PERSONAL BRANDING ATTRIBUTES AFFECTING

EXECUTIVES' SELECTION FOR JOB INTERVIEW IN LITHUANIA

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

of ISM University of Management and Economics

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of International Marketing

by

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May 2017

Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify and evaluate the personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for a job interview in Lithuania. Literature review revealed that personal branding process is mainly based on product branding which encompasses brand identity, brand positioning and brand image parts. Research on executive's personal branding is extremely scarce thus semi-structured in-depth interviews with the executive search professionals (n=10, convenience sampling) were conducted to clarify the relevant personal branding attributes and levels. Then, computer-administered questionnaire based on demonstration of hypothetical executives' profiles was carried out among the broader sample (n=57, snowball sampling) to evaluate these attributes using an adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis. Utilities estimation revealed that the highest preference are for 30-40 years old executives, possessing visible achievements at work and being recommended by someone familiar to executive search professionals. Respondents identified feedback about the candidate, his/her age, level of education, achievements at work, and companies, where the candidate worked, as the most important attributes affecting their selection decision. While candidate's gender, university completed, membership in professional organizations, participation in business events and candidate's wide spectrum of non-professional interests were the least important. Simulation of three hypothetical executive profiles showed that the addition of personal brand positioning related attributes positively affects the total value of executive's profile however it does not have a compensatory effect when personal brand identity related attributes are weak.

Keywords: Branding, Personal branding, Executive search, Selection decision, Job interview, Adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

Background of the Research

Executive recruitment is a specific process that poses a challenge for both the executives and also recruiters due to confidentiality demand. Reluctance to reveal recruitment or job search activities to current employer, employees or competitors is a key reason why the majority of executive job market is hidden (Guiseppi, 2014): vacancies for the executives are usually unlisted whereas highly-compensated managerial professionals themselves are not very active in a job search as the good old truth says the great employees do not look for a job. In this context, executive search, informally headhunting, as a specialized recruiting practice has been introduced for the benefit of the employers. However, for the executives, facing a fierce competition for jobs – only 9 per cent of total vacancies in Lithuanian market in 2016 was dedicated to managerial level ("Employed Persons by Occupational Groups", 2017), - the solution how to become more noticeable among the executive search professionals and be favourably perceived by them is still not completely defined.

Personal branding, first formulated by Tom Peters in 1997 (Shepherd, 2005, p. 590), is a relatively new concept that suggests employing marketing practices to position a person as a brand. Since then personal branding became a popular theme escalated by various consultants and coaches in a vast number of self-improvement books, specialized websites, blogs and training programs as being vital not only for the celebrities but also for each person competing in nowadays world including a job market. Hence, this might be one of the methods the executives could exploit in order to increase their success in a job search.

Despite the growing interest in personal branding and its application in a process of job search, still little is known about effective personal branding strategies and their impact on behavioural intentions of executive search professionals. This research aims to fill this gap and herewith contribute to academic knowledge and executives' individual practice. After presenting the research problem, its goal, objectives, scope, theoretical and practical contribution, this chapter outlines the chosen research design and the sequence of thesis.

Research Problem

Personal branding as a distinctive concept has been initially formulated and popularized with the help of business, career and branding consultants (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; Montoya & Vandehey, 2009; Peters, 1997; Rampersad, 2008). A great public interest in this new phenomenon encouraged the advent of specialized market niche for personal branding consultancy services (Bram, 2009) and even the creation of their certification system ("3 Info: Personal Brand Strategist Certification," n.d.). Despite this, an input from the academic community for this area is still scarce. Theoretical discussions about personal branding construct (Brooks & Anumudu, 2016; Khedher, 2015; Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005; Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015; Shepherd, 2005; Zarkada, 2012) resulted into preliminary conceptual frameworks that are not tested empirically enough, hence the academic literature examining personal branding is under-developed.

When it comes to executives' personal branding, what is the object of this research, scholars have come up to the conclusion that the executives can be treated as brands however most research is more focused on CEO's image and reputation impact on organizations (Bendisch, 2010; Fetscherin, 2015) and vice versa than branding benefits

for the management individuals in the context of job search. Though the author found some research on relationship between executives' personality traits and their career success (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 1999) or the effect of social media usage by the top executives for personal branding purposes (Karaduman, 2013), this is not enough to define and generalize an overall personal branding effect in executive search process.

Academic literature in the field of recruitment process has already covered some parts of personal branding concept that are mostly related to social influence and interdependence theories, self-presentation and impression management tactics utilized by the candidates during a job interview (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009; Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002) or in a stage of job application (Knouse, Giacalone, & Pollard, 1988). Due to technology development, particularly, internet, social media as a channel for job-seekers' self-marketing became a frequent and important research subject (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Chiang & Suen, 2015; Edmiston, 2016; Gershon, 2014; Hood, Robles, & Hopkins, 2014; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning, 2014), however there is a lack of knowledge what and how other branding strategies except social media usage affect recruiters' choice, particularly in case of executive search.

To sum up, there is an obvious need for more empirical studies of existing personal branding theoretical frameworks and a deeper understanding how personal branding practice could be applicable specifically to the executives in terms of a job search. Although some personal branding strategies relevant to recruitment process are already examined by the scholars, there is a lack of more generalized understanding of different personal branding strategies or their combination that could effectively influence recruit-

ers' behavioural intentions. Hence, the key problem of this research is to answer the question what and how executives' personal branding attributes affect their selection for a job interview in Lithuania.

Research Goal and Objectives

This research aims to identify and evaluate the personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for a job interview in Lithuania. In order to successfully achieve the research goal, the following objectives are set:

1. By analysing academic literature to define and conceptualize the research constructs: executives' personal branding and executives' selection for a job interview.

2. Based on theoretical considerations, to design an analytical research model providing guidelines how to evaluate the executive's personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for job interview.

3. To carry out the qualitative in-depth interviews with the executive search professionals in order to clarify executives' personal brand attributes relevant to Lithuanian market and the context of this research.

4. By conducting an experiment-based quantitative research, to identify and evaluate the executive's personal branding attributes affecting executive's selection for job interview.

5. To discuss the empirical research findings in light of existing research studies and state theoretical and managerial implications of this research.

6. To present the research limitations and recommendations for future studies, and conclude the thesis by summarizing the main points of the thesis.

Research Scope

The focus of this research lies on the executives' personal branding in the context of their selection, in this way, taking into account Shepherd's (2005, p. 601) suggestion to take a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the behaviour implicit in self marketing and personal branding. It needs to be acknowledged that the value of personal branding is analysed from the perspective of brand-creator (executives) rather than shareholders what was investigated by Bendisch (2010) previously. In other words, the research first and foremost aims to reveal the benefits of personal branding for the executives which may be materialized as increased competitiveness in a job market and higher compensation as a consequence.

Unlike other studies examining conceptual personal brand models or specific branding tools, this research seeks to review wider range of personal brand attributes and positioning strategies and to find out whether there is any combination of them optimal specifically for the executives in a job search. Such approach seems reasonable in order to come to the inferences relevant and practical in application. However, due to time and resources constraints, this research concentrates just on the part of executive search process that encompasses candidates' sourcing, reference checking, screening and other activities performed by the executive search professionals before a job interview. In other words, the research investigates how executives' personal branding attributes affect executive search professionals' intentions to prioritize a candidate when selecting for a job interview what is extremely important in a so called hidden executive job market.

The research is conducted in Lithuanian market due to several reasons. Firstly, this market is familiar to the researcher, hence easier access to the data and much deeper

insights and interpretations are expected. Secondly, it almost can be claimed (apart from a few exceptions) that personal branding is not researched at all by local academic community while the importance of this concept is likely to increase in the future due to developing economy and growing number of foreign investments and international companies in the country that would lead to a higher demand for competent executives in a job market. Finally, a detailed research in a specific market has a potential to be replicated in other countries and be compared with each other bringing new findings in personal branding area.

Research Contributions

> **Contribution to Academia.** Academic literature investigating personal branding, as a new marketing phenomenon intended to promote individual in the market, is still under-developed (Khedher, 2015, p. 19). Majority of current studies are at the conceptual level that are lacking of empirical findings able to prove the same effect of personal branding in different and specific cases. Moreover, there is a lack of deeper understanding what constitutes the personal brand's structural elements, that is to say, when, how and which attributes and/or strategies form the most successful personal brand identity and positioning. This research aims to fill this gap by analysing the phenomenon from the multi-disciplinary perspective and providing new insights and empirically-tested findings about personal branding application in a specific field (executive search). The outcomes of the research are identification of executives' personal branding attributes, their importance and utility values for the executive search professionals, and possible interaction effects that all contribute to existing theory by expanding the understanding of the composition of personal branding.

Contribution to Individuals. It is argued that the purpose of personal branding is to differentiate the person in the market in order to gain a competitive advantage. This research intends to reveal specific strategies and tactics that could be applied in practice by the executives searching a job. Hence, the additional knowledge from this research could provide the executives with more career opportunities, higher job satisfaction and even income increase. Moreover, scientific substantiation of personal branding application in recruitment field increases the image of career consultants' professionalism and lays a foundation for the development of this business niche.

Research Design

In order to address the central research question, what and how personal branding attributes affect the selection of executives for a job interview in Lithuania, a mixed methods research design is used. At the first stage a qualitative research, using a semi-structured in-depth interviews, is carried out to elicit the personal brand elements relevant to the executive search professionals. At the second stage quantitative research is conducted so that to measure the importance and utility of each personal brand element. Data then is collected from the executive search professionals through experiment-based survey administered on the Internet, and analysed using Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint analysis method.

Thesis Layout

Following this introduction, chapter of **Literature Review** will provide a critical analysis of the most prevailing theories and topics relevant to personal branding in order to highlight existing gaps in studies and justify the research problem. Subsequently, **Research Methodology** is presented where a detailed description and justification of re-

search design is introduced, as well as qualitative research results are presented. In chapter of **Empirical Research Results** quantitative research findings, based on collection and analysis of primary data sources, are reported. Finally, **Discussion and Conclusions** synthesize the literature review and empirical research findings, summarize the main points of the thesis, discuss the contributions and limitations of the research and suggest areas for future research.

Summary

This chapter has introduced the research topic about personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for job interview. Despite the great public interest in personal branding, academic literature in this field is still scarce. Hence, the aim of this research is to fill this gap and to identify and evaluate the personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for a job interview in Lithuania using a multi-disciplinary approach. The outcome of the study is identification of the most important personal brand elements that enhance executives' competitiveness in a job market. Thereby this will contribute both to individuals, foremost, aspiring executives, and also academic knowledge by providing more empirical findings of personal branding concept and expanding an understanding of personal brand construct. In order to reach the research goal, qualitative and quantitative research is conducted in Lithuanian market. Primary data is collected from the executive search professionals through in-depth interviews and computer-administered questionnaire survey. Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis method is applied for quantitative data collection and analysis. Hereinafter, academic literature with regard to personal branding concept and its application in recruitment area is reviewed.

Literature Review

Introduction

This research aims to identify and evaluate the personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for a job interview in Lithuania. Current literature indicates that personal branding is a new and still little explored marketing phenomenon. Though, several multi-disciplinary studies, including personal banding and recruitment, prove the influence of personal branding on recruitment intentions, as well as the relevance of this topic and scholars' interest in this perspective. However, studies of executives' personal branding are extremely scarce, thus it is worthwhile to make a detailed review of current personal branding literature in order to find out the specificities for this group of individuals and justify the research problem.

Literature review starts with a description of personal branding concept. Further, different models of personal branding are presented and compared in order to provide deeper understanding of the composition of personal brand and identify the attributes and strategies relevant for a personal brand. Then, particularly the models of executives' personal branding are discussed seeking to compare them with general models analysed previously. Then, analysis of executives' selection for a job interview construct is provided which purpose is to clarify executive search professionals' decision process and the factors which may influence it. Finally, the multi-disciplinary research on personal branding and recruitment intentions are reviewed so that to identify the gaps in this area and justify this particular research. When selecting the literature for this review, it was concentrated on the recent sources written in English and preferably published within 10 years in globally known journals, books or online sources with academic background.

Personal Branding Concept

      Definition of Personal Branding. When analysing any new scientific concept, the starting point should be its definition. Personal branding is a relatively new phenomenon, stemmed from non-academic practices, thus discussions about its definition are still open. The notion of personal branding first has been formulated and popularized by Peters (1997) in his article "The Brand Called You" where he stated, "We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You". According to him, no matter how well you are and what great skills you possess, first and foremost, you need to market it – gain visibility and reputational power, so that to differentiate yourself and stand out in a competitive market. Rather than focusing on improving individual skills or motivations, personal branding highlights the importance of an explicit self-packaging as a way to success (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005, p. 308).

      After initial attempt to define personal branding in a non-academic way, further explanations of this concept are tried to relate to a classical definition of branding. Rampersad (2008, p. 34) posits that personal branding involves effective management of perceptions, in other words, controlling and influencing how others perceive you. According to Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model, a brand can be described as the associations that people have about products of a particular seller, hence a person brand can be also defined as the set of associations identified with a particular person (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012, p. 107). The idea that the personal branding movement is an extension of previous consumer branding, originally developed for products and organizations, thus some product branding principles can be applied for people positioning, is supported

by several scholars (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005, p. 313; Parmentier, Fischer, & Reuber, 2013, p. 373; Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015, p. 182; Shepherd, 2005, p. 589).

As the research on personal branding are still scarce, this phenomenon lacks the united and well-established definition too. However, one of the most comprehensive and completed formulation is provided by Khedher (2015, p. 19) and Zarkada (2012, p. 1) who propose that personal branding is a new marketing concept encompassing marketing strategies that a person selects in order to promote his or her major personal characteristics in the market.

Reasons of Personal Branding Emergence. According to Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney (2005, p. 315), personal branding is closely related to social upheavals that emerged during the transition from an industrial to an information-based economy in the 1970s. Large organizations in the United States, previously promising a life-long employment, started massive layoffs for the first time in history and focused on hiring temporary and contract workers instead (Brooks & Anumudu, 2016, p. 23). This led to increasing competition amongst job seekers, comparatively lower payment and diminishing job security. Not only a growing number of freelancers, but also the rest employees and even people in management positions were affected by this situation (Nessmann, 2008, p. 4). These changes in labour market demonstrated that the individuals could no longer depend on employers (Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015, p. 182) and that their personality and individuality, capabilities of competing in a crowded market independently were becoming progressively important values (Nessmann, 2008, p. 3). Without economic turmoil, Philbrick & Cleveland (2015, p. 182) denote some other incentives for personal branding popularization that are related to subsequent social changes. One of them is a new atti-

tude toward work as a source of personal satisfaction and self-realization, another is the advent of new technology enabling to communicate and share personal thoughts using online tools.

Philbrick & Cleveland (2015, p. 188) emphasize that personal brand can facilitate to stress your specialties to the professional world while Zarkada (2012) even includes aspects of human psychology and individual values describing personal branding as a "hope of being acknowledged, feeling unique and worthy of attention and most of all, the hope of finding meaning now that traditional values have been eroded and conspicuous consumption is fast losing ground as a panacea to obscurity and loneliness" (p.6). Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney (2005, p. 312) and Shepherd (2005, p. 597) highlight the benefits of building a personal brand and identify it as an essential help for the aspiring professionals to gain competitive advantage in a marketplace as well as a response to a crowded communication world.

Challenges in Personal Branding. While describing personal branding as a compound of marketing strategies, it is worthwhile to mention the challenges raised by several scholars that may complicate a conceptualization of personal branding from the perspective of marketing theories. To begin with, Shepherd (2005, p. 593) reveals a potential conflict between personal brand and one of the key marketing principle. The manufacturers and marketers usually adopt a consumer-focused approach when producing products – the products are being adapted to consumers' needs. In personal branding, by contrast, individuals are not prompted to reskill or change their behaviour or other characteristics as it would be impossible in some cases primarily due to human nature. Instead, individuals are encouraged to build "authentic you" by communicating as effective

as possible their existing characteristics, and advised to use a person-centred approach, which philosophy is based on already outdated product marketing approach.

Moreover, Parmentier & Fischer (2012, p. 108) indicate that "human beings, unlike products and services, are not 'produced' purely to serve markets", thus they have multiple roles and self-images in their personal, social and working lives. According to branding literature, a strong brand must be simple, clear and consistent. Then the question arises how the person would manage to harmonize his or her multiple identities so that not to undermine or dilute his personal brand? Shepherd (2005, p. 596) argues that even if individuals are able to impose their business-related identity on other personal identities, they may find it extremely difficult to live this unique brand.

Besides, in both studies (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012, p. 108; Shepherd, 2005, p. 597) is agreed that personal branding promises could be somewhat deceptive. Recalling Peter's (1997) statement that "everyone has a chance to stand out", the scholars argue that personal branding cannot guarantee a visibility sufficient in a business world as there is simply too many people competing for attention even within small and specific business niches not to mention emerging global markets. In this case, Shepherd (2005, p. 597) reminds the Zipf curve as an illustration of the distribution of awareness in order to emphasize that only tiny group of the population can reach a majority of public awareness while everyone else has questionable chances to stand out.

To sum up, there are still many unanswered questions about scientific and practical validity of personal branding that unlock plenty of research opportunities. Following Bendisch's (2010) suggestion, this study particularly is interested in an open question "whether it is possible to brand any individual with the right application of branding

techniques" (p.260). Thus, in the context of executives' search, it is worthwhile to ana-lyse the interaction between specific communication tools and inherent characteristics of executive, answering to the question whether branding could generate any compensatory effect when there is a shortage of knowledge, skills, experience or other important fea-tures in executive's profile.

Models of Personal Branding

Characteristic features of personal branding are the main focus of this research which aims to investigate personal branding effect on executives' recruitment process. Hence, an initial analysis of personal brand composition and its process is necessary. Theoretical models usually are the best to explain these aspects. As for the model of per-sonal branding, a consensus on this is still lacking. Probably the first attempt to structure this phenomenon was made by a leading coach Rampersad in 2008. In his inspiring arti-cle, dedicated to the human performance technology professionals, he describes a holistic and authentic personal branding model (Figure 1) that may help to build a trusted person-al and professional image. The author presents a cyclic process that essentially is based on branding theory and is composed of four interrelated wheels.

Firstly, it is advised to define your personal ambition by formulating your vision, mission and key differentiating characteristics. Secondly, Rampersad encourages creating your distinctive personal brand promise what requires detailed self-analysis and identifi-cation of your specific talent, specialization, target audience and goals. This stage is fin-ished with authentic brand story and its unique elements, e.g. logo, slogan. Thirdly, it is suggested to move further by composing a personal balanced scorecard in order to moni-tor your performance and plan the actions for personal improvement. Finally, according

to the author, the most important step is implementation of all the preceding steps in marketplace. Following the plan-deploy-act-challenge cycle is considered to be effective device to meet various challenges and keep constantly cultivating your personal brand.
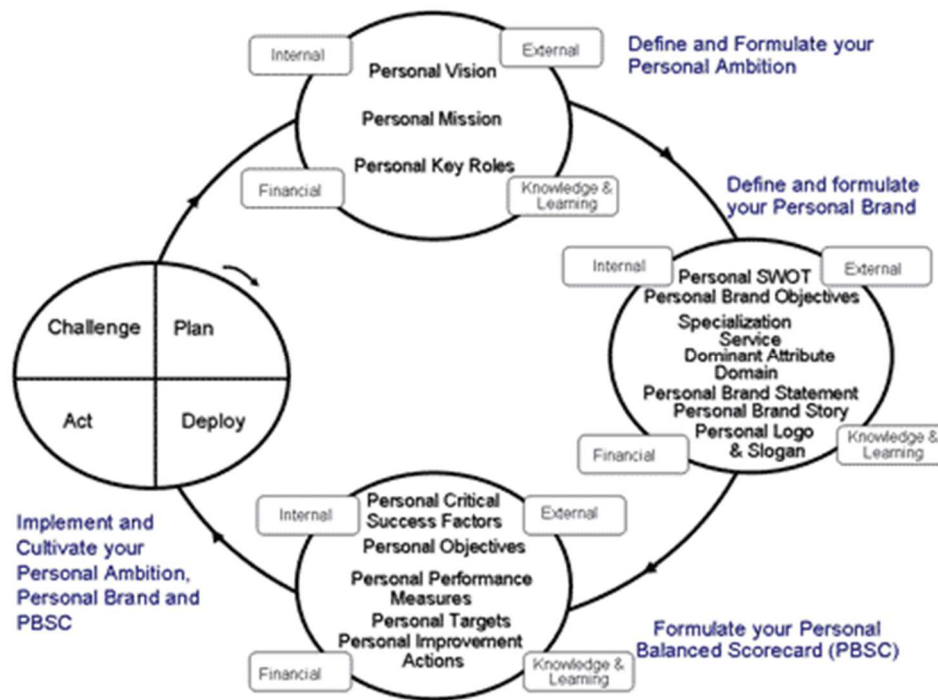
Figure 1. Authentic Personal Branding Model. From "A New Blueprint for Powerful and Authentic Personal Branding," by H. K. Rampersad, 2008, Performance Improvement, 47(6), p. 35.

Rampersad states that this authentic personal branding model has been successfully proven in practice both for individuals and also for organizations. However, despite of being easy-to-understand for the practitioners, it seems to be too abstract and general for making specific academic inferences. The model tends to replicate traditional product branding process rather than reveal the essence of personal branding. Considering the aim of this research, Rampersad's model cannot fully explain the composition of personal brand that is critically important in this case.

The same year Nessman (2008) publishes the article where he appeals to person-alization phenomenon growing in a social context, public and organizational communica-tion. Individuals are becoming at the centre of attention in different contexts: individuali-zation trend makes people prioritize themselves versus society; they focus on the search of individual uniqueness; increasing amount of media is designated for sections dealing with highly-visible personalities (e.g. celebrities, VIP); CEOs are attaining more and more attention from the stakeholders of the companies. Consequently, he presents a per-sonal communication management (or personality PR) model geared to effective people positioning.

The model is based on three types of communication counselling models: brand-ing/marketing model, that generally follows the 4Ps (*product*: services, proposals, indi-vidual qualities; *price*: fees, salary; *place*: where the person offers his/her services; and *promotion*: advertising, sponsoring, testimonials, public relations); reputational model, and public relations model (Nessman, 2008, p.9-10). It consists of six steps:

1. *briefing*, clarifying of person's problem and goals;

2. *analysis*, evaluation of current situation and personal brand building encom-passing formulation of person's identity, unique value proposition, mission statement and brand elements;

3. *strategy*, setting realistic and measurable communication goals, identifying tar-get groups, formulating key messages and the guidelines for their communication;

4. *tactics*, planning PR tools:

a. *self-management*, documentation of personal data (e.g. curriculum vitae, photo archive), also preparation for the most frequent journalists' questions;

b. *impression management*, planning of self-presentation techniques, based on politeness, friendliness, honesty, helpfulness, modesty and sincerity virtuous, and including all types of behaviour and forms of communication that could influence and control the impression about the person left on stakeholders: language, rhetoric, clothing, symbols, symbolic behaviour, office furnishings and so forth (p.15);

c. *media management*, preparation for publicity and topic management, encompassing press releases, press conferences, letters to the editor, guest commentaries, interviews, statements, home stories, reports, storytelling, personal website, blogs, business cards, signed cards or postcards, posters, brochures, books, portraits (p.16);

d. *social management*, focusing on social activities such as being involved in associations, clubs, interest groups, providing financial support for charitable institutions, participating in public debates, panel discussions, holding lectures or seminars, taking on socio-political responsibility, networking, personal gifts, birthday greetings, spontaneously calling friends, colleagues or journalists, or personal invitations to dinner or a business lunch (p.17);

5. *implementation*, adjusting all the planned activities to the particular person in order to assure consistency between person's actions and his or her values and achieve authentic, trustworthy and credible image;

6. *evaluation*, selecting proper evaluative models to monitor the performance and effectiveness, also plan adjustments for improvement.

Comparing Nessman's and Rampersad's models, it should be noted that their initial and final parts coincide to some extent. However, while Rampersad's model is focused on general process, Nessman's model concentrates on personal communication

side and provides more specific information about the tools common for such purpose. Moreover, the latter model already covers self-presentation and impression management techniques that will be actively discussed in subsequent frameworks.

Further studies on personal branding were gradually being complemented by theoretical foundation as long as Khedher (2015) summarised the majority of recent research and proposed by far the most generalized and comprehensive framework of personal branding process (Figure 2). The scholar describes personal branding as a planned three-stage process composed of personal brand identity as an input, personal brand positioning as a method, and personal brand image as an outcome of this process.
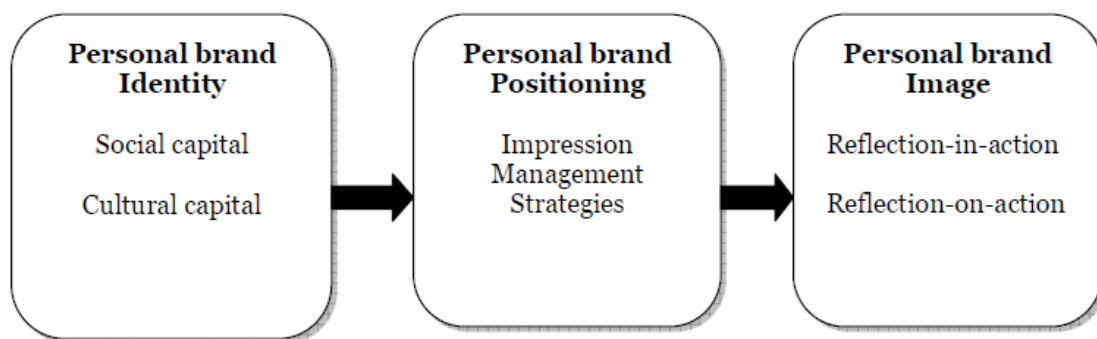
Figure 2. Personal Branding Process. From "A Brand for Everyone: Guidelines for Personal Brand Managing," by M. Khedher, 2015, Journal of Global Business Issues, 9(1), p. 21.

Khedher draws on Bourdieu's (1984) Field Theory arguing that a personal brand identity constitutes of social and cultural capitals – competitive resources for the agents within established organizational field. In other words, the more a person invests in his social and/or cultural capital, the more successful he may be in a specific area. This concept was also supported by Parmentier, Fischer, & Reuber (2013) who used Bourdieu's perspective as a background when analysing differences between product and person po-

sitioning practices. The scholars concluded that successful person brand positioning within established organizational field should be achieved by gaining a field-specific social and cultural capital that allows to "stand out", and at the same time becoming conformed to a field's institutionalized expectations in order to "fit in" (p.376). Standing out and fitting in are considered to be the parallels to the points of differentiation and points of parity for product brands.

Khedher (2015) details in his study that social capital encompasses networks, connections, group memberships, and familial relationships that may provide information, career guidance, and advocacy for promotion or employment (p.21). Whereas, cultural capital is a form of formal and informal knowledge, skills, education, as well as diplomas, linguistic competence and specific attitudes, or personal style. Both social and also cultural capitals can be converted into other types of capital.

The method of personal brand positioning is described by Khedher, applying Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, as a form of impression management – a goal-directed activity of controlling information with a purpose to shape and influence an audience's impressions of a person. Impression management, which Nessman (2008) also has included in his Personal Communication Management Model, is comprised of:

1. *artifactual displays*, tools and activities used to prove person's skills and qualifications: resume, application letter, social network, web sites, online portfolios, blogs;

2. *personal appearance*, means how people form their image in the workplace such as level of hygiene and appropriate business attire;

3. *manner*, way of conveying attitudes through nonverbal communication: gestures, facial expressions, and body language;

4. *verbal behaviour*, creating or protecting one's image using assertive or defensive tactics.

Finally, the third stage of the Khedher's model is dedicated to reflexivity. The purpose of this stage is to constantly monitor the actual person's image in the minds of the audience, to collect relevant feedback, identify the gaps and, in this way, improve the personal branding tactics and assure personal development. Drawing on Schon's personal development concept, the researcher identifies two types of reflexivity: reflection-in-action involves adjustment during the action, while reflection-on-action is a past behaviour analysis seeking critically assess previous failures and review one's strength and weaknesses. Reflexivity, being the last stage of the process, definitely is not the end of personal branding process. Like previous models, the last stage is a base for the new cycle of the same process having newly adjusted goals based on person's experience.

This framework, being by far the most comprehensive explanation of personal branding process, seems to be also eligible for structuring different personal brand attributes and communication strategies found in literature (Table 1).

This part of literature review, describing a development of personal branding model, reveals several findings relevant for this study. Firstly, personal branding generally is based on product branding, thus its essential purpose is to differentiate the person by stressing his/her strengths as unique attributes so as to withstand competition. Secondly, personal brand is composed of brand identity and positioning that actually encompasses different personal attributes and the strategies of their communication. These elements, characteristic to personal brand, are identified in a sufficient amount of literature. Finally, personal branding is a dynamic, cyclic process that aims to adapt personal brand to the

requirements of specific target group in order to form this audience's favourable perceptions leading to the expected behaviour. Hence, there is no universal compound of personal brand attributes or strategies that may fit in every situation. Therefore, it is meaningful to ascertain the optimum set of them relevant to the specific target groups what exactly this particular study pursues.

Table 1. *Summary of Personal Brand Attributes and Strategies Found in Literature*

		Attributes / Strategies	Source
Personal Brand Identity	Cultural Capital	Age, gender, country of origin; Moral values, specific attitudes, personal style; Formal and informal knowledge, education (diplomas), linguistic competence; Management style; Leadership skills: business skills, organizational capacity, public communication skills, the ability to be visionary, a certain cognitive style and emotional intelligence, ability to give clear directions and set a long-term strategy, to teamwork and provide inspiration, to build relationships and select the right people, to make and communicate tough decisions.	Bendisch (2010) Fetscherin (2015) Khedher (2015)
	Social Capital	Networks, connections, group memberships, and familial relationships; Social status, tenure and power in the company.	Fetscherin (2015) Khedher (2015) Kim & Cannella (2008) Withers, Hillman, & Cannella (2011)
Personal Brand Positioning		Elements: logo, slogan; Self-presentation: resume (CV), application letter, professional biography, business cards, photos; Physical footprint: physical appearance, especially facial attractiveness, gestures, body language, business attire, level of hygiene, office furnishings; Digital footprint: social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter), personal web sites, email, online portfolios, blogs, video/audio sharing (YouTube), social rankings (Amazon testimonials); Publicity: press releases, press conferences, letters to the editors, guest commentaries, interviews, storytelling, 'elevator speech' or 'pitching', books, presentations, publications; Social activities: being involved in associations, clubs, interest groups, participating in public debates, panel discussions, holding lectures or seminars, providing financial support for charitable institutions; Networking: personal gifts, birthday greetings, spontaneously calling friends, colleagues or journalists, personal invitations to dinner or a business lunch.	Chiang & Suen (2015) Dutta (2010) Edmiston (2016) Fetscherin (2015) Gershon (2014) Harris & Rae (2011) Hood, Robles, & Hopkins (2014) Karaduman (2013) Khedher (2015) Kleppinger & Cain (2015) Nessman (2008) Philbrick & Cleveland (2015) Rampersad (2008) Van Dijck (2013) Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning (2014)

Note. Compiled by the author.

Executives' Personal Branding

Executives are interesting group for the personal branding researchers what is seen from several efforts to model a personal branding framework particularly for this group of individuals. These studies are not abundant and still in an early stage, however are noteworthy in order to expand the understanding of this research context. Hereinafter reviewed chief executive officers (CEOs) brand models are exclusively focused on the reciprocal link between CEO personal brand and organization's image and show quite good congruence with the previously discussed personal branding models. Despite several different formulations and specific context, it can be concluded that CEO (executive) personal branding substantially corresponds to the general personal branding process model, presented by Khedher (2015).
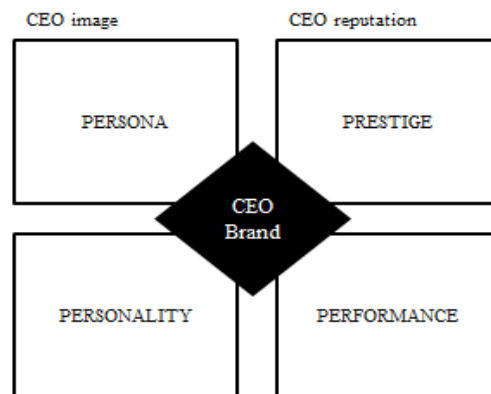
Figure 3. The 4 P's of CEO branding. From "The CEO branding mix," by M. Fetscherin, 2015, Journal of Business Strategy, 36(6), p. 23.

The latest CEO-related personal branding model found in literature is owned by Fetscherin (2015). As he states, "Researchers discovered a multitude of attributes of the CEO which impact companies, such as CEO personality, the number of years the CEO has held the executive position (tenure), whether the CEO is also the chairman of the

board (CEO duality), CEO compensation or reputation in terms of awards won"
(Fetscherin, 2015, p. 22), thus the scholar examines how these attributes relate to each
other and presents a CEO Branding Mix (Figure 3) which serves as a framework for
CEOs to systematically measure and manage their image and reputation.

Fetscherin identifies four major components, with the allusion to a product mar-
keting mix (4P): performance, prestige, personality and persona. The first two have the
effect on the CEO's reputation while the rest contribute to his image. All these compo-
nents are interrelated and together compose the CEO brand:

1. *CEO prestige*, can be considered as a congruence between CEO and company
reputation;

2. *CEO performance*, describes how well CEO executes the company's strategy,
motivates the teams, plans his succession and engages with various stakeholders;

3. *CEO personality,* encompasses CEO's personal qualities; the most positive
traits of the CEO are identified as honesty, humility, being sincere, loyal, faithful, char-
ismatic and modest, while the most negative encompass Machiavellianism and narcis-
sism, arrogance, lack of empathy, poor listening, egoism and amorality;

4. *CEO persona,* individual characteristics which people form judgment about
CEO on, consist of age, gender, physical appearance, especially facial attractiveness, also
education, social status, tenure and power in the company.

First and foremost, Fetscherin's model facilitates to clarify the composition of
executive brand and specify its attributes (Table 1). Moreover, it stresses the importance
of the link between CEO personal brand and the stakeholders. This point of view is ex-
amined more extensively by Bendisch (2010) several years before. Her conceptual

framework of CEO brands illustrates the main CEO brand dimensions - identity, image, reputation, positioning and equity - and their interrelation (Figure 4).
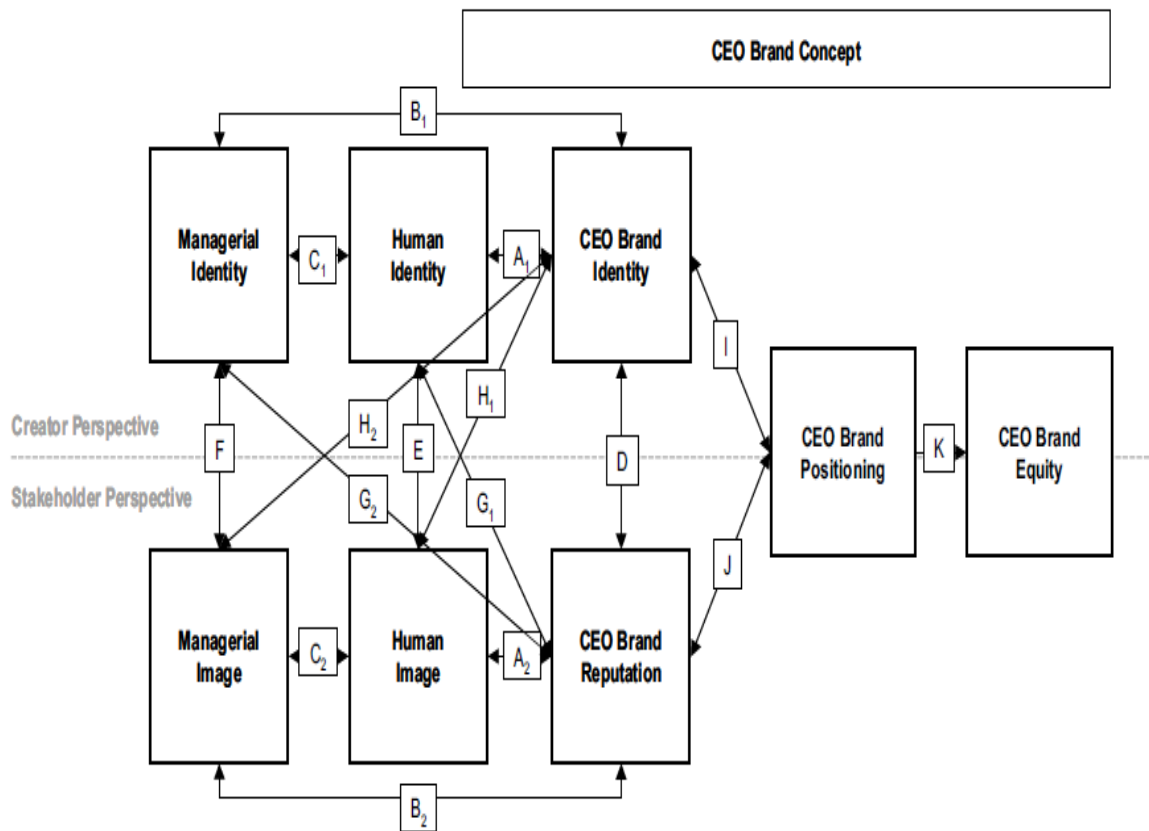
Figure 4. Conceptual Framework of CEO Brands. From "Branding CEOs: How relationship between chief executive officers, corporate brands and stakeholders image can influence perceived brand value," by F. Bendisch, 2010, University of Bradford, p.142.

   The scholar, analysing the relationship between CEO brands and the corporate brand of the organisation they represent, argues that there should be two perspectives from which a CEO brand, or any other personal brand, is looked at. On the one side, brand creator perspective belongs to the agents that are responsible for how the personal brand should look like in marketplace. These could be a brand owner – CEO, or consultant or organization that builds and manages particular CEO's brand. On the other side, CEO brand, by contrast to product brand, usually has multiple stakeholders, not only con-

sumers, but also investors, employees, business partners, journalists, other organizations, and so forth. Hence, shareholder perspective is owned by different groups of people that are interested in CEO for some reasons, and whose perceptions of CEO determine his brand value.

Both the CEO brand identity on the brand creator side and also the CEO brand reputation on the stakeholder side are influenced by the human and by the managerial identity/image. The definition of himself as a human being impacts CEO's definition of the brand and vice versa (A_1). Moreover, how CEO defines himself in his managerial role reciprocally influences his definition of a brand (B_1). The same reversible relation is between CEO's human identity and managerial identity (C_1). The relationships among CEO brand reputation, human image and managerial image on the stakeholder side conform the same dynamics (A_2, B_2, C_2).

Bendisch highlights the interrelation between identity and image dimensions too. On the one hand, how CEO defines himself influences how he is perceived by the others. On the other hand, if there is a gap between ideal self and the actual identity in the public, CEO will adapt his own self-definition. Hence, the relationship between CEO brand identity and CEO brand reputation (D), human identity and human image (E), and managerial identity and managerial image (F) are also reciprocal. Besides, the researcher acknowledges that mutual interactions exist between CEO brand identity and human (H_1) as well as managerial (H_2) image. Analogously, CEO brand reputation influences human (G_1) and managerial identities (G_2) and vice versa.

Both brand identity and image lead to CEO brand positioning dimension that plays a vital role in gaining a strong competitive advantage, e.g. against another CEO in a

fight for position in a job market. The relationship between CEO brand positioning and CEO brand reputation is reciprocal (J). The reputation of CEO influences his positioning, while the positioning in the market impacts the CEO brand reputation. The same dynamic is acknowledged to be inherent for the link between brand positioning and CEO brand identity – CEO brand positioning can trigger adaptation of the CEO brand identity (I). Finally, the CEO brand positioning leads to the CEO brand equity both for the brand creator and also for the brand's stakeholder (K). This is an aggregation of all accumulated attitudes of the stakeholders that accept the CEO's brand.

According to Bendisch, the CEO brand identity is a compound of associations related to a brand, in other words, the stakeholders' perceptions that a brand creator aspires. As in case of other personal brands, CEO brand identity is complemented with a human identity that is a person's self-definition, or human essence, encompassing his core values and moral principles. Whereas, managerial identity describes a specific role of CEO which principally illustrates the "role stress" that CEO experiences when he strives to balance between often conflicting expectations from the stakeholders in working life and his own personal values. It is acknowledged that human identity is relatively stable, while managerial identity usually tends to fluctuate depending on the situation.

It is considered that the CEO brand identity includes core and extended elements. Drawing on Aaker's brand identity model, Bendisch suggests their division into four dimensions which actually relates to Fetscherin's (2015) CEO Branding Mix:

1. *CEO brand as product*, encompasses product-related attributes that trigger the associations of power and prestige, usually related to leadership skills: business skills, organisational capacity, public communication skills, the ability to be visionary, a certain

cognitive style and emotional intelligence, ability to give clear directions and set a long-term strategy, to teamwork and provide inspiration, to build relationships and select the right people, to make and communicate tough decisions, certain management style or even CEO brand's country of origin;

2. *CEO brand as person*, includes human characteristics that describes his personality. In this case, a significance is given not for CEO's cognitive attributes as intelligence, skills or abilities, but for a congruence between CEO's brand personality, which is purposefully created, and his natural way of behaviour;

3. *CEO brand-organisation link*, explains a fit between CEO and organization which he represents, the more CEO's brand coincides with organization's values, the more value is added for both parties;

4. *CEO brand as symbol*, describes the visuals that identify and differentiate CEO, as well as induce the associations of trust and respect.

When it comes to CEO brand reputation, it can be considered as the reflection of the CEO brand identity in the minds of the stakeholders. This dimension is by far the most difficult to manage as the brand owner hardly controls the perceptions of the groups of stakeholders with different expectations. Bendisch confirms the hypothesis that CEO brand equity is enhanced through stakeholder perceptions of an ideal self-image rather than their actual.

In conclusion, executive's personal brand studies reveal some important aspects. Firstly, executives' personal branding generally corresponds to a personal branding process model proposed by Khedher (2015). The same as for any other group of individuals, the main branding constructs – identity, positioning and image – are also valid for the

executives. Secondly, the researchers of executives' personal brand identify different perspectives which the personal brand may be viewed from and exceptionally highlights the importance of executive's brand compliance with the multiple types of stakeholders. Finally, these studies provide additional examples of executives' personal brand attributes that mainly comprise executive's symbolic features shaping an association with trust, his/her personality traits, performance as the evidence of leadership skills, and executive's image congruence with company's identity.

Executives' Selection for Job Interview

       Background of Executives' Selection. It is obvious that the process of executives' selection requires a decision making followed by some certain behavioural manifestations from an agent responsible for executive search. To begin with, Withers, Hillman, & Cannella (2011) state, that "the director [executive] selection process is the formal process by which individuals are identified, screened, nominated, and elected" (p.245), thereby indicating the discrete steps divided by decision points and actions. Moreover, independent human resource professional Hollenbeck (2009), discussing about executive selection outcomes, clearly prompts his colleagues to "view selecting executives not as a selection problem but as a problem in decision making and judgment" (p.140). In addition, this process is deemed to be highly complex as incorporates different determinants such as firm's requirements and its internal decision-makers, environmental factors, as well as candidate's characteristics (Kim & Cannella, 2008, p.286; Martinez, Lengnick-Hall, & Kulkarni, 2014, p.959; Withers, Hillman, & Cannella, 2011, p.263). To sum up, there is a reason to presume that classical human behaviour and decision making theories are eligible for explaining a variable of executives' selection, particularly with

adoption of cognitive approach, as the process is based on rational, discerning, logical and active agent's participation in decision making (Bray, 2008, p.8).

Theory of Planned Behaviour. Accordingly, a Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by I. Ajzen (1985), is one of the most prevailing cognitive models that focus on beliefs and attitudes as the factors predicting human behaviour. It stemmed from a previous Theory of Reasoned Action, expanding its application for not only volitional but also non volitional behaviour. Based on TPB, any human behaviour is more or less planned and goal-directed thus people are expected to act in accordance to their intention. Theory generalizes relations between these intentions and actions, as well as the factors that influence them. Figure 5 provides an overview of TPB model adjusted to managers' behaviour.
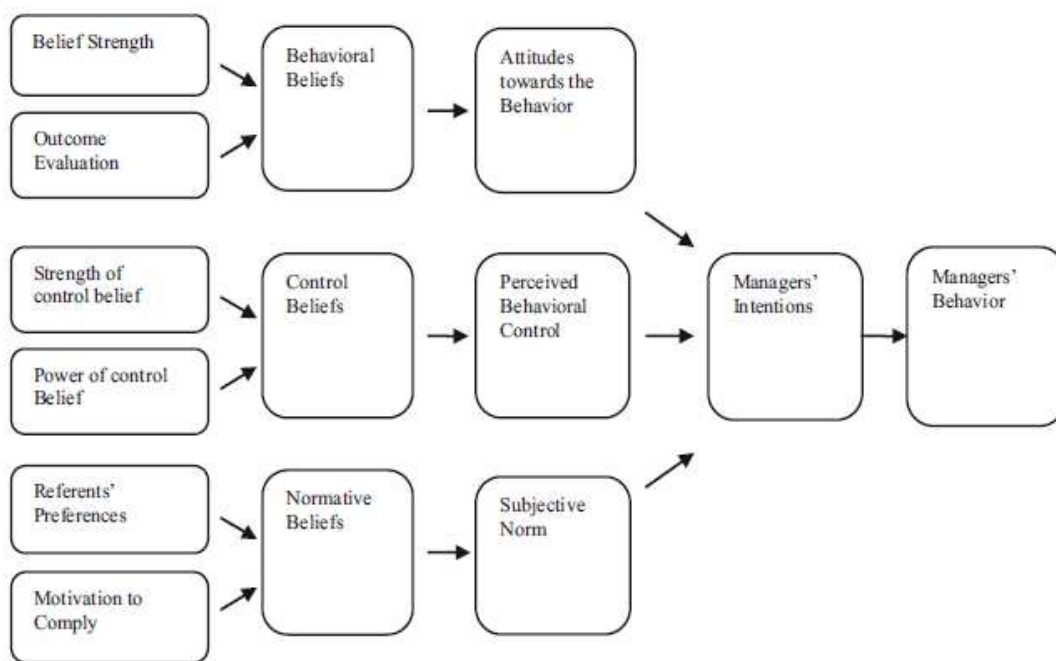
Figure 5. The Theory of Planned Behaviour. Adapted from Ajzen, 1985. From "Attitudes and company practices as predictors of managers' intentions to hire, develop, and promote women in science, engineering, and technology professions," by S. Braun & R. A. Turner, 2014, Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 66(2), p. 96.

As it is seen in the model, person's intentions, which directly influence his/her behaviour, are related to these types of determinants:

1. *attitude toward behaviour*, the personal factor based on person's salient beliefs about the behaviour. The strength of behavioural beliefs and person's positive or negative evaluation of the outcomes of the behaviour underlie favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the behaviour;

2. *subjective norm*, person's perception of social pressures to perform or not to perform the behaviour. The factor is influenced by person's normative beliefs about the referents', with whom he is motivated to comply, opinion;

3. *perceived behavioural control*, the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour. The person will attempt to perform the behaviour if the perceived advantages of success outweigh the disadvantages of failure.

In general, the model highlights that person's attitudinal, normative or control beliefs are only variables that influence human behaviour. In this respect, information about the world acts more important role than any demographic characteristics or personality traits (Ajzen, 1985, p. 14). Taking into account the nature of this study, when executives' personal brand is considered to be a stimulus inciting a response of executive search professional, this fact seems relevant.

The TPB is widely used in many different fields to predict human behaviour especially in health-related issues. Likewise, this model has been validated to predict managerial behaviours (Dhar, 2014, p.449), in recruitment context too. In the past few years the utility of the TPB has been highlighted in examining managers' intentions to hire such sensitive social groups as persons with disabilities (Ang, Ramayah, & Amin, 2015;

Araten-Bergman, 2016; Hernandez et al., 2012) or cancer survivors (Mak, Ho, & Kim, 2014), also covering specific professions recruitment as psychologists in a healthcare system (Tolliver, 2016) or women in science, engineering, and technology sectors (Braun & Turner, 2014). The summary of recruitment-related studies based on TPB is presented in Table 2.

While some researchers successfully employed standard model of the TPB for their studies, the others were inclined to modify it in order to reach more informative results. Ang, Ramayah, & Amin (2015) changed the classical relations among the constructs of the TPB by setting subjective norms and perceived behavioural control as direct antecedents of attitudes which in turn mediated the relationship between previously mentioned independent variables and dependent variable – hiring intention. Such rearranged model fitted the data better than the original model, implying that a further examination of an augmented version of the TPB is worthwhile.

Pursuing the idea of the TPB model modification, the inclusion of some exploratory variables (i.e., perceived company practices, past behaviour, affect, and gender-neutral value) in S. Braun's & R. A. Turner's (2014) study predicted 71% of the variance for intention, whereas R. M. Tolliver (2016) reached even 78% of variance by removing behavioural beliefs and subjective norms, and adding paths between normative beliefs and attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and intent. These numbers are impressive taking into account that the TPB studies usually report 39% of explained variance on average. Despite the classical TPB prevalence in social psychology studies, recent findings indicating higher predictability of intentions in case of modified TPB models imply that the TPB's eligibility may be different depending on specific research context.

Table 2. *Recent Research on Recruitment Based on Theory of Planned Behaviour*

Research	Context / Aim	Model	Findings
Hernandez et al. (2012)	Examined behavioural intentions to hire workers with disabilities among non-profit and for-profit employers.	Standard TPB	Highlighted the utility of TPB. Though previous research relied heavily on examining employer's attitudes, this study stressed the importance of including subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in order to make the attitudes more informative.
Dhar (2014)	Explored the covert motives that might exist amongst senior managers when recruiting their desired candidates.	Standard TPB	TPB can provide a framework for the development of recruitment protocols. The TPB has proven its validity in predicting a wide assortment of behaviours, such as job search and employee turnover.
Braun & Turner (2014)	Examined the correlates of middle managers' intentions to hire, promote, develop, and retain women in science, engineering, and technology professions.	Standard TPB, augmented by perceived company practices and exploratory variables (past behaviour, affect, and gender-neutral value)	The model explained even 71% of the variance in managers' intentions toward women friendly behaviour, thus the study contributed in finding that other variables except associated with TPB also predict managers' behavioural intentions.
Mak, Ho, & Kim (2014)	Explained employer factors to hire and retain cancer survivors in Singapore.	Standard TPB, augmented by Social Cognitive Theory constructs	Findings suggested that attitudes and subjective norms such as efficacy and attitude toward cancer survivors in TPB are crucial to employers in hiring cancer survivors.
Ang, Ramayah, & Amin (2015)	Examined the impact of employers' attitudes on intention to hire the Malaysians with disabilities.	Modified TPB, attitudes as moderating variable	Results confirmed that the TPB constructs are adequate to explain the hiring intentions. However, further TPB refinement was suggested as the study showed that attitudes had a mediating effect on relationship between the independent variables (i.e., subjective norm and perceived behavioural control) and the dependent variable (i.e., intention to hire).
Araten-Bergman (2016)	The first longitudinal study to explore the relation between managers' attitudes, intentions, and the actual hiring of persons with disabilities.	Standard TPB, augmented by Features of Organizational Diversity Climate variable	The TPB successfully predicted intentions to hire, but failed to predict actual hiring. Instead, concrete indicators of diversity climate (formal disability hiring policy and disability training) emerged as significant predictors of hiring as measured 6 months later.
Tolliver (2016)	Examined how well the TPB predicted executives' intentions to hire psychologists.	Standard TPB, augmented by exploratory variables, modifications of relations among the constructs	Standard TPB model was a poor fit with the data. However, after modifications, the model fit the data well and explained 78% of the variance in executives' intent to hire psychologists.

Note. Compiled by the author.

Hence, there is a reasonable possibility to integrate the TPB with another theoretical model, change its internal links, or augment it by additions in order to adjust to the particular research objectives.

This part of literature review leads to the conclusion that, according to TPB, executives' selection is a behaviour which is induced by the intention. TPB is a prescriptive cognitive method (Bray, 2008, p.20) that tends to explain how behaviour is structured and what causal links exist among different elements. Therefore, TPB particularly focuses on attitudes and beliefs that justify further constructs. However, despite the fact that TPB model has been widely used in previous research related to recruitment, the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of executive's personal branding (stimulus) on his/her selection (response), thus exploration of the reasons of such impact, related to the rising beliefs or attitudes due to stimulus, is not in the scope of the study. Moreover, as Bray (2008, p.24) summarizes, intention is a dynamic concept which constantly changes based on new information, which definitely affects agent's beliefs and attitudes. This is another reason to avoid attitudes and beliefs constructs in this study, as the researcher particularly strives to evaluate the effect of personal branding on selection intention, non-including other factors that may also be influential on dependent variable. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to additionally analyse an analytic cognitive model that explains the process of behaviour rather than its structure.

Decision Making Model. Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model, depicted in Figure 6, was originally developed in 1968. As Bray (2008, p. 15-17) and Langen (2013, p. 22-23) describe, a decision process consists of seven stages encompassing need recognition, internal and external information search, the evaluation of alternatives, purchase, post-

purchase reflection and divestment. The sequence of decisions are influenced by two factors, firstly, by stimuli, and secondly, by external variables – environmental influences and individual differences. In this case, it should be stressed, that purchase decision is affected by individual's attitudes that lead to his/her intention. This logic coincides with a main principle of Theory of Planned Behaviour too.
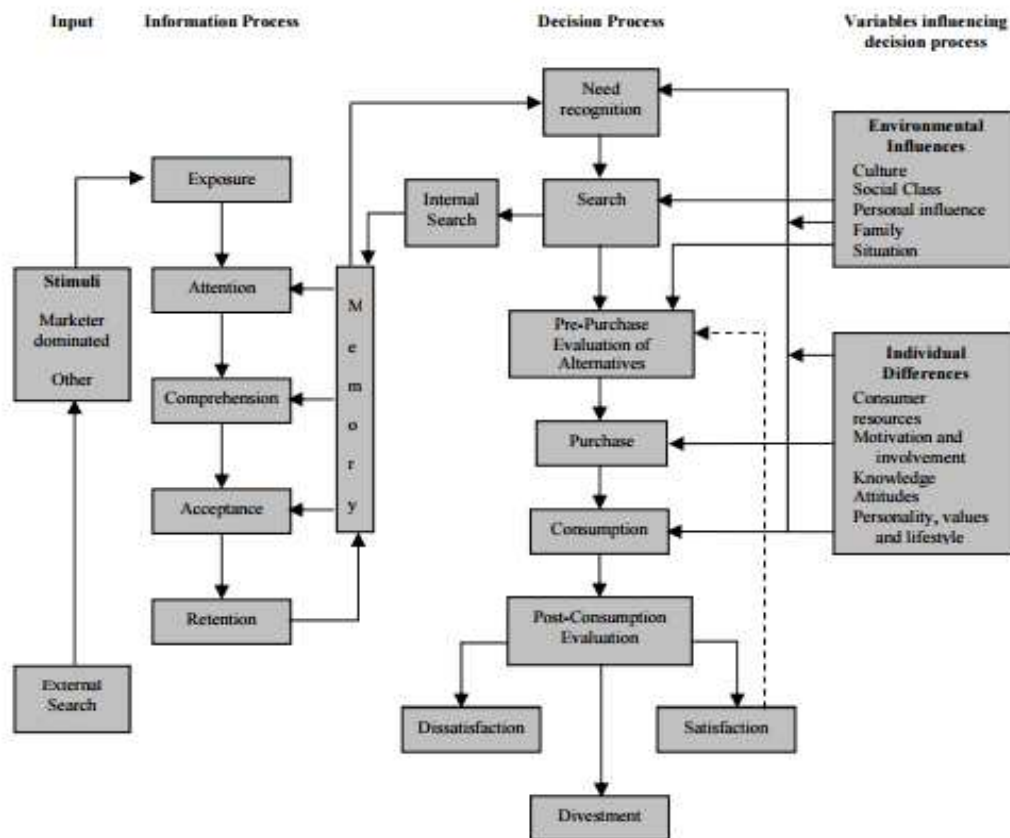
Figure 6. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel Decision Model. From "Consumer Behaviour Theory: Approaches and Models," by J. P. Bray, 2008, p. 16.

In relation to this study, information search, alternatives evaluation and purchase clearly reflect the decision process of executive's selection: an agent reacts to external stimuli (executive's profile), evaluates alternatives by comparing different candidates, and makes a selection decision followed by the intention induced by his/her attitudes

about the selection. Hence, a decision model reveals more expanded and comprehensive view of executive's selection process than only TPB, though at the same time includes the most essential part of the previously discussed model – agent's attitudes and intentions. In conclusion, it can be assumed, that the real executive's selection would be highly predicted by the intention to do that, while this intention would be directly affected by executives' profiles (stimuli) which are actively evaluated by the agent.

Personal Branding Impact on Recruitment Intentions

Despite the fact that personal branding is relatively new area for the researchers, some multi-disciplinary studies, including personal branding elements and recruitment intentions, have already been carried out. This only shows the relevance and interest in the topic. While the early studies were concentrated on impression management techniques used in candidate's resume or during a job interview, subsequent research turned toward online identity, likely due to advent of online communication tools over the last decade. A summary of this research is provided in Table 3.

Knouse, Giacalone, & Pollard (1988) examine the impact of impression management techniques used in resume and cover letter on the perceptions of recruiters and conclude that these techniques are evaluated negatively except the usage of them in a cover letter. While Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke (2002) and Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi (2009) investigate them in the context of a job interview and get the positive results. These findings prove that personal branding in general has the effect on the perceptions of the recruiters.

Later studies focus on online identity and identify its importance in nowadays job market. Employers' inclination to use online information for evaluating a suitability of a

candidate for a job has been demonstrated (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015). At the same time the candidates also tend to engage in online personal branding, though their efforts often are insufficient or misdirected (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). Further studies highlight the importance of *LinkedIn* social channel in the context of recruitment. While

Table 3. *Research on Personal Branding in Recruitment Process*

Research	Aim	Methodology	Findings
Knouse, Giacalone, & Pollard (1988)	Investigates effect of <u>impression management</u> usage in resume and cover letter on <u>recruiters' perceptions</u> of 15 items.	<u>Quantitative</u>: 81 managers surveyed after showing hypothetical candidates resumes and cover letters: basic and endowed with impression management techniques.	Respondents rated the impression management cover letter negatively on several perceptions but positively on self-confidence. There were stronger and more negative reactions toward the resume, however.
Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke (2002)	Investigates how <u>applicant characteristics</u> influence the use of <u>impression management tactics</u> in interviews, and how these behaviours affect <u>interviewer perceptions</u> of person–job fit and applicant–interviewer similarity.	<u>Experiment</u>: mock interviews between 73 business students and 25 HR representatives. <u>Quantitative</u>: post-interview questionnaires	Results demonstrated that extraverted applicants made greater use of self-promotion during their interviews, while agreeableness was associated with non-verbal cues. Self-promotion was the impression management tactic most strongly related to interviewers' perceptions of person-job fit, whereas non-verbal impression management influenced perceived similarity.
Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi (2009)	Investigates the relationship between candidates' <u>self-presentation tactics</u> during a job interview and <u>interviewer ratings</u>, and whether these tactics also are correlated with <u>later job performance</u>.	<u>Experiment</u>: field and lab (mock) interviews between recruiters and candidates.	Research reveals that what you see in the interview may not be what you get on the job and that the unstructured interview is particularly impacted by these self-presentation tactics.
Labrecque, Markos, & Milne (2011)	Examines how people manage <u>online personal brands</u> in a Web 2.0 context and feel about others' judgment of the content they post.	<u>Qualitative</u>: brand audits of 12 people generated, given to undergraduate students and HR specialists to evaluate on 49 items, after comparing the evaluations of the two respondent groups, depth interview conducted.	People engage in personal branding, though their efforts are often misdirected or insufficient. They consider personal online branding challenging, especially, during life changes or when managing multiple audiences.

Research	Aim	Methodology	Findings
Hood, Robles, & Hopkins (2014)	Aims to determine the personal branding components that are perceived important by recruiters and employers when hiring job candidates. Focusing on social media tools.	Qualitative: semi-structured interview with 12 recruiters; Quantitative: online survey of 170 recruiters, measuring the importance placed on specific classroom activities, the most important skills recruiters look for in the interview process, which social media platforms are most widely utilized, which elements of the LinkedIn profile are most important and the most important elements to include on a résumé.	Recruiters used social media to include and/or exclude candidates from a search. The majority used LinkedIn profiles to find candidates.
Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning (2014)	Identifies the elements of a LinkedIn profile that hiring professionals focus on most, and then examine LinkedIn profiles in terms of these identified elements across different industries.	Qualitative: interviews with HR professionals to determine their usage of LinkedIn; Analysis: 288 LinkedIn profiles from three industries were compared on the 21 variables identified in the interviews	Study reveals that utilizing LinkedIn instead of the traditional resume might be problematic. Users were reluctant to fully complete their profiles. The vast majority of the sample was white, thus using LinkedIn as a selection device might lead to legal issues. LinkedIn has non-work-related components that could bias decision making.
Chiang & Suen (2015)	Investigates how a job seeker self-presentation affects recruiter's hiring recommendations in an online communities and what categories of self-presentation contribute to fit perceptions for obtaining hiring recommendations. Case of LinkedIn.	Qualitative: in-depth interviews and focus groups with HR professionals and job seekers; Quantitative: questionnaire for HR professional after examining randomly selected LinkedIn profiles (n=100).	Recruiters make inferences about job seekers' person–job fit and person–organization fit on the basis of argument quality in specific self-presentation categories, which in turn predict recruiters' intentions to recommend job seekers for hiring. Although certain specific categories of self-presentation offering source credibility have positive associations with person–person fit perception, there is a non-significant relationship between perceived person-person fit and hiring recommendations.
Berkelaar & Buzzanell (2015)	Explores employers' use of online information for personnel selection.	Qualitative: 45 in-depth employer interviews	The vast majority of employers directly acknowledged cybervetting: use of online information to evaluate the suitability of an individual for a particular role. Data revealed that employers evaluate the relative presence or absence of certain types of visual, textual, relational, and technological information in patterned and idiosyncratic ways.

Note. Compiled by the author.

Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning (2014) focus particularly on this channel and examine the elements of *LinkedIn* profile important for the HR professionals, the rest studies analyse it in a broader perspective, such as the effect of self-presentation techniques usage in *LinkedIn* on recruiters' hiring recommendation (Chiang & Suen, 2015), or being one of the personal branding components, that are important in a hiring situation (Hood, Robles, & Hopkins, 2014).

Review of multi-disciplinary research provides additional insights that also indicate the gap in academic literature. To begin with, existence of such type of studies confirms the relevance and need of this topic. Moreover, the research has been conducted in different contexts – both during a job interview, and also before it – what justifies a possibility to analyse executives' personal branding effect in the stages of their identification, screening and selection for a job interview. However, considering the high interrelation between personal brand and its target group, studies dedicated for specific individuals are still lacking, and executives' personal branding investigation from a hiring perspective is totally absent. Furthermore, current research tends to concentrate on a few personal branding strategies or attributes rather than to analyse a broader scope of elements at once in order to examine the interaction among them and/or possible compensatory effects. To sum up, personal branding in recruitment context is a relevant but still little explored area particularly among specific groups of individuals such as the executives.

Summary

Review of literature related to personal branding reveals that personal branding essentially corresponds to the product branding process encompassing building a brand

identity, then positioning it in a market, and finally achieving a desirable image among the target audience. Personal brand identity is composed of various individual attributes, while positioning relates to communication strategies and tools - all of these elements are identified in a sufficient amount of literature. Moreover, it is argued that CEO, the same as executive, may be deemed a personal brand. However, still little studies on executives' personal brand present few significant peculiarities comparing them with general personal branding models. This leads to the conclusion that personal branding strategies may vary depending on specific target groups or context, but the main principles and model of the process tend to remain the same in all cases. In addition, recent academic studies prove the influence of various personal branding elements on recruiters' perceptions.

Taking into account the importance of a specific audience and context for personal branding application, this research problem is to answer the question what and how personal branding attributes affect the selection of executives for a job interview in Lithuanian market. Previous studies analysing CEO personal branding have been made from the perspective of CEO brand and organization link. However, none of research exists that investigates particularly executives' personal branding in the context of their recruitment. Moreover, in similar research (Hood, Robles, & Hopkins, 2014) the importance of different personal branding elements were examined, but not their influence on recruiters' intentions. This research aims to fill this gap, as well as to analyse the interaction between the elements of personal brand identity and its positioning strategies. To sum up, further exploration of personal branding application in different specific contexts is necessary in order to develop this phenomenon as a distinctive marketing concept.

Research Methodology

Introduction

After reviewing personal branding and its application in recruitment area, and describing the research problem, this part of thesis discusses the methodological approach being applied for the study. Taking into account the goal of the research, prevailing theories and previous studies on personal branding, a research design is developed and its variables operationalized. Subsequently, research process and methods are justified. Then, after description of survey design, sampling techniques and data analysis methods are discussed. All these steps mentioned are important for producing a high quality research.

Research Design

The goal of this research is to identify and evaluate the personal branding attributes affecting executives' selection for a job interview in Lithuania. Previous literature review provides theoretical foundation for developing an appropriate analytical model for this purpose. Literature on executives' hiring identifies their selection as a decision process where selection is considered to be an executive search professional's behavioural moment. Theory of Planned Behaviour being one of the most prevailing human behaviour model states that any goal-directed human behaviour stems from the intention to perform that behaviour. Hence, in the context of this research, executives' selection for a job interview may be well predicted by executive search professionals' intention to select the candidate for a job interview.

Taking into account the complexity of executive search, while the final choice depends on plenty of other factors not only on the initial information about the candidate, it is likely that search professionals would tend to invite for a job interview as much po-

tential candidates as possible. However, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the differential factor that may be achieved due to personal branding techniques that executive applies. In this respect, it is worthwhile to specify dependent variable and formulate it as intention to prioritize the candidate when selecting him for a job interview.

According to Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Decision Model, decision process is directly influenced by various external and internal factors, as well as, for example, marketing stimuli. In this case, executives' personal branding may be considered as a compound of stimuli that directly impacts a selection decision. Theoretical considerations suggest that personal branding, as independent variable, is composed of two parts. Following Khedher's (2015) suggested Personal Branding Process Model and Bendisch's (2010) Conceptual Framework of CEO brand, these are personal brand identity, encompassing different attributes, and personal brand positioning, meaning communication strategies of those attributes (Table 1).
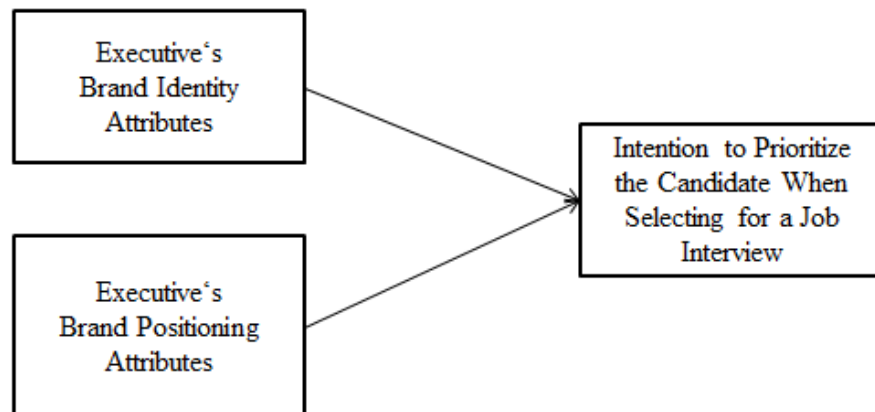
Figure 7. Analytical Research Model. Composed by the author.

Considering what has been mentioned before, an analytical model for the research is developed (Figure 7), where dependent variable is *Intention to Prioritize the Candidate*

When Selecting for a Job Interview and independent variables are *Executive's Brand Identity Attributes* and *Executive's Brand Positioning Attributes,* together forming an executive's personal branding construct. The links from personal branding attributes toward selection intention are unidirectional, implying that the more value for personal branding attribute is attached by executive search professional, the greater effect it has on executives' selection decision.

In line with this analytical model, this study addresses five research questions (RQ) and two hypotheses (H) as followed:

RQ1: What are the executives' personal branding attributes and levels related to executive's brand identity and executive's brand positioning*?* Literature indicates various personal branding attributes (Table 1) however there is no empirical evidence of their relevance for the executives in the context of their recruitment.

RQ2: Are there any significant interactions between different executive's personal branding attributes*?* As executive search professionals base their selection decision on the total value of a compound of different attributes, the question arises if there are any attributes that are interrelated.

RQ3: What is the preference for each executive's personal branding attribute level? The higher the preference for attribute level, the more value this attribute level adds to the total value of selection decision, thus the executive having this attribute level is more likely to be selected.

RQ4: Which executive's personal branding attributes are the most important for the respondents with different experience in executive search? The higher importance, the more difference in total value of selection decision the attribute can make.

H1: Executive's personal brand positioning related attributes will be less important for more experienced executive search professionals than for less experienced professionals. Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi (2009) stated that recruiters conducting unstructured interviews tend to be more susceptive to self-presentation tactics, thus it is assumed that more experienced executive search professionals may ignore some attributes, particularly related to positioning, due to previous experience or simply awareness of personal branding effect.

RQ5: How different is the effect of brand identity versus brand positioning related attributes on the probability of executive's selection? As the majority executive's identity attributes are related to inherent features, the possibilities to change them may be more difficult than implement communication strategies (positioning). Moreover, Khedher (2015) illustrates the personal brand positioning as the next step of the process following the brand identity, thus it is meaningful to test its differential effect separately.

H2: Addition of executive's brand positioning related attributes to the executive's profile while holding the executive's brand identity related attributes constant will increase the likelihood of executive's selection. Recent studies encompassing personal branding and recruitment showed that personal branding influences the perceptions and intentions of recruiters. Hence, it is predicted that the preference for the executives using brand positioning strategies will be higher than for the executives without these attributes.

Research Methods and Process

A sequential exploratory mixed methods research design is selected for this case. Mixed methods research is the type of research in which the elements of qualitative and

quantitative approaches are combined in order to reach deeper understanding and corroboration of phenomenon. One of the rationales of mixed methodological studies is a research development by "using the results from one method to help inform the other method" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 116). Consequently, commonly used sequential exploratory design starts from qualitative research which findings are then used to develop a quantitative survey instrument. According to Harrison & Reilly (2011), "exploratory designs are useful for exploring relationships when study variables are unknown; developing new instruments, based on initial qualitative analysis; generalizing qualitative findings; and refining or testing a developing theory" (p. 15). Such research approach is used in previous studies related to personal branding usage in recruitment area (Chiang & Suen, 2015; Hood, Robles, & Hopkins, 2014; Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning, 2014). Taking this into account and also considering that personal branding is not fully developed and empirical research on it is scarce, particularly in the context of executives' recruitment, this research method seems relevant.

As a result, firstly, the qualitative research using semi-structured in-depth interviews with executive search professionals is conducted in order to identify the executive's personal branding attributes relevant for the target population of this study. The interpretation of interview data together with secondary information (Table 1) from literature leads to development of the list of executive's personal brand attributes and levels which can be used for quantitative research (RQ1). Secondly, a computer-administered questionnaire is used in order to collect data for quantitative analysis and answer to the rest research questions (RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ5), as well as to test the hypothesis (H1,

H2). Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis is used for the part of quantitative research. The summary of research process is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. *Research Process*

Research Question	Hypothesis	Method	Output
STEP 1 **Secondary data analysis: literature review** **Primary data collection: semi-structured in-depth interview**			
RQ1: What are the executives' personal branding attributes and levels related to executive's brand identity and executive's brand positioning?	-	Qualitative data analysis	List of executive's personal branding attributes and levels
STEP 2 **Primary data collection: computer-based ACBC questionnaire**			
RQ2: Are there any significant interactions between different executive's personal branding attributes?	-	2 log-likelihood test	2-way interaction effects
QR3: What are the preferences for each executive's personal branding attribute level?	-	HB estimation	Utilities scores
RQ4: Which executive's personal branding attributes are the most important for the respondents with different experience in executive search?	H1: Executive's personal brand positioning related attributes will be less important for more experienced executive search professionals than for less experienced professionals.	HB estimation + segmentation	Average importance scores
RQ5: How different is the effect of brand identity versus brand positioning related attributes on the probability of executive's selection?	H2: Addition of executive's brand positioning related attributes to the executive's profile while holding the executive's brand identity related attributes constant will increase the likelihood of executive's selection.	Simulation using Randomized First Choice Model	Shares of Preference

Qualitative Research. In-Depth Interviews

The purposes of qualitative research are to gain more deeper insights about executives' selection process in Lithuania, elucidate what factors related to potential candidate are important for the executive search professionals at the initial stage of selection, and

facilitate the development of subsequent quantitative survey instrument. In order to achieve these goals in-depth interviews are employed. Such type of direct, personal interview is usually recommended when information from professional people is required (Malhotra, 2007, p. 162). Besides, executive search industry in Lithuania is relatively small and highly confidential what additionally justifies the selection of this procedure for the purpose of this research. Moreover, it was decided to conduct semi-structured interview and follow pre-prepared template of the questions (Table 5) in order to assure the same topics in all cases and to ease further qualitative data analysis.

Table 5. *Question Template for Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews*

No.	Question
1	What level of executives do you usually search for and for what type of industries, organizations?
2	How does the process of executives' selection for the first interview look like? Does it sometimes change due to any reasons?
3	What are five the most frequent channels where you get the information about potential candidates? Why these? What type of information are you searching there?
4	What are five the most important executive's features? How can you evaluate them before the first interview?
5	What executive's activities, related or not with his/her professional life, seem to you important / unimportant or favourable / unfavourable?
6	What difficulties are you facing with when searching the candidates for executive position? Do you see any opportunities which the executives tend to miss in order to represent themselves more efficiently?
7	What are the main factors that influence your intention to invite the candidate for a job interview?

Nonprobability judgmental sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the interviews as it is low cost, convenient and quick method (Malhotra, 2007, p. 344), appropriate for the small executive search industry that is known for the researcher, and meets the requirements of exploratory research when the data generalization to popu-

lation is not necessary. The respondents were recruited via warm calls and social media (*LinkedIn*). The target population is primarily the consultants working in leading executive search agencies in Lithuania, then internal HR directors, managers or HR freelancers who engage in executive selection process. It is planned to conduct as many interviews as necessary until a recurrence of information was reached.

In total 10 respondents were interviewed in March, 2017. The sample was sufficient as the information started to repeat early what has been expected due to homogeneity of population. 7 respondents were from executive search agencies, the rest – internal HR managers. All the interviews were conducted in Lithuanian and audio-taped except one due to respondent's rejection. The average length of interview was 33 minutes, ranging from 11 to 58 minutes.

The interviews revealed several useful findings. To begin with, the respondents generally agree with the value of personal branding as the less information about the candidate is available, the less likely that he/she will be invited for a job interview as executive search is usually hidden and confidential process. Moreover, it is highlighted that any single attribute probably would not be assessed as more important than the other because all the factors are usually evaluated together and considered in the overall specific context of executive search. This leads to the conclusion that survey questions simply eliciting the importance of personal branding attributes or their rating may not be efficient in quantitative research.

In addition, at the stage of screening and initial selection the potential executives are identified by a few essential attributes usually related to their working experience. According to the respondents, though the other attributes are not indicated as important

for selecting the candidate, but their presence frequently shapes associations with the significant values. For instance, while the fact of executive's participation in professional trainings is far from being determinant in selection decision process, but it denotes executive's inclination to improve and relates him/her with constant learning feature which is considered to be valuable for the search professionals. Finally, the attributes of executives' personal branding that are relevant for the executive search professionals in Lithuania have been indicated (Table 6) which will be an input for quantitative survey development.

Table 6. *In-Depth Interviews Data Matrix*

	Attribute	R.1	R.2	R.3	R.4	R.5	R.6	R.7	R.8	R.9	R. 10	SUM
Executive's Brand Identity	Work experience in relevant business, functional area	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**10**
	Company type and reputation	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	**8**
	Proved achievements related to work		1	1	1	1					1	**5**
	International experience		1				1		1			**3**
	Education		1	1		1	1		1	1	1	**7**
	Foreign languages			1	1		1					**3**
	Leadership skills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			**8**
	Constant learning	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	**8**
	Intelligence					1	1					**2**
	Entrepreneurship						1					**1**
Executive's Positioning	Connections (positive reference, recommendations)		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**9**
	Presence in Data Base		1	1		1	1	1	1		1	**7**
	Publicity, being an opinion leader		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**9**
	Presence in Social Networks (LinkedIn)		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**9**
	Membership in organizations, associations, communities, clubs, social responsibility activities			1	1	1	1	1		1		**6**
	Photo			1								**1**

Quantitative Research. Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis

In order to determine the relative importance and utilities the executive search professionals attach to executives' personal brand attributes, one of the most widely-used quantitative methods in marketing research, conjoint analysis, is selected. There are several reasons for that. Firstly, applications of conjoint analysis span all areas of marketing, such as new product or concept identification, competitive analysis, market segmentation, pricing, advertising, distribution. Malhotra (2007, p.674) indicates the suitability of conjoint analysis when determining the relative importance of attributes in the consumer choice process or identifying the composition of the most preferred brand. Secondly, conjoint analysis employs the more realistic context of asking respondents to evaluate potential product or brand profile rather than simply rate the importance of each attribute. The stimuli in conjoint analysis are combinations of attribute levels which foster the respondent to make trade-offs during selection process like in real situation. This is extremely important in the context of executives' selection process which is highly complex. Finally, such method has a potential to improve originality of this research as conjoint analysis has not been used in personal branding research yet.

Figure 8 shows that several methods of conjoint analysis exist in order to adapt better for different nature of decision processes. Choice-Based Conjoint (CBC) is the most popular method however the usage of Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint (ACBC) method is increasing every year gaining the second place in a rating. Both methods, developed by *Sawtooth Software, Inc*., are full-profile choice tasks which have been adopted by the marketing research community enthusiastically as they seem to mimic what actual buyers do more closely than ranking or rating product concepts in conventional

conjoint analysis ("ACBC Technical Paper," 2014, p.1). However, some weaknesses have been identified in CBC method. When a dozen or similar choice tasks are presented, the survey experience for respondents starts to be repetitive and boring, what leads to answering more quickly than would be possible if respondents were engaged in deeper thought processing using additive, compensatory model. Therefore, ACBC has been developed to solve this problem by adapting choice tasks to the respondents as much as possible, as well as eliminating attributes which are unimportant or unacceptable.
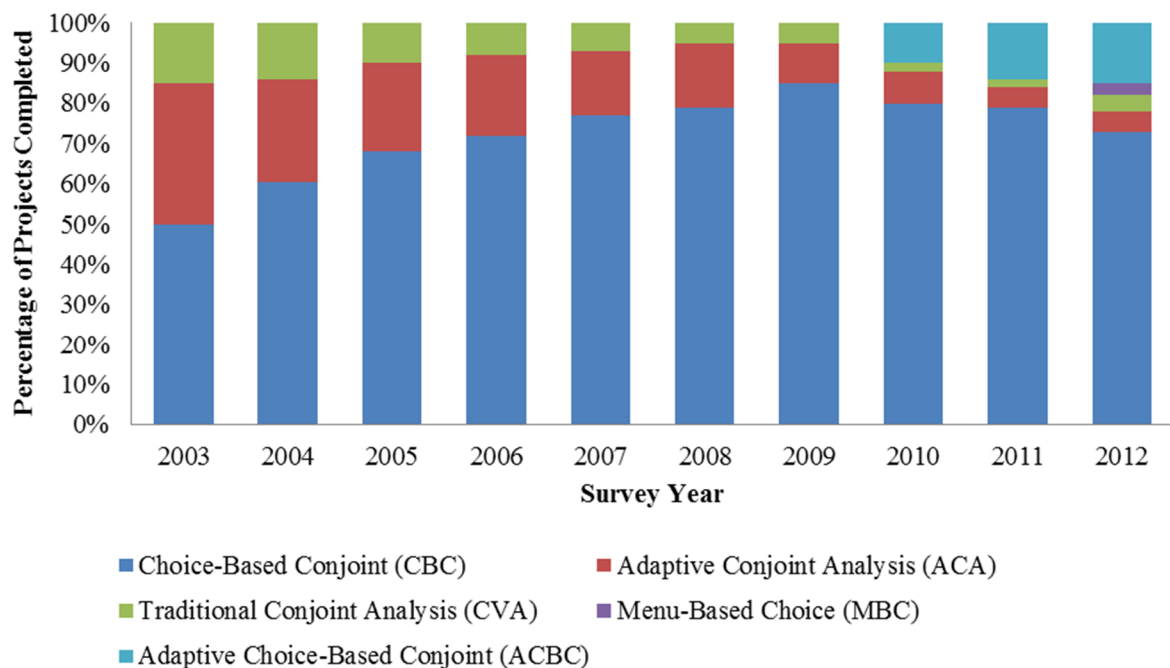
Figure 8. Usage of Conjoint Methods. Based on "Getting Started with Conjoint Analysis: Strategies for Product Design and Pricing Research (3rd ed.)," by B. K. Orme, 2014, Manhattan Beach, CA: Research Publishers LLC, p.40.

The standard ACBC computer-based survey process consists of three steps (Figure 9). Firstly, the respondents answer a build-your-own (BYO) questionnaire and configure their preferred choice. Secondly, based on BYO answers, the algorithm, following a near-orthogonal design, creates a set of similar product choices that are near neighbours

to the respondent's preferred product. In the screening section respondents indicate which of these similar products they would consider. After presentation of each group of concepts, previous answers are scanned to check whether the respondent is using non-compensatory screening rules. In this case, levels that are totally unacceptable or, contrarily, absolute requirement are identified. Finally, respondents make a final product selection among the concepts that are close to their BYO-specified product, identified as possibilities in screening section, and conform to any cut off rules. In choice tasks section the concepts are presented using a tournament format until the most preferred concept is identified. The attributes that have common levels across the concepts and, as well, are typically the most important factors for the respondent, are grayed out. This encourages the respondents to discriminate further among concepts based upon features of secondary importance. Optionally, a calibration section may be additionally included to the process so that to calibrate a *none* utility threshold. The concept identified in the BYO section, the concept winning the Choice Tasks tournament and four others are re-shown to the respondent asking how likely (a standard five-point Likert scale) he/she would be to choose each concept if it were available in the market. Setting a *none* utility threshold is necessary for the market simulator to predict if the concept would or not be chosen.
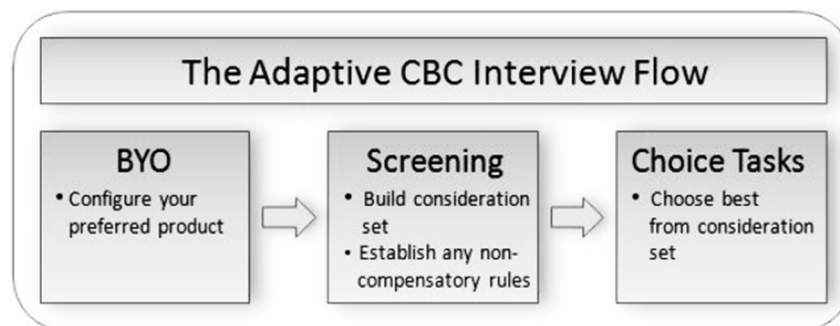
Figure 9. The Standard Adaptive Choice Survey Process. From "ACBC Technical Paper," by Sawtooth Software, Inc., 2014, p.10.

As a result, ACBC seems to be appropriate for this research. The survey process described previously illustrates well the method's potential to be less monotonous, more interactive and engaging in a more thoughtful process of choice making despite the fact that this survey takes from 50 to 300 per cent longer than standard CBC. This is important fact when considering the executive search as a complex decision process including many attributes of personal brand. In terms of the number of attributes, CBC works efficiently with maximum 10 different attributes. Qualitative research reveals that much more attributes are required for executive's personal branding study (Table 6). It is stated in Sawtooth Software website that ACBC is capable to deal with up to 100 attributes. Moreover, ACBC provides more information than CBC for computing part-worth utilities even when dealing with smaller sample sizes. Part-worth utilities may be estimated at the aggregate level using standard multinomial logit methods or at the individual level using hierarchical Bayes methods (Orme, 2014, p. 130). This is relevant in the context of this research as executive search industry in Lithuania is small. To sum up, all these arguments justify the usage of ACBC method for the development of quantitative survey instrument and further quantitative data analysis.

Survey Design

ACBC survey for this study was prepared using *Lighthouse Studio Version 9.3.1* software based on recommendations of its developer *Sawtooth Software, Inc*. At the outset, the list of attributes is necessary. After thorough interpretation of data from literature and in-depth interviews, it was detected that the majority of the attributes identified in literature coincided with the mentioned during the interviews. Additionally, the attributes

about candidate's age, appearance and gender, which have been mentioned in literature

but not in interviews, were included in the list (Table 7) upon the author's decision.

Table 7. *List of Attributes and Levels for ACBC Survey*

No.	Attribute	Level	Variable
1	Experience in a leading position, sector	Up to 5 years; From 5 to 10 years; More than 10 years	Brand Identity
2	Companies where the candidate worked	International capital, well-known in the market; International capital, little known in the market; Local capital, well-known in the market; Local capital, little known in the market	Brand Identity
3	Achievements at work, business	Visible; Not visible	Brand Identity
4	Level of education	Bachelor; Master; Executive MBA; PhD	Brand Identity
5	University completed	In Lithuania; Abroad	Brand Identity
6	Participation in vocational trainings	Yes; No	Brand Identity
7	The candidate's profile in the social network *LinkedIn*	Present, filled in detail; Present, not filled in detail; Not present	Brand Positioning
8	Online information about the candidate and his/her activities (except *LinkedIn*)	The candidate-generated content (personal web-site, blog, YouTube channel, etc.); Other authors, not the candidate, generated information; Information on the Internet is absent	Brand Positioning
9	The candidate for you is	Known and familiar; Known but not familiar; Unknown and unfamiliar	Brand Positioning
10	Feedback about the candidate	Recommendation from familiar person; Recommendation from unfamiliar person; Reference from familiar person; Reference from unfamiliar person; Neither reference, nor recommendation	Brand Positioning
11	Membership in professional organizations	Yes; No	Brand Positioning
12	Participation in business, professional events	Yes; No	Brand Positioning
13	Wide spectrum of non-professional interests	Visible; Not visible	Brand Identity
14	Gender	Female; Male	Brand Identity
15	Candidate's appearance for you	Attractive; Unattractive	Brand Positioning
16	Candidate's age	Up to 30 years; From 30 to 40 years; From 40 to 50 years; More than 50 years	Brand Identity

Note. Composed by the author based on data from Table 1 and Table 6.

At the next stage several decisions regarding design settings had to be made (Figure 10). To begin with, the number of total concepts (cards) which each respondent will evaluate (*Number of Screening Tasks x Number of Concepts per Screening Task*) had to be selected. It is recommended between 18 to 40 cards, depending on the attribute list length and complexity. However, in all cases, there should be such a number of cards included that would be sufficient for each level taken forward to the ACBC survey to appear at least twice, and preferably three times per respondent. This is easily tested by the feature in a program (Test Design) that generates dummy respondent data and tabulates the number of times each level appears across the concepts. After this procedure, it was decided to include 50 cards in total.

Figure 10. Settings of ACBC Survey Design. From Lighthouse Studio Version 9.3.1 software.

Next, the number of concepts brought into the Choice Tournament was chosen. *Sawtooth Software* suggests to limit this number to a little over half of total cards and to show them in triples. As a result, 27 cards ($27 < 50/2$) were set. The decisions regarding the number of attributes to vary from the BYO selection when generating concepts, the number of Unacceptables and Must-haves questions, as well as the number of calibration concepts, were made according to the recommendations in a software manual (Lighthouse Studio Manual v9.3., 2017, p. 468), except *Maximum Attributes to Vary from BYO Selection* that was increased from 4 to 6 in order to pass a design test.

After constructing the part of ACBC questionnaire, additional questions were added asking the respondent to indicate his/her gender, experience in executive search industry and the type of position held when selected an executive (executive search agency vs. internal position in employer's organization). Moreover, a disqualifying question was included at the beginning of the survey in order to avoid the respondents who do not meet the targeting criteria. When the survey designing was finished, a pilot survey was conducted among 5 respondents in order to get feedback. Consequently, some survey visual style and text corrections were made. Finally, an URL link to the survey was generated for distributing online among the target population.

Sampling Design

Sampling is one the components of a research design which should be carefully executed so that the research results are reliable. Sampling design process consists of determination of target population, sampling frame and technique, sample size and sampling execution. Target population for this research should be composed of people who have ever been engaged in executive search in Lithuania. Hence, in this case, it may be

assumed that the sampling units of target population are executive search agencies and large companies (1000 employees and more) which likely have the greatest need of the executives, while the elements of target populations are executive search consultants and internal HR directors, managers, or HR partners who work at employers' organizations. Executive search agencies (n=41) were identified using online enterprise search database *rekvizitai.vz.lt*, while large companies (n=77) were clarified based on the latest reports from the website of *State Social Insurance Fund Board* (Public Insurers Data, 2017). Consequently, total number of sampling units is 118, whereas the amount of elements can hardly be indicated precisely as there are no data sources indicating how many target respondents work for target organizations.

A nonprobability snowball sampling technique has been chosen, while after the selection of initial group of respondents, subsequent respondents are identified based on the referrals from initial respondents. The major advantage of this technique is that it increases the likelihood of locating the desired and often rare characteristics in the population. Previously estimated target population is not abundant and relatively homogenous, thus snowballing technique seems to be efficient as well as low-cost way that also promises a higher control of the sample quality.

Assuming that the target population size is 118, the sample size would be 91, with 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error and 50% response distribution, according to Slovin's formula (Tejada & Punzalan, 2012). However, ACBC may require even smaller sample size because it captures more individual data than conventional choice-based conjoint surveys by providing greater number of product concepts for the respondents' evaluation. In some research it is concluded that ACBC would produce similar group-level

standard-errors with 38% fewer participants than a choice-based conjoint survey (Cunningham, Deal, & Chen, 2010, p. 269). Consequently, the minimum sample size for this study may be reduced even to 56 and still provide significant data.

In terms of sampling execution, the sampling units and elements were identified in public data (internet search, state reports, company's websites, *LinkedIn* profiles). Initial group of respondents were those whose contacts were attainable for the researcher. Survey link was sent to the respondents through emails or messages via social media, asking to fill the questionnaire and then to recommend subsequent respondents. Survey has been conducted for approximately two weeks from 10th till 26th April, 2017.

Data Analysis

After conducting the survey, it is planned to check the data and eliminate the incomplete or repetitive answers (from the same IP addresses). Descriptive statistics implemented by Excel will be used to analyse the sample and the questions about respondents' working position, work experience and gender. Further data will be analysed using automated tools provided by *Lighthouse Studio 9.3.1* software. Firstly, counting analysis will be implemented which summarizes how many times each level has been included and chosen in different stages of the survey. Secondly, *Interaction Search Tool* will be used in order to identify any first-order interaction effects – situation when two or more levels combining have a different utility for people than the simple sum of their separate parts. The strength and importance of these interactions will be checked by a 2 Log-Likelihood test. Thirdly, hierarchical Bayes (HB) estimation will be used for estimating part-worth utilities for each level and the importance of each attribute. The main advantage of HB is that it borrows information from other respondents in the sample to sta-

bilize the estimates for each individual. Finally, previously estimated part-worth utilities will be converted into shares of preference using randomized first choice model so that to predict what executive profile would be likely selected. All these analysis methods will contribute to the search of the answers to the research questions raised in a research analytical model.

Summary

This chapter discussed the chosen methodology of the research. Based on previous literature review, an analytical research model was constructed and research questions and hypotheses formulated. A sequential exploratory mixed methods research design was selected for this study when qualitative data acquired is used to inform a further quantitative research. Qualitative data was collected from the executive search professionals during in-depth interviews in order to clarify the relevant elements of executives' personal branding. This data then was used to develop the list of attributes and levels for quantitative, computer-based survey. It was decided that Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint analysis, developed by *Sawtooth Software, Inc.*, is the most appropriate method for quantitative survey development, data collection and analysis.

Empirical Research Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative questionnaire starting from the respondents' demographic characteristics and then discussing the results related to the research questions and hypotheses:

RQ2: Are there any significant interactions between different executive's personal branding attributes?

QR3: What are the preferences for each executive's personal branding attribute level?

RQ4: Which executive's personal branding attributes are the most important for the respondents with different experience in executive search?

RQ5: How different is the effect of brand identity versus brand positioning related attributes on the probability of executive's selection?

H1: Executive's personal brand positioning related attributes will be less important for more experienced executive search professionals than for less experienced professionals.

H2: Addition of executive's brand positioning related attributes to the executive's profile while holding the executive's brand identity related attributes constant will increase the likelihood of executive's selection.

Sample Characteristics

129 responses were collected from which 72 had to be eliminated: 48 - incomplete, 15 – disqualified, 6 – duplication of IP addresses, 3 – illogically short length

of survey time (6-8 minutes). Consequently, data from 57 (44%) respondents were used

for analysis. An average length of survey time identified was 34 minutes. Distribution of

data about respondents' working position, experience and gender is illustrated in Table 8.

18% (10) of all the respondents work for executive search agencies, while the rest (n=47,

82%) are internal people engaging in executive search at the employer's organizations.

The majority of them (70%) are females and this distribution is consistent among both

groups of respondents divided by position. According to official statistics, females com-

prised 39% of occupied managers and 70% of occupied specialists in Lithuania in 2016.

Keeping in mind traditional domination of women in HR sector, the distribution of gen-

der is considered representative. More than half of respondents (58%) denoted their expe-

rience in executive search from 1 to 5 years, and the total average of experience is 6,6

years. Slightly higher tenure is characteristic for the people working in agencies than or-

ganizations due to more experienced males in that group.

Table 8. *Sample Characteristics*

Working position	Agency		Employer		Total	
	Frequen-cy	*Percentage*	Frequency	*Percentage*	Frequency	*Percentage*
Total Count	**10**	*18%*	**47**	*82%*	**57**	*100%*
Female	7	*70%*	33	*70%*	40	*70%*
Male	3	*30%*	14	*30%*	17	*30%*
Experience, <=5 years	5	*50%*	28	*60%*	33	*58%*
Experience, >5 years	5	*50%*	19	*40%*	24	*42%*
Total Average of Expe-rience, years	**7,1**		**6,5**		**6,6**	
Female experience	6,0		7,0		6,8	
Male experience	9,7		5,3		6,1	

Counting Analysis

Counting different outcomes in ACBC data provides useful insights (Appendix

1). To begin with, it is seen that 4 was a minimum times any level of each attribute oc-

curred across the concepts viewed by the respondent, including any replacement cards, while the maximum was 8. Moreover, respondents' selection in BYO section is revealed. Ideal profile has been described as experienced in a leading position or sector from 5 to 10 years (56%), working in well-known companies, either international (40%) or local (47%), possessing clearly visible professional achievements (96%) and master degree (61%), preferably participating in vocational trainings (93%), also having a detail *LinkedIn* profile (68%) and present in online media (information generated by other authors, 58%), rather unfamiliar for executive search professional (known but not familiar – 58%, unknown and unfamiliar – 32%), but recommended by familiar person (70%), participating in professional, business events (93%) and having wide spectrum of non-professional interests (84%), but not interested in membership in professional organizations (no – 54%). Similar levels are also dominating in "winning" concepts during choice tasks tournament. Just in this case the list of variables have been expanded what additionally shows that male (53%), from 30 to 50 old years (77%), preferably attractive (68%) are the features chosen more frequently.

In addition, executive's experience from 5 to 10 years (7%) and his/her visible achievements (16%) were identified as must haves. Whereas, among unacceptable features were highlighted not visible achievements (16%) or recommendations from other people (no feedback - 11%), possessing only bachelor degree (11%) or being more than 50 years old (11%), as well as not being present in online media (11%).

Interaction Effects

RQ2: Are there any significant interactions between different executive's personal branding attributes?

Sometimes two or more levels combining have a different utility than the simple sum of their separate parts. In order to test all potential 2-way interaction effects and answer to the research question a 2-log-likelihood test was used, which is more sensitive than the Chi-Square statistic. Five interaction effects (Table 9) were identified as significant with 99% confidence level, p-value from 0,0021 to 0,0076. However, there is no reason to include any of these interaction effects into further utilities estimation model as the difference in Percent Certainty (pseudo R-squared) values of these models are too low (max.=0,35%) to improve its predictability.

Table 9. *Two-Way Interaction Effects*

Run	Log-Likelihood Fit	Chi Square Value	2LL P-Value for Interaction Effect	Gain in Pct. Cert. over Main Effects
+ Participation in vocational trainings x Wide spectrum of non-professional interests	-3594,9098	9,4382	**0,0021**	0,12%
+ Level of education x Feedback about the candidate	-3585,7529	27,7519	**0,0060**	0,35%
+ Experience in a leading position, sector x The candidate's profile in the social network LinkedIn	-3592,5392	14,1795	**0,0067**	0,18%
+ Experience in a leading position, sector x Companies where the candidate worked	-3590,7935	17,6707	**0,0071**	0,22%
+ Achievements at work, business x Participation in business, professional events	-3596,0694	7,1191	**0,0076**	0,09%

Note. 2-log-likelihood test, 99% confidence level, n=57

Utilities Estimation

QR3: What are the preferences for each executive's personal branding attribute level?

Utility scores, also known as part-worths, indicate the desirability of each attribute level. The utility estimate for each level is the average rating of all the cards that include that specific level. Utilities scores of each attributes, calculated using Hierarchical Bayes (HB) estimation method and summarized as normalized zero-centered diffs, are presented in Appendix 2.
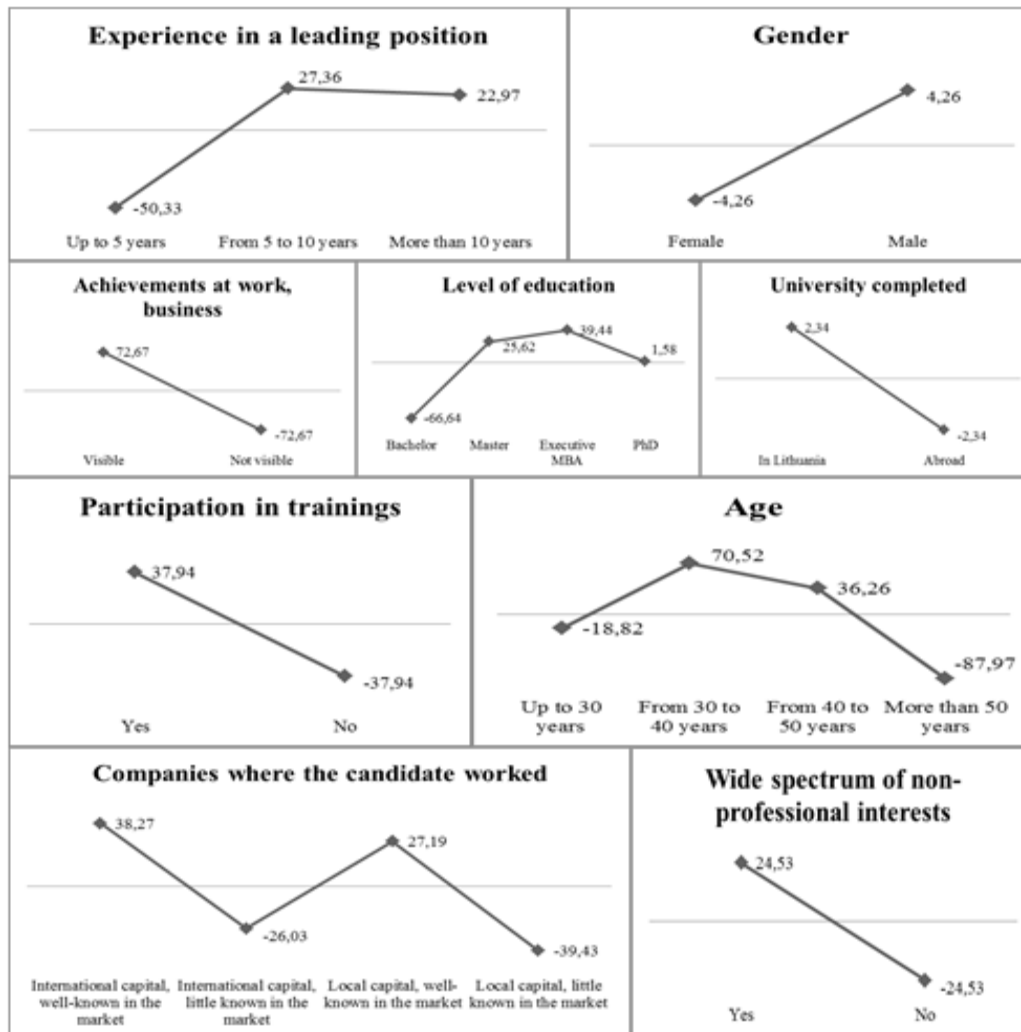
Figure 11. Line Charts of Part-Worth Utilities for Brand Identity Attribute Levels, n=57

In terms of part-worth utilities for brand identity attribute levels (Figure 11), executive's gender and country, where he graduated, have almost neutral utility value (close

to 0) for the executive search professionals. Whereas the highest utility scores are at-
tached to the levels related to executive's age, education and achievements. The highest
negative utility value is referred to the candidates older than 50 years (-87,97), while the
most valuable executives are considered to be from 30 to 40 years (+70,52). Bachelor
degree is evaluated extremely negatively (-66,64), and executive MBA is the most pref-
erable (+39,44). As it was mentioned before, executive's visible achievements in busi-
ness/professional area significantly add 72,67 points. Regarding other, less important lev-
els, executive's experience in a well-known company, either in international or local, is
valued much more than in little known. As well as, longer experience in a leading posi-
tion (more than 5 years) is related to higher utilities than less than 5 years (-50,33). Par-
ticipation in trainings (+37,94) and having non-professional interests (+24,53) are also
favourable features.

When it comes to the brand positioning attribute levels (Figure 12), the highest
utility is attached to the executives recommended by familiar person (+92,72). Candi-
date's appearance, participation in business events or membership in professional organi-
zations are of little significance. Though, it is interesting to note that such membership
brings even a bit negative value (-10,77). It is also seen from the data, that low awareness
of the executive is considered as disadvantage, as absolutely unknown and unfamiliar
candidate is evaluated negatively (-20,53), as well as absence in *LinkedIn* (-17,28) and
generally on Internet (-42,83).

Personal Branding Attribute Importance

RQ4: Which executive's personal branding attributes are the most important for
the respondents with different experience in executive search?
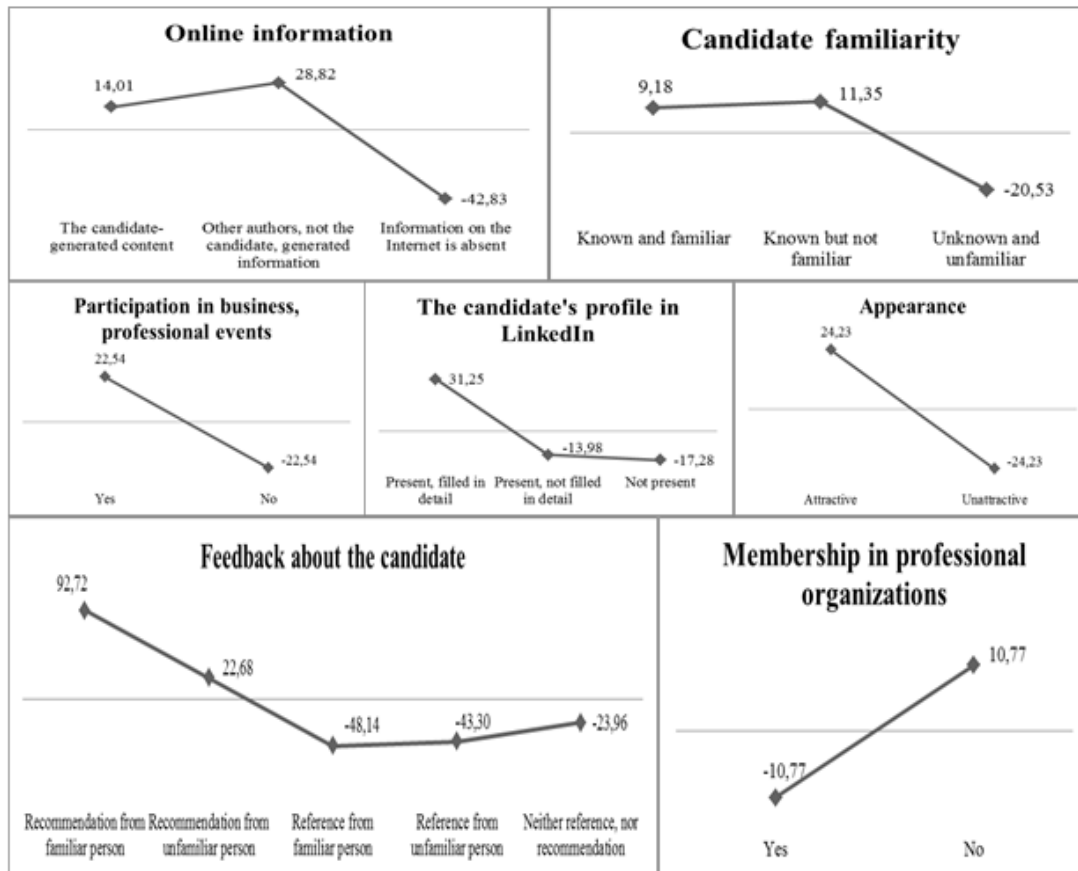
Figure 12. Line Charts of Part-Worth Utilities for Brand Positioning Attribute Levels, n=57

Attribute importance reflects how much difference each attribute could make in the total utility of a concept, in other words, this is the range in the attribute's utility values. Average importance scores for the total sample are presented in Appendix 3. According to this, feedback about the candidate (12.58%), his/her age (12,55%), level of education (9,47%) and executive's achievements (9,22%) were identified as the most important, while the impact of gender (2,11%), university type (2,38%), membership in professional organizations (2,80%) and participation in business events (3,32%) considered to be low (Figure 13). Comparing attributes from the perspective of personal branding construct, a slightly higher importance is assigned to brand identity related attributes (av-

erage of importance scores 6,69%) than brand positioning (average of importance scores 5,69%).

Average Importance (%)

Attribute	Score
Gender	2,11
University completed	2,38
Membership in professional organizations	2,80
Participation in business, professional events	3,32
Wide spectrum of non-professional interests	3,89
Appearance	4,03
Candidate familiarity	4,87
Participation in vocational trainings	4,90
The candidate's profile in the social network LinkedIn	5,24
Online information (except LinkedIn)	6,95
Experience in a leading position, sector	7,48
Companies where the candidate worked	8,20
Achievements at work, business	9,22
Level of education	9,47
Age	12,55
Feedback about the candidate	12,58

Figure 13. Bar Chart of Average Importance Scores, n=57

H1: Executive's personal brand positioning related attributes will be less important for more experienced executive search professionals than for less experienced professionals.

Respondents were divided in two segments based on the length of their experience in executive search. First group is composed on those whose experience is 5 years and less, another – more than 5 years. This criterion is based on sample median and was selected due to possibility to gain relatively equal segments by size. Attribute importance by segments are presented in Appendix 4.

According to the results, more experienced respondents tend to pay more attention to the brand identity related attributes like candidate's age (14,38% vs. 11,22%), experi-

ence in a leading position (8,17% vs. 6,97%) and level of education (10,06% vs. 9,04%) than less experienced respondents (Figure 14). On the other hand, they are less susceptive to the candidate's presence in online media (5,84% vs. 7,75%), his/her participation in business events (2,63% vs. 3,82%), location of university (1,70% vs. 2,88%) and candidate's appearance (3,38% vs. 5,40%).

Despite the fact, that less important attributes for more experienced respondents mainly encompass brand positioning attributes, their overall importance for selection decision is relatively low. Both respondents groups prioritize the same top five attributes such as feedback about the candidate, executive's age, his/her level of education, achievements and companies were executive worked. To sum up, there is little significant evidence that executive's brand positioning related attributes are less important for more experienced respondents than the rest of them, hence H1 is refuted.
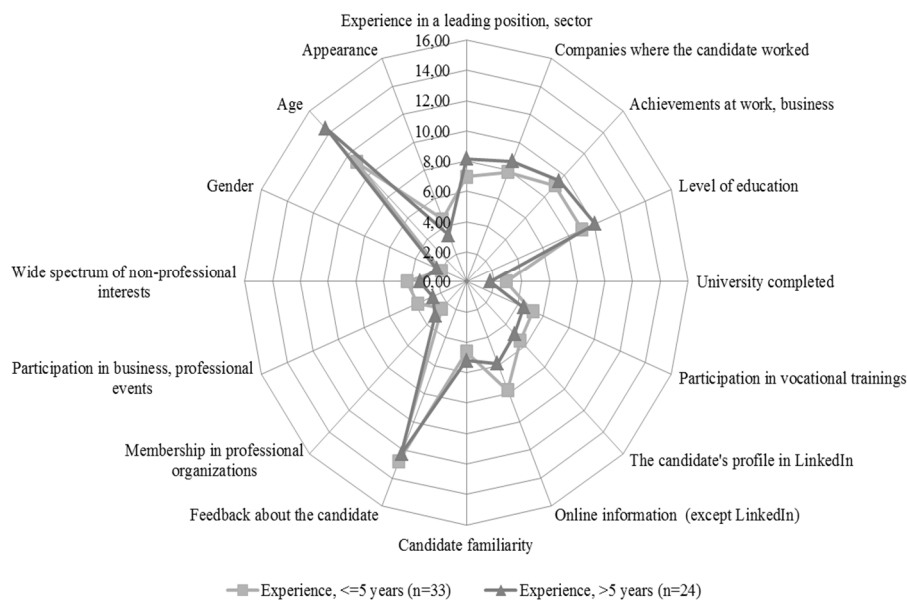
Figure 14. Radar Chart of Segmentation of Average Importance Scores According to Respondents' Experience in Executive Search

Choice Simulation

RQ5: How different is the effect of brand identity versus brand positioning related attributes on the probability of executive's selection?

H2: Addition of executive's brand positioning related attributes to the executive's profile while holding the executive's brand identity related attributes constant will increase the likelihood of executive's selection.

In order to answer to the research question and test the hypothesis, shares of preference for different hypothetical executive's profiles were estimated using *Market Simulator* in *Lighthouse Studio v.9.3.1* program. Three profiles were created based on the value of executive's brand identity and executive's brand positioning attribute levels (Appendix 5): Profile1 with both strong identity and also strong positioning, Profile2 – with strong identity but weak positioning, Profile3, contrary to Profile2, having weak identity but strong positioning related attribute levels. Simulation, done using randomized first choice model, results (Table 10) showed that 92,60% of respondents would choose Profile 1, while the likelihood of selection of the rest profiles is very low: 1,38% of respondents would choose Profile 2 and only 0,68% - Profile 3. 5,33% of respondents would not choose any of these profiles.

Table 10. *Shares of Preference for Simulated Executives' Profiles*

Profile	Shares of Preference	Std Error	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Profile1 (Strong Identity + Strong Positioning)	92,60 %	2,28 %	88,13 %	97,08 %
Profile2 (Strong Identity + Weak Positioning)	1,38 %	0,98 %	-0,54 %	3,31 %
Profile3 (Weak Identity + Strong Positioning)	0,68 %	0,66 %	-0,61 %	1,97 %
None	5,33 %	1,93 %	1,54 %	9,12 %

Note. n=57, confidence level 95%

These findings lead to the conclusion that personal brand positioning related attributes positively affect the total value of executive's profile and increase the likelihood of his selection for a job interview. This confirms the Hypothesis 2. However, the effect of personal brand identity related attributes is significantly greater – if executive's profile has many lower value identity related attribute levels, even the most valuable positioning related attribute levels will not compensate this disadvantage.

Summary

The survey response rate, being 44%, is relatively low, due to probably the length and complexity of the survey. Despite this fact, the minimum required quantity of responses was achieved. Majority of the respondents (70%) was women however, according to official statistics and general knowledge about human resource industry, such gender distribution mirrored the target population sufficiently. There were congruence between initial respondents' priorities (BYO selection) for attribute levels and their presence in "winning" concepts hence the respondents tend to be consistent in their responses what only increases the reliability of the survey results.

Five significant 2-way interaction effects were identified between these attributes: participation in vocational trainings and wide spectrum of non-professional interest, level of education and feedback about the candidate, experience in a leading position and presence in *LinkedIn*, experience in a leading position and companies where the candidate worked, achievement at work and participation in business event. However, these effects were not included in utility estimation due to low potential to improve selection predictability.

Utilities estimation showed that the highest preference are for 30-40 years old executives, possessing visible achievements at work and being recommended by someone familiar to executive search professional. Whereas, the highest negative utility values are attached to bachelor education, non-visible achievements, little experience in a leading position (less than 5 years), working at local capital, little known companies, being more than 50 years old and absent in online media.

Respondents identified feedback about the candidate, his/her age, level of education, achievement at work and companies, where the candidate worked, as the most important attributes affecting their selection decision. While candidate's gender, university completed, membership in professional organizations, participation in business events and candidate's wide spectrum of non-professional interests were the least important. Segmentation according to respondents' experience in executive search showed that more experienced respondents paid slightly more attention to personal brand identity related attributes than personal brand positioning related attributes, however the differences were minor thus Hypothesis 1 was not confirmed.

Simulation of three hypothetical executive profiles revealed that the addition of personal brand positioning related attributes positively affects the total value of executive's profile what confirms Hypothesis 2. However, these attributes do not have a compensatory effect when personal brand identity related attributes are weak. This leads to the conclusion that the usage of personal brand positioning strategies is important for the executive, but their effect is significant only when personal brand identity is sufficiently strong.

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

This part of thesis discusses and interprets the main empirical research findings in light of previous studies. Then, theoretical and managerial implications are provided. In addition to that, potential research limitations are revealed as well as recommendations for future research on personal branding are presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with the summary of the main points of the thesis.

Synthesis of Literature and Empirical Research Findings

Plenty of personal branding attributes was identified in literature (Table 1), stemmed either from practice or from empirical research. Moreover, different sets of them were empirically tested in multi-disciplinary studies (Table 3) and proved their effect on recruiters' perception or intentions. However, this research, including a wide spectrum of personal branding attributes, showed that not all of the attributes identified in literature were important and valuable for the executive search professionals in executive's selection stage. This makes to refer to the CEO personal brand models, developed by Bendisch (2010) and Fetscherin (2015), where the significance of stakeholders in personal brand development is extremely stressed. The same as in product branding, personal branding is based on meeting the needs and preferences of specific target group.

In terms of the attributes important for the executive search professionals, it is interesting to discuss executive's age and gender. None of these attributes were mentioned during the in-depth interviews. Only Respondent 5 indicated that there is a growing tendency of preferring younger candidates, though, in respondent's opinion, practice usually shows that such candidates lack of maturity needed for executive position. De-

spite this, survey results revealed that age is the second important attribute, and the highest utility value is attached to relatively young, 30-40 years old executives, while the least valued are executives older than 50 years. Incidentally, these findings were discussed with another respondent from questionnaire sample during the data analysis. Less preference for the older candidates was explained as the issue of different generations – younger executives are associated with more progressive managerial practices that are becoming relevant in developing corporate environment in Lithuania. Meanwhile, gender was identified as the least important attribute and this fact is essential taking into account recent public debates on gender inequality among top managerial positions in European organizations.

Bendisch (2010) and Khedher (2015) discerned personal brand identity and personal brand positioning parts in personal branding construct. This logic was followed in choice simulation too. Test of hypothetical executives' profiles with different strength of identity and/or positioning parts revealed that brand positioning related attributes positively affect the total utility of the concept with the condition that brand identity related attributes are of high value too. Moreover, brand identity related attributes and brand positioning related attributes together generate much more value than separately.

This, firstly, coincides with Bendisch's (2010) CEO personal brand concept which highlights the relationship between personal brand identity and personal brand positioning. Secondly, it supports general personal branding models illustrating personal branding process (Khedher, 2015; Nessman, 2008) that starts from brand identity part and, then, follows to brand positioning part. Thirdly, this finding relates to Peters (1997) statement that no matter how well your skills are – you need to market yourself, and to

Bendisch's (2010, p. 260) proposition for future research to answer the question whether any individual can be branded with appropriate branding strategies. Considering the research results, marketing strategies may benefit the individual only if he/she has something valuable that can be branded. Thus, successful branding of individual depends on either inherent features that are valued by target group, or possibilities to improve them. To sum up, these considerations support Shepherd's (2005, p. 593) thought about potential conflicts in personal branding due to person-centred approach.

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to personal branding research area, which is still underdeveloped, and expands the knowledge of personal branding application in executive search. Contrary to the previous research, this is the first effort to analyse executive's personal brand from the perspective of brand creator instead of stakeholder. Empirical research results not only support previously developed personal branding theoretical frameworks, but also highlight the importance of personal brand identity part, particularly in branding the executives. Moreover, this research identifies specific executive's personal branding attributes that are important for their selection for a job interview that provides a deeper understanding about the composition of personal brand and brings a foundation for future research.

Managerial Implications

The research provides several practical recommendations for the aspiring executives. It is proved that application of personal branding may be beneficial in order to improve executive's competitiveness and the likelihood to be selected for job interview in Lithuania. However, it is recommended to take care of essential value of the 'product',

before starting to actively market yourself. Any successful executive, first and foremost, should be well-educated and preferably have master or executive MBA degree, also possess at least 5 years of leading experience in well-known companies and demonstrate convincing achievements at work. When it comes to awareness, executives should invest in their personal network as the antecedent to prompt recommendations. In addition, executive's online presence should be established in order to assure easier accessibility to the information about the executive. What is important to note that the need of communication strategies is even greater for the older candidates as the executive search professionals value the least the candidates who are older than 50 years.

Research Limitations

As with many research the present study has some limitations due to time and resource constraints. First limitation is related to the survey design. Though ACBC survey tends to be more engaging and convenient for the respondents than non-adaptive conjoint surveys, it still took more than 30 minutes to fill on average. Taking into consideration that the questionnaire also required relatively high attention and intense thinking, there is a potential risk that some respondents started to answer to the questions automatically. Moreover, executive's personal branding attribute levels and their combinations in survey could seem non-realistic, particularly, when the specific search context was absent. Survey complexity leads to the second limitation associated with sample. Response rate was low mainly due to incomplete surveys. Thus, the sample size may be criticized as too small. To sum up, due to mentioned limitations, the survey results should be considered with caution.

Future Research

Presented limitations lead to the suggestions for future research. Firstly, the study with bigger sample and more demographic questions may bring additional opportunities for respondents' segmentation according to industry, company types, or any other relevant dimensions. Secondly, this research results illustrate executive's personal brand in the context of relatively small Lithuanian market with only developing corporate and managerial culture. Findings from neighbour markets or developed Western European countries may bring additional insights based on cultural or managerial practice differences. Finally, future research may focus on a few certain executive's personal brand attributes related to brand identity, e.g. age, and analyse the executive search professionals' attitudes toward them in order to find the way how to influence the perceptions.

Conclusions

1. In order to achieve the goal of the study, first of all, existing literature on personal branding and executive's selection decision was reviewed. It revealed that personal branding process is mainly based on product branding and it comprises personal brand identity, personal brand positioning and personal brand image parts. The attributes related to brand identity and brand positioning parts were identified for further research approach development. According to literature, executives' selection was defined as executive search professionals' decision which is predicted by the intention to select particular executive.

2. Based on theoretical considerations, an analytical research model was developed where executive's personal branding attributes directly affect the executive's selection decision. A sequential exploratory mixed methods research design was chosen to

address the research questions and hypotheses. Qualitative research part, implemented as semi-structured in-depth interviews with the executive search professionals, brought additional insights about executive's personal branding elements. Together with the findings in literature they were transformed into executive's personal branding attributes and levels for further quantitative research. Adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis was selected for computer-based survey development and further data analysis.

3. Utilities estimation showed that the highest preference are for 30-40 years old executives, possessing visible achievements at work and being recommended by someone familiar to executive search professionals. Moreover, respondents identified feedback about the candidate, his/her age, level of education, achievement at work and companies, where the candidate worked, as the most important attributes affecting their selection decision. Simulation of different hypothetical executives' profiles showed that addition of personal brand positioning related attributes to the profile increases the total value of the concept however it hardly compensates the weaknesses in brand identity part.

4. After discussion of empirical research results in light of previous studies, theoretical and managerial implications were provided. This research expands the knowledge of still poorly-researched personal branding area, as well as provides initial findings about executive's personal branding for future research. At the same time, identification of personal branding attributes and their importance for the executive search professionals in Lithuania offers opportunities for the executives to increase their competitiveness in the market. Finally, the research limitations and recommendations for future research were presented.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Results of Counting Analysis for ACBC

Attribute / Level	Selections in BYO Section		Must Have Report		Unacceptable Report		"Winning" Concepts	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Experience in a leading position, sector								
Up to 5 years	22	39	0	0	4	7	13	23
From 5 to 10 years	32	56	4	7	0	0	26	46
More than 10 years	3	5	0	0	0	0	18	32
Companies where the candidate worked								
International capital, well-known in the market	23	40	0	0	0	0	18	32
International capital, little known in the market	1	2	0	0	1	2	8	14
Local capital, well-known in the market	27	47	0	0	1	2	26	46
Local capital, little known in the market	6	11	0	0	3	5	5	9
Achievements at work, business								
Visible	55	96	9	16	0	0	47	82
Not visible	2	4	0	0	9	16	10	18
Level of education								
Bachelor	7	12	0	0	6	11	7	12
Master	35	61	0	0	0	0	18	32
Executive MBA	14	25	0	0	0	0	22	39
PhD	1	2	0	0	5	9	10	18
University completed								
In Lithuania	33	58	0	0	0	0	33	58
Abroad	24	42	0	0	0	0	24	42
Participation in vocational trainings								
Yes	53	93	1	2	0	0	48	84
No	4	7	0	0	1	2	9	16
The candidate's profile in the social network *LinkedIn*								
Present, filled in detail	39	68	0	0	1	2	32	56
Present, not filled in detail	6	11	0	0	2	4	13	23
Not present	12	21	0	0	2	4	12	21
Online information about the candidate and his/her activities (except *LinkedIn*)								
The candidate-generated content	15	26	0	0	3	5	17	30
Other authors, not the candidate, generated information	33	58	1	2	0	0	29	51
Information on the Internet is absent	9	16	0	0	6	11	11	19
The candidate for you is								
Known and familiar	5	9	0	0	1	2	19	33
Known but not familiar	34	60	0	0	0	0	30	53
Unknown and unfamiliar	18	32	0	0	0	0	8	14

Attribute / Level	Selections in BYO Section		Must Have Report		Unacceptable Report		"Winning" Concepts	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Feedback about the candidate								
Recommendation from familiar person	40	70	1	2	0	0	36	63
Recommendation from unfamiliar person	5	9	0	0	3	5	7	12
Reference from familiar person	6	11	0	0	6	11	5	9
Reference from unfamiliar person	1	2	0	0	7	12	3	5
Neither reference, nor recommendation	5	9	0	0	6	11	6	11
Membership in professional organizations								
Yes	26	46	0	0	0	0	28	49
No	31	54	0	0	0	0	29	51
Participation in business, professional events								
Yes	53	93	2	4	0	0	46	81
No	4	7	0	0	2	4	11	19
Wide spectrum of non-professional interests								
Visible	48	84	1	2	0	0	48	84
Not visible	9	16	0	0	1	2	9	16
Gender								
Female	-	-	0	0	0	0	27	47
Male	-	-	0	0	0	0	30	53
Candidate's age								
Up to 30 years	-	-	0	0	4	7	9	16
From 30 to 40 years	-	-	0	0	0	0	24	42
From 40 to 50 years	-	-	0	0	0	0	20	35
More than 50 years	-	-	0	0	6	11	4	7
Candidate's appearance for you								
Attractive	-	-	1	2	0	0	39	68
Unattractive	-	-	0	0	1	2	18	32

Appendix 2. Part-Worth Utilities

Attribute Level	Utility	Std Deviation
Experience in a leading position, sector		
Up to 5 years	-50,33	62,99
From 5 to 10 years	27,36	45,44
More than 10 years	22,97	40,86
Companies where the candidate worked		
International capital, well-known in the market	38,27	35,28
International capital, little known in the market	-26,03	45,17
Local capital, well-known in the market	27,19	41,39
Local capital, little known in the market	-39,43	53,96
Achievements at work, business		
Visible	72,67	56,69
Not visible	-72,67	56,69
Level of education		
Bachelor	-66,64	64,38
Master	25,62	43,02
Executive MBA	39,44	43,44
PhD	1,58	57,93
University completed		
In Lithuania	2,34	23,84
Abroad	-2,34	23,84
Participation in vocational trainings		
Yes	37,94	32,14
No	-37,94	32,14
The candidate's profile in the social network LinkedIn		
Present, filled in detail	31,25	34,18
Present, not filled in detail	-13,98	35,65
Not present	-17,28	38,87
Online information about the candidate and his/her activities (except LinkedIn)		
The candidate-generated content	14,01	43,43
Other authors, not the candidate, generated information	28,82	43,03
Information on the Internet is absent	-42,83	52,08
Candidate familiarity		
Known and familiar	9,18	46,91
Known but not familiar	11,35	29,60
Unknown and unfamiliar	-20,53	33,09
Feedback about the candidate		
Recommendation from familiar person	92,72	65,10
Recommendation from unfamiliar person	22,68	42,93
Reference from familiar person	-48,14	71,59
Reference from unfamiliar person	-43,30	58,80
Neither reference, nor recommendation	-23,96	51,77

Attribute Level		Utility	Std Deviation
Membership in professional organizations			
	Yes	-10,77	30,29
	No	10,77	30,29
Participation in business, professional events			
	Yes	22,54	27,47
	No	-22,54	27,47
Wide spectrum of non-professional interests			
	Yes	24,53	31,15
	No	-24,53	31,15
Gender			
	Female	-4,26	22,13
	Male	4,26	22,13
Age			
	Up to 30 years	-18,82	70,25
	From 30 to 40 years	70,52	55,14
	From 40 to 50 years	36,26	40,82
	More than 50 years	-87,97	88,88
Appearance			
	Attractive	24,23	38,44
	Unattractive	-24,23	38,44

Note. n=57; utilities are summarized as normalized zero-centered diffs

Appendix 3. Average Attribute Importance

Attribute	Importance, %	Std Deviation	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Experience in a leading position, sector	7,48	4,86	6,21	8,74
Companies where the candidate worked	8,20	3,55	7,28	9,13
Achievements at work, business	9,22	6,90	7,43	11,01
Level of education	9,47	4,56	8,29	10,65
University completed	2,38	1,79	1,92	2,85
Participation in vocational trainings	4,90	3,82	3,91	5,89
The candidate's profile in the social network LinkedIn	5,24	3,28	4,39	6,09
Online information about the candidate and his/her activities (except LinkedIn)	6,95	4,05	5,90	8,00
Candidate familiarity	4,87	3,14	4,06	5,69
Feedback about the candidate	12,58	5,88	11,06	14,11
Membership in professional organizations	2,80	2,86	2,06	3,55
Participation in business, professional events	3,32	2,94	2,56	4,08
Wide spectrum of non-professional interests	3,89	3,05	3,10	4,68
Gender	2,11	1,85	1,63	2,59
Age	12,55	6,74	10,80	14,30
Appearance	4,03	3,99	2,99	5,06

Note. n=57

Appendix 4. Segmentation of Average Attribute Importance (%) According to Respondents' Experience in Executive Search

Attribute	Total	Experience, <=5 years	Experience, >5 years
	n=57	**n=33**	**n=24**
Experience in a leading position, sector	7,48	6,97	8,17
Companies where the candidate worked	8,20	7,87	8,66
Achievements at work, business	9,22	9,04	9,48
Level of education	9,47	9,04	10,06
University completed	2,38	2,88	1,70
Participation in vocational trainings	4,90	5,21	4,47
The candidate's profile in the social network LinkedIn	5,24	5,49	4,90
Online information (except LinkedIn)	6,95	7,75	5,84
Candidate familiarity	4,87	4,64	5,20
Feedback about the candidate	12,58	12,82	12,26
Membership in professional organizations	2,80	2,51	3,20
Participation in business, professional events	3,32	3,82	2,63
Wide spectrum of non-professional interests	3,89	4,29	3,35
Gender	2,11	1,96	2,31
Age	12,55	11,22	14,38
Appearance	4,03	4,50	3,38

Appendix 5. Description of Executives' Profiles for Choice Simulation

Label	Profile1 Strong Identity + Strong Positioning	Profile2 Strong Identity + Weak Positioning	Profile3 Weak Identity + Strong Positioning
Experience in a leading position, sector	From 5 to 10 years	From 5 to 10 years	Up to 5 years
Companies where the candidate worked	International capital, well-known in the market	International capital, well-known in the market	Local capital, little known in the market
Achievements at work, business	Visible	Visible	Not visible
Level of education	Executive MBA	Executive MBA	Bachelor
University completed	In Lithuania	In Lithuania	Abroad
Participation in vocational trainings	Yes	Yes	No
The candidate's profile in LinkedIn	Present, filled in detail	Not present	Present, filled in detail
Online information (except LinkedIn)	Other authors, not the candidate, generated information	Information on the Internet is absent	Other authors, not the candidate, generated information
Candidate familiarity	Known but not familiar	Unknown and unfamiliar	Known but not familiar
Feedback about the candidate	Recommendation from familiar person	Neither reference, nor recommendation	Recommendation from familiar person
Membership in professional organizations	No	Yes	No
Participation in business, professional events	Yes	No	Yes
Wide spectrum of non-professional interests	Yes	Yes	No
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Age	From 30 to 40 years	From 30 to 40 years	More than 50 years
Appearance	Attractive	Unattractive	Attractive