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FACULTY OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS
Master of Management

Master's thesis

Missed opportunities in personal branding: finding solutions through luxury branding

Promotor :
Prof. dr. Pieter PAUWELS

Chidi Graus

Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management

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Preface

This masters dissertation has been written as part of my Master of Management program at Hasselt University. As I am specializing in International Marketing Strategy where I found branding an interesting subject and as the topics proposed by the university did not appeal to me, I approached Prof.dr. Piet Pauwels as he is considered a specialist in this area and hoped he may have some suggestions on a branding related topic. Prof.dr. Pauwels suggested to write a masters dissertation on a personal branding related topic. A former student has written a masters dissertation on this subject in the previous college year and Prof.dr. Pauwels felt this may be an interesting subject to focus upon. As I knew little about personal brand management, I did some online research and found that though recently introduced, personal branding is an upcoming concept that fits today's experience economy which I found interesting. Prof.dr Pauwels therefore set up a meeting with Katlijn Voordeckers who is the owner of the coaching and consultancy agency Opmerkelijk where she specializes in personal branding. During this meeting that can be considered a brainstorm session, we discussed my previous education in Commerce where studying abroad in Paris was part of the program. As I followed a minor in Paris that emphasized luxury brand management which I found very interesting, we decided to link personal branding with luxury branding which eventually led to the topic of this masters dissertation.

The literature study that has been conducted in this masters dissertation gave me an understanding of personal branding which was a new concept to me. In addition, it provided me with a more thorough understanding of luxury brand management. The qualitative empirical study that has been conducted in this masters dissertations contributes to personal brand management as several guidelines for personal branding purposes came to surface as a result of this research.

The process of writing this masters dissertation has been a challenging and interesting journey. The literature study conducted in this masters dissertation not only taught me a lot about the subjects at hand but also taught me to review literature on an academic level. Finally, this masters dissertation has allowed me to conduct a qualitative study. As I have conducted a quantitative study as part of my previous education, this masters dissertation can be considered a contribution to my research skills.

Summary

Luxury brand management is a known phenomenon in the academic literature and is considered to be different from what traditional marketing preaches. Personal brand management though not as known in the academic literature as luxury brand management, is considered a relevant and upcoming phenomenon in today's experience economy and seems to find its roots in traditional marketing. Both concepts seem to share the same foundation as both focus on authenticity and uniqueness. As personal brand management is a rather new concept there might still be opportunities present for personal branding purposes. It is therefore interesting to see if there are opportunities present in luxury brand management that can be translated to personal brand management as luxury brand management is considered to be different from traditional marketing while personal brand management seem to find its roots in traditional marketing. This led to the following research question:

“Do key success factors in luxury brand management apply for personal brand management?”

In order to answer this research question that is at the heart of this masters dissertation, a literature study and a qualitative empirical study have been conducted.

Literature study

As personal branding and luxury branding are both derived from branding in general, the literature study starts with providing the reader with a thorough understand of branding. As such a foundation has been set that allows me to give the reader a good understanding of personal branding and luxury branding.

Personal branding emphasizes uniqueness, authenticity and personal values and beliefs. By setting up an authentic personal brand, your unique characteristics and values will distinguish you from the rest. Without these characteristics and values you will be just like everyone else. Personal branding is about knowing what is authentic to you, differentiating yourself from others and compelling to your target audience, and using that to reach your goals.

Luxury seems hard to define as the perception of what is and is not a luxury product or brand may be dependent on the context and the people concerned. However, an attempt has been made to define luxury branding through the analysis of several definitions provided by academic literature. We can therefore suggest that luxury is regarded as images in the minds of consumers that comprise

associations about a high level of price, excellent quality, aesthetics, rarity, exclusiveness, authenticity, uniqueness, craftsmanship, extraordinariness and a high degree of non functional associations. A luxury brand can therefore be characterized by a recognizable style, strong identity, high awareness, and enhanced emotional and symbolic associations.

By clearly outlining personal brand management and luxury brand management we found that they share common ground as both concepts share the emphasis on authenticity and uniqueness which are characteristics that both concepts consider highly important when setting up a brand identity. Luxury branding however is considered to be different of what traditional marketing preaches which is evident by the 24 anti-laws of marketing suggested by Kapferer and Bastien (2009). While personal brand management seems to find its roots in traditional marketing as personal branding is more or less based on the thought of what can be applied to products can also be applied to people. It might therefore be interesting to see if there are opportunities present in luxury brand management that can lead to new insights for personal brand management as both have common ground yet both seem to find their roots somewhere else. As the 24 anti-laws of marketing are considered to be key success factors in luxury brand management, these anti-laws serve as an inspiration for the empirical qualitative study that attempts translating these anti-laws of marketing to personal brand management.

Empirical qualitative study

This study aims at transferring the 24 anti-laws of marketing suggested by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) and considered to be key success factors in luxury brand management, to personal brand management. We rely on focus group interviews as a prime data collection method. The advantage of working with focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group.

Two focus group sessions were held where an attempt was made to translate the 24 anti-laws of marketing to personal brand management as this could generate new insights for personal branding purposes. Each anti-law was discussed during the sessions. Though some anti-laws of marketing were found to be irrelevant for personal brand management, some anti-laws were considered useful and serve as guidelines for personal brand management. These guidelines can be helpful for businesses that are currently applying personal branding or that are willing to apply personal branding in the future as these are useful guidelines when making strategic decisions. These guidelines can also be relevant for consultancy businesses in the personal branding industry as these guidelines can be beneficial for consultants in their attempt at consulting their clients in personal branding.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

While luxury branding is a known phenomenon in the academic literature and lots of research has been conducted on defining luxury branding, personal branding has still not been acknowledged in the academic literature and though it has only recently been introduced, academic literature seems to neglect the relevance of personal branding or somehow consider personal branding as irrelevant due to little research and information currently available.

Why personal branding does not seem to find its breakthrough in the discipline of marketing, either in terms of formal research, textbook contents or academic curricula is disputable. There seems to be confusion on what defines personal brand management. Perhaps personal branding is too tied up in the roots and shadows of traditional marketing as this industry is based on the logic of applying to people the same marketing and branding principles originally developed for products and corporations. Marketing literature finds the marketing of products and the marketing of people comparable. However, literature from a human resource point of view, or even from a more psychological point of view, might see this differently.

Luxury branding on the other hand, is suggested as being different from traditional marketing. Some authors claim luxury branding finds its roots in traditional marketing while others disagree and claim that luxury branding is different from traditional marketing in such a way that it needs to be treated differently when it comes to marketing and management. It is therefore questioned in the academic literature whether a formal marketing blanket can be placed easily around the shoulders of luxury branding.

Though luxury branding and personal branding seem to have different roots, both share more or less the same philosophy. Personal branding emphasizes a unique promise of value and demonstrating that value in everything you do. It entails managing your perceptions effectively and controlling and influencing how others perceive you and think of you. Personal branding needs to be authentic and needs to reflect a person's true nature. This authenticity is based upon one's life, one's goals, one's values, one's uniqueness and one's passion. These factors are also focused upon in luxury branding and are highly valued in creating a brand's identity especially in the luxury industry. It is identity that gives a brand that particularly powerful feeling of uniqueness, a timelessness, and the necessary authenticity that helps give an impression of permanence. Luxury is tied to its unique know-how, values and culture.

Hence, literature indicates that luxury branding and personal branding share the same philosophy while personal branding seems to find its roots in traditional marketing and luxury branding does not. Luxury branding has found its breakthrough in the academic literature of marketing while personal branding does not. Is personal branding perhaps too rooted in traditional marketing? In other words, are there maybe opportunities present in luxury branding that can be useful for personal branding?

This masters dissertation focuses on personal brand management and luxury brand management and attempts to link both concepts through the analysis of luxury brand management, to see if there are tools used in luxury brand management that can be useful for personal brand management.

1.2 Research question

The research question that is central in this masters dissertation is:

“Do key success factors in luxury brand management apply for personal brand management?”

A number of sub-questions have been formulated, in order to answer the research question

1. What is branding?
2. What is personal branding?
3. What is luxury branding?
4. Does personal branding and luxury branding share the same fundamentals?
5. To what extent is luxury marketing different from traditional marketing?
6. To what extent can the 24 anti-laws of marketing (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009) be transferred to personal brand management?

Kapferer and Bastien (2009) have introduced 24 anti-laws of marketing, laws that are the opposite of what traditional marketing preaches while applicable to luxury marketing. As personal branding finds its roots in traditional marketing it might be interesting to see whether personal branding can learn something from luxury branding as this is perceived to be different from traditional marketing. More specifically, it might be interesting to see whether the 24 anti-laws of marketing that can be considered to be key success factors in luxury brand management, may gain new insights for personal brand management. As personal branding and luxury branding seem to share the same fundamentals, there might be opportunities present in these 24 management principles also referred to as the anti-laws of marketing that can be used by businesses in order to improve their personal branding strategy. This masters dissertation attempts to find opportunities within these 24 anti-laws of marketing that can be of relevance for personal brand management.

1.3 Research design

The research in this masters dissertation is done by using a qualitative literature study and a qualitative empirical study.

1.3.1 Qualitative literature study

A literature study was done on what constitutes a brand and on branding in general as this concept serves as a foundation for personal brand management and luxury brand management. Therefore an attempt has been made to grasp the essence of branding which makes it easier to understand personal brand management and luxury brand management. As personal brand management has been introduced recently, a literature study focused on this concept was essential. By consulting several books and articles written by experts on this topic, I have made an attempt in defining personal brand management. As personal brand management has not found its breakthrough in the academic literature of marketing yet, many of the sources used on this particular topic, were written by experts in personal brand management.

Luxury brand management is a well known concept in the academic literature of marketing though there seem to be some misunderstanding on what defines luxury. Several definitions given by academics and experts in the field of luxury branding are outlined in order to get to one final and clear definition. A literature study was therefore important, in order to gain a deep understanding of luxury brand management.

Through a critical analysis and interpretation of existing literature on personal branding and luxury branding I would like to see whether personal branding and luxury branding have potential bridges in their brand management and if there are opportunities in luxury brand management that can be transferred to personal brand management.

1.3.2 Qualitative empirical study

After critically analyzing existing literature on luxury brand management as well as personal brand management, 24 anti-laws of marketing suggested by Kapferer (2009) were taken as a starting point and served as an inspiration to find the answer to the research question. We rely on focus group interviews as a prime data collection method. Focus groups are basically group interviews which heavily rely on the quality of interaction between the members of the group and less on the interaction with the interviewer/moderator. Through the discussion of the 24 anti-laws an attempt

was made to find tools existing within these 24 anti-laws that can be translated to personal brand management and that can be relevant for personal brand management purposes.

Chapter 2: Branding

In this chapter an attempt has been made in defining a brand and the branding process in order to set a foundation to better understand the concept of personal branding and luxury branding which will be discussed in chapter 3 and 4. As a brand seems to be a complex phenomenon, several definitions of a brand have been outlined in order to create some understanding on what constitutes a brand. Additionally, part of this chapter is dedicated to the branding process. Finally, the brand identity is also fully discussed as literature indicates this is of essence in the branding process and provides direction, purpose and meaning for a brand which is important when understanding the branding process.

2.1 Defining a complex phenomenon; a brand

A brand is a complex phenomenon. Though brands have been widely discussed and debated in academic literature; a common understanding of what constitutes a brand could not be made among brand experts. Each expert comes up with his or her own definition of brand or nuances of definitions which increase the complexity in brand interpretation as well as its management (Kapferer, 2012). This paragraph however, outlines some definitions in order to create some understanding on what constitutes a brand.

Neal and Strauss (2008) state that brands are assets (or liabilities) that convey values, value, and meaning. For providers, brands can create a sustainable competitive advantage. For users, brands are a way to choose among offerings. For employees brands provide identity, community, and opportunity. For investors, brands shape expectations of future returns. For channel partners, brands can create a shared bond of cooperation and understanding. For top management, brands act as a leadership and motivation tool.

Brands started out as tangible marks craftsmen put onto their goods to tell everyone the identity of the maker. Prospective buyers would know to look for the mark of the artisan whose level of craftsmanship or breadth of offering they knew from prior experience, or by word of mouth. The “trade” mark functioned as a quality assurance device. Most quality gurus define quality as “performance of standard.” Craftspeople strived to either meet the needs of their customers (an outside-in, market-driven standard) and/or to achieve their vision of an esthetic goal expressed as the design/finish of their product (and inside-out, producer-driven standard). As the market-driven standard was met, the mark became a symbol for the quality of the product, the values the brand stood for, and the value users derived from that product (Neal & Strauss, 2008).

Arch (2010) stated (personal communication, October, 2010) that a brand is a named product or service that refers to the branded thing itself. A brand can be considered a trademark which refers to the name or symbol in the abstract sense. It is a customer's belief about a product or service represented by a symbol and/or famous catchphrases. It can be products, services, organizations, places and people. A brand is a promise of satisfaction, a sign, a metaphor operating as an unwritten contract between a manufacturer and a client.

The American Marketing Association proposed the following company-oriented definition of a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (AMA as cited in Wood, 2000, p. 664). This definition has been criticized for being too product-oriented, with emphasis on visual features as differentiating mechanisms. Despite these criticisms, the definition has endured to contemporary literature, albeit in modified form which is a brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers (Bennet as cited in Wood, 2000, p. 664). The key change to the original definition are the words "any other feature" as this allows for intangibles, such as image, to be the point of differentiation. The particular value of this definition is that it focuses on a fundamental brand purpose, which is differentiation. It should not be forgotten that brands operate in a market environment where differentiation is crucially important. The other key feature of this definition is that it takes the corporate perspective rather than emphasizing consumer benefits (Wood, 2000).

A more consumer-oriented approach in defining a brand is the promise of the bundles of attributes that someone buys and provide satisfaction. The attributes that make up a brand may be real or illusory, ration or emotional, tangible or invisible (Ambler as cited in Wood, 2000, p.664).

The Tronvig Group defines a brand as what sticks in your mind associated with a product, service or organization – whether or not, at that particular moment, you bought or did not buy (Heaton, n.d.). Kapferer (2012) states that a brand is a shared desirable and exclusive idea embodied in products, services, places and/or experiences. The more this idea is shared by a larger number of people, the more power the brand has. He then adjusts his definition as he claims times have changed which led to the definition of a brand as a name that symbolizes a long-term engagement, crusade or commitment to a unique set of values, embedded into products, services and behaviors, which make the organization, person or product stand apart or stand out (Kapferer, 2012).

Maurya and Mishra (2012) concluded that a definition of a brand cannot be given in a just a few lines as they analyzed more than three dozen definitions of a brand. Based on their findings an attempt has been made to put their understanding based on exiting review of definition which intends to capture the essence of the brand. According to Maurya and Mishra (2012) brands are conditional, intangible and legal assets for a firm. They act like a signal of perceived value to all the stakeholders. The perceived value (benefits) may range from functional to psychological associations. This signal is influenced by the interaction among the firm the various stakeholders (also between stakeholders) through the various point of contact and interaction. Hence in spite of understanding the brand as separate themes, we should look at it holistically as a value indicator for various stakeholders. The meaning of the values is subjective and personal; it is shaped by the interaction of company and stakeholders over a period of time and driven by the vision of the organization. The challenge for the organization lies in minimizing the gap between the brand identity and perception. The concept of a brand is also dynamic and changes along with the change in social (cultural), economic, political, technological, legal system and across the geography. The brand is not always managed by the firm or customer alone, it evolves over a period of time in a given context with the interaction of various stakeholders with the firm (offerings). A brand is not an end in itself it is the means to achieve certain objectives of various interest group and should always be complimenting a value offering (Maurya & Mishra, 2012).

2.2 From a brand to branding

It is important to note that a brand is not the same as branding. A brand can be considered as the sum of the perceptions that are held about a company, product or service. A brand is the set of emotions that people associate with a corporate name or a product. Branding on the other hand, can be considered as the universe of activities you undertake that affects those perceptions. Branding consists of marketing activities that attempt to create, reinforce, or change the emotions that people associate with a corporate name or a product. In order to effectively build a positive brand perception, it is important to engage in both internal and external activities which are aligned to deliver a consistent impression of who you are as a company or a brand.

Derived from a brand, branding as a verb can be defined as making a brand out of something or someone (Van Zwieten & Van De Grift, 2005). A strong brand is considered to be an important mean to influence consumer behavior. Branding is a way to create distinctiveness and to communicate this in a consistent and recognizable manner. The concept of a 'brand' is what is most important when it comes to branding. Via a brand, you are able to link the distinctiveness of a product or service to a certain product which makes it recognizable to consumers. The concept of distinctiveness is what is

crucial to brands. It is about what differentiates a brand from similar other brands in the same product category. When this distinction is attractive and well communicated, it can serve as the most important reason to buy a product of a certain brand instead of a more or less similar brand (Van Zwieten & Van De Grift, 2005).

According to Arch (personal communication, October, 2010), branding is a continuous struggle between producers and customers to define promise and meaning. Branding is creating an identity outside the use of function or service and getting into the minds of consumers. Branding should both precede and underlie any marketing effort. It is the expression of the essential truth or value of an organization. Branding can be considered as the communication of characteristics, values and attributes that clarify what this particular brand is and what it is not. A brand will help encourage someone to buy a product and it will directly support whatever sales or marketing activities are in play.

According to van Zwieten and Van De Grift (2005) the feelings associated with a certain brand are considered crucial as well. Linking emotions to a certain brand can lead to the creation of distinctiveness. A brand is therefore also considered as a combination of associations and giving meaning on the basis of symbols, (brand) names, behavior and presentation. In short, brands consist of several elements such as a name, symbols captured in a logo, personalities that symbolize meaning, colors and slogan that are part of the presentation. These are all elements that call for associations, that have meaning, that build recognition and that eventually create a brand. These associations are led by communication and marketing. The creation and communication of the elements mentioned earlier, in order to build a recognizable and distinct brand, is referred to as 'branding'. Branding is about creating a feeling and a mental concept of a certain brand linked to a product or service.

The branding process can also be described as the migration path that bridges today's marketplace with tomorrow's marketplace. Getting from your current brand image to your desired brand identity requires that your company have a brand strategy, or a migration path on how to get from today's image to tomorrow's identity. When this is done with existing products or services, it keeps your brands relevant to your served markets. As conditions change in the environment, your brand adapts these new challenges and opportunities. The branding process is therefore communicating the need for change, how to change, what to change and guiding the actions associated with change (Neal & Strauss, 2008).

It is known from the previous paragraph that a brand is an asset. Branding is considered to be the magic behind creating that asset and increasing its value. It should be noted that brand building is a complex, recursive process, marked by a series of actions designed to achieve a sustainable, differentiated competitive advantage. What makes branding a complex process is that the actions and outcomes are somewhat unique to each part of the organization and to each separate stakeholder groups. Everyone owns the brand; yet, in many organizations no one entity owns the brand or fully understands their role in, and impact on, the branding process (Neal & Strauss, 2008).

Branding matters as branding is your story. It is how the world will perceive you. Good branding can lead to earning more money than operational excellence can; bad branding can be fatal. A great brand commands higher prices and higher margins. It can even make you a hero. It is considered to be the delicate touch point between you and the rest of the world. When customers respond emotionally and loyally to your company, you have built a strong brand, with authenticity, a meaningful presence and an effective voice (Cosper, 2014).

2.3 Brand identity

The purpose of this paragraph is to elaborate the definition of brand identity and of related concepts, such as the identity prism by Kapferer (2012) and the value proposition, that a brand identity generates. As brand identity is central to a brand's strategic vision, it is important to get a closer look at what constitutes the identity of a brand as it highly relates to a brand and to the process of branding.

2.3.1. What is brand identity

A brand identity similarly provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. It is central to a brand's strategic vision. Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members. Brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits. Brand identity structure includes a core and extended identity. The core identity- the central, timeless essence of the brand – is most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets and products. The extended identity includes brand identity elements, organized into cohesive and meaningful groupings, that provide texture and completeness (Aaker, 1996).

2.3.2 Understanding a brand; the identity prism

According to Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2008) brand identity offers some very useful and concrete glimpses into the essence of the brand phenomenon itself. It constitutes the foundation and the federating element of all the activities designed as being manifestations of the brand. Brand identity can be considered as the capacity of a brand to be recognized as unique, over time, without confusion, thanks to the elements that individualize it. The brand's identity is a major resource and a frame of reference for the development of an overall strategy. It influences not only creation and communication, but also logistics, production, distribution, human resource management, information processing, and so on. At all levels of its activity, a brand aspires to become what it truly is (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008).

Kapferer (2012) introduced the identity prism by which we are able to identify a brand's ethical and aesthetic constants which will give us a more thorough understanding of what constitutes a brand. This brand identity prism is shown in figure 1 (Kapferer, 2012). A well-presented brand has to be able to be seen as a person (sender) and also as the stereotypical user (receiver). A brand has social aspects that define its external expression (externalization) and aspects that are incorporated into the brand itself (internalization).

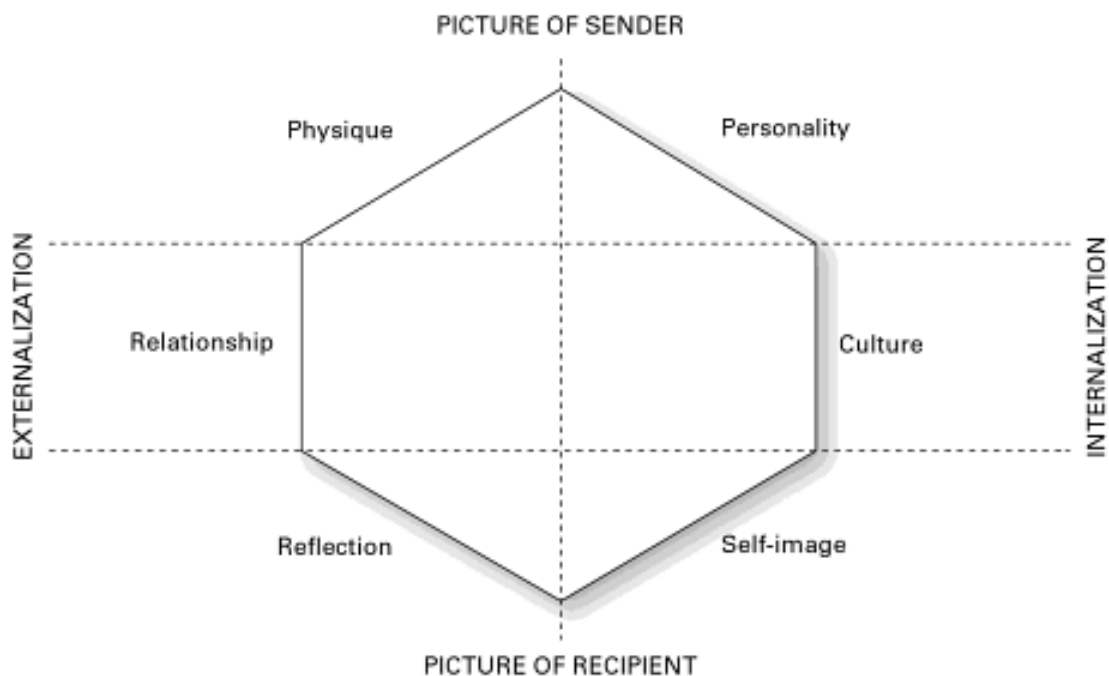


Figure 1 Reprinted from *The New Strategic Brand Management; Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking* (p. 183), by J.-N. Kapferer, 2012, Kogan Page Limited

Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2008) describe the elements of Kapferer's identity prism in short as following where Chanel has been taken as an example to clarify this tool for analysis. The physique of the brand relates to the concrete element that immediately comes to mind when the name of the brand is mentioned and can be considered as a set of sensory and objective characteristics. It is both the brand's backbone and its tangible added value and can be considered as the basis of the brand. In the case of Chanel, physique can refer to the total look for women. Brand personality is the brand's character and can be apprehended by means of questions such as: if it were a woman, what kind of character would she have? By communication with consumers in a particular way, these consumers can be given the feeling that all brand-related communication actually constitutes a person with specific character traits speaking to them. When analyzing Chanel, personality can be described as instinctive, daring, creative, perfectionist, understated and sophisticated. The brand's culture is linked to the original values of its creators, the culture of the country or the region or city where the brand is developed. It is the system of values and basic principles on which a brand has to base its behavior. When applying this element to Chanel, simplicity, sophistication, anticipation and liberation are key words that describe the culture of the brand. Relationship is involved with the social communication of the brand. A brand with identity influences relations between individuals, first through sign of belonging to a group, and then well beyond. When applied to Chanel, durable, flattering and respectful come to surface. The brand's reflection describes the typical customer the market associates with the brand (the customer it imagines for it). Note that this is not to be confused with the target customer. Chanel's reflection can be the modern elegant woman. The brand's self-image corresponds to the image consumers have of themselves when using the product. It is the mirror the customer holds up to itself. How does the customer perceive himself when using the product? Applying the self-image element to Chanel could result in a self-image of a liberated woman's lifestyle. The brand identity prism enables us to get a more thorough understanding of what elements constitute a brand.

2.3.3. Providing a value proposition

According to Van Zwieten and Van De Grift (2005) brands should differentiate if possible on the basis of tangible physical and functional product characteristics as well as emotional characteristics which are intangible characteristics that are not directly linked to the product. In order to market, communicate a brand effectively and create a brand experience van Zwieten and Van De Grift (2005) suggest that you should first determine the desired brand values and brand identity. The following criteria are important in this process, relevance, differentiation, authenticity and reality, and vision and mission. Firstly, an emotional brand value must of course be relevant to the brand. Secondly, it is important that a brand value is distinctive within its product category. In addition, authenticity is an

important criterion as it is crucial that emotional values are real and authentic. Finally, it is of essence what vision and mission the company is pursuing. What are the values of the company and its goals. Brand values must contribute in setting up a vision and a mission that the company will pursue. Besides the emotional brand values, a brand must also have expressive values: when using a brand, what does the brand say about me? Brands tell something about the user. It is a way of expressing style, lifestyle and personality.

Aaker (1996) summarizes the criteria mentioned by Van Zwieten and Van De Grift in a value proposition which is a statement of the functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer. An effective value proposition should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive purchase decisions. A value proposition can also be described as the verbal statement that matches up the firms distinctive competencies with the needs and preferences of a carefully defined set of potential customers. It is a communication device that links the people in an organization with its customers, concentrating employee efforts and customer expectations on things that the company does best in a system for delivering superior value. The value proposition creates a shared understanding needed to form a long-term relationship that meets the goals of both the company and its customers (Rintamaki et al, 2007).

The most visible and common basis for a value proposition is a functional benefit – that is, a benefit based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the customer. Such a benefit will usually relate directly to the functions performed by the product or service for the customer. Functional benefits, especially those based upon attributes, have direct links to customer decisions and use experiences. The challenge is to select functional benefits that will ‘ring the bell’ with customers and that will support a strong position relative to competitors. The latter task involves not only creating a product or service that delivers but also communicating that capability to customers which might be the most difficult task. When the purchase or use of a particular brand gives the customer a positive feeling, that brand is providing an emotional benefit. Emotional benefits add richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand.

Brands and products can become symbols of a person’s self-concept. A brand can thus provide a self-expressive benefit by providing a way for a person to communicate his or her self-image. Each person though has multiple roles. For each role, the person will have an associated self-concept and a need to express that self-concept. The purchase and use of brands is one way to fulfill this need for self-expression. When a brand provides a self-expressive benefit, the connection between the brand and the customer is likely to be heightened. (Aaker, 1996)

Van Zwieten and Van de Grift (2005) set up a brand identity that reflects the desired and existing functional, emotional and expressive value in order to create a consistent and clear brand vision that is recognizable for the consumer. This brand identity can be illustrated by a so called brand template which is shown in figure 2 (Van Zwieten & Van de Grift, 2005).

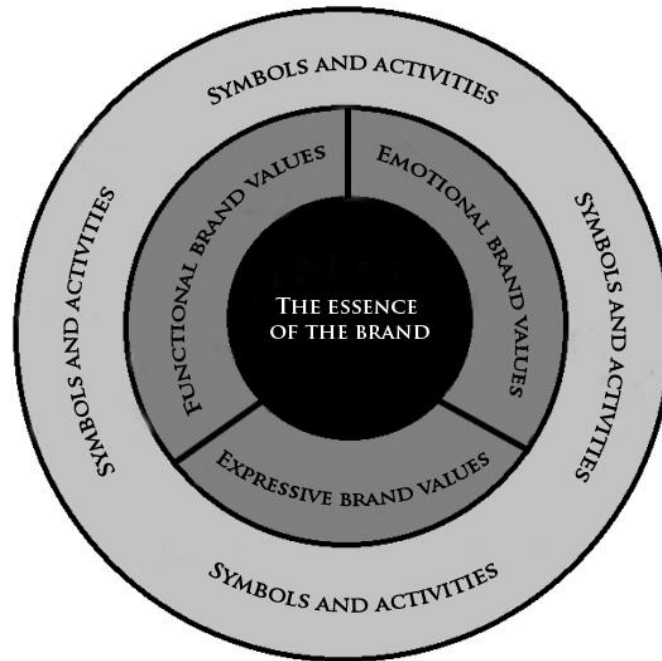


Figure 2 Adapted from *Merk IK; Talentbranding voor een Succesvolle Carrière*, (p. 48), by H. Van Zwieten and M. Van de Grift, 2005, het Spectrum

In addition to the functional, emotional and expressive brand values the brand template shows the essence of the brand, also known as brand essence which consists of the most important values that the brand stands for. For example 'think different' in the case of Apple. The symbols and activities are elements that give meaning to the brand values of the brand. These can be of functional or emotional nature.

2.4 The importance of a strong brand

A strong brand is of great importance which has led to branding becoming a key issue for many companies. First of all, it seems that in order to differentiate your brand from competitors it is important to communicate a good and clear brand identity. Secondly, a strong brand conquers a place in the mind of the consumer which leads to consumers knowing what the brand stands for and eventually buying the brand. Thirdly, a brand can influence the behavior of the consumer. The brand experience is an important tool to ensure that consumers buy the brands' product or service. A strong brand is also important because it is able to build relationships with its customers. Once a customer chooses a certain brand and eventually is satisfied, a relationship can evolve which can

lead to brand loyalty. Finally, the importance of a strong brand is relevant in order to introduce new products and services based on the reputation of the brand and its brand values (Van Zwieten and Van De Grift, 2005).

This chapter is dedicated to answering the research sub question 'what is branding?'. This chapter started off with grasping the essence of a brand which seems to be a complex phenomenon, and therefore outlined several definitions in order to define what constitutes a brand. This chapter continued with the branding process and finally ends with discussing brand identity and the value proposition as according to academic literature both are of essence when understanding branding. Hence, through the discussion of these elements the research question 'what is branding' has been answered and a foundation has been set to better understand personal branding and luxury branding.

Chapter 3: Personal branding

This chapter is dedicated to personal brand management and frames the concept of personal branding as it is known today. Based on a literature study of academic literature as well as business magazines, this chapter aims at providing a clear and broad image of what exactly personal branding is as this is of essence for further analysis and important in order to properly connect personal branding to luxury branding.

This chapter starts off with providing the reader with a clear definition of personal branding by combining views on personal brand management and definitions of personal branding, given by several authors whom are specialized in personal brand management. The chapter continues with reasons that led to the introduction of personal brand management and shows the advantages that one can gain through personal brand management. A psychological perspective on personal branding will also be discussed in order to understand personal branding more thoroughly. The chapter then continues with a section dedicated to authentic personal branding, as authenticity seems to be essential in personal brand management. Finally, this chapter ends with stating several examples of personal branding on an international level, so the reader is able to visualize the concept of personal branding.

3.1 Personal branding; the unfamiliar

Over the past decade a minor personal development business has emerged that encourages and advises individuals how to market and brand themselves. This business is based on the logic of applying to people the same marketing and branding principles originally developed for products and corporations. It seems, however, that this business referred to as personal brand management is not an area which is emphasized upon in the academic marketing literature. A reason for this might be that the marketing literature finds the marketing of products and the marketing of people comparable. However, literature from a human resource point of view, or even from a more psychological point of view, might see this differently.

Since the late 1990s, personal branding has become increasingly popular as a subject of self-improvement books, websites and consultancy services. To this day however, little of this interest appears to have permeated the discipline of marketing, either in terms of formal research, textbook contents or academic curricula. Despite the interest taken by university careers advisers in graduate job search, the subject of personal branding appears to be largely absent from marketing curricula in higher education (Shepherd, 2005).

3.2 Defining personal branding

Personal branding was invented by Tom Peters (1997) who issued that we are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. According to Peters, to be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You. The key premise of personal branding is that everyone has a personal brand. In one phrase, personal branding can be considered as your unique promise of value (Peters, 1997). According to personal branding guru William Arruda, personal branding is the process of unearthing your unique promise of value and demonstrating that value in everything you do. It is about consistently being your best self so you can achieve your goals while adding tremendous value to your team, organization and company. Arruda stated in an interview that:

Personal branding is permission to be your self—your best self. It's knowing what's authentic to you, differentiating from your peers and relevant and compelling to your target audience, and using that to reach your goals and add value to your employer. It separates you from your peers and allows you to expand your personal success while building greater success for your organization. In today's fast-changing economy and shifting workplace environments, personal branding is no longer a luxury; it has become a critical survival skill (Martin, 2009, p.417).

Rampersad (2008) believes that branding is about influencing others, by creating a brand identity that associates certain perceptions and feelings with that identity. According to Rampersad (2008) personal branding is a new trend that entails managing your perceptions effectively and controlling and influencing how others perceive you and think of you. Having a personal brand seems to be a very important asset in today's online, virtual and individual age. Rampersad (2008) emphasizes uniqueness, authenticity and values as most important factors when it comes to personal branding. By setting up an authentic personal brand, your unique characteristics and values will distinguish you from the rest. Without these characteristics and values you will be just like everyone else.

According to Dan Schawbel (2011), personal branding can be defined as the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition, whether professional or personal, and then leveraging it across platforms with a consistent message and image to achieve a specific goal.

Note that a personal image is not a personal brand. Everyone has a personal image which is the collection of qualities people identify with you such as your sense of humor, your hairstyle, your favorite food, your clothing, and so on. These qualities help people form a mental picture of you. A personal brand however, is different because it is how other people perceive you. On the outside, former President Bill Clinton looks like a noble attractive and credible statesman. But people perceive

him differently due to his past actions – his brand is that of a misguided, has-been politician. In the best circumstances, a personal image is an accurate reflection of a personal brand. Mother Theresa for instance, looked like a woman dedicated to lifelong servitude of the poor and indigent, and we think of her as a modern-day saint. In this case, the personal image is truly an accurate reflection of the personal brand (Montoya & Vandehey, 2003).

3.3 The birth of personal branding

The introduction of personal branding was caused by the technological revolution that changed the structures of today's careers. In the past it was normal that people worked their entire career at one or two organizations. Today however, most people will have four to eight jobs at different organizations during their career. Personal branding is therefore of interest for the purpose of career development and can be considered as an effective career tool, as it helps to define who you are, what you stand for and what makes you unique and special which can be attractive for employers and organizations.

Another reason for personal branding to be born are the changes in communication that we all have experienced the last couple of year. The internet has given everyone the opportunity to become a publisher. Email, blogs, social media, forums and discussion groups made it possible to learn, network and expose your business and yourself. When you have become an online friendly, known and a consistent presence and brand, people will feel like they know you and will be more likely to do business with you. Personal branding is therefore also of essence for the development of an organization as more opportunities can be created through internet and social media that have a positive effect on personal branding for both the organization as its employees (Rampersad, 2008).

In addition, the birth of personal branding is also due to the upcoming experience economy which centralizes offering a memorable and unique experience. An experience is in this case considered to be the psychological value of a service or product which has become increasingly important in a world where consumers continue to look for distinctive experiences that are in line with their self image and make them aware of who they are. An entrepreneur should anticipate by selling its target group a unique experience by telling a unique story that is authentic to the entrepreneur as a person.

The importance of personal branding has come to life as it can lead to many advantages for entrepreneurs and organizations. These advantages are outlined below.

- It stimulates meaningful perceptions on the values and qualities that the organization or the entrepreneur stand for.
- It tells others who you are, what you do, what makes you unique, how you create value for customers and what customers can expect when doing business with you or your company.
- It influences how others perceive you
- It creates expectations in the mind of people who may work with you in the future
- It creates an identity of the entrepreneur which makes it easier for others to remember the entrepreneur or the organization.
- A strong personal brand can lead to customers believing you are the only solution to their problems.
- It differentiates you from your competitors and makes you unique in the market (Rampersad 2008).

3.4 Personal branding from a psychological perspective

Harmsen (2011) defines personal branding as a form of psychological capital that is slowly built and that you constantly take with you during the different phases of your career. Harmsen (2011) describes five different gears that together form the accelerator model: acceptance, ambition, authenticity, attention and autonomy.

The first gear is acceptance; the acceptance of changes in your work field and the acceptance of the need to constantly develop and distinguish yourself. The psychological capital that is part of this gear is the hope to set new goals and to achieve these goals. The second gear is ambition; what do you want to achieve? It is about making choices so people will recognize you and your specialism. The psychological capital that is central in this gear, is optimism. The third gear is authenticity, where it is central to create a convincing image of your personal and professional capacities. The psychological capital in this case, is wisdom which is manifested by gaining experience, reflection and learning from previous experience. The fourth gear in the accelerator model suggested by Harmsen (2011) is attention. This gear shines light on the importance of getting attention from your target group. In other words, you should sell yourself by managing your first impression, your self-presentation on the internet and by standing out in your immediate surroundings. The psychological capital that is part of this gear is self-efficacy which is basically getting attention of others by being pro-active. Finally, the fifth gear is autonomy where independence is centralized. As it takes time and effort to

work on your personal brand, the psychological capital that suits this gear is mental strength (Harmsen, 2011).

3.5 Authentic personal branding

According to Rampersad (2008), sustainable, authentic and consistent personal branding is related to some criteria. These criteria are outlined below (Montoya & Rampersad as cited in Rampersad, 2008, p. 30).

1. Authenticity; be your own brand. You are the CEO of you. Your brand must be based on your own personality. It represents your character, your behavior, values and vision. Your personal brand should therefore fit your ambitions.
2. Integrity; you should hold on to your morals that are in line with your personal ambitions.
3. Consistency; you should show consistent behavior. This requires courage. Can others always depend on you? Are you constantly doing relevant things?
4. Specialization; you should focus on one area or specialization. Be accurate and concentrated on your core talent and unique skill. Being a generalist, without specific skills, competencies or talents, does not make you unique or special.
5. Authority; you should be seen as a known expert in a certain area, very talented, experienced and an effective leader.
6. Distinctiveness; you should distinct yourself on the basis of your brand. It should be expressed in a distinct manner that is different from your competitors and that is considered of value to others. The target group should quickly understand and acknowledge what you stand for when it is clearly formulated.
7. Relevance; what you stand for should be linked to what your audience and/or target group finds important.
8. Visibility; your brand should be carried out repeatedly in a consistent manner, till it is embedded in the minds of your target group. It is about constantly repeating and long term exposure.
9. Perseverance; your brand needs time to grow. It should be developed. You should hold on to your brand, do not give up, believe in yourself and be patient. It took personal brands such as Tiger Woods and Oprah Winfrey years of dedication, sacrifice, courage, planning and patience to become the icon they are today.
10. Goodwill; People often do business with people they like. Your personal brand will lead to better results and will last longer when you are seen in a positive manner. You should be associated with a value that is positive and valuable.

11. Presentation; presentation is one of the most important elements after your brand has become known. When you do not perform, and you do not continue to improve yourself, your personal brand will become a deception. Your personal brand should therefore be translated in your personal balanced scorecard (Rampersad, 2008).

According to Rampersad (2008) when building your brand around the criteria mentioned previously, and committing to act according this criteria, your brand will be strong and you will be able to distinguish yourself from others and your target group will be able to better understand your brand. It should be noted that a personal brand is a journey and an evolving and organic process. It starts with the determination of who you really are, based on your dream, your vision, your mission, your philosophy, your values, your identity, your self-knowledge and self-consciousness, instead of making up a personal brand that does not show the personal you actually are. By setting up an authentic personal brand, your unique characteristics and values will distinguish you from the rest. Without these characteristics and values you will be just like everyone else.

3.6 Personal branding; Let's set an example

A lot of celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, pay attention to personal branding. They are aware of their unique qualities and apply personal brand management to distinguish themselves from the rest. Note that not only celebrities apply personal brand management, entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates and politics such as President Obama were also able to successfully implement personal branding. They were able to connect themselves with their values and their vision and able to communicate this vision to their target group (Rampersad, 2008).

Oprah Winfrey's dream was to use television as a service to god. Her dream was the leading principle in setting up her personal brand and creating an emotional connection with her audience. The television hostess was born in poverty in Mississippi where she had been sexually abused by male family members which led to giving her the strength to define and pursue her dream. Oprah is known for doing good in the world. She once said " Create the highest and biggest vision possible in life and it can become a reality. Go for the highest and biggest vision possible in life and make it your purpose in life. Follow your passion and sooner or later your passion will take over and no one can stop you" (Rampersad, 2008, p.39). Oprah Winfrey is a strong brand with authenticity, cohesion and focus. She is authentic and her actions are based on her motives and her emotional brand values. These are more important than her functional brand values. There are enough presenters, but her warmth and sincerity make her to who she is today. She is able to effectively use all communication

channels that are at her disposal. In addition, she maximizes her personal brand both for herself as for others. Her choice in communication channel as well as the messages she communicates are all in line with her personal brand identity (Zwieten & van de Grift, 2005).

Another example is Bill Gates whose dream thirty years ago was to have a personal computer on every desk. He recently stated "When I was nineteen I envisioned the future and based my career on what I saw. I was right. The personal computer is the most empowering tool that we have created which enabled people to do great things" (Rampersad, 2008, p.39) Bill Gates was at that time well aware of his talent, which was to effectively market the personal computer software. Gates started his personal brand with a dream and has been working in the computer field ever since (Rampersad, 2008).

The dream of Barack Obama is to realize real change, change that we believe in. His passion for change served as the foundation for his personal brand. Obama had a clear brand promise: 'Change!'. That he combined with decisiveness which is evident in his world famous slogan: 'Yes, we can!'. Obama wrote on his own campaign website 'I am asking you to believe. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington. I am asking to believe in yours'. In other words, 'Together we can change America'. Obama's goal was to win the election with as many votes possible. Obama was well aware of his capabilities and his own brand values which led to a communication strategy where speeches and the internet were the main communication channels. Obama learned from previous campaigns that a campaign should be more personal and more local: individual voters with individual problems are who matter most. That is why Obama chose to give speeches on a local level, give examples of real problems of people whom he had actually met. In addition, Obama's campaign became so successful as he was able to optimally implement new media, web 2.0, in his campaign. This way, communication became more personal and more interactive (Zwieten & van de Grift, 2005).

This chapter is dedicated to answering the research sub question 'what is personal branding' as the understanding of personal brand management is essential and serves as the foundation in answering the research question that is at the heart of this masters dissertation. This chapter therefore aims at providing a clear and broad image of what exactly personal branding is as this is of essence for further analysis and important in order to properly connect personal branding to luxury branding

Chapter 4 Luxury branding

This chapter is dedicated to luxury and tries to define luxury by outlining several definitions given by different authors in order to set up one clear definition. This chapter illustrates the difficulty in defining luxury as there seem to be some confusion in academic literature on what constitutes luxury. This confusion is often led by perception. This chapter continues with discussing luxury branding. Finally, this chapter ends in suggesting that luxury brand management can be considered different from traditional marketing which is illustrated by the 24 anti-laws of marketing (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

4.1 Defining luxury

Today luxury is everywhere but there seems to be confusion about what really makes a luxury product, a luxury brand or a luxury company. In order to thoroughly understand luxury brand management we must first have a close look at how luxury is currently defined.

4.1.1 Difficulty in defining luxury

It should be noted that there is no single, definitive meaning for luxury but there are, however, many definitions of luxury. Illustrating the difficulty in defining luxury comes to surface when distinguishing luxury, a luxury, my luxury and luxury as a sector, a market or a strategy.

According to Kapferer and Bastien (2009) Luxury, the word itself, evokes inaccessibility, the lifestyles of the rich, expensive objects and costly personalized services. In this case, luxury is seen as absolute luxury such as mansions and yachts. There is no need for brands in this case. A luxury is seen as a relative concept. What can be a luxury to me can be non-luxurious to others. My luxury is considered a very personal revelation about one's secret dreams, something rare, highly emotional but not inaccessible. It is often seen as experiential such as climbing a mountain or going fishing in the wild. Luxury as a sector refers to the companies held as member of this sector. In each country, an official organization represents such companies: in France it is Comité Colbert. Luxury as a market reflects the common use of the word in market surveys made by consulting companies. Luxury as a strategy indicates that luxury is a very specific business model which has been invented by those brands that now define the pantheon of luxury brands worldwide (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

4.1.2 An overview of several definitions

However, one still needs a definition of luxury. According to Vigneron and Johnson (2004) luxury goods are defined as goods for which the simple use or display of a particular branded product brings esteem on the owner, apart from any functional utility. Hence, luxury products enable consumers to satisfy psychological and functional needs, and it seems that these psychological benefits are the main factor distinguishing them from non-luxury products (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Vigneron and Johnson are also known for using prestige as a point of reference to measure the element of a luxury in a brand. They assert that the 'prestige' inherent in a brand consists of perceived quality, perceived unique value, perceived hedonic value, perceived social value and perceived conspicuous value (Uggla & Lashgari, 2012).

Kapferer and Bastien (2009) introduce six dimensions in their attempt to define luxury:

1. a very qualitative hedonistic experience or product made to last;
2. offered at a price that far exceeds what their mere functional value would command;
3. tied to heritage, unique know-how and culture attached to the brand;
4. available in purposefully restricted and controlled distribution;
5. offered with personalized accompanying services;
6. representing a social market, making the owner of beneficiary feel special, with a sense of privilege (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

Kapferer (2009) also emphasizes the importance of a brand its identity in the luxury industry. According to Kapferer it is identity that gives a luxury brand that particular powerful feeling of uniqueness, a timelessness, and the necessary authenticity that helps give an impressions of permanence. However, one clear definition can still not be concluded based on the six dimensions provided by Kapferer as their weight may differ.

Luxury has also been defined by distinguishing three different levels of luxury. The inaccessible luxury which refers to exclusive models, sometimes hand-made in single units such as a special-model Rolls Royce. The second level is referred to as intermediary luxury. This level contains objects that are expensive replicas of individual models. When applying this to the fashion field, haute couture would be considered as inaccessible luxury while specially made outfits, duplicating all or part of a couture model, would fall under the intermediary level. Finally, accessibly luxury has been added to his analyses as it represents all those products made in factories or workshops and that are produced in larger series (Alleres as cited in Hemantha, 2013, p. 66). Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2008) argue in

their book *Luxury Brand Management* that such classification is not a very operational one and states that 98% of the luxury business today corresponds to the accessible luxury category.

According to Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2008), a luxury good must consist of three dimensions: it must have a strong artistic content, it must be the result of craftsmanship and it must be international. The artistic dimension relates to the profound and sophisticated aesthetic-research process. We are selling an aesthetic object and not merely a product. The craftsmanship aspect refers to the fact that customers want to believe that the object comes directly from the designer's workshop even if they are actually mass manufactured. The third and last dimension refers to the international aspect and focuses on the necessity for luxury brands to have an international profile and presence with a discernible national character. Based on these three dimensions Chevalier and Mazavollo (2008) envision the luxury as those beautiful objects, virtually hand-made by artists and craftsmen, that must be seen everywhere in the world before customers will accept being part of the deal and purchase them in their home country or elsewhere (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008)

4.1.3 Though hard to define – our definition of luxury

Luxury is particularly slippery to define as a strong element of human involvement, very limited supply and the recognition of value by others are considered to be key components. A good can be considered luxurious to one person but a necessity to another. A good can even be either a luxury or a necessity for the same person in different situations. Consequently, the perception of what is and is not a luxury product or brand may be dependent on the context and the people concerned (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

Based on the definitions provided, it can be assumed that luxury is regarded as images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price, excellent quality, aesthetics, rarity, exclusiveness, authenticity, uniqueness, craftsmanship, extraordinariness and a high degree of non functional associations. A luxury brand can therefore be characterized by a recognizable style, strong identity, high awareness, and enhanced emotional and symbolic associations. It evokes uniqueness and exclusivity, and is interpreted in products through high quality, controlled distribution and premium pricing.

4.2 Luxury branding

Luxury branding is a term associated with a business that is concerned with high-end products. In business sense, the term is related to luxury products (Hemantha, 2013). Keller (2008) has outlined 10 characteristics that help to briefly define luxury branding.

1. Maintaining a premium image for luxury brands is crucial; controlling that image is thus a priority.
2. Luxury branding typically involves the creation of many intangible brand associations and an aspirational image.
3. All aspects of the marketing program for luxury brands must be aligned to ensure quality products and services and pleasurable purchase and consumption experiences.
4. Brand elements besides brand names – logos, symbols, packaging, signage and so on – can be important drivers of brand equity for luxury brands.
5. Secondary associations from linked personalities, events, countries and other entities can be important drivers of brand equity for luxury brands.
6. Luxury brands must carefully control distribution via a selective channel strategy.
7. Luxury brands must employ a premium pricing strategy with strong quality cues and few discounts and mark downs
8. Brand architecture for luxury brands must be managed very carefully
9. Competition for luxury brands must be defined broadly as they often compete with other luxury brands from other categories for discretionary consumer dollars.
10. Luxury brands must legally protect all trademarks and aggressively combat counterfeits.

Table 1: ten characteristics of luxury branding (Keller, 2008).

These ten characteristics of luxury brands and their branding practices serve as the foundation as to how luxury brands can be marketed (Keller, 2008).

4.3 Luxury marketing vs. traditional marketing

Vickers and Renand (2003) suggest that luxury goods can be differentiated from normal or 'non' luxury goods by the extent to which they exhibit a distinctive mix of three important dimensions of instrumental performance in terms of functionalism, experientialism and symbolic interactionism.

Williams and Atwal (2008) state that the marketing of luxury goods has become complex, associated not only with conveying an image of quality, performance and authenticity, but also with attempting to sell an experience by relating it to the lifestyle constructs of consumers. The characteristics of luxury goods suggest that marketing within the sector is different from many other industries.

According to Kapferer et al. (2009) luxury brands have so far been reluctant to adopt any of the classical tools of mass marketing. Kapferer and Bastien (2009) claim that when managing a luxury brand, it is necessary to forget a fair number of laws of marketing, which can be applied to brands, even to premium brands, but not to luxury. They even state that traditional marketing techniques are not suitable to luxury and that these techniques can in fact be positively harmful to it. Kapferer and

Bastien (2009) have therefore put forward 24 management principles which they call the anti-laws of marketing peculiar to luxury as they are at the opposite extreme of what traditional marketing normally preaches. These 24 anti-laws of marketing are discussed below.

1. Forget about 'positioning', luxury is not comparative

At the heart of every marketing strategy, you will find the concept of positioning, of the unique selling proposition, and of gaining a competitive advantage. Every brand has to specify its positioning, and then convey it through using the 4p's. Positioning is the difference that creates the preference for a given brand over the one that it has decided to target as a source of new business.

When it comes to luxury however, being unique is what counts, not any comparison with a competitor. Luxury can be considered as the expression of a taste, of a creative identity; of the intrinsic passion of a creator; luxury makes the bald statement 'this is what I am', not 'that depends' – which is what positioning implies. Never compare yourself is the key motto. Chanel has an identity but not a positioning. Identity is not divisible, it is not negotiable – it simply is. Luxury is considered to be superlative and not comparative. It prefers to be faithful to an identity rather than always worrying about where it stands in relation to competitors (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

2. Does your product have enough flaws

In surveys into the perception of luxury, consumers worldwide were interviewed and the consensus was that 'product excellence' is the primary prerequisite of luxury. However, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) contradict this view and state that the aim of an upper-premium brand is to deliver a perfect product while it would need a touch of madness for it to be counted a luxury. In the world of luxury, the models and the products must have character or personality. If you were to buy a luxury watch, you would probably be warned that it loses two minutes every year. The flaw is not only known, it is assumed – one could say that that is both its charm and its guarantee of authenticity. Luxury brands are not interested in being the leader in utilitarian or functional comparisons – primarily they are hedonistic and symbolic. Their 'flaw' is a source of emotion. Flaws can be unique and so boost an item's desirability.

3. Do not pander to your customers' wishes

A luxury brand has to maintain a consistency over time and across its entire range, which guarantees its authenticity, and therefore its attraction, its mystique and its spark. Traditional marketing listens to consumers, transforming their wishes into global products. The customer is king and the customers' desires are at the heart of the business. The luxury brand, by contrast, comes from the

mind of its creator, driven by long-term vision. Note that there are two ways to go bankrupt: not listening to the clients, but also listening to the client too much (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

4. Keep non-enthusiasts out

In traditional marketing there seem to be an obsession with poaching clients from other brands as sales growth is of essence and is considered to be the main measure of success. This leads to companies coming up with new products that will extend market penetration. To increase the relevance of the brand – the number of people who would say that the brand was of interest to them – it is necessary to avoid being too exclusive or too different. In contrast, when it comes to luxury, trying to make a brand more relevant is to dilute its value, because not only does the brand lose some of its unique features, but also its wider availability erodes the dream potential among the elite, among leaders of opinion (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

5. Do not respond to rising demand

The main objective of traditional marketing is volume growth. Traditional marketing sets its sights at achieving leadership in market share. With sufficient volume, the business can work with small margins and will still be able to make money. This is however not applicable to luxury. A luxury brand must have far more people who know it and dream of it than people who buy it. Rarity value sells as long as the customer understands why the product is rare and is prepared to wait. Rarity can be managed just like the relationship with the clientele; so it is not a matter here of poor sales forecasting but a deliberate strategy of resisting demand in order to be master of it. When you are a local luxury brand, going global is the way of growing in volume without damaging the 'dream value' of your brand through market saturation (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

6. Dominate the client

Luxury brands are considered to be a reward and a token of gradual elevation. To preserve this status, the brand must always dominate its client. This does not mean that a luxury brand does not respect its clients but that clients should not be considered as so called 'best buddies', making themselves out to be their equals which makes brands lose their aura. A certain distance is preserved and an aura of mystery should be maintained. The luxury brand should dominate in the sense that it should be ready to play the role of adviser, educator and sociological guide (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

7. Make it difficult for clients to buy

Traditional marketing does everything to facilitate quick access to the product through mass production. Luxury however, has to be earned. Desire depends greatly on inaccessibility. It is the time spent searching, waiting and longing. Luxury needs to excel in the practice of distributing rarity. It has to know how to set up the necessary obstacles to the straining of desire and keep them in place (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

8. Protect clients from non-clients, the big from the small

Modern luxury works on the open-close principle which means that a luxury brand must set up a degree of social segregation. This can be illustrated by brands introducing sub-brands that have a separate distribution. Too much 'open' is harmful to the brand's social function while too much 'closed' is too confining and can lead to financial suffocation (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

9. The role of advertising is not to sell

When it comes to advertising, traditional marketing first comes up with a unique selling proposition. After each commercial one looks at sales figures to see whether the commercial really worked. In luxury however, the dream comes first. Advertising in this case, is focused upon sustaining a myth, a mystery and magic. The dream must always be recreated and sustained, for reality kills the dream. Advertising luxury is not about creating a direct response but more about selling the dream (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

10. Communicate to those you are not targeting

Luxury has two valuable sides – luxury for oneself and luxury for others. The latter is important whereas there should be many more people who are familiar with the brand than those who can afford to buy it for themselves. Traditional marketing though, is focused on efficiency and gaining a return on investment. Advertising in this case, is focused on the target consumers and every person reached beyond the target is often considered as a waste of investment money. In luxury, if somebody is looking at somebody else and fails to recognize the brand, part of its value is lost. It is of essence to spread brand awareness beyond the target group (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

11. The presumed price should always seem higher than the actual price

It is generally known that advertisements for luxury products often only show the product, prices are usually not shown. In the luxury world, price is something that is not to be mentioned as the imagined price should be higher than the actual price which is the opposite of traditional marketing. A higher imagined price creates value (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

12. Luxury sets the price, price does not set luxury

Traditional marketing can be considered as fully demand-based while when it comes to luxury, you first come up with a product, then you see at what price you can sell it; the more it is perceived by the client to be a luxury, the higher the price should be. This is the opposite to what applies in the case of for example a product trading up, where the marketer tries to find out at what price level there is room for a new product (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

13. Raise your prices as time goes on in order to increase demand

Generally, when the price falls, demand rises. With luxury however, the relationship is reversed. As soon as price becomes an issue, you are no longer dealing with luxury, even if the product bears the name of a luxury brand. It is about raising prices, and of course about reinvesting these additional profits in quality and in advertising. In order to live in luxury, you have to be above others and you should not be 'reasonable'. A reasonable price is a price that appeals to reason, and therefore comparison. As mentioned in the first principle luxury is superlative and not comparative (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

14. Keep raising the average price of the product range

In traditional marketing, a new product is launched at a skimming price and as soon as competition comes onto the scene, the price will drop. The opposite happens in luxury. A brand that cannot grow in volume and profitability, other than by launching accessible products shows that it is no longer part of the luxury market. This means that the growth of a luxury brand does not rely on running after a less well-heeled clientele but on taking advantage of the global economic growth that is creating new rich people throughout the world. These people are looking for a way to reward themselves and for a symbol. That is why the average price needs to continue to increase – while at the same time the value element of the product or service should increase as well (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

15. Do not sell

If a strategy of systematically raising all your prices is pursued, you have to be prepared to lose sales and to lose customers. Most brands are not willing to take this risk, or else go running after customers; when you get to that point you are no longer talking luxury but mass consumptions – which is considered to be more profitable. It should be noted that in traditional marketing, fast moving consumer goods hunt for consumer while in luxury marketing it is just the reverse, consumers are attracted (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

16. Keep stars out of your advertising

In traditional marketing, it is often seen that stars are used in advertising. However, using stars to promote luxury goods can be extremely dangerous. A luxury brand is courted by the stars, in the same way as those are courted by journalists and paparazzi. As mentioned earlier, when speaking of the luxury brand's relationship with its customers, I must respect them but also dominate them. Calling on the services of a star can be considered as an indication that the brand needs some of this star's status just to survive, and admitting that it has none of its own. For a luxury brand, this can be an error of strategy as it can turn the relationship on its head. Only brand domination is acceptable. If celebrities are used to promote a luxury product, the status of the luxury product will be reduced to a mere accessory. This was however avoided by Louis Vuitton with their core value campaign. Louis Vuitton advertised with for example Michael Gorbachev, former USSR President whom is not a fashion symbol but a man who changed the world. His Louis Vuitton product is not the hero in this advertisement, but only the witness of an exceptional moment (a strategic negotiation) (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

17. Cultivate closeness to the arts for initiates

In traditional marketing, the brand often seeks to appeal and to create an affective relationship. In order to do so, the brand uses music, music that is at least appreciated by its target audience. The brand follows people's tastes. The luxury brand is a promoter of taste, like art. Luxury is not a follower, it is creative and it is bold. That is why it is best for luxury to remain close to the unpopular arts those that are emerging and have yet to appeal to the majority (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

18. Do not relocate your factories

Reducing cost prices is vital in the mass consumer market and in fashion which often means relocating factories in order to reduce costs. Luxury management does not apply this strategy. When people buy a luxury product, they are buying a product steeped in a culture or in a country. Having local roots increases the perceived value of the luxury item (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

19. Do not hire consultants

Consultants sell 'do like others' which is also called benchmarking. Using consultants in luxury would erode specific characteristics of a luxury brand – and its ability to maintain its pricing powers to this specificity. By bringing methods from a normal economic sector, consultants instill the poison of averaging everything. Luxury pricing power is not based on cost reduction but on added value and feelings of uniqueness. Hermes has to buy crocodile skins at the best price possible but in any case, it will never buy anything but the best skins. When luxury companies adopt advertising methods from

FMCG sectors the marketing of demand is the rule. The perspective taken by these sectors is that the luxury brand should try to please its consumers, answer to their needs, propose consumer benefits and have a positioning strategy. If you refer back to anti-law 6, this can be considered a mistake as luxury works the opposite way: it aims at creating dreams. Luxury does listen to consumers, to the clients but luxury is not consumer led (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

20. Do not test

Luxury companies do not test among consumers. If you test you are a mass prestige company. Testing means that the decisions of the luxury brand are subject to the taste of the consumers. In traditional marketing, FMCG companies try to solve a consumer problem whereas it is essential to ask what the current problem is and does the advertising shows effectively how much the product solves the problem. Luxury is a taste educator. It builds the classics of tomorrow not the hits of today which are often soon forgotten. Luxury's status is reinforced by the fact that its messages are mysterious, not easily grasped. Another problem with tests is that of the selection of respondents as this asks a fundamental question: who should be considered as a luxury consumer? However, it is legitimate for a luxury brand to test new products with a selection of existing good customers of the brand, and especially on the shop floor, where a real face-to-face discussion is possible. Not only is the opinion of essence but it also helps to make the consumers feel more 'part of the brand' and enhance their brand loyalty (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

21. Do not look for consensus

Testing implies looking for consensus: any option could be chosen as long as it is elected by the majority of average people. Are consensual decisions the sign that it will be a lasting success or a temporary fad? In luxury management holding on to consensual decisions is not an indicator for success. When taking a look at the most successful fragrance of the last 20 years, Angel, it was decided despite the test results which were very bad. Few respondents however were very enthusiastic about the product (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

22. Do not look after group synergies

Implementing synergies is one of the most obvious rules in a group to improve the net result of a brand. In luxury however, it is the best way to destroy the dream of a brand. A brand could lose pounds by losing its pricing power – one of the strongest elements of the luxury strategy. As proved by the number of luxury brands bought by a group that have been almost killed by too strong synergies implementation aiming at improving quickly the net financial result. When a company that has been successfully pursuing a luxury strategy, is bought by a group who is unaware of this strategy,

a brand can get destroyed as their strategies do not match. This is why luxury groups such as LVMH maintain the independence of their brands as much as they can (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

23. Do not look for cost reduction

Creating value is what is most important in luxury. But it should be noted that this value creation must not come from cost reduction. It must come from added value. In luxury you will need a lot of creativity to justify and sustain a systematic price increase. In luxury, value creation does not only rely on the talent of a creator or of a CEO, but on each employee of the company. From the top managers to production people whereas lots of new ideas originate on the workshop floor, to the sales staff whereas new ideas come from customers and understanding their dream (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

24. Just sell marginally on the internet

The trend of selling on the internet is currently present as it seems that if you do not sell on the internet you are 'out'. There, the distinction between luxury, fashion and premium strategy of prestige brand operating on the luxury market is crucial. Internet sales are extremely well adapted to fashion and premium, but not to luxury. So called web specialists blame the luxury companies who do not sell online, forgetting or even ignoring that all the 'plusses' of digital trade are huge 'minuses' for luxury. Luxury purchase needs time and effort to be deserved, true price and no discounts on excessive prices, one-to-one relationships with the sales people and not with a machine, feeling of belonging to a 'club' of selected people and not being part of an anonymous crowd. The internet can however be used as a complementary service for existing customers and in order to strengthen the brand's story. It cannot be used as a selling tool, except for products that are not part of the luxury strategy of the brand (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

4.4 24 anti-laws; an inspiration for further research

When comparing personal branding to luxury branding based on the definitions previously given, it can be seen that both share more or less the same philosophy. Personal branding emphasizes a unique promise of value and demonstrating that value in everything you do. It entails managing your perceptions effectively and controlling and influencing how others perceive you and think of you. Core values of personal branding are authenticity, uniqueness and pursuing a dream. These values are also focused upon in luxury branding and are highly valued in creating a brands' identity especially in the luxury industry. It is identity that gives a brand that particularly powerful feeling of uniqueness, a timelessness, and the necessary authenticity that helps give an impression of permanence.

Thus, literature indicates that luxury branding and personal branding share the same philosophy while personal branding seems to find its roots in traditional marketing and luxury branding does not. Luxury branding has found its breakthrough in the academic literature of marketing while personal branding does not. Is personal branding perhaps too rooted in traditional marketing? As they seem to share the same philosophy though both find their roots somewhere else, it might be possible for personal brand management to learn something from luxury brand management. In other words, are there opportunities present in luxury branding that can be useful for personal branding?

As stated earlier, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) have introduced 24 anti-laws of marketing, laws that are the opposite of what traditional marketing preaches while applicable to luxury marketing. Kapferer and Bastien (2009) propose that traditional marketing techniques are not suited to luxury. Traditional marketing is only concerned with the bottom of the luxury pyramid, where brands are no longer selling luxury products, but products derived from luxury brands. As these 24 anti-laws of marketing are specifically applied in luxury brand management and according to literature preaches the opposite of what traditional marketing preaches, these anti-laws will serve as the inspiration for the research that is core in this masters dissertation. More specifically, research will be conducted to see whether the 24 anti-laws of marketing considered to be key success factors in luxury brand management suggested by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) might be relevant and useful for personal brand management. As personal branding and luxury branding seem to share the same philosophy, there might be opportunities present in these 24 management principles also referred to as the anti-laws of marketing that can be used by businesses in order to improve their personal branding strategy.

To see whether the 24 anti-laws suggested by Kapferer et al. (2009) can be translated to personal branding context and therefore can provide new insights for personal brand management, we set up an qualitative empirical study. We rely on focus group interviews as a prime data collection method. Focus groups are basically group interviews which heavily rely on the quality of interaction between the members of the group and less on the interaction with the interviewer/moderator. A focus group is carefully selected group of people brought together in the same place to discuss a particular topic or issue relevant to them (Hart, 2005). The advantage of working with focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. Using focus groups in this case is appropriate because participants are easily and actively able to discuss the topic as it does not demand a degree of expertise.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to answering the research sub-question 'what is luxury branding?' as the understanding of luxury is important in answering the research question that is core in this masters dissertation. This chapter also provides us with the answer to the sub-question 'does personal branding and luxury branding share the same fundamentals?' as this chapter outlines that personal branding and luxury branding share its emphasis on authenticity and uniqueness that serve as a foundation for both concepts. Finally, this chapter answers the research question 'to what extent is luxury marketing different from traditional marketing?' which is evident by the introduction of the 24 anti-laws of marketing suggested by Kapferer and Bastien (2009).

Chapter 5: Research methodology

This chapter is dedicated to focus groups which is the research methodology used in this masters dissertation. The first paragraph is aimed at explaining why a focus group has been chosen as a research method and clearly sets out the strengths of using a focus group as a research method. The chapter then sets out the motivation behind decisions concerning the number and size of the focus group, the sampling variables that were taken into account, the group composition and the role of the moderator as all these elements should be taken into consideration when setting up a focus group.

5.1 Focus group interviews

The focus group interview is used as a self-contained data collection method as it serves as the primary means of collecting qualitative data. Using focus groups in this manner requires a careful matching of the goals of the research with the data that the focus group can produce to meet these goals. In this case we are interested in understanding the particular rather than the general. We are more interested in issues of meaning than in precise numerical descriptions. For these purposes, focus groups can be used to answer the research question (Morgan, 1997).

The strengths of focus groups depends on the reliance on the researcher's focus and the group's interaction. The strength of relying on the researcher's focus is the ability to produce concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic of interest. Additionally, the ability of focus groups to gather data efficiently is derived from the almost magical synergy that makes this method superior to for example individual interviews. The interaction during which several perspectives come together can provide new insights and can generate ideas efficiently as there are several participants while an individual interview would produce only one perspective (Morgan, 1997). In addition, focus groups bring deeper motives and reactions to the surface and are widely respected for bringing out information that might be missed by a statistical study (Quible, 1998).

5.2 Number and size of groups

The number of groups to set up is determined by the comparisons that the researcher wishes to make. Holding more groups is not necessarily better, although holding two focus groups may place the researcher on firmer ground in relation to making claims about the patterning of the data, since it would suggest that the differences observed are not just a feature of a one-off group, but are likely to be related to the different characteristics of participants reflected in selection (Barbour, 2007). As the research is focused on finding tools for personal brand management by using the

aforementioned 24 anti-laws as an inspiration, it is essential that the focus group sessions are creative sessions due to the interaction and the reliance on the creativity of the participants.

Therefore, we decide that two focus group sessions will be held to generate different perspectives and more creative views on the topic as the composition of participants will differ. As focus group participants must share a common denominator, one group will contain participants that have knowledge of marketing either in previous education or work related. The other group will consist of participants that have an interest in marketing and have a basic knowledge of marketing but not due to previous education or career wise. Both focus group sessions may result in different outcomes as the background of the participants differ. Different views on the topic can therefore be generated as having knowledge of marketing from either previous education or work can lead to different perspectives than having an interest in marketing with basic knowledge. The data derived from the focus groups will be compared and complemented to get to relevant tools for personal branding purposes. Additionally, the number of groups has a direct impact on the size and structure of the research team. Conducting many groups almost ensures the need for a larger research staff (Morgan, 1997). As the research will be conducted by only one person, using two focus groups seems realistic and in my opinion, will result in enough insight to deal with the research question.

The amount that each participant has to contribute to the group is a major factor in decisions about group size. If the participants have a low level of involvement with the topic, it may be difficult to maintain an active discussion in a smaller group. Another key factor is how much detail the researchers need to hear from each participant. Small groups work best when the participants are likely to be both interested in the topic and respectful of each other. In addition, small groups are more useful when the researcher desires a clear sense of each participant's reaction to a topic simply because they give each participant more time to talk. In large groups, discussions are more difficult to manage, and this is especially true when the participants are highly involved in the topic. Practice also shows that large groups can easily break into small conversations which implies a loss of data because such conversations are hard to tape. Consequently, large groups typically require a high level of moderator involvement which are for some research purposes not desirable. Thus, on the one hand, a smaller group gives each participant more time to discuss her or his views and experiences on the topic. On the other hand, a large group contains a wider range of potential responses on the topic. Many of the earlier focus groups texts echoed the advice that tends to be given in marketing research that the ideal size of a group is 10-12 people. Barbour argues that a maximum of eight participants is generally quite challenging enough as the requirements of the researcher to identify individual voices and seek clarification and further exploration of any

differences in views that emerge make larger groups, if not impossible, then exceedingly demanding to moderate and analyze (Barbour, 2007). In terms of a minimum number, Barbour (2007) states that it is perfectly possible to hold focus group discussion with three or four participants depending on the topic. Morgan (1997) however, states the size of a focus group must lie between 6-10 participants. Below 6, it may be difficult to sustain a discussion; above 10, it may be difficult to control one. However, Morgan (1997) acknowledges the fact that group size highly depends on the purpose of the research and the constraints of the field situation.

As the focus groups in this case are considered to be creative brainstorm session in order to generate insight and ideas, a small group would be in order as it is of essence to give each participants time to discuss his or her views and experiences and for the researcher to get a clear sense of each participant's reaction. As the focus group is considered to be a creative brainstorm session, it is of essence to allow the participants to discuss and brainstorm freely which is why the moderator's involvement will be quite low and its role is mainly to guide the participants. Due to this low involvement, a small focus group is more appropriate than a large focus group. The size of the focus group will therefore lie between 5-7 participants.

5.3 Sampling

According to Morgan (1997) random sampling is seldom of use in selecting participants for focus groups for at least two reasons. First, the small number of participants involved in most focus group projects makes it extremely unlikely that a sample of size 40 or so will be adequate to represent a larger population, regardless of random selection. Second, a randomly sampled group is unlikely to hold a shared perspective on the research topic and may not even be able to generate meaningful discussions. It is therefore of essence to select focus groups participants through purposive or theoretical sampling.

The group composition should ensure that the participants in each group both have something to say about the topic and feel comfortable saying it to each other which is why it is of essence to use segmented samples and homogeneous groups. Could the participants easily discuss this topic in normal, day-to-day interaction? Participants must feel able to talk to each other, and wide gaps in social background or lifestyle can defeat this requirement. It should be noted that the goal is homogeneity in background and not homogeneity in attitudes. If all the participants would share virtually identical perspectives on a topic, it could lead to a flat, unproductive discussion. According to Morgan (1997) the most common background variables that are considered in the process of segmentation are sex, race, age, and social class. In this case sex as a segmentation variable is not

applicable as the topic and issues raised in this research do not correspond to differences in perspectives between men and women and can therefore not reduce the comfort level of the discussion.

The similar applies to race as I believe racial differences cannot become an issues during a group discussion about the topic at hand. The segmentation variable age can however serve as a variable that needs to be taken into account. Older and younger participants may have difficulty communicating with each other which can be due to the fact that they have different experiences with a topic or because similar experiences are filtered through different generational perspectives. It is therefore decided that the sample will consist of participants in the age group of 20 to 30 years old as I believe this age group is able to give a refreshing perspective on the topic at hand. Class differences reflect a general segregation of interaction in our society so that even when the participants have few overt class differences in their experiences they may still be uncomfortable discussing personal experiences in each other's presence. It should therefore be taken into account that it is not the actual differences among participants but whether they perceive each other to be different that determines their willingness to discuss a topic together. Class differences in this case are not an issue. However, it is important that focus group participants share a common denominator which in this case is the interest in marketing and the basic knowledge of marketing as these are characteristics that the participants of both groups have in common (Morgan, 1997).

5.4 Group composition

It needs to be decided whether the group composition involves seeking out strangers versus allowing acquaintances to participate together. According to Morgan (1997) the notion that focus groups must consist of strangers is considered to be a myth. In fact, social scientists routinely conduct focus groups in organizations and other naturally occurring groups in which acquaintanceship is unavoidable. Furthermore, working with prior acquaintances can help the researcher deal with issues of self-disclosure. The real issue is that strangers and acquaintances can generate different group dynamics which may lead to a researcher to different choices, depending on the research goals. Practical concerns should also be taken into account when deciding between strangers and acquaintances. In some cases it may be impossible to recruit a full group of strangers or it may be impossible to recruit a full group of acquaintances (Morgan, 1997).

In this case it is decided that the group will consists of acquaintances as they can comfortably discuss the topic in ways that are useful for the research. In addition, recruiting strangers for the focus group is time consuming and time is in this research not at our side.

Table 2 gives a clear overview of the number and size of the groups, the segmentation variables that should be taken into account and the group composition that have previously been discussed.

Number and size of groups	
Number of focus group sessions	Two
Size of groups	Five-seven participants
Sampling	
Sex	No segmentation variable
Race	No segmentation variable
Age	20-30 years
Class	No segmentation variable though an interest in marketing and a basic knowledge of marketing serves as the common denominator among participants
Group composition	
Composition	Acquaintances

Table 2: Overview of focus group elements

5.5 Role of the moderator

The involvement of the moderator will be quite low as the focus group session is aimed at the participant's creativity and ability to brainstorm on the topic at hand. The moderator is mainly present to record, take notes and guide the participants during the session. The main goal of the moderator is to structure the session with regard to asking questions in order to control the topics and with regard to managing group dynamics in order to control the way the participants interact (Morgan, 1996). Several anti-laws will need to be discussed and it is the task of the moderator to centralize each anti-law in the discussion and introduce each anti-law during the session. It is, however, of importance that there is some control during the session including getting irrelevant discussions back on track, restarting discussion when the group runs dry, ensuring that groupthink does not stifle opinions that differ from those of the majority, cutting off overly dominant participants, engaging overly reticent participants and so on. Most of these problems, however, can be handled by the group itself with a minimal level of moderator involvement (Morgan, 1997).

A script has been set up that serves as a guide during the group sessions. This script shows several steps that need to be run through during the session (Appendix 1).

Chapter 6: Data analysis

This chapter starts off with providing information of all participants that took part in the focus group sessions. Age and previous/current education or current working field/job position are outlined in a table as this provides a better understanding of the group compositions. This chapter continues with a paragraph where the focus group sessions are discussed so that the reader can better understand and visualize the course of both sessions. This paragraph is more focused on the introduction while the third paragraph gives an analysis of the data that has been collected during both sessions.

6.1 Information on participants

Before the sessions started, the participants were asked to introduce themselves and the participants were informed that their age and their previous or current education or current working field/job position would be noted. Table 3 shows the information of the participants of focus group 1 and table 4 shows the information of the participants of focus group 2.

Focus group 1: Information on participants

Participant	Age	Previous/current education or current working field/job position
1	26 years	Account manager at an International company
2	27 years	Event manager at a political think tank
3	26 years	Event planner at an event agency
4	22 years	Studying journalism
5	29 years	Recruiter
6	29 years	Traineeship at a Dutch bank

Table 3: information focus group 1: non-marketers

Focus group 2: information on participants

Participant	Age	Previous/current education or current working field/job position
1	22 years	Studying Master of Management – International Marketing Strategy
2	28 years	Studying Master of Management – International Marketing Strategy
3	25 years	Graduated Master in Marketing and Finance
4	23 years	Graduated Master in Strategic Marketing
5	23 years	Graduated Bachelor in International Business

Table 4: information focus group 2: marketing professionals

6.2 The focus group sessions

The session with focus group 1 took place a week before the session with focus group 2. There was some difficulty in setting a date for both groups as there are several agenda's to take into account. Though many people were approached for the sessions, a lot of people were unfortunately not available on such short notice which led to focus group 1 consisting of 6 people and focus group 2 consisting of 5 people.

Both focus group sessions were held at my house in Maastricht as I found this to be a central location so that people would not have to travel a long way which lowered the barrier of attending the session. In addition, people could enjoy a drink and some snacks in a cozy environment which made the atmosphere more comfortable and informal. Finally, this location was chosen as picking the University or even the city library as a location would mean I had to take the opening hours of these facilities into account which made it more difficult to schedule a session.

I started both sessions by introducing myself. Introducing myself served as a signal that the session was about to start and also served as a way to set an example as all participants had to introduce themselves as well. As all participants were a bit hesitant while entering, an introduction of each participant was in order as this would lead to a more comfortable atmosphere and also signals that every voice should be heard. At the beginning of both sessions, I explained what a focus group

exactly is, so everyone knew what to expect. I then continued both sessions with giving several instructions that were aimed at emphasizing that all opinions and experiences were important to me and that there are no right or wrong answers (Appendix 1). I also stated that if there were to be any questions at all, they must not be afraid to ask. This was followed by an explanation of the goal of the session and the subject at hand where I also emphasized that it is a creative brainstorm session and all input is useful. Finally, before starting the session I explained my role as the moderator and asked the group if there were any questions so far. Both groups immediately had questions on what personal branding and luxury branding exactly was. It was therefore good to start the session with asking the participants to make an attempt in defining luxury branding and personal branding.

In both sessions the participants were asked to define personal branding by applying what they think is personal branding on Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama and Steve Jobs. Both groups tended to have difficulty with grasping the essence of personal branding. Yet using examples did get the sessions started and immediately made the participants brainstorm. As this was in the beginning of the session I did however notice that some participants were still a bit hesitant to speak and needed to be addressed so they would speak out. Both groups tended take personal branding literally and stated that personal branding is about making a brand out of a person. Focus group 1 was more focused in defining personal branding by using Oprah as an example. When this group discussed Obama the understanding of values came to surface as they found that Obama has certain values and beliefs that the American people can relate to. This group had difficulty in defining personal branding by using Steve Jobs as an example.

Focus group 2 also discussed all examples and made an attempt in defining personal branding accordingly. Humanity was focused upon during the discussion of Oprah. This group had quite a discussion about Steve Jobs but still were not able to truly define personal branding by using Steve Jobs as an example. As did group 1, focus group 2 also mentioned values that the American people can relate to when it comes to the discussion of Barack Obama.

Though they were unable to truly grasp the essence of personal branding as for example authenticity had not been mentioned by both groups. Both groups did however find an overlap with the actual definition as they seem to acknowledge the emphasis on values during their search for a definition. I then provided both groups with the definition of personal branding so it would be clear for everyone what personal branding exactly is.

I continued the sessions by asking the participants to make an attempt in defining luxury branding and give examples. Focus group 1 concluded that luxury branding is about marketing luxury and examples such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton were given. This group stated that luxury branding concerns marketing luxury products and aiming for a higher segment as these are expensive products. Focus group 1 was a bit shallow in their attempt in defining luxury and defined it rather simplistic. Focus group 2 on the other hand though agreeing that luxury branding concerns marketing luxury did acknowledge the difficulty in defining luxury itself. A discussion started on what luxury exactly is as one participant found a car by Audi luxury while another person did not consider this to be luxury. A discussion started and this group acknowledged the difficulty in defining luxury as it depends on the perception of what someone considers to be luxury. What can be luxury to one person can be non luxurious to another person. I ended the discussions by providing both groups with a definition of luxury branding where indeed a difference in perception on luxury was acknowledged.

Once both definitions were clear among the participants, I once more explained what the goal of the session was and that to reach this goal, the 24 anti-laws of marketing by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) would be used as an inspiration and would all be discussed during the session. The discussion and results of these sessions are discussed in the next paragraph.

6.3 Outcomes of the focus group sessions

For the clarity of the data analysis, the focus group that consisted of participants that have an interest in marketing and have a basic knowledge of marketing but not due to previous education or career wise will be referred to as focus group 1 from this point forward. The focus group that consisted of participants that have knowledge of marketing either in previous education or work related will be referred to as focus group 2 from this point forward.

1. Anti-law 1: Forget about 'positioning', luxury is not comparative

Both focus group sessions tend to have similar outcomes in their attempt to translate this anti-law to personal branding. Though they differed in opinion whether or not you should position, both found authenticity and uniqueness valuable.

Focus group 1 found it quite easy to translate this anti-law as they soon reached a common opinion and conclusion on this first anti-law. One participant wondered why you would position yourself, as your values are unique and you as a person are unique. He asked the group why you would position and take competitors into account while you as a person are unique thus your personal brand is unique. Another participant responded by asking 'how can you remain unique?'. This participant was

worried about the fact that competitors are able to copy parts or elements of your branding strategy and thus, take away your unique values. Quickly another person responded stating that competitors copying parts or elements of your branding strategy does not mean you will lose your unique values, it just means someone else is using them as well. Focus group 1 found that personal brand management is about letting your unique values come forward. Everyone is different which is why you are not positioning but mere emphasizing your unique values. Based on these unique values you are able to create an identity. These participants did note that these values need to be authentic and real in order for personal branding to work.

Focus group 2 tend to conclude that you are positioning in personal brand management as well as luxury brand management. While introducing this anti-law, one participant immediately said 'I do not agree'. He continued by stating that when Rolls Royce or Lamborghini introduces a new car or technology, competitors will immediately follow as such you are forced to position yourself. Another participant responded by claiming that though competitors might follow a certain technology or design, positioning is not necessary as Rolls Royce clients will stick to Rolls Royce and Lamborghini clients will stick to Lamborghini. This led to the discussion whether they agreed with this anti-law or not. As this is not the issue at hand, I had to interrupt the discussion as the goal is to translate the anti-law to personal branding. Whether or not they agree with this anti-law is not the issue.

One participant took Obama as an example, and asked the group if Obama is positioning himself. A participant responded and stated that Obama does position himself as he positioned himself as a democrat. Another participant reaction to this response was that being a democrat might be part of his unique values as Obama did not decide to be a democrat before entering the elections, he simply is and always has been a democrat.

A discussion started on Steve Jobs and Apple as participants of the group seemed to disagree on whether or not Apple owes its success to Steve Jobs and whether or not Apple positioned itself or simply launched innovative products in line with Steve's vision that appealed to a large amount of people. They wondered whether it was the vision of Steve Jobs that led to success or their positioning strategy and the fact that they listened to the needs of the customers. The group concluded that brands always make deliberate choices that are in line with their strategy and brand identity. They claimed that when deciding upon a certain strategy, you will always take the environment and its competitors into account hence you are positioning yourself, a product/service or a brand even though you are considered unique. It was concluded during this session that positioning is of essence in personal brand management but that the positioning strategy is based upon authentic and unique personal values.

2. Anti-law 2: Does your product have enough flaws

Focus group 1 concluded that flaws make a product authentic and applied the same concept to people. It was stated during this session that perfection makes a product or a person unbelievable. In addition, it was stated that consumers might recognize some flaws in a person and therefore may identify themselves more quickly with a brand or a person. This group believed that everyone has flaws, that flaws make you human and that by neglecting these flaws you would not be authentic.

Focus group 2 tend to conclude the opposite. The participants did acknowledge that no one is perfect and that everyone has their flaws but they wondered why you should emphasize these flaws and more importantly wondered if these flaws would sell. One participant stated that in today's society everyone seems to pursue perfection. He questioned why you should emphasize flaws. Another participant responded as he felt that flaws can make a personal brand more human which makes it easier for others to relate to the brand. Though this group agreed that people have flaws, flaws that can even be part of your unique values, they still concluded that flaws should not be part of your brand identity when it comes to personal brand management.

3. Anti-law 3: Do not pander to your customers' wishes

Focus group 1 stated that too much changes make a story incredible and will lead to the risk of customers losing their identification with the brand. According to this group, a strong brand asks for a strong personality and listening to customer can cause too much fluctuations in identity and in strategy which could make a brand incredible. This seemed to be the overall opinion of the group, two participants did note however that brands do listen to their customers and took advertising as an example. These two participants stated that when a brand advertises, the advertisement is adapted to a certain target group and should generate a certain amount of sales or response. The evaluation of advertisements and its effect leads to the brand listening to the customers' wishes. These participants were soon convinced by the other members of the group who stated that in personal brand management where brand identity is based on personal unique values and the authenticity of a person, it is not wise to listen to your customers too much as this can drift you away from your personal values and beliefs. In addition however, this group concluded that changes due to growth are advisable as your customers will grow with you. Growth in this case is referred to as changes in society and/or economic changes and/or technological changes and innovation.

Focus group 2 tend to have concerns about sales. One participant asked the following questions 'What if a company that applies personal brand management based on the unique values of the CEO does not seem to generate enough sales? Would you adapt your vision or strategy to the wishes of the customers in order to generate more sales? In other words, would you distance yourself from the values that were previously at the heart of the company in order to generate more sales or would you hold on to your values, risking going bankrupt in the worst case scenario?' Another participant responded and stated that a brand always listens to clients as brands always look at the results which according to this participant automatically leads to an evaluation of sales and therefore the brand is, maybe unknowingly, listening to the wishes of customers. This participant took Obama and Oprah as an example. He stated that Obama gauges the people's opinion and Oprah gauges ratings and the needs of her audience. Another participant though agreeing to the examples previously given, stated that listening to your customers too much and therefore changing the values of the brand can lead to disastrous consequences as your customers might get confused due to the inconsistency in your identity. What worried this participant is that when listening to your clients too much, and adapting your values, vision or strategy, are you still applying personal brand management which is holding on to your dream, your unique values and your personal authentic characteristics. The group shared these questions and therefore concluded that you should not listen to clients too much when it comes to personal brand management as it is essential to hold on to your unique values and beliefs. The group did however noted that when your brand or company is in such bad shape financially and it is forced to adapt its vision or strategy to the customer's wishes, such decisions should be taken into account to avoid bankruptcy.

4. Anti-law 4: Keep non-enthusiasts out

Both focus groups had the same opinion when it comes to anti-law 4. Both stated that the translation of this anti-law to personal brand management depends on the kind of businesses you are in. When dealing with commodity goods a wider acceptance leads to a bigger market, market penetration is therefore advisable. When you are dealing with a niche market, coming up with new products that will extend market penetration may not be the best choice as wider availability may dilute the value of the brand. It was also noted that the translation of this anti-law does not specifically concern personal brand management but can be of essence for branding in general.

5. Anti-law 5: Do not respond to rising demand

Both groups had difficulty translating this anti-law to personal brand management as both groups tend to agree that this anti-law does not specifically apply to personal brand management. After the introduction of this anti-law one participant of group 2 immediately said 'this is nonsense'. This

participant disagreed with this anti-law in the luxury segment as he claimed that even in luxury you respond to rising demand. One of the participants disagreed and responded by taken Ferrari as an example. This participant stated that even when there is a rising demand in Ferarri's, Ferarri will not increase their production as a response to this rising demand as this takes away the scarcity of the and desirability of the car. Another participant also provided the group with an example. She took shoes of French designer Isabel Marant as an example. She said 'the last couple of years a certain sneaker by Isabel Marant has been a trend worldwide. Isabel Marant makes sure these sneakers are hard to find and therefore remain desired and wanted by giving retailers one opportunity each season to order these sneakers. Even when demand is high, retailers are not able to reorder these sneakers. They will have to wait till next season.' Both examples convinced the group of this anti-law when it comes to luxury. The group then continued with applying this anti-law to personal branding. The group agreed that in personal brand management you do respond to rising demand as this makes a positive contribution to your sales. One participant took André Rieu as an example for personal branding and stated that he does respond to rising demand as each year he gives more performances in for example Maastricht than he did the previous year. During the discussion of this anti-law all participants did take into account that when exclusivity or rarity is part of your personal brand strategy and/or part of your unique values, this anti-law of marketing can be applied. In that case it is however a deliberate strategy of resisting demand in order to create an exclusive product/brand.

6. Anti-law 6: Dominate the client

Focus group 1 as well as focus group 2 immediately agreed on the opposite of what applies to luxury brand management. Both groups concluded that though it is of essence to preserve a certain distance and an aura of mystery in luxury brand management, personal brand management is based on the opposite. All participants quickly found that in personal brand management it is essential to do the opposite and not maintain a certain distance and mystery which in addition is almost impossible, as your vision, strategy and in other words personal brand is based on your unique personal values and beliefs, and your authenticity. Remaining a mystery and preserving a certain distance is therefore not only unadvisable but also considered to be almost impossible. Though both groups came up with the same translation of this anti-law, focus group 2 did add that it is possible in personal brand management to create a certain dream that places you higher than your clients and that is based on your unique values. Dominating the client in this case is translated to creating a dream and motivating costumers to pursue your dream.

7. Anti-law 7: Make it difficult for clients to buy

Both groups agreed that this anti-law is not specifically applicable in personal brand management as both groups concluded that it depends on the business that you are in, the distribution strategy and the values that you are pursuing.

8. Anti-law 8: Protect clients from non-clients, the big from the small

As both groups understood that this anti-law of marketing is considered to be important in luxury branding, both neglected the importance when it comes to personal brand management. Once again it is dependent on the business that you are in as was already stated in the discussion of the previous anti-law. Personal brand management can also be present in a luxury segment whereas both groups tended to agree with this anti-law and indeed found that too much open could be harmful to the brand's social function. In general though, both groups found this anti-law of marketing not applicable in personal brand management as your vision is based on your unique values and on your authentic characteristics and you are willing to address everyone that shares these values.

9. Anti-law 9: The role of advertising is not to sell

During the translation of this anti-law one participant took Mars as an example and stated that advertisements done by Mars are focused on its taste and on generating sales. Mars is not advertising a certain identity or a certain vision, this brand is more focused on functional characteristics which in this case is the taste of the product. Another participant responded to this example by taking Snickers as an example and stated that Snickers has a certain vision that they put forward in their advertisement which is if you are low on energy, grab a snickers as this will give you energy. Another participant said 'Is this considered to be a vision or just a slogan?' which made the group wonder. This participant also took Kit Kat as an example and said 'have a break, have a Kit Kat' which obviously is just a slogan and should not be considered as putting forward a certain vision.

One participant took Louis Vuitton as an example and stated that this brand started with a certain vision which is making trunks in order to make travelling more comfortable. The goal of advertising in the case of Louis Vuitton is not to sell but to put forward their vision and their dream.

After the discussion of several examples I asked the group to translate this anti-law to personal brand management. Would you advertise with the goal of generating sales or would you advertise with the goal of telling your story and sharing your authentic vision and your dream. Based on previous examples and on the definition of personal branding the group seemed to agree with this anti-law of marketing and translated this anti-law of marketing by suggesting that in personal brand management advertising should be more focused on keeping the authentic dream alive and motivating customers to pursue your dream and values rather than focusing on generating sales

through advertising. This group suggested that advertising in personal brand management is aimed at building a sustainable image based on an authentic story and on personal values.

Focus group 2 had some difficulty in understanding this anti-law which is why I took Chanel as an example and noted that Chanel did not advertise with clothing or bags in their advertisements. Chanel does not advertise with a goal to generate more sales. Chanel simply is Chanel and customers will buy Chanel even without their advertisements. When Chanel advertises in magazines their putting forward an identity and they do not focus on their products in their advertisements. One participant quickly responded and said the following 'but how many times do you see advertisements or commercials with the Coco Chanel fragrance?'. This participant was of course right because Chanel does advertise a lot with their fragrances and make-up. However, fragrances and make-up by luxury brands are an entire different story as these are considered to be a personal dream or luxury at a reasonable price. It is great to be able to afford the luxury and sophistication of Chanel for less than 50 euro's. Chanel started with the introduction of fragrance in the twentieth century and this is part of a product penetration strategy and should be considered the core product that Chanel started with and therefore should not serve as an example when translating this anti-law (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). One participant mentioned Steve Jobs and stated that Jobs always held on to his vision. Another participant responded and claimed that Apple's goal is to generate sales. The other participant responded with the fact that Steve Jobs and Apple should be seen separately and that Steve Jobs has always pursued his dream and his vision which led to Apple generating more sales. This group therefore suggested that advertising in personal brand management should be aimed at communicating your vision and your values. This group did note that while advertising with your image and vision at heart, sales are an important consequence or result of advertising as is for any brand or any business. Though sales should be taken into account this group did agree on the fact that advertising an authentic story and your unique values should be the main goal of your communication strategy.

10. Anti-law 10: Communicate to those you are not targeting

Both groups acknowledged that this anti-law is not really applicable to personal branding. Both groups therefore translated this anti-law by suggesting that in personal brand management it is of importance to address and to communicate to those that share your vision, your authentic characteristics and your unique values and beliefs. In personal brand management you are targeting the people that pursue your dream and it is in this case essential to spread and communicate your dream. It is in personal brand management not important to have many more people who are familiar with the brand than those who can afford to buy it for themselves. This anti-law was

therefore only shortly discussed during both sessions as both groups did not find this anti-law important in personal brand management.

11. Anti-law 11: The presumed price should always seem higher than the actual price

Both groups found this anti-law of marketing suitable for the luxury branding but agreed that this anti-law of marketing does not necessarily apply to personal brand management as it depends on the business that you are in. As personal branding can also occur in the luxury segment, this anti-law of marketing can be suitable for personal branding purposes but as stated before, it depends on the business that you are in.

12. Anti-law 12: Luxury sets the price, price does not set luxury

As this anti-law of marketing also concerns price, both groups had difficulty in translating this anti-law of marketing to personal brand management. Both groups did agree that this anti-law can be suitable for the luxury industry. One participant took Louis Vuitton as an example and stated that Louis Vuitton has a certain bag in its collection that is made from plastic and only the handles are made from genuine leather. But as this bag and the brand is perceived to be luxury, Louis Vuitton is able to ask a high price for the bag. Though both groups acknowledged that it is optional to apply this anti-law of marketing in personal brand management, they still agreed that this anti-law is too specific and does not necessarily apply to personal brand management but that it depends on the business that you are in.

13. Anti-law 13: Raise your prices as time goes on in order to increase demand

Both groups agreed that luxury is not about asking reasonable prices as both groups found that the prices of luxury goods are far above reasonable. Both groups got lost in a discussion on the prices of luxury goods and what kind of margin these luxury brands were gaining. But as this was not the issue at hand I soon had to get both groups back on track. In their attempt in translating this anti-law of marketing to personal branding, both groups agreed that this anti-law of marketing does not necessarily apply to personal brand management but that it depends on the business that you are in as it concerns price related choices.

14. Anti-law 14: Keep raising the average price of the product range

This anti-law of marketing might work for the luxury industry but is not necessarily applicable in personal brand management. Both groups acknowledge that this can be an optional pricing strategy for personal branding yet so are other pricing strategies. Both groups again agreed that as this anti-law of marketing specifically concerns price. Applying this anti-law to personal branding is therefore

difficult as it depends on the business that you are in and the pricing strategy that you have chosen to maintain.

15. Anti-law 15: Do not sell

One participant said the following 'there is no need to hunt for customers, as your authentic values serve as the most important asset and will attract customers.' The group agreed with this participant and found that it is the dream and his or her experiences where the product or brand is based on, that should attract customers. You are not hunting for customers yet you are attracting customers with your personal vision that they can relate to and that they can identify themselves with. At this point, it is evident that your personal unique values and authentic characteristics should come forward in your product or your brand, as is the case in personal brand management. This can however be a risky strategy as this can lead to losing customers or even losing sales as you are not hunting for customers.

One participant from group 2 translated this anti-law of marketing by stating that luxury marketing is more focused on a pull strategy while traditional marketing is more focused on a push strategy. According to him both strategies can occur in personal brand management. Another participant disagreed and stated that push and pull strategies can occur in luxury marketing as well as in traditional marketing. The group seemed to disagree with this participant as they felt that a push strategy for example in advertising is focused on constantly advertising the product in order to get in the minds of the consumers. The pull strategy on the other hand implies that the brand stops to advertise his product in order to attract interested consumers. The group found that the push strategy is not present in the luxury industry as advertising is not focused on generating sales but more focused on creating brand awareness. Focus group 2 therefore suggested the same as focus group 1 but found that during the introduction of a new brand or product you are always hunting for customers instead of attracting customers, hoping they will come to you. These participants found that attracting customers can be done when a reputation has been set and suggested that in the early phase of a brand, you are always hunting for customers as your brand's future relies on these first customers. Taken this argument into account, the group did end the discussion on this particular anti-law by stating that when it comes personal brand management you are however attracting customers with your personal authentic story which that they can identify themselves with.

16. Anti-law 16: Keep stars out of your advertising

Focus group 1 quickly had a discussion about the fact whether this anti-law of marketing is really applied in the luxury industry. One participant claimed that though luxury brands may not use

celebrities in their advertising, these brands do send out products to celebrities, hoping these celebrities will get photographed while wearing or using their products. According to this participant, this can be considered to be advertising by using celebrities. As a moderator I had to interrupt the session and point out that this is not the issue we need to be discussing. I noted that this anti-law had to be translated to personal brand management and all participants quickly agreed that it is not advisable to use a celebrity in advertising as it can take away the attention and aura of the person, and more important his or her unique and authentic characteristics, that is essential to the brand. This group felt it would be risky to use a celebrity as customers might get confused or might get a wrong impression as to what the brand actually stands for. In addition, this group stated that by using a celebrity, the brand will be associated with not only the values of this celebrity but also his actions which are uncontrollable.

After the introduction of this anti-law one participant quickly responded and said 'you mustn't use a celebrity, that would be dangerous. Linking another person to your unique values would be tricky.' Another participant responded and asked the group the following 'what if this celebrity fits within your unique authentic values?'. Some participants responded that if this would be the case, you could indeed use a celebrity. Under the condition that this celebrity truly fits your unique values and authentic story. The participant then responded with another question and said 'but we just stated that these values are unique, how is it possible that a celebrity has these unique values as well?'. A discussion started but the group agreed that a celebrity can share the same values and can relate to these unique values as is the case for customers who can also relate to unique authentic values. Though the group agreed on the fact that it is possible in personal brand management to use a celebrity they still found it not advisable. This group seems to question how it is possible to use a celebrity in your advertising as personal branding is based on the unique values of the personal brander and thus this group suggested that it would be dangerous to link another person to the brander's unique characteristics. This group acknowledged the risk that when using a celebrity in your advertising, this celebrity might overshadow the personal authentic values that are at the heart of the brand. Another participant saw the value of using a celebrity as he or she can serve as a role model. The group considered this option but eventually stuck to their conclusion and stated it was still not advisable to use a celebrity in advertising when it comes to personal brand management. Eventually the participants agreed that using celebrities in advertising when it comes to personal brand management, is not a smart move as your advertising is based on the unique and authentic characteristics of the CEO, the designer or in other words the personal brander behind the brand and using a celebrity might harm these values or your authentic identity.

17. Anti-law 17: Cultivate closeness to the arts for initiates

There were not really discussions about this anti-law in either of the sessions. The participants of both groups quickly agreed on a translation of this anti-law.

One participant from focus group 1 took the lead and suggested that it is possible to put forward a certain lifestyle or a certain taste for example by emphasizing a certain unique hobby or the love for a certain genre of music. This may cause you to stand out more. Another participant responded and noted that when emphasizing such unique hobby or taste in music you might exclude part of your customers as they are unable to identify themselves in this unique hobby or music genre. All participants seem to agree and it was therefore concluded in this session that remaining close to the unpopular or even popular is optional as long as you stick to your authentic personal beliefs as customers are then still able to identify themselves with these beliefs.

Focus group 2 found that when it comes to personal brand management it is not a matter of choice to stick to popular or unpopular arts. These participants suggested that due to the fact that the brand is based on personal authentic values, the arts as well are in line with these values whether it concerns popular or unpopular arts.

18. Anti-law 18: Do not relocate your factories

Both groups translated this anti-law of marketing in the same manner and concluded that the relocation of factories should always be in line with the authentic values that were introduced in the beginning. If local roots have always been valued by the brand or are part of the authentic identity of the brand, the brand should not abandon these local roots as this could terribly harm the brand.

One of the participants of group 1 took a Parisian designer as an example. This participant stated that if his or her local Parisian roots are put forward in its brand identity, relocating factories would be a very bad decision as this could seriously harm the credibility of your brand. Another participant responded as he saw no harm in relocating factories when this is not part of your identity or authentic values. 'Why not relocate if this means you can reduce costs and it does not harm your brand?' he stated. Other members of the group in this case agreed. Group 1 eventually concluded that though relocating factories in order to reduce costs would help the company financially, it could harm the company in the long run as this could affect the identity of the brand and can eventually lead to the brand losing its customers. When local roots are not part of your identity though, group 1 did not really see harm in relocating.

19. Anti-law 19: Do not hire consultants

This anti-law suggests that consultants sell 'do like others'. Focus group 1 had a discussion whether or not this is actually the case in luxury or even in traditional marketing. One participant stated that a consultant is there to consult you in a way that is best for the company or the brand. This anti-law claims that when luxury companies adopt advertising methods from FMCG sectors the marketing of demand is the rule while luxury aims at creating the dream and according to anti-law 6 does not listen to customers. This participant wondered why a consultant at a luxury brand or company would advise a luxury brand to adopt advertising methods from FMCG sectors? 'That would be one hell of a bad consultant' he said as this may not be in the best interest of the luxury brand. Focus group 1 found this anti-law to sketch a rather negative image of consultants and disagreed with the claim that consultant do like others as is stated in this anti-law. As this group found that a consultant is hired to look out for the best interest of the brand and advises the brand or company in line with this thought, hiring a consultant in personal brand management is possible.

Focus group 1 was more concerned about the ability of the consultant in understanding the unique and authentic values of the brand and translate or implement these values in his vision and strategy for the brand. This group agreed that if consultant actually sell 'do like others' it might indeed not be wise to hire consultants as in personal brand management it is of essence to pursue you personal authentic values rather than to 'do like others'. However, this group also had second thoughts and wondered if consultants actually sell 'do like others'. This group therefore concluded that it is optional to hire a consultant as long as the authentic personal values are at the heart of every decision and the consultant is fully aware of these values and attempts to guide the brand within these values.

20. Anti-law 20: Do not test

Both groups acknowledged the difficulty of testing among consumers when it comes to luxury as the definition of luxury depends highly on what customers perceive to be luxury and it is therefore difficult whom should be considered a luxury customer. Both groups also agreed that testing means that the decisions of the luxury brand are subject to the taste of the customer which is not in line to what we define is luxury. In their attempt to translate this anti-law of marketing to personal branding, both groups found that this does not apply to personal branding. Though they agreed that it is of essence for the brand to pursue its unique authentic values, all participants see no harm in testing as long as the decisions made afterwards are in line with the authentic values the brand stands for. Both groups saw an opportunity in testing as the brand is able to learn from the feedback given by customers while it is not mandatory to implement this feedback.

21. Anti-law 21: Do not look for consensus

Focus group 1 found it rather radical that this anti-law is convinced that testing immediately implies looking for consensus as according to this group, is not necessarily the case. One participant said 'testing does not automatically mean that a certain option is chosen because a majority of the people tested, favors this certain option.' Another participant responded and said 'then why would you test at all if you may neglect the results eventually?'. Some participants of the group responded and were of opinion that testing can provide a brand with information and feedback from customers but does not necessarily mean that the brand is looking for consensus. This group therefore saw no harm in testing as long as the decisions made afterwards, that might be based on the test results, are in line with the authentic personal values of the brand.

Focus group 2 found that you are not looking for consensus in personal brand management yet you are pursuing your authentic and unique values. This group found that in personal brand management you can organize tests among consumers, as long as the actions afterwards are in line with your authentic and unique values that are part of your brand identity. This may eventually lead to consensus decisions yet not deliberately.

22. Anti-law 22: Do not look after group synergies

Focus group 1 stated that synergies will always partly destruct a brand as synergies will always lead to concessions. This group took Samson, who is a Dutch politician, as an example to translate this anti-law to personal brand management. Samson is leader of the PVDA and also the face of this political party. He is currently placed in a rather right cabinet and therefore has not been able to pursue and push through some of his ideals that he has been preaching the last couple of years. This led to some criticism of his own party. Based on this example, focus group 1 concluded that group synergies are not advisable as the brand is forced to make concessions. Focus group 1 therefore agreed with this anti-law as they acknowledge the risk that when a brand is successfully pursuing a strategy based on personal authentic values, is bought by a group who is unaware of this strategy, a brand can get destroyed as their strategies do not match.

Focus group 2 stated that when the brand or company is in financial distress, being taken over by another company might be the best option. In addition, one participant noted that even when the brand or company is not in financial distress, implementing synergies can also lead to the availability of more resources that can be beneficial for the brand. Another participant noted that often customers are not even aware that a certain brand has been taken over by a company. This participant took the fashion brands Massimo Dutti, Zara and Bershka as an example as lots of people

are unaware of the fact that all three fashion brands are part of the company Inditex. 'While all three fashion brands are part of the same company, they all have a different identity and all focus on a different segment as such they all pursue a different strategy.' Another participant responded and stated that it would be difficult to match a strategy based on authentic and unique personal beliefs with a group that shares the same authentic and unique personal beliefs, as this group should also take other brands and therefore other strategies into account. Focus group 2 eventually concluded that being taken over by another company is optional as long as the brand does not lose its authentic identity.

23. Anti-law 23: Do not look for cost reduction

Both groups agreed that this anti-law of marketing does not apply to personal brand management. Cost reduction is possible when it comes to personal brand management as long as it is in line with your authentic and unique values, and you remain consistent in your identity and in the message you send out to your customers. If cost reduction does not affect your unique promise of value, both groups see no harm in this matter.

24. Anti-law 24: Just sell marginally on the internet

Both groups agreed that this anti-law of marketing is not necessarily applicable when it comes to personal brand management. A discussion on this specific anti-law of marketing was not present as both groups found that selling through the internet is optional in personal brand management, as it depends on the business that you are in. Both groups did note that when entering the internet it is essential to consistently communicate your authentic story and your unique promise of values offline as well as online. Your authentic story must therefore be evident through your entire website. In addition, personal brand management can also exist in the luxury business whereas according to both groups selling on the internet is not advisable.

This chapter is dedicated to answering the research sub-question 'to what extent can the 24 anti-laws of marketing be transferred to personal brand management?'. This chapter contains the analysis of the data derived from the focus groups. The discussion of each anti-law led to eliminating some anti-laws as these are not applicable for personal branding purposes. Some anti-laws however were successfully transferred to personal brand management as is evident from this chapter and can be considered useful for personal brand management.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

The goal of this masters dissertation is to find opportunities present in luxury branding that can be useful for personal branding purposes. As an inspiration the 24 anti-laws of marketing by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) have been used and this final chapter clearly outlines if there are anti-laws of marketing that can be applied in personal brand management and that can provide personal brand management with new insights. This chapter continues with the formulation of implications and limitations that came to surface during this research. Finally, this chapter ends with a paragraph dedicated to self-reflection.

7.1 Conclusion

Though the focus group sessions seemed to generate different outcomes on whether or not you will need to position yourself in personal brand management, both found authenticity and uniqueness valuable assets in personal brand management. Setting up a positioning strategy or creating an identity and mere emphasizing your authentic and unique values and therefore you are not positioning, has remained undecided as both groups differed in opinion. As a result however, we can conclude that authenticity and uniqueness need to be focused upon either way. I do believe that brands always make deliberate choices that are in line with their strategy and brand identity. I therefore find that positioning is of essence in personal brand management but that the positioning strategy must be based upon authentic and unique personal values. Nevertheless, we found that authenticity and uniqueness are considered to be valuable assets which however did not bring us any new insight for personal brand management as these assets are what personal branding is based on.

Both sessions generated different results on whether or a personal brand should have flaws. One group tend to hold on to the authenticity of a person and felt that flaws make a person and a brand authentic while the other group tend to approach this anti-law from a more commercial perspective and wondered if flaws would sell. One group stated that perfection makes a product or a person unbelievable and felt that flaws can make a personal brand more human which makes it easier for others to relate to the brand. The other group did acknowledge that no one is perfect and that everyone has their flaws but they wondered why you should emphasize these flaws and more importantly, wondered if these flaws would sell as in today's society everyone seems to pursue perfection. Though both sessions did not generate a common conclusion, taking flaws into account for personal brand management purposes can be considered relevant for personal branding even though it is still disputable to what degree these flaws should come forward.

Both groups tend to agree that listening to clients too much in personal brand management is not advisable. It was however noted that when your brand or company is in such bad shape financially and it is forced to adapt its vision or strategy to the customer's wishes, such decisions should be taken into account to avoid bankruptcy. Nevertheless both groups favor holding on to your vision and strategy based on your unique values and authentic characteristics as this is the essence of personal branding. The translation of this anti-law can gain some insight for personal brand management purposes but it can still be questioned to what degree you should listen to your clients' wishes as this depends on the state of the personal brand and even on its strategy.

Whether or not to keep non-enthusiasts out does not specifically concern personal brand management but can be of essence for branding in general. In addition, both groups stated that the translation of this anti-law to personal brand management depends on the kind of businesses you are in. Recommendations based on these anti-law are therefore not in order.

Not responding to rising demand might be applicable in the luxury industry but in other businesses this law is not applicable. Both sessions generated the same conclusion and agreed that in personal brand management you do respond to rising demand as this makes a positive contribution to your sales. This anti-law can therefore not be translated for personal brand purposes as the opposite is the case. It should however be taken into account that when exclusivity or rarity is part of your personal brand strategy and/or part of your unique values, this anti-law of marketing can be applied. In that case it is however a deliberate strategy of resisting demand in order to create an exclusive product/brand.

Dominating the client might be applied in luxury brand management but the opposite accounts for personal brand management. Your vision, strategy and in other words personal brand is based on your unique personal values and beliefs, and your authenticity. Remaining a mystery and preserving a certain distance is therefore not only unadvisable but also considered to be almost impossible. It is however possible in personal brand management to create a certain dream that places you higher than your clients and that is based on your unique values. Dominating the client in this case is translated to creating a dream and motivating costumers to pursue your dream which is in line with personal branding. The creation of a dream and motivating customers to pursue your dream is a well known thought in personal brand management and therefore this anti-law did not generate new insights for personal branding.

Both groups found that protecting clients from non-clients is not applicable in personal brand management as your vision is based on your unique values and on your authentic characteristics and you are willing to address everyone that shares these values. Personal brand management can also be present in a luxury segment whereas both groups tended to agree with this anti-law and indeed found that too much openness could be harmful to the brand's social function. This does not however generate new insights for personal brand management as it is merely a choice of strategy.

Based on the outcomes of both sessions concerning whether or not the role of advertising is to sell, it can be concluded that in personal brand management advertising should be more focused on keeping the authentic dream alive and motivating customers to pursue your dream and values rather than focusing on generating sales through advertising. Both groups suggested that advertising in personal brand management is aimed at building a sustainable image that is based on an authentic story and on personal values. Both groups therefore agreed with this anti-law as the role of advertising is not to sell but noted that sales are an important result of advertising as is for any brand or business. This anti-law of marketing can be useful for personal brand management as personal brand management seems to have its roots in traditional marketing where advertising might be more focused on generating sales as this is what traditional marketing preaches.

Communicating to those you are not targeting is an anti-law that was considered to be irrelevant for personal brand management as in personal brand management you are targeting the people that pursue your dream and it is in this case essential to spread and communicate your dream. It is in personal brand management not important to have many more people who are familiar with the brand than those who can afford to buy it for themselves.

Anti-law 11, 12, 13 and 14 all concerned price and did not necessarily apply to personal brand management as all depend on the business that you are in or the pricing strategy that you have chosen to maintain. These anti-laws can therefore generate no relevant insights for personal brand management.

As for the anti-law of marketing do not sell that concerns whether or not to hunt for customers, we can conclude that in personal brand management you are not hunting for customers yet you are attracting customers with your personal vision that they can relate to and that they can identify themselves with. It should be noted however that this can be a risky strategy as this can lead to losing customers or even losing sales as you are not hunting for customers. In addition, it must be noted that during the introduction of a new brand or product you might always hunt for customers

instead of attracting customers. To what extent you should hunt for customers remains disputable but in the case of personal brand management, it is advisable that every strategic decision is taken with the authenticity and the unique values at heart instead of generating more sales which is often the case in traditional marketing.

Based on the outcomes of both sessions we can conclude that in personal brand management, it is advisable to keep celebrities out of your advertising as it can take away the attention and aura of the person behind the brand and might harm the unique values and authentic characteristics, that are essential to the brand. It might be risky to use a celebrity as customers might get confused or might get a wrong impression as to what the brand actually stands for. In addition, by using a celebrity, the brand will be associated with not only the values of this celebrity but also his actions which are uncontrollable. This anti-law of marketing can be useful for personal brand management.

Whether or not to stay close to the unpopular or popular arts are not an issue in personal brand management. The brand is based on personal authentic values, the arts as well should be in line with these values whether it concerns popular or unpopular arts. Remaining close to the unpopular or even popular is therefore optional as long as you stick to your authentic personal beliefs as customers are then still able to identify themselves with these beliefs.

Based on the outcomes of both sessions it can be concluded that the relocation of factories should always be in line with the authentic values that were introduced in the beginning. If local roots have always been valued by the brand or are part of the authentic identity of the brand, the brand should not abandon these local roots as this could terribly harm the brand. When local roots are not part of your identity though, both groups see no harm in relocating.

Both groups disagreed with the anti-law that consultants sell 'do like others' in luxury brand management and found that a consultant is hired to look out for the best interest of the brand and advises the brand or company in line with this thought. It is therefore concluded that in personal brand management it is optional to hire a consultant as long as the authentic personal values are at the heart of every decision and the consultant is fully aware of these values and attempts to guide the brand within these values.

Though in luxury brand management testing is not advised, the outcome of both sessions indicate that in personal brand management you can organize tests among consumers, as long as the actions afterwards are in line with your authentic and unique values that are part of your brand identity. This

may eventually lead to consensus decisions yet not deliberately. Both groups even saw an opportunity in testing as the brand is able to learn from the feedback given by customers while it is not mandatory to implement this feedback.

Whether or not to look after group synergies is difficult to say in the case of personal brand management. Based on the outcome of both sessions we can conclude that on one hand it is risky that when a brand is successfully pursuing a strategy based on personal authentic values is bought by a group who is unaware of this strategy, as a brand can get destroyed when their strategies do not match. On the other hand, implementing synergies can lead to the availability of more resources which can be beneficial for the brand. Especially in the case of financial distress. It is therefore concluded that being taken over by another company is optional as long as the brand does not lose its authentic identity and personal values.

In luxury brand management one does not look for cost reduction. In personal brand management however, this anti-law is not applicable as cost reduction is possible as long as it does not affect your authentic and unique values, and you remain consistent in your identity and in the message you send out to your customers.

Selling through the internet does not apply to luxury brand management but can be applied in personal brand management, as it depends on the business that you are in. It should be noted that when entering the internet it is essential to consistently communicate your authentic story and your unique promise of value offline as well as online. Your authentic story must therefore be evident through your entire website.

Based on the outcome of both sessions where an attempt has been made to translate the key success factors of luxury brand management also known as the anti-laws of marketing, to personal brand management, we are able to set up several guidelines that can be used in personal brand management. The results of the focus group sessions showed that most key success factors though applicable in luxury brand management are however not applicable in personal brand management. Some anti-laws of marketing however could indeed be translated for personal brand purposes and can serve as useful guidelines for personal brand management. These are the following guidelines:

- Taking flaws into account for personal brand management purposes is optional though it is still disputable to what degree these flaws should come forward as this depends on the type of flaws and on your strategy.
- Listening to clients too much is not advisable in personal brand management. You should hold on to your vision and strategy that is based on your unique and authentic values. Note however that if your brand or company is in such bad shape financially and is forced to adapt its vision or strategy to the customer's wishes, such decisions should be taken into account to avoid bankruptcy.
- When exclusivity or rarity is part of your personal brand strategy or part of your unique values, you should not respond to rising demand.
- In personal brand management, the role of advertising is not to sell but advertising is aimed at building a sustainable image that is based on an authentic story and personal unique values.
- In personal brand management you are not hunting for customers yet you are attracting customers with your personal vision that customers can identify themselves with. Note that during the introduction of a new brand or product you might always hunt for customers instead of attracting customers. To what extent you should hunt for customers remains disputable though in personal brand management it is advised that every strategic decision is taken with the authenticity and unique values at heart.
- In personal brand management you should keep celebrities out of your advertising as it can take away the attention and aura of the person behind the brand and might harm the unique values and authentic characteristics that are essential to the brand.
- Remaining close to the unpopular or popular arts are both optional as long as these are in line with your authentic and personal beliefs.

7.2 Implications

The outcome of this research can serve as guidelines for personal brand management. These guidelines can be useful for businesses that are currently applying personal branding or that are willing to apply personal brand management in the future. These guidelines can also be relevant for consultancy businesses in the personal branding industry as these guidelines can be beneficial for consultants in their attempt at consulting their clients in personal branding. Though some translations of anti-laws are already known in personal brand management or not applicable in personal brand management, new perspectives have drifted to surface and are considered to be useful guidelines when making strategic decisions in personal brand management.

7.3 Limitations

As only two focus group sessions were held, a few translations of anti-laws remain undecided as the input of only two focus groups have been taken into account. A third session or even more sessions would have generated more insights but due to the time frame were unfortunately not conducted. Further research will therefore lead to a better translation of anti-laws as more perspectives can be taken into account.

7.4 Self-reflection

During both sessions I noticed that participants still had difficulty understanding luxury branding and personal branding. Both concepts had to be defined and explained several times during both sessions. Constantly defining both concepts was quite time consuming whereas the sessions took longer than was anticipated. It might therefore have been better to visualize both concepts. This could have been done by using a white board and setting out some keywords.

In addition, I found that participants often were more focused on discussing whether or not to agree with a certain anti-law of marketing in the case of luxury brand management instead of translating the anti-law to personal brand management. Participants often got lost in the anti-law and often had to be reminded of the purpose of the session. This was also quite time consuming. In this case as well, it might have been better to visualize the goal of the session by writing it down on a white board.

Due to the difficulties that came to surface during the sessions, both sessions took longer than was anticipated and I noticed that in the end some participants had difficulty in concentrating. It might have been better to split the anti-laws into two parts and discuss each part in a different session as this may have been better for the duration of the sessions as well as for the outcomes.

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Appendices

1. Script focus group session

Duration of the session: 120-180 minutes

Size of the group: 5-7 participants

Location: home or university. Provide participants with drinks and snacks.

Recording device: audiotape recorder combined with taking notes by the moderator

Introduction

- Welcome participants and introduce myself: age, previous education and current working status/work field of participants will be noted. Participants will introduce themselves to create a comfortable atmosphere.

- Explanation focus group by moderator: As a form of qualitative research, focus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between a researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group which serves as the primary source of data (Morgan, 1997). The information that comes to surface during the session will be held confidential and no names will be used. The session is however recorder and notes will be taken during the session by me.

- Instructions:
 - Legitimate the members' responsibility to manage the discussion: If you tend to get off track, someone will usually pull the group back to the topic – I will jump in I necessary, but usually one of you takes care of that for us.
 - Cue them on how to handle common problems: If the group runs out of things to say, just remember that I am interested in translating the 24 anti-laws for personal branding purposes and I want to hear as many different things about this as possible. There is no right or wrong opinion.
 - Emphasize that you want as many perspectives as possible: If your experience is a little different from what others are saying, then that is exactly what I want to hear from you.
 - Get them to use questions to direct the flow of interaction: If someone has not really joined in, or you seem to be hearing from the same people all the time, try asking a question to someone who has not spoken as much.

- Emphasize hearing about their experiences. Not everyone is willing to state or defend an opinion, but most people are willing to tell their stories: I want to hear as many stories as possible. Even if you think your experience is just like everyone else's, do not just say 'I agree'. We want to hear your story, because there is always something unique in each person's own experiences.
- Stress that all experiences are equally important to you: I need to hear as many different things from as many of you as time allows. There are really no right or wrong answers in this area- if there were I would have gone to experts and they would tell me the answers. Instead, I am here to learn from your experiences and to listen to your opinions (Morgan, 1997)
- Explain goal for the session: the goal of the focus group session is basically to find tools for personal branding purposes by using luxury branding as an inspiration. There are 24 anti-laws of traditional marketing used to define luxury branding. These anti-laws will be used as an inspiration in order to find useful tools for personal branding. Each anti-law will be presented by the moderator and the aim is to discuss each anti-law of traditional marketing and see whether there are opportunities present for personal branding purposes. Stress that it is a creative brainstorm session and all input is useful.
- Explain role of moderator: I am here to guide you during the discussion and to take notes. As a moderator, I will not be involved in the discussion but will provide guidance when the topic seems to fall out of reach in the discussion. I will introduce each anti-law and provide you with a short introduction on each anti-law. I want to understand your input. Therefore, my typical intervening question will be: 'Why?'.

Session

- Opening the session: ask participants to define personal branding in order to set up a clear definition for the session. In order to set the right mood for the session and motivate the participant's creativity, a picture of Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama and Steve Jobs will be presented. Participants are asked to apply personal branding on the examples given.
- Session: continue session with introducing and discussing each anti-law. Challenge participants by using follow-up questions. A short description is given when introducing each anti-law to make it more clear for the participants what is meant by each anti-law.

1. Forget about 'positioning' luxury is not comparative	13. Raise your prices as time goes on in order to increase demand
2. Does your product have enough flaws?	14. Keep raising the average price of the product range
3. Do not pander to your customers' wishes	15. Do not sell
4. Keep non-enthusiasts out	16. Keep stars out of your advertising
5. Do not respond to rising demand	17. Cultivate closeness to the arts for initiates
6. Dominate the client	18. Do not relocate your factories
7. Make it difficult for clients to buy	19. Do not hire consultants
8. Protect clients from non-clients, the big from the small	20. Do no test
9. The role of advertising is not to sell	21. Do not look for consensus
10. Communicate to those you are not targeting	22. Do not look after group synergies
11. The presumed price should always seem higher than the actual price	23. Do not look for cost reduction
12. Luxury sets the price, price does not set luxury	24. Just sell marginally on the internet

Table 5: 24 anti-laws of marketing (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009)

- Closing the session: thank participants for their cooperation. Give them and ask them for contact information for further follow-up if requested or if necessary. Conclude that the data derived from the session will be analyzed and used for my master dissertation.

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Missed opportunities in personal branding: finding solutions through luxury branding

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