Article

Self-marketing-empirical research from the users' perspective

Szonja Jenei[1,*], Silvia Molnár[2], Szilvia Módosné Szalai[3], László Józsa[4]

[1] J. Széchenyi István University, 9026 Győr, Hungary

[2] J. Selye University, 94501 Komarno, Slovakia

[3] Széchenyi István University, 9026 Győr, Hungary

[4] University of Pannonia, 8200 Veszprém, Hungary

* Corresponding author: Szonja Jenei, jenei.szonja@sze.hu

Abstract: Personal branding is a conscious activity that utilizes classic product marketing methods to make a person more marketable. In our study, we employed a quantitative research methodology. Through a survey, we examined the importance respondents assign to visible and non-visible traits and characteristics. During the data analysis, we established a ranking of the most important traits identified by the survey participants, which they believe contribute to a more favorable perception. Among the top five ranked traits—reliability, appearance, charisma, grooming, and authenticity—three are recognizable during the first encounter. Our findings suggest that women place greater emphasis on social perception than men, making them more likely to remain unnoticed. At the same time, younger generations tend to overvalue their presence on social media platforms.

Keywords: self-marketing; self-branding; self-awareness; personal brand

1. Introduction

Carnegie's statement from 1936, "Effective communication with people is one of the greatest challenges we may face," remains just as relevant today. With the multiplication of communication channels, we no longer only communicate our message through personal presence; the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others has brought self-management and personal branding into unprecedented focus (Carnegie, 2011).

The abundance of offerings encourages entrepreneurs and employees aiming for success to make their services and skills more attractive and marketable through strategic methods similar to classic product marketing. As success is judged subjectively, developing the right self-marketing strategy depends on individual motivation. In masculine, competitive societies, the measures of success are power and wealth, while in societies that emphasize feminine values, a balanced work-life ratio and shorter workweeks are viewed as success. Managing a rising start-up requires individualism, creativity, and risk-taking, whereas large corporations have recognized that knowledge-sharing, teamwork, and standardization of workflows are essential for secure operations.

Personal branding can be seen as a form of self-management and personal development, through which we not only become more attractive personalities but also increase our influence and impact on others' lives. Combining well-grounded self-awareness with conscious personal brand-building can improve our personal and professional relationships, whether we aim for success as employees, leaders, or entrepreneurs. While both workplace demands and entrepreneurial trends evolve

organically, certain core values have not lost their significance over time. Experiencing success, which is interpreted differently by each individual, requires deep self-awareness, the ability to recognize opportunities, and the capacity to adapt to changes in the environment.

2. Literature review

In the classical sense, marketing is a series of activities that extend from the concept of a product or service to its sale, where marketing serves as a tool for generating profit. According to the definition of the American Marketing Association, "A brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that distinguishes the goods or services of one seller from those of other sellers." The ISO brand standards add that a brand is an "intangible asset" aimed at "creating distinctive images and associations in the minds of stakeholders, thereby generating economic profit/value" (AMA, online, 2022).

Józsa (2000) points out that modern interpretations of marketing also extend to areas such as politics, environmental protection, or the communication of social messages. In these cases, the focus is not on exchanging goods and money but on special forms of exchange, such as the processes of exchanging votes, political ideas, and social goals and support. According to Papp-Váry (2009), brands provide value that exceeds their costs, and the emotional aspect is just as important as the functional one. Personal branding, as a marketing concept, was first defined in the 1990 s in Tom Peters' book The Brand Called You, although personal branding as an unconscious activity has long existed. Due to interdisciplinary overlaps, it is not possible to pinpoint the exact date of the concept's formulation, as building a profitable personal brand requires knowledge from psychology, sociology, and other disciplines. According to Törőcsik (2017), beyond brands, people are also in competition with each other, and by consciously designing our identity, we can create clear positive associations in our environment when our name is mentioned. Our behavior, appearance, body language, and opinions represent and communicate our values and ambitions. This personal branding approach aligns with the study by Gelencsér et al. (2024), who highlight the importance of emotional and relational factors in employee retention, especially in diverse organizational structures. Just as personal branding requires the authentic expression of one's values to form positive associations, organizations benefit from creating an environment where employees feel aligned with the company's values and bond with their co-workers. This emotional attachment fosters a supportive atmosphere (Ton et al., 2022), which enhances retention by giving employees a sense of belonging and purpose beyond mere functional roles. In personal and organizational branding, consistent communication of values is critical to fostering long-term loyalty and positive recognition, whether in the professional marketplace or the business environment.

Újvári (2014) believes that personal branding is about the person who influences others, including their good and bad qualities. In the past, personal branding was mainly associated with well-known individuals or politicians, but with the spread of the internet, anyone can now become a personal brand. From a marketing perspective, building a personal brand is no different from creating any other brand. Its benefits are

particularly evident in businesses where the person providing the service or consulting is important, but a strong personal brand can also help us land our dream job. Montoya (2009) states personal branding is a clear, powerful, and captivating public image. Our personal brand is an enhanced "self," developed through well-crafted communication methods, and its purpose is to convey two essential pieces of information to the target market: who I am and what I am good at. Personal branding is the mental image potential clients receive when they think of us. It represents our values, personality, expertise, and the qualities that make us stand out from our competitors. Personal branding is a promise that tells the recipient what to expect from us and a relationship whose characteristics define our influence on the recipient. According to Németh, Kálmán, and Malatyinszki (2024), the success of a brand, much like financial security, involves creating a reliable, valuable perception among stakeholders, as is essential for trust-based relationships.

As ordinary people, we express ourselves both personally and in the virtual space, and our behavior and presence on social media shape the image others form of us. Building a personal brand means consciously shaping this image and creating a unique personal brand image for ourselves (Hetesi, 2015). The foundation of our personal brand is the person, made unique by their personality. Thinking patterns, emotions, and behavioral patterns define an individual's unique style and influence their interactions with their environment (Atkinson, 1994).

For millennia, philosophers and psychologists have been intrigued by personality development, leading to the creation of numerous theoretical models. The earliest, Hippocratic personality typology from 400–200 BC, distinguishes four fundamental personality types (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic), while Eysenck, a significant figure in the trait theory of personality, categorized personality along the dimensions of introversion-extraversion and emotional stability-instability. Freud, the founder of psychoanalytic theory, compared the complexity of the human psyche to an iceberg in the early 1900 s, where the small visible part represents conscious experience. In contrast, the massive part beneath the surface holds a multitude of desires and drives that influence our actions. According to Freud, human behavior is deterministic, with unconscious desires and unmet drives underlying every action, and he divided personality into three parts: the Id, Ego, and Superego (Nagy-Kiss, 2007). This division still serves as the foundation for research today; for instance, when analyzing assisted suicide from a personality-centered perspective (Serra et al., 2022), it can also be applied to the less sensitive topic of self-marketing. Csíkszentmihályi (1997) distinguishes between autotelic and exotelic personality types. For autotelic people, material wealth, power, and fame are unimportant; they engage in activities for their own enjoyment rather than to achieve some distant goal. They are less dependent on external rewards and feedback, making them less susceptible to manipulation. In contrast, an exotelic personality is motivated by external feedback or pursuing a goal. While no one is purely autotelic or exotelic, the quality of our lives can be significantly improved if we learn to love what we must do anyway. In such cases, harmony between "want to" and "have to" emerges, ensuring the experience of flow or deep immersion.

Purkiss and Royston-Lee (2010) argue that many people neglect to build their personal brand because they mistakenly believe that simply doing their job well is

enough and that someone will eventually notice them. While our family and friends may be aware of our strengths, our employers, potential clients, and business partners do not always have the opportunity to get to know us. According to the authors, the foundation of personal branding is authenticity, consistency, and the ability to stand out from the crowd. Key factors in building a strong personal brand include identifying our abilities and talents, establishing a stable value system, and keeping our life goals in mind, which give meaning to our actions. They also emphasize the importance of authenticity and the conscious development of a network. According to Carnegie (2012), smart communication alone is not enough for building relationships; we reach a higher level of effectiveness when our behavior radiates generosity and trustworthiness. We can have the most significant impact on others when we sincerely take an interest in them and make them more important than ourselves. Hogan (2008) highlights the importance of nonverbal communication and authenticity, which can change others' behavior or attitudes toward us. First impressions serve as signposts for future interactions. Within 10 s, our body language and appearance convey an image of us that determines the level of acceptance we receive from others.

In the first moment of a meeting, we subconsciously decide "yes" or "no" about the other person, and the same decision is made about us. One of the key factors in building non-verbal rapport, established in our subconscious, is physical appearance. Every situation has its appropriate attire, and individuals instinctively feel safer in the company of people who look similar and represent similar values to their own. Grooming and appearance influence the development of trust and likability and signal our belonging to a specific group. Hogan (2008) mentions synchronizing tone, facial expressions, and breathing with the other party as key factors in building rapport and facilitating the constructive sharing of ideas. Lieberman (2017) agrees on the importance of first impressions, which hold great significance in both personal and professional relationships. The feelings associated with us influence the future development of our relationships, and thus, the author highlights several psychological connections. According to the law of association, we link pleasant feelings with those who are near us at that moment. If we want someone to like us, we should approach them when they are in a good mood so they will associate us with positive emotions later on. People feel more comfortable around pleasant-looking individuals, which makes our appearance crucial during the first meeting. Individuals are instinctively drawn to those who smile, as a smile conveys confidence, happiness, and enthusiasm. Even before the first meeting, we should ensure that positive emotions are associated with us, for example, by emphasizing our positive qualities in our application or resume, not just with facts but also with language. Pease and Pease (2006), based on their research in non-verbal communication, concluded that 60%–80% of the impression formed during business negotiations is based on body language, and the initial opinion of a negotiating partner is formed within four minutes. Body language reflects our current emotional state, and our body signals convey much of our message to the other party. According to their observations, individuals of higher status use minimal gesticulation, and their gestures are composed and disciplined. Adjusting jewelry, a watch, or a bag during a vital negotiation or interview conveys uncertainty. Excessive display of feminine signals by women in business reduces their credibility. Navarro (2013) believes that non-verbal communication extends beyond body

language; it includes how we behave and act. Our body continuously conveys information about our work ethic, intentions, and feelings to the outside world. If two people have the same abilities, their attitudes will differentiate them. With the help of our smile, posture, gestures, and non-verbal messages, we can solidify our position within an organization or increase our chances for the next promotion. Belsky (2010) argues that it is a misconception to think that a great idea is enough to be successful because the formula for success is 1% idea and 99% execution. A good self-marketing strategy is about earning the respect of those around us based on a sincere interest in something that showcases our strengths. Before launching our self-marketing campaign, we need to find out what makes us different, and only then should we develop and implement our communication strategy.

Over the past two decades, personal branding has become an important concept in management literature. Beyond self-help books, numerous empirical studies have been conducted on personal branding, and Gorbatov et al. (2018) made an attempt to analyze these systematically. After analyzing more than 100 published studies, the researchers concluded that the heterogeneity of previous research has prevented the establishment of unified definitions and conceptual frameworks, leading to the fragmentation of self-marketing as a research field. The trends in personal branding have been categorized into four different theoretical fields: sociology, marketing, psychology, and economics.

From the sociological perspective, personal branding is explained by the underlying processes of perception and reflection, as well as our expressions and performance, through which we try to influence how others perceive us. The marketing theory approach views self-marketing as an extension of classical product marketing methods for individuals. In the psychological approach, personal marketing is a self-development tool that satisfies the basic psychological needs for self-esteem and self-actualization. Economic theories emphasize the importance of understanding the macroenvironmental factors in which personal branding occurs. The question most pressing for job seekers and those seeking promotions is how to make themselves more attractive and marketable in their resumes or during job interviews. Introducing entrepreneurial knowledge and soft skill development into the education system has provided students with helpful knowledge not only for starting a business but also as a key factor in building a successful career. As sustainable tourism highlights the value of aligning personal goals with broader economic and environmental objectives, such perspectives may serve as a useful case for understanding the importance of personal branding in a globally competitive environment (Kálmán et al., 2024d; Kabil et al., 2024).

Unlike classic product marketing, where the return on investment can be measured in monetary terms, the success of self-marketing activities is evident when the individual secures the desired job or promotion (Shuker, 2014). University students majoring in business know that building a successful career requires self-reflection and combining unique skills with effective presentation (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2024). The research by Manai and Holmlund (2015) highlights that the majority of students analyze their core identity and the skills that differentiate them from their peers to some extent. Interviewees also emphasized that they consider self-marketing a long and complex process requiring significant self-examination and external support to

help them recognize their limitations. According to self-development professionals and career advisors, the notion of a lifetime job is outdated in the dynamically changing competitive environment, and they see the rise of portfolio careers as a future trend. Shepherd (2005) characterizes the process of personal branding as inevitably involving conflict.

In self-marketing circles, a consumer-oriented approach is often encouraged. Career counselors urge individuals to develop and acquire key skills that make them more attractive in the job market. However, they advise against personal transformations solely in response to market demands. Some personal branding experts suggest that clients should not try to change themselves but rather work with what they already have. In his 2013 research, Pihl examined the self-marketing practices of Swedish fashion bloggers who built entrepreneurial careers thanks to their personal brands in the early 2000 s. The key finding of the research is that the individual traits and values forming the foundation of personal brands became intertwined with corporate brands after the bloggers transitioned into entrepreneurs. The efforts made in personal branding generated a competitive advantage for the participants, and this transformation occurred without losing their personal values in the process. This aligns with Kálmán et al. (2024a), who argue that aligning personal values with broader brand values is essential in fostering sustainable success, even in consumer-centric sectors like tourism, where individual branding and destination image can merge effectively. Similarly, a study on green human resource management (GHRM) by Miah et al. (2024a) highlights that promoting environmental knowledge and self-efficacy among employees aligns personal behaviour with organisational sustainability goals. This alignment not only reinforces individual green behaviour, but also a coherent brand identity based on sustainability principles (Miah et al., 2024b).

Poeczea and colleagues (2018) present the results of their analysis of the indicators behind successful self-marketing techniques on social media. They examined two major platforms: YouTube, focusing on the leading YouTubers, and their presence on Facebook. Their conclusion is that the combined analysis of user-generated metrics and sentiment ratings provides information necessary for individuals engaged in self-marketing to optimize their communication on social media. This plays a crucial role in achieving continuous audience growth, which can also lead to monetary gains. Applying these techniques allows independent game developers and the gaming industry to gain insights into the critical reception of their products directly from the target audience. Considering the growing global phenomenon of social media marketing and the increasing number of companies targeting potential consumers with diverse products and services across various social media platforms, the authors believe that both user-generated metrics and sentiment analysis are essential tools for today's marketers. This facilitates the study of brand personality communication on social media, regardless of the field in which these individuals operate. The importance of metrics and audience engagement parallels findings by Kálmán et al. (2024c), who suggest that brand perception and its relation to green transition indicators significantly affect audience trust and engagement, thus underscoring the role of perception management in effective self-marketing.

Trefzger and Dünfelder (2016) discuss the opportunities for researchers to participate on social media platforms. The advent of social media has fundamentally simplified communication, making it easier and more cost-effective for individuals to connect worldwide. Consequently, researchers' organizations (such as the universities they work for) have transferred control over communication, reputation, and branding to individuals. Competition among researchers is intensifying, and achieving long-term academic careers is becoming increasingly difficult. There is a growing disconnect between career expectations and realistic career opportunities among academics, making it crucial for researchers to face competition and differentiate themselves from others. This challenge is also echoed in studies by Kálmán et al. (2024b), who examine how personal credibility and perceived integrity are essential in high-competition fields, where individual reputation and differentiation are vital for long-term success. The authors also highlight the importance of network thinking, accurately defining the target audience, and choosing the right content marketing strategy. They emphasize the advantages of selecting the appropriate communication channels (platforms) and offer suggestions for organizing social media management, such as aligning and harmonizing multiple personal profiles, creating workflows, and optimizing content for the audience by monitoring interactions across channels. Their conclusion is that self-marketing and personal branding can be used to actively shape public opinion favorably. Social media platforms offer excellent opportunities for achieving this goal.

In self-promotion, we can distinguish between observable and non-observable characteristics. Observable traits—such as appearance, body language, and communication style—are directly visible and can immediately influence impressions made on employers or potential partners. In contrast, non-observable characteristics—such as authenticity, intrinsic motivation, or personal values—remain hidden but often have a deeper impact on how individuals are perceived.

Authenticity, as a non-observable characteristic, plays a particularly important role in self-promotion, as people perceive those who genuinely represent their values and goals as more credible. Authentic self-promotion goes beyond showcasing positive qualities; it involves presenting oneself consistently and sincerely, showing genuine interest and commitment. This approach builds trust and makes the individual more appealing to employers and other stakeholders, who are more likely to support and value someone perceived as authentic rather than defined solely by external characteristics (McGregor, 2022).

3. Methodology

We conducted the empirical study using a quantitative research methodology, implemented through a survey between September 2022 and March 2023 in the North-Western region of Hungary and South-Western Slovakia. The research aimed to examine how consciously job seekers or individuals considering a job change prepare for marketing their labor and knowledge and what importance they place on first impressions, documented knowledge, or more subtle character traits. Emphasizing the exploratory nature of this study, our goal was not to establish and test hypotheses but rather to understand the differences or contradictions between the literature findings

and the respondents' opinions. Given the limited number of empirical studies available on the topic of self-marketing, we aimed to expand the existing body of literature through our research questions and provide a foundation for future studies. Our study focused on addressing the following research questions.

- What tactical support do our respondents, job seekers along the Danube region, use to prepare for interviews? Do they focus on adjusting their appearance to meet expectations, or do they work on developing their skills? Do they build a network of connections, or do they consciously use social media?
- Which traits do the survey respondents consider essential for securing and maintaining a job, and which become apparent during a first impression? If we treat importance as a weight, to what extent, in percentage, do employers get to know the applicants?
- Is there a difference between the self-marketing attitudes of the two genders? In which aspects do their views align? What underlies these attitudes?
- How does age influence perspectives related to self-marketing?

The topic of self-marketing is a central element of one of our dissertations, and we therefore anticipate conducting further research in this area, incorporating both qualitative approaches and open-ended questions. The quantitative analysis was primarily intended for broad exploration of the topic, while future studies will build on these results to conduct personal interviews, providing deeper and more detailed insights into respondents' experiences and motivations.

We received 339 responses to our questionnaire (**Table 1**), with a slight majority of female respondents, accounting for 57.2%. Of the respondents, 72.6% are residents of Hungary, while 27.4% are from Slovakia. Regarding age distribution, we received minimal responses (2.4%) from the slowly retiring baby boomer generation. Responses were almost evenly distributed among the other generations, with the highest response rate observed in Generation Y (39.2%). The age distribution closely mirrors the distribution of those considering a job change.

Table 1. Demographic data.

Gender (%)		Residence (%)	
Male	42.8	Hungary	72.6
Female	57.2	Slovakia	27.4
Birth year		Settlement type	
Between 1946–1964	2.4	Village (population under 5000)	40.7
Between 1965–1979	24.8	Small town (population between 5000 and 20,000)	26.8
Between 1980–1994	39.2	Medium-sized town (population between 20,000 and 100,000)	27.7
1995 or later	33.6	City (population over 100,000)	4.7
Occupation (%)		Education (%)	
Student	16.2	Primary education	0.6
Employee	74.6	Secondary education	36.9
Entrepreneur	8.3	Higher education	62.5
Unemployed	0.9		

From an occupational perspective, the distribution of respondents follows the general social structure, with the number of employees being significantly higher than that of students and entrepreneurs. The number of respondents with primary education is low (0.6%), while those with higher education qualifications are double the number of those with secondary education. Since we received responses from the North-Western region of Hungary and South-Eastern Slovakia, the response rate from capital cities is minimal. Most responses came from settlements within the surveyed areas.

Based on the above, we can conclude that the sample does not reflect the entire social distribution and is, therefore, not representative. The most significant distortion was observed in terms of educational qualifications.

4. Results and discussion

The relevance of our survey is demonstrated by the fact that 87.3% of respondents consider the opinion formed based on first impressions to be an important factor. A typical setting for this is the job interview, where we aim to "rent out" our skills. We reviewed self-marketing techniques in **Table 2**. Based on this, we reached the following conclusions. Conscious use of social media, networking, consulting with a style advisor, and utilizing a coach can all be viewed positively as tools to help "sell" oneself. However, from the employer's perspective, these methods may also obscure certain personality traits (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Methods used by the respondents to sell themselves.

I have used the services of a style consultant, photographer, makeup artist, or other appearance-enhancing professional	I have used the services of a coach, personality development expert, speech coach, or other skill development professional	I consciously build my network	I consciously use social media platforms
24	61	146	103

- Few respondents (24 people, 7.1%) seek professional advice for their appearance, even though this is crucial during job interviews. It is not enough to think only about regular beauty care. Technical professionals' expected appearance differs significantly from candidates in creative fields.
- Those who use the assistance of a coach, personality development expert, speech coach, or other skill development professionals (61 people, 18%) are not aiming to create a false image but are seeking real improvement in a relatively short time. Recruitment professionals should pay attention to this, as it is essential to discern whether a positive impression is a result of innate ability or dedicated effort.
- Instead of merely examining social media presence (103 people, 30.4%), HR professionals would benefit more from exploring the candidate's entire digital footprint (e.g., childhood competitions, statements, appearances on others' platforms, positions on social issues, and expressed opinions). Conscious use of the web and a well-thought-out media presence may be prerequisites for successful career building in specific fields.
- Conscious networking, which is considered important by nearly half of the respondents (146 people, 43.1%), can be an indicator of career ambition. However, individuals who strategically build connections upward may lose their

sensitivity to reality. With a narrowing circle of contacts, they are more likely to misunderstand the challenges faced by the less fortunate members of society.

Participation in training programs (**Figure 1**) can provide an advantage in the competition for desirable jobs. We did not categorize training as a tactic, as acquiring marketable knowledge often requires significant effort and sometimes years of dedication. In line with the demands driven by increasing digitalization and a changing environment, three-quarters of respondents feel it is important to expand their existing knowledge continuously. Nearly half of the respondents (42%) prefer participating in professional training related to their work, while 5% opt for skill development courses. An additional 27% of respondents expressed interest in both "soft skill" and "hard skill" courses. Meanwhile, 26% of respondents indicated that they do not participate in further training or classes beyond their already acquired qualifications.
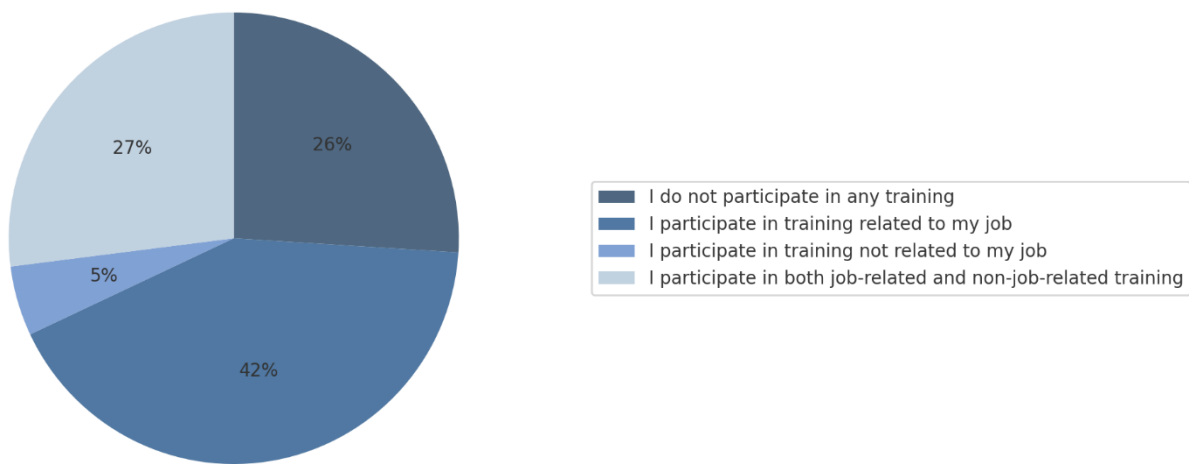

Figure 1. Respondents' willingness to participate in training.

Table 3 shows the ranking of external and internal traits as prioritized by our respondents. The ranking was established based on the number of mentions, and the list includes both internal and external characteristics and mixed traits.

Table 3. Ranking of characteristics considered important by the respondents.

Number of Mentions	Perceptibility	Trait
61	Only after a longer relationship	Reliability
55	At the first meeting	Appearance
52	At the first meeting	Charisma
47	At the first meeting	Grooming
37	Only after a longer relationship	Authenticity
32	At the first meeting	Verbal communication
30	At the first meeting	First impression
22	Only after a longer relationship	Empathy
21	At the first meeting	Smile
14	Only after a longer relationship	Experience
13	At the first meeting	Clothing style
11	Only after a longer relationship	Commitment

Table 3. (*Continued*).

Number of Mentions	Perceptibility	Trait
11	Only after a longer relationship	Interest in others
11	At the first meeting	Non-verbal communication
9	Only after a longer relationship	Determination
6	Only after a longer relationship	Selflessness
5	At the first meeting	Attractiveness
4	From documents, online	Content shared on social media platforms
4	From documents, online	Education
4	At the first meeting	Being a good listener
4	From documents, online	Network
1	At the first meeting	Tone of voice

Using the mentions as a weight, we found that 60% of the most essential traits identified by the respondents can be assessed during the first meeting (**Figure 2**). This result supports the relevance of literature emphasizing the importance of opinions formed after first impressions. A significant portion (38%) of the listed characteristics and traits remain hidden after the initial meeting.
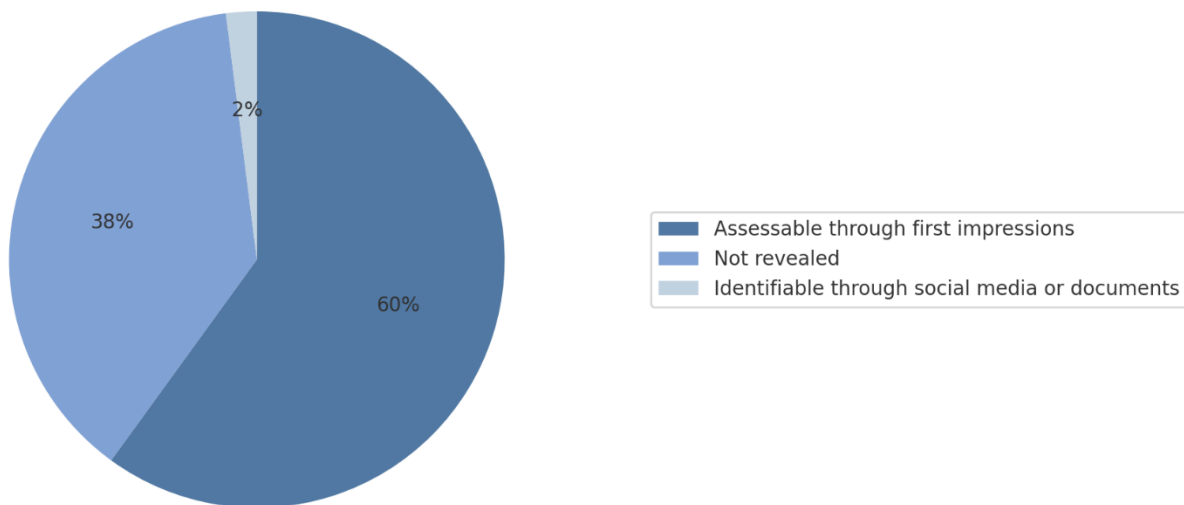

Figure 2. Proportion of characteristics that can be identified during the first encounter.

The average values presented in **Table 4** are for informational purposes only, as they were calculated from ordinal variables. Based on the size of the standard deviation, the smallest value is found in the importance of grooming, while the most significant value is in empathy. According to the ranking of the average values, the two most highly rated traits are reliability (mean = 4.56) and authenticity (mean = 4.53). The ranking continues with external traits noticeable during the first meeting, such as grooming (mean = 4.5), charisma (mean = 4.21), first impression (mean = 4.13), appearance (mean = 4.11), and smile (mean = 4.07). According to our respondents, the least important factor in assessing a person is education (mean = 2.99).

Table 4. Assessment of the characteristics.

Evaluated Trait	Data					percentage distribution [%]				
	Valid	Average	Med	Mod	Std. Dev.	Least impor-tant	2	3	4	Very impor-tant
Reliability	339	4.56	4	5	0.809	2.4	0	6.2	21.8	69.6
Authenticity	339	4.53	4	5	0.857	2.4	1.5	5.6	21.8	68.7
Grooming	339	4.5	4	5	0.786	2.4	0	4.1	32.4	61.1
Charisma	339	4.21	3.5	5	0.891	1.8	3.2	10.9	40.4	43.7
First Impression	339	4.13	4	4	0.902	2.7	2.1	12.7	44.5	38.1
Appearance	339	4.11	4	4	0.814	2.7	0.6	10.6	55.8	30.4
Smile	339	4.07	3	4	0.892	1.8	1.8	20.4	39.5	36.6
Verbal Communication	339	4.02	3.5	4	0.856	2.4	1.8	16.2	51	28.6
Commitment	339	4.01	3.5	4	0.974	2.7	3.5	20.1	37.2	36.6
Determination	339	3.94	3.5	4	0.998	2.1	6.2	22.1	35.4	34.2
Empathy	339	3.93	3.5	4	1.038	3.5	5	21.2	35.4	34.8
Selflessness	339	3.84	3.5	4	0.97	1.8	5.9	28	35.4	28.9
Clothing Style	339	3.71	4	4	0.89	3.2	5	23.6	53.7	14.5
Experience	339	3.68	4	4	0.91	3.5	5.3	25.1	51.6	14.5
Interest in Others	339	3.63	2	4	0.921	2.4	6.8	32.7	41.3	16.8
Good Listener	339	3.62	3	4	0.961	4.4	4.4	32.7	41.9	16.5
Tone of Voice	339	3.6	2	4	1.025	3.5	10	28.6	38.1	19.8
Attractiveness	339	3.52	3.5	3	0.878	2.1	4.4	48.4	29.8	15.3
Education	339	2.99	3.5	3	0.98	7.4	21.8	40.4	25.7	4.7

Our research examined six literature-based statements to determine whether there were differences in how men and women perceived them. Significant differences were identified in three of the statements.

According to Purkiss and Royston-Lee (2010), many people mistakenly believe that self-marketing is unnecessary because those who work hard and persistently will naturally be noticed and recognized. In our sample, we found a significant difference between the opinions of men and women ($p = 0.001$), with women more likely to agree that self-marketing is unnecessary. The results suggest that women are more likely to invest less effort into building their personal brand, increasing the likelihood of missing out on promotion opportunities. Their family burdens further exacerbate their limited opportunities, which is reinforced by their more reserved attitude.

Újvári (2014) argues that the benefits of self-marketing are primarily evident in businesses where the service provider or consultant plays a crucial role. Additionally, having a strong personal brand can make it easier to land one's dream job. Our research shows that female respondents are more likely to agree with this statement than male respondents, with a significant difference observed ($p = 0.002$).

The agreement with the first two statements is somewhat contradictory. While women acknowledge the necessity of self-marketing and its impact on career building and business success, they do not consider its application important in their own cases. Based on the results, women prioritize family harmony over career advancement.

Hofstede's (2008) cultural dimension of femininity and masculinity reflects the extent to which society is driven by competition, performance, and success. In masculine societies, success-oriented values are instilled as early as school and persist throughout organizational life. Leaders are expected to be decisive, with an emphasis on competition and performance, and conflicts are resolved through confrontation. Status symbols, such as cars, houses, and clothing, and their display play a significant role in daily life. Achieving these requires long working hours and dedicated effort. In feminine societies, the dominant value is caring for others, and quality of life is the primary indicator of success. According to Hofstede Insight (2023), Hungarian and Slovak societies are distinctly masculine, a characteristic further confirmed by our research findings (**Figure 3**).
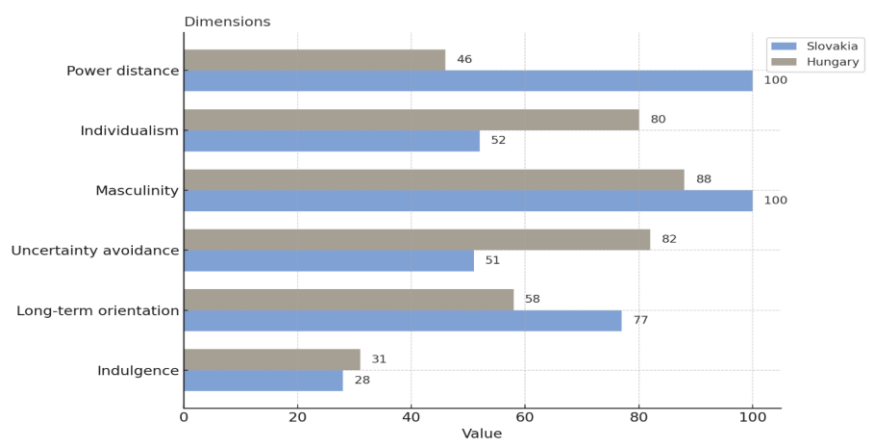

Figure 3. Comparison of Hungary and Slovakia based on Hofstede's 6-dimensional.

Table 5. Evaluation of statements from the perspective of women and men.

Statements	Men tend to agree more	Women tend to agree more	No difference
Self-marketing is unnecessary because those who work hard and persistently will be noticed and recognized anyway. $p = 0.001$		x	
The benefits of self-marketing are primarily evident in businesses where the service provider or consultant is important, but having a good personal brand can also make it easier to land your dream job. $p = 0.002$		x	
When creating good self-marketing, external appearance, non-verbal communication, and first impressions are key, as they influence the further development of relationships with us. $p = 0.114$			x
Self-marketing helps to create a positive impression, which would have developed over time anyway. $p = 0.533$			x
People are instinctively attracted to those who smile because it suggests confidence, happiness, and enthusiasm. $p = 0.206$			x
As average individuals, we express ourselves both in person and in the virtual space, and a perception is formed about us based on our behavior and social media presence. $p = 0.036$		x	

According to Hetesi (2015), as average individuals, we express ourselves both in person and the virtual space, and a perception is formed about us based on our behavior and presence on social media. In the case of this statement, with a *p*-value of 0.036,

we can assert with 95% confidence that women are more concerned with external feedback and the content shared online. Niederle (2016) explains this phenomenon by noting that men and women possess different cognitive traits, with men being more confident and competitive than women. In examining age differences in statements derived from the literature, we identified significant differences in two of the six cases (**Table 5**). Among the younger age group, there is a clear increase in the perceived importance of being present on social media platforms and in the virtual space ($p < 0.001$).

A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the importance of smiling, which is highly valued by the digital generation, as it conveys confidence, happiness, and enthusiasm ($p < 0.001$), qualities that are particularly important to younger individuals. Meanwhile, Godány (2018) cites a lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, and prejudice as inhibiting factors for women when starting businesses. In the case of Lieberman's (2017) emphasis on the importance of smiling and Hogan's (2008) focus on the significance of non-verbal communication, no significant difference was found between the opinions of men and women.

5. Conclusion

With the spread of the internet and social media platforms, in addition to traditional product marketing, increasing attention is being paid to personal marketing. We are present on numerous online social platforms, form opinions, share information and content, and thereby influence others. Our analysis aims to expand knowledge related to self-marketing, drawing upon established findings in the literature. Due to interdisciplinary overlaps, it cannot be definitively stated that personal branding solely requires marketing knowledge; hence, in our literature review, we also considered insights from the field of psychology.

Among the conclusions of authors emphasizing the necessity of personal branding, we highlighted a few that researchers believe are of paramount importance in building a favorable image. Beyond documented knowledge and skills, information conveyed through non-verbal channels also plays a crucial role in external perception. The authors agree that the goal of building a marketable self is not to showcase false attributes but rather to manage oneself and continuously highlight and develop existing abilities consciously.

Our survey aimed to understand how much importance respondents place on conscious influence to achieve greater success. We asked participants to rank the importance of external and internal traits highlighted from the literature in forming a positive personal brand, and to indicate their level of agreement with statements previously formulated by researchers.

Respondents generally ranked external characteristics at the top, indicating that outward appearances play a significant role in a person's judgment. Despite this, few seek expert help in shaping their appearance or style. Respondents place even greater importance on consciously building a network, suggesting that they trust more in the power of social capital than in succeeding through individual abilities—still a distinct characteristic of Central and Eastern European countries.

Women tend to place greater importance on external perception, which can hinder the process of conscious personal branding, making workplace invisibility more common and acceptable for them. For the younger generation, happiness emerges as a key consideration, but displaying that happiness on social media platforms is even more important. Consciously shaping a positive personal brand is essential for those aspiring to a career or successful business, as possessing skills and abilities alone is insufficient if they remain invisible and do not serve one's goals.

The main limitation of our research is the lack of representativeness, which does not allow for drawing general conclusions beyond the sample. Significant distortions were observed in the sample distribution for several demographic characteristics, such as education, where respondents with higher education were overrepresented. Unequal distribution was also noted regarding employment and citizenship; thus, the results cannot be generalized to the two countries or employment types. Our findings may serve as guidance for future research on self-marketing, and we aim to achieve a representative sample in future studies, enabling the formation of homogeneous, comparable groups in terms of education, employment, and age.

When interpreting the results, it is important to consider that the sample does not fully reflect the true composition of society, as the number of respondents with lower levels of education is limited. However, there is significant demand today for reliable and conscientious skilled workers and cleaners. It would be beneficial to develop methods that make their positive qualities more visible to employers, helping them secure positions where their work is appreciated and, where possible, rewarded financially. Given the underrepresentation of respondents with lower education levels in the sample, we set the goal of paying greater attention to the inclusion of this group in future studies, which could enhance the broader applicability and practical relevance of our research findings.

On the path to understanding self-marketing, we initially selected a sample from a cultural context familiar to us. However, it would be highly interesting to analyze and compare the self-management practices of employees from different cultural backgrounds. This could reveal methods that are mutually beneficial across cultures, while other practices may be less effective within our own geographical area and cultural context.

References

American marketing Association (2022) https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/, Letöltve: 2022.10.24

Atkinson, R. L., Atkinson, R. C., Smith, E. E., & Bem, D. B. (1994). Psychology. Osiris–Századvég.

Belsky, S. (2011). Making Ideas Happen: Overcoming the Obstacles Between Vision and Reality. HVG Kiadó Zrt.

Carnegie, D. (2012). How to Win Friends and Influence People in the Digital Age. HVG Kiadó Zrt.

Csíkszentmihályi, M. (2021). The Art of Joy: Flow in Everyday Life. Alföldi Nyomda Zrt.

Gelencsér, M., Kőmüves, Z. S., Hollósy-Vadász, G., & Szabó-Szentgróti, G. (2024). Modelling employee retention in small and medium-sized enterprises and large enterprises in a dynamically changing business environment. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS. http://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-09-2023-3961

Godány, Zs. (2018). Female entrepreneurs – Research areas – A theoretical overview. Vezetéstudomány, 49(4), 58–67. https://doi.org/10.14267/VEZTUD.2018.04.06

Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2018). Personal branding: Interdisciplinary systematic review and research agenda. Frontiers in Psychology, 9, 2238. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02238

Hofstede (2024) https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=hungary*%2Cslovakia, Letöltve: 2022.10.24

Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, G. J. (2008). Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. Molnár Nyomda és Kiadó.

Hogan, K. (2008). The Science of Persuasion – Get Yes Answers from Anyone – in Less than 8 Minutes!. Danvantara Kiadó.

Józsa, L. (2000). Marketing. Veszprémi Egyetemi Kiadó.

Kabil, M., Abouelhassan, A. M., & Dávid, L. D. (2024). Gender perspectives in tourism studies: A comparative bibliometric analysis in the MENA region. Tourism Planning and Development, 21(3), 276–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2022.2050419

Kálmán B. G., Dávid L., & Malatyinszki Sz. (2024d, in press). The role of geoparks in sustainable tourism development: A case study approach. Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites, 17(4spl)

Kálmán B. G., Grotte J., Lakshmi, V., Tóth A., Módos-Szalai Sz., Zugor Zs., & Malatyinszki Sz. (2024a). Sustainable city tourism—A systematic analysis of Budapest and Mumbai. Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development (JIPD), 8(9). http://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i9.7933

Kálmán B. G., Malatyinszki Sz., Bárczi J., & Zéman Z. (2024b). Corrupción e Inclusión Financiera en Hungría y México [Corruption and Financial Inclusion in Hungary and Mexico, in Spanish]. Revista Mexicana de Economía y Finanzas Nueva Época // Mexican Journal of Economics and Finance (REMEF), 19(2). http://doi.org/10.21919/remef.v19i2.1015

Kálmán B. G., Malatyinszki Sz., Zugor Zs., & Szőke B. (2024c). Perceived Corruption in Light of Green Transition Indicators. Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental // Environmental and Social Management Journal (RGSA), 18(3). http://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n3-166

Lieberman, D. J. (2017). Get Anyone to Do Anything. Édesvíz Kiadó.

McGregor, S. C. (2022). Predicting authenticity: The effects of self-monitoring, self-presentation styles, and biological sex (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Waikato).

Miah, M., Rahman, S. M. M., Biswas, S., Szabó-Szentgróti, G., & Walter, V. (2024a). Effects of green human resource management practices on employee green behavior: the role of employee's environmental knowledge management and green self-efficacy for greening workplace. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS, online, online-online. http://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-04-2024-4462

Miah, M., Szabó-Szentgróti, G., & Walter, V. (2024b). A systematic literature review on green human resource management (GHRM): an organizational sustainability perspective. COGENT BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT, 11(1). http://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2371983

Montoya, P., & Vandehey, T. (2009). The Brand Called You: Create a Personal Brand That Wins Attention and Grows Your Business. McGraw-Hill.

Nagy, L., & Kiss, E. (2007). Typing personality in classical and modern temperament theories. In Sketches of Personality – Reflections on the Fundamental Directions of Personality Psychology. Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó.

Navarro, J. (2013). Body Language: An Ex-FBI Agent's Guide to Speed-Reading People. Libri Kiadó.

Németh, E., Kálmán, B. G., & Malatyinszki, Sz. (2024). Pénzügyi biztonság Magyarországon: a 2023-as OECD-felmérés eredményeinek kettős nézőpontú elemzése [Financial security in Hungary: A dual perspective analysis of the 2023 OECD survey results]. Statisztikai Szemle // Hungarian Statistical Review, 102(9), 896–915. https://doi.org/10.20311/stat2024.09.hu0896

Niederle, M. (2016). Gender. In A. E. Roth & J. H. Kagel (Eds.), Handbook of Experimental Economics (pp. 481–553). Princeton University Press.

Pease, B., & Pease, A. (2006). The Definitive Book of Body Language. Park Könyvkiadó.

Pihl, C. (2013). In the borderland between personal and corporate brands – The case of professional bloggers. Journal of Global Fashion Marketing, 4(2), 112–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2013.763474

Poeczea, F., Ebsterb, C., & Straussb, C. (2018). Social media metrics and sentiment analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of social media posts. Procedia Computer Science, 130, 660–666. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2018.04.117

Purkiss, J., & Royton-Lee, D. (2010). Brand You: Turn Your Unique Talents into a Winning Formula. HVG Kiadó Zrt.

Rekettye, G., Törőcsik, M., & Hetesi, E. (2015). Introduction to Marketing. Akadémia Kiadó.

Serra, A. L., Stiefel, F., & Bourquin, C. (2022). The psychiatrist as gatekeeper in requests for assisted suicide: A qualitative study. Geriatrie et Psychologie Neuropsychiatrie du Vieillissement, 20(1), 111–120. https://doi.org/10.1684/pnv.2022.1013

Shepherd, I. D. H. (2005). From cattle and Coke to Charlie: Meeting the challenge of self-marketing and personal branding. Journal of Marketing Management, 21(5–6), 589–606. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725705430738

Shuker, L. (2014). 'It'll look good on your personal statement': Self-marketing amongst university applicants in the United Kingdom. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 35(2), 224–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2012.740804

Szabó-Szentgróti, G., Gelencsér, M., Hollósy-Vadász, G., & Kőmüves, Zs. (2024). Understanding the employment expectations of young professionals: A study by education level. Journal of Ecohumanism, 3(7), 564–577.

Ton, A. D., Hammerl, L., Weber, D., Kremer, O., & Szabo-Szentgroti, G. (2022). Why leaders are important for cross-functional teams: Moderating role of supportive leadership on knowledge hiding. PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES IN MANAGEMENT, 20(3), 178–191. http://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20(3).2022.15

Törőcsik, M. (2017). Self-Marketing – Relationships Between Person and Marketing. Akadémia Kiadó.

Trefzger, T. F., & Dünfelder, D. (2018). Unleash your brand! Using social media as a marketing tool in academia. In International Conference on Social Computing and Social Media (pp. 449–460). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39910-2_42

Újváry (2014) http://mek.oszk.hu/12700/12796/12796.pdf, downloaded: 2022.10.24