A Business Student’s Self Aid Kit – Developing Self Marketing Skills

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Helsinki

2011
Abstract

Self marketing is a fairly new subject currently pigeonholed by self-help books, consultancy services and Web sites. Very little of this interest has influenced or become a part of the discipline of marketing; either in terms of formal research, academic curricula or textbook content. An attempt was made in this thesis to broaden the field of marketing by researching self marketing through a traditional marketing and branding framework. The aim was to offer business students a self marketing structure through the construction of a “self marketing tool box” they may use as a support and employ at the time they set to begin their working lives, during possible career changes, and in competitive situations. In addition, the aim was to also examine the expectations business students had towards the topic of self marketing as a whole.

Ways of developing self marketing skills were introduced, a theoretical review on self marketing as seen through a branding perspective was put forth and a self marketing tool box was presented before and after the empirical study. Brand identity structure, personal qualities and charisma were researched alongside methods of developing self marketing skills such as CV and cover letter writing, social media presence and the adoption of a marketing oriented mind frame.

A qualitative method was applied, through snowball sampling. The study aimed to explore the different issues from a business student’s perspective with regards to self marketing, in addition, the informants were required to express their thoughts on the constructed tool box and discuss the issues of brand core and extended identity. The findings suggested that self marketing is expected to act as a boost in the right direction for a person seeking employment and professional success; it was characterized as a method for differentiation and increasing competitiveness. Also, the informants showed concern over the fact that self marketing was not much discussed within their own reach, thus a need for more information on the topic was expressed. Finally, a need for the reconstruction of the self marketing tool box was expressed during the empirical study and action was taken so that the tool kit would better act as a guiding framework on the journey of a business student or any other individual in developing their self marketing skills. In addition, it may be concluded that this model contributes as a source of support for those seeking guidance on the issue of self marketing.

Key Terms
Self marketing, brand identity, personal qualities, methods, self marketing tool box, expectations.
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1. Introduction

During the past two decades self marketing has become an extremely popular subject for self-help books, consultancy services and various Web sites discussing competitiveness, communication skills and career development. Yet, to this date very little of this interest has affected the discipline of marketing; either in terms of formal research, academic curricula or textbook content. It seems that there is no theoretical basis for the concept, although self marketing is very apparent on many levels, running from personalized CVs and cover letters to the use of professional publicists.

It is rather evident in today’s increasingly competitive and global job market that having the right degree and seeming near perfect on paper is not enough to receive an employment position anymore. An individual must also possess the appropriate self marketing skills in order to prove that he/she is indeed the right fit for the job at hand. Hardly ever is there only one person applying for any position, thus the ones who can bring forth a competitive advantage whether it is in personal skills or other positive qualities are usually the ones who end up employed from a crowd of hungry applicants. Self marketing may provide students in particular with a set of competitive skills and tools that can be utilized upon graduation, when applying for employment positions and throughout a life time of career changes and expanding business arrangements. In the business world networking has become increasingly important and tough competition more the norm than the exception; for these reasons alone self marketing is an interesting concept to pursue investigating, in terms of it helping an applicant to compete, network and stand out.

1.1 Research Problem and Study Aim

Self marketing may on occasion refer to the use of professional publicists who assist individuals, in particular celebrities to maintain success in their careers and to gain more recognition; however the term in this thesis will refer to people, mainly business students who take action in marketing themselves. Although the concept is a very popular topic among consultancy services, social media and numerous self-aid literatures, it is not discussed in the academic world and no theory has yet been constructed in relation to it; this is indeed a major
incentive upon deciding to begin researching self marketing on a deeper and more profound level. Also, this detail presents a clear research gap; since there is no relevant theoretical framework with regards to the topic of self marketing one should be created. Thus, the primary problem is in the creation and development of a theoretical framework on self marketing, in addition, since the focus of this thesis will be on business students it is of significance to explore how they feel about any created framework and about self marketing in general. Finally to provide readers with clear managerial as well as theoretical implications channels for developing self marketing skills need to be brought forward. Thus, the research problem can be divided in to three questions:

(1) How can a self marketing framework/tool box be created?

(2)What are business students’ expectations, thoughts and feelings on the created tool box and self marketing as a concept?

(3)Where can business students find support and advice on developing their own self marketing skills?

Answering the research problems presented above through the careful analysis of existing literature and a thorough empirical study will then achieve the overall aims of this thesis. The aims of course are to explore the phenomenon of self marketing on a deeper level and offer business students a self marketing framework they may lean on and utilize at the time they set to begin their working lives, during possible career changes, competitive situations and when making a name for themselves as a way of getting ahead in their professions. Also, the aims consist of examining the expectations students have with regards to their self marketing skills and what they feel would be important to know regarding this topic.

The ultimate aim of this study is thus threefold:

(1)To prepare a self marketing tool box consisting of useful information and recommendations students may use when job hunting and networking in general,
(2) To research the information students have on self marketing and investigate their expectations with regards to the presented tool box, and finally,

(3) To provide implications on where students can develop their own self marketing skills

1.2 Justification of Study

The concept of self marketing has not yet been theoretically recognized and included in the marketing discipline, thus it presents a real challenge to attempt to broaden the traditional field of thought and formulate a theoretical backbone for self marketing. However, it is also precisely why a study such as this should be conducted, so that the subject of self marketing can begin to evolve and become academically renowned.

The focus of the research will be on business students of a higher educational degree, their thoughts and experiences will be intensely examined, one of the goals is also to find out how they see self marketing, is it a vitally necessary skill in their minds and what type of support do they feel they need in order to market themselves effectively. The pilot study that will be discussed next in this chapter influenced the formation of the research aims and problems.

The theoretical structure will be beneficial to business students in particular, in that it will provide them with relevant information on self marketing as seen through marketing and branding perspectives; it will present an extensive amount of guidelines that students can use to their advantage as they prepare themselves for the working arena. Consequently, the purpose is not to offer a summary of existing theories that the academic community can merely browse through, but instead to present an analytical text containing synthesis, width, depth, consistence and clarity that will be of use to the individuals reading it.

Two groups will benefit from this the most, the business students and educational institutions, as the students will gain the support they most likely need in a competitive career market offered to them through a framework of relevant information and advice, not to mention theoretical support that will act as the skeleton for the framework. Any university or other educational institution on the other hand will profit from this thesis, in that the empirical
component will provide much information on the current state of mind of its main stakeholders, the students.

Up to date, the number of out of work graduates possessing a higher academic degree in Finland, has been, at its peak, around 700, in 2009, however, it rose to 1400, whilst unemployed individuals under the age of 25 numbered at 20 900 in 2008 and 30 400 in 2009 (Taloussanomat, 2009). There is no uncertainty that the current economic situation in 2011 has had an overwhelming effect on employment in the academic community, and everywhere else for that matter. More and more companies have had to let go of, even their most devoted employees, which in turn has made it increasingly difficult for recent graduates to apply for occupations in the academic commune and forced them to compete against a large group of individuals, many of whom possess several years of experience and connections that recent graduates simply cannot equal with. There is a indeed a need for this kind of research since the business world is relentlessly changing and expectations of employers are constantly changing along with it, competition is harder than ever; a study on self marketing skills would offer beneficial, if not, crucially important tools for job seekers everywhere.

After having discussed with business students on the subject of self marketing, it became evident that they were expressing a need for support upon beginning their working lives and ending their studies, they discussed their uncertainties regarding the job hunting process, their anxiety about having to stand out in a crowd and lack of knowledge on how they in fact should present or market themselves. This thesis, which contains relevant theories, tools and a framework on self marketing that can be put to actual use and provide significant understanding on a topic not yet academically understood or discussed, can provide that needed support to an extent.

### 1.3 Pilot Study and Findings

In order to establish guidelines for the formation of the theoretical component, five pre-interviews were conducted. These interviews and their results also had an effect on the threefold research aim which is to (1) to prepare a self marketing tool box consisting of useful information and recommendations students may use when job hunting and networking in
general, (2) to research the information students have on self marketing and investigate their expectations with regards to the presented tool box, and finally, (3) to provide implications on where students can develop their own self marketing skills.

Conducting the pre-interviews offers great insight into what type of literature I should begin to investigate, it should be something that can provide direct benefit to the person reading it, a business student in particular. I have chosen the focus to be on developing students’ self marketing and analyzing their expectations with regards to the topic, therefore I need to keep this focus in mind throughout the course of this thesis. It due to this that I believe conducting five pre-interviews offers an excellent stepping board for the formation of the theory and creating the self marketing tool box.

The information gathered during the pre-interviews gave an insight to the students’ preferences and interests. In addition the interviews gave a closer perspective into what types of activities they value the most, which in turn indicated some topics that would be valuable to discuss in the theoretical component. The pre-interviews allowed the candidates to provide data specific for the aims of this thesis. The interviews were collected using a purposeful sampling technique, due to the fact that my study purpose was clear and I required certain types of respondents in order to meet the objective of my study; master’s level business students, with not much working life experience (See Appendix 1 for Interviewee Profiles).

According to Gummesson (2000) since accurate evidence is not so crucial for generating theory, the kind of evidence, as well as the number of cases, is also not crucial. Relying on this statement and the overall aims of my study I felt that information obtained from five single informants in the pre-interview phase was sufficient. The type of purposeful sampling which were used were criterion sampling; picking all cases that met some criterion, in this case students under the age of 30 years, with no full time work experience accept alongside school and studying at Hanken or the Helsinki School of Economics; this type of profile was needed in order to represent the average business student in the best possible way, since the study is qualitative in nature I decided to narrow down the students by age and place of study. Furthermore, one of the aims is to offer students knowledge on how to self market, and for this reason as well I decided to focus on the ones with relatively no work experience and therefore a true need for the development of self marketing skills.
The motive behind using a purposeful sampling method was the fact that the pre interviews were to facilitate in the writing of the theoretical framework and there was no way that the sample size could or would have represented the entire population of students at a master’s level in Helsinki; in addition there was no need for an absolute truth at that moment. Two students majoring in marketing and three in economics were consulted, all of them at the master’s level, in their twenties, with not much work experience. The students were questioned on what they felt self marketing is, on the usability of the concept in practice and what support they feel that they need to bring their own personalities forward and stand out in a competitive situation i.e. in what ways they could market themselves effectively.

The main results indicated that there is a great need for support in the area of self marketing amongst these students. The first theme that was discussed was what self marketing is and what it means in practice. All the answers were more or less similar, in that self marketing is seen as the way one presents one’s self, the way one communicates to others, and the way one looks on paper, specifically how one stands out from a pile of three hundred CV’s. In addition, the way a person behaves in social media was also considered to be a part of self marketing. The general consensus was that self marketing is more or less related to branding activities yet moving the focus from products and services to the self. Online behaviour also rose as a topic in the discussion; students expressed the need for guidance on how one should act on social media channels and the Internet in general, in addition they mentioned concern on how they should create their résumés and cover letters.

Following are some extracts from the conducted interviews, they are rather miscellaneous yet they help in painting the bigger picture on the students’ sentiments and in addition act as an excellent platform to begin working on the theoretical component.

“You have to be careful what you write and how you write it, some people don’t understand that in today’s world prospective employers can do a thorough investigation on you. Behaving badly on Facebook might cost you a potential job even! But, who tells you what the right etiquette is? No one and using common sense is not enough in my view...Also, I don’t know how to make my CV special, it’s supposed to be short anyway, so how am I supposed to add things that make it show my individuality...”

(Hätinen, 25.5.2011)
“Every other person has a higher degree-education; we all look the same on paper, I mean, if you ignore GPA maybe. I want to know how to bring my personality through, how to stand out and be remembered in person and on paper…” (Wallenius, 25.5.2011)

“I don’t think it’s enough that we have some CV-workshop check twice a year and then that’s it. The rest of the time we learn valuable theoretical information and knowledge, but are taught nothing about what is required from us in working life... Some people are confident and social by nature and do well when they have to represent themselves, but that does not apply to everyone. I at least, need some guidance on how to behave in different recruitment situations, what is allowed, what is smart and what is the right way to go about things...Everybody is different, but how is that communicated in order to stand out?” (Pihlaja, 27.5.2011)

“I feel stressed when I think about the future, when I actually have to grow up! I don’t know how to even explain what I know, I mean, I study marketing yes... But then when I apply for job in like an advertising agency, why would they pick me instead of someone else who has the same background? Or I mean, what is it that would make me a better candidate? I don’t know actually or at least I don’t know how to articulate it” (Kukkohovi, 23.5.2011)

“I think I know what self marketing is, you have to brand or market yourself just like you would do to a product or service or something, but it seems somehow cheesy I mean isn’t it a bit self absorbed? And if not, how could you do it without coming off way too cocky when you’re just a beginner anyway and you’re only beginning to find your place in the world and the employment market is full of people from all across the globe with all sorts of different skills and abilities that I just can’t necessarily match up to…” (Laitinen, 29.5.2011)

The main aspect students stressed was the ever changing employment market and the increased competitiveness in it. A globalized world brings with it global challenges, students need to be prepared to apply for a position alongside applicants from various cultures and backgrounds; applicants from the US for example are very educated in self marketing and presentation skills. This detail brought with it some concern, as the general consensus seemed to be that in Finland on a general level self marketing is not much stressed nor is bringing one’s own personality in to display either, however with competitors creating video CV’s, making power point presentations of themselves and really standing out of the crowd with the use of innovative techniques, leaves some students feeling lost and beginning to question how they too could market themselves just as strongly. In addition, it was mentioned by all of the
informants that these tools should be given at the time one is still studying, so that upon graduation a business student would feel well prepared for the working arena; however there was no clear mention as to where this information should be found. The students expressed some degree of anxiety towards graduating and beginning their careers; they seemed rather lost on where to begin applying for employment positions and what skills they should highlight whilst doing so, furthermore a need for examples and ways of self marketing was clearly articulated.

When analyzing the results, there seemed to be a clear call for a framework on self marketing that could be utilized and applied whilst being academically valid and born from a theoretical origin, students also asked for guidance in methods such as CV creation, interview technique and social media presence. It is for these above mentioned results that this thesis will introduce both theory and methods in a consecutive order, resulting in one final self marketing tool box that attempts to satisfy the needs expressed by the informants, furthermore the created tool box will then be introduced to a new set of informants and their expectations and thoughts towards it analyzed; only then can implications be introduced.

1.4 Previous Research

There is very little previous research conducted on the area of self marketing, though several articles and studies have been published regarding the subject, discussing presentation skills and interview techniques. In addition, in recent years more and more consultants have been employed with the task of preparing recent graduates or a soon to be graduates for the job market, important skills such as how to prepare for interviews, present one’s self in academic situations and be a competitive player amongst other job hunters are taught as strategic skills to have in the business world.

The emphasis on self marketing as a skill has limited coverage in the marketing literature even though “so often students are released into the market with only a hazy idea at best of how to market the most important product: themselves” (McCorkle et al., 2003: 4). One would assume that if the before mentioned statement holds water, there is a need for the development of students’ self marketing skills. Understanding the job search process, how to
find out about job openings; make contact with businesses; and how to effectively market one’s skills, abilities and knowledge, as well as personal characteristics- is vital to both short- and long term career success of students (McCorkle et al., 2003: 198). The authors also imply that

“... Students must be prepared for an increasingly competitive job market at the entry level and for professional lives that will be characterized by frequent job shifts and career changes. Thus, it is incumbent on faculty to create courses that deliver not only the standard marketing content but also include behavioural learning skills objectives” (198).

This study clearly indicates the need of self marketing skills especially for students; it provides further validation for the choice of my research aims and problems.

Shepherd (2005) discusses about the need for the marketing community to begin exploring the topics of self marketing and personal branding and put its own stamp on the subjects

“Can the discipline of marketing reclaim self marketing and personal branding from the enthusiasts? For the budding professional marketer, the authors of self help books, career advisors and Web pundits appear to be the primary sources of advice currently available on the subject. Is it beyond wit or ambition of mainstream marketing to put its own seal of approval on these potentially crucial ideas?” (12).

In response to Shepherd’s paper, an effort to discuss the topic of self marketing through relevant marketing literature will now be made.

A study conducted at the Media and Communication Studies of Örebro University, indicates that

“Career coaching for job seekers has become increasingly prevalent when guiding the management of the self in practices such as writing Curriculum Vitae (CV)... The concept of discursive positioning is used to analyze talk in interaction and the way people are positioned in discourse by their own and others' utterances (Davies and Harré, 1990). The findings point to obstacles and ambiguities in the construction of a 'sellable' self... “(1).
The previous research data will be utilized throughout this paper; in addition the career coaching study discussed above will provide useful implications towards the end of the thesis.

1.5 Delimitations

This study concentrates on finding out relevant information and theories on the topic of self marketing through the use of branding literature, self-improvement books and studies conducted regarding students’ self marketing skills, abilities and expectations. The scarcity of academic literature and existing theoretical frameworks is certainly a form of limitation, in that it may cause a hindrance to the academic level and depth of the text provided. In addition due to the subject’s rather new and unexamined nature there is not much previous research to use as a starting point or comparison.

The participants examined are students at either the Hanken School of Economics or the Helsinki School of Economics and none of them have any full time job experience, in fact all of them have mostly worked part time alongside their studies, in addition all of these students are of Finnish origin and under the age of 30. The informants consist of business students alone, no other type of students were included in this study; thus the results do not represent all student residing in Helsinki, merely a certain type of student, that is a business student under the age of 30. Based on a methodology-driven approach, other informant roles do obviously exist yet were not included in this study. Moreover the informants were predetermined by the pilot study and the theoretical framework to consist only of business students; therefore this predetermination is indeed a restriction, because all the results will be interpreted from a business student’s perspective, feelings and expectations. Thus, the results will not provide any insight in to the outlooks of older students, people in working life, marketing professionals or any other group of people for that matter. Furthermore, a snowball sampling technique was used in this study, meaning that all the informants are personally related to each other in one way or the other; this may result in having similar results from the informants, since it could be argued that students who know each other are also likely to share similar values to a degree.
1.6 Structure of the Paper

This paper will begin by a chapter introducing ways of developing self marketing skills, a theoretical review on self marketing as seen through a branding perspective will also be established; first the chapter will examine direct ways of self marketing such as writing a CV and cover letter and social media, consequently self marketing customs through the brand identity concept, personal qualities and charisma will be assessed. The reasoning behind discussing these very concepts comes from the pilot study, these methods such as the use of social media and the creation of curriculum vitae were seen as being a part of self marketing skills, and thus they will be discussed in further detail as well. Third and to finalize the theoretical review, a self marketing tool box will be presented at the end of the theoretical framework. Accordingly, the methodological component will be introduced; the result and analysis of the qualitative research presented and in close implications and a conclusion of this study will be brought to attention.
2. Developing Self Marketing

The aim of this chapter is to provide direct ways on how one can utilize self marketing in situations when one is looking for a new employment position or simply making a name for one’s self and networking for future possibilities. The starting point for all this should come from the recognition of the need for a person to sell themselves, and from the willingness to assume the state of mind of a marketer; the attitude and mind frame need to be marketing oriented in order to successfully develop self marketing skills.

According to Shepherd (2005) the literature of marketing is written by members of informal tribes; one of these consists of academic marketers whose theories I will examine on a later note, the second group consists of so called naïve marketers who are in fact practitioners such as publicists, politicians and media smart celebrities, this group and their say on the matter of self marketing will not be examined as it does not aid with the overall aims of this thesis. However, the third tribe of marketers will be discussed in this chapter, as Shepherd (2005) states

“A third tribe consists of members of the self-help and personal development communities, which includes a diverse set of individuals, businesses and organizations whose aim is to assist individuals in realizing their potential. This tribe also includes members of the education and training sectors, and also those involved in helping people find a job or plan a career” (4).

The offerings that this third tribe has made to the field of self marketing will be discussed in the following sub chapters.

2.1 Recognizing the Need to Sell Yourself

According to Paul McDonald (2002) whether you are satisfied in your current position or not, identifying and showcasing your strengths should be a key part of your professional advancement strategy. Marketing is recognised as the means of increasing visibility, awareness and forming the path towards long term relationships between businesses and consumers; yet this area of expertise has been often forgotten when applying it to one’s own selves and
careers. Thus, recognizing the need to sell yourself should be a given. In fact, McDonald (2002) argues that personal satisfaction and reward require regular reassessment of options, both inside and outside one’s current company. In addition, to remain fulfilled, one should always be looking for the next challenge; this is why it is vitally important to take a proactive approach to marketing yourself. The goal should be to display one’s expertise to a wider audience, even though those that are close may already be familiar with one’s abilities they may not necessarily be the people to assist with any future career development strategies. Self marketing is recognised by McDonald as more than just a tool for career development; it is seen as an instrument to assist a person to maximize his/her effectiveness and enable them to make the most and succeed in the best possible way in their current position. Wider recognition of one’s own personal talents may also help to bring about added professional respect. The most important and crucial element in an effective self marketing strategy begins with an honest and straightforward assessment of one’s strengths and weaknesses; one needs to be aware of one’s own professional value and only then begin planning on how to convince others of it. McDonald suggests that

“…to make an objective evaluation, you will need to benchmark your talent against those in your profession and industry, and determine which abilities are currently most in demand... The goal is to focus on those competencies that add value, make a bottom line impact and contribute to an organization’s long term growth... Make a habit of regularly researching the market in your area to determine the level of hiring activity at your level and which skills are mentioned the most often” (61).

IT- knowledge today is a must, a strong technical and information systems know-how and background has become ever more critical in all industries. In your professional skills assessment, high level IT- knowledge should bear significant weight (McDonald, 2002: 62). Therefore, possessing at the very least the basic level and knowledge on information technology is a crucial element in the building of a strong self marketing package.

Having the ability to follow direction as well as to give it is truly a talent. The aptitude to interpret and forecast a company’s big picture and engage in active suggestions for future endeavours proves the capacity to provide strategic direction. In addition, being able to direct others when necessary is also a valued skill. Your marketability is significantly boosted if you can demonstrate a track record of helping staff members integrate corporate priorities into their individual objectives (McDonald, 2002: 62). Finally, beyond all other skills and capacities
whether technical or financial the attribute that will determine success in a new position is essentially strong interpersonal abilities. Personal skills are critical since good communication is one of the foundations for success. McDonald refers to a study claiming that interpersonal skills ranked number one among CFOs as the most important consideration when hiring management-level employees. Networking, recognizing your own strengths is at least half the self marketing battle, it is not always easy to identify, analyze and capitalize on your own talents. In addition to online resources, sometimes using an outside source, such as a career consultant, can help you place things in proper perspective (McDonald, 2002: 63).

Figure 1 illustrates four very relevant questions one should ask when beginning to self market; this outline was constructed for this paper in order to clearly see what questions one should ask one’s self, in order to find out more on one’s skills, abilities and areas that need improvement.

Figure 1  The Self-Evaluation Model

Answering these questions presented in figure 1 in an honest fashion should help in finding direction of where one stands and what skills need to be developed. Assessing the level of one’s competency and skills and then analyzing whether or not those can be transferred to other areas of expertise provides useful in portraying that one is a multitalented individual.

After having discussed the recognition of the need to sell one’s self as the starting point for successful self marketing, I will now continue to the notion of applying a state of mind of a marketer and evaluating one’s own actions and behaviours from a marketing perspective.
A Marketer’s Mind frame

Personal brands are symbolic embodiments of a self marketer that publicly distinguish that person from all other competitors (Beals, 2008: 149). In other words, one should adopt the mind frame of a marketer no matter what one’s are of expertise is, at least when it comes to developing an effective career improvement strategy. As mentioned earlier, it all begins by carefully assessing one’s skills and abilities, and then the objective of a strategic self marketing plan is to begin constructing name recognition and affirmative attitudes toward your personal brand. Beals suggests five steps be followed in order to establish a successful plan, these are demonstrated in an outline I constructed in Figure 2.

![Figure 2 - Strategy Building](image)

As any organization so should self marketers have an effective vision statement; it is indeed a snapshot of where one aims to be in the future. An effective vision statement assists in remaining focused and having a clear sense of direction; it should be clear as well as concise, so as to keep it short in order to effortlessly go back to it for both motivational and reminding purposes. After having developed a vision statement, one then needs to determine what the target audience for the realization of that vision is; this is achieved by identifying what the purpose for the self marketing consists of, for example if attempting to regain a certain position within one’s current organization the target audience would be the respective department, people and processes that enable one to become involved within that position and business segment.
Assessment of one’s own strengths and weaknesses as mentioned before is a key element in the building of a personal brand. Beals (2008) suggests the self assessment model resemble the traditional and simple SWOT-analysis

“...serious self marketers take time in developing their plan to do a competitive analysis... other self marketers who have the same target audience you have, are all in a similar profession or have similar socio-political goals...How do you stack up against them in each category you study?” (143).

Goals and objectives should be a product of the strategic self marketing plan’s ultimate vision; they should be in “writing and as quantitative and specific as possible”, (Beals, 2008: 144). Indeed without concrete goals one cannot act or plan on what the next progress should be, in addition setting clear objectives clarifies as well as quantifies one’s needs and wants. Goals should be divided into short-, medium- and long term so that they are again made as clear and concise as possible.

Once, the vision statement has been made, the target audience decided on, one’s own potencies and limitations assessed, unambiguous goals and objectives set it is time to operationalize the self marketing strategy. The operation plan is put in to motion by incorporating a number of marketing methods ranging from using social media channels to direct advertising to networking. Evident direct advertising is expensive and not necessarily the right choice to use in self marketing, yet all is dependent upon what the ultimate goal of the self marketer is. Beals (2008) stresses the importance of integrity in communication

“...Companies deservedly feel the heat when they engage in deceptive advertising. Likewise, you should never be deceptive in your personal promotion activities. The short-term gain you get from it will be outweighed by the long-term harm “(145).

All in all, self marketing should be thought of as a continuous activity that cannot let relegate in its intensity; even if all in one’s career and personal life is at top level, the need to market one’s self for future opportunities is essential. Great self marketing skills come from having confidence in one’s self, setting goals and following them through, putting effort into the work one does and producing better quality through that effort and most importantly, believing in one’s self and in one’s abilities to succeed in working life. In other words, one should determine what one wants, figure out one’s future goals and aim for them, prioritize, and in
addition, one should be able to do all this while recognizing the interdependence of those actions.

In conclusion, self marketing begins from recognizing the fact that one needs to sell one’s self effectively in order to gain the competitive edge in the job hunting process for instance, in addition a marketing oriented mind frame is vital for successful self marketing skills.

Next, I will advance to the matters that were brought up in the pilot study; these issues consist of direct ways and means for self marketing. The construction of an effective cover letter, curriculum vitae and the adoption of interview techniques for successful job interview results as well as the use of social media will be discussed further.

2.2 Effective CV, Cover Letter and Interview Technique

There are several sources on writing and preparing a competent CV and cover letter, yet all of them communicate the same message; the aim is to secure an interview. Here I will discuss the construction of the curriculum vitae and cover letter in further detail.

Curriculum Vitae

In essence, the CV conveys an individual’s personal details in the way that presents him/her in the best possible light; it is indeed a marketing document in which one is marketing one’s self. A person is selling his/her skills, abilities, qualifications and experience to potential employers. In addition to summarizing qualifications, skills and experiences the CV should also reflect key aspects of an applicant’s personality that can enable him/her to stand out from all the other candidates, i.e. the competitors. It is valuable to insert some of the individual qualities and strengths throughout the CV so that one’s uniqueness is truly emphasized. Also, any specific achievements from work, academic or personal life should be highlighted as these too reflect personality and can add value.

According to the University of Kent’s Career Advisory Service (2011)
“... There is no “one best way” to construct a CV; it is your document and can be structured as you wish within the basic framework below. It can be on paper or on-line. There are no absolute rules but, in general, a new graduate’s CV should cover no more than two sides of A4 paper... It is targeted on the specific job or career area for which you are applying and brings out the relevant skills you have to offer, it is carefully and clearly laid out: logically ordered, easy to read and not cramped, it is informative but concise, it is accurate in content, spelling and grammar. If you mention attention to detail as a skill, make sure your spelling and grammar is perfect” (1).

Thus, since self marketing begins before any face to face contact is experienced, one must be able to present one’s skills and abilities in a manner that catches the eye of the potential employer from the very beginning. Some have gone so far as to make a video CV in order to stand out from the crowd, by doing this they enable the employer to get a feel of the possible employee before inviting them to an interview; this method has been criticized however,

“While a video resume introduces applicants on camera, the value such visual imagery adds is debatable, since when the information is delivered verbally, recruiters need to clean the details themselves. Instead, the video resume should be used to augment a text resume since it may provide certain other information about the individual that cannot be assessed from a text resume. For example, an individual may be able to demonstrate exceptional communication skills” (Singh, 2007).

As a result, a video CV should only acts as an addition to the actual CV, and should be recognized as a potential marketing tool in one’s self marketing strategy.

Cover Letter

A cover letter usually accompanies each sent out CV. It may even make the difference between obtaining a job interview and having a resume ignored, therefore it makes good logic to devote the necessary time and effort in to writing effective cover letters.

According to Allison Doyle (2011), a cover letter should complement, not duplicate the resume. Its purpose is to interpret the data-oriented, factual curriculum vitae and add a personal touch. A cover letter is often the earliest written contact with a potential employer, creating a critical first impression.

The cover letter should be designed specifically for its purpose depending on whether it’s a direct application letter or one where the aim is to inquire for potential employment prospects or a networking letter in which one is asking for information and assistance in the job search
process. One should absolutely not design a form letter and send it to potential employers as there is a risk of it ending up in junk mail. Even though it can be time consuming to write a customized cover letter for each job one is applying for, it is still important to take effort in order to show the company why one is a good candidate. Effective cover letters explain the reasons for interest in the specific organization and identify the most relevant skills or experiences; relevance is determined by the employer’s self-interest. They should express a high level of interest and knowledge about the position. (Doyle, 2011)

In conclusion, it has become evident that attaching a cover letter to an application is professional etiquette. Unless specified otherwise, one should always write a concise, interesting and personalized cover letter. An emphasis on strong self marketing should be put from the very beginning of the process.

Interview Strategy

When one makes it past the resumé phase and is called for an interview, it is argued by Jeff Beals (2008) it is the most difficult and important part of the job hunting process and it is there that one’s self marketing skills truly need to shine, during the interview. Interviews provide the best possibility for proving you are the solution to the hiring manager’s problem. Through phone interviews, in-person interviews and second interviews, the relationship between job seeker and hiring manager is forged (Beals, 2008: 213). On a positive note, if one has received an invitation for an interview it can only mean that one was successful in creating a good impression on paper, what is left is to continue on that beneficial impression.

Dressing appropriately is vital; the first key to success – whether it is winning a job, a contract, or an ally – is to make the other person comfortable. Comfort starts from your first appearance; it should put the other person at ease (Beckworth, Beckwith, 2007: 225). An appropriate way of dress communicated a professional attitude and shows respect towards others; one should stay away from provocative garments or clothes that make a statement; since the ultimate goal is to make the other person feel comfortable. One’s appearance and grooming are a part of non-verbal communication, which is valued as highly important. For instance Michael Argyle (1972) argued that there are up to 3 distinct forms of human nonverbal communication which all have different origins and modes of functioning: (a)
nonverbal communication of attitudes and emotions and manipulation of the immediate social situation, (b) nonverbal communication as a support and complement of verbal communication, and (c) nonverbal communication as a replacement for language. In an interview setting, nonverbal communication is used as a support and complement of the verbal communication taking place between interviewer and interviewee as well as to influence the surrounding setting; thus it acts together with the verbal communication and should therefore be paid much attention to. In addition, arriving on time, greeting the interviewer in a polite manner and thanking him/her for having you are fundamental in the creating a good impression and displaying a professional stance. It is equally important to send a thank you letter after the interview, since it shows appreciation for the employer’s interest in you, restates your desire for the position and the company, reminds the employer about your qualifications and demonstrates that you have good manners.

During the actual interview Beals (2008) states that

“You will build deeper rapport by engaging in conversation with the interviewer instead of simply answering questions... Questions are critically important to building rapport and also for establishing credibility. The interviewer is not the only question asker. Interviewees should ask almost as many. Asking questions makes you look interested and enthused. It shows that you are a leader. It also helps you psychologically, because whoever is asking questions is in control at that moment” (218).

Figure 2 illustrates three important points that comprise good interview skills and abilities. Even though it is essentially the interviewer who controls the course and direction of the interview, one should still be in command as well so as to not be surprised by an unexpected question for instance and lose balance, being reactive shows that you are alert and effectively listening to what is being asked of you; conducting extensive research on the organization and position you are being interviewed for assists on your ability of being reactive and to the point. As mentioned earlier, asking questions is a sign of good leadership skills, thus showing an ability to control the course of the interview without being overbearing or domineering can prove to be an important skill.

Remaining active, responsive and steady throughout the interview process is important, as in addition to showing that one is able to concentrate fully to the communication taking place between the interviewee and the interviewer or fellow interviewees, one is also portraying a
level of dedication to the situation there by proving that one indeed wants the position at stake.

In conclusion, the interview is a crucial part of the job hunting process; appearance is highly valued and should make the other person feel at ease, thus a provoking way of dressing is certainly not recommended. Goods manner and showing respect toward the interviewer by arriving early, greeting politely etc. are the factors that comprise the first impression one gives. Carefully studying the organization and employment position one is applying for, being prepared to answer any possible questions as well as asking them, maintaining a high level of concentration and momentum throughout the interview and portraying an aura of healthy confidence are the keys to a successful interview.

Next, I will discuss the use of social media in self marketing. This subject is brought to attention for two reasons, firstly social media has gained recognition and interest worldwide ever since the growing usage of various sites such as Linkedin and Facebook to name a few, the influence of social media presence and behaviour on one’s image has been discussed during the past few years and on this ground I find it to be a relevant topic to bring up when discussing self marketing, secondly social media and how one behaves on different online channels was mentioned in the pilot study and pre interviews.

2.3 Social Media

Social media has become relevant in almost all industries; it is in those various social media channels where people immediately go to for recommendations on everything ranging from food to sports to employment positions and everything in between. It is for this reason that social media as a tool for strategic self marketing will be taken a closer look at.

Social media has been used in career hunting quite actively during the past years; internet sites such as Monster, LinkUp, JobCentral, and YAHOO among many others offer recent graduates and others looking for employment to share a common virtual platform where they are offered the opportunity to sell themselves online, not to mention the self marketing that takes place on places such as Facebook and Linkedin. People post their CV: s, skills and
competencies, wishes and wants, past experiences and general interests for potential employers to have a look at, i.e. the potential employer can very well be someone following that person on Twitter or Linkedin. For these reasons, it is of high importance that one knows what information to share and what not on various social media channels, since it is not very complicated for a prospective employer to find out unflattering information about an applicant by simply conducting research online.

Michael Haenlein and Andreas Kaplan (2010), in their study named “Users of the World Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media”, discuss different tactics businesses should implement when accessing social media and becoming active online. These tactics prove helpful for self marketing as well, after all one is building a business of one whilst engaging in this activity, to an extent. The authors suggest that one should choose carefully which channels of social media to use since there are hundreds available; vigilantly examining the different sites, who visits them and what they have to offer facilitates in choosing only a few to then become active in, being consistent and ensuring activity alignment is key. Before one enters any application, time should be taken out to discover that application and learn about its history and rules. If one is present on more than one social media, it is very important that one is not sending contradictory messages i.e. the same sort of activities should be taking place in all the different forums. Choosing a unique URL for all the social media channels one is using and keeping them consistent is one way to avoid contradicting one’s self. One goal of communication is the resolution of ambiguity and reduction of uncertainty, and nothing is more confusing than contradicting messages across different channels (Haenlein, Kaplan, 2010: 65).

Most importantly if one wants be noticed, one should be interesting, thus, it is indeed of high importance what information one shares online; not everything an applicant may find as interesting is seen the same way by an employer and in contrast not all thoughts should be exposed to a wider audience. In addition, whilst attempting to be interesting a level of humbleness should also be maintained; thus, a perfect balance of the two characteristics would be the ideal.

Evidently, social media is changing the way people become employed today and it has made competition ever more difficult and challenging. The standards have become extremely high to
illustrate to a potential employer why one would be an irreplaceable addition to their organization, there for self marketing has become more and more important in order for individuals to truly stand out. It is often advised to “Google” one’s self in order to find out what information is present online and see what the top search results are and what content is available on the links; one needs to be aware of the content shown on those channels. One’s brand identity on a social media channel is obviously the logo and personal photo one uses, here again consistency is important; therefore using the same photo on all the social media canals is recommendable; people may share the photo to present it to others, thus it should really represent you in the best possible manner. Showing one’s personality is fine; however a certain degree of professionalism should be maintained. The case of Laura Gainor for example, the marketing specialist who used self marketing and social media to land her ideal employment position is an interesting illustration to study, when looking at a concrete way of self marketing where one shows one’s personality yet remains professional (see Appendix 2).

Recognizing the need to sell one’s self, adopting a marketer’s mind frame, creating an effective CV and cover letter, preparing for an interview strategically and recognizing one’s own strengths and downfalls, and assessing ways on how to behave on social media channels and online in general were all discussed in that they are the subjects most related to self marketing on a realistic level; these activities should be adopted in order to successfully self market. In addition these were the subjects that the students of the pilot study wanted to explore on a deeper intensity. Moving forward, self marketing will be discussed next through a branding perspective in order to gain a deeper theoretical insight on the topic.

The creation of a CV, cover letter and interview techniques were discussed here, due to the fact that these subjects were mentioned more than once in the pilot study by the informants. Also, the role of social media in self marketing activities was further examined on the same grounds. The motivation behind the above mentioned topics was that these attributes such as the creation of the CV, cover letter, preparing for a job interview and utilizing social media were not only mentioned in the pilot study where a clear need for further information on the subjects was expressed and the students interviewed in the preliminary research distinctively mentioned that these elements were of interest and presented a challenge to them, but in addition the topics provide excellent examples that can be later utilized for the formation of the self marketing tool box. The aim is to provide students with a framework on developing
their self marketing skills thus discussing the students’ areas of interest in addition to relevant theory was necessary. Furthermore, self marketing consists of direct methods of implementing action running from simple CV writing to more complex situations such as how to communicate one’s self in an interview situation.
3. Self marketing through Branding Literature

The aim of this chapter is to discuss self marketing through a branding perspective; there is an obvious logic of applying to people the same marketing and branding principles that were originally developed for products and businesses. In addition, charisma will be discussed in that it is an important element in making a lasting impression on others, which is what self marketing activities attempt to achieve.

Self marketing will be investigated from a branding perspective, due to the fact that there is little evidence of the development or promulgation of an over-arching conceptual framework for self marketing, rooted in the discipline of marketing, and few examples of a strategic mindset developed from basic marketing principles (Shepherd, 2005:3), and that the attempt is to transfer the principles and practices of marketing from products to individuals in a coherent manner.

Furthermore, branding literature will be utilized instead of basic marketing theory since it can offer a wider platform to choose relevant concepts from and it identifies clear ways on how one can build a strong identity and communicate that identity consistently.

3.1 Brand Identity

Self marketing as a concept refers to the ways and means in which one communicates his/her abilities to a wider audience, in networking situations, in applying for employment positions and making a name for one's self as a means of getting ahead in one's career, it is the act that when properly adopted should end up in differentiating one in an increasingly crowded marketplace; studying this notion from the perspective of existing branding theory helps in gaining deeper insight on self marketing and assists in creating the toolbox that students may use as a guideline when necessary.

The key to build a strong brand lies in understanding the brand identity. According to Aaker (2002) a brand identity consists of four perspectives that are the brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol, which can be divided further into twelve
elements. The brand identity structure includes a core and an extended identity; the core identity represents the essence of the brand (Aaker 2002: 85-86):

- **Product**: product scope, product attributes, quality/value, use experience, users, country of origin.
- **Organization**: organizational attributes, local versus global.
- **Person**: brand personality, customer/brand relationships.
- **Symbol**: visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage.

All four perspectives are different and each helps to enrich and differentiate the brand identity. However, not all brand identities should be based on all perspectives. Some brands can only find one perspective to be useful, whereas others use all four. Nevertheless, in the process of creating a brand identity it is crucial to consider all of the perspectives in order to find out which ones articulate the brand the most; since, the focus here is to discuss self marketing through branding literature; a closer look needs to be taken towards the creation of brand identity through all the perspectives.

Therefore, one could perceive these four perspectives from an “I”-point of view; for example asking what attributes, qualities and experiences does one have to offer, what features can one provide that make them competitive in a global market; what can one offer at a local and a global level, what does one’s personality bring to the table, what images or metaphors could be used to self market in the best possible manner?

One of the typical mistakes during the brand identity creation process is a restricted focus on product attributes, existing brand images, brand positions, and the brand’s external role of influencing customers. In order to avoid these errors and broaden the brand concept, it is useful to take other dimensions and perspectives into consideration.

The Brand as Product perspective according to Aaker (2002) includes product scope, product attributes, quality/value, use experience, users, and country of origin. Every brand has a core product; thus, the product scope implies association people have to this product, which makes an important part of the brand identity. It is also important to know with which product the brand is being associated with. Aaker (2002) states that a strong connection to a product
guarantees that the brand will be remembered when the product class is discussed; applying this to a self marketing activity would mean that one should market one’s self in a manner that when he or she is being discussed for an employment position for example, certain attributes would be directly linked to him or her, for instance when mentioning certain skills his or her name would immediately stand out from the other applicants. Product attributes provide functional and emotional benefits for customers by offering something more than its competitors.

Quality/Value of a product according to Aaker (2002) gives the brand strength and priority over others. Quality can be used as a core identity element, and value is related to quality. Use experience is related to a place where a product can be used. The term, associations with users, refers to positioning a brand according to the personality of the customer who uses the product. A strong user-type position can imply a value proposition and a brand personality (Aaker 2002: 82). Link to a country of origin means associating a brand with the country it derives from, which hopefully increases a credibility of the brand.

The Brand-as-Organization perspective consists of organization attributes (such as innovation, consumer concern) and local vs. global. Aaker (2002) claims that the brand-as-organization perspective focuses more on attributes of the company than attributes of the product or service; organizational attributes are more difficult to imitate than product attributes; it is harder to duplicate a company with values, special programs, and remarkable employees. Organizational attributes also provide credibility for a new product (Aaker 2002: 83). Local vs. global implies that a brand can be local or global, both cases have their own advantages and disadvantages. A local brand can easily become the pride of local inhabitants, which pushes them to purchase it. Although a global brand can gain more recognition and prestige, it may end up losing its personality.

The Brand-as-Person perspective includes personality and brand-customer relationships. Aaker (2002) explains that a personality can be whatever; genuine, energetic, modern, active, or youthful. A brand personality closes the gap between a stranger and the product, and makes the stranger its new customer. The brand personality allows people to relate to the brand and become loyal customers. In sum, the brand personality and identity symbolizes what a customer aspires to be and feels related to. By buying a certain brand, a customer quite often
expresses his or her personality. The personality of the brand communicates the product attributes and builds brand customer relationships.

The Brand-as-Symbol perspective consists of two parts: visual imagery and metaphors, and brand heritage. A strong symbol helps a brand to gain recognition and allows to be remembered in the future. Visual imagery symbols easily remind of the brand. Anything that represents a brand can be a symbol, including, celebrities and even programs like the Ronald McDonald House for McDonald’s. It is very important if a symbol has a metaphor behind it. A brand heritage can also be expressed through symbols and be present on the brand. When considering the Brand-as-Symbol concept from a self marketer’s perspective this aspect could for instance refer to any visual imagery that one may use to communicate one’s personality, running from personal pictures to imagery shared on social media and other online channels.

**Core and Extended Identity**

Aaker (2002) explains that the core identity represents the timeless essence of the brand; it is the centre that remains after you peel away the layers of an onion. The core identity is the soul of the brand, the fundamental beliefs and values that drive the brand, and everything that the company behind the brand stands for. In terms of self marketing, the core identity is indeed how one presents one’s self in situations such as job interviews and networking events and even, throughout one’s life time; the key is to remain consistent in the identity that is communicated yet altering the way the communication is done, according to the situation at hand.

The core identity normally stays the same if a brand enters a new market or goes through changes; it contains the core associations that enable the brand to remain the same. Over the years the communication strategies might change, yet the core identity should stay impeccable and timeless. In terms of self marketing, this could be translated to a person staying true to who they are at their very core yet changing their communication strategies according to the situations they find themselves in. Ideally, customers should perceive a brand according to its core identity; this same principle should apply to the perception one gives of one’s self to a potential employer.
According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002) the extended identity is everything that is not and that doesn’t fit into the core identity. The extended identity includes details that enable to visualize what a brand stands for and elements that give completeness to the brand; the bits and pieces that evolve around one’s core identity. The extended identity is filled with useful details that complete the brand; in self marketing, these details may be the ones that truly differentiate a person from the rest. A brand personality does not often become a part of the core identity (Aaker, 2002: 88). However, it can be exactly the right vehicle to add needed texture and completeness by being part of the extended identity.

A brand essence is part of the core identity and represents itself similar to a single thought that captures the soul of the brand. A good brand essence statement captures the main idea behind what the brand stands for and holds the core identity elements together. The brand essence should be distinct in order to differ from competitors, and it should be persuasive and convincing enough to inspire clients and employees of the company; i.e. convincing enough to make one stand out of the crowd and be remembered over the others. The more interpretations the brand essence has the more effective and meaningful it usually is. (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2002: 45-47.)

### 3.2 Value Proposition

The brand identity has no meaning unless it provides a value proposition for its customers. Unless a person can provide true benefit to a company they are applying to work for, their way of marketing themselves is in fact useless; a good self marketer remains realistic and emphasizes the true values that they can provide to an area of expertise. Aaker defines a brand’s value proposition as a statement of the functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer. An effective value proposition should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive purchase decisions (2002: 95). According to his Brand Identity Planning Model, which has been modified in Table 1 to fit a self marketing framework, it can be seen that the value proposition leads to a brand-customer relationship, or in the case of a self marketer it leads to a preferably long-term and loyal relationship between the business and the person.
### Table 1  A Self Marketer’s Brand Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Essence: Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core Identity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour</strong>: Social and outgoing, I get others involved and excited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong>: Consistent best-of-category work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovativeness</strong>: Not afraid to use my imagination and introduce new ideas at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong>: Provide value in all of my activities, in team working situations, leadership, risk management, meetings etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extended Identity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novelty</strong>: As a recent or soon to be graduate I have something to offer and just needs the opportunity to portray my professional skills and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong>: (1) I am not afraid to take risks; (2) I am ambitious in getting results at the work place; (3) I am just at the beginning of my career, I have something to prove; I am willing to learn; (4) Competent, I always do my best, and have high standards in terms of the quality of my work and a strong sense of morals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Me” symbols</strong>: (1) How am I apparent in social media? (2) Projects or activities I am known for; (3) Personal pictures that offer insight on my personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value Proposition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional benefits</strong>: Multilingual, good negotiator, IT-skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional benefits</strong>: (1) Taking pride in potentially being the underdog due to lack of work experience. (2) Outgoing and friendly personality, willing to work with others. (3) Giving a good first impression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-expressive benefits</strong>: Willingness to make my own voice heard; taking risks when bringing new ideas forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship benefits</strong>: A loyal worker in an organization, committed to forming a long term relationship with the business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 illustrates an example of a brand identity for a self marketer, it is derived from an original table created by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002) where the core identity contains four concepts – quality, innovation, fun/entertainment, and value; and the extended identity adds the underdog position, brand personality, and symbols. I have decided not to use the original table which was created for the Virgin organization, due to the fact that it does not offer anything of use to the field of self marketing or to an individual wanting to gain self marketing skills. The brand identity table is useful in that each person using it can visualize it from the point of view of his/her own skills. The table is crafted to present general attributes that may very well express one’s personality, skills and abilities as seen through core identity, an extended identity and value proposition.

The table is divided into three main categories, the core identity which according to Aaker (2002) represents the timeless essence of the brand; it is the centre that remains after you peel away the layers of an onion, therefore one’s core identity relates to the fundamental characteristics that make a person who they are, in table 1 the core identity is constructed from behaviour, reliability, innovativeness and value; these traits are used as an example of a person’s core identity. The next category is the extended identity which includes details that enable to visualize what a brand stands for and elements that give completeness to the brand; the bits and pieces that evolve around one’s core identity, in the table they are illustrated as novelty, traits and “me” symbols. These three subjects refer to the elements that complete one’s core identity, as an example being a beginner in the job hunting and self marketing process adds an extension to one’s core identity in that it underlines the need for an opportunity to begin gaining experience and proving one’s skills and abilities to a wider audience, in addition traits or characteristics that one may have such as competence, willingness to take risks and learn and provide quality results also provide more in to your identity. “Me” symbols refer to how one portrays one’s self in a more visual manner, for instance how one is apparent on social media channels and what information one shares there. The final category is the value proposition, without which the brand identity has no meaning; the brand needs to provide a value proposition for its customers, in this case a self marketer needs to provide real value to a potential employer for instance. The value proposition consists of functional, emotional, self-expressive, and relationship benefits. Functional benefits are based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to a customer, in this case benefits such as language and IT skills may offer efficient value in a
prospective employment position. Emotional benefits provide customers with a positive feeling after the purchase is complete or in a self marketing situation leave an excellent impression on a potential employer after an interview. Self-expressive benefits are those that allow customers to self-express themselves and become symbols of a person’s self-concept, making one’s own voice heard and not being afraid of taking risks when bringing new ideas forth are means of providing self-expressive benefits in a self marketing construct. A brand-customer relationship according to Aaker (2002) often derives from the value proposition, or it can also originate from the brand identity itself, in table 1 the provided relationship benefit is referred to a potential long term and loyal affiliation between a person and their place of employment.

Functional Benefits are based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to customer. These functions are performed by the product or service for the customer. One negative aspect about functional benefits is that they can easily be imitated, and that decreases the strategic flexibility, which does not allow the brand to extend. I.e. functional benefits that a recent graduate might have would be for instance, as stated in the table, language and negotiation skills and IT-proficiency; these are indeed easily emulated and this is why the individual doing the self marketing should also stress other benefits.

Emotional Benefits provide customers with a positive feeling after the purchase is complete. Emotional benefits increase the satisfaction of purchasing the brand; they provide the brand with richness and give customers emotional satisfaction. The key to emotional benefits is in the brand focus on customers’ feelings; the brand must be appealing enough in an emotional way; it needs to touch the bigger picture. Brand strategists believe that strong brand identities consist of functional and emotional benefits both (Aaker, 2002: 97). The table stresses the emotional benefit of having an outgoing and social personality, moreover being someone people would want to work with and also taking pride in the fact that one is new and in a way the underdog.

Self-Expressive Benefits are those that allow customers to self-express themselves and become symbols of a person’s self-concept. Self-expressive benefits communicate a person’s self-image. By buying a certain brand the customer fulfils the need for self-expression. If we compare self-expressive benefits with emotional benefits, self-expressive benefits focus more
on the self rather than the feelings. (Aaker, 2002: 99) This in turn relates to the way in which recent graduates express themselves, in what way they bring their own characters on display. The table mentions making one’s own voice heard and not being afraid of taking risks when bringing new ideas forth as examples.

A brand-customer relationship according to Aaker (2002) often derives from the value proposition, or it can also originate from the brand identity itself. Especially a good foundation for a brand-customer relationship is when the brand itself represents a company or person, instead of a product. Positive feelings and associations like concern for the environment or consumers, admiration or friendship, and being a part of the community cannot quite be described as value proposition, but also contribute to a brand-customer relationship. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002) state that the goal of any brand should be to create a relationship with its customer; which means a brand can be a friend, an advisor, a mentor or anything else that resembles a personal relationship. In essence, the goal of any self marketer is to form a relationship with a potential employer and in fact form a relationship in all the networking activities one engages in, thus the brand-customer relationship should be one of the ultimate goals of engaging in self marketing activities to begin with.

These branding theories were presented in order to gain a theoretical approach towards the subject of self marketing, utilizing the brand identity table provides a guideline on how to analyze one’s own skills and abilities, the extended brand identity forces a self marketer to dig deeper into one’s own identity and bring forth new attributes of one’s self. Furthermore, in the process of self marketing it is critical to consider all of the four perspectives as presented by Aaker (2002) in order to find out which ones articulate one’s personality the most; the identity consists of four perspectives that are the brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol, once these are implemented to one’s self, a self marketing framework can then begin to formulate.

Shepherd (2005) discusses the application of branding theory in to personal branding, in this text however branding was applied to self marketing; nonetheless an interesting perspective is brought to attention and Shepherd’s view supports the brand identity theory and how it should be applied to self marketing.
“According to most advocates, the personal branding process mirrors the product or corporate branding process, and should follow three broad stages... extract, express and exude. First, the individual is encouraged to look inside themselves to discover their key identifying attributes ... They then construct a compelling brand statement around this attribute set. Finally, they create a strategy for making the brand visible to the outside world... Branding for people in about finding your “big idea”, the core you, putting it out in the universe to fulfil itself” (2).

The above mentioned citation from Shepherd (2005) suggests a similar pattern of action as the brand core and extended identity structure does. Self marketing does indeed begin from an inside out viewpoint at first.

Next, I will discuss a set of personal qualities needed to build a strong brand, or in this case a well-built set of self marketing tools for a student. The qualities of denting, binding, leaning and refusing will now be applied to people in the same way that they were originally applied to products and services in the marketing literature.

### 3.3 Personal Qualities

Morgan (2004) introduces a guide to replacing the traditional view on branding held by organizations in to a more demanding one, what he calls the “challenger culture”. It aims to offer counselling for branding experts on how to build something more from their brand and aids the reader in implementing a broader understanding of the benefits of a challenger culture within their own organization. This branding framework offers great insight on personal qualities that need to be brought out in people in order to achieve success in working life and they can be well applied to the concept of self marketing. A set of five personal qualities are introduced by Morgan (2004), they are first and foremost characteristics that challenger individuals creating a challenger culture need to bring out in themselves, four of these five qualities can also be applied in to the development of self marketing skills and will be discussed next.
1) Denting

Denting refers to driving the brand vision, in this case your personal brand, forward and interpreting rejection as a request for additional information. Denters may initially sound like rebellious mavericks, but in fact they share a number of common qualities: they are on a personal mission to drive the brand vision forward, they see themselves as employed by the brand, not the company, they are therefore doing this job for this job, rather than for the one it will get them afterwards, they are happy to embrace tension within the organization rather than dilute the vision of the brand and they do not easily accept the answer “no” – from inside or outside the company (Morgan, 2004:122).

In actuality, the concept of denting goes somewhat hand in hand with the characteristics of charisma, which will be discussed later in this chapter, especially with possessing high self-esteem and having a vision. If one is to present oneself in a confident manner and stand out from the competition, one needs to be able to project a confident presence, clear goals and a true passion and want for the task at hand.

2) Binding

Binding refers to how challengers create singularity of direction across a team; it argues that one does not need a single individual at the helm of a challenger brand, but one does need a singular vision, and it looks at how challenger teams have created agreements or “contracts” between themselves and their partners in order to bind everyone in the team to delivering that brand vision (Morgan, 2004: 116). Moreover, the concept of binding refers to a singularity of vision and purpose, even if a group of people is involved.

The way in which the concept of binding can also be applied to self-marketing, and not just corporate branding comes from the fact that success in business is not based on individual talent and capacity alone; instead it is achieved, often, as a result of team work and the ability to be a functioning and productive member of that team. Being able to convey that one would make a productive team member and that one is aware of how crucial team work is, and can be, for accomplishment in business, and realizing the fact that, in team work, all members are
pursuing the same goal is an important feature in the development of self marketing skills as well as in creating a challenger brand culture suggested by Morgan.

3) Leaning

Leaning refers to exposing oneself to risk and knowing how to profit from it. Thus, leaning in to exposure does indeed present a different kind of involvement; it recognizes that to do what is best for a brand’s future success might involve a certain level of risk – “and for someone looking for a rock solid career path through an organization, that may be an uncomfortable thing to contemplate, but if you want to be a Challenger, it’s something that has to be accepted, end indeed leant into” (Morgan, 2004: 169).

Here again, we can take the idea and concept of leaning, suggested by Morgan as one of the personal qualities needed to create a challenger brand culture, and use it to our advantage. Leaning can be used as one method of self marketing; and it certainly helps in developing self marketing skills. For example, in a job interview having the courage to take a risk and step outside the box can certainly give a great impression to a potential employer; however one should of course know which risks are worth taking and which are not. In any case, exposing oneself to risk is a desirable and looked for characteristic in today’s ever changing business environment, it certainly proves that an individual is willing to work hard and be ambitious to achieve goals.

4) Refusing

What a Challenger individual refuses to accept defines them as powerfully as what they have a passion for (Morgan, 2004: 116). The word, refusing, does portray a negative impression, however in this context; it is meant to be something positive, it is meant to communicate a different kind of passion. Refusing encourages us to not accept “that the category has to be that way, or the trade relationships have to be that way, or the consumer relationship has to be that way” (Morgan, 2004: 181).

According to Morgan, central to one’s ability to refuse is also a very strong sense of what a brand should be in the first place – despite what anyone else may think on the matter. The old
saying, those who stand for nothing will fall for anything, applies well here; it is a sign of character and personal strength to refuse to do something against one’s principles and sense of morals. Applying this notion to self marketing; showing good and firm character, the courage to refuse an issue that one is against, if such an issue even comes up of course, is definitely a characteristic that may most likely enhances the representation one gives of one’s self.

These personal qualities as introduced by Morgan (2004) were discussed here in order to offer guidelines for students, the focus of this study, on how to build something more from their own personality, skills and abilities. Denting, binding, leaning and refusing are all valid ways of improving one’s self marketing skills, these qualities were discussed through a branding perspective, yet they offer an insight on personal qualities that need to be brought out in people in order to achieve success in working life and career planning.

### 3.4 Charisma

Charisma, defined by the Greek as a gift from God, and otherwise known as a feature found in people characterized by personal charm and attractiveness, is not a quality that one can learn to have. At least this is the popular belief on the matter; you either have charisma or you don’t, i.e. you are born with it or not. However, one can question whether it would be possible to enhance and develop personal qualities within ourselves or even create qualities that we have never had; according to Owen (2008) it is indeed possible. Charisma will be discussed next due to the fact that it can be seen as a personal quality and in addition having or not having an abstract feature such as charisma can vitally influence the success or failure of an individual’s self marketing activities.

There are a number of globally recognized personality profiling tools available to guide a user towards greater understanding of themselves and others. Yet, profiling charisma has up until recently proved a daunting challenge because of abstract and often, conflicting definitions (Owen, 2008:9). However, according to Owen among others, charisma is not God given or inborn; instead it is a behavioural model that anyone can develop. The elements of charisma are constructed of five features; first Owen argues that charismatic individuals possess high-
self esteem; they feel comfortable within themselves which in turn should convey to others that they are authentic and assertive. Second, they must have a driving force within whereby individuals are living the life based on what is important to them; often referred to as “values”, these drive and motivate behaviour so that individuals appear dynamic and enthusiastic (Owen, 2008:11). Third, charismatic individuals possess a sensory awareness which allows them to read their fellow beings and the mood of others. Fourth, they encompass a clear vision of what they want and where they are headed, “this creates a strong energy of intent, an intensity that others can feel” (Owen, 2008:11). And finally, people who are charismatic have a high level of energy; charismatic people both display energy and concurrently draw it upon them. Figure 3 presents, the five elements of charisma concisely.

It is important to examine and recognize the characteristics that make up charisma, due to the fact that in self marketing the focus is on how the individual presents him/herself. Charisma is a crucial characteristic in making a great first impression for instance in a job interview; walking in with all the right elements both internal and external and being charismatic can have a crucial effect on how the job interview proceeds and what the end result is. Figure 3 was crafted in order to paint a clearer picture on what elements make up charisma and how these can be developed further.

Figure 3  The Elements of Charisma
One can build up charisma by first carefully examining the five characteristics and then developing and enhancing each of them. Owen (2008) argues that, self-improvement, development and growth evolve through four stages:

1) At first, the individual is not even aware of what he/she should be improving on; this is referred to by Owen (2008) as “unconscious incompetence”.

2) The next stage occurs when the learner becomes aware of their need/want to develop and improve; they become consciously incompetent leading to either the motivation to do something about it or leave things as they are (Owen, 2008: 18).

3) Once a learner has reached the stage of really wanting to self improve and develop self marketing skills and enhance charisma, it can be said that the learner is on the way to becoming consciously competent. Effectively, they are required to set aside time to practice and focus on implementing the changes they desire (Owen, 2008: 18).

4) The final stage of self-improvement, development and growth refers to the stage where the learner has integrated his/her development requirements and a newly improved performance is being achieved naturally. At this point, the learner is unconsciously competent.

Clearly, change does not happen overnight, thus when individuals truly want to develop themselves, they must take the needed time to do so and carefully examine themselves, recognize their short comings and weaknesses and put in a great effort to become better; to have enhanced self marketing skills and possess charisma.

At this time, competition for employment positions and for keeping an employment position is harder than ever; having the right diploma and sufficient work experience are, in most cases, the same qualities that the other competitors have as well. Thus, possessing developed self marketing skills and charisma might very well create the one differentiating factor resulting in the keeping or acquiring of a career.
The element of charisma was brought to attention in this text due to the fact that it is without a doubt a strong quality a person should have in order to be remembered and stand out in a crowd. In addition, discussing the fact that charisma is indeed a quality that one can develop and maintain provides useful awareness for people willing to enhance their own self marketing skills.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to attempt to explore self marketing from the standpoint of marketing and branding as an academic discipline. However, a particular dispute is indeed whether or not the marketing community can take in the notion of self marketing into its ever widening field, and in fact resolve some of the conceptual issues that exist in their advocacy. As Shepherd (2005) inquires

“To put not too fine point on it, can the discipline of marketing reclaim self marketing and personal branding from the enthusiasts? For the budding professional marketer, the authors of self-help books, career advisors and Web pundits appear to be the primary sources of advice currently available on the subject. Is it beyond the wit or ambition of mainstream marketing to put its own seal of approval on these potentially crucial ideas?” (12).
3.5 Construction of the Tool Box

To conclude this chapter, the theoretical information provided earlier will be utilized in the formation of a tool box that illustrates the skills needed and ways on how to develop those skills. The toolbox is created using both the methods introduced in the previous chapter as well as the theory from branding literature discussed in the chapter before. Therefore, the aim is indeed to answer the first research question i.e. how can a self marketing framework/tool box be created? In addition, this framework can then be utilized to answer the second research question in the methodological component, i.e. what are students’ expectations, thoughts and feelings on the created tool box and self marketing as a concept?

Since, the ultimate aim of this study is threefold: (1) to prepare a self marketing tool box consisting of useful information and recommendations students may use when job hunting and networking in general, (2) to research the information students have on self marketing and investigate their expectations with regards to the presented tool box, and finally, (3) to provide implications on where students can develop their own self marketing bringing the theoretical part to an end will achieve the first aim of this study as mentioned above. The tool box can be seen in Figure 4. The tool box introduces the aim at first, which is to describe self marketing attributes as discussed in the theoretical framework and then describe how they could be translated in to action, for instance the attribute of brand identity can be realized by making one’s own brand identity table, recognizing one’s core and extended identity alongside the value proposition; this assists in realizing one’s own skills and competencies.

The tool box attempts to include the theoretical information discussed in this paper in a concise and coherent manner so that the individual utilizing this framework may find it useful in beginning to develop his/her own self marketing skills. However, this tool box is not the final version in that it may well change after the empirical component if the informants find it to be not comprehensive enough.
Figure 4  Self Marketing Tool Box

• Moving from the recognition of attributes to action; beginning self marketing.

**AIM**

• A) Identity, Value Proposition and Credibility
• B) Personal Quality: Denting, Binding, Leaning & Refusing
• C) Charisma

**ATTRIBUTE**

• A) Create your own brand identity table; recognize your core and extended identity and identify your value proposition. Express your personality, skills and abilities; visualize. Assess yourself through the brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol perspective.
• B) Exercise confidence when presenting yourself, show that you have excellent team working skills, do not avoid risk taking, and portray your own character. Analyze your self marketing through the practices of denting, binding, leaning and refusing.
• C) Recognize your delimitations and work on them; develop your energy level, self esteem and create a vision for the future. Work on interpersonal skills; network.

**ACTION**

Recognize the need to sell yourself, adopt a marketing oriented thought, and revise CV and cover letter writing alongside interview techniques. Assess your social media and online presence.
3.6 Summary of Theoretical Part

The theoretical part emphasized certain key elements; it began by discussing the must for an individual to recognize the need to sell one’s self was discussed. The very essence in marketing thought is recognised as the means of increasing visibility, awareness and forming the path towards long term relationships between businesses and consumers; thus, in self marketing activities a person must be willing to apply this notion to his/her own activities and communications. In addition, in order to successfully self market one must adopt a marketing oriented way of thinking and behaving; a marketer’s mind frame follows a consecutive order when marketing him/her- self, Beals (2008) suggests that this should begin by developing a personal vision statement, deciding on the target audience, assessing one’s strengths and weaknesses, forming clear goals and objectives, developing an operations strategy and then beginning implementation, i.e. the order follows a very basic marketing strategy applicable for goods and services.

In addition, ways of developing self marketing skills through direct methods such as CV and cover letter creation, where bringing one’s personality and individuality in the clearest most concise way possible is highly recommended. Behaviour during interviews, bringing one’s thoughts and expertise to the interviewer’s attention was also discussed as well as means and methods on how to perform and display one’s self via social media. These were all discussed due to the fact that they were mentioned during the pilot study; the students showed a need for deeper analysis regarding the topics of CV, cover letter, interview techniques and social media.

Finally, self marketing was looked into through branding literature, the core and extended identity. The brand identity consists of four perspectives that are the brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol, which can be divided further into twelve elements. It includes a core and extended identity with a value proposition, these were applied to marketing the self; i.e. the individual should begin by realizing what his/ her very essence is and what revolves around that essence, what sort of skills and abilities from functional to emotional ones for example. The value proposition refers to what direct value can a brand bring to its consumer, here it was suggested that a self marketer carefully assesses
what they can provide of value to a potential employer for instance. Personal qualities that can be used to bring out the most of one’s personality and successfully self market were discussed and ways of developing those qualities called denting, binding, leaning and refusing were suggested. Charisma was discussed in that it can be seen as a central quality in making a great first impression for example in a job interview; having all the right elements both internal and external may very well effect how the job interview proceeds and what the end result is. Finally, a self marketing tool box was constructed; the framework was meant to be as unambiguous and to the point as possible, therefore not all was included in its construction. The emphasis was mainly on how individuals can use the tool box in order to better understand themselves and being able to, with its support begin self marketing successfully.

In conclusion the core theoretical themes of this study are (1) brand identity, (2) core and extended identity, (3) personal qualities and (4) self marketing tool box as seen in figure 4.
4. Methodology

This chapter will introduce the method of research applied, explain the reasoning behind the choice of method as well as discuss interview techniques and illustrate the interview guide.

A qualitative method was applied in this research. The method of sampling was aimed to select cases rich in information; informants with a lack of work experience and at their master’s level, thus close to graduation and the launching of their working life, these informants would most likely have much to share with regards to the use of self marketing in employment seeking situations and a need for guidelines on how they could market themselves in the best possible way. The specific type and number of cases selected depended on the study purpose and resources. As the purpose of the thesis was clear and certain types of respondents were needed in order to meet the objective of the study, i.e. business students of a higher university degree either at the Hanken School of Economics or the Helsinki School of Economics, under the age of 30 years, with minimal work experience, the choice on qualitative research was purposeful sampling for the pre-interviews and the snowball method for the actual interviews.

4.1 Research Method and Objective

Each sampling technique including snowballing is aimed to reach the same goal that is to select cases purposefully, however, different situations require different approaches and due to this there are several ways of conducting purposeful sampling. Snowballing, i.e. identifying cases through people who know other people who in their turn know others who may be of help in the research study, was used for this thesis. I decided to use this method since it seemed the logical choice to help pick students with a similar background; the sample was not heterogeneous in nature.

The aim was to explore how students see the idea of self marketing and how familiar they are with branding themselves. I sought to find out if they feel it is necessary in today’s competitive job market, to attain deeper knowledge regarding the vital tools needed upon graduation, such as interview skills, the proper drafting of the curriculum vitae and self presentation skills among others. I wished to explore their expectation and feelings towards the idea of self
marketing and investigate in what ways they might be utilizing various self marketing means. In addition, the objective was to conduct an in-depth study highly rich in information; thus the unit of analysis consisted of 12 informants from the Hanken School of Economics, the Helsinki School of Economics. The informants consisted of business students alone, therefore the results do not cover all types of students; in addition no deep comparison or analysis was made between students of marketing and economics, although this could have been possible. I chose not to do so in order to remain focused on the actual aim which is researching business students’ expectations towards the subject of self marketing without differentiating students majoring in marketing or economics.

As to the type of purposeful sampling, snowball sampling was applied since it proved to be the most appropriate method considering the aim was to interview business students, and business students easily refer to their colleagues for information gathering. Furthermore the purpose of the research was to understand and describe a particular group in depth, i.e. the major stakeholders of schools, the pupils, or in this case the business students of business schools. Qualitative research was chosen since the purpose was to gain detailed and comprehensive information. Interviewing is a highly efficient research method to acquire data related to individuals’ attitudes, perceptions, expectations and values, this is in that sense rather impracticable to accommodate through a quantitative method. Having a quota of 12 students was profound enough to give a valid representation.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

When interviewing a student from Hanken, whom I had attended a same marketing course with, I asked her to nominate another individual who could be asked to give his/her opinion on the topic of my research, an individual studying at either Hanken or HSE. I then interviewed this new individual and continued in the same way until the material became more or less saturated, i.e. I was getting no new viewpoints from new informants. Prior to this, the five initial pre interviews were conducted via purposeful sampling.

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2005) discuss data saturation on qualitative research flowingly
“...purposive samples are the most commonly used form of nonprobabilistic sampling, and their size typically relies on the concept of “saturation”...although the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes, prior to data collection, necessary for conducting quality research.” (59)

The discussion follows to suggest that prior to initiating to conduct the interviews and decide on sample size the researcher should create a codebook consisting of certain qualities or answers and then referring to that codebook to see which attributes or qualities have been occurring consequently; only then can one realize that saturation has in fact been reached; this type of coding is especially of use when the sample is extremely heterogeneous and the aim is to compare different groups for instance. In this particular thesis however, the sample is homogenous in nature and the objective is not to compare different demographics to one another. For most research enterprises, in which the aim is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogenous individuals, twelve interviews should suffice (Guest et. al. 2005: 79), thus justifying with the overall aim of the thesis and nature of the needed informants I used a sample size of 12 individuals as the target of the study. The interviewee profiles can be seen in Appendix 4.

Snowball sampling is an efficient method for populations that are not well delimited nor well detailed, for example students of a higher university degree; the very target of my research. The downside of this method is that I do not get a precise idea of the factual division of the opinions in my target population. Since, people who suggest other people that they know, might be suggesting individuals who very well share similar views, and if this were true then other clusters of interest might have been left unnoticed. This can be compensated by asking people to nominate such persons, who might be of an opposite opinion, or begin the snowball chain from not one but several different people, even from different social groups; however this was not applicable for this research since the group of people I intended to research was homogenous in nature.
4.3 Interviews

Interviews as a method of obtaining in depth information are often used alongside observation in qualitative research; its purpose is first and foremost to gather data. Silverman (2006) points out that everything is dependent upon one’s research topic; methods in themselves have no instinct value and the world never speaks directly to us but is always encoded via recording instruments like field notes and transcripts.

A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience, not only to the interviewer but also to the interviewee. The process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn’t know- or at least were not fully aware of- before the interview (Patton, 2002: 405).

There are primarily three alternatives of interviewing according to Patton (2002): the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended interview. The first also known as the unstructured interview has its benefits in that questions can flow from immediate context, same persons can be interviewed several times as questions emerge from the interaction taking place and it allows for deepening of the topic (Holmlund-Rytkönen, 2010: lecture), on the other hand it can consume a lot of time, be difficult to analyse and not easy to make notes on. The general interview guide approach involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins (Patton, 2002: 342). In other words, the interview guide functions as a checklist during the interview; it keeps the interviewer on track and with it, all relevant topics should be covered. Some drawbacks of course exist, for instance spontaneity suffers with this approach, one could miss out on issues that are relevant/important to the informant (Holmlund-Rytkönen, 2010: lecture).

The standardized open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words (Patton, 2002:342). In this type of approach, analysis is made easier by making the responses easy to find and compare, the interview is highly focused and time is efficiently utilized and variation among
Interviewers can be minimized if several interviewers are used. Patton (2002) does discuss the combination of several approaches and states that interview strategies are by no means mutually exclusive. The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understanding in their own terms (Patton, 2002:348).

Silverman (2006) defines three different models that are relevant to interview data: positivism, emotionalism and constructionism. Each has a differed approach on the art of interviewing, for instance positivists see that interview data have the possibility to give researches access to facts about the world, where as emotionalists consider interviewees to be viewed as experiencing subjects who actively build their social words and finally constructionists see interviewees and interviewers to be actively engaged in constructing meaning. For positivists, interviews are essentially about ascertaining facts or beliefs out there in the world, emotionalists switch the focus – but only slightly (Silverman, 2006: 123). Applying these views on my own interviews I can note that I had more or less of an emotionalist stance on interviewing, in that my primary goal was to produce data which could provide a genuine insight in to the informants’ experiences, thoughts and feelings. However, I also detected a positivist tone in that I did use some standardised questions to find out facts about the informants’ behaviours and attitudes.

Emotionalists aim to access emotions by describing respondents’ inner experiences, by encouraging interviewers to become emotionally involved with respondents and to convey their own feelings to both respondents and readers (Silverman, 2006: 124). Unlike the other models, constructionism allows us to see the local, interactional work carried out by both interviewer and interviewee, without losing sign of the cultural resources which they draw upon (Silverman, 2006: 148).

The aim of this study was to explore the meaning of self marketing to the informants, to explore whether or not they feel it is a skill one should have and a strategy one should develop in order to become more successful in the forming of a professional career; therefore to me the aim of the study required a combination of an emotionalist, positivist and constructionist approach.
Patton (2002) discusses different question options and lists six kinds of questions that can be asked of people; these can be seen in Table 2. For example, starting with easy questions when interviewing; non controversial questions, with present behaviours/experiences/activities and then moving on to opinions and feelings; the general order begins with the present and ends with the past (Holmlund-Rytkönen, 2010: lecture).

Table 2  Question Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELING</th>
<th>Responses of people to their experiences and thoughts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>What the respondent knows; factual information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENSORY</td>
<td>What is seen, touched, tasted and smelled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>Age, education, occupation, characteristics; tell us about how people categorize themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTINGUISHING</td>
<td>Behaviours, opinions, feelings, knowledge, sensory data and demographics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERIENCE&amp; BEHAVIOUR</td>
<td>Aim to elicit behaviours, experiences, actions and activities that would have been observable had the Observer been present.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Patton (2002)

The wording used in asking questions can make a significant difference in the quality of responses elicited (Patton, 2002: 360). If an interviewer simply throws out several questions at once to see which one the informant answers to, he/she is putting unnecessary weight on the interviewee; it also gives out the impression that the interviewer has not figured out what question should be asked and it wastes precious time. It is for these before mentioned reasons that asking the right questions in the right way are of crucial importance. The interviewer bears the responsibility to pose questions that make it clear to the interviewee what is being asked (Patton, 2002: 360).

“Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people – qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches” (Patton, 2002: 406). Indeed, the qualitative
research approach takes on a much more forward and in-depth approach to understanding and exploring human behaviour than other approaches do. It is for these above mentioned reasons that it is important at the beginning of the interview to explain the purpose of inquiry and the methods to be used. The basic messages to be communicated in the opening statement are (1) the information is important, (2) the reasons for that importance and (3) the willingness of the interviewer to explain the purpose of the interview out of respect for the interviewee (Patton, 2002: 407).

In conclusion, interviews are a method used to obtain data from informants, to better understand human behaviour and to increase information already obtained from for example observations. There are various ways of conducting interviews ranging from unstructured to structured ones; it all depends on the aim of the study and perhaps, to some extent, the philosophy of research that the interviewer possesses. In addition, there are certain types of questions that an interviewer can use to obtain the information he/she is after. It is important while interviewing to ask open ended questions allowing the informant to speak freely, make the informant feel comfortable, allow room for spontaneity yet keep on track and most of all know what questions to ask and how to ask them. “To be a good interviewer you must like doing it. This means being interested in what people have to say. You must yourself believe that the thoughts and experiences of the people being interviewed are worth knowing (Patton, 2002: 417).

Interview Guide

The role of the interview guide see Appendix 2, in my research was to act as guideline providing element; to assure discovering the issues worth determining and asking questions which helped to answer the research objectives. The inquiries in the interview guide were constructed based on the research problems, pre understanding and the existing theoretical framework; these features served as the sources that I utilized to ignite reactions from the informants. In fact, there are several factors that assist a researcher to construct a thorough interview guide; one should carefully consider issues such as delimitations, key themes, field notes, interviewing technique, using different question types, the theoretical framework, the overall purpose of the study and the research approach. The aims of my study were the main guiding force in building up my interview guide; in addition I wanted to have a relatively
unstructured open-ended interview with some structured elements due to the fact that I believed this was the best method to use with my informants as all of them seemed to be very talkative and interested in the topic of my thesis, my pre-understanding lead me to believe that they would prefer a more informal type of interview session. Also, the topic required both a structured and an unstructured approach.

When designing the interview guide the overall aims of the thesis were stressed, as well as the second research question: What are students’ expectations, thoughts and feelings on the created tool box and self marketing as a concept? thus the plan was to examine the expectations students have with regards to their self marketing skills and their roles in the employment seeking process, the guide (see Appendix 3) was kept rather formless due to the fact that I wanted to have conversational interviews; however I did keep in mind the different question types and the importance of probing, these inquiries occurred more or less in a spontaneous manner yet were triggered by the guidelines visible in the interview guide. In essence, the interview guide was designed to cover the theoretical elements presented in earlier chapters, analyze students’ expectations, needs and wants regarding the subject of self marketing as well as to explore the topic in depth.

The content of the interview guide was divided in to six constructs, which were

(1) The synopsis, i.e. the interviewee’s background and his/her main thoughts on self marketing.

(2) The role of self marketing in the interviewee’s life currently i.e. if there is a need for it or not, where would the interviewee go for advice on self marketing methods.

(3) The use of self marketing methods; does the interviewee use any, if yes, then how?

(4) Presentation of the self marketing tool box; what thoughts it evokes, possible improvement suggestions, and general discussion on the concepts in the box.

In addition, when attempting to discover the main thoughts students have on self marketing the following issues will be introduced to the interviewees and they will be asked how relevant
they consider for instance using external help. I.e. do they see the use of external help as a crucial part of self marketing? These seven variables were chosen due to the theory that has been introduced and findings from the pilot study.

(1) STANDING OUT

(2) EMPHASIZING SKILLS

(3) INTROSPECTION

(4) USING EXTERNAL HELP

(5) PRESENTATION IN PERSON

(6) PRESENTATION ON PAPER

(7) MARKETING ACTIVITY

When discussing the channels people use for self marketing advice, the interviewees will be given alternatives to choose from or state their importance; these alternatives are again a product of the theoretical framework and the pilot study findings. The informants will be given the following five examples

(1) INTROSPECTION

(2) BRANDING AND MARKETING LITERATURE

(3) SCHOOL CURRICULA

(4) WORKSHOPS

(5) CAREER COACHING

With regards to the self marketing methods students are or are not utilizing, the informants will be given methods discussed in the theoretical framework and asked to analyze their own selves with regards to those methods and whether or not they in fact are utilizing them. These subjects are adopted from the branding literature and other related theory.

(1) SOCIAL MEDIA
Lastly, when attempting to find out the feelings the students have towards the constructed tool box, certain characteristics will be introduced to them and they will be asked to state their personal opinion on the matter. The informants will be asked how they feel the constructed self marketing tool box is. If the results indicate that the tool box could be modified, it will be altered if course.

In sum, the interview guide is used as a guideline to keep the interviews on the right track and absorb as much information on the interviewees as possible, to be able to paint a picture on their expectations about self marketing and their thoughts on the self marketing tool box, after I have analyzed the results of the research I will then present the implication as an attempt to answer the third and final research question: Where can students find support and advice on developing their own self marketing skills? Of course, this research question will also be partly answered during the interviews. Yet, only after I assess the expectations, thoughts and feelings around the actual concept of self marketing can I present real implications as to where students could find possible support and advice on how to develop their self marketing skills.
4.4  **Data Analysis and Quality of Research**

The collected principal data consisted of twelve in-depth interviews. The data was analyzed keeping in mind two of the three research aims; (2) to research the information students have on self marketing and investigate their expectations with regards to the presented tool box, and, (3) to provide implications on where students can develop their own self marketing. Therefore the objective of the research was to achieve the overall aims of the paper and conclude in useful and valid information for the reader.

This study utilized Spiggle’s framework as a basis for qualitative analysis. Spiggle (1994) puts forth seven analytic operations that can be used to explain how a researcher arrived at his/her inference and conclusions. Categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration and refutation; these are neither discrete activities, nor do they occur in an ordered fashion, in contrast they are used throughout the process accordingly.

Table 3 presents, in sum, how the different methods introduced by Spiggle (1994) were used for this particular research. The analytic operations- categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration and refutation – provide a means for managing qualitative data for the purpose of analysis and interpretation (Spiggle, 1994: 496). Research work consists of many different areas that all need to be carefully analyzed and put into operation; taking advantage of the methods that Spiggle (1994) discusses in her article is crucial. Means such as refutation helped me as a researcher to remain realistic and always question my work. Instead of blindly believing all of my thoughts to be right, I in contrast learned to look at both sides of each story. Comparison was utilized to carefully contrast and compare different research methods in order to find the one that met my aim the most, integration was implemented in order to assure that all the different areas I worked on came together in a coherent and logical fashion and iteration was used as a way of remaining systematic throughout the process. These methods are discussed more in table 3.

The operations that Spiggle (1994) suggests helped me as a researcher to control the data during the analytical process, in the organization of different methods, and finally in the interpretation and development of formats and theories.
Table 3  Analysis of Qualitative Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT?</th>
<th>WHEN?</th>
<th>HOW?</th>
<th>WHY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td>When constructing the interview guide, during the interviews and analysis of results.</td>
<td>Making a table for various categories; expectations, thoughts and feelings of the informants.</td>
<td>Categorization was needed in order to remain focused on the overall objective of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstraction</td>
<td>After assessing the interview guide and field notes.</td>
<td>Breaking down existing categories, looking for factors that share the same features.</td>
<td>Abstraction was needed for a more grounded construct, to find data that share similar features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>When looking at research philosophies, sampling methods and interview means.</td>
<td>Exploring various methods of sampling, research methods and interviewing techniques.</td>
<td>Comparison provided a guideline on the collection and analysis of the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensionalization</td>
<td>During the interviews.</td>
<td>Identifying categories and then exploring the characteristics along different dimensions.</td>
<td>Dimensionalization was needed to define existing relationships across different categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>In the final analysis phase, “integration requires the mapping of relationships between conceptual elements” (Spiggle, 1994:495).</td>
<td>Analyzing in a way that kept the students’ feelings and expectations as the primary focus of the interviews, as well as their experiences.</td>
<td>Integration was needed to bring all the pieces of the study together and make the flow of text coherent and logical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration</td>
<td>Throughout the entire process; from beginning to end.</td>
<td>Going back and forth between the different stages, from sampling to research philosophy, to interviews. No specific stages.</td>
<td>Iteration was needed in order to develop constructs from the collected data; keeping in mind what has been done before and how it affects what will be done next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refutation</td>
<td>At all stages, when discussing theory and analyzing methods of action.</td>
<td>Questioning the categories, propositions and frameworks.</td>
<td>Refutation was needed to remain realistic, question one’s own ideas and look at issues from different perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spiggle (1994)
A method such as refutation assists a researcher to remain realistic in that he/she does not take any idea just as it is but instead remains critical, for instance during the interview when an interviewer used probing techniques to increase understanding he/she is also investigating a certain statement made by the informant critically yet without provoking or irritating the informant. Iteration is needed throughout the research process; I personally moved back and forth between different sections of this paper since all of them are related to each other, in addition methods such as sampling and observation play a part in other areas such as interviewing and reporting of the results, thus it is crucial that iteration is used from beginning to end.

In order, to show a cohesive and consistent research one needs to utilize integration and bring all the various pieces that the paper consists of together to portray an overall picture of what the research is about to begin with. Dimensionalization was utilized during the interviews for instance as I gave the informant a scale to choose from when considering the importance self marketing tool box, from very important to not so important; it is about the identification of categories and examining the characteristics along the dimensions.

Before deciding on the method of the interviews, what type of sampling was to be used and whether or not to conduct participant observation it was important to utilize comparison to find the most suitable method for each stage, which is how I decided to construct an interview guide and use snowball- sampling as the main research method. In order to have grounded constructs, identify common features amongst the data and be able to break down existing categories abstraction was utilized. Categorization was needed to identify different existing categories and remain focused on the aim of the study; in fact remaining focused on the purpose of the study is crucial at all stages since the aim here is to find answers mainly to two of the three research questions.

In sum, Spiggle’s (1994) application on qualitative data to be analyzed through analytical operations and tactics was utilized for this study. The seven main stages that she suggests all occur in different orders and different sequential fashions depending on the actual research being conducted; in any case they assist in organizing qualitative data, in distinguishing significance, reaching a conclusion in addition to forming conceptual schemes and theory.
Each research requires ways of considering the trustworthiness and quality of the conducted study. This paper built a self marketing tool box based on brand identity theory, and then researched the reactions and expectations of students with regards to that tool box, thus it is essential to evaluate the quality and credibility of the research methodology.

Gummesson (2001: 41) mentions objectivity, intersubjectivity and subjectivity in relation to new theory creation. An accurate research strategy should involve objectivity in order to achieve unbiased results and analyzes. In addition, the existence of good and bad subjectivity and objectivity are mentioned by Gummesson (2001); this refers to the efforts of discussing fact instead of opinions where as bad objectivity comprises of bureaucratic ways of looking at science. When science is not introduced and processed according to academic literature and books it is rejected as false science; this causes a delimitation applicable to my research, although branding theory was utilized a certain degree of false science was also introduced; this was however believed to be necessary due to the subject being relatively new and not much academic science was found in relation to it, though existing theories on brand identity were utilized. Good objectivity on the other hand refers to factors which put a strong value on the use of intuition and own sense; good objectivity was applied throughout the construction of this thesis.

There are indeed delimitations to this study, which become evident through the themes presented by Gummesson (2001), for example as a business student myself I have a preunderstanding on the research phenomenon, which may be subjective to some degree. Such a preunderstanding has been gained through personal experience and close interest to the field of self marketing as a soon to be graduate, and this may have had an effect on the objectivity of this thesis. However, the data analysis was written according to Spiggle’s (1994) qualitative analysis scheme, which is certainly recognized in the academic research community and thus does not hinder the validity of the work.

Quality of Research

Any research, irrelevant to its field, if wanted to be taken seriously needs to portray trustworthiness and high quality. The particular way that trustworthiness is evaluated will vary considerably depending on the research program and philosophy within which the research operates, but its importance is postulated to be a scientific universal (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 1). Silverman (2006) and Wallendorf & Belk (1989) provide several guidelines a researcher can
use in order to maintain a high level of quality throughout his/her research process. Silverman (2006) discusses reliability and legitimacy issues related to both qualitative as well as quantitative research methods, in some instances on matters that refer to the use of both practices simultaneously, he also converses research ethics. Silverman (2006) states that social science is credible to the extent that it uses suitable methods, is thorough, critical and objective in its handling of data. In addition, he mentions several appropriate means for validating studies based largely upon qualitative data which include: analytic induction, the constant comparative method, deviant-case analysis, comprehensive data treatment and the use of appropriate tabulations. Silverman (2006) also discusses high reliability in qualitative research which is associated with low-inference descriptors.

On the other hand, Wallendorf & Belk (1989) focus more on qualitative means and how to ensure that post-positivist research is proven to be trustworthy. However, both argue for similar methods to be used when ensuring trustworthiness. Wallendorf & Belk (1989) bring forth answers to questions concerning reliability; these are meant to answer the same underlying questions as the criteria employed in positivist research, but address them within the tenets of post-positivist philosophy of science (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 3). In addition, the techniques for assessing these components include the following (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 29); prolonged engagement combined with persistent observation; triangulation across sources, methods, researchers and sites; regular on-site team interaction; negative case-analysis; debriefings by peers; member checks; purposive sampling; seeking limiting exceptions; emergent design; observation over time and the explanation of changes; reflexive journals; dependability and confirmability audits; interviewing techniques; safeguarding informant identity and researcher self-analysis and introspection. The following five factors need to be considered when conducting research:

(1) Credibility (is the representation believable?)

(2) Transferability (can working hypotheses be employed in other contexts?)

(3) Dependability (are similar findings to be found if the inquiry is repeated in the same context?)
(4) Confirmability (can the researcher’s interpretations be understood by looking at the data and other records?)

(5) Integrity (was the interpretation influenced by lies or misrepresentations by the informant/s?)

As I reflect upon my own research in light of these previously mentioned methods, I can notice that I have not used all of the techniques mentioned by Wallendorf & Belk (1989), however this is the case due to the fact that several features make this research assignment different from regular ones; first of all this project is not extensive enough in terms of time to imply prolonged engagement combined with persistent observation, regular on-site team interaction or negative case-analysis for that matter.

Conducting ethnographic research requires spending sufficient time in a context to develop an understanding of the phenomenon, group or culture in broad perspective before focusing on a particular aspect or theme imbedded in that context (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 4). In addition, regular on-site team interaction was not incorporated in this study as it was conducted individually and not as a team, in fact Wallendorf & Belk (1989) suggest several methods of increasing trustworthiness for research assignments conducted in teams for example debriefings conducted by peers and therefore some of their methods do not apply in this context. However, when focusing on the five criteria, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and integrity I believe that this criteria has still been met in this research project; ensured through methods of triangulation across sources and methods, personal reflection and also negative case analysis since as researcher one must remain realistic and constantly place doubt upon information obtained, it’s also important to “recognize that data are never perfect reflections of the phenomenon being studied” (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 8) when considering integrity, in establishing confirmability an audit has been used throughout the project as I have had my writing evaluated in different stages.

In addition, relating to integrity where “the problem of lack of integrity in naturalistic research arises from the possibility of conflict between the researcher and informants” (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 16), in this research I made my own personal best attempt to make the informants feel as comfortable as possible and ensure at all stages that they knew why I was interviewing
them and to whom the research is aimed; in addition I offered them the possibility to read the
notes I had made at the end of each interview, which is known as a “member check” as
Wallendorf & Belk (1989) state it; a final technique for establishing credibility, in which the
interpretation and report is given to members of the sample for comment, however not all of
the twelve informants were interested in reading the report, in fact only three wanted to see
the notes I had, so a member check was not conducted on all cases.

Besides the general strategy of scepticism, there are several other means of assessing and
increasing the integrity of naturalistic research (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 17), these methods
include: prolonged engagement and the construction of rapport and trust; triangulation; good
interviewing technique; safeguarding informant identity and researcher self-analysis and
introspection. All of these methods were used in this thesis accept for the obvious, prolonged
engagement. The interviewees were given full anonymity; accept in terms of their place of
education and age. Arranging a good interview and making the informant feel at ease and
comfortable was of top priority. Also, greater research integrity can be brought about by
researchers more completely and openly understanding themselves (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989:
19); this method was incorporated from the very beginning during the personal reflection on
research philosophy.

Regarding issues of dependability and transferability, it is at this stage rather difficult to ensure
or even attempt to answer the question of whether or not working hypotheses can be
employed in other contexts; however one must keep in mind that this research was not based
on proving or disproving hypotheses but rather describing the informants’ feelings and
expectations towards the concept of self marketing and examining the overall role of the
subject in each informant’s life; relating to dependability and whether or not similar findings
are to be found if the inquiry were to be repeated in the same context the answer remains
unclear as there is always an possibility that the results would be the same or the opposite.

Triangulation as a method of ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability
and integrity was used throughout the research assignment. Triangulation over data collection
methods is also sometimes useful in establishing confirmability, for example, photographs
provide additional information that can be compared to field notes for at least some
descriptive details about persons, places, and things being observed; video and audio
recordings also provide a check on what actions took place and what was said (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989: 15). Although no pictures or video was taken during the interviews, extensive notes were made and all the discussions were recorded. In addition, triangulation was used when comparing various means information gathering techniques, sampling methods and interview approaches, as Wallendorf & Belk (1989) state triangulation over methods is especially helpful in comparing interview-based perspectives on action to observation-based perspectives in action.

Silverman (2006) puts forth a set of questions used to evaluate qualitative research but also states that the set can just as well be used for the assessment of quantitative data. All systematic attempts at description or explanation, and in this research the aim was to be descriptive instead of explanatory, need to answer several critical questions, thus a researcher embarking on an investigative project should attempt to answer the following inquiries as mentioned by Silverman (2006: 276):

(1) Do the methods match with the questions being asked?

(2) Is there a clear connection to theory or an existing body of knowledge?

(3) Are there clear accounts of the criteria used for the selection of cases for study, and of the data collection and analysis?

(4) Does the understanding of the methods match the needs of the research aim?

(5) Were the data collection and keeping of records systematic?

(6) Are references made to accepted procedures for analysis?

(7) How systematic is the analysis?

(8) Is the way that themes, categories and concepts were derived from data explained fully enough?
(9) Is there enough discussion on the evidence for and against the researcher’s arguments?

(10) Is there a clear distinction made between data and their interpretation?

From these questions, it is again apparent for a researcher to remain consistent and systematic throughout the assignment; ensuring that the research aim is always apparent and clearly linked to the theory used as well to the data collection methods; all of these ensure a high quality study. As in this research, several theoretical sources such as Silverman (2006) and Patton (2002) were used and referenced to in order to portray a reliable validation for why certain things proceeded as they did, in addition constant discussion and analysis has been applied throughout the research. It is an increasingly accepted view that work becomes scientific by adopting methods of study appropriate to its subject matter (Silverman, 2006: 280).

Reliability was ensured during the interviews by tape-recording the entire face-to-face interaction, as Silverman (2006) states

“Interview studies must also satisfy the criterion of using low-inference descriptors and when wanting to satisfy the need for low-inference descriptors by tape-recording all face-to-face interviews, carefully transcribing these tapes according to the needs of reliable analysis, presenting long extracts of data in your research report – including, at the very least, the question that provoked the answer” (28).

All of these before mentioned methods of increasing interview trustworthiness were applied from the interview guide to the transcribed dialogues and recordings. Reliability can be addressed by using standardized methods to write field notes and prepare transcripts (Silverman, 2006: 288).

Furthermore, the utilization of a research project i.e. is there any use from the project to someone is also crucially important in defining the quality of a study. This thesis can very well be used to the advantage of students, educational institutions, social media sites, career coaching professionals and all academics in the field of self marketing.
Ethical issues in qualitative research are closely related to the features of the methodology applied which in this case include interviewing with some element of personal involvement. Silverman (2006) reminds us that at every stage of the research process, from study design to data gathering to data analysis and writing the report, one needs to be aware of ethical issues: guidelines are usually available from professional associations within one’s discipline however the varying social backgrounds of action mean that such guidelines cannot cover every situation that will arise; one should always be alert to emerging ethical issues and confront them as best seen possible. In this research project ethical pitfalls such as exploitation, deception, fraternizing with disliked groups and participating in dubious bargains were utterly avoided. On the other hand, ethical safeguards or goals that each researcher should aim towards such as ensuring voluntary participation, protecting the informant from harm, offering anonymity and ensuring mutual trust were employed to the fullest extent; I treated all my informants with respect from the very beginning and ensured that they knew the aim of my research and why I was interviewing them. In addition to treating one’s informants in an ethical manner it is also vital that the research practice is ethically responsible, in this context Silverman (2006) mentions three stages; framing your research topic, analyzing data and when the study is completed. In the beginning, one should carefully consider what the purpose of the research is, here it was to study self marketing from a branding perspective and research students’ expectations towards the subject. Furthermore, when it comes to data analysis, according to Silverman (2006) one needs to show the readers that one has dealt evenhandedly with the people whose lives and experiences have been described; in this study twelve informants were used and their expectations extensively described, without going to too much detail about their personal lives. Finally, after the study ethical issues still remain, for example Silverman (2006) suggests that here a researcher should consider whether or not he/she is satisfied with the initial consent obtained from the informant or ask for further permission before publishing anything. In sum, several methods can be used to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of a study beginning with assuring issues such as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and integrity. Making certain that the aim of the study is in direct relation to the theories used and discussed, incorporating triangulation throughout the process and being ethically aware from start to finish are all guidelines, which, when used correctly make up for a high quality study.
5. Empirical Study Results

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the qualitative study. The research is based on twelve in depth interviews, which were conducted with business students at their master's level in either Hanken or the Helsinki School of Economics. Thus, the study focuses solely on the perspectives attained from business students. The interviews were conducted between the 12th and 20th of October 2011. The findings are presented following the structure of the interview guide presented in Appendix 3; the various interview quotations as well as the interview matrix and discussion represent the findings. To conclude, the core findings are discussed in relation to the theory.

The conducted study attempts to answer the second aim and the problem, i.e. to investigate the information students have on self marketing and explore their thoughts and inspirations towards the constructed tool box. Next, the interview results will be presented following the structure of the interview guide.

5.1 Synopsis

The second research problem of this study was to examine how students saw self marketing and how they felt about the constructed tool box. The interviews began by examining the general information regarding the informants such as their field of study, age and work experience. The demographic data can be found in Appendix 4.

Table 4 presents an interview matrix on the first part of the research, i.e. how self marketing is seen and defined by the students. The matrix clarifies the responses of the students given to the various definitions, the reactions were more or less the same, safe for the fact that some felt self marketing was something that one needs support in and others saw it is an individual responsibility requiring a certain degree of introspection. I constructed a table with the features or words that were mentioned to the informants during the interviews such as standing out and presentation on paper and in person. Each informant was given seven different definitions on self marketing and was asked to state whether they think that definition describes self marketing extremely well, somewhat well or not at all.
Table 4  Self Marketing Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMANT</th>
<th>STANDING OUT</th>
<th>EMPHASIZING SKILLS</th>
<th>INTROSPECTION</th>
<th>USING EXTERNAL HELP</th>
<th>PRESENTATION IN PERSON</th>
<th>PRESENTATION ON PAPER</th>
<th>MARKETING ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juho Oikuri</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
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<td>LOW</td>
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<td>LOW</td>
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<td>Markus Sunell</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
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<tr>
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<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederik Karlsson</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>LOW</td>
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<td>LOW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa Rosenström</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
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<td>MODERATE</td>
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<td>MODERATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sari Veikkolainen</td>
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<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HIGH** = Describes self marketing extremely well  
**MODERATE** = Describes self marketing somewhat  
**LOW** = Barely describes self marketing if not at all

The matrix above clearly illustrates that self marketing as seen through a student’s perspective is much related to how one presents one’s self to others on paper and in person, in addition it is about how one stands out in a crowd and emphasizes one’s skills and strengths. When asked if self marketing is seen as a marketing activity three students felt that it is not truly a marketing activity and on the other hand only two students strongly felt that self marketing is related to the marketing arena; this result is in fact somewhat supported by Shepherd (2005), who stated that an extension of marketing from the conventional realm of products to individuals is problematic on several grounds, and a re-theorization may not be as
straightforward (3). Thus, it is not evident that people assume self marketing to automatically consist of traditional marketing activities.

After going through the various definitions of self marketing each informant was asked to discuss self marketing in their own words and at the same time mention what if anything the concept means to them. One occurring statement was that self marketing is the way one comes across to others and how one presents one’s self on paper and in person as Karlsson (2011) explains

“It’s how much effort you put in yourself so that others will notice you and you can leave a good impression on them, like in a job interview if they don’t see anything special about you they probably won’t contact you for the second phase…. You have to give it your all when you are in situations like that, like interviews especially group ones… To me personally, self marketing is not a familiar subject, I mean it brings to mind CV workshops and career advice that’s offered at school, like they help you to better present yourself…” (15.10.2011)

Furthermore, self marketing was seen as a competitive advantage by most, for example Kaskeala (2011) describes the concepts of self marketing as

“It is how you make yourself look better than your competitor on paper, in person, online, in experience, in personality, in everything; I think self marketing is all about finding your unique selling point and then really emphasizing it.” (20.10.2011)

In addition, self marketing was seen as something that often requires external support, Marino (2011) explains

“I think sometimes we are blind at ourselves, like we don’t even realize if we’re really bad at something or vice versa and I think if you want to do self marketing and really stand out you should first know who you are and really understand yourself as a person and as a potential employee, so I have for example thought of going to see our career advisor at school, I think we have one… So basically self marketing is something you can’t do alone I think, you have to have someone to maybe push you to the right direction...” (17.102011)

However the most important and recurring feature mentioned was that self marketing refers to how one stands out in a crowd and communicates on paper and in person as the below
quotation demonstrate. All informants saw self marketing as the act of differentiating yourself from the rest and stressing your strengths whilst undermining your weaknesses.

“It’s about finding what qualities I have that maybe you don’t and how I can make those qualities shine so that I will be remembered, feels quite narcissistic somehow... Like I have to shine and be all “me, me me” but I guess that’s what it is, or that’s how I see it at least... But yeah, how to stand out and be noticed, that’s self marketing to me.” (Laitinen, 20.10.2011)

“Self marketing is about marketing the self, marketing me, instead of a chocolate bar or a beauty spa; I should market myself, my strengths, my skills, my specialties and my expertise...” (Hänninen, 20.10.2011)

Furthermore, two out of the three who did not consider self marketing as a marketing discipline or activity actually have marketing as their majoring subject. It is quite evident, that self marketing is not considered as belonging to the marketing framework, at least not directly, as only a minority of informants felt that it was. Self marketing is mostly seen as a means of standing out, and as a way of presenting one’s self in person and on paper. When it comes to validating self marketing as a part of the traditional marketing construct the responses are relatively scattered, in that some informants feel it is of course belonging to marketing whilst others see self marketing as more of an unambiguous subject. The use of external help in self marketing activities was emphasized, a number the informants feel that on occasion having external support in helping them to bring the most out of themselves is both needed and highly welcomed. Oikuri (2011) discusses the use of an external party in self marketing development

“I think it could be really useful to see myself through someone else’s eyes, especially a professional’, I think people can become somewhat blind to their own competencies and delimitations so having an outsider in the process is a good thing to me at least” (17.10.2011)

Moreover, Marino (2011) states

“If I would have the possibility to get advice from a career professional for example or some other skilled person and that person would advise me and give me guidelines on how to bring the most of myself and how to really be a competitive threat, I would definitely take full advantage of that opportunity” (17.10.2011)
When questioned whether or not introspection and a reflective stance is needed in self marketing the answers varied quite extensively. Only one fourth of the respondents saw an inner directed standpoint as highly imperative in self marketing related activities and the concept as a whole. It seems that most of the informants do not necessarily believe that one should self market through an inside out perspective as the theoretical framework suggests, but instead as an activity that one needs outside assistance in order to succeed in. However, when assessing self marketing through the brand identity, charisma and personal qualities perspective as discussed earlier in this paper, it is evident that self marketing should begin from the inside out and not the outside in, i.e. an individual needs to begin by carefully assessing his/her own identity, what that identity is constructed of, what extended features are around it and only then begin implementing those findings and communicating them to the outside world. Therefore, there is a crucial difference between this particular interview result and what the theoretical framework suggests.

When discussing what expectations self marketing as a concept raises in the minds of students the answers evolved around success, getting noticed professionally and assisting in landing an ideal employment position, Oikuri (2011) discusses his expectations

“I hope self marketing can help me beat my competition in an interview situation for example, I expect it to give me tools that I can apply to myself and become a more effective person” (17.10.2011)

In addition, Marino (2011) mentions the following

“I expect that if I market myself effectively I will be noticed and remembered, my CV will stand out the most from all the other applicants, my personality will stay in the mind of a potential employer and I will ultimately get the job I want” (17.10.2011)

Furthermore, Johansson (2011) expects the subsequent from self marketing

“Self marketing should help me find the best way to communicate my skills and abilities and also minimize but recognise my weaknesses, self marketing is a way for me to present myself in the most effective way possible in order to gain success in working life and make good connections” (15.10.2011)

Kallio (2011) also expects results from self marketing activities
“I think it’s a process, like any marketing activity and I expect that process to end up in success, it should lead me to positive results in my professional life, self marketing should assist me in standing out and being considered a competitive threat who can’t be replaced just like that” (15.10.2011)

Evidently, the expectations that are pointed towards self marketing are quite high, in that self marketing activities are seen as a gateway to success more or less, self marketing is seen as an ongoing process which also has an end goal and that goal, according to the majority of the respondents is gaining success and landing an ideal employment position.

### 5.2 Role of Self Marketing in Student’s Life

Once general definitions on the subject of self marketing have been established, it is time to discuss the role of self marketing in the lives of the interviewed business students. By role, I am referring to how self marketing is evident in the everyday activities of the informants and how the students are planning to begin their careers, precisely whether or not they believe that when starting working life self marketing could be of value to them in the employment seeking process. I also wanted to inquire if students felt there was a need for self marketing, where they wanted that need to be met and how.

Table 5 illustrates the various channels used for the development of self marketing skills and to what extent these channels are needed in the eyes of the informants. Each interviewee was given five examples, i.e. introspection, branding and marketing literature, school, workshops and career coaching to rank in terms of usability, to explain whether or not they believe this example to be a very much needed channel for self marketing, a somewhat needed channel or a not at all needed one. The results can be seen in the interview matrix in table 5.
Table 5  
**Interview Matrix 2, Channels of Support for Self Marketing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMANT</th>
<th>INTROSPCEPTION</th>
<th>BRANDING AND MARKETING LITERATURE</th>
<th>SCHOOL CURRICULA</th>
<th>WORKSHOPS</th>
<th>CAREER COACHING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juho Oikuri</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
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<td>MODERATE</td>
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<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>LOW</td>
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<td>HIGH</td>
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<td>HIGH</td>
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<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus Sunell</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
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<td>MODERATE</td>
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<td>Joonas Kaskeala</td>
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<td>LOW</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederik Karlsson</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henna Hänninen</td>
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<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders Johansson</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaana Ahonen</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Rosenström</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmi Kallio</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sari Veikkolainen</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HIGH** = A very much needed channel  
**MODERATE** = A somewhat needed channel  
**LOW** = A not very much or at all needed channel

The main channel the interviewed students were interested in utilizing as a means of bettering and developing their self marketing skills was in fact themselves, i.e. the students showed interest in working on their own selves and analyzing their own skills and abilities, however this did not mean that other forms of support were not mentioned. A need for external help such as courses offered in school, workshops and career coaching were also seen as interesting ways of better improving on self marketing, in addition utilizing marketing and branding literature was also appreciated as a support system. Thus, developing self marketing skills seems to begin from within and then lead to the use of outside support channels, according to the majority of the informants. The results indicate that especially upon beginning a career and
ending one’s studies the role of self marketing is seen as highly important and valuable, as Kallio (2011) states

“I want to know how to self market when I start looking for a job, I think I need to know how to have a CV that really stands out at least that and like, how I should carry myself in an interview and how I present myself overall... I want to know what my skills and abilities really are, right now I don’t really know...” (15.10.2011)

A level of anxiety towards self marketing was expressed by many of the informants, in that they see marketing as something necessary for success yet they cannot actually grasp the subject or for instance say whether or not they have already developed a strategy for their future careers after graduating and how they plan on acting out those strategies, and whether or not self marketing would be a part of those strategies.

In fact, only five respondents mention that they have a more or less clear plan for the future and see self marketing as being an important part of those plans. Karlsson (2011) feels that self marketing has a strong role in his life especially now that he is finalizing his studies

“I think self marketing is really important, I take into consideration how I present myself and how I should market or brand myself like a product, I know it might sound really self centred, but if I want to make it and get a good employment position either where I’m working part time now or in another place I need to strongly market myself; so I do have a strategy basically on how I plan on getting my ideal job, and self marketing is a part of that strategy” (15.10.2011)

Oikuri (2011) sees self marketing as highly important for his future

“I definitely feel self marketing should have a big role in my current situation, I really want to get a permanent job at my present occupation, and I need to really make myself more and more visible there, so I have thought about different ways of marketing myself to my employer, even though he already knows who I am or I don’t know but... but I feel like I have to make myself seen more, so that he realizes that I could be of even better use there once I graduate and can start working full time” (17.10.2011)

In addition, Johansson (2011) also discusses the role of self marketing in her future
“Yeah, I think I will contact the career advisor in my school, I’ve given my CV to some more educated and experienced people to have a look at and give me feedback on it, I have also spent quite a lot of time soul searching and trying to really grasp what my strengths and weaknesses are… Oh and I also always participate in those working breakfast-events at school, I think they are a good way of networking… So, yes, to answer your question, I am active in self marketing related activities I think and I do have a need for it in my life.” (15.10.2011)

On the contrary there was also one informant who felt quite strongly that she does not need to develop any strategy on how to successfully self market and did not feel that self marketing was that relevant in their lives, Veikkolainen (2011) says

“I have never thought about self marketing that much and I don’t really feel it is something I should actively participate in… I think marketing has been already shuffled in to too many areas like politics and religion, and I just don’t think I need it… It seems too self-centred, yeah you have to present yourself nicely, but do I need a theoretical construct to be able to do so? I don’t think so….” (15.10.2011)

However, Veikkolainen’s (2011) view was the only one that saw self marketing as a more or less indifferent subject and something that should not even be mentioned when discussing marketing concepts.

When discussing the level of trust the informants have in their own qualifications and whether or not they feel a set of guidelines is needed to assist them in marketing themselves effectively, the answer often proves that although a student may feel he/she is qualified for an occupation for instance there is a lack of confidence in portraying it. Laitinen (2011) explains

“I am well educated, I will graduate with a master’s degree hopefully, I’ve been working for a marketing company for three years already and I think I have learned a lot …. The thing is, I feel kind of stupid applying for jobs where they require like over five years of experience and then I’m competing with people who have already been marketing managers and CEO’s for several years and who have so much more to offer than I do, it’s like can I get a break?” (20.10.2011)

In addition, Marino (2011) also expresses her trust in her qualifications accompanied by her concern in portraying them
“I feel really uncomfortable talking about myself, I don’t know if it’s like a cultural thing, I mean I know I’m good and qualified and ready to start real working life, but this whole thing about having to stand out from everyone else and toot my own horn in a way... I don’t know it just make my stomach turn a bit, I want to be able to present myself and market myself as the best person for the job, but I just feel like I can’t... Maybe if I would have some assistance it would ease off the jitters.” (17.10.2011)

From these results, it can be seen that one of the major dilemmas posed by self marketing is the feeling of uncomfort it raises in many students, i.e. marketing one’s self feels like a distant concept to a degree although it raises positive expectations and is considered important. The general consensus is that self marketing is seen as significant, necessary, interesting and valuable, it is considered to be necessary when job searching and networking, however the subject also raises much apprehension in that many of the informants feel that they do not really know how to self market and although they realize it is more that having an interesting CV and being well dressed for an interview, they do not grasp the idea on a deeper level. Thus, self marketing is perhaps seen as a rather shallow concept, as was discussed earlier in the theoretical component one of the typical mistakes during the brand identity creation process is a restricted focus on product attributes, existing brand images, brand positions, and the brand’s external role of influencing customers. Analyzing Aaker’s (2002) theory in this context does indeed indicate that perhaps the reason self marketing causes a certain degree of distress in the informants is the fact that it is seen through a somewhat restricted focus. In order to be able to avoid this and instead broaden the brand concept, it is useful to take other dimensions and perspectives into consideration; i.e. look at self marketing through an identity driven viewpoint with a core and extended structure.

One of the research questions for this thesis was where can students acquire support on developing their self marketing skills, this question was attempted to answer by directly asking the informants where they wanted to get support from and giving them exampled to evaluate on. The students were presented with options such as career coaching, introspection and branding and marketing literature. Rosenström (2011) states the following

“I would start helping myself first, because no one knows me better than me, so I would start by first analyzing myself, but then I also think it’s real important to go through things with an outsider who can maybe help you bring out your best qualities, like some professional consultant, I think we should even
have some course at school that would guide us on how to bring out the best, I mean we have those places that you can get your CV checked, but more would be great.” (17.10.2011)

Furthermore, Johansson (2011) adds

“I think we should have more workshops where we could practice marketing ourselves, like how we would act in an interview and stuff like that. I don’t know where these workshops could be arranged, but maybe on school premises... And I wouldn’t mind getting good tips and pointers from professionals.” (15.10.2011)

Marino (2011) feels positive towards utilizing branding and marketing literature in order to develop self marketing

“Same concepts can be incorporated to a person that can be to a service or product, I mean from a marketing point of view, I think utilizing relevant literature and then applying it to a self marketing activity can be very helpful to better understand yourself and work on your own strengths and how to bring them out in the best possible way...” (17.10.2011)

Oikuri (2011) expresses the following

“Self marketing is a relatively new topic to me, I know it’s important and necessary today and if I think of where and how I would want supports and advice on ways of developing it like a skill well then I would probably want a whole package if that’s realistic... I would want to dedicate my own time to really investigate my skills and areas I should improve on, then I would want advice from someone maybe the school counsellor or career advisor, I would like to take part in work shops where they teach you the practical parts like the creation of a good CV and cover letter but then I would also want advice on how to carry myself and leave a good impression on people...” (17.10.2011)

Furthermore, Sunell (2011) discusses the importance of introspection

“I don’t think you can present yourself in the best possible light and beat the surrounding competition if you don’t first recognize who you really are and what makes you better in something than others, so I think the whole thing should start from the inside, but I also think that after that you should get some sort of support, like at school we have those CV workshops, but it would be nice to have more than that like on a more profound level...” (12.10.2011)
5.3 Use of Self Marketing Methods

In the theoretical component of this thesis, ways of improving one’s self marketing skills were introduced, for instance adopting a marketer’s mind and recognizing the need to sell yourself were discussed, in addition certain personal qualities utilized in branding were put forth as ways of developing one’s skills and the brand identity concept was established. In the interviews these above mentioned concepts alongside the use of social media, which was brought up the students of the pilot study, were discussed. When asked about the level of activeness in self marketing most respondents were inactive, in that the only aspects they felt they were paying attention to were in essence how they are present in social media channels on how they have constructed their CV:s, none of the informants had incorporated self marketing as a deeper concept in their own lives, for instance introspection and evaluating one’s skills and abilities although mentioned when defining self marketing was not actually done by any of the informants.

Table 6 illustrates an interview matrix on the use of self marketing methods by the students interviewed as well as their feelings towards the different methods presented. Social media, the need to sell one’s self, the brand identity perspective, personal qualities, charisma and CV and cover letter were introduced to the informants as methods for self marketing, the interviewees were then asked to state whether or not each concept was highly recognized, somewhat recognized or not at all recognized as a self marketing method and in addition if they themselves actually utilize the different activities mentioned. It is important to establish how the interviewees feel towards a certain self marketing activity before going any deeper in to the discussion.
Table 6  Interview Matrix 3, Self Marketing Methods Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMANT</th>
<th>SOCIAL MEDIA</th>
<th>THE NEED TO SELL ONE’S SELF</th>
<th>BRAND IDENTITY</th>
<th>PERSONAL QUALITIES</th>
<th>CHARISMA</th>
<th>CV AND COVER LETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juho Oikuri</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela Laitinen</td>
<td>MODERATE / MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>MODERATE / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agneta Marino</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>LOW / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus Sunell</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / MODERATE</td>
<td>MODERATE / LOW</td>
<td>LOW / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joonas Kaskeala</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>LOW / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederik Karlsson</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>MODERATE / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henna Hänninen</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE / LOW</td>
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<td>MODERATE / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders Johansson</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / MODERATE</td>
<td>MODERATE / MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / MODERATE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaana Ahonen</td>
<td>MODERATE / MODERATE</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>LOW / LOW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa Rosenström</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
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<td>Emmi Kallio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sari Veikkolainen</td>
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<td>LOW / LOW</td>
<td>HIGH / HIGH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HIGH = Very much recognized  
MODERATE = Somewhat recognized  
LOW = Not very much or at all recognized  
HIGH = Very much utilized  
MODERATE = Somewhat utilized  
LOW = Not very much or at all utilized

It is quite evident that although a method may be recognized as useful it is still not applied, this can very well be due to the fact that as discussed earlier there seems to be high level of anxiety towards the concept of self marketing by many informants.

The students showed interest in the topic of self marketing yet had not really heard about it before or become familiarized with it in the past, Veikkolainen (2011) discusses

“I’ve never thought about self marketing as having a certain role in my life, I mean yeah I think about what I post on my Facebook page or Linkedin just in case some potential employer would have a look at what my CV looks like and how I dress for an interview, but then that’s really that, I mean I don’t really
think of self marketing on like a deeper level, as some kind of theoretical thing, it just is... Don’t think like there’s a way of self marketing really...” (15.10.2011)

Furthermore, Hänninen (2011) adds on the topic of social media

“I think social media is a really important part of self marketing because it seems that everything happens online these days, and having accounts like Linkedin and being visible on Monster for example can really help in finding good employment positions and you also get to meet interesting new people there... So I really pay attention to what I post on my profile, what types of pictures I have and who I associate with, just in case” (20.10.2011)

The main expectations informants have on self marketing in fact seems to relate to the use of social media and online activities in general, the results indicate that almost all of the students pay much attention to how they portray themselves on social media sites and in fact consider this to be the main channel for self marketing. Kaskeala (2011) discusses

“I check my Linkedin and Monster page every day when I wake up, I look for employment prospects and see if any employers have checked out my CV, I try to be consistent in all the different channels I am present in, I contact businesses and people there and try to network, to me this is self marketing, I am marketing myself online” (20.10.2011)

As discussed earlier, Haenlein and Kaplan (2010) suggest that one should carefully select which online channels to use when marketing since there are hundreds available; examining the different sites, who visits them and what they have to offer facilitates in choosing only a few to then become active in, being consistent and ensuring activity alignment is key. This discussion seems to be supported by the informants as well in that they too feel one needs to remain cautious on where and how one is present online. However, although social media is seen as extremely important by the majority of the informants, other ways of self marketing are also mentioned for instance Karlsson (2011) discusses

“I think knowing yourself is the most important self marketing method there is or as far as I know on the topic, I mean when you think of traditional marketing, you have a product and that product has certain features and strengths that you need to promote in the right place, at the right price, and in the right way; so I think this applies to marketing yourself as well, I mean I try to think of myself like if I was a
brand how would I market that brand and where... It’s just hard to analyze yourself on such a deep level I think” (15.10.2011)

Furthermore, Oikuri (2011) also discusses the topic

“I think the only way you can probably self market is to really deeply understand who you are and what you’re made of, maybe the worst mistake that happens in many marketing activities is that a company might have a really good product but then they market it to the wrong audience and in an inappropriate way, so basically they set themselves out to lose... So when self marketing you probably need to be really careful on how you set out to do it” (17.10.2011)

All in all, the majority of the students recognize a need to market themselves and become aware of their own skills and abilities on a deeper level, the informants admit to spending time in preparing for an interview, creating a CV and on the way they appear online, yet the extent of their dedication to the use of self marketing methods does not go beyond the superficial, when asked to think of themselves as a brand having an identity or personal qualities to be communicated most of the informants seem out of place and only three of the students interviewed in fact saw this as being crucial for successful self marketing. For instance Sari Veikkolainen (2011) discusses the personal qualities put forth by Adam Morgan (2004) in the following manner

“I am not familiar with these, basically the point is that one should stress certain qualities in one’s self in order to succeed I guess, but people have different qualities we are not all the same... I do not really comprehend what these qualities are and how they can be useful, but then again I have not thought of self marketing on such a deep level” (15.10.2011)

However, Oikuri (2011) is of a different opinion

“The personal qualities seem very interesting; I would like to know more about them... Refusing especially, it’s real exciting to think that at times you should just decline something that does not fit your personality, it shows strength I believe, I’ve never thought of refusing as a quality that could help me market myself better.... But I guess it builds your personality in a way or makes you stand out maybe” (17.10.2011)
When asked to discuss the subject of recognizing the need to sell one’s self the responses were rather anxious and concerned in that the idea of selling one’s self made some respondents feel insecure. Kallio (2011) states the following

“Of course we are suppose to bring our best forward in like a job interview, but the idea of having to constantly bring myself out and make my voice heard, well that makes me uncomfortable... I feel like it’s too self obsessed somehow” (15.10.2011)

On the contrary, Johansson (2011) discusses his need to sell himself

“Yes, I think that’s the key to success, realizing that there is so much competition out there you have to stand out, you have to give your all to be remembered, I want to be noticed of course! I think if you don’t recognize the fact that you need to sell yourself you won’t be able to market yourself to basically anyone” (15.10.2011)

Furthermore, Kaskeala discusses on the subject

“I don’t think you can start improving yourself and bringing yourself out there and being competitive if you don’t even recognize why you have to do so, I think if you understand that there is a need for you to sell yourself in order to succeed in your career, only then you can really start doing something about it, so in that sense it should start from the inside basically” (20.10.2011)

Social media is by far the most recognized tool used for self marketing and it is also something that the informants seem to utilize, the creation of the CV and cover letter is also put in high value. In addition, most informants felt there is a need to sell or market one’s self and this recognition is considered as important in order to self market successfully. However, when discussing the personal qualities used in branding many of the informants had nothing to contribute, it seemed that the thought itself was quite unfamiliar, the brand identity perspective on the other hand received recognition and is seen as an effective starting point for a person to become better familiar with his/her own skills and abilities. In addition, charisma is seen as a powerful attribute in marketing one’s self yet developing it is not practiced by many; however this may very well be due to the abstract nature of the attribute itself.
5.4 Self Marketing Tool box as a framework

The final stage of the interview evolved around the constructed self marketing tool box, it was presented to all the informants and their thoughts regarding it discussed, the brand core and extended identity was analyzed through a self marketing perspective by each student. In addition students were asked if there were qualities they felt the tool box was missing.

Table 7 presents an interview matrix were the general feelings towards the tool box can be seen. Each attribute visible in the table was mentioned to the informants and they were asked to rank it as scoring high, moderate or low; for instance when stating the attribute “useful” the informant was then asked to respond whether the self marketing tool box is seen as highly useful, moderately useful or barely useful.

The self marketing tool box is considered to be valuable although some preunderstanding is required in order to better comprehend and implicate it in to action. All in all, the informants felt it was well constructed, concise and logical yet the greatest delimitation based on their responses was the fact that some concepts were not familiar to them. However, no one thought of the tool box to be confusing which supports the need for its construction in the first place. It is apparent that although the box is seen as a helpful guideline in assisting a self marketer find his/her way and truly analyze him/her through various frameworks and theoretical constructs it is also viewed as confusing due to some unfamiliar concepts. The results adapted from the interview matrix had an influence on deciding to redo the self marketing tool box, in order to make it ever more comprehensive and reduce the amount of confusion it created in some informants. Based on the interview results the new tool box should be more inclusive, explain the various terms on a deeper level and not cause confusion to ones interpreting it.
Table 7  Interview Matrix 4, Thoughts on the Self Marketing Tool Box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMANT</th>
<th>USEFUL</th>
<th>CONSTRUCTIVE</th>
<th>ENCOURAGING</th>
<th>UNNECESSARY</th>
<th>CONFUSING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juho Oikuri</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniela Laitinen</td>
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<td>Agnetta Marino</td>
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<td>Markus Sunell</td>
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<td>Joonas Kaskeala</td>
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<td>Frederik Karlsson</td>
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<td>Henna Hänninen</td>
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<td>Jaana Ahonen</td>
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<td>Lisa Rosenström</td>
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<td>Emmi Kallio</td>
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<td>Sari Veikkolainen</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**HIGH** = Tool box scores high on this attribute  
**MODERATE** = Tool box scores moderately on this attribute  
**LOW** = Tool box scores very low on this attribute

The general feeling towards the tool box is that it is seen as helpful in providing a guideline to the person utilizing it to deeply analyze him/herself, however the mentioning of the personal qualities namely denting, binding, leaning and refusing was seen as confusing in that these branding qualities were not familiar beforehand to the informants. Following are some quotes regarding the students’ thoughts about the tool box; Sunell (2011) discussed the question in the following way:

“Yeah, I think it’s interesting to kind of look at yourself through a branding perspective, imply your identity and then assess what your core and extended identity is… But I only knew this because I am very familiar with branding literature… And the denting, binding, well I didn’t really get them, I mean what we discussed before gave me some insight to the subject but… I think the tool box can really be of much help but only if you understand the concepts; like the part analyze yourself through denting, binding etc. well that was not clear to me, maybe if I knew what denting and binding are it could be different….”  
(12.10.2011)
Oikuri (2011) saw the tool box as very useful

“I think it’s real direct and to the point, like there is no extra nonsense, you basically have to truly understand who you are; self marketing starts from the inside, just like effective branding starts with building a strong identity that can then be communicated as a strong image to customers, so when you know your inner skills and abilities it is much easier to then start communicating them…” (17.10.2011)

Veikkolainen (2011) was not of the same opinion, in that she had a rather negative reaction towards the constructed tool box

“Well, I don’t know... I mean why should I start thinking of myself as a brand? I don’t really see the point of making something that is so basically simple so complicated. Like, maybe this can be useful to someone who is very confused on how to present herself to someone or something like that, but then again for me I don’t have those confusions, so to me this is just another table I guess” (15.10.2011)

Rosenström (2011) also expressed her doubt towards the functionality of the tool box

“What does recognize the need to sell yourself mean? I want to understand this better, and what are the binding, denting etc. things? I think the tool box in itself is very clear and concise, but some of the concepts in it or just unfamiliar to me, so maybe if I would read about the concepts I could also understand the box better....” (17.10.2011)

Karlsson (2011) feels rather positive towards the self marketing tool box

“I would really use this for deep introspection, I think it provides an excellent guideline in to a topic not that much discussed, I like the fact that you’re suppose to yourself understand who you are and recognize your own unique set of qualities; the application of the branding concepts is interesting to me” (15.10.2011)

Furthermore, Ahonen (2011) adds her thoughts

“This tool box seems to suggest hard work; I mean it tells me to deeply analyze myself as a brand, my identity, my core, my thoughts, my strengths and my weaknesses... In a way it’s intimidating, because I have never thought of these things before so it’s eye opening, I’ve just always stressed about going to
interviews and maybe creating a CV that stands out, but that’s that… I’ve never thought about myself as a product per se and how I should begin to communicate myself, or market myself…” (14.10.2011)

When asked to apply herself to the tool box Hänninen (2011) mentions the following

“So I guess my core identity is my strong and fearless personality when it comes to hard work, like I always force myself to learn things I do not understand or cannot do properly, that’s just who I am… I never let go unless I learn, guess that’s a characteristic that should be appreciated, and then well my extended identity well that’s my strong market research skills, I have had much experience in this field, the value I provide well my attitude, research experience and ambition…” (20.10.2011)

Furthermore Johansson (2011) discusses himself through the brand identity perspective offered in the tool box

“My core is my strong analytical skill, I am very serious about work and education and this is a personal trait I doubt will disappear anywhere and I think a business analyst should have this type of personality… My extended identity would then maybe strategic planning skills and then my functional qualities would be the strong know how I have on business models, balanced scorecards, COPE-analysis etc. I know these and how to use them thoroughly and a business analyst, which is what I am aiming at, needs to know these…” (15.10.2011)

Kallio (2011) saw her own brand identity in the subsequent way

“My core is my sense of responsibility, I never hand in anything late, I am responsible in all aspects of my life, especially the professional, because I am so responsible, I don’t think I could ever let a task slide me by… And then when I consider what my extended characteristics are, then I would say my team working skills and the ability to assume both a leading and a following role in a group and then my functional benefits would be my extensive IT and programming skills that make at least I think, a very competitive candidate.” (15.10.2011)

Overall, the feelings towards the tool box are positive; with a few exceptions who find it rather confusing due to the concepts it illustrates. This again, encourages to the remaking of the self marketing tool box. When asked what it is missing, the common response was that some of the concepts especially Adam Morgan’s (2004) personal qualities were not familiar and they would like to understand what those qualities are in order to better recognize why they are
mentioned in the tool box, even though they were discussed earlier on during the interviews. For instance, Marino (2011) explains the following:

“I think the box is missing some explanation or introduction, I get the going from attribute to action and beginning with the aim, but then the leaning and refusing etc. are mentioned and I get somewhat lost, what are they? Are they actions I should take or what? Maybe I need to read the whole discussion about the tool box to get the content better” (17.10.2011)

Furthermore, Hänninen (2011) discusses the charisma element in the tool box:

“I don’t really understand why charisma is mentioned, I though it’s something a tad intangible and indefinable, like no one can explain it, but then in this tool box it’s presented as an attribute and then the action is to develop your energy level and work on self esteem, but how is that done?” (20.10.2011)

In addition, Laitinen discusses the tool box in the following manner:

“I think the tool box is really clear in a way and I understand the logic, but I don’t know how I’m supposed to construct my own brand identity table and how I can analyze myself through denting and binding and those attributes... I believe it would be much easier if I would have some sort of pre understanding before I see the tool box, then it would be easier to grasp” (Laitinen, 20.10.2011)
6. Discussion on Results

The aim of this chapter is to assess the overall results provided by the study and discuss their meaning in the light of the research questions. The outcome of the study produced many different views on the topic of self marketing, whether or not it is seen as useful and what expectations it raises in students. As one of the central aims of the study was to explore the information students have on self marketing and investigate their expectations with regards to the presented tool box and one of the research questions was to answer what are students’ expectations, thoughts and feelings on the created tool box and self marketing as a concept? The previous chapter presented the results of the interviews more or less following the design of the interview guide; this chapter will in its turn discuss the results in a more thorough manner so that they can best answer the research aim and question. In addition theoretical and managerial implications will be discussed as well as the delimitations of the study.

6.1 Review of Results

The study aimed to figure out several issues from a student’s perspective with regards to marketing, they were asked to define the term in their own words, discuss the expectations it raises, ponder on whether or not they in fact use self marketing in their lives, to what extent and the need for it in their future careers. In addition, the informants were required to express their thought on the constructed self marketing tool box and discuss the issues of brand core and extended identity. Following, I will present the main results in sum.

The common description the students interviewed gave for self marketing was without exception being competitive, presenting one’s self effectively in person and on paper and standing out; these were the strongest definitions that almost each informant gave. In addition, self marketing was also seen as a process requiring a relevant amount of introspection, external support and the emphasis of personal skills. In order to give an overall definition for self marketing; I have utilized the answers attained during the interviews and formulated them in to one clear definition. The definition consists of what self marketing
 means for students as well as what it used for. Therefore, based on the perspective of the students interviewed self marketing is defined in the subsequent manner

“Self marketing is the process by which an individual communicates his/her skills and competencies in a manner that enables him/her to stand out in a crowd and be a competitive threat in any situation involving job hunting, developing a career and/or networking. External assistance is required for successful self marketing, in addition to a relevant amount of self reflexion.”

In order to answer the research question of what are students’ expectations, thoughts and feelings on the created tool box and self marketing as a concept, the concept needed to be defined first, only then could I discuss the expectations it presents. Once the expectations were examined, the common response from the informants was that self marketing is anticipated to assist a person to succeed in his/her career, to make him/her get noticed, stand out and achieve professional success in the long term. The general expectations students have on self marketing can thus be defined in the subsequent manner

“Self marketing provides a person with the possibility for future success in terms of employment, networking and gaining attention in the professional arena. Self marketing is a means of differentiating one’s self from the surrounding competition and results in truly standing out in a crowd.”

Therefore, self marketing is expected to mainly act as a boost in the right direction for a person seeking employment and professional success, it is seen as a method for differentiation and being noticed.

The concept of brand identity consisting of a core and extended identity was discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis; the perspective suggests a great amount of self reflexion since the individual applying this branding theory to him/herself in a self marketing construct needs to apply a branding oriented mind frame, where he/she deeply analyses his/her core identity and the extended distinctiveness around the core, what functional, emotional, self-expressive and relationship benefits included. Discussing and asking the informants to apply this framework in to their own identities produced interesting results, the students
interviewed did apply the construct to their own selves have it be in a rather superficial manner, however this can be explained by the simple fact that deep self analysis may take a much longer period of time than is used for an interview session. In any case, the discussion on brand identity raised much notice in the informants. Whilst accepting that applying the branding framework to the self requires introspection, at the same time the informants also seemed to appreciate external support suggesting that although they do themselves wish to participate in forming a marketable self they require and expect e.g. an outside professional to also contribute.

Charisma and developing it was seen as very interesting by the informants, they felt that it is indeed a characteristic highly valued, although it in fact has no clear definition, it is an abstract intangible rather mysterious attribute that the students saw as a tool for successful self marketing. Interest was expressed on how to develop and construct charisma if even possible; the students clearly stated that if they were offered direct guidelines on how they can on their own or with external support build a charismatic presence they would do so without hesitation. This willingness comes from the recognition that self marketing is about standing out in a crowd and being competitive.

The personal qualities of denting, binding, leaning and refusing were seen as applicable in a self marketing construct, the notion of validating the same practices that are applied to traditional marketing and branding practices to the field of self marketing were welcomed. This result in itself is quite contradictory when considering the fact that many of the informants did not see self marketing as a marketing activity per se, but agreed on applying the same theories to self marketing that are applied to for example the construction of a brand. However this can be explained by the relatively low if not nonexistent attention paid for self marketing as a recognized subject in the academic community.

The informants showed deep concern over the fact that self marketing is not much discussed or practiced anywhere within their reach at least in an accessible way. Where competitors may be creating video CV’s, constructing power point presentations of themselves and standing out of the crowd with the use of innovative techniques, this leaves some students feeling lost and beginning to question how they too could market themselves in an equally strong manner. The respondents felt that these tools should be given at the time one is still studying, so that upon
graduation one would feel well prepared for the working arena. The students similarly to the ones of the pilot study also expressed anxiety towards graduating and beginning their careers; they feel confused on where to begin applying for employment position and what skills they should highlight whilst doing so, a need for examples and ways of self marketing was clearly articulated.

The reactions towards the self marketing tool box were relatively receptive and positive; the tool kit was seen as an acceptable guideline and framework to assist in the development of one’s own self marketing skills and analysis of one’s own abilities. Yet, some of the themes apparent in the box were seen as confusing, such as the personal qualities, the informants felt that the box needs some sort of introduction in order for it to be better understood. In addition, even though the initial self marketing tool box was not seen as completely incomprehensible there is a motivation to construct it again, in order to make use of the interview results and create a more comprehensive framework for business students to utilize for their advantage. The new tool box should include all the relevant theory discussed in this paper in a logical order and concise wording.

In addition, if the tool box would be even more comprehensive it would certainly offer better benefit for the individual examining it and wanting to utilize it personally. Due to this, there is motivation to rebuild the initial self marketing tool box and make it more coherent and usable; the new tool box can be seen in Figure 5. It attempts to take in to consideration all the relevant theory discussed yet present it in a concise and coherent manner.
Figure 5  Self Marketing Tool Box

**Brand Essence**
- Core Identity: the aspects that construct the core identity; personality, values, inherent skills, experience etc.
- Extended Identity: the characteristics that are around the core identity; skills and abilities, educational background etc.
- Value Proposition: functional, emotional, self-expressive and relationship benefits

**Brand Identity Structure**
- Product: product scope, product attributes, quality/value, use experience, users, country of origin.
- Organization: organizational attributes, local versus global.
- Person: brand personality, customer/brand relationships.
- Symbol: visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage.

**Developing Charisma**
Becoming aware of one’s need/want to develop and improve; becoming consciously incompetent leading to either the motivation to do something about it or leave things as they are.

Once one has reached the stage of really wanting to self improve and develop self marketing skills and enhance charisma, the learner is on the way to becoming consciously competent. Effectively, one is required to set aside time to practice and focus on implementing the changes one desires.

Integrating one’s own development requirements and a newly improved performance becomes naturally achieved.

**Denting**  
Driving one’s personal brand forward and interpreting rejection as a request for additional information. Presenting oneself in a confident manner and stand out from the competition, one needs to be able to project a confident presence, clear goals and a true passion and want for the task at hand.

**Binding**  
Creating singularity of direction across a team, success in business is not based on individual talent and capacity alone; instead it is achieved, often, as a result of team work and the ability to be a functioning and productive member of that team.

**Leaning**  
Exposing oneself to risk and knowing how to profit from it.

**Refusing**  
Showing good and firm character, the courage to refuse an issue that one is against, if such an issue even comes up of course, is definitely a characteristic that may most likely enhances the representation one gives of one’s self.

**Self-evaluation**
- Providing strategic direction
- Developing people skills
- Providing transferable skills
- Strengthening IT knowledge

**Social Media Presence**
Utilizing social media and online channels for career hunting purposes, consistency and showing one’s personality in a professional and interesting manner to attract positive attention.

**Strategy Building**
- Vision statement ->
- Target audience ->
- Assessment ->
- Goals and Objectives ->
- Operations Strategy ->
- Implementation
6.2 Theoretical Implications

At present, as the theoretical review indicated there is no valid theoretical framework regarding the subject of self marketing, the empirical results also suggested that although self marketing is seen as a marketing activity there is no theoretical backbone to it and due to this self marketing is not yet fully accepted in the marketing discipline by the sample group.

One major theoretical implication of this thesis is thus the status of self marketing in the marketing community, Shepherd (2005) discusses that although self marketing is in some ways associated with and developed from principles in mainstream marketing, the debate so far seems to indicate that it is not yet satisfactorily embedded in a proper theoretical marketing framework, in fact he suggests a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the behaviour inherent in self marketing. It is apparent that self marketing is a more or less inside-out process that serves to summarize the strengths, skills and abilities of an individual in relation to a target audience; this is as far as the research results show and it also supported by Shepherd (2005) and Fodge (2011) who indicated that students are keen on building their own marketable selves as well as getting external assistance. Complementary theoretical frameworks such as identity theory and personal branding could offer further insight into the subject.

The results indicate that branding activities are welcomed in the creation of a marketable self, the brand essence perspective through identifying the core and extended identity and realizing personal value propositions can very extensively be applied to self marketing as an inside-out activity. In addition, Morgan’s (2004) personal qualities of denting, binding, leaning and refusing and the concept of developing charisma and the importance of a marketing oriented mind frame offer new insight on how to develop self marketing and begin implementing it in real life situations such as when meeting prospective employers. The construction of a self marketing tool box with relevant theoretical guidelines offers valuable aid for any individual wanting to build a marketable self.

As with regards to the final research question “where can students find support and advice on developing their own self marketing skills”, the answer lies first and foremost in the students themselves, as the results indicated that they are willing to work on developing their own
marketable selves yet require some guidelines and occasional external assistance while doing so. Thus, primarily when wanting to develop self marketing skills, based on the results of this study, students can begin with deep introspection and utilize the constructed tool box as a starting point for them to better understand their own skills, competencies and shortcomings. Becoming better acquainted with applicable branding and marketing theories is needed as well.

Self marketing, in various guises, is now a rapidly growing business in its own right, and the range of advice now publicly available is serving to democratize the process; what was once a service provided by others is now an activity one is encouraged to undertake oneself (Shepherd, 2005: 1). Consequently, as self marketing becomes a more popular field of interest further research is needed to maintain and further prove its belonging to the marketing community.

Although this thesis focused on the expectations business students have towards self marketing and on their need for support in these type of activities, McCorkle et al. (2003) studied the level of preparation students had towards entering the job market and towards using self marketing as a means of getting ahead in their careers. Thus, McCorkle et al.’s (2003) study can be implicated to the outcome of this thesis. The authors discuss the importance of skills development in the process of self marketing activities; an area that was disregarded in this paper yet still present interesting theoretical implications and areas for further research. The authors discuss the following regarding skills development

“Skills have been divided into two categories: discipline-related and support skills... Discipline-related skills are developed with the practice of discipline-related knowledge. Discipline-related skills provide a strong selling point when competing for a specific job in marketing and also provide evidence of, at the least, indirect experience. Alternatively, support skills are transferable across several jobs or disciplines and may include subcategories in the areas of communication, interpersonal, creativity, and decision making, among others... Any student, regardless of education level or major, may acquire and benefit from these support skills.” (5)

Thus, further researching skills development and the division between discipline and support skills can result in an even greater platform for self marketing literature. It is quite apparent
from McCorkle et al.’s (2003) study that it is highly recommended to build marketable skills into students; this same suggestion was put forth in this thesis.

In addition, McCorkle et al.’s (2003) quantitative study involving business students in a US based university resulted in the following conclusions

“Procrastination is common. Many, including the better students, often wait until their last semester in school before setting aside even nominal time for job search preparations and focus... Many students are attempting to balance part-time jobs and heavy course loads, and they rationalize that they are too busy to allocate the time required for adequate career research and job preparation and effort. Many students have expectations that good jobs will come to them and, as graduation comes and goes, in some cases, are disappointed when the popular and preferred companies do not interview on campus or advertise in the local newspapers” (1).

Whereas, the results of this thesis indicate a clear willingness from the students’ standpoint to actively engage in self marketing activities, especially those involving self reflexion, similarities in the studies' results do exist as well for example in terms of students’ anxiety and unknowingness of how to go ahead with issues relating to self marketing and job searching activities. McCorkle et al. (2003) discuss the issue

“After the completion of their studies many marketing students have not chosen a career field(s) and have little knowledge of the career path they could follow... Even if these decisions are determined by their senior year, there is limited time for focused preparation in the form of targeted internships, mentoring and networking... Business students rarely view the job search as an opportunity to apply what they have learned about marketing to their own job situation- what the authors refer to as self marketing.” (1)

Here again, the lack of direction amongst the students is evident. Perhaps, applying self reflexion from an early stage may ease the process of engaging in self marketing activities, as the sooner one begins incorporating an activity the easier it should logically be, to become comfortable with that activity.

In conclusion, the theoretical implications of this thesis suggest that branding literature is indeed applicable to self marketing practices, the idea that charisma is something that can be
developed was introduced and is open for further research, an inside- out method of self marketing with the possibility for external assistance was expressed by the informants and supports the above mentioned statement that self marketing in an activity that can be undertaken on one’s own. Also, the fact that students have a lack of direction in terms of where and how to begin self marketing activities in addition to feeling anxious towards the topic is supported by McCorkle et al.’s (2003) study.

### 6.3 Managerial Implications

The results indicated that self marketing is at times seen as something that external help is required for in addition to the inside- out perspective. One valuable method of using external assistance for developing self marketing activities is in fact career coaching which refers to the process of assisting candidates in selecting a course of study that may support them in becoming employable. Its aim is to help applicants getting into a career that is suited for their interest, aptitude, personality, and expertise. It can provide to be useful so that the candidate can market him/herself in the best manner possible. The notion of whether or not it is an absolute necessity for successful self marketing is however subject to debate.

A study conducted at the Media and Communication Studies of Örebro University “Governing through career coaching: Negotiations of self marketing” raises interesting ideas on the topic of career coaching and high lights its importance in today’s society where academics and white-collar workers are encouraged to become marketable; it has indeed become a growing industry for these groups. Knowing one’s self is highly important, one should be able to analyze both the positive and negative characteristics of one’s personality, and be confident enough to admit weaknesses, which inevitably exist. Thus, in career coaching subjects themselves dynamically take part in their own self-construction too.

The findings suggest hindrances and uncertainties in the very construction of a marketable/ sellable self; in addition they point out that although students do not openly question self marketing they show difficulty towards how to actually market the self. According to Fogde an (2011)
...an underlying assumption in the marketing of self is giving a good impression in order to be sellable…
However, it could be argued that in promoting the self it is not always clear cut what this means in term of how to display the self or being comfortable doing this (71).

When giving career advice, the students are interactively encouraged to be self-reflexive in order to successfully self market. This suggests that the applicant and career coach are both required to work on the self marketing strategy, in that the applicant needs to truly reflect on his/her competencies, characteristics and wants where as the career coach then assists the applicant to successfully communicate them. Fogde (2011) continues to reflect on career coaching procedures by stating that

...A psychological discourse is constructed as introspective self-reflexivity in the process of constructing a self. This introspection involves several aspects and domains of the individual, not only what can be seen as formal and professional competencies. It also involves personal and private aspects (77).

The study’s results suggest that students feel anxious with regards to the notion of “standing out in a crowd”, especially when that crowd comprises people with a similar background; it is thus acknowledged as a demanding task. It is seen as the occupation of the career coach to find out ways for the individual to market the self successfully. Therefore suggesting that students seem to value the additional input available from career coaches, yet simultaneously contributing themselves too to the construction of a marketable self. The results of this study are highly similar to Fodge’s research discussed here.

Career development can also be considered as one major managerial implication of this study; self marketing is seen by the informants as well as by relevant literature as a means of achieving success in working life and standing out from the competition, thus it is indeed relevant in career development practices. There is an obvious need expressed for a support system when it comes to self marketing, this need can well be utilized further by career coaches, educational institutions, personal branding consultants and educational institutions.

Also, a relevant study suggests that self marketing should be taught and incorporated from an early stage; McCorkle et al. (2003) recommend that a self marketing project be assigned to any “Principles of Marketing class”. This project would require students to define their existing knowledge and skills, choose a career field and a targeted group of companies or a specific
industry, and decide on their positioning and marketing mix strategies, including a targeted cover letter and resume. In addition the authors suggest that schools and students alike strengthen ties with their universities’ career services. In addition to arranging seminars for the basic job search skills of cover letter/resume writing and job interviewing, most of these career services offices could also “offer career counseling; job interview role-playing; and shadowing, mentor, and internship and networking opportunities, among many other valuable services” (McCorkle et al. 2003: 8).

McCorkle et al. (2003) discuss other ways of strengthening students’ self marketing activities from an early stage.

Besides the use of guest speakers and executive professors in the classroom, increased activity with marketing and business-oriented college clubs and local and national professional associations provide numerous benefits, such as (1) increased focus on marketing/business careers and the need for preparation; (2) the setting of more realistic entry-level job expectations; and (3) more targeted opportunities for networking, mentors, shadowing, internships, nonprofit volunteerism, guest speakers, and full-time jobs. (9)

Other managerial implications also include arranging seminars, courses and workshops for students and other individual interested in developing their own self marketing skills for the better. The informants of the study expressed willingness to participate if these types of activities were offered for them.

The findings showed very clearly that students want to themselves participate in the construction of their marketable selves yet require guidelines on how to begin that process; in addition they expressed the need for outside professionals in becoming successful self marketers. Self marketing is considered a valuable tool for career development and a usable skill in a competitive job market. Increased rivalry for professions highlight the crucial need for self marketing and stresses its growing importance among young and old professionals. In addition, it is relevant to note that besides fulfilling the immediate need for employment, the need for self marketing may very well continue for the rest of a student’s working life as he or she changes employers, positions, and even careers.

In order to conclude the managerial implications of this study I have constructed a table, illustrating the different means individuals can utilize in order to improve and develop their
self marketing skills. Table 8 demonstrates means of increasing these skills and also suggests a
time and place for these activities. As suggested by McCorkle et al. (2003), the sooner an
individual begins engaging in activities related to self marketing the better.
Table 8  Managerial Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self reflection</td>
<td>Dedicating time to deeply understand one’s own skills and abilities.</td>
<td>No place specifically needed for this.</td>
<td>All the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding and Marketing Theory</td>
<td>Familiarizing one’s self with the literature from books, articles and courses.</td>
<td>No place specifically needed for this.</td>
<td>Whenever possible, during studies preferably.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Enlisting on various online mediums, e.g. Linkedin, Heebo.</td>
<td>Online.</td>
<td>All the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>Contacting school’s or employment office’s career advisor for a meeting.</td>
<td>At school, or the employment office for instance.</td>
<td>Whenever possible, during studies preferably.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Coaching</td>
<td>Contacting both public and private services offering guidance on this field.</td>
<td>Where ever it is arranged.</td>
<td>Whenever possible, during studies preferably.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>Working together with colleagues/friends on improving self marketing skills, giving and receiving feedback.</td>
<td>Where ever it is arranged.</td>
<td>Whenever possible, during studies preferably.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Participating in events where the opportunity to work on self marketing skills is offered, e.g. CV workshops are often arranged at school premises.</td>
<td>At school.</td>
<td>Whenever possible, during studies preferably.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking events</td>
<td>Actively following what events are organized, e.g. through alumni groups.</td>
<td>Where ever they are arranged.</td>
<td>All the time.</td>
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</table>
7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter will present an overall conclusion of the whole study and put forth suggestions for further research. The empirical study as well as the theoretical framework will be summarized and a comprehensive conclusion introduced. Recommendations to further research the subject of self marketing is seen as important and highly necessary.

7.1 Conclusion

The research problem was divided into three questions, how can a self marketing framework/tool box be created, what are students’ expectations, thoughts and feelings on the created tool box and self marketing as a concept and where and how can students find support and advice on developing their own self marketing skills? The ultimate aims of the study were threefold: (1) to prepare a self marketing tool box consisting of useful information and recommendations students may use when job hunting and networking in general, (2) to research the information students have on self marketing and investigate their expectations with regards to the presented tool box, and finally, (3) to provide implications on where students can develop their own self marketing. The aims were reached by answering the research questions in the order they had been presented.

The first research question was responded via the theoretical framework; branding literature by Aaker (2002) was utilized alongside relevant sources from other narratives. In order to prepare the self marketing tool box aimed to offer guidelines and concepts for individuals interested in developing their self marketing skills, applicable theory was needed. The pilot study gave direction in to where and what type of theory would be introduced and then related to the tool box. In addition, the self marketing tool box was further developed after the empirical study as to fit the informants’ needs the best possible way. It became evident that marketing and branding theory can indeed be applied to the self marketing construct and the study suggests that perhaps the time has come to accept self marketing in to the ever expanding arena of marketing theory. Discussion on the need to sell yourself, adopting a marketer’s mind frame, creating an effective CV and cover letter, preparing for an interview strategically and recognizing one’s own strengths and weaknesses, and assessing ways on how
to behave on social media channels and online in general were all identified as methods of self marketing; thus these activities should be adopted in order to successfully self market, the research results also showed that these means raised interest and concern in the respondents.

The concept of brand identity mainly a core and extended identity suggested a great amount of self reflexion as the individual applying this branding theory to themselves in a self marketing construct needs to apply a branding oriented mind frame, where they deeply analyse their core identity and the extended distinctiveness around the core, what functional, emotional, self-expressive and relationship benefits included. Whilst accepting that applying the branding framework to the self requires heavy introspection, the informants did appreciate and want external support; consequently although they themselves wished to participate in forming their own marketable selves they expressed the need for an outside professional to also contribute.

Utilizing the brand identity table provided a fine guideline on how to analyze one’s own skills and abilities, the extended brand identity forces a self marketer to dig deeper into one’s own identity and bring forth new attributes of one’s self. Furthermore, in the process of self marketing it was critical to consider all of the four perspectives as presented by Aaker (2002) in order to find out which ones articulate one’s personality the most; the identity consists of four perspectives that are the brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol, once these have been implemented to one’s self, the self marketing framework can then begin to formulate.

Denting, binding, leaning and refusing are all valid ways of improving one’s self marketing skills, these qualities were discussed through a branding perspective and offered an insight on personal qualities that need to be brought out in people in order to achieve success in working life and career planning. Charisma was introduced as an aspect of self marketing; it was discussed and seen as an admirable quality a person should have in order to be competitive, ways of developing charisma such as working on one’s self esteem and energy level were introduced.

The second research question related to researching the information students had on self marketing and investigating their expectations with regards to the presented tool box. The
results indicated that self marketing is seen as being competitive, presenting one’s self effectively in person and on paper and standing out. Furthermore, it is a process requiring a relevant amount of introspection, external support and the emphasis of personal skills. Self marketing provides the possibility for future success in terms of employment, networking and gaining attention in the professional arena. It is a means of differentiating one’s self from the surrounding competition and results in truly standing out in a crowd. Self marketing is expected to act as a boost in the right direction for a person seeking employment and professional success; it is seen as a method for differentiation and being noticed. The students believed applying the branding framework to the self required deep introspection, yet at the same time they also seemed to appreciate external support suggesting that although they themselves wish to participate in forming their own self marketing plan an outside professional was also welcomed to contribute.

The reactions towards the self marketing tool box were receptive and positive; the tool kit was seen as a useful parameter and framework to support in the development of one’s own self marketing skills and examination of one’s own abilities. Some of the themes visible in the box however were seen as confusing, such as the personal qualities, the informants felt that the box needs some sort of introduction in order for it to be better understood. In addition, if the tool box would be even more comprehensive it would offer better benefit for the individual examining it and wanting to utilize it personally. Due to the before mentioned reasons, the initial self marketing tool box was recreated and attempted to make it more coherent and comprehensive.

The third research question was to provide implications on where students can develop their own self marketing skills. Several managerial and theoretical implications were put forth, one main theoretical implication of this thesis was the position of self marketing in the marketing community, although the concept is associated with and developed from principles available in mainstream marketing, there are indications that it is not yet satisfactorily embedded in a proper theoretical marketing framework, this is evident in the lack of valid theory and excessiveness of self-help literature. Self marketing is an inside- out process that serves to summarize the strengths, skills and abilities of an individual in relation to a target audience; this is as far as the research results show and was also supported by Shepherd (2005) and Fodge (2011) who indicated that students are keen on building their own marketable selves as
well as getting external assistance. From a managerial perspective the study results indicated that self marketing was also seen as something that external help is required for in addition to the inside-out perspective. A valuable means of using external assistance for developing self marketing activities was suggested to be career coaching which refers to the process of assisting candidates in selecting a course of study that may support them in becoming employable. Its aim is to assist applicants getting into a career that is suited for their interest, aptitude, personality, and expertise. It was suggested to be useful so that the candidate can market him/herself in the best manner possible.

Referring to concrete ways for students to get assistance and support in self marketing, firstly one source would be this very thesis, in particular the self marketing tool box which can offer concrete guidelines to be utilized in order to best bring out one’s skills and abilities and become a competitive threat. Actively participating in workshops and seminars that provide information on the current job seeking trends, CV and cover letter makings arranged at school or student organizations can give great insight on what to do in order to stand out in today’s job market. Most educational institutions offer counselling in terms of career planning, this support should of course be utilized. Being active in various online communities, signing up for career hunting websites and networking societies also provide many interesting ways and means of staying current with the trends of the time, meeting potential new co-workers and employers. The key is of course to know how to be present on those sites and to be consistent and professional on what information one shares. Perhaps, the most important channel for students to gain support on self marketing is indeed themselves, through introspection and the use of available literature.

Evidently, most business students do realize that today’s job market is highly competitive and challenging, and that it requires considerable effort to follow successfully. This thesis presented my observations, relevant academic literature, and qualitative interview results concerning a business student’s self marketing expectations. The research findings gave several recommendations for developing students’ self marketing skills, with the perspective of instructing business students to apply relevant marketing and branding literature for their own personal triumph.

In sum, the key findings of this study can be stated in the following manner
(1) **Tools in the self marketing tool box:**

The main self marketing tools refer to the brand identity which consists of four perspectives that are the brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol. It includes a core and extended identity with a value proposition. Personal qualities that can be used to bring out the most of one’s personality and successfully self market are namely denting, binding, leaning and refusing; these are crucial instruments needed in the tool box. Charisma is a central quality for a great first impression; having all the right elements both internally and externally, thus it is also a needed tool. Recognizing the need to sell one’s self in order to begin self marketing with the appropriate attitude, in addition one must adopt a marketing oriented way of thinking and behaving. The writing of CVs and cover letters as well as preparing for interviews are also needed tools for successful self marketing and therefore needed in instruments in the final self marketing tool box.

(2) **Overall definition of self marketing:**

Self marketing is the process by which an individual communicates his/her skills and competencies in a manner that enables him/her to stand out in a crowd and be a competitive threat in any situation involving job hunting, developing a career and/or networking. External assistance is required for successful self marketing, in addition to a relevant amount of self reflexion. Successful self marketing skills derive from having confidence in one’s self, setting goals and following them through, placing effort into the work one does and producing better quality through that effort and most importantly, believing in one’s self and in one’s abilities to succeed in working life.

(3) **Expectations regarding self marketing:**

Self marketing provides a person with the possibility for future success in terms of employment, networking and gaining attention in the professional arena. Self marketing is a means of differentiating one’s self from the surrounding competition and results in truly standing out in a crowd. In addition, self marketing evokes feelings of anxiety in some business students, in that they feel uncomfortable with having to focus solely on standing out and
making their voices heard; this was discussed as perhaps relating to cultural phenomena; however more research is needed on why it causes such unease in certain informants. Indeed, self marketing is seen as a skill one should have and a strategy one should develop in order to become more successful in the forming of a professional career.

(4) Channels for developing self marketing skills:

The main channel for successful self marketing begins from the individual him/herself. This thesis and the self marketing tool box however also act as a channel for developing self marketing skills. Actively participating in workshops and seminars that provide information on the current job seeking trends, participating in CV and cover letter guidance arranged at student organizations. Using online communities, signing up for career hunting websites and networking societies are a very current channel to use for developing self marketing skills. In addition, career coaching can also be used as a means for bettering self marketing skills. Ultimately, the most important channel for students to gain support on self marketing is indeed themselves, through introspection and the use of available literature.

7.2 Recommendations

The study focused on the feelings and expectations of students with regards to the subject of self marketing. The research approach was qualitative and consisted of a pilot study with five students and an empirical research conducted using twelve informants. The study was restricted to Finnish students with limited work experience from either the Hanken or the Helsinki School of Economics institutes. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized; however they can be suggestive and provide a basis for further research. Alternatively, interesting results could be achieved if instead of studying the students one would study for instance the major employers in Finland in comparison, examine what qualities they expect to see in applicants, what self marketing ways, if any they admire and see as highly competitive. What expectations do employers have towards self marketing as opposed to the expectations the students portrayed. In addition, future research could examine self marketing through the basic principles of marketing theories, as to establish a simple definition for the subject. Theoretical frameworks such as identity theory, personal engineering and personal branding
could also be further researched in order to offer an even deeper analysis on the subject of self marketing.

Moreover, it would be of high value to conduct this same study in another country different in terms of culture for example the United States of America where the practice of presenting one’s self is much more open and loud, public speaking and presentation skills are highly valued and the overall working environment is also somewhat different. It could provide interesting information when comparing results from two different countries in terms of students’ self marketing expectations; in addition the aspect of culture could be investigated on a deeper level, to examine whether or not the cultural environment people live in has an effect on their self marketing skills and expectations.

Due to the relatively new nature of self marketing, there is an existing need to thoroughly examine the conceptual and practical difficulties that exist around the subject; as Shepherd (2005) suggests a parameter on how “marketing might embrace these popular and lucrative subjects, and provide a suitable theoretical framework for them within the discipline” (1). Due to the fact that adopting a marketing principle and branding techniques for a relatively non-conventional topic as self marketing is somewhat subject to resistance and debate, further theoretical research needs to be conducted on self marketing from a marketing and branding perspective.

Investigating personal branding alongside self marketing, identifying the underlying differences between the two concepts could shed more light on the area under discussion and help us to better understand the subjects and their place in the marketing arena.

Also, more research is needed to validate the success or failure of any self marketing strategies, skills, or methods. Some kind of follow-up measures could be taken after individuals have in fact used their self marketing skills in real life to then establish the comparative accomplishments of those efforts. While assumptions can and have been made about the importance of self marketing, there is yet no existing literature to in fact validate those assumptions.
7.3 Delimitations

The limitations of this study are related to the challenges of self marketing as a concept, one theoretical and the other practical. The theoretical challenge refers to the debate of whether or not the scope of marketing should be broadened and self marketing officially included, and the practical challenge is to design a syllabus that incorporates these activities in a manner that supports the effective development of professionals. This thesis attempted to offer a solution to these challenges yet did not result in offering a one single truth or final say on the matter, further research is needed in order to bring self marketing closer to the academic community and away from the self-help book shelf.

The subject’s rather new and unexamined nature meant there was not much previous research to use as a starting point or comparison; this caused a limitation to the extensiveness and thoroughness of research. The participants examined were students at either the Hanken School of Economics or the Helsinki School of Economics and therefore the results do not represent all students living in Finland for example but rather a much smaller group of people. In addition all of the students came from a Finnish or Swedish Finnish background; therefore the study results offer no international view on students’ expectations towards self marketing. Furthermore, the students consisted of business students solely and the results due therefore not represent all students. Based on a methodology-driven approach, other informant roles could have been used, in addition a comparative study between marketing and economics students could have been conducted, however this was not an aim of the paper but more or less an interesting by product. The snowball sampling technique was used in this study resulted in having more or less similar results from the informants, causing with a low level of variety in perceptions.

A major delimitation however is the fact that there still are gaps and missing elements around the subject of self marketing and in addition due to the reality that this is a relatively new idea in development, there is not much attempt made thus far at evaluation.
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SlideShare, How to Stand out in a Competitive Job Market


Time Magazine. 2007. It’s A Wrap, You’re Hired
# APPENDIX 1  INTERVIEWEE PROFILE FOR PILOT STUDY

<table>
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<th>Informant</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>Major</th>
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<td>Hanken</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
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*HSE = Helsinki School Of Economics

* The real names of the informants have not been given
APPENDIX 2 THE CASE OF LAURA GAINEOR

A relevant example of using social media in a humble as well as an interesting way would be the case of Laura Gainor; who is currently a social media manager for GMR Marketing.

Laura Gainor wanted to go to work at Comet Branding in Milwaukee, so she created an attractive self-marketing strategy using tools available on social media channels. The SlideShare application offered by LinkedIn was the key to her success. She uploaded a PowerPoint presentation and used SlideShare to make it public on her LinkedIn site. Within the presentation she began with a virtual resume of what she has done throughout her career, while also showcasing her creative and strategic talents as a means to show she truly wanted to become a part of Comet Branding. Following the community responses, Comet Branding then contacted her to set up a Skype interview, which proved to be successful, as she then went to her second interview she was immediately offered the position. In the following days, her presentation was often used as to how job seekers can make the most of social media.

The presentation itself is personal, engaging and at the same time professional; it is 42 slides long, however each slide contains very little text and leaves the reader wanting to see the next slide. Five extracted photos from the actual slideshow-presentation are illustrated below; in them it is apparent that whilst she is telling her “life story” she is simultaneously explaining why she is motivated to work in the social media business and how she has the professional expertise to be qualified for the industry. Laura Gainor mentions in her presentation on self-marketing (2010), on how to stand out in a competitive market, that one of the keys to her success was consistency throughout the process, she knew her goal and what message she wanted to portray, and that message was kept constant from beginning to end. In addition, she mentions networking and engaging in conversations on social media platforms as a way of forming business relationships with people one may later engage with in projects, employment opportunities and the exchange of ideas in general. One should think of self-marketing as a business; it should have a clear set of goals, it needs to be customized in order to send a unique image, it should publish content regularly in order to be remembered, and should ultimately benefit others as well as yourself. Having an innovative mindset, not being afraid of
Taking risks and being creative are key elements in the creation of a successful self-marketing strategy.

**Picture: 1**

![Image 1](source: www.slideshare.net/LauraGainor Slide: 3)

**Picture: 2**

![Image 2](source: www.slideshare.net/LauraGainor Slide: 14)

**Picture: 3**
Married @BrianGainor on August 22, 2009
In Uptown Charlotte

I would love to join the Comet Branding Team!

Source: www.slideshare.net/LauraGainor Slide: 22
Picture: 5
Thank you to Comet Branding for being such an appealing agency. I look forward to coming by your office on March 1st! Until then... I will be emailing you my resume!

Connect with me:

Source: www.slideshare.net/LauraGainor Slide: 42
APPENDIX 3  THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. **Synopsis**

- Informant’s field of study
- Informant’s definition of self marketing
- General thoughts on the concept
- Self marketing is about:

  STANDING OUT
  EMPHASIZING SKILLS
  INTROSPECTION
  USING EXTERNAL HELP
  PRESENTATION IN PERSON
  PRESENTATION ON PAPER
  MARKETING ACTIVITY

2. **Role of self marketing in informant’s personal life**

- Need for self marketing; existent or nonexistent
- Level of activeness in self marketing related activities
- Interest in self marketing as a principle; how would one like to be consulted on the subject
- The level of trust in own qualifications; the need for a set of guidelines to assist in marketing one’s self a certain way
- Thoughts on external assistance in self marketing, as well as role of introspection
- Self marketing can be taught via:

  INTROSPECTION
  BRANDING AND MARKETING LITERATURE
  SCHOOL CURRICULA
  WORKSHOPS
3. **Use of Self Marketing Methods**

- Thoughts on how to use self marketing in real life
- Applying the brand identity concept to the self
- Inside out process of branding to self marketing
- Level of activity and consistency on various social media channels, time and effort spent on the creation of CV and cover letter
- Recognition of the need to sell one’s self; adoption of marketing oriented thought
- Informant uses following self marketing to what extent:

  **SOCIAL MEDIA**
  THE NEED TO SELL ONE’S SELF
  BRAND IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE
  PERSONAL QUALITIES
  CHARISMA
  CV AND COVER LETTER

4. **Self marketing toolbox**

- General feelings towards the toolbox
- Brand core and extended identity
- Evoked thoughts
- Missing parts
- Self marketing tool box is seen as:

  USEFUL
  CONSTRUCTIVE
  ENCOURAGING
  UNNECESSARY
  CONFUSING
### APPENDIX 4  INTERVIEWEE PROFILE FOR QUALITATIVE STUDY

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