

Everywhere you go, no matter who you are, labels are used to identify people. With over 300 million people living in the United States how can people possibly make their personal labels unique enough to differentiate their identities? One answer to this question is that we can distinguish ourselves through our own personal branding. Personal branding can be described as the ways in which people may identify themselves in their personal life and other settings such as the workplace. In this ever changing world, people's personal branding is affected by our environment, and the many people that impact our lives. Through my educational process in working towards my marketing degree, I have found many consumer behavior concepts that can be applied towards describing our behaviors, and the establishment of one's personal brand. Such concepts include the learning process, attitude formation and the development of the self through one's social groups. All of these concepts have had significant impacted on the development of my personal brand.

Challenge Seeker

There are many different aspects that go into the production of our personal brand such as: how people dress, our work experience, how we present ourselves to others, and how one associates themselves within society. These are just some of the many factors, which shape people into who they are, and how they define themselves. I have always believed in defining my personal brand as someone who loves to face challenges. My parents and teachers have always encouraged me to take an active role as a challenge seeker in my personal life and in the classroom. This has had a significant role in the development of my personal brand because I always strive towards excelling within and outside of the classroom. My role as a challenge seeker has also helped me to search for new membership roles that I can take on in organizations such as: the American Marketing Association, the St.Thomas Student Alumni Committee, Advertising Federation of American, and the National Student Advertising Competition.

But how does one go about creating their unique and personal brand through the learning process? One of the main contributing factors to developing a self-identity stems from early childhood development in which one is conditioned through their exposure to many social/environmental factors. As children grow, their parents strive to teach about the values and norms of society. These are often established through the process of behavioral learning theories, which means that learning takes place as a result of their external environment. According to these learning theories, people respond to feedback that they receive as they go through life. From these experiences people shape perceptions of what they believe and how they want to be perceived in society.

My learning process has helped to define part of my personal brand as challenge seeker, who excels academically and takes a leadership role amongst my peers. As people go through their levels of schooling they learn different techniques as well as get feedback from their teachers based on their performance. I tried to take what I learned from previous experiences and try to make myself better the next time around. I have also applied this theory towards my adaptation to learning about new forms of social media. There are many different forms of social media that are emerging and it has become an important challenge for me to learn about using the different features. For example, I recently became a member of the LinkedIn networking site so that I can start making connections in the Twin Cities business community. Through this I have the ability to show my personal brand to others as well as learn about new and exciting opportunities that may be available to me.

Group Leader

The ways in which people choose to present themselves affects their personal brand. Some of these choices include: ones choice of clothing, the music they listen to, how they choose to style their hair, and how one carries themselves throughout their daily lives aides one in

forming their personal brand. This type of attitude formation is how people decide the way in which to present themselves in society. I use attitude formation to present myself as a strong independent woman who is willing to take on a variety of leadership roles in my workplace as well as in my social life. I have formed the attitude that I can do anything I put my mind to. Also, part of my personal brand is that I choose to present myself in the workplace as someone who is willing to initiative the lead on new projects in order to prove to my manager that I can handle more responsibility within the company.

This aspect of my personal brand has been established through a cognitive process of attitude formation. This means that a person might shape their attitudes from the behavior of their friends or media endorsers that surround them. From this, people decide on what type of lifestyle that they want to portray in order to match their different attitudes. This process of identification and attitude formation plays a significant role into how we choose to make ourselves appeal to others. Furthermore, we use social judgment theory, which assumes that people use information that they learn and compare it towards what they already know as their frame of reference. This attitude formation has helped me to develop my personal brand because it enables me to show others my potential as a leader. I hope to use my unique attitudes to communicate my experience in leadership roles through my resume to potential employers.

Active Community Member

Similar to the concept of attitude formation is the concept of reference group's effects. The term reference group is used to signify the impact that others have towards an individual's aspirations, behaviors and group associations that effect personal branding. Reference groups have impacted my personal brand because they inspire me to attain the best qualities in order to be the best individual I can be. One way in which my reference groups have influenced my personal brand is through their persuasion for me to be an active role in the community through

volunteering. I have been a mentor through coaching children in sports and helping teach them in the classroom.

Being an active community member has impacted my brand because I have learned that it is important to be a role model as well as an effective communicator and listener. My family, friends, co-workers and classmates all have their own reference groups, which I may be a part of. That is why I plan to continue taking an active role in my community so that I can help to show them the many positive benefits from taking an active role in the community. There have been many people that have had a positive affect on my life. I hope that through my personal brand I will be able to have positive effects on the lives of others as well.

Conclusion

In today's society labels play a significant role in defining who people are. That is why I strive to make my personal brand stand out beyond the many other brands that I am surrounded by. Through my learning process, attitude formation and the development of my roles in society have all worked towards establishing myself as a unique independent woman who works and studies to be successful. Having a strong personal brand is important because it plays a large role in defining who I am and how I am portrayed through the eyes of others. As a student that will soon be facing a challenging job market, I hope my personal brand will extend through my resume and interactions to show prospective employers my potential within their company.