Brand Me:
The role of digital marketers building a digital personal brand for Mexican millennials

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc Digital Marketing is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

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With all my heart I would like to thank my friends Luis Alonso, Fabián, Andrea, Francisco, Linda, María, Danilo, Felipe, Brando, Beto, Jorge y Julio César for believing in me, for being my second family and for pushing me to accomplish what I thought it would be unachievable.

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"Last but not least,

I wanna thank me for believing in me,

I wanna thank me for doing all this hard work,

I wanna thank me for having no days off,

(…)

I wanna thank me for always being a giver

And tryna give more than I received

I wanna thank me for tryna do more right than wrong

I wanna thank me for just being me at all times."

Snoop Dogg.

Abstract

This study aims to understand the role of digital marketers in building a successful digital personal brand for Mexico City's millennial generation. A mixed method was chosen to analyse two sides of demand for this consulting service: the millennial generation as clients and digital marketers as possible providers.

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with a marketing expert and a personal image consultant, and a public survey was sent to 123 volunteers. The results showed that Mexican millennials care about their digital personal brand and reputation for professional and social purposes but would not pay an expert to manage it.

In conclusion, digital marketers can contribute with these key points: provide a clear communication strategy to anyone prepared to pay for the service; inform that congruency between online and offline personal profiles are prime objectives of the digital branding process; and educate people about the rewards that hiring marketers has.

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Figures and Tables

Overview

Based on a structure presented by a peer (Nagarajan, 2020), Figure 1 illustrates a summary of the method and research design adopted by the researcher to address the research question and hypotheses.

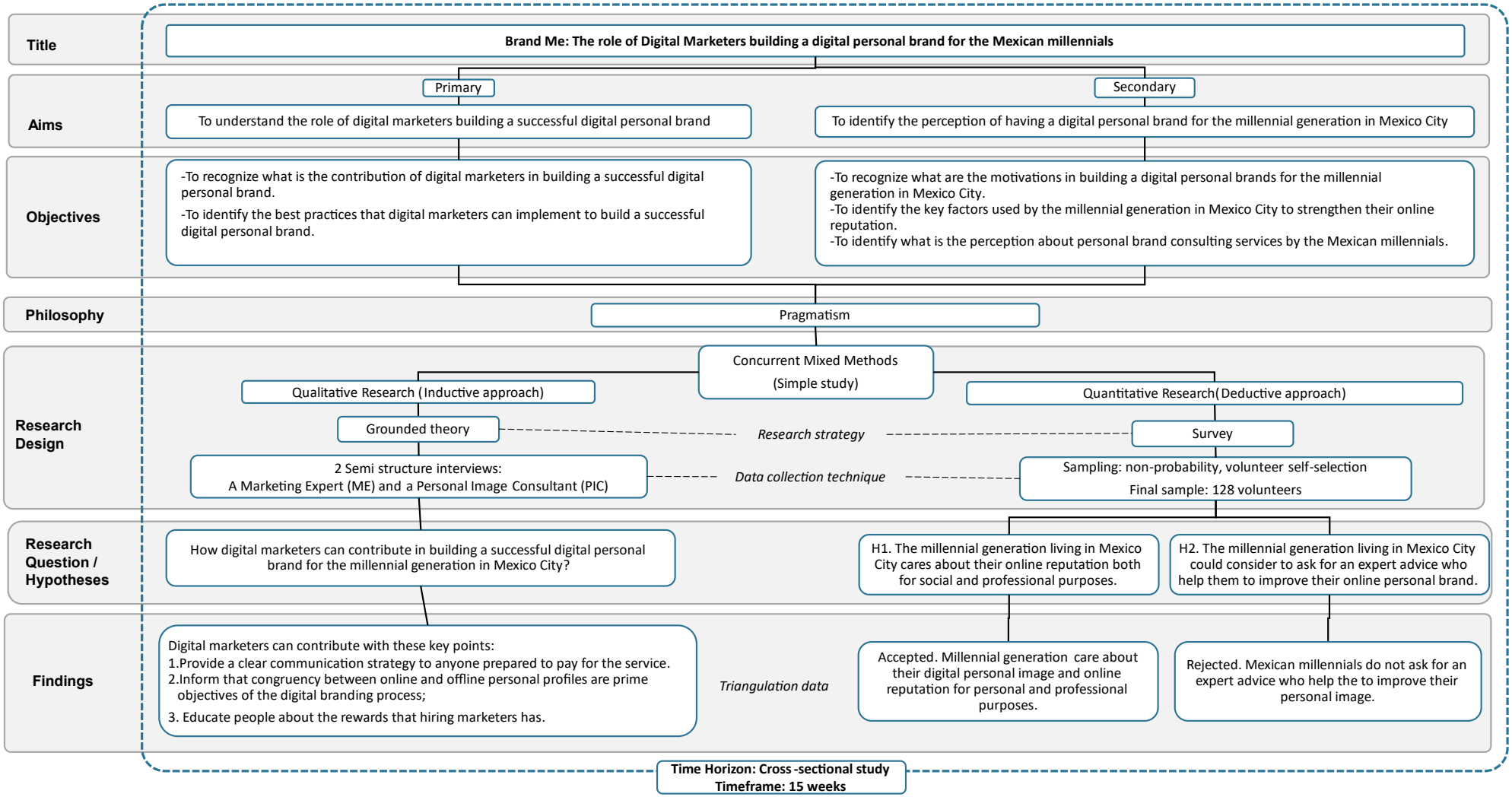


Figure 1. Overview with the key elements of this research.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Nowadays, branding is no longer an exclusive technique of marketing mix for products or services. With the expansion of the Internet and the ease of using social media networks for unlimited purposes, people have become a product by using self-promotional techniques that can allow them to influence the public's digital perceptions about them (Machaz and Shokoofh, 2016).

Due to the fact that online presence has grown more than ever, users can brand themselves by sharing personal information to create a virtual image that is not necessarily an accurate representation of them in real life. According to Statista (2021), in January 2021 there were 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide, which represents 59.5% of the global population; of those, around 81% (3.78 billion) are social network active customers who open accounts and share personal information across different platforms.

Much of our daily activities and interactions are mediated through devices that store our data in information systems, meaning that people can unintentionally create their digital footprint in every click they make. This helps to predict people's behaviours and preferences (Sjöberg *et al.*, 2017). However, due to the ease of free resources via online platforms, people can also intentionally manipulate what is known about them online.

According to the report "Digital 2021, Global Overview Report" by Global Web Index and presented by Hootsuite (2021) that shows how people around the world use the Internet, social media, mobile devices, and ecommerce, in average people spend

daily around 6:54 hours using the Internet, of this 2:25 hours are spent in any of their 8.4 social media accounts that a user has in a regular basis.

As it very well known, once a person decides to open an account in any social media network, it is necessary to create a "profile" to introduce and identify themselves on the digital platform. As providing real information is not always required, people are free to change or lie about some aspects that in real life are not strengths. This is not only possible through social media, but anyone can also create a blog or website about themselves and influence perceptions and thoughts that people have about them.

Therefore, as people are free to share accurate or enhanced information to interact online, they are constantly "branding themselves" by promoting their major personal characteristics (Zarkada, 2012). As this practice is not always done right or with a clear objective of communication in mind, this is a clear job opportunity for digital marketers who specialise in branding to showcase the uniqueness of brands, either for products, services, or people (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

As it will be reviewed subsequently, researchers agreed that Tom Peters introduced the concept of "personal brand" in his article "*The Brand Called You*" in 1997. He proposed that everybody possesses the power of standing out and working on their own brand; as he literally expresses: "to become the CEO of *Me Inc"* (Peters, 1997).

After his proposal was published in the American business magazine "Fast Company", there were various studies focused on having a strong personal brand for business or professional goals. Also, with the expansion of internet access and the

increase in social media networks, research related to personal branding in the digital world grew significantly.

1.2 Research Gap

As a result of the increase of communication through the Internet and several social media channels, personal brand has become a common subject in articles and books related to reputation management and self-help. However, researchers agree that there is still a significant lack of academic research about personal branding focusing on its contribution to marketing knowledge (Sagliocco and Buccino, 2020) and also how people can build their online personal identity (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014).

As it will be discussed in the literature review of this study, the academic approach to personal branding in the digital world is still in progress around the world, including Mexico. There are many articles and websites that suggest how Mexican users can improve their digital personal brand and online reputation using online tools or following guidelines. However, it is unclear who is the professional in charge to provide expert advice about this new concept supported by academic marketing literature.

In this scenario, this research is relevant to demonstrate that online personal branding is a field still unexplored in the Mexican market, particularly for the millennial generation, which represents a professional opportunity for digital marketers to show people's uniqueness. Moreover, this is framed in one of the countries where its population spends around 3:27 hours a day on social media, one of the highest daily time spent in the world (Hootsuite, 2021).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This integrative literature review will consider various academic sources from the marketing point of view to identify what has been explored and what is the gap in the knowledge or digital personal brand in the Mexican market.

To address a thematic approach of personal branding in the digital era, this research will cover the importance of some key concepts as: brand and branding, personal branding, digital personal brand, online reputation management, and the chapter will end with a detailed explanation of the aims, objectives, the research question, and hypothesis to be tested.

2.1 Brand and Branding

The concepts of brand and branding are mainly understood from the marketing and business perspective to show uniqueness or positive singularity in products and services (Pérez and Gringarten, 2020). However, since the beginning of the ancient civilisations, the approach of these definitions has had both negative and positive connotations depending on the timeframe. According to Bastos and Levy (2012), “brand” and “branding” have strong roots in different human motivations, from conquest, domination, and power to many forms of practical, aesthetic, and social self-expressions.

Etymology speaking, there is evidence that the word “brand” has its origin with the Icelandic synonyms of *oom* and *brond* that refer to words “fire” or “burning”. This implies the use of fire to mark the skin or objects for cosmetic, medicinal, social, psychological, political, or cultural purposes (Bastos and Levy, 2012).

From a historical point of view, the word “brand” is one of the oldest in English language. Its origin dates from the late fifth century before Common Era, when the term was first found in the old English poem called *Beowulf* both as a verb and as a noun (Stern, 2006).

There are numerous examples of the use of the word “brand” in its old meaning to denote possession or property. The ancient Egyptians used trademarks to protect animals from being stolen in 2700 before Common Era (Kotler *et al.*, 2019). Greeks and Romans used to identify possession of animals and slaves by burning their skin (Bastos and Levy, 2012).

Philip Kotler (2019) and David Aaker (1991) mention that in medieval Europe, trade guilds put trademarks on their products to distinguish them from the low-quality ones. Similarly, in 1266 BCE, English bakers were obligated to put a specific symbol on every single product they sold. Also, branding in the fine arts field started when artists signed their works.

Thus, brand as a concept has had an important role in the beginning of commerce, it was not until the last century when branding and brand associations became a vital factor for the marketplace (Aaker, 1991). Even though the word “brand” was founded for the first time 1000 BCE, it was taken as a marketing term in 1922, when it was defined as a trade or proprietary name (Stern, 2006).

Despite the fact, “brand” has become a common term in the marketing field, there is not a unique definition in the academic world which has been widely discussed. Examples of some of the previous studies are reviewed subsequently.

A brand has been defined as "*something that generates awareness, reputation, and prominence in the marketplace*" (Keller, 2012, p. 30). Jean-Nöel Kapferer affirms that "*a brand is a name with the power of influence*" (2012, p. 8). The same author affirms that brand is a name that evokes respect, prestige, passion, trust, engagement and creates a community. The brand also can be understood as "*a promise of the value you'll receive*" for a product or service (Peters, 1997).

A brand involves the visual and verbal representation linked with firms and their services (Stern, 2006). It can represent an idea, a product, a shop, a service, a place, a person, or a group, that need to be differentiated from others that were designed to satisfy the same need in the marketplace and branding is the process to reach this differentiation (Kotler *et al.*, 2019).

Armstrong and Kotler (2016, p. 249) argue that a brand is more than symbols and names *"it is everything that a product or service means for a customer"* and also it is the most valuable asset of a company. One of the most recent definition, describe a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol or a combination of them, meant to identify services or products of sellers to distinguish them from the competition (American Marketing Association, 2021).

Based on the approaches above and summarising the meaning of these concepts, it can be argued that brand can be understood as a name, a symbol or combination of both that identifies and distinguishes a product or service from others.

From the marketing perspective, branding can be defined as the procedure through which a brand can be identified and distinguished from a service, idea, person,

or any product offered in the marketplace from others of the same category that advocate satisfying the same need. The success of branding is based on its awareness, trust, respect, power of influence and basically the perception that customers have about it.

2.2 Personal Branding

As seen from the above review of the key concepts, branding has been defined and understood mainly from the point of view of customer-oriented products, but it has been practiced also in the corporate communications and the services industry. However, when it involves individuals, it is described as personal branding (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014).

This concept started to be known when, in the late nineties, it was often used interchangeably with the concepts of “human brand” and “self-marketing” (Shepherd, 2005; Jacobson, 2020). In the beginning, personal branding was mainly associated with celebrities, politicians, athletes, and musicians with the purpose of being known in the marketplace (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014; Zabojnik, 2018).

It was promoted as a result of the increasing number of articles, books, magazines, personal coaches and specialized literature related to self-help to succeed in the business world (Khedher, 2014). Then, it became popular with students and job agencies that encouraged people to stand out and be visible among their peers.

Peters (1997) took a simple example to illustrate what personal branding is: the author argues that in the digital age, when everybody sends and receives emails, the

decision about what email is opened first, is directly related to the value that users get for spending time reading the message. The author also affirms that the sender is a brand itself and it has the power of influence on the final decision of opening the email or sending it directly to the trash unread.

According to “The Brand Call You” by Peters (1997), everything that people do or don’t do, contributes to communicating the value of that personal brand. For instance, their behaviour in a business meeting, how people socialize with colleagues, what kind of words are used to send emails, or the tone that people used in a call, and more shape the larger message that people send about their own brand.

The cited author opened the discussion about personal branding and its effects in people’s life but it is still considered a new concept in marketing literature for various researchers (Zarkada, 2012; Khedher, 2014; Shaker and Hafiz, 2014; Zabojnik, 2018; Sagliocco and Buccino, 2020). Consequently, there is not a unique definition about what a personal brand is and what its elements are, therefore some definitions of previous studies are reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Due to the global adoption of social media networks, having a personal brand has become an important asset not only for unskilled and graduate students (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014; Zabojnik, 2018), it is an important asset as well for high and entry management positions who want to be more competitive in the job market.

William Arruda (2002) was one of the first authors who defined this term exclusively for professional purposes and he suggest it as the future of career management. The author defined it as the *“unique promise of value that you have to*

offer your employer or your clients" (Arruda, 2002, p. 7) and he says that building a personal brand is more than marketing activities where people promote themselves, it is about demonstrating authenticity and uniqueness.

Other authors supported the idea that the same marketing principles that have been developed for products or businesses can be applied to people (Shepherd, 2005; Chen and Chung, 2016). This key assumption has opened the discussion to create similar methods to brand products or services but focused on individuals whose practice was called "*life-as-company philosophy*" (Walker, 2000). Some examples will be described later.

William Arruda (2002) established one of the first personal branding processes to help people to achieve their professional goals. His three-stage method replicated the corporate branding model that includes showing a unique promise of value as phrase one; create a strong personal statement around that value as phase two; and finally make a strategy to be visible. It was summarized as "*extract, express and exude*".

Similarly to the Arruda model, Manel Khedher (2014) defines personal branding as a strategic process in which individuals follow a certain number of phases to promote themselves. As a result, a three-phases process was developed by the cited author, who describes the first one as brand identity; the second one as brand positioning; and the third one as evaluation of brand image.

Continuing with the studies of the personal brand only in the field of the professional, Hai Ming Chen and Hsin Mei Chung (2016) developed a scale to measure personal brand of a business CEO, which resulted in a pioneer in the literature related

to this topic. They argue that a strong personal brand includes a mix of reputation, personal qualities, attitudes, the unique combination of strengths, weaknesses, skills and both internal and external characteristics of people. Seven dimensions were developed and tested in the business sector as follows: standards, competency, charisma, style, values, character, and leadership.

This is significant since it shows that the subject of personal branding has gradually expanded its field of study. As has been commented, at the beginning it was limited only to the promotion of public figures or celebrities, later new methodologies were developed to serve professionals who sought to excel in the labour field.

However, it is important to mention that these analyses are narrowed only to achieve professional objectives and to stand out from the job market. Then, it can be considered a limited approach since other authors started to show that the personal brand field extends beyond the limits of the professional market.

As an example, a significant contribution to the academic literature was given by Fahim Shaker and Reaz Hafiz (2014) who described the importance of having a successful personal brand both for professional purposes but also for personal and social goals. They analysed in depth the relation between the dimensions of brand personality, which is a well-established concept in the marketing literature by Jennifer Aaker (1997), and it is related to human identity in order to build a personal brand for personal ambitions.

Brand personality is described by Jennifer Aaker (1997) as the set of human personality dimensions related to the brand. These core dimensions supplement the

brand identity concept, which is described by David Aaker (1996) as the unique set of brand associations that forms what a brand stands for. Brand identity establishes a relationship with a customer by generating an emotional, functional, and self-expressive value proposition. Brand identity, brand positioning and the brand image are the main elements of personal brand theory (Nanayakkara and Dissanayake, 2020).

Consequently, Jennifer Aaker (1997) established a framework of five personality dimensions perceived in consumers' mind as displayed in Figure 2.

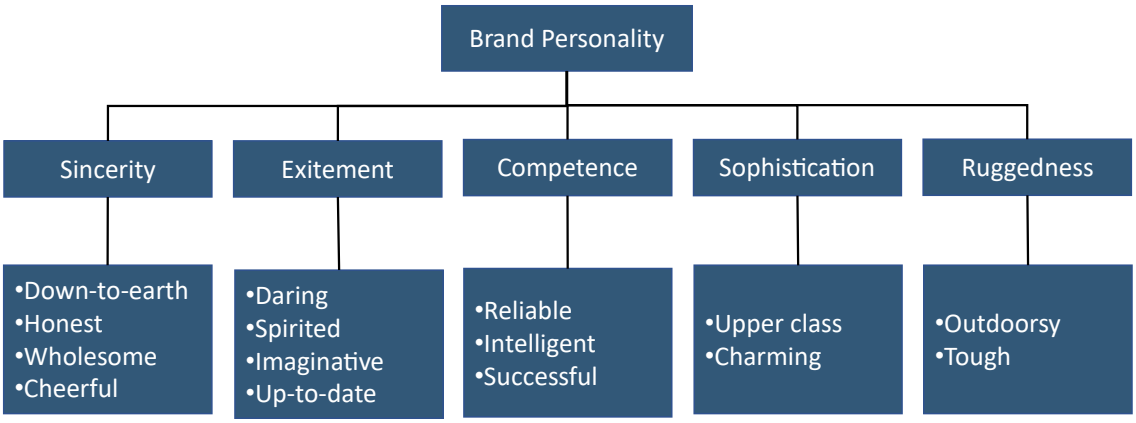


Figure 2. Brand Personality Framework by Jennifer Aaker (1997, p. 352).

Shaker and Reaz Hafiz (2014) found that similar to the framework established by Jennifer Aaker (1997) for a brand as products, the concept of human identity construction needs to be considered when building a personal brand. Authors argue that humans beings tend to select socially desirable qualities that add a certain meaning to the individual self. Hence, building a personal brand is not about showing intrinsic characteristics, it is based on human constructions about how people want to be known.

2.3 Digital Personal Branding

Personal brand in the digital space constitutes a relatively new area which has emerged from the development of new technologies and its role in human interactions. As a consequence, there is not a unique definition of this concept in academic literature. It has been mentioned interchangeably in journals as “online personal brand” or “digital personal brand”, so for the purpose of this study, both concepts will be used under the same definition.

Digital branding has been defined as “*the creation and management of brands and the totality of the consumer digital experience through all forms of digital technologies*” (Kotler *et al.*, 2019, p. 410) this includes the Internet platforms, social media networks and any other form of digital technology.

Correspondingly, digital personal branding implies showing positive individual attributes on a digital platform with the aim of standing out both for the professional goals and social objectives (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014).

Due to the increase of social media all around the world, and the ease of sharing personal information, there is a minuscule line between private and public life (Kleppinger and Cain, 2015). Nowadays, personal branding relies on a combination of the appearance of self-offline and the presentation of self-online (Jacobson, 2020).

Fahim Shaker and Reaz Hafiz (2014) give an explanation about how online identity is built based on the identity offline. They expose that the online environment offers a range of platforms where people can connect and form an identity which can

be related, or not, to the real personality of the user. However, most of these relations in the digital world are based on pre-existing relationships with people offline.

The same authors concluded that a favourable impression in online platforms, can help to improve self-esteem offline (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014) and argue that the best way to promote themselves in the era of globalisation is through social media channels (Ward and Yates, 2013; Pérez and Gringarten, 2020).

In order to contribute to personal brand knowledge in the digital space, innovative concepts such as e-professionalism (Ward and Yates, 2013), online-persona and online invisibility (Kleppinger and Cain, 2015), enter the arena of marketing literature. with the aim of explaining the new dynamics of the hyperconnected society.

Some authors analyse online personal branding under the premise that everybody has one, even when it is unintentional. For example, Kleppinger and Cain (2015) claim that it is an important digital asset where online invisibility could also affect future careers for students and young professionals. Pérez and Gringarten (2020) explain that having an online personal brand can represent either an opportunity or a threat for future opportunities to a person's life in general.

In 2020, a pandemic due to the Coronavirus disease forced companies to keep their employees working from home. As a result of this global crisis, Pérez and Gringarten (2020) made a study to redefine workers as essential or non-essential, that is, those people whose task was essential for the daily activities of a company, or who carried out activities that could be replaced by any other employee . This led to highlighting how important it is to work on the personal brand because in times of

uncertainty such as the pandemic, people can demonstrate the essentials of their brand. The authors conclude that in the near future, having an established personal brand may be unescapable.

2.4 Online Reputation Management

For a better understanding of digital personal branding, it is essential to define what online reputation is and how it affects the individual identity. As a first definition it can be said that reputation is described as people's opinion about something or somebody and it is built over the time as a social consensus (Gordoa, 2018). It regards information used to make a value judgement about them (Farmer and Glass, 2010).

In the beginning, reputation management was focused on people's appearance and its influence on others. With the expanding of the *digital world of mouth* strategies for building an online reputation, it now also includes analysis of behaviour in social media channels and search behaviour in search engines (Yang, 2015).

It is said that people's reputation moves to the digital space where "*Google has become the new reputation engine"* (Beal and Strauss, 2009, p. 109) and has become one of the most valuable assets for both brands and people.

Previous studies have said that online reputation management has not been studied in detail from the academic perspective (Ryan *et al.*, 2016) but for the purpose of this study, personal online reputation management will be understood as any activity on digital platforms for reputation building, increasing and upkeep. It has significant

importance because it impacts both professional and social life, and at the same time, it has consequences in the society as a whole (Yang, 2015).

2.5 The Mexican Context

In the review of the literature by the researcher, very few studies have been found to show the influence of personal branding in the Mexican market. There are several numbers of life coaches, influencers and content creators who suggest methodologies to use to stand out, both from the online and offline spheres. However, there is a clear gap in the literature about the perception and demand of this service in the Mexican market.

Based on the last official census by the Mexican Government (INEGI, 2021), there are 9,209,944 people in Mexico City; of those around 2 201 176 are in the range of age 25 to 39 years old, which represents 23.9% of its population. This group is part of the millennial generation, a common term used in popular literature to identify people born between 1980 and 2000.

A report that examines the digital behaviour of generations in Mexico by GWI (2021), shows that the average number of social media accounts owned by millennials is 9.2 social platforms. If the average user has 8.4 accounts (Hootsuite, 2021), it is clear that Millennials stand out the most from the regular internet user.

The cited report shows that Mexican Millennials usually look for brands that can help them to improve their online reputation. As natural status-seekers, the study reveals that part of their motivation to be online is to stand out from the crowd and they tend to consume brands that fill up this need (GWI, 2021).

These target results are interesting because around a third of the population in Mexico City are part of the millennial generation, who are the most well-educated generation and, consequently, the most competitive. In addition, this research will focus on the capital of the country because it is the most important economic and commercial zone in the country, with the greatest demand for employment and with greater connectivity.

2.5.1 Who is covering the demand for personal brand services in Mexico?

Previous studies by the marketing Faculty of the Kellogg School of Management indicate that marketers should address the experience to the target consumer, anticipating what concept should be, and then create a brand positioning statement (Tybout and Calder, 2010). Following this premise, marketers are the professionals who could satisfy the demand of this service.

However, in the case of Mexico City only the Colegio de Imagen Publica, a private college, has a special master course about personal image consulting and diploma in digital image that include personal brand as a subject. Books about self-improvement and personal image have been published by this institution but there are no more academic resources or educational institutes based in the capital.

2.6 Rational and Research Gap

This investigation is important because it contributes to the knowledge of the digital personal brand in the marketing field, which is a field barely studied in Mexico.

As will be discussed in detail, previous research shows that both online presence and reputation become more important for professional purposes, with a big impact on people's perceptions. Although there are several examples of self-help books and articles that suggest how people can behave on their social media platforms, academic research is still lacking knowledge for the Mexican market.

So, since the personal brand and its extension to the digital space is an issue that has attracted the attention of researchers and more people are aware of its importance in this era of hyperconnectivity, two hypotheses will be developed in this research to know what the perspective of the millennial generation to their own digital personal brand and if they would consider that an expert could advise them in building it successfully. Correspondingly it will seek to know the point of view of experts in marketing and image, who could satisfy this demand for consulting services.

2.7 Aim and Objectives

This study will be focused on the population of Mexico City, particularly in the range of age 25-34 years old -the millennial generation, which represents the biggest age group in the capital of Mexico (INEGI, 2021) and the largest group of active users in social media with 13.4% women and 18.8% men of share (Hootsuite, 2021).

It will be focused on reaching two aims with particular objectives each, as follows:

Aim one:

- Understand the role of digital marketers in building a digital personal brand in Mexico City.

Objectives*:*

- To recognize the contribution of digital marketers in building a successful digital personal brand.
- To identify best practises that digital marketers can implement to build a successful digital personal brand.

Aim two**:**

- To identify the perception of having a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City.

Objectives

- To recognize what are the motivations in building a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City.
- To identify the key factors that the millennial generation in Mexico City use to strengthen their online reputation.
- To identify what is their perception about experts in marketing.

2.8 Research Question and Hypotheses

As it is unclear what is the demand for digital personal brand services in Mexico City, and also who can provide an expert advice to cover the demand, the following research question and hypotheses will be addressed:

- Research question: How can digital marketers contribute to building a successful digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City?
- Hypothesis 1. The millennial generation living in Mexico City cares about their online reputation both for social and professional purposes.
- Hypothesis 2. The millennial generation living in Mexico City could consider asking for an expert advice who help them to improve their online personal brand.

To reach the answer for the research question, two deep interviews will be conducted with experts in branding and a survey will be sent to a sample of Mexican millennials to prove or reject the hypotheses. The Methodology chapter for this research will explain it in more detail later.

CHAPTER 3

Method

3.1 Introduction

As shown in Figure 1 of this study, the researcher developed a general framework to facilitate the reading of the present study. This chapter describes the methods and techniques used by the researcher to conduct this study.

First, an overall framework of this research will be presented with the aims, objectives, research design, research question, and hypotheses. It will be displayed as a summary to illustrate the full method for ease of understanding for the reader.

Then, the research philosophy, research approach, methodological choice and techniques of data collection will be supported by the scheme proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill' Research Onion Model (2019), which is the full theory adopted by the researcher.

Next, a description of the participants, research design, materials, and procedures taken will be described within the timeframe given to conduct this research.

Finally, a description of how the ethical considerations such as informed consent, the anonymity of the data collected, and the scope of the research were informed to the participants.

3.2 Scheme adopted

The primary aim of this research is to recognise the role of digital marketers in building a successful digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City. To reach that, this study adopted the Research Onion Model, which is a scheme proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), where a number of stages were covered to address the research questions and confirm or reject the proposed hypotheses.

Figure 3 illustrates the cited Research Onion Model and the dimensions where this study went through. Explanation about the stages chosen in every dimension will be presented subsequently.

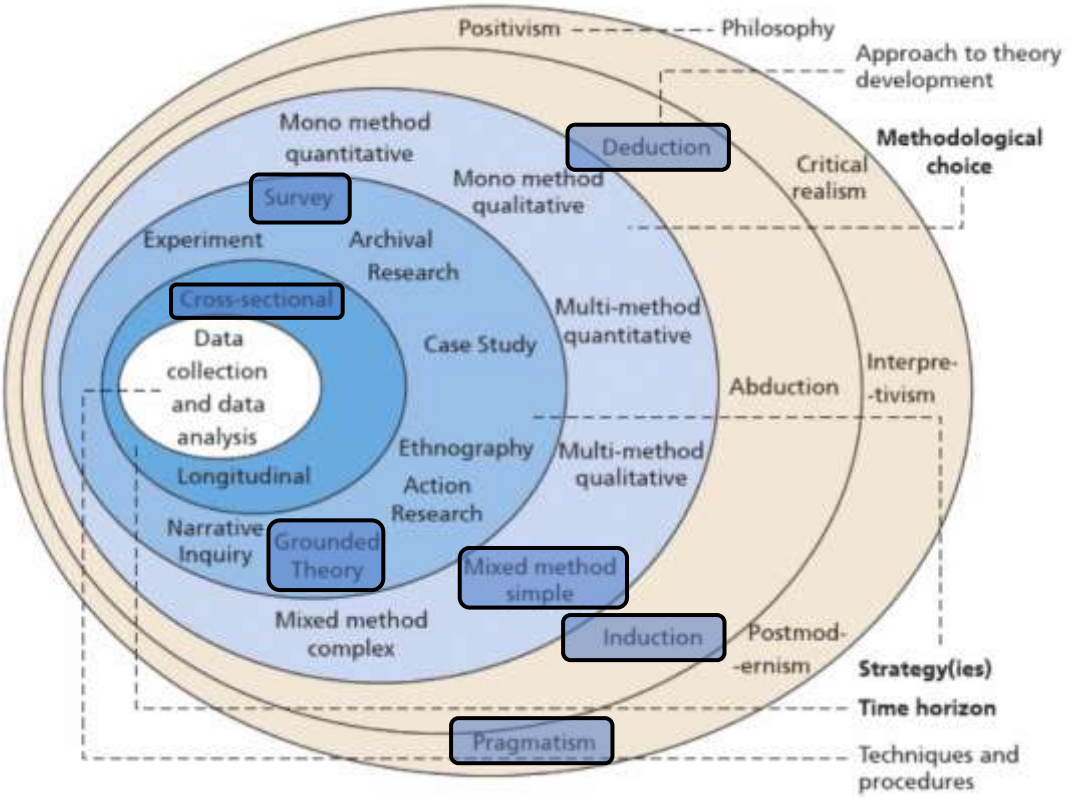


Figure 3. Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 174)
Selection by the researcher.

3.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of assumptions and beliefs regarding creating new knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In the academic literature is also known as worldviews (Creswell and Creswell, 2017) and the main aim is to describe the reality. Saunders (2019) argues that there are five major philosophies used in business management research as follows: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism.

The researcher conducted the study under the lens of the pragmatism philosophy because it was the most accurate to address the research question and prove the hypotheses. This method has several advantages, such as recognising the existence of different ways of understanding the reality (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) and because it is not limited to understand the world either just objectively or subjectively only.

Other approaches were not appropriate for the study because they reduced the scope of the analysis. For instance, the positivism approach is not a suitable paradigm for this study as participants' opinions cannot be analysed under the lens of universal laws o general assumptions that govern the world as it is the fundamental characteristic of this philosophy (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). It is necessary to take into consideration the particular and unique background of Mexico City related to Internet access to understand what it is about the perception of personal branding in the digital space.

Similarly, the critical realism approach was not taken as a research paradigm either as it is focused in on historical analysis of organizational structures that shape

visible events (et. al Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), which it is not related to the main topic of our study.

Another view is the interpretivism philosophy that claims that human interactions cannot be analysed from the same point of view of physical events (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This opened the possibility of becoming a paradigm for this study. Still, it is a subjectivist philosophy that emphasises the individuals' lived experiences and add their participants interpretations to the investigation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), the researcher considerer that pragmatism gave a better scope for the analysis by offering a broader variety of research strategies to address the research problem.

Lastly, postmodernism sees the reality from the point of view of power relations and give voice to the silence perspectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). However, the broad topic of this study is still having contributions from researchers, and it cannot be yet analysed from dominant or passive perspectives.

3.4 Methodological choice

Given the time frame of fifteen weeks, concurrent mixed-method research was selected to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Both groups of results were interpreted together in a single phase to compare what is the demand of personal branding in Mexico City (quantitative method) and what is the offer of this service supplied by the experts (qualitative method). Figure 4 illustrates the methodological choices proposed by Saunders (2019) and the ones selected by the researcher.

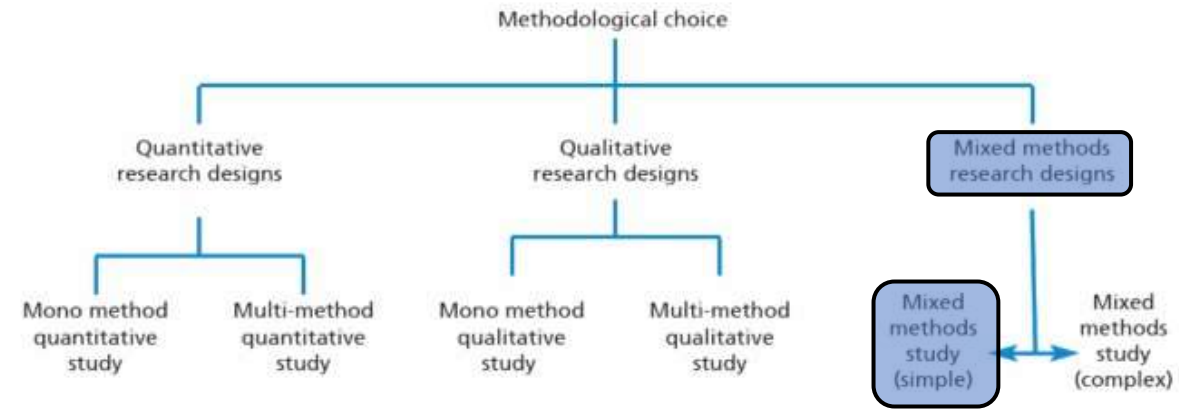


Figure 4. Methodological choice (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 179).
Selection done by the researcher

3.5 Research Population

In light of exploring our main topic from two different perspectives, qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to collect data. First, the qualitative approach was utilized to put individuals as the focus of attention (Bryman and Bell, 2011), and subsequently, for the quantitative approach, a particular set of questions were sent via survey to understand general perceptions about branding. Individuals for both techniques were selected as follows.

3.5.1 Participants

Literature review evinced that online personal branding has been offered as a professional service by marketers but by experts in other fields as well. With that in mind, the researcher considered interviewing two experts based in Mexico City who offer personal brand consulting services in the capital.

The first interview was with a marketing expert who provided the perspective of personal branding from both academic point of view and business and management. The second one was done with a personal image consultant who is an expert in perceptions, body language and no verbal communication.

All of them had experience in personal branding but from different fields. Based on their experiences, experts were selected from a variety of professionals found in LinkedIn and the invitation to be part of this study was done via that social network.

In an effort to integrate more valuable information into the analysis, more people were invited to participate but due to the limited time of the investigation, it was not possible to schedule an appointment. It is important to mention that a content creator was interviewed for this study, but her responses were not included in this analysis since they were far from the central topic of the research.

3.5.2 Sampling

In terms of statistics and quantitative research methodology, a sample is defined as the portion of the population that was selected for a particular study (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In this case, the sample was selected from the population of the capital of Mexico and narrowed to the millennial generation, a common term used in the popular literature to identify people born between 1980 and 2000.

Based on the last official census by the Mexican Government (INEGI, 2021), there are 9,209,904 people in Mexico City. Of those, 2201 176 people are in the range of age

25-40, this represents 23.9% of its total population. Figure 4 shows the composition by age and gender of people in Mexico City.

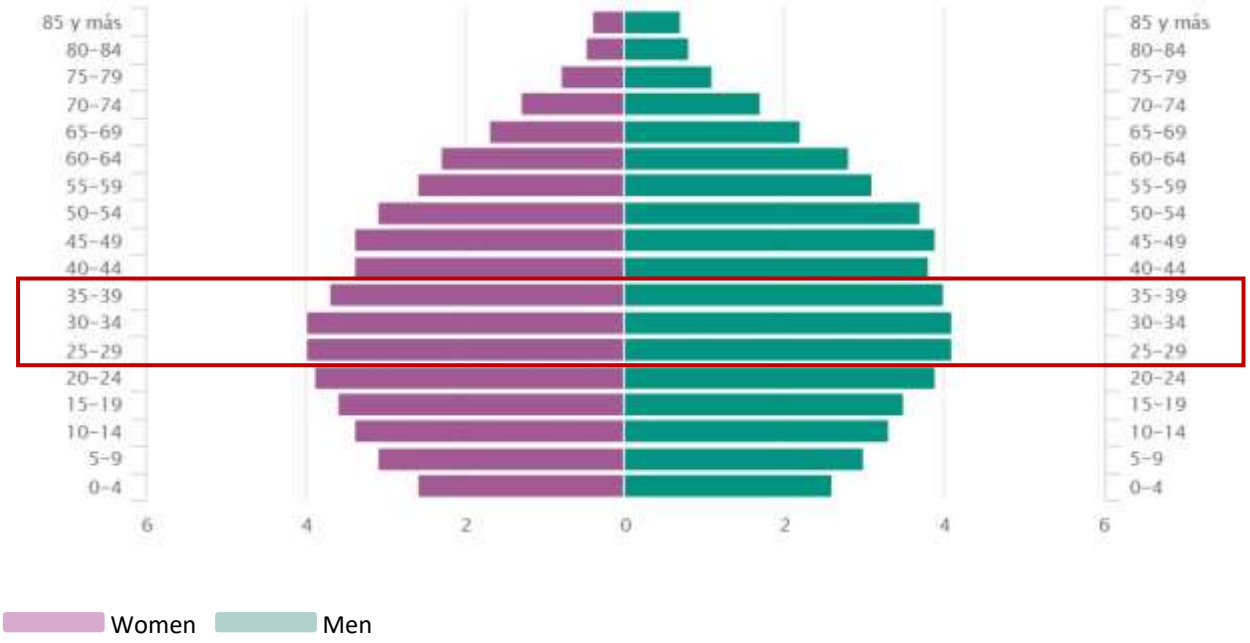


Figure 5. Total population of Mexico City, composition by age and gender. (INEGI, 2021). The selection shows the group of age that was studied in this research.

Using a sample size online tool (*Sample Size Calculator: Understanding Sample Sizes*, 2021) the estimation of sample size for this research was a minimum of 97 participants to achieve 95% of confidence level and 8% - 10% of margin of error.

To hire participants, a non-probability, volunteer self-selection sample was applied. The questionnaire to search for the participants was shared via WhatsApp groups and on the researcher's social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. This method was the most convenient due to the researcher was not based in Mexico City and could not have any personal interaction with the participants.

Additionally, this method was the most accurate in terms of time and availability as participants received a link via social media networks a direct message. They were free to be part of the study and data collected were taken from those who responded (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Variables set to be part of this survey will be explained in the following subheading.

3.6 Design

As it was shown in Figure 1 Overall framework, this research has two main aims and clear objectives. The primary is to understand the role of digital marketers in building an online personal brand from the point of view of three experts in different fields, and the second one is to identify the millennial generation's perception about brand themselves in the digital space.

Which this in mind, to get through to aim number one, the inductive approach was adopted to have a better understanding of the qualitative result. Additionally, the deductive approach was selected to analyse the survey, which is the quantitative technique implemented and it will be mentioned later.

The research design chosen was exploratory as the goal of this research was to gain background information about a specific topic (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) which is digital personal branding in the marketing literature.

The time horizon of this research was cross-sectional because a particular population in Mexico in the period of fifteen week was selected to be part of this research. Once the data was collected in the period mentioned, not more information

over a long period of time from the participants was required as longitudinal studies involve (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

As it was mentioned, mixed-method study was applied with the aim of having two types of data. The evaluation of both results conducted a data triangulation analysis which was selected by the researcher because it provides better confidence of final findings. The design of data collection techniques will the detailed subsequently.

3.6.1 Qualitative Method / Semi-structured interview

Two different questionnaires were developed, one for each expert. The researcher considered that doing the interviews in Spanish would be more convenient for the participants and the researcher herself as it was their native language, and they could express themselves freely. Despite the above, the interview with the personal image consultant was done in English for the own decision of the participant.

These questions were asked to obtain similar information but from different points of view. The main areas of interest were:

1) Definition of personal branding from their field of expertise.

2) Motivations of their clients when they ask for their expert advice.

3) Personal branding in the digital space.

4) How much people could be prepared to spend for a consultant service in personal branding.

5) Opinion about other fields that can contribute to building a personal brand strategy for a client.

These questions were considered for the primary aim that searches for understanding the role of digital marketers, if any, in building a digital personal brand. The main foundation of these questions was supported in the literature review that evidenced the demand of this service and all the professionals who attempt to provide an expert solution (Peters, 1997; Arruda, 2002; Shaker and Hafiz, 2014; Sagliocco and Buccino, 2020). The questionaries can be found in Appendix A.

3.6.2 Quantitative Method / Survey

To be part of the study, participants were asked to be in the range of age of 25-40 years old and live in Mexico City at least during the last 5 years. By replying to the first three questions, only participants with the mentioned characteristics could continue with the survey.

Questions from 4 to 15 were designed to measure awareness, perceptions, and opinions about both their own online presence and others online reputation. Table 1 displays the variables considered in the survey.

Table 1. Description of objectives and variables measure in the survey.

Question number	Variable measured	Objective
1, 2 and 3	Demographics	To reach the sample by avoiding people out of the range of age or city set.
Questions to prove or reject the Hypothesis 1		
4 and 5	Social media usage	To recognize the online presence.

6	Brand personality dimension by Aaker	To prove if the brand personality theory by Aaker (1997) is applicable for personal brand as it is applicable for products or services.
7 and 9	Online reputation and authenticity offline and online	To recognize if their online personal brand match with their personality offline.
8 and 10	Perception	To identify their perception about implications of online reputation and their digital personal branding for professional purposes
11 and 12	Motivations and perception	To find the main reason why people share experiences online that shapes their personal brand. To recognize key elements of personal brand in the digital space that shapes people's opinions
Questions to prove or reject the Hypothesis 2		
13 to 15	Awareness	To discover if people know who can provided and expert advice building an online personal brand.

3.7 Materials

The materials used for this study were the result of the discussion and analysis in the literature review. The construction was done by the researcher, but all questions were tested first in a pilot test for external participants who suggested changes in terms of clarity of the questions. Their additions were taken into consideration before collecting the data.

3.7.1 Qualitative Method / Semi-structured interview / Questionnaire

One specific questionnaire was developed for each professional with flexible questions as it follows: 17 questions for the digital marketer and 13 questions for the personal image consultant.

Even though the questionaries were different, all of them followed the same structure starting with the name and background of professionals, then questions about their expert opinion of personal branding, questions about how they work with their clients were next, and finally opinion about other fields that offer personal branding consulting services.

Depending on the flow of the interview and the expert was being interviewed, some questions were answered in advance which allowed to reduce the number of questions and gave the opportunity to go deeper in other topics.

A copy of the questionnaires for each participant, a participant information sheet and consent form are included in Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C.

3.7.2 Quantitative Method / A survey

The material used to achieve the secondary aim was an online survey hosted using Google Forms. The survey included 15 questions in Spanish that were meant to approve or reject the hypotheses identify as a result of the literature review.

The researcher designed the survey using open-ended questions, scale questions, and multiple-choice questions. With the aim of having more insights for the analysis, all questions were mandatory, specifically the ones that were open questions.

Considering reliability and consistency, the online survey contained the same questions for the participants who first had to cover two specific demographics as live in Mexico City and being in the range of range between 25 and 40 years old and there were not modifications during the timeframe that was delivered. They accessed the

same link and had not limit of time to answer the questions. A copy of the full questionnaire in English version is included in Appendix A.

3.8 Procedures

The data collection was primarily collected online as the researcher is based in Ireland and the study was narrowed in the population of Mexico City. Only the in-depth interview with the personal image consultant was face-to-face, but there was not direct contact between other participants and the researcher.

3.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

The researcher had the first contact with the marketing expert, the personal image consultant and the content creator via LinkedIn and invited them to be part of the study. After the verbal agreement, a participant information sheet and consent form were sent to them by email with a request of mailing it back if agreed. A copy of the documents are available in Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C.

A specific date was arranged to do the interview via online video conference software with the expert in marketing and the content creator. Only the interview with the personal image consultant could be planned in person with the researcher and recorded for further analysis.

The session was recorded and was notified to the participants before starting the interview. After their oral consent, the researcher introduced herself and explained both the academic purpose of the study and the ethical considerations of it.

Participants were asked to introduce themselves and give a little background about them. As it was a semi-structured interview, the flexibility of this technique allowed us to omit some questions that were replied to during the conversation without being asked. The time compromised was 35-40 minutes for each interview.

Once all questions were replied to, the researcher thanked them for the time and offered to share the findings after the submission of the thesis.

3.8.2 Survey

The online survey was distributed online passing through groups in social networks like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram from the 17 of November until the 4th of December of 2021. On clicking the link provided, participants were taken to a survey hosted in Google Forms with a small introduction about the survey.

The survey was open to everybody. Participants interested to be part clicked the link and read a description and purpose of the study, if they agreed, they started with the questions. The participants were informed in advance about the academic purposes of the survey and the full anonymity of their answerers. The questionary took the participant an average of 2:15 minutes to complete.

The first step was to answer the first three questions that allowed to narrow the study related to age, genre, and city of residence. If they could be part of the sample, 11 questions more were showed regarding to understand their perceptions about their own personal brand and online reputation.

Each question was mandatory to reply but participants were free to express any opinion or leave the study any time. Once all questions were answered, participants submitted their answers and final message was displayed to thanks for the time.

This procedure was convenient for the selection of participants in the survey because it allowed to delimit the target of the sample and, once the demographic requirements were met, to complete the 15-question questionnaire in an average time of 3 minutes.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Participants were informed through a consent form sent by email, which included detailed information about the objectives, procedures, and purposes of the study. The documents explained the purpose of the research which gave them the freedom to accept or reject the invitation.

Participants were ensured that their information would be anonymised, not identifiable, and recordings could be watched by the author of this research to do the analysis and the academic team at Dublin Business School as evidence of the collection.

Additionally, they were informed that the data collected by the research did not contain any personal information about the participants except the recording that will be in the repository of the college.

The information Sheet and consent form given to the participants is available in Appendix B and Appendix C.

3.10 Limitation of the research

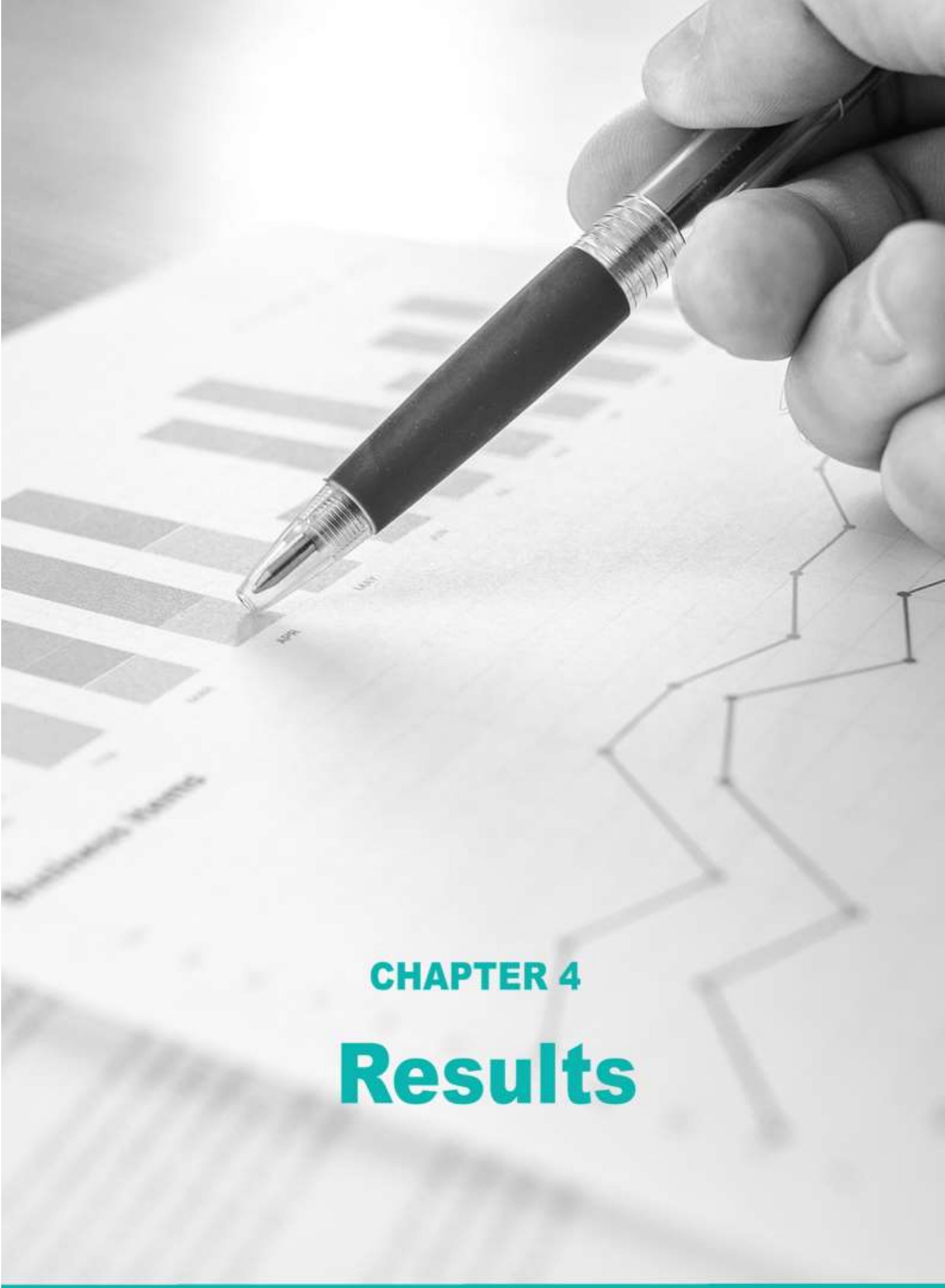
The research had two main limitations that could affect the internal and external validity. Firstly, although the data analysis and discussion were done in English, the interviews and surveys were presented to the participants in Spanish. The researcher considered that participants could express themselves freely in their native language, better than in English. A proper translation of the entire data collection was done by the researcher, however, there are some expressions given by the participants that have no literal translation to English that could skew the meaning.

Secondly, the survey was implemented as an instrument of data collection and shared through online channels. However, the researcher had no total control over the truthfulness of the responses and some participants could be out of the sampling required.

As a result, the survey had 178 responses in total; 42 were excluded from the final analysis because they did not satisfy the minimum two requirements for this study: living in Mexico City and being part of the millennial generation; so only 128 responses could be analysed. Nevertheless, as the minimum sample size needed was more than 97, the total of responses reached was enough to do the analysis.

3.11 Time Scale

As fifteen weeks were given to conduct this study, a certain number of steps were given to get results conclusions. Time scale and steps followed to conclude this study available in Appendix D.



CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter presents and summaries the findings obtained from the interviews conducted with two experts and the survey sent out to the Mexican population. Due to mix method was chosen by the researcher, quantitative results will be displayed first, following by the data gathered on the semi-structured interviews.

4.1 Analysis of the Survey (Quantitative research)

This section will analyse the results of the survey where a total of 178 responses were gathered. To show the results, this section will be divided in three subtopics. The first subheading called *Demographics* will include questions 1 to 3 that were made to pre-select the target audience. The second part includes the results of questions 4 to 12 that support hypothesis number one. And finally, the results of questions 13 to 15 that were made in relation to hypothesis number two. A copy is the full questionary is available in Appendix A3.

4.1.1 Demographics

Due to the study was narrowed to the millennial generation, pre-screening questions were included strategically to ensure as much as possible the validity of the responses. Some participants were excluded from the study as they did not cover the specific demographics. As a result, 178 contestants participated in the study but only 121 met the research qualifications. Figure 6 shows the results of the first pre-screening questions. Graphs and calculations were done using Microsoft Excel.

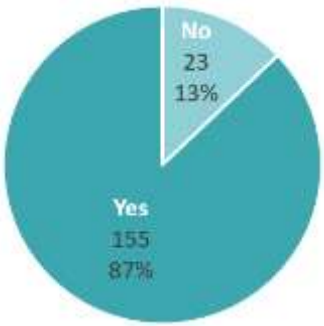
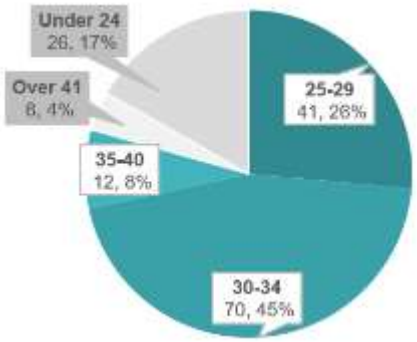
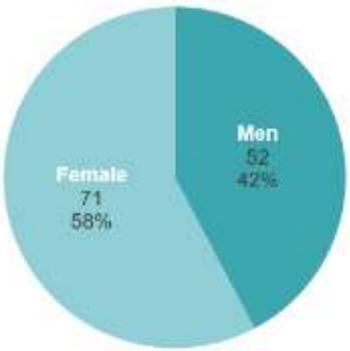
1.Have you lived in Mexico City in the last 5 years?	3. How old are you?
	
• *If yes, continue with the next question.* • *If no, the survey finish for the participant.*	• *If the participant chooses the bracket of age between 25 to 40, continue with the next question.* • *If the participant was under 24 or over 41, the survey finish for the participant.*
Initially, 23 out of 178 participants could not continue with the questionnaire. As a result, 155 respondents were taken to the next question about the bracket of age.	Then, 32 respondents out of 155 could not continue with the survey as they do not belong to the millennial generation that is focussed on the range of age of 24 to 40 years old.
2. What is your gender?	
	**Finally, 123 participants out of 178 initial volunteers answered 13 more questions whose answers were taken as results for this research.** The gender differential between female and male participants in the survey was 9.5% skewed to female.

Figure 6. Results of the pre-screening questions.

4.1.2 Results to prove or reject the Hypothesis 1 (H1)

H1. The millennial generation living in Mexico City cares about their online reputation both for social and professional purposes.

4.1.2.1 Social media usage: favourite platforms or social media networks to interact.

The survey shows that 51.2% of the respondents spend that time in 1 to 3 social networks, 39% uses 4 to 6 accounts, 9.9% use 11 to 9 and only one person uses more than 10 per day. Following Figure 7, we can conclude that a significant portion of this sample, leading by females, uses a maximum of 3 social media networks.

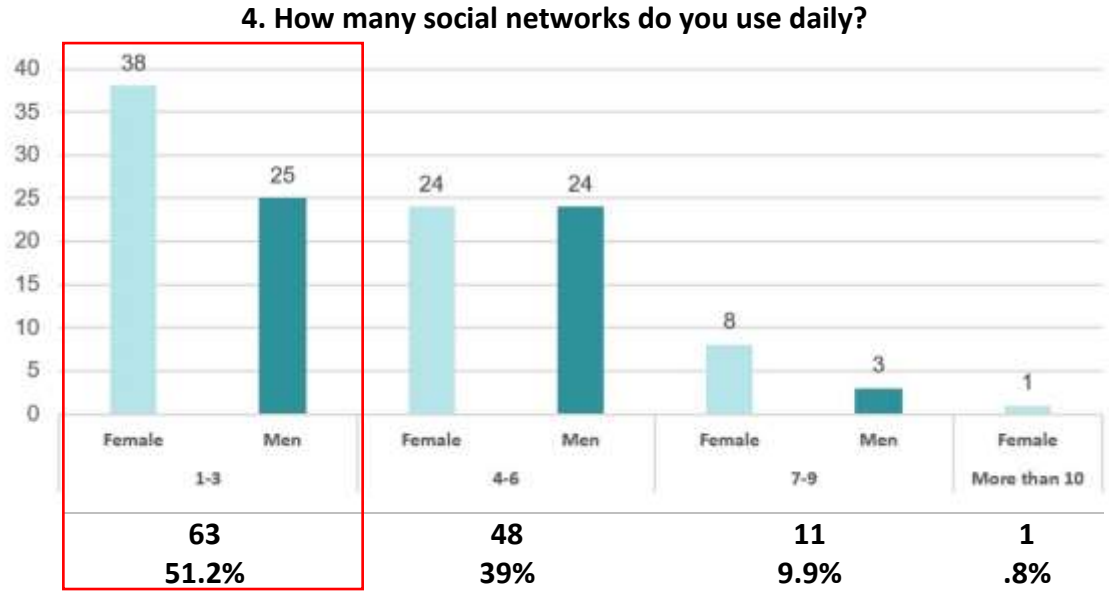
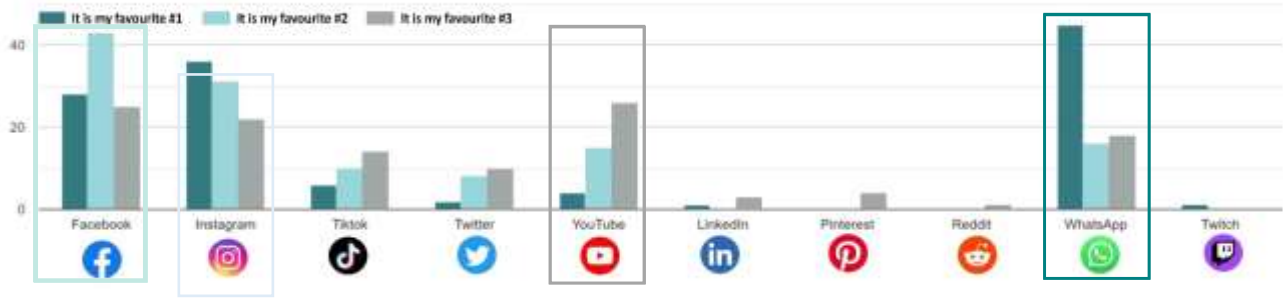


Figure 7. Number of social media accounts used by the millennial's generation disaggregated by genre.

To understand where Mexican millennials prefer to interact in the digital space, participants were asked to choose the three main social media networks. Figure 3 illustrates that WhatsApp was the favourite social network used by Millennials with 45 responses which represents 36.5% of the answers. Facebook was chosen as the second favourite and YouTube had the place as the third favourite social network.

Figure 8 shows that, although the mentioned social networks were the favourites, Instagram was also repeatedly mentioned in the survey with 89 responses, following distantly by TikTok with 30 and Twitter with 20. Twitter and Twitch were the least point out with only one mention each.

5. What online platform do you use the most? Please select your 3 favourites platforms.



Platform	Favourite #1	Favourite #2	Favourite #3	Total of responses by platform
Facebook	28	43	25	96
Instagram	36	31	22	89
TikTok	6	10	14	30
Twitter	2	8	10	20
YouTube	4	15	26	44
LinkedIn	1	0	3	4
Pinterest	0	0	4	4
Reddit	0	0	1	1
WhatsApp	45	16	18	79
Twitch	1	0	0	1

Figure 8. Social networks most used by millennials who answered the survey.

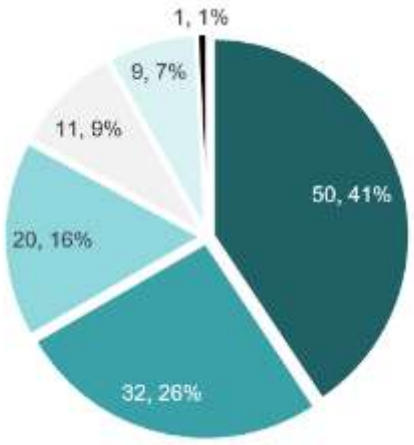
4.1.2.2 Brand personality dimension by Aaker.

Once the results were obtained about the favourite channels where millennials interact, they were asked about the way they like to present themselves to others.

So, with the intention of proving if the theory about the five personality dimensions established by Jennifer Aaker (1997) can be applied in building a personal brand as Shaker and Reaz Hafiz affirmed (2014), the five categories were offered to the participants without mentioning that they belonged to a theoretical framework, and they were given the option "Other" in case they did not identify with any of them.

Then, the survey reveals that 92.68% of the participants felt identify with these categories, where “Down-to-earth, honest wholesome and cheerful” belonging to “Sincerity” in Aaker framework, was preferred. Figures 9 shows the rest of answers.

6. In the following categories of personality, which one describes you best in your profiles on social media?



Personality	R	%
Down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful	50	40.65
Reliable, intelligent, successful	32	26.02
Daring, spirited, imaginative, up to date	20	16.26
Outdoorsy, tough	11	8.94
Other	9	7.32
Charming, upper class	1	0.81

Figure 9. Responses for question 6 in the survey based on Aaker’s(1997) *framework.*

Based on Aaker’s dimensions, *Sincerity* (Down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful), *Competence* (Reliable, intelligent, successful), and *Excitement* (Daring,

spirited, imaginative, up to date) were the were the categories that most participants felt identified with.

However, it should be noted that within the 9 people who did not find identification with the personality categories offered, 4 of them said they prefer not to share information or go unnoticed with the following verbatims:

- *“Imperceptible”*
- *“I don't like to talk about myself, I prefer to be deciphered”*
- *“Without any information, as confidential as possible”*
- *"I do not share information online”*

The remaining 5 open responses were a mixture of the personality characteristics of the Aaker scheme.

4.1.2.3 Online reputation

The previous question showed that more than 90% of the participants intend to communicate a particular type of personality on their social media channels, which is part of building their personal brand. For this reason, the next question consisted of knowing if they considered that the people around them had the same perception of them.

7. Looking at your answer above, do you think that people around you have that perception about you?

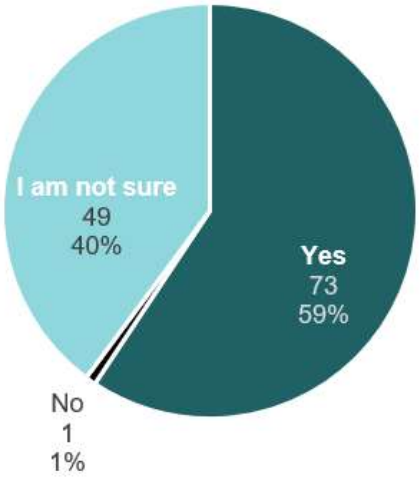


Figure 10. Results of question 7 regarding to other people´s perception.

Looking at the pie chart in Figure 10, it is visible that most of the participants consider that the people around them perceive them in the same way that they want it. Only one person said "*No*" and 49 more chosen the option "*I am not sure*".

4.1.2.4 Authenticity Offline-Online

The following question was developed to determine how closely the personalities of the participants match online and in real life, from the point of view of them. Figure 11 illustrates that most of the people favoured the option "Strongly agree" which indicates that they have the intention of communicate the same message on both channels.

9. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all and 10 is agree strongly, how much does your personality in real life match with your profiles on the Internet?

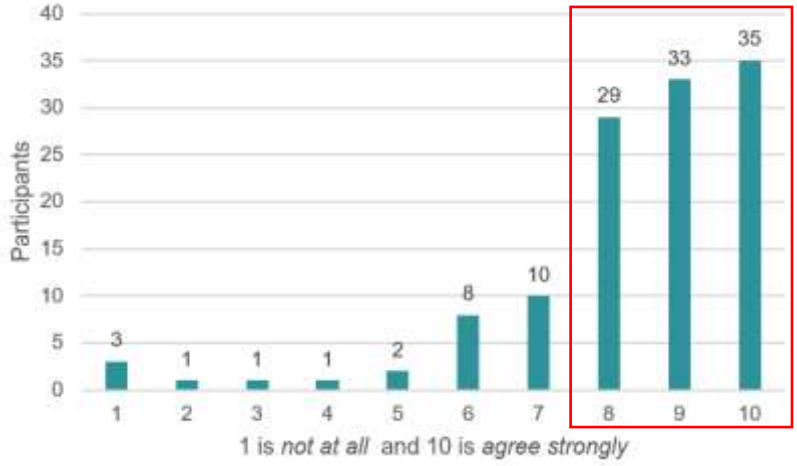


Figure 11. Bar graph that represents the intention of the participants to show themselves in the same way in their online and offline channels.

<u>4.1.2.5 Digital personal branding for professional purposes</u>

As previously reviewed, the beginnings of personal branding were limited to strength the profile of celebrities and people with public visibility. Then, its use for work purposes expanded, where it continues to be a fundamental piece for those who seek to strengthen their professional profile.

The following questions were developed to see if in hypothetical scenarios, people are aware about the influence of their presence online for professional purposes. Responses will be showed in Figure 12 and 13.

8. If a recruiter is offering you your dream job, but the decision of being hired is based on the information that is available about you online (social media and online platforms), do you think that you would get the position?

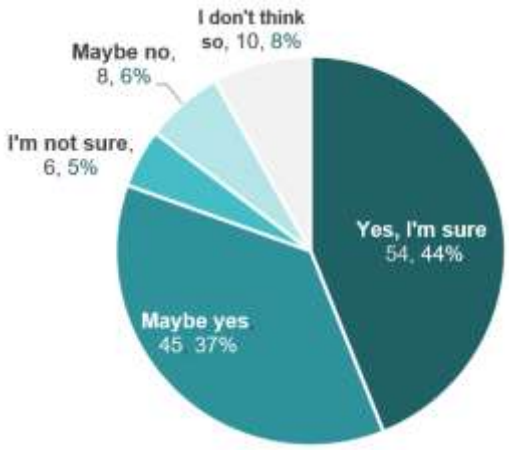


Figure 12. Hypothetical scenario 1

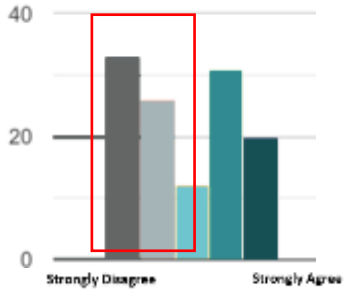
The figure above illustrates that more than a half of participants are completely sure that they can be hire if a recruiter looks for information about them online. Also, more than a third of the population think that it can be a possibility, which means a positive perception about how the participants perceived themselves in the online space. Only 5% are not sure and 13% answers with a negative answer.

This result interesting with the answers to the previous question where most of participants thinks that their profiles online match with their personality in real life.

10. To what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I don´t know | Agree | Strongly Agree

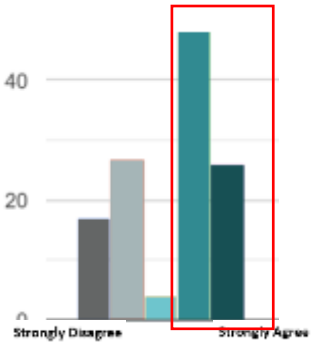
a) My posts online affect the perception that people have about me.



Results		
34	Mostly	48.78%
26	disagree	
12	Neutral	9.7%
31	Mostly	41.46%
20	agree	

This statement divided the audience's opinion as it is visible on the graph. Even though 48.78% participants consider that online behaviour does not affect how others perceived them, there is just a small difference between the who agree that it affects the perception about them.

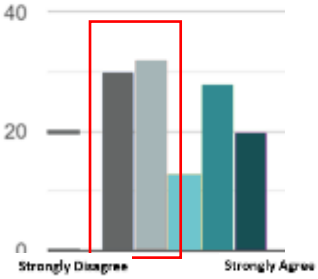
b) When I meet someone new, I tend to look for his/her information online.



Results		
17	Mostly	35.77%
27	disagree	
4	Neutral	3.2%
49	Mostly	60.97%
26	agree	

This state clearly shows that it is not enough to meet someone in person to be able to have a general perception about them. **People do need to know about others through online platforms and that it is an extension of you. As it is said in previous studies.**

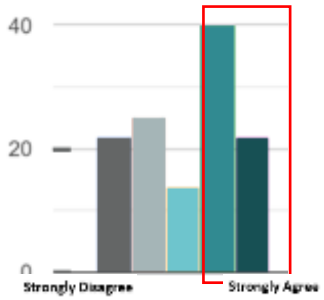
c) My behaviour with someone can change depending on their behaviour online.



Results		
30	Mostly	50.40%
32	disagree	
13	Neutral	10.56%
28	Mostly	39.02
20	agree	

Even if they look for information online as it was shown in the previous question, **the bar chart reveals that participants have a tendency not to change their behaviour with others once they have viewed posts on their platforms.**

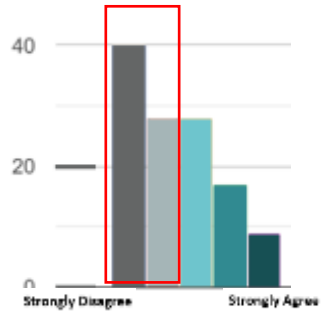
D) People should care about their presence online for professional purposes.



Results		
22	Mostly disagree	38.21%
25		
14	Neutral	11.38%
40	Mostly agree	50.40%
22		

The bar graph shows that **half of the participants agree to care their online presence for work purposes**. Those who disagree represent 38.21% while just over 10% do not have a position in favour or against.

e) It is ok that recruiters may have a look at candidates' profiles when they are hiring.



Results		
40	Mostly disagree	55.28%
28		
28	Neutral	22.76%
17	Mostly agree	21.13%
9		

When they were presented with **the hypothetical scenario where a recruiter could view their profiles online to make a decision about being chosen or not as the best candidate for a position, more than half were overwhelmingly in disagreement.** Although 22.76% did not show a trend for or against, those who mostly disagreed were the minority with 21.13%.

Figure 13 Hypothetical scenario 2

4.1.2.6 Motivations

One of the aims of this study is to recognize what are the motivations in building a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City. Part of this

construction is based on sharing experiences via social media channels and digital platforms.

Figure 14 illustrates de result of question 11 where the participants were given some options to choose the main purpose of sharing their life in the digital space, but also the option “other” to add another category not identified by the researcher.

11. What is your main motivation of sharing your experiences on your online platforms and social media?

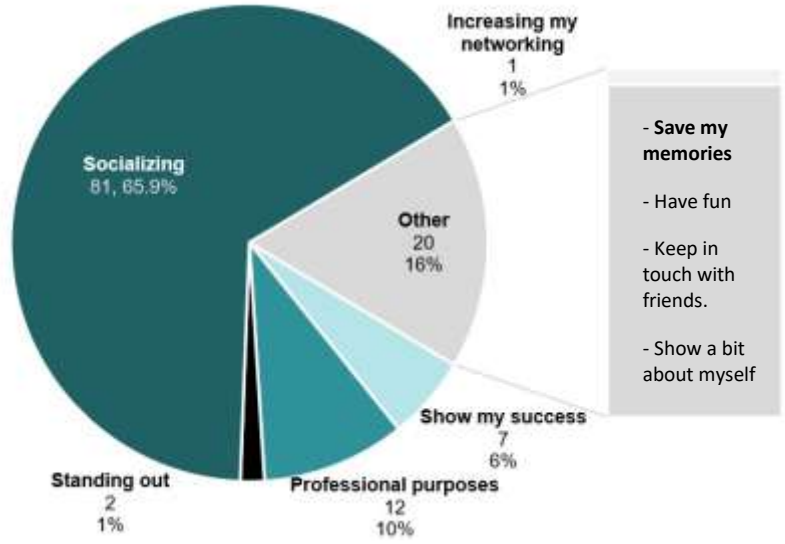


Figure 14. Main motivations of sharing personal experiences online

The graph above reveals that 65.9% of the participants share their experiences online with the goal of socializing. The second most selected option, but very far from the first selection, was for professional reasons with 10% of the preferences. The rest of the options that included showing my success with 6% stand out and increase my network of contacts with 1% each, were the least chosen.

Remarkably, for the option given as "Others", 20 different responses were received that can be grouped into 4 categories as shown in the graph. Apparently,

millennials consider social networks as a cloud to store memories in a way of pictures, videos, or posts.

To find out what moves millennials to create a judgment of another person through what is shared online, they were asked to select the first aspect they see on people's profiles when they first enter.

12. When you visit an online profile of someone that you just met, what do you look first at?

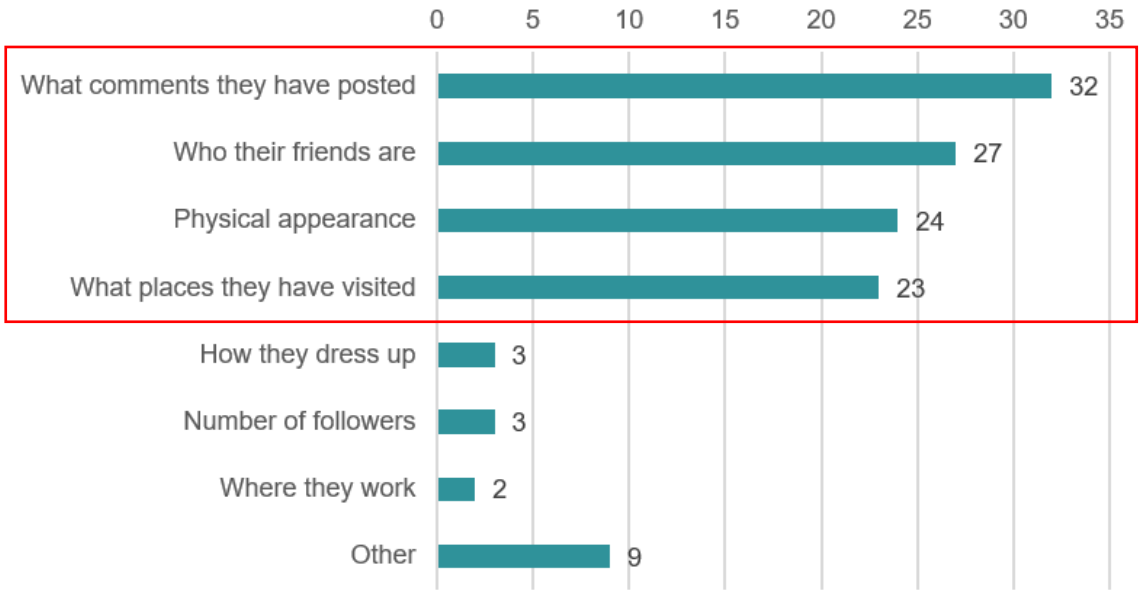


Figure 15. Bar graph that shows the number of participants that select each option given for question number 12.

The figure above indicates that what kind of comments people post, who are their friends or visible networking, how they look like and where they have been, are the most common aspects that the participants see in people's profiles to build an opinion about someone.

The least chosen were related to the number of followers, how they dress up and their place of work with the minimum of responses. For the option "Other" participants express the following verbatims: "T*heir cosmogony", "What do you like", "I*

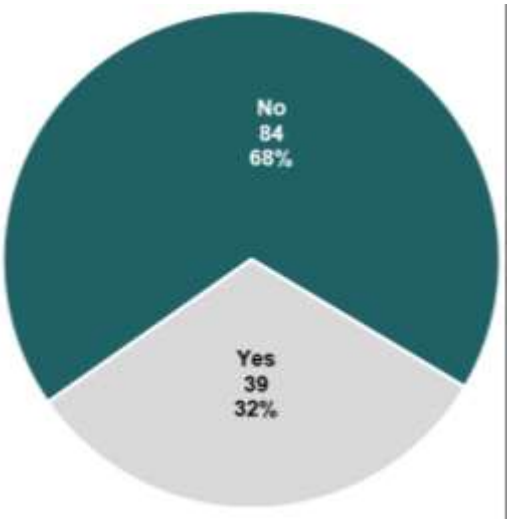
do not do this practice", "Their pictures in general", "Nothing", "I only verify professional profiles sometimes", "Pictures", "I never add strangers", and "All of them".

4.1.3 Results to prove or reject the Hypothesis 2 (H2)

H2. The millennial generation living in Mexico City could consider asking for an expert advice who help them to improve their online personal brand.

Questions from 13a, 13b, 14 and 15 are directly related to the demand that the millennial generation could have in Mexico City regarding online personal brand services. The objective of the following questions is to support or reject the hypothesis number 2.

13 a. If you had to hire an expert to help you improve your personal image, would you know who to hire?



13 b. If yes, please, write the expert or field: (Open question)

Figure 16. Pie chart and world cloud with Results of questions 13 and the open question 13 b.

On one hand, the figure above shows that 68% of people do not are aware of the professional who could help them to improve their personal image. In another hand, those who replied yes, were asked to mention the name of field or expert that they considered appropriate. The responses were varied, but the most common was “a public image consultant/image consultant” with 19 responses, followed by “an influencer” with 3 responses, “a friend” with 2 responses, and 15 more different responses as it is illustrates in the word cloud.

The following two questions were developed to find out if the millennials in Mexico City would pay an expert to help them improve their personal brand online and, in addition, how much they would be willing to pay. Figure 17 shows their responses.

14. Would you pay for that expert who can help you to improve your personal image in your online platforms?	*15. How much would you be prepared to spend **per hour** for expert advice that can help you to improve your presence online?*

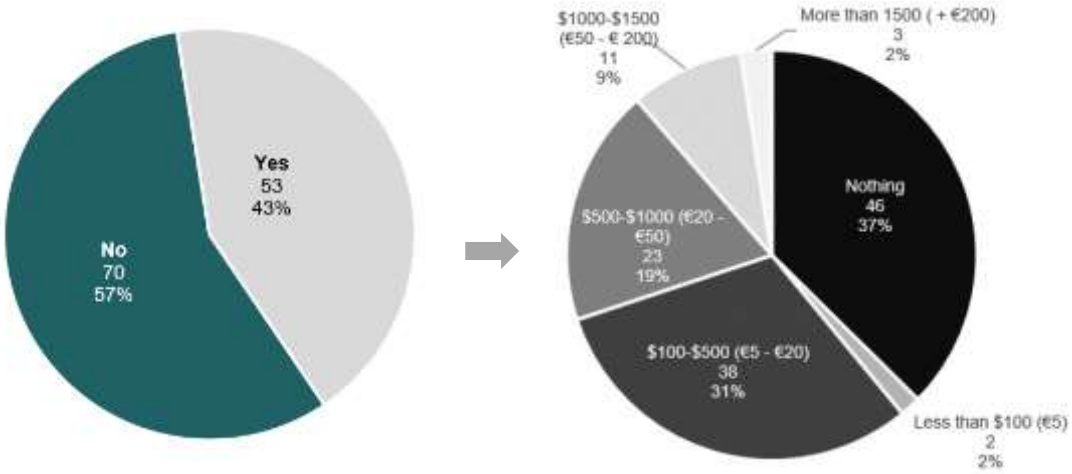


Figure 17. Results of how much millennials would be prepared to spend for a consultancy from an expert in personal branding. The price per hour is shown in Mexican pesos MXN. (According to AnPost (2022) *by January of this year 1 euro = 23.20 MXN).*

4.2 Analysis of Semi-structured interviews (Qualitative research)

This subsection will show the results obtained from the two interviews that were conducted in the framework of this study. Responses from the participants will remain anonymous and it will instead be called only as Marketing Expert (ME) and Personal Image Consultant (PIC). Full questionaries of each participant are available in Appendix A (A1 and A2).

4.2.1 Thematic analysis

To transform the data gathered in the interviews to useful and meaningful information, a thematic analysis was developed to support the research question of this study. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the qualitative method aims to reply

de the research question about how digital marketing experts contribute to building a successful digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City.

Based on the paper published by Braun and Clarke (2006), a thematic analysis is defined as a method that looks to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes in the data. This process follows a series of steps that should not necessarily be followed in a linear way, since it is a flexible process that allows the researcher to back and forth in the data when necessary.

The six stages proposed by the authors were followed by the researcher starting from getting familiar with the data through deep analysis of the transcripts. Then, initial codes were established to group the information using cross-column analysis on NVivo Software to turn out it into themes. Finally, the report with the results was created as it will be presented next. Figure 18 illustrates the process followed by the researcher to acquire three themes.

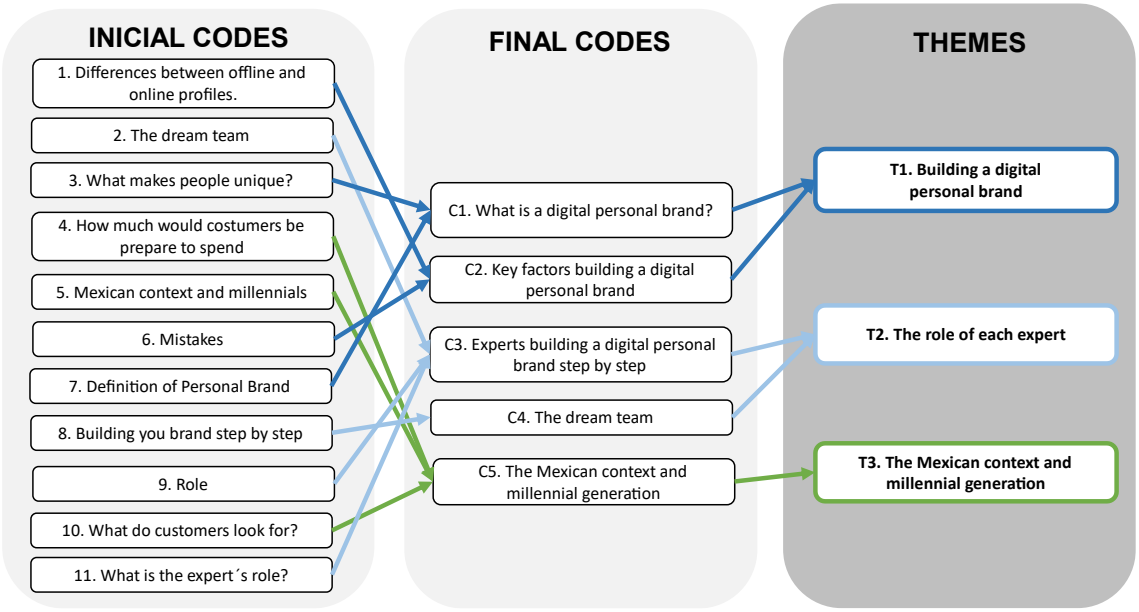


Figure 18. Process of coding to reach three themes to support the research question.

4.2.2 Who are the participants?

To start each interview, they were asked to introduce themselves and comment on what they do for work. Figure below shows their profile and responses:

Marketing expert (ME)	Personal Image Consultant (PIC)
Marketer and lecturer with more than 20 years of professional experience mainly in Marketing and Strategic Planning in media: television, print and digital.	Public Image and Change Management Consultant. He has been a speaker for companies and universities and advised politicians and businesspeople to improve their public image.
"I own a strategic marketing agency. (…) What we do is establish analysis and planning to achieve specific objectives of our clients. (…) A client arrives, has a need to meet a specific objective, and we make a whole plan to see how we are going to be able to achieve (…) The marketing that we work on is totally integrated, not necessarily digital."	*"I'm a public image consultant. So, what´s that? I help people and companies to improve their image (…) from the public image perspective. We have different kinds of angles to… to evaluate their image. So, we evaluate every one of those, and that is the way we can help companies, politicians, people, influencers, everyone."*

Figure 19. Profile and expertise of the participants.

4.2.3 Theme 1. How to build a digital personal brand? (T1)

4.2.3.1 Code 1. What is a digital personal brand? (C1)

The Marketing Expert (ME)
"Branding is creating mental representations in people's minds and also in people's hearts. Creating personal branding is looking for that… that way in which we are going to impact others. You have to be very clear about how you want to impact others."

Figure 20. Definition of personal branding by the marketing expert

ME defined branding as mental representations in people's minds and hearts with the aim of making them tangible. The participant affirms that everybody does personal branding and position themselves through the form of using social media channels and the way people behave.

Additionally, ME commented that personal branding is all about to understand people's DNA. This is shaped by how people move, speak, behave, in what social media network have an account but it also includes offline attitudes. The participant defines this DNA as a "*backbone*" that keep people transmit functional benefits to others.

Likewise, PIC support the previous idea about having a personal brand even when people do not realize that everything that people do or no do is part of it.

4.2.3.2 Code 2. Key factors in building a digital personal brand (C2)

	
Marketing expert (ME)	**Personal Image consultant (PIC)**
"Consistency is one of the important pillars that brands must take in consideration because if you do not have consistency, if you are not honest with what you want to say and with what you really are, at any point people will realize what you are doing a fake brand, something fictitious."	*"You have to be the same in everything. You cannot be one here, another here, another there, ok? (…) There must be consistency. People get engaged with people who is honest."*

Figure 21. Key factors that contribute in building a successful personal brand in the experts opinion.

Then, experts were asked to share the key factor to have a successful digital personal brand from their field's point of view. As it can see in the verbatims above, both

participants coincidence that people need to be coherent and consistent in the offline and online space. Also, ME and PIC agreed that showing people´s uniqueness is one of the best tactics in building a digital personal brand. Additionally, PIC commented that it is important to show people´s essence and not go against that.

An important insight, ME emphasised that a personal brand must be profitable, and people have to evaluate how they are going to have the return on investment. It does not have sense to invest time in something that it will not give anything in return.

Likewise, ME considered that detecting the strengths that shape people's identity is essential to build a personal brand. This must be done in a personal and strategic way, since no one is going to express better who we are than ourselves, we cannot pretend to be something that we are not both online and offline.

Additionally, ME affirmed that when people build a branding plan, they must be congruent with who they really are and what they are really. Those mental representations that become tangible need to be according to what people are because it is evident when someone lies.

Regarding mistakes that people make in building a personal brand, PIC suggested don't focus on the numbers and don't follow all the stereotypes. People should find their own thing, something that make them special. PIC argued that people need to be honest with the audience who are receiving the message. It is not about to pretend to be someone else, it is about be yourself using all resources online and offline available.

4.2.3 Theme 2. The role of each expert (T2)

4.2.3.1 Code 3. Building digital personal brand step by step (C3)

Marketing expert (ME)	Personal Image consultant (PIC)
*"The marketing that we do (…) depends on each client, right? (…) according to their need is the way you can integrate marketing tools. Not everyone is good with digital, not everyone is good with offline (*tools*), it depends (…)* *Everyone can make their passion, what they love the most, become it profitable (…) We make their passion profitable."*	*"The first step is to interview them to understand who they are, like, who they were, who they are. And, of course, who they want to be.* *As public image consultant, you have to catch (…) what they're not saying with words, but they are saying with the body, (…) with some stories they have or share."*

Figure 22. Process followed by the experts to build a personal brand for a client.

The experts were asked about the process in which they guide their clients to create an online personal brand. Both started the process with their clients with an analysis of the client' objective through in-depth interviews. This lets them know what your goals are and after that they can establish a work plan with them.

ME said that the process always starts with a goal. Clients have to define how they want to be seen, what they want to achieve in life, and what they want to project to others. Once they understand what they want to say, it is moment of build an identity or DNA, and then the visibility stage, which makes their passion profitable. The visibility stage has a lot to do with how much the client wants to invest in social media for example, or if they want the whole visual image, a logo, etc, and it will depend on the client's budget.

From the image consultant field, PIC said that usually does not help people only to improve their image in the digital space, as all angles where the image is perceived need to be evaluated. The participant affirmed that the public image field, it's about how you manage your image in the present, but in the long term is going to be a reputation, and that for sure include the digital space.

So, the process followed by PIC usually continues with a test after the first interview. The participant said that sometimes people do not say everything in the first approach because some "scars in life" are difficult to say. So, it is necessary to do an extra test to confirm that what was said in the first interview was true.

PIC pointed out that it is essential to understand how much the client is prepared to spend because the interviews can give many insights about many things the client can improve but the work plan will depend on the budget. When the main objective is detected, around four to six sessions will be arranged with the client to work on the final plan.

4.2.3.2 Code 4. The dream team (C4)

To understand how multidisciplinary can be this new area of marketing knowledge, participants were asked if they could choose their dream team to make an online person's personal brand for a client, which professional would they choose?

Marketing expert (ME)	Personal Image consultant (PIC)
"Compulsorily, someone from personal image, that is, who sees issues of how you communicate physically, how you dress, how you speak ... how you behave, this ... all, all, all the part of public image."	*"A community manager who is already managing all your social. And of course, if you are trying to give a little bit of commercial, focus to your… to your what you're doing with your personal branding, and marketing specialists.*

Figure 23. The "Dream team" for a digital personal brand plan.

ME and PIC agreed that a stylist, a graphic designer, a photographer, and a digital marketing team (digital marketer, community manager, copy, content creator) can contribute to build a successful online personal brand for a client. ME added a public relationship officer and PIC added a storyteller who can say the best way to tell the client's story.

Result interesting that both mention each other as essential part of the "dream team" without known who else was part of this study.

4.2.4 Theme 3. The Mexican context and millennials (T3)

4.2.4.1 Code 5. The Mexican context and millennial generation (C5)

One of the questions that each participant's questionnaires had in common was to describe what their clients sought to achieve when they requested their services. Similarly, they were asked to narrow their response to the Mexican context and their millennial generation.

Marketing expert (ME)	Personal Image consultant (PIC)
"Not even people who study marketing sometimes know that what is spreading on a social network talk about you, your history, the way in which you behave... the rest of the population does not know necessarily. So no, I don't think (…) they don't know what they're projecting all the time"	*"The common ground is that they don't know what they want to change about themselves (…) but I know for sure (…) that everyone wants to improve themselves, and everyone wants to be loved."*

Figure 24. The expert´s point of view regarding to perception of personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City

In terms of the millennial generation in Mexico City, ME considered that it cannot be generalized. Although most seek to share a lifestyle, ME assures me that the same behaviour cannot be established for all millennials. The participant affirmed that build an online personal brand it is not a millennial issue, it is everyone's issue. At the same time, ME consider that even people in the marketing field, are not aware about their digital footprint and, consequently, either the rest of population.

For his part, PIC said that the first issue is that customers do not know exactly who can help them to improve their image because the line is blur in between stylists, motivational coaches, speakers, content creators and even digital marketing specialists. Regarding digital marketers, PIC considers that they can use tools to improve people's presence online, increase numbers in social media using different marketing tools, but there is not enough.

Even though, when public image consultants fix people from outside, but they also fix people's inside to give the world the best of their clients, it is not usual that

people in Mexico City are aware that they exist. The only people who look for their services are people who already have a goal in mind. The majority are people that they do not exactly what they want to reach but they want to be loved or just change something on their lives and, they usually do not pay anyone because are confused about who could help them to improve themselves.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study aims to contribute to the knowledge of the personal brand in the digital space, which is a field little studied in the knowledge of marketing, that is why two objectives were established for this research. The primary is to understand the role of digital marketers in building a successful digital personal brand for the chosen population, and the secondary is to identify the perception of having a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City.

To achieve these objectives, a mixed methodology was designed to provide two different perspectives to the central theme of this study. On the one hand, a survey was designed that would provide the perspective of the millennial generation of Mexico City on improving their digital personal image and the experts who could help them in this objective. On the other hand, two in-depth interviews were conducted with experts who provided their point of view on the services they offer to improve people's personal image in the digital space.

The survey results show that the Mexico City millennial generation cares about their online reputation and prefers to project themselves with a Sincerity profile, based on Jennifer Aaker's (1997) personality dimensions framework.

Although a considerable part of the sample shares their experiences online with the intention of socializing, and they also consider that it is important to take care of what they share about themselves online for professional purposes. On the contrary, they do not agree with recruiters reviewing the profile of candidates when they are recruiting.

It is also worth noting that an important part of the participants consider that their online profiles coincide with their personalities in real life, and that the people around them have the same perception of them in both spheres.

When the participants were asked whether they would hire someone to help improve their online profiles, most said they would not know who to turn to. However, those who did have an expert in mind responded with a wide range of respects, including hiring an image consultant, an influencer, a friend, and only two people suggested a marketing expert. In parallel, a large proportion of the sample said that they would not pay for advice with an expert to help them improve their image online.

From the point of view of experts, digital marketing tools are elements that help potential online presence of people, but the key factor to have a successful personal image in the digital space is the coherence between what is published and what is projected in real life.

Each expert explained the methodology they follow to provide advice to their clients who seek to improve their image in the digital environment. They also said they could work together with other experts to shape the online personal image "dream team."

Finally, regarding to the millennial generation in Mexico City, they both agreed that few people seek their services and that those who are willing to do so are not sure exactly which expert to turn to.

In the next subheading, the hypothesis proposed for the survey and the research question with which the in-depth interviews were carried out will be discussed.

5.2 Hypotheses 1

H1. The millennial generation living in Mexico City cares about their online reputation both for social and professional purposes

The literature review evidenced that the population in México spends around 3:27 hours a day in social media, one of the highest daily time spent in the world (Hootsuite, 2021). In the case of Mexico City, a report by GWI (2021), shows that the average number of social media accounts owned by millennials is 9.2 social platforms. However, even though they own accounts in several platforms, the results indicate that the millennial generation use only 1 to 3 social media accounts in regular basis, being Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp e Instagram their favourites.

Once it was reviewed in which channels millennials interact more frequently, it is important to understand how they show themselves on their social media profiles. As described in the literature review, Jennifer Aaker (1997) defined a framework of five personality dimensions perceived in consumers' mind in relation to brands.

Similarly, Shaker and Reaz Hafiz (2014) asserts that a brand attracts its consumers from its association with human characteristics, and they feel attached to it because they feel identified with the personality characteristics that the brand communicates. In the same way, building a personal brand, people are expected to develop certain characteristics that make them associate and be validated by a certain group of people.

This is supported by the results of the survey that show that people do identify with Aaker's (1997) theory of personalities, particularly with the dimension called

“Sincerity”, since most people chose a given category even when they had the opportunity to choose "*Other*" to describe themselves.

As shown in the results, some answered that they preferred to go unnoticed. These answers result interesting for the researcher because it indicates that there are those who are online without the intention of being identified or communicates that they are in the digital space, which also communicates anonymity.

Having in mind that reputation is all about people's opinion about something or somebody and it is built over the time as a social consensus (Gordoa, 2018), it was important to know if what they want to tell thought their behaviour on social media channels is received by others. The survey revealed that 59% of the participants think that their message it is well received by their contacts but 40% said that they are not sure.

This tells us that most believe they are in control of their online reputation, that is, of what others think of them. However, it does not mean that those who do not know how they are perceived by other people, do not have a reputation, it only shows that they are not sure that their message is well received.

As it was cited in the previous chapter, some studies concluded that building a digital personal brand relies on a combination between online and offline behaviour. Furthermore, most of what is built in the digital world, it is based on pre-existing relationships offline (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014; Jacobson, 2020).

This is clearly evidenced by the hypothetical scenarios that were raised in the survey. Participants said that their attitude towards people does not change depending

on their online presence. However, it is clearly demonstrated what Shaker and Hafiz, and Jacobson (2014) refer about the link between offline and online relationships when they say that, although people do not change their behaviour, participants tend to seek information about others online.

This leads to the conclusion that, in the age of Internet, it is not enough to meet a person in real life to form an opinion about them. The responses showed that it is important to be consistent between the qualities that a person shows in real life and what they appear on their social networks.

In relation to the above, the survey participants considered that their online profiles have a high coincidence with their personalities in real life. Then base on the primary data collected and previous studies, the researcher conclude that being coherence and to be consistent is one of the key attributes to build a successful personal brand for socializing purposes, which is the main reason why people share their experiences online.

In conjunction with the expansion of new technologies, personal branding for professional purposes has also moved to the digital environment, and with it, the online reputation where employers can find out who the candidates are just by looking for their profiles in online search engines. For this reason, it is said that “Google has become a new reputation engine” and it has become in one of the most valuable asset for people (Beal and Strauss, 2009). So, some questions were related to identify the perception of participants about having a digital personal brand to be more competent in the labour marketplace.

When asked if people should watch what they post online for professional purposes, most said yes. They even ensured that themselves could be hired in a recruiting process if a recruiter checked their profile online. In contrast, the same participants did not agree that recruiters could review online profiles to review candidate profiles.

This shows us that, as the mentioned authors argue, online search engines play an important role in creating value judgments about people we do not know or with whom we do not have an offline relationship.

Based on the above, it is possible to confirm the hypothesis raised since the responses to the survey show that the millennial generation living in Mexico City do cares about their online reputation both for social and professional purposes.

However, it is important for the researcher to mention that a considerable part of the respondents is not clear if their digital personal brand, which will become part of their reputation, is interpreted by others in the way it is preferred.

5.3 Hypotheses 2

H2. The millennial generation living in Mexico City could consider asking for an expert advice who help them to improve their online personal brand.

As has been said in the previous chapter, the Mexican market, especially the millennial generation, has not been studied in depth to find out if they would pay for an expert to help them improve their personal image.

The result of the survey clearly shows that personal branding in the digital space is not a clear demand for the millennial generation of Mexico City since 68% of the sample does not know who the expert is who can help them to have a successful personal image. Furthermore, 57% of the participants are not willing to pay for a consultation with an expert, as the results showed.

The researcher considerers that this is also a consequence of the confusion when mentioning many experts from different fields who could help them improve their personal image. This had already been predicted by Peters, who popularized the term personal branding and claimed that this topic had been covered by self-help and self-esteem couches who were unaware of the value of the personal brand (Peters, 1997).

The survey revealed that most of the participants associate personal branding with personal image consultants, influencers, or stylists. However, despite the fact that digital marketing experts have all the knowledge of digital tools and strategy to improve people's presence in the digital space, they are not considered expert branding professionals.

Then, the researcher rejects the initial hypothesis as he has evidence that the millennial generation of Mexico City does not consider personal marking in the digital environment to be a service that can be offered by an expert on the subject. There is clear confusion between who can provide the service and the monetary value it may have.

The researcher considers that the hypothesis could be reformulated if more information had been provided to the participants about personal branding as a service

provided by experts. With this, new questions could be formulated in the questionnaire that would provide a broader panorama of the possible demand for this service.

The questionnaire was planned so that the participants answered freely without biasing their answers with predetermined information. However, the changes proposed could open the door to new research that could be focused on personal branding as a field of marketing, and not from the point of view of the role that marketing experts play, as is the object of study of this research.

5.4 Research Question

Research question: How digital marketers can contribute in building a successful digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City?

Both previous studies and the interviews carried out with ME and PIC confirmed the initial idea that Peters (1997) raised in his article: everyone build their own personal brand, whether or not they are aware of it.

Personal branding is a relatively new topic in the academic literature that has drawn the attention of several researchers (Zarkada, 2012; Khedher, 2014; Shaker and Hafiz, 2014; Zabojnik, 2018; Sagliocco and Buccino, 2020). As branding is a study branch of the marketing field, marketers could be the experts in this area who provide expert advice to those who wish to improve their personal brand.

Therefore, if all people have a personal brand that now also permeates the digital space, this research seeks to know the role that marketing experts in meeting this demand as they are experts in branding.

ME redefined personal branding as mental representations in people's minds and hearts, a concept that supports what has already been studied by other researchers who argue that personal branding implies showing positive individual attributes on a digital platform with the aim of standing out both for the professional goals and social objectives (Shaker and Hafiz, 2014).

The literature review evidenced that some authors supported the idea that same marketing principles that have been developed for products or businesses can be applied to people (Shepherd, 2005; Chen and Chung, 2016). That is why numerous methodologies have been developed to make it easier for people to find their personal brand identity that allows them to differentiate themselves from others.

In the case of the experts interviewed, both commented that their methods begin with in-depth interviews with their clients to find out who they really are, in ME's words "*knowing people's DNA*" o what make them unique. Then it is important to establish what objective the client want to achieve or how want to be positioned and, finally, give visibility to that uniqueness.

This is clearly supported by the methodologies that other authors have suggested were brand identity is defined as a first step; the second one is the brand positioning; and the third one as evaluation of brand image (Khedher, 2014).

Regarding this point, the researcher considers that strategy is the key point to be able to have a successful personal brand online or offline, so a contribution that marketing experts can offer to those who seek to improve their personal brand online is a strategic plan to communicate the message for which they want to be perceived.

The coding of the information showed that both experts agreed that coherence and consistency between what people are in real life and their online profiles is a key factor in building a personal brand. This is related to what Jacobson asserts when he points out that personal branding relies on a combination of the appearance of self-offline and the presentation of self-online (Jacobson, 2020).

The researcher of this study agrees with the experts' point of view about being authentic is the key factor to success in building a personal brand. In addition, it is important to have in mind what Fahim Shaker and Reaz Hafiz (2014) affirm about the range of platforms that the online environment offers where people can connect and form an identity which can be or not related to the real personality of the user. However, most of these relations in the digital world are based on pre-existing relationships with people knowing offline.

With the expansion of technologies and access to the Internet, it is essential to consider that consistency in people's actions is not only in real life, since our online profiles are an extension of ourselves and our relationships with others, both must be similar in order to send a coherent message. This is clearly related to what the survey participants said, where they ensured that their online profiles strongly match their personalities in real life.

For this reason, the researcher considers that another contribution that marketing experts can provide to those who want to improve their personal brand online is to create the mentioned strategy based on showing the authenticity and uniqueness of people using digital marketing tools.

As the experts said, digital marketing tools help increase the presence of people online, but that presence has to have a clear objective based on a strategy. Although, part of the mistakes made by those who seek to improve their personal brand online is to be guided by the number of followers or reactions that are achieved, the marketing expert must educate people to create organic reactions based on a strategic plan with objectives clear communication.

In the context of the millennials of Mexico City, experts commented that it is a market that is not interested in asking for expert advice to improve their personal brand online. This is supported by what was pointed out in the literature review where it was analyzed that only some educational institutions in the capital address the subject from an academic point of view and there is very little research on the matter.

Despite the fact that this market segment spends a large amount of time on social networks, there is not a tendency to see personal branding as a service in demand and it is not clear who can meet said demand. That is why the experts pointed out that there is a confusion between what marketers, image consultants and self-help coaches do in this regard.

The researcher suggests that another contribution of marketing experts to create a successful personal brand in the digital environment is to educate people about

the knowledge that marketing experts have in order to provide personal branding consulting. That is, to communicate that they are experts in marketing and that they could work leading a multidisciplinary team so that, as ME said, their personal brand is profitable.

5.5 Limitations and Strengths

Part of the limitations of this study lie in the selection of participants for in-depth interviews. As reviewed in previous studies, content creators or motivational couches are professionals who have helped people improve their personal brand online. For this reason, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with a content creator in order to find out how she carries out the process of building a personal brand online with her clients. However, once the transcription was reviewed, the interview was far from being related to the subject of this study, so their answers were omitted in the investigation.

Similarly, the period of time given to carry out the research played an important role in the results. As a mixed methodology was carried out, the data collection had a short collection period. On the one hand, in the case of the survey, only the minimum number necessary to have a sample of the millennial population of Mexico City was collected, responses with which the analysis was done.

On the other hand, the researcher requested interviews with various experts but, being such a specialized topic in Mexico, experts could contribute their experience in the field, had complicated agendas that limited the arrangement of an appointment in the period of time where this was done this study. For this reason, only two in-depth interviews with experts were held.

Despite the limitations of the number of participants for the study and the time given to carry out the research, this study highlights several strengths among which the possibility of having both angles of the services of the personal brand in the market stand out, on the one hand, those who can demand a service as it is the millennial population, and on the other, those who offer the services who are the experts in the field.

Similarly, despite the fact that the sample was minimum required, the responses provided interesting insights that support the hypotheses raised. Likewise, the experts who were part of the in-depth interviews are experts with many years of experience in her field, which allowed the researcher to have a broad vision of their field of knowledge.

As described in the methodology chapter, data collection was done in the Spanish language and was translated into English for analysis purposes. Although in the beginning this was considered a limitation as there were no literal translations of some expressions of the participants, this became a strength in the research because it allowed the audience and the researcher to express themselves freely in their native language and, consequently, provide more organic insights easy to detect and include in the analysis.

5.6 Future Research

Based on the findings and the primary data collected, it is clear that there is a great field of action to delve into the subject of online personal branding for the millennial genre of Mexico City. Some angles from which the issue of personal branding

can be approached in the digital environment that the researcher has considered after the research carried out will be mentioned below.

In the first instance, the limitation of this research was access to professionals who offered their services as branding experts. It might be interesting to know the point of view of some influencers, self-help coaches, even more marketing experts or image consultants. In the same way, it would be interesting to know the perspective of a client who has already improved their personal brand online from the hand of a marketer. His experience could be very enriching for a future study.

As PIC mentioned in the interview, there is a very small group of people looking to improve their personal brand online, and those who have done so regularly have a clear objective and are willing to pay for an expert. The same was demonstrated in the survey where an important part of the participants commented that they would not pay for a consulting session with a branding expert.

In this sense, it would be interesting to know what the motivations of this group of people are when they pay for advice from an expert in branding. This would reduce the survey target to an upper-class group who could pay for the service and could even open the spectrum for a focus group that would provide clearer information about their motivations.

This research and its findings could have real life applications by opening the discussion of a field that has not been explored in Mexico and that could have potential interest from marketing companies that provide comprehensive communication solutions to professionals and people with public visibility. Although the results show

that few people of the millennial generation would pay for a personal branding consulting service, experts assured in the interviews that those who are willing to pay are often upper-class people and have a initial idea about what they want to communicate.

Therefore, the findings open the door for a broader investigation of the motivations that the Mexican market has to create a successful personal brand in the digital space, not only for the millennial generation, but for other generations based in the capital.

Finally, an interesting fact to notice it is that personal branding in the academic literature has been widely considered only under the perspective of social media channels, like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and others. However, other digital spaces for instance videoconferences, blogs, or personal websites where people have the opportunity to promote themselves as rarely been studied. That is why the researcher consider that future research can be done from the point of view of how other platforms different to social media impact people's reputation.

5.7 Conclusion

To summarize this section, it is concluded that the millennials of Mexico City do care about their presence and reputation online through the care and type of publications they make to show their personality. However, most would not consider paying an expert to help them build or enhance their digital personal brand. Similarly,

experts consider that to build a successful digital brand it is important to be coherent and consistent between online and offline, but they support the fact that few in Mexico request their services as branding experts to improve their online reputation.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

To conclude this study, it is concluded that the first hypothesis is fully met since the results of the survey show that the millennial generation of Mexico City is concerned about the perception that others have of them in the digital environment, both for professional purposes like to socialize. In terms of reputation, this sector of the population seeks to create a social consensus about who they are in the digital environment.

This concern is reflected in the type of publications they make online, the type of social networks they use, and the personality they want to capture in their publications with the intention of to be perceived in a particular way in their digital profiles. Based on the results, a new in-depth investigation into the motivations of the millennial generation to shape their online profiles and consolidate their online reputations could be the subject of further research.

Likewise, the analysis of previous studies came up the second hypothesis of this study that sought to verify if the millennial generation of Mexico City could consider looking for an expert in personal branding to help them improve their personal brand online. However, the hypothesis was rejected by the researcher based on the survey and, at the same time, with the answers provided by the experts who confirmed that online personal branding is not yet a demand for the millennial generation.

Despite the above, the field of personal branding in the digital environment is an area of opportunity as it is a little explored but highly specialized field. Those who look

for services are regularly prepared to pay for consultancies and have communication objectives that only need to be guided under a strategy.

Regarding the research question, the experts demonstrated the important role that marketers play in building the personal brand of people in the digital environment, however they also confirmed that only people who have a clear objective for being seen in a particular way online, they are the ones looking for that service, but it is not common for the target chosen.

The researcher concludes three contributions that marketers could provide in the field of personal branding based on the depth interviews conducted.

1. Be strategists. Having a strategic communication plan that guides the message that clients want to send on their social networks is key to having a successful digital personal brand. Knowledge of digital marketing tools contributes considerably to this regard, but it is necessary to work under the guidance of a clear communication strategy to make a personal brand profitable for both offline and online spaces.

2. Coherence and consistency. Using digital marketing tools, marketers must guide the strategy with the aim of seeking consistency between the profile of people online and what they are in real life. Finding a balance between the two spheres is what will strengthen people's reputations to generate a social consensus that eventually contributes to building a successful digital personal brand.

3. Share and educate. Given that marketers have extensive knowledge of the fundamentals of branding, it is relevant that the population recognizes their role as branding experts and can see them as professionals capable of make successful personal

brand strategies not only for celebrities or people with public visibility, but for all people who seek to strengthen their online presence for professional and social purposes.

To summarize, personal branding in the digital space is a new topic in the academic marketing literature that has gradually attracted the attention of researchers in recent years. The present study sought to show personal branding as a consulting service that could represent an opportunity for marketers in Mexico City as it has the most qualified population and with greater connectivity. The point of view of potential clients was shown, such as the millennial generation, and that of the experts who could cover the demand with the aim of having both broad angles of the subject. It is expected to attract the attention of more researchers who can contribute to what is inescapable in the digital age: having a digital personal brand.

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Images

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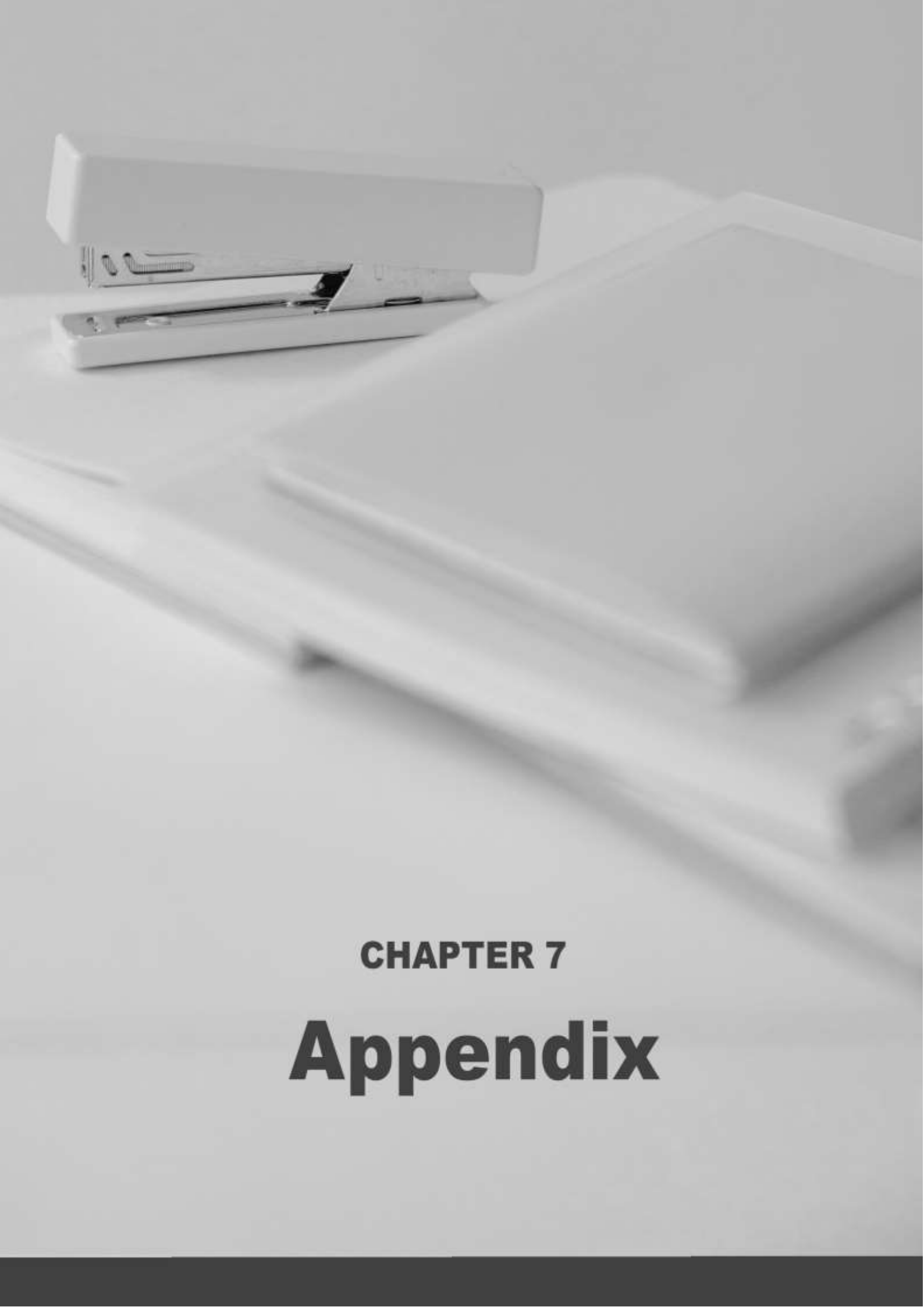

CHAPTER 7

Appendix

Appendix A. Questionnaires

A1 Key questions for the Marketing Expert (ME)

1. Could you please tell me, what your name is and what you do for work?
2. In your experience as a marketer, how could you define what is a personal brand?
3. Do you think that people in Mexico City care about how they want to be known (perceived) in the digital world? Why?
4. What do you think are the differences between branding for product/services and branding for people?
5. What are the most common goals to achieve of your clients when they ask for your services as an expert in branding?
6. What do you think are the main missteps that people have when they want to show their uniqueness in their online platforms?
7. In general terms, once a client asks for your advice as an expert in branding, what is the general process?
8. How much is the average price per client?
9. What are the challenges of matching a digital personal brand with one in the real world?
10. Regarding the millennial generation, we will consider them as people between 25-39 years old, do you think that they look after, or are they aware of their personal brand in the digital world?

11. Do you think that millennials behave the same between the real and digital space? Why?
12. What do millennials do to stand out that other generations do not? What is their more
13. valuable uniqueness?
14. In your opinion, what is the role of marketer or how they can contribute building a personal brand for a client?
15. What are the key factors of building a successful digital personal brand?
16. If you could work with another professional of a different field of yours to strengthen the strategy for a client, what would their role be?
17. In your opinion, what is the demand for personal brand consulting services in Mexico City and how will it be in the next 5 years?

A2 Key questions for the Personal Image Consultant (PIC)

1. Could you please tell me, what your name is and what do you do for work?
2. What are the most common goals that your clients want to achieve when they ask for your services as an image consultant?
3. In general terms, once a client asks for your advice as an expert in perceptions and image consulting, how do you work with them?
4. Could you please tell me, on average how much is the investment for that service?
5. Could you please define what is a personal brand from the perspective of the image consulting field?

6. What are the key factors that define what is a personal brand for individuals?
7. What do you think are the main missteps that people follow when they are building their personal brand in online platforms?
8. In your opinion, what is the role of image consultants or how they can contribute in building a personal brand in the digital space?
9. Do you think that people behave the same in the real and digital world? Why? What is the difference?
10. In your experience with your previous clients, what are the challenges of matching a digital personal brand with the one in the real world?
11. What are the key factors of building a successful digital personal brand?
12. If you could work with another professional of a different field of yours to strengthen the strategy for a client, what would their role be?
13. In your opinion, what is the demand for personal brand consulting services in Mexico City now and how will it be in the next 5 years?

A3 Survey

Hello,

This research is being undertaken as part of a MSc in Digital Marketing course at Dublin Business School (DBS). The purpose of this study is to understand what the motivations are behind of having an online presence in social media channels and online platforms. Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous.

Questions.

1. Have you lived in Mexico City in the last 5 years? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Yes (If so, next question)

- No (If so, finish questionnaire)

2. What is your gender? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

3. What is your age? *Multiple choice question)*

- 24 or less
- 25-29
- 5. What online platform do you use the most? Please select your 3 favourites platforms 35-40
- 41+ Other (if so, finish the questionnaire)

4. How many social networks do you use daily? *(Multiple choice question)*

(Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, Snapchat,

Reddit, Own websites, a personal blog)

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- More than 10

5. 5. What online platform do you use the most? Please select your 3 favourites

platforms *(Multiple choice grid question)*

-Facebook
-Instagram
-Twitter
-YouTube
-LinkedIn
-Pinterest

-TikTok
-Snapchat
-Reddit
-A Blog
-A Personal website
-Forums

6. In the following categories of personality, which one describes you best in your profiles on social media?

- Down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful.
- Daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date.
- Reliable, intelligent, successful.
- Charming, upper class.
- Outdoorsy, tough.
- Other_____

7. Looking at your answer above, do you think that people around you have that perception about you? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

8. If a recruiter is offering you your dream job, but the decision of being hired is based on the information that is available about you online (social media and online platforms), do you think that you would get the position? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Yes, I am sure
- Maybe yes
- I'm not sure
- Maybe No
- I don’t think so

9. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all and 10 is agree strongly, how much does your personality in real life match with your profiles on the Internet? *(Linear scale question from 1 to 10)*

10. To what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

(Linear scale question from 1 to 10 where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree in every statement)

- My posts online affect the perception that people have about me.
- When I meet someone new, I tend to look for his/her information online.
- My behaviour with someone can change depending on their behaviour online.
- People should care about their presence online for professional purposes.
- It is ok that recruiters may have a look at candidates' profiles when they are hiring.

11. What is your main motivation of sharing your experiences on your online platforms and social media? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Professional purposes
- Show my success
- Standing out
- Socializing
- Increasing my networking
- Show my economical level
- Other_____

12. When you visit an online profile of someone that you just met, what do you look first at? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Physical appearance
- How they dress up
- What places they have visited
- What comments they have posted
- Number of Followers
- Who are their friends

- Where they work
- Other_____

13 a. If you had to hire an expert to help you improve your personal image, would you know who to hire? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Yes (*If so, continue with the next question)*
- No (*If so, then skip next question)*

13 b. Write the name of the expert or field_____

14. Would you pay for that expert who can help you to improve your personal image in your online platforms? *(Multiple choice question)*

- Yes
- No

15. How much would you be prepared to spend **per hour** for expert advice that can help you to improve your presence online? *(Multiple choice question)*

I would be prepared to spend per hour a maximum of:

- Nothing
- Less than $100 (€5)
- $100-$500 (€5 - €20)
- $500-$1000 (€20 - €50)
- $1000-$1500 (€50 - € 200)
- More than 1500 (+ €200)

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B. Information sheet

B1 Example

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE
Brand Me: The role of Digital Marketers building a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico.

INTRODUCTION
This research is being undertaken as part of a Master of Sciences in Digital Marketing at Dublin Business School (DBS). The aim of this study is to understand role of Digital Marketers building a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City.

This study is conducted by Hortencia Salero who a master's student at Dublin Business School (DBS). The research is under the guidance of Ms Naomi Kendal is, who is the supervisor assigned by the Postgraduate Business Dissertation Coordinator of the cited university. Contact details will be provided at the end of this form.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN
In this study, you will be asked to reply 13 open questions regarding to your experience as a digital marketer and your opinion about branding in the digital world as a new topic in the marketing literature. As it is an open questionary, some questions might be answered by others, so the number of questions can be reduced.

The interview will be fully recorded in a live session and treated as confidential. The researcher might take notes during the session to save insights for the analysis. In case technical problems, the researcher will send a new link to continue with the session.

The researcher may publish research reports that include your comments, but **your data will be anonymous.** This means your name and identity will not be linked in this research report to anything you say or do.

TIME COMMITMENT
The study typically takes around 20 to 30 minutes, and it will be done in an online videocall session thought Zoom, a specialized chat session and videoconference software. The link will be sent in advance by the researcher.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

- You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you.
- You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn or destroyed.
- You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.
- You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered.
- If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data collected by the research does not contain any personal information about you except the recording that will be in the repository as a proof of the data collected.

This interview is one of the three deep interviews that are part of the methodology for this study, so all the data collected during the interviews will help to do the final analysis where participant individual opinions will not be identifiable.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The researcher and the supervisor will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact them:

Hortencia Salero
Researcher
Email:
Phone:

Naomi Kendal
Supervisor
Email:
Phone:

Appendix C. Consent Form

C1 Example

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:
Brand Me: The role of Digital Marketers building a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This research is being undertaken as part of a Master of Sciences in Digital Marketing at Dublin Business School (DBS). The aim of this study is to understand role of Digital Marketers building a digital personal brand for the millennial generation in Mexico City.

AGREEMENT
By signing below, the participant agreeing that:
(1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet,
(2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily,
(3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and
(4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

YOUR CONSENT
Please send this form with your name to the researcher by email
showing that you consent to us collecting these data with the following text:

"I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. I agreed to be part of this study voluntarily and I were informed about the use of my data."

_____
Participant's Name

Hortencia Salero Narváez
Student's Name

02 of December of 2021
Date

Appendix D. Gantt Chart

Project schedule followed by the researcher under the guidance of the supervisor. As it is shown in the illustration below, it was a joint effort that made possible to complete the present investigation in a period of 15 weeks.

	October					November				December				January	
	1st to 3rd	4th to 10th	11th to 17th	18th to 24th	25th to 31st	1st to 7th	8th to 14th	15th to 21st	22nd to 28th	29th to 5th	6th to 12th	13th to 19th	20th to 26th	27th to 2nd	3rd to 10th
Weeks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Communication by email with supervisor															
First meeting presentation and subsequent live sessions with supervisor.															
Gather data for the Literature Review															
Collection of primary data (Survey)															
Contact with participants															
Obtain consent form from participants.															
Depth interviews with participants.							PIC			ME					
Write Literature Review section															
Feedback of Literature Review section draft by supervisor.															
Write Methodology section.															
Write Results section															
Feedback of Methodology section by supervisor.															
Write a Discussion section.															
Write Conclusion section.															
Write Introduction, Abstract and References sections.															
Last feedback by supervisor															
Gather all sections in a final draft and review.															
Design a poster															
Submission of poster and dissertation															