

## Identifying the effective factors in personal branding in the food industry based on the grounded theory method

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*The goal of this study is to use the grounded theory technique to uncover the characteristics that influence personal branding in the food business. The current study is quantitative in terms of approach and applied in terms of goal. The systematic technique of Strauss and Corbin was applied in this study, which involves three basic procedures: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The snowball sampling approach was utilised in this study for sampling. Snowball sampling is generally the first step, and it continues until saturation is reached. Based on this, 19 specialists and managers in Iran's food business who were familiar with the term personal branding were interviewed in-depth and semi-structured interviews. MAXQDA 11.1.4 software was utilised to analyse the data in this investigation. The results showed the components identified in personal branding in casual conditions of this study including personal characteristics, business characteristics, strategies including identity tools defined in behavior, appropriate tools for illustration, social networking, social responsibility, use different and distinctive methods, focus on goal, market research, contextual conditions including cultural values, political, economic and social issues, ideas and beliefs, dynamic world and intervening conditions including criticisms and suggestions, difference between cyberspace and real world, audience expectation level, social norms and outcomes include advancing the company's goals, saving time and money, gaining internal satisfaction, attracting and retaining audiences, gaining reputation, and improving the quality of communication.*

**Keywords:** *personal branding, food industry, grounded theory method*

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## 1. Introduction

There are more successful firms that are one step ahead of their competition in today's competitive market. As a result, the brand variable can be a substantial competitive advantage. Being connected to technology and the Internet, on the other hand, persuades businesses to recognise the notion of a personal brand in the online world. Most firms' foundations are built on brands, and they fulfil a variety of important functions (Sexton, 2008). Brands, at their most basic level, serve as indications of a company's products. Customers can benefit from brands because they can simplify decisions, guarantee a particular level of quality, decrease risk, and establish trust (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Brands may also symbolise the company's, workers', stakeholders', and other stakeholders' values and agreements. Heinz defined personal branding clearly in 2004: "Personal branding is about understanding who you are and what you do best, and reaching out to your audience." Personal branding, according to Rampersad (2004), is about building an identity that individuals of all perceptions and emotions can relate to (Werner Runebjörk, 2006). Personal branding has evolved from a basic economic technique to an ideological view of the corporate world, affecting one's sense of self in the process (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). Most proponents believe that personal branding should follow three main processes, which William Aroda shortened as "extraction, expression, and distribution" in 2005. First and foremost, people are taught to explore within themselves for their primary differentiating characteristics. Then, based on these characteristics, construct a motivating "personal brand statement." Finally, create a visible branding plan for the outside world (Shepherd, 2005). Offline personal branding approaches were shown to be more important than online personal branding methods in Johanna Jaakola and Rachelle Jonkman's (2018) study. Personal traits have a significant influence on the employment of IT graduates, according to Pathmanathan and Dodamgoda (2018), and this relationship is linked to personal branding. Personal values and cultural competency have a good and substantial influence on the establishment of personal brand of immigrants and local employees, according to Rasman Friendica (2018). Personal branding on social media through content, according to Markéta Urbanová and Thea Slind (2016), is a complicated and ongoing process in which all aspects of this framework must be performed simultaneously in order to develop a strong and comprehensive personal brand. Personal branding may be a significant strategy in the field of management and

leadership today since it can help a person differentiate himself from other managers and leaders and help him build a successful career (Rampersad, 2008). Personal branding plays a critical role in organisational processes and the achievement of corporate objectives, necessitating a specific emphasis on the problem of personal branding in order to guarantee that it leads to value creation and, as a result, implementation. It's critical to understand the aspects that influence personal branding in the food sector.

## **2. Theoretical foundations of research**

### **Personal brand**

Personal branding is a relatively recent concept in marketing, having been coined by Tom Peters in 1997. Peters popularised the notion of "my company," a private corporation in which everyone is their own boss (Shepherd, 2005). Branding's role in society has risen to new heights, and it is now employed by both businesses and people. It is critical for businesses to have a corporate brand so that workers can identify with it. External stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation are also influenced by its brand (Hatch & Schultz, 2008). Personal branding has become more important for individuals since it can be used to set them apart from others (Shepherd, 2005). Personal branding theories are frequently regarded as an extension of brand theories (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). In 2003, Keller points out that branding ideas may be applied to individuals, and that this sort of branding can be a key aspect in a company's continuous success (Hughes, 2007). Finding something that is right and distinctive to the individual and letting others know about it is what personal branding is all about (Peters, 1997). In truth, everyone has a personal brand that they use in various social situations, but not everyone is aware of it. A person's personal brand and how others perceive him or her are influenced by all of their activities, behaviours, and accomplishments (Werner Runebjörk, 2006). Because a personal brand may provide a competitive advantage and the potential to fulfil personal goals (Peters, 1997), it's crucial to understand that building and sustaining a personal brand is a continuous process (Werner Runebjörk, 2006). The creation of brand theories is a term used to describe personal branding theories (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). The sort of branding used may be a crucial influence in a company's long-term success (Hughes, 2007). Finding something that is right and distinctive to the individual and letting others know about it is what personal branding is all about (Peters, 1997). In truth, everyone has a personal brand that they use in various social situations, but not everyone is aware of it. A person's

personal brand and how others perceive him or her are influenced by all of their activities, behaviours, and accomplishments (Werner Runebjörk, 2006). Because a personal brand may provide a competitive advantage and the potential to fulfil personal goals (Peters, 1997), it's crucial to understand that building and sustaining a personal brand is a continuous process (Werner Runebjörk, 2006). The notion of a personal brand was described by Mantua in 2002 as "a personal identity that inspires precise and meaningful views of the values and traits that are significant to the individual." Human qualities and personality may be characterised as people's perceptions of themselves and what they communicate to others through their voice, gestures, and words (Werner Runebjörk, 2006). When your personal brand is built on everything you do on a daily basis, brand maintenance and updating are critical, which is why "you must continually analyse your brand to determine "What does your brand represent and how does it affect your life?" McNally and Speak (McNally and Speak, 2002).

### **Personal branding criteria**

According to Mantua, each personal brand has eight guidelines in 2002. These eight guidelines are not inextricably linked to a personal brand or a personal brand statement; rather, they are eight criteria by which one may track the evolution of one's personal brand. In reality, these guidelines should be taken into account while developing a personal brand and utilised to track its success over time. These are the eight rules:

**Expertise:** If one individual tries to be linked with everything for everyone, nothing will be for anybody. Personal marketing relies heavily on expertise, which entails selecting a small group of people from a large group of people and then delivering a clear message to them.

**Leadership:** To have a strong personal brand, a person must be regarded as one of the most informed, influential, or competent individuals in their profession.

**Personality qualities:** In all aspects, including mistakes, the personal brand should be formed around the individual's personality attributes.

**Distinction:** When a person develops their own brand, they must do so in a distinctive manner. To establish a lasting impression, one must express oneself in a unique way compared to others in the same profession. A personal brand can only be engraved in people's thoughts if you express yourself in a unique way.

**Visibility:** Personal brands need to be seen consistently and frequently. As long as a person's personal brand is known, visibility is more important than his abilities.

**Unity:** A person's behavior in secret must be consistent with his or her general brand. Unity is about guiding one's personal life in accordance with one's public character.

**Perseverance:** When a personal brand is established, it must be allowed time to develop, it must be devoted to it, and it must be disregarded when transient impulses arise. There is no quick way to build a personal brand, even if it appears to be the result of years of dedication.

**Goodwill:** The more a person is seen as a well-intentioned individual or the embodiment of value ideas, the more powerful his brand becomes. A personal brand can help its owner achieve success, but this should be viewed as a bonus (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

### **The difference between a personal brand and an employer brand**

Shepherd characterised the conflict between an individual's personal brand and the employer's brand as a "form of brand conflict" in 2005. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility of a contradiction. Peters concentrated on creating a form of harmony between the employer and personal brands in 1997. However, it doesn't take much imagination to see how a strong personal brand might harm an employer's brand, and vice versa. In 2011, Harris and Rae underline the need of remembering that personal branding may be quite powerful, at least in the eyes of certain businesses that may view the makers of effective winners as a danger. Developing a strong personal brand as an employee might raise suspicions, especially if the brand overshadows top executives or even the company itself.

As a result, the personal brand and the company brand might clash in a variety of ways. Capota (n.d.) explains one cause for the conflict: "Self-branding offers the maximum freedom, which is responsibility," he argues.

Self-branders have a unique opportunity to generate chances for themselves. Self-branders are constantly working for themselves, even if they have a boss. 2005 (Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney). Personal branding allows you to be as creative as you want. At the same time, this creates tension.

### 3. Research Methods

The current study is quantitative in terms of approach and applied in terms of goal. The data in this study was analysed using a systematic manner given to Strauss and Corbin. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding are the three basic processes used in this strategy. Theoretical sampling approach was employed as the sampling method in the current investigation, which was accomplished utilising the snowball methodology, based on the specified research method. Sampling in theory typically, sampling continues until saturation occurs, at which point the researcher introduces the next individual to the researcher; typically, the researcher tries to consciously pick the samples depending on the type of particular information required. Based on this, 19 specialists and managers in Iran's food business who were familiar with the term personal branding were interviewed in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Repetition was noticed in the material gathered from the twelfth interview onwards, although it lasted until the nineteenth interview. Each interview lasted between 45 and an hour. All of the interviews were taped and replayed numerous times in order to extract crucial topics.

**Table 1: Interview questions**

Raw	Question	source
1	What are the main features of your personal brand? And what do you think it depicts about you? In short, how would you describe your personal brand?	Widell(2020), Rangarajan(2017), Jenna Jacobson (2017),Erika Butetsi Bugaari Balintulo(2019)
2	Is your defined character in the online space the same as your offline character? Or do you change your behavior to advance your career and make more profit? Why?	Rangarajan et Al (2017), Dumont & Ots (2020)
3	What are the criteria for forming a strong personal brand? And with the help of a personal brand, can a specific target audience be reached?	Le Ngoc Nguyen Anh(2019), Reponen(2020), Widell (2020)
4	What steps do you take to create distinction, reputation, trust, credibility as well as attract your personal brand audience? And in general, how can a personal brand be improved?	Melissa Kuitunen(2019), Schawbel,D(2010), Le Ngoc Nguyen Anh(2019), Arruda (2005)
5	What content do you post on your page? And what factors have you considered when sending a post or interacting with Iranian contacts?	Reponen(2020),Marco Guzman, Marcus widell(2020), Kuitunen(2019)

6	Do personal values and cultural competencies affect a personal brand? For example, is there a connection between the music and the charm of the post you posted? And how do you give a deep meaning to your audience?	Widell(2020), Frendika(2018), Kuitunen(2019)
7	What is your main goal in creating and developing a personal brand? And did you have a long-term and specific strategy for building a personal brand?	Keränen, C(2020), Reponen(2020), Roni Myllymäki(2019), Fabien Michael Philippe Huché-Deniset,(2017)
8	How do you match the personal brand image with the company brand image? Under what circumstances can the company's brand be overshadowed? And how does a company's brand affect the broad boundaries of a personal brand?	Reponen (2020), Rangarajan(2017)
9	What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a personal brand in your field of work?	Myllymäki (2019)
10	How important do you think the need for a personal brand is in the food industry? And how does personal branding help you in your career advancement? And do you have an example that shows that personal branding has contributed to organizational achievements?	Jacobson(2017), widell(2020), Erika Butetsi Bugaari Balintulo(2019), Keränen, C. (2020), .Le Ngoc Nguyen Anh(2019), Rangarjan(2017)
11	How do you think personal branding is effective in the hiring process? And are you searching online for more information on potential employees? If so, what are you looking for?	Minor-Cooley & Rochelle Parks-Yancy(2020), Sharp(2015)
12	How do you measure the effectiveness of your personal brand?	Rangarjan (2017)

In this study, action was made to boost the validity by offering feedback to the respondents and directing them in the direction of the research in a way that did not alter how they responded. In addition, following each interview, the collected model was presented up to that point, and if the interviewee had any questions concerning the model, he was encouraged to ask them. To ensure the reliability of the research, two methods of internal evaluation and external evaluation have been used. Therefore, in this research, coders were provided to a number of experts to express their opinions about labels and how to cod. The model was also provided to a number of experts for comment, and after making corrections at each stage, the final model was presented. MAXQDA 11.1.4 software was utilised to analyse the data in this study, and it was used to perform open,

axial, and selective coding. Finally, a statistical description of each dimension was offered, as well as a conceptual model based on the interview data.

#### 4. Findings

The data gathered from the interview was analysed using the data theory of the foundation approach in this study. As a result, the text of each interview is analysed first, and conceptual labels are assigned to them based on significant lines and places in the conversation. Following the first coding, the researcher merged the codes and placed comparable codes in abstract classes called categories, and lastly, the primary classes were extracted by arranging similar categories in a certain conceptual level, as described below. The first stage involves open coding, followed by the second and third stages, which include axial coding and selective coding (theorising), respectively. This stage involves a general examination and integration of various circumstances in axial coding. The relevance of data integration in basic thinking cannot be overstated.

**Table 2: Statistical description of causal conditions**

	Frequency	Relative percentage
<b>Individual characteristics</b>	25	92.59
<b>Business features</b>	2	7.41
<b>Total</b>	7	100.00

The frequency connected to the components of causative circumstances is indicated in Table (2), with the component of individual traits having the highest frequency. Personal traits account for 92.6% of the total, while business aspects account for 7.4%.

**Table 3: Statistical description of background conditions**

	Frequency	Relative percentage
<b>cultural values</b>	17	40.48
<b>Dynamic world</b>	3	7.14
<b>Beliefs and beliefs</b>	13	30.95
<b>Political, economic and social issues</b>	9	21.43
<b>Total</b>	47	100.00



Table (3) illustrates the frequency of the components of contextual circumstances, with the component of cultural values having the highest frequency. 40.5 % of the cultural values component, 30.95 % of the ideas and beliefs component, 21.43 % of the political, economic, and social concerns component, and 14.7% of the world component are dynamic.

**Table 4: Statistical description of the intervention conditions**

	Frequency	Relative percentage
<b>Feedback</b>	12	41.38
<b>The difference between cyberspace and the real world</b>	9	31.03
<b>Audience expectation level</b>	5	17.24
<b>social norms</b>	3	10.34
<b>Total</b>	29	100.00

Table (4) indicates the frequency of the components of interventionist circumstances, with criticism and suggestions having the highest frequency. Criticisms and recommendations account for 44.38 % of the components, while the gap between cyberspace and the actual world accounts for 31.03 %, the audience's degree of expectation accounts for 17.24 %, and societal norms account for 10.34 %.

**Table 5: Statistical description of strategies**

	Frequency	Relative percentage
<b>Perfect tool for illustration</b>	22	11.83
<b>Identity tools defined in behavior</b>	30	16.13
<b>Adopt a different and distinct approach</b>	48	25.81
<b>Market research</b>	5	2.69
<b>Focus on the goal</b>	27	14.52
<b>Social networking</b>	46	24.73
<b>social responsibility</b>	8	4.30
<b>Total</b>	186	100.00

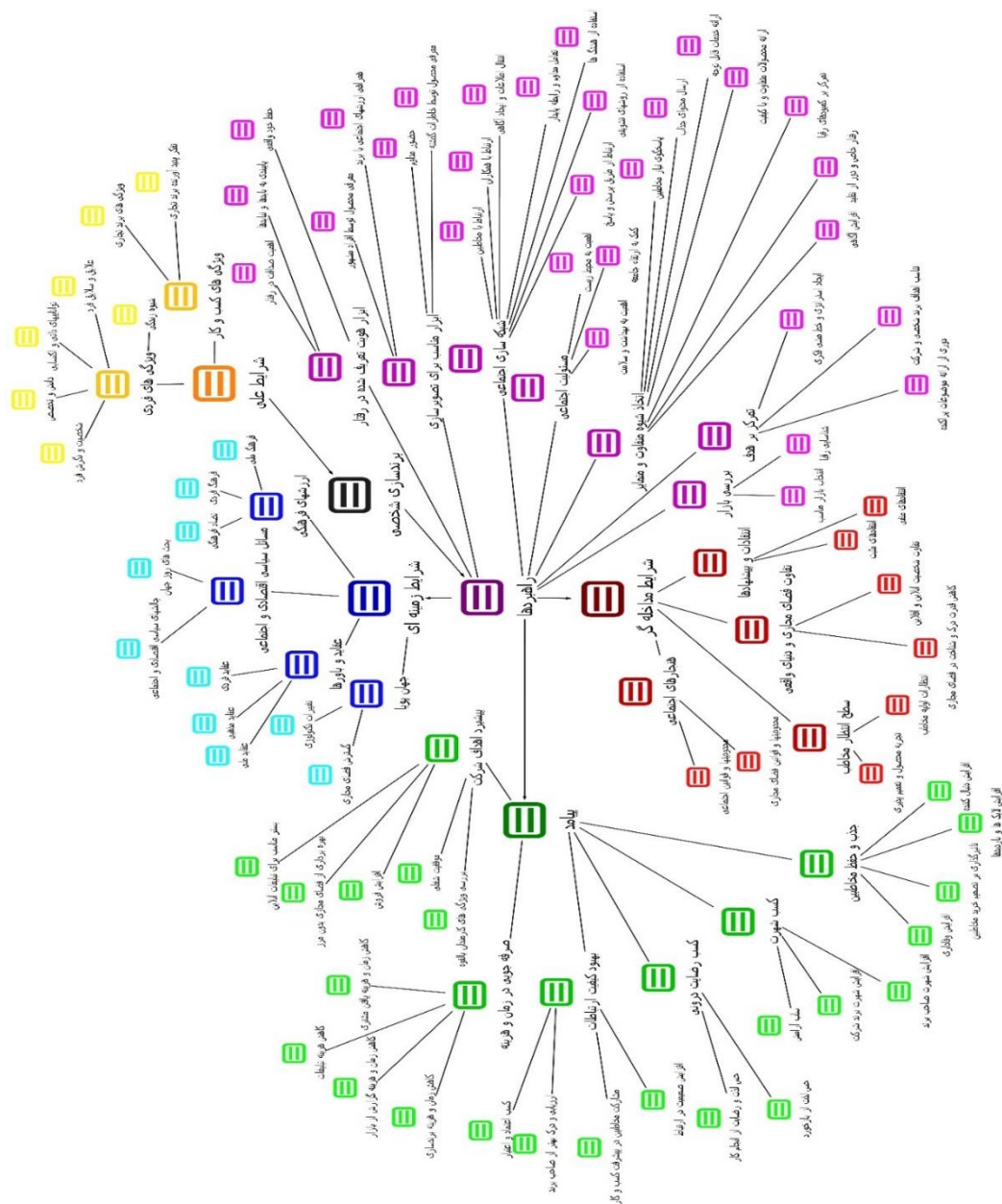
Table (5) indicates the frequency of the components of strategies, with the component of choosing a new and unique way having the highest frequency. Adopting different and distinct methods accounts for 25.81 %, social networking accounts for 24.73 %, identity tools defined in behaviour

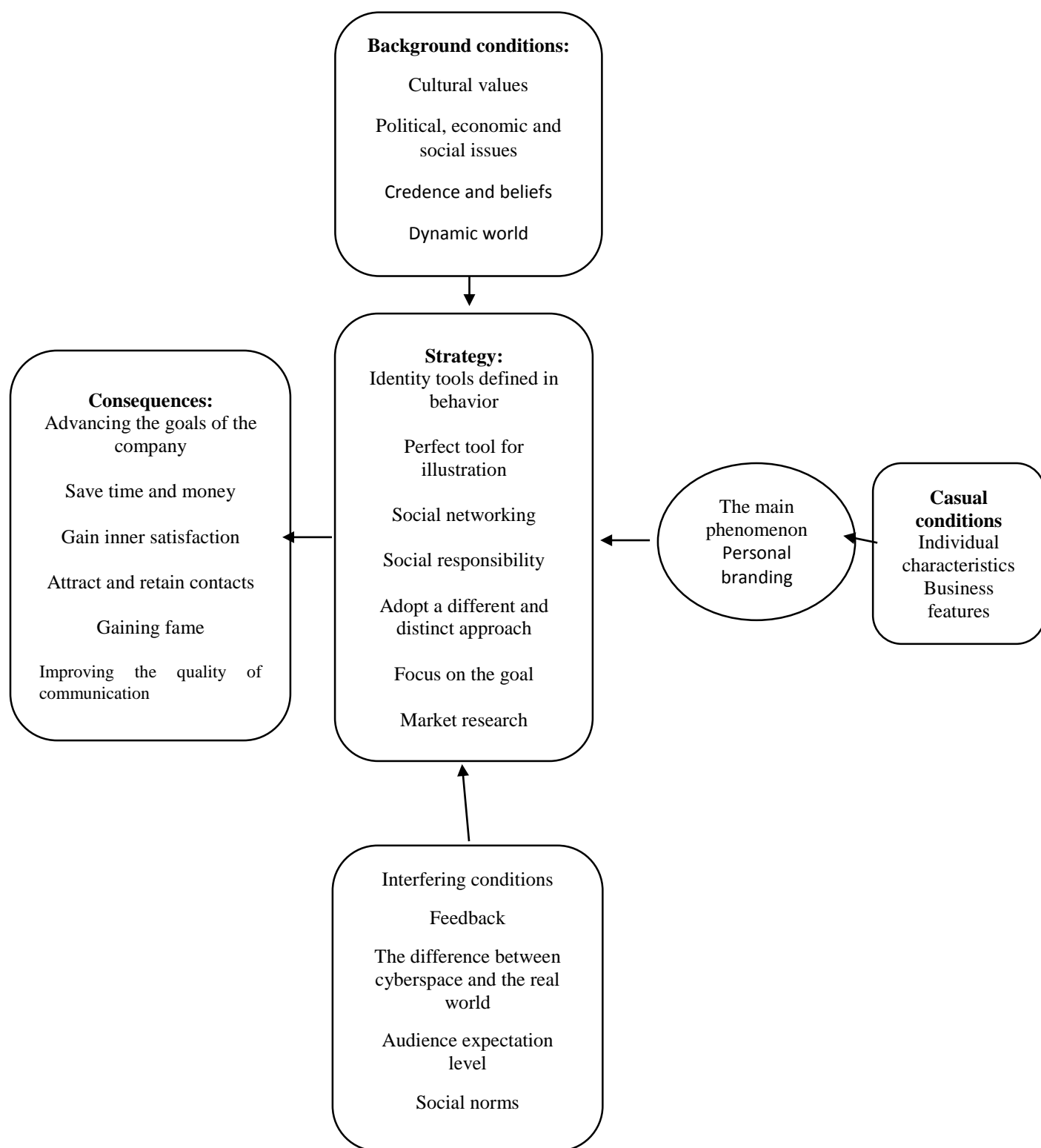
accounts for 16.13%, focus on goal accounts for 14.52 %, appropriate tools for illustration accounts for 11.83 %, social responsibility accounts for 4.30 %, and market accounts for 2.69 %.

**Table 6: Statistical description of the consequences**

	Frequency	Relative percentage
<b>Improving the quality of communication</b>	48	30.57
<b>Attract and retain contacts</b>	21	13.38
<b>Save time and money</b>	6	3.82
<b>Advancing the goals of the company</b>	62	39.49
<b>Gain inner satisfaction</b>	2	1.27
<b>Gaining fame</b>	18	11.46
<b>Total</b>	157	100.00

Table (6) indicates the frequency of the components of outcomes, with the component of furthering the company's aims having the highest frequency. Internal satisfaction accounts for 39.49 % of the component of advancing the company's goals, 30.57 % of the component of improving communication quality, 13.38 % of the component of attracting and retaining audiences, 11.46 % of the component of gaining reputation, 3.85 % of the component of saving time and money, and 27 % of the component of saving time and money.





**Figure 2: Indigenous conceptual model of personal branding in the food industry**

The goal of this study is to use the grounded theory technique to uncover the characteristics that influence personal branding in the food business. A native model of personal branding was updated in this study after conducting interviews and then evaluating the data using open, axial, and selective coding. Personal branding in the Iranian food business, causative conditions, contextual factors, intervening conditions, methods, and effects are the six categories discovered in this research. Personal characteristics, business characteristics, cultural values, political, economic, and social issues, ideas and beliefs, dynamic world, social norms, criticisms and suggestions, cyberspace differences and Real-world, audience expectations, behavioural identity tools, tools for imagery, social networking, social responsibility, different approach, goal focus, and market research, advancing company goal are the components identified in personal branding in this study. Improve internal satisfaction, audience attraction and retention, reputation, and communication quality.

**Table 7: Dimensions, components and indicators of personal branding in the food industry**

Indicator	Component	Dimensions	
Personality and attitude of the person	Individual characteristics	Casual condition	
Knowledge and expertise			
life style			
Interests and tastes of the individual			
Intrinsic and acquired abilities			
Brand features			
Branding phenomenon			
	Business features		
National culture	cultural values	Underlying Condition	
Individual culture			
Cultural conflict			
World Day Discussions			
Political, economic and social challenges			Political, economic and social issues
Individual opinions			
Religious beliefs			
National beliefs			
Technology changes			Beliefs
Expanding cyberspace			
	Dynamic world		
Positive reviews	Feedback	Interfering conditions	
Negative criticism			
The difference between online and offline characters			The difference between cyberspace and the real world
Decreased power of perception and recognition in cyberspace			

Early expectations of the audience	Audience expectation level	
Product experience and generalizability		
Restrictions and rules of cyberspace		
Restrictions and social rules		
The importance of honesty in behavior	Identity tools defined in behavior	<b>Strategy</b>
Committed to the do's and don'ts		
Maintain your real self		
Product introduction by celebrities	Perfect tool for illustration	
Accompanying social values with the brand		
Continuous presence		
Product introduction by past memories		
Communication with contacts	Social networking	
Communication with colleagues		
Transmit information and create awareness		
Communication through questions and answers		
Use of incentive methods		
Use hashtags		
Continuous interaction and lasting relationship		
Importance to the environment	Social Responsibility	
Importance to health and wellness		
Help improve the community		
Meets the needs of contacts	Adopt a different and distinct approach	
Post attractive content		
Provide outstanding services		
Offering different and quality products		
Focus on competitors' shortcomings		
Special behavior and away from imitation		
Increasing awareness		
Proportion of personal and company brand goals	Focus on the goal	
Avoid presenting scattered topics		
Creating a strategy and intellectual policy		
Choosing the right market	Market research	
Identify competitors		
Examine the characteristics of potential employees	Advancing the goals of the company	<b>Consequence</b>
Career Success		
sales increase		
Exploitation of cyberspace without borders		
The perfect platform for online advertising		
Reduce customer time and cost		

Reduce branding time and cost	Save time and money	
Reduce the time and cost of reporting from the market		
Reduce advertising costs		
A sense of pleasure from the feedback	Gain inner satisfaction	
A sense of joy and satisfaction from doing the job		
Increase followers	Attract and retain contacts	
Increase likes and hits		
Influence the decision to buy contacts		
Increase loyalty		
Increase the reputation of the brand owner	Gaining fame	
Increase the brand reputation of the company		
Deprivation of peace		
Increase intimacy in communication	Improving the quality of communication	
Audience involvement in business development		
Better evaluation and understanding of the brand owner		
Gain trust and credibility		

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