotypes. Times have changed and the corporate workplace conditions now are very different from those of the past. It is no longer the norm for women to be staying home housewives; they are becoming increasingly larger portion of the labor force. It goes without saying that changes require adaption, and the process of adaption takes time and patience.
9 Final words

The author was extremely intrigued by the research findings. It was surprising to see how few people think of themselves as a brand. After reading existing literature on how personal branding has become a necessity in the corporate workplace, the author was expecting strong evidence supporting that claim. The findings were also eye-opening for the author and it was difficult to hear women in top management positions say that still today gender bias against females exists. It is incomprehensible, and almost repulsive, that in the year 2017 women still must work harder than men to prove themselves.

In hindsight, there are several issues that need to be addressed regarding both the quantitative research and the qualitative research. When doing a quantitative research, the sample chosen must best represent the population. There should be equal number of participants from each gender and age group. This was not the case as a clear majority of 77% were women. Participants aged 20-25 years old were also by far the largest group or 55.9%. In addition, all questions in the Internet questionnaire used the idiom “Do you think...?” when a better wording had been “Have you experienced...?” It is therefore not guaranteed that those who answered that inequality exists in the corporate workplace, have experienced it. It might just be their gut feeling, rather than actual knowledge. The qualitative research has similar problems. Even though the three interviews gave a deep understanding of the participants’ feelings and opinions, it is important to remember that it merely states their experience. It is not meant to represent the population. Had the author chosen any other three women it is not unlikely that the answers and findings had been somewhat different.

It is evident that there still exists room for further research on the subject of personal branding and gender bias in the corporate workplace, and this thesis can well be used as a starting point. Furthermore, the author hopes that this thesis can provide guidance on how one can build, communicate, and maintain a personal brand, and use it to one’s advantage. It is also his deepest wish that Iceland will continue in its fight for equal rights, as according to findings there is still a long way to go.
Bibliography


Kaputa, C. (2016). *Graduate to a new career: How smart students, new graduates, and young professional can launch brand you*. Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.


Appendix I – Interview inquiry

Sæl nafn,

Hilma Jónsdóttir heiti ég og er nemi í viðskiptafráði við Háskóla Íslands. Um þessar mundir er ég að vinna að lokaritgerð minni til BS-gráðu á sviði markaðsfráði og alþjóðavíðskipta. Ritgerðin snýr að persónulegu vörumerki (e. personal brand) í tengslum við konur í stjórnunarstöðum. Markmið ritgerðarinnar er því að rannsaka hvað konur í slíkum stöðum hafa tileinkað sér í þessum fræðum. Að sama skapi er unnið með þá tilgátu að það ríki ójafnrétt milli kynja á vinnumarkaði með tilliti til tækifæra til vaxtar í starfi.

Þar sem áhersla er á konur í stjórnunarstöðum var mér hugsað til þín. Þín reynsla og þínar skoðanir á viðfangsefninu væru ómetanlegt framlag til rannsóknarinnar. Hafir þú áhuga er um að ræða viðtal er varðar þitt persónulega vörumerki og hvað þú telur vera mikilvægt í uppbyggingu á slíku vörumerki. Þá vil ég gjarnan fá þitt álætt á jafnrétti kynjanna á vinnumarkaði. Viðtalið tekur um það bil 30 – 50 mínútur og fer fram á þeim tíma og stað er þér hentar. Mun ég senda þér spurningarnar fyrirfram svo þú hafir tök á að líta yfir þær.

Viðtalið verður tekið upp en er það aðeins til þess að auðvelda mér úrvinnsluna. Að loknum ritgerðarstöðum verður öllu slíku efni eytt. Þá skal ítrekað að fyllsta trúnaðar verður gætt, það er viðmælendir koma ekki fram undir nafni heldur starfstætt.

Með von um jákvæðar undirtektir.

Með bestu kveðju,

Hilma Jónsdóttir,

hij1@hi.is
Appendix II – Interview questionnaire

1. Hver er menntun þínn?
2. Hver er starfsreynsla þínn?
3. Hve lengi hefur þú verið titill fyrritæki?
4. Var starf þitt hér hjá fyrritæki eftirssött, voru umsækjendur margir?
5. Sinnir þú óðrum stjórnunarstörfum samhlíða?
6. Hugsar þú um sjálfan þig sem vörumerki?
7. Ef svo er, hvenær först þú að áta þig á mikilvægi þess að hugsa um sjálfan þig sem vörumerki?
8. Hverjir eru þínir styrkleikar?
9. Hverjir eru þínir veikleikar?
10. Hver eru þín sterkustu persónueinkenni?
11. Hver vilu að ímynd þínn sé?
12. Ertu meðvituð um að allt sem þú gerir hefur áhrif á ímynd þína og þar af leiðandi þitt persónulega vörumerki?
13. Hvað einkennir góðan stjórnanda að þínu mati?
15. Hver er lykilþátturinn í að koma sér á framfæri, hvort sem er innan veggja fyrritækis eða utan þess?
16. Hvernig sýndir þú þína styrkleika í verki áður en þú fékkst stöðu titill?
17. Hver er lykilþátturinn í að viðhalda góðum árangri í starfi?
18. Telur þú að þú hafir verið ráðin sem titill vegna þess hve vel þú byggðir upp og miðlaðir þínun styrkleikum?
19. Telur þú persónulegt vörumerki vera mikilvægt á vinnumarkaði?
20. Telur þú að það ríki ójafnrétt milli kynja á vinnumarkaði í formi tækifæra til vaxtar í starfi?
21. Telur þú að konur þurfi að leggja sig meira fram en karlar til þess að sýna að þær séu hæfar í stjórnunarstöður?
22. Ef svo er, hvers vegna heldur þú að svo sé?
23. Finnur þú eða hefur þú einhvern timann fundið fyrir vantrausti að hálfu undirmanna eða samstarfsfólks, í ljósi þess að þú ert kona?
24. Er eitthvað sem þú vilt segja að lokum?
Appendix III – Internet questionnaire

Þessi könnun er hluti af lokaritgerð minni til BS-gráðu á sviði markaðsfræði og aðbjöðavíðskipta við Viðskiptafráðideild Háskóla Íslands. Ritgerðin fjallar um hugtakið persónulegt vörumerki (e. personal brand) í tengslum við æðstu stjórnunarstöður fyrirtækja. Þá er meðal annars verið að kanna hvort það ríki ójafnrétti milli kynja á vinnumarkaði í formi tækifæra til vaxtar í starfi.

Það tekur aðeins um 1-2 mínútur að svara þeim niú spurningum sem lagðar eru fyrir. Tekið skal fram að frjálst er að hætta þátttöku hvenær sem er, sem og að svara ekki einstaka spurningu. Sömul leiðis skal ítrekað að svörin eru og munu ekki með neinu móti vera rekjanleg.

Ef þú hefur einhverjar spurningar eða ábendingar er þér velkominn að hafa samband í gegnum netfangið hij1@hi.is.

Virðingarfyllst,
Hilma Jónsdóttir

1. Hvert er kyn þitt?
   o Karlkyn
   o Kvenkyn
   o Annað

2. Hver er aldur þinn?
   o < 20 ára
   o 20 – 25 ára
   o 26 – 30 ára
   o 31 – 40 ára
   o 41 – 50 ára
   o 51 – 60 ára
   o > 60 ára
3. Hvaða menntun hefur þú lokið?
   - Grunnskólapróf
   - Stúdentspróf
   - Íðnnám
   - Grunnnám í háskóla
   - Framhaldsnám í háskóla
   - Annað

4. Hefur þú heyrð um hugtakið persónulegt vörumerki (e. personal brand)?
   - Já
   - Nei

5. Hugsar þú um sjálf/að sjálfan þig sem vörumerki?
   - Já
   - Nei
   - Ég veit ekki

6. Telur þú persónulegt vörumerki (e. personal brand) vera mikilvægt á vinnumarkaði?
   - Já
   - Nei
   - Ég veit ekki

7. Telur þú að það ríki ójafnrétti milli kynja á vinnumarkaði í formi tækifæra til vaxtar í starfi?
   - Já
   - Nei
   - Ég veit ekki

8. Telur þú að karlar þurfi að leggja sig meira fram en konur til þess að séy að þeir séu hæfar í stjórnunarstöðum?
   - Já
   - Nei
   - Ég veit ekki

9. Telur þú að konur þurfi að leggja sig meira fram en karlar til þess að séy að þær séu hæfar í stjórnunarstöðum?
   - Já
   - Nei
   - Ég veit ekki