

Article

# From Start-Up Capital to Diversification and Sustainability of Personal Branding Activities

Agnieszka Walczak-Skałeczka 

Department of Management, Faculty of Management, Lublin University of Technology, 20618 Lublin, Poland; a.skalecka@pollub.pl

**Abstract:** Personal branding has become a common practice in the business world. In a knowledge-based economy, this seems to be a natural direction for the development of individuals' professional activities. However, the diversity in the activities undertaken is significant. Therefore, it is important to examine not only the final results of the activities undertaken but also their internal variation and sources, which can influence the long-term development of the individual and the ability to maintain these activities in the long term. The purpose of this article is to present the results of research on the impact of an individual's start-up capital and occupation on the diversification of activities undertaken while building a personal brand. Literature research was conducted to identify the components of start-up capital and to establish the relationship between the personal branding process and the start-up capital possessed. The empirical research used a diagnostic survey method, a questionnaire technique. It was conducted among a representative sample of Polish internet users in May 2021. Analyses revealed relationships between individual components of start-up capital and the variation in personal branding activities undertaken, as well as among those in occupations requiring creativity, broad decision-making and dependence on individual performance. The study provides relevant information for the discussion on how the concept of personal branding can be practically applied among people from different social and professional groups.

**Keywords:** personal brand; start-up capital; personal branding; cultural capital; economic capital; social capital



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## 1. Introduction

Practices related to the marking of authorship and the confirmation of credibility or work quality, e.g., craftsmanship, have been known since at least ancient times [1,2]. Reputation is not a new concept, nor is the range of practices that support its development and maintenance. Personal branding, however, is a much broader concept. Among the factors that have led to the development of the personal brand concept are: (a) the gradual extension of the brand concept into further areas of use—in this case the individual; (b) profound socio-cultural changes, e.g., the culture of individualism [3], with its inherent narrative of success, or the culture of narcissism [4]; (c) the ease with which the internet and social media make it possible to create an individual image for every person who has access to the internet and has at least elementary knowledge of using these platforms; (d) the ease with which the internet enables an incomparably greater number of people to be reached than traditional communication channels, at least compared to the costs; (e) changes in the labor market caused, among other things, by the progressive specialization of work and the global orientation towards the knowledge economy and the economy of experts, where individual knowledge, skills and creativity are largely decisive for the cooperation between employer and employee or client and service provider (e.g., freelancer); and, finally, (f) activities of professionals, such as marketers and PR specialists, to make young people, particularly those starting out on their career paths, believe that building a personal brand is a guarantee of success for them. A culture of individualism is characteristic of

Western societies of late modernity. One of the most important human experiences during socialization is the inculcation of personal autonomy and the development of a strong sense of personal responsibility for one's own life [5,6]. Therefore, the individual must develop strategies that allow him or her to shape their own development path, career or life in general. The concept of personal branding provides specific ways of thinking about oneself and the surrounding reality, as well as the tools to design and manage one's own career path. Personal responsibility for one's story leads directly to the specific construction of personal self-narration. 'Narratives justify and explain identity by exemplifying it. We are, as a species, sense-dependent beings because we use fiction, or more precisely symbolic conventions, to "make ourselves real". We are necessarily our own literary characters, actors on our own stage' [7] (p. 164). In the pursuit of success, the narrative of success becomes the only acceptable narrative. When we consider, among other things, the cult of consumption and changes within the family, we enter the space of the culture of narcissism. It is characterized by a devaluation of previous value systems and an orientation towards individual success, particular interests and the satisfaction of one's own ego [8]. The digital world, which enables the staging of authenticity, intensifies this phenomenon on a massive scale [4]. And while the concept of personal branding is evolving in the field of marketing, it is useful to keep in mind the broader socio-cultural context in which activities related to this concept are implemented. Contemporary culture, which is inextricably linked to the development of the internet, promotes narcissism and extroversion. The online environment has now become more than just a place for entertainment. A significant proportion of professional contacts are shifting to the internet, and it is here that personal branding activities are largely carried out [9].

The concept of the personal brand has been functioning under this name since the end of the twentieth century [10], but there are at least a dozen approaches to the concept that share many common features while differing on the most essential points. Therefore, there is still no single unified approach when it comes to defining the personal brand [11], the instruments and the effects in terms of achieving the desired goals [2,12], as well as what we can already call side effects, which are not always positive [13,14]. Research and analysis on personal branding often focus on the benefits that effective personal branding activities can bring [12]. These include, among others, credibility, influence [15], self-realization [16], reflexivity [17], differentiation in the market, employability [18,19] and monetary outcomes. Attempts are also being made to build Personal Brand Equity models [20] and in particular CEO Brand Equity [21–24]. The process of personal branding itself is reduced in the literature to the identification of general stages, which can be put down to [12]: raising self-awareness, analyzing audience needs and positioning, constructing brand architecture, seeking feedback and self-reflecting. However, there is a lack of analysis in the literature on what factors influence whether a personal branding process can be conducted effectively in the long term, let alone what is necessary to conduct a sustainable personal branding process.

Today's interest in the mental and physical well-being of individuals is no longer limited to the private sphere [25,26], and building a personal brand is proving to be a physically and mentally demanding process in some cases. One reason for this may be the heavy use of social media, which is an important tool in the process of communicating a personal brand. The negative impact of social media on the emotional state has already been confirmed many times [27–29], even in the case where LinkedIn was the medium studied [30]. Another reason may be the increased social pressure that comes with carrying out personal branding activities.

Thus, the effect of personal branding in one sphere is inherently positive (e.g., increasing the price margin on the service provided by the personal brand, increasing market penetration due to increased recognition, etc.), while in another, it may turn out to be negative (e.g., decreasing psychological well-being or even causing depression [13,31]). Therefore, it is important to identify the factors that can affect the risk of these negative effects. These can be organized into three categories, one of which relates to an individual's

personal resources prior to the start of the branding process, and two of which relate to how the process itself is conducted: (1) the level of start-up capital an individual has when starting a conscious personal branding process, (2) the intensity of the personal branding process and (3) the diversity of personal branding activities.

Initial capital (cultural, social, and economic) can provide an important basis for the proper preparation and execution of the personal branding process. Intensity refers to the sum of all types of activities undertaken in the personal branding process [32]. The differentiation of these activities, on the other hand, refers to the inclusion in the process of activities from all identified stages of the process. The opposite of differentiation of activities in the personal branding process is focusing only on selected stages of the process (e.g., communication) and neglecting others (e.g., strategic planning, self-reflection).

The relationship between initial capital and the intensity of personal branding activities has already been confirmed [32]. This article focuses on the relationship between a personal brand builder's initial capital and the diversity of personal branding activities undertaken.

## 2. Start-Up Capital and Capital Accumulation as Bases for Sustainable Personal Brand Development

### 2.1. Start-Up Capital of a Personal Brand

The personal brand is a construct that functions primarily in the context of an individual's professional activity. For this reason alone, it cannot be regarded as a blank slate that can be written freely. An individual embarking on the personal branding path has some start-up capital. How it is defined will influence the approach to the personal branding process itself. In this study, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capitals was adopted as the starting point [33]. He used the concept of capital to formulate a description of the social world, and what position an individual could ultimately take in the social world depended precisely on the various types and levels of capital possessed by the individual. These are [34] (pp. 104–105):

- Economic capital—financial and material resources that can be used to produce products and services;
- Cultural capital—knowledge, skills, attitudes and therefore competencies, as well as customs, habits, lifestyles;
- Social capital—relationships and acquaintances, networks of mutual recognition;
- Symbolic capital—symbols legitimizing the possession of other capital forms.

The relevant factors for starting the process of building a personal brand, which is a tool for achieving a certain position in the social world, are social, economic and cultural capital. Symbolic capital may be important in communicating a personal brand [35]; however, as it can be considered an emanation of other forms of capital, it is not the focus of this study. Social capital in relation to personal branding can be understood as personal networks, both in the private and professional spheres. These will include people to whom an individual can turn for various types of professional or emotional support when needed. Economic capital can be understood as a general state of possession, namely earnings and assets, as well as a subjective assessment of the material situation. Cultural capital can be perceived as formal and informal education, language, communication and social competence, lifestyle and resulting attitudes (e.g., proactive or defensive in the face of challenges) or mindsets (e.g., fixed or growth mindset [36]). 'Cultural capital requires long-term accumulation, but it can be treated as capital with a high security factor, since depriving an individual of its forms is extremely difficult, if possible at all' [35] (p. 276).

The conditions (material, familial, cultural, social, ideological) in which an individual grows up, which are related to the possibility of accumulating various forms of the above capitals, can have a significant impact on how he or she manages his or her personal and professional life [37,38].

Occupation also appears to be important in the personal branding process, depending in part on the individual's start-up capital. On the one hand, a profession depends at least in part on the knowledge and skills one possesses, very often also on the ability to enter a certain environment, which should be considered social capital. Cultural capital

(e.g., knowledge, lifestyle, linguistic competence, attitudes brought from home and previous experiences), social capital (people the individual knows, including family and friends who have specific professions) and finally economic capital (the state of possession, the level of prosperity in which the individual grew up) affect how the individual performs in the socialization and educational process. It also influences decisions concerning, for example, the choice of profession; for example, the child of physicians is more likely to choose a career related to medicine [33,37,39]. Start-up capital, understood as the sum of cultural, social and economic capitals, influences these initial decisions on career paths and thus, in part, determines the nature of the personal brand [17]. On the other hand, some occupations will lead to a steady increase in various forms of capital, while others will probably not. The profession influences the environment in which an individual operates and the extent to which he or she can increase his or her cultural, social and economic capital. Some professions, e.g., physician, lawyer, designer, etc., have more potential in this regard than others, e.g., a salesman in a neighborhood store or a job in a cleaning service [40]. Finally, depending on an individual's profession, building a personal brand may prove to be more or less essential to successfully building and sustaining a personal career path.

## 2.2. Personal Branding Process

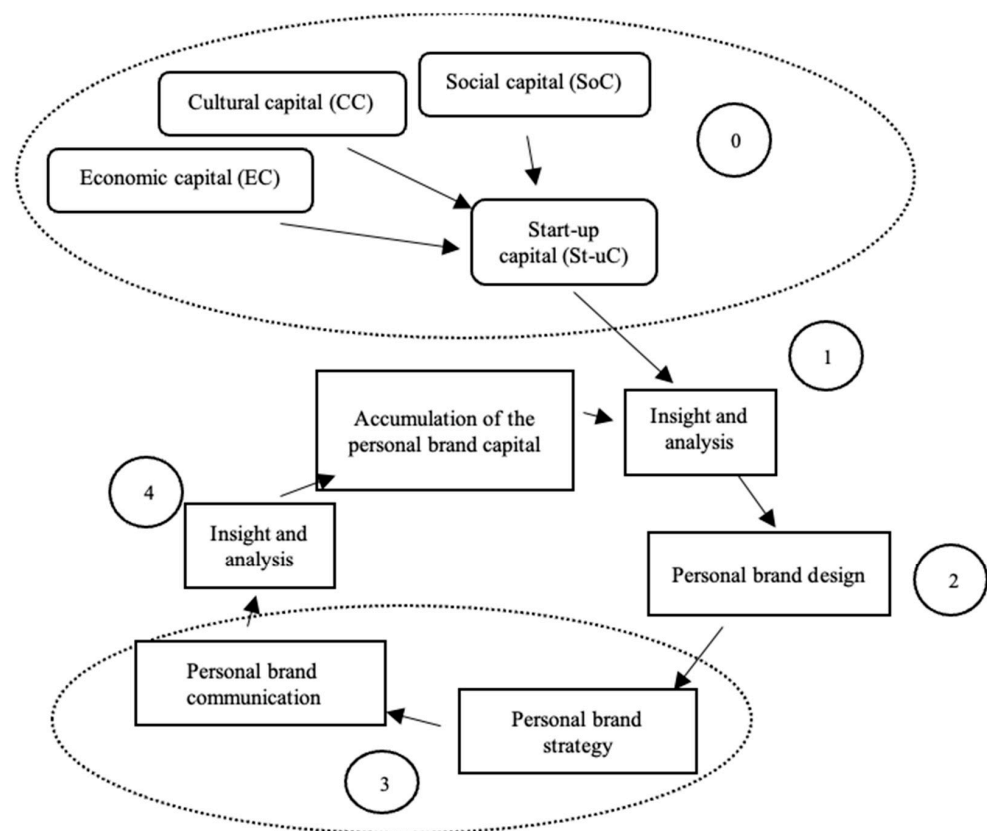
There is no single, universally accepted approach to the personal branding process. The cyclical nature of this process can be considered its main characteristic [12,41,42].

The cyclical nature of the personal branding process can be considered in several dimensions:

- A cycle of vertical professional development in one area of specialization, which is associated with successive degrees of professionalization of the work performed. Among others, the level of organizational hierarchy (in the case of people employed in organizations) and the scale of the conducted business or activity (in the case of people running their own business regardless of its form) are of significance here. Progressing through the successive stages of career development in this approach will involve a cyclical redefinition of one's personal brand, e.g., an intern will base this brand on different resources and focus on different activities than a high-level manager with 20 years of experience.
- A cycle of horizontal professional development that is related to extending or changing the specialization of the work performed.
- The individual's personal development cycle. Every individual develops continuously throughout their life cycle [43]. The personal brand is strongly linked to the individual and his or her development in various areas, which also has the effect of forcing the personal branding process to be cyclical, although the various cycles do not necessarily follow a regular or systematic pattern.

Rampersad's proposal appeared to be the one that attempts to convey its complexity in the most detailed way so far. The cyclicity of the process in his view is determined by opportunities and threats coming from the environment. The process of building a personal brand itself takes place on four levels: internal (physical and mental state), external (relationships with customers, family, friends, colleagues), knowledge and learning (skills and ability to learn) and financial (financial stability) [42] (p. 45). In most models, the personal branding process begins with a personal SWOT analysis or self-reflection on one's resources conducted in any form. However, the concept of start-up capital, which in this study is understood as the sum of cultural, social and economic capital prior to the start of the personal branding process, does not appear in them. Start-up capital in this view is subject to accumulation in each cycle of the personal branding process. The term capital is more pertinent in these considerations than the term resource (usually found in analyses of personal potential), as resources are more likely to be possessed, while capital can easily be turned and multiplied [38]. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive analyses of how this start-up capital affects the brand-building process.

For this purpose, a framework model of the personal branding process was proposed considering the start-up capital (Figure 1). An individual starting the process of building a personal brand has a certain start-up capital (0), which in this study is defined as the sum of social, economic and cultural capitals. The process of building a personal brand begins with (1) an analysis of the social, cultural and economic capital held, regardless of the career stage at which an individual begins to build a personal brand. The next step is to (2) create a conceptual framework for the personal brand, which is then (3) reformulated into a brand strategy with a list of activities to deliver a certain value to the audience and ultimately communicate the personal brand. By definition, this process is cyclical, meaning that the end of one cycle is the beginning of the next. And it starts with (4) insight and analysis of both the actions taken in terms of their effects (e.g., achieving goals, impact on the overall functioning of the individual and others) and the personal brand capital accumulated during the process.



**Figure 1.** Personal brand building in relation to the capital at disposal. Reprinted from Agnieszka Walczak-Skałeczka, Elena Mieszajkina (2021) [32].

These are rather broadly outlined stages, which should be broken down into more detailed activities and actions that reflect the above assumptions. These activities can be grouped as follows: (a) self-cognition, (b) analysis and strategic planning, (c) continuous targeted development, (d) delivery of value as promised by the brand and (e) personal brand communication. This reflects the path that an individual goes through as their personal brand-building process. This activity systematization aims not only to determine the nature of the activities (ad hoc vs. planned, disordered vs. subordinated to the adopted strategy). Indeed, a process approach to brand building requires the creation of a structured and verifiable inventory of activities, a task that seems impossible without a multi-faceted observation of the activities of people building personal brands. Moreover, focusing on only one stage of the personal branding process and neglecting others can make it difficult to hold the process in the long term, as well as its implementation in a sustainable manner. This paper proposes using the term sustainable personal branding process to refer to



personal branding processes that take into account at least such areas of an individual's activity as professional and market, social, intellectual, relational, personal and moral and lead to maintaining a relative balance between these spheres in the long term through active management of the individual's activities at each stage of the process.

### *2.3. Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process*

Much of the discussion around personal branding revolves around communication activities with the brand's audience, and a large part of this discussion focuses on online activities [12,16,44–48]. However, the process of personal branding does not begin and end with communication alone. Similarly, an organization or product's brand-building activities are not limited to communication. The concept of a personal brand differs from that of a brand in general, primarily because the branding processes are performed on the human being. It is therefore necessary to address the complexity of human life and its development in these processes.

Regarding the personal branding process, this complexity can be observed precisely by taking actions from each stage of personal branding. At the stage of self-discovery, these may include: analysis of the individual's strengths and weaknesses in various spheres of functioning, analysis of past life history and systematic self-reflection. At the stage of analysis and strategic planning, these may include: setting goals in the short and long term, defining a vision for one's life, planning a career path and selecting types of activities for development opportunities or potential benefits. At the stage of continuous focused development, these may include: acquiring new skills in professional and nonprofessional areas, developing one's understanding of the world and vision of a person and building a network of contacts. At the stage of delivering value in accordance with the brand promise, these may include, but are not limited to: reliable performance of professional duties, fulfillment of established personal plans, participation in projects that fit into my vision of me (e.g., volunteering) and delivering on professional and nonprofessional promises. At the stage of personal brand communication, these can include maintaining social media profiles; running a blog, vlog or podcast; contributing to traditional and online media (expert commentary, interviews); maintaining one's own website; publishing one's own materials in the form of books, eBooks, guides, articles, etc.; and speaking at conferences or industry meetings. Each of the stages of the process is necessary, although at different levels of personal brand development, the intensification of activities in each of them may vary. However, the ability to maintain the personal branding process in the long term requires cyclically revisiting each of these stages. Differentiation of activities undertaken in the personal branding process is understood as the implementation of activities from as many of the listed stages of the personal branding process as possible.

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between start-up capital held and the variation in personal brand-building activities undertaken. The different capitals can be measured by various indicators, the relationship of which with the differentiation of personal branding activities undertaken may prove more interesting or significant than their combined analysis. Accordingly, seven research hypotheses were formulated.

#### *2.3.1. Social Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process*

The social capital that an individual possesses at a given point in his or her life and development is related to the individual's family environment, his or her educational process (teachers, coaches, mentors) [37] and his or her personal activities aimed at networking [49]. The theory of capitals [33,40] explains how the people an individual surrounds himself or herself with influence the development and career opportunities that lie ahead for the individual. An individual with the right people around him or her has easier access to knowledge and tools, as well as substantive and emotional support during the various stages of the personal branding process. It can be difficult to effectively conduct a personal branding process without such support. These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

**H1.** *People with higher social capital undertake a greater variety of personal brand-building activities.*

### 2.3.2. Components of Economic Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

Economic capital is one of the factors that can affect not only the ability to undertake personal branding activities but often also the ability to educate or develop in general. Focusing only on the course of the personal branding process, economic capital can prove to be an important factor at many of its stages, e.g., the need to pay for tuition or training, or the need to pay for services that an individual is unable to perform on his or her own, e.g., making a website. In the case of economic capital, both its objective and subjective evaluation can be relevant. Earnings can be considered one of its absolute measures. The subjective assessment of the economic situation was considered the second relevant indicator.

**H2.** *People with higher income levels undertake a greater variety of personal brand-building activities.*

**H3.** *People with a higher subjective assessment of their own financial situation undertake a greater variety of personal brand-building activities.*

### 2.3.3. Components of Cultural Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

Cultural capital is defined in three forms [33]:

- A certain type and level of cultural competence (among others, legitimate culture, knowledge, linguistic, communication, social competences, professional qualification);
- Possession of goods (e.g., cultural), the acquisition and use of which require appropriate competence;
- Relevant diplomas and certificates, often providing specific entitlements.

Bourdieu, relating cultural capital in his work to social class divisions, pointed out the importance of inherited cultural capital (brought from the home and social circle from which an individual comes) and the possibility of overcoming boundaries between social classes. For him, social class takes on a specific meaning because it is defined both by economic location and 'a sense of belonging linked to a shared identity, including shared lifestyles and an associated sense of dignity' [50] (p. 13). Personal branding is considered today one of the tools supporting employability and career development [19]. In this sense, it can also be a tool to help overcome barriers between social divisions.

Cultural capital is the most complex and internally diverse capital. Thus, many indicators support the analysis of its level [51]. Among the most relevant groups of indicators from a personal brand-building perspective are education, readership and attitudes. The education received affects the nature of the work an individual can undertake. This, in turn, is related to the extent of personal branding needs and the level of knowledge and skills one possesses on how to carry out this process. Sometimes, regardless of education, individuals who read a lot in the areas that interest them can significantly expand their knowledge and, with additional activity, also their skills in that particular topic. For the process of personal branding, however, not all subject areas will be equally important. In addition to these factors, an individual's attitude and mindset are also important. Individuals who can successfully shape their personal and professional lives over the long term are characterized by a growth mindset [36]. Sometimes, this attitude is the result of the process of socialization and upbringing, and sometimes, the individual develops it on his or her own. A growth mindset is associated with a sense of agency (the belief that one can influence the course of events [52]; it is a component of a positive self-image and has adaptive significance: it enhances the attractiveness of chosen goals and increases energy and persistence in action [53]), self-esteem, a sense of achievement, openness to change and creativity. Such individuals often take entrepreneurial steps on their personal and professional paths. Building a personal brand is considered a manifestation of entrepreneurial activity [54]. These arguments lead to the following hypotheses:

**H4.** People with higher education undertake a greater variety of personal brand-building activities.

**H5.** People with higher reading levels (in terms of quantity and quality) undertake a greater variety of personal brand-building activities.

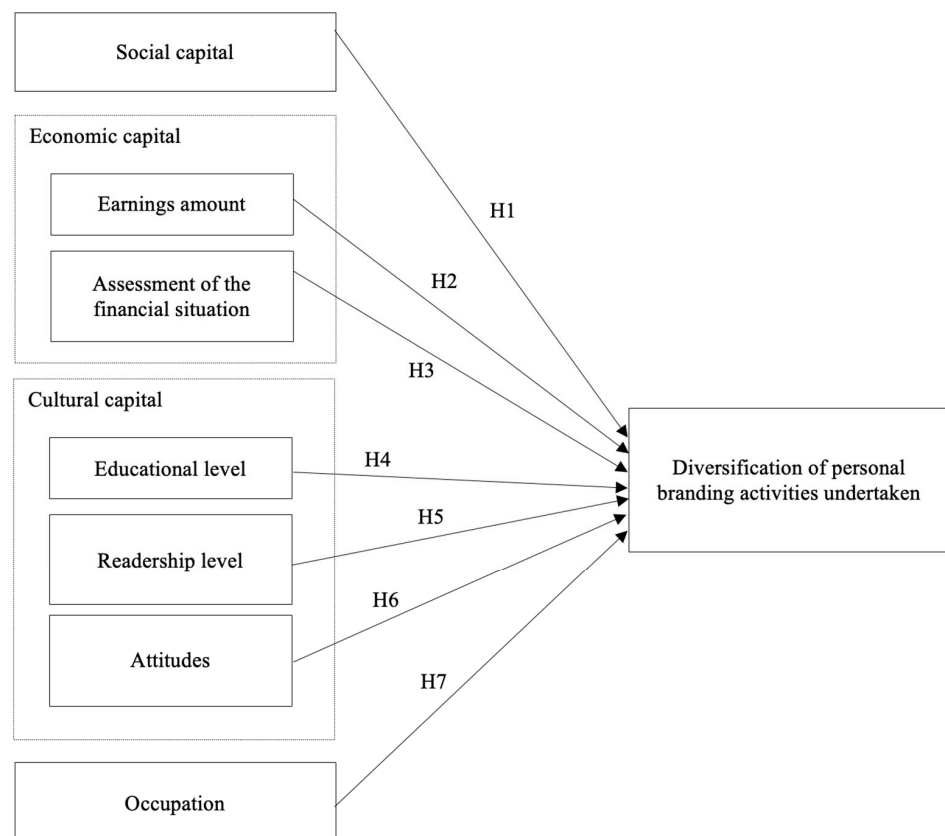
**H6.** People displaying attitudes focused on a sense of agency, self-esteem, a sense of achievement, openness to change and creativity undertake a greater variety of personal brand-building activities.

#### 2.3.4. Occupation in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

Today's variation in the nature of the work done in different professions is enormous. Some positions force the individual to constantly develop linguistic, cultural and communicative competence. Others promote development in strategic thinking, planning and execution of activities. Others develop creativity and self-expression. Some support the individual's development in all of these areas. Others offer such support to a very limited degree or not at all. Occupation has an impact on the intensity of personal branding activities [32]. This may be due, for example, to the fact that some professions require more social exposure. Perhaps the nature of the job also influences the diversity of personal branding activities undertaken.

**H7.** People in professions dependent on personal effectiveness, characterized by a high degree of individual decision-making and requiring creativity undertake a more diverse range of personal brand-building activities.

Figure 2 presents a hypothetical model of the impact of the components of start-up capital and occupation on the variety of personal branding activities undertaken.



**Figure 2.** Hypothesized model. The impact of the components of initial capital and occupation on the diversity of personal branding activities undertaken.



### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Research Tool

The survey was conducted in May 2021 using an online research panel run by a specialized research agency on a representative sample of  $n = 1000$  Polish internet users. The decision was made to perform the study without introducing inclusion or exclusion conditions. The characteristics of the research sample are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the research sample.

Characteristic	Specification	n	%
Gender	Women	501	50.1%
	Men	499	49.9%
Age	18–24 years	127	12.7%
	25–34 years	241	24.1%
	35–44 years	258	25.8%
	45–54 years	168	16.8%
	55–64 years	135	13.5%
	65 years or more	71	7.1%

A diagnostic survey method using a computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) technique was used to verify the hypotheses.

The research tool was a proprietary survey questionnaire. Economic capital was examined using two parameters: the declared level of earnings (EC1) and the respondents' subjective assessment of their financial situation (EC2).

Social capital (SoC) was measured using elements of the Questionnaire for the Measurement of Individual Social Capital [55]. Questions concerned the respondent's ability to ask specific people for substantive or emotional support.

The following indicators were used to measure cultural capital:

- Readership of books, magazines and journals (in print and electronic versions) considering their subject matter (CCS);
- Level of education (formal, informal and supplementary) (CCE)
- An attitude (CCA) assessment developed based on selected parts of the measurement scales: sense of control [56], M. Rosenberg's SES self-esteem (Polish adaptation [57]), future orientation, need for achievement, openness to change and creativity [51].

The questionnaire was used both to determine the intensity of brand-building activities undertaken (regardless of their type) according to the social, cultural and economic capital held and profession [32] and to analyze the differentiation of these activities. This article focuses on the impact of start-up capital on the differentiation of actions taken at different stages of the personal branding process. What is most relevant here is the type of personal brand-building activities undertaken. The individual activities have been grouped into activity blocks:

- PBS—self-discovery activities;
- PBP—planning activities;
- PBD—development activities;
- PBDV—activities in the field of delivering values in accordance with the brand promise;
- PBC—personal brand communication activities.

Undertaking specific activities was measured using a Likert scale, where 1 meant do not undertake, 5 meant undertake regularly.

#### 3.2. Results

In order to check the consistency of a block of questions, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was determined. A coefficient greater than 0.75 meant that a block of questions could be treated as a set of questions that address the same issue.

The reliability of the different question blocks was examined. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was:  $\alpha = 0.77$  for PBS,  $\alpha = 0.83$  for PBP,  $\alpha = 0.86$  for PBD,  $\alpha = 0.80$  for PBCV and  $\alpha = 0.95$  for PBC. Block responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1—I do not undertake; 5—I undertake regularly). The blocks were coherent, and the questions were aggregated. Descriptive statistics for each block of questions are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for PB blocks after question aggregation.

Question Block	n	Mean	Mdn	Min	Max	SD	% from PB
PBS	1000	14.29	14.0	4.0	20.0	3.161	15%
PBP	1000	18.45	18.0	5.0	25.0	3.803	19%
PBD	1000	18.72	19.0	5.0	25.0	4.104	20%
PBCV	1000	20.00	20.0	5.0	25.0	3.615	21%
PBC	1000	23.28	23.0	9.0	45.0	10.565	25%

After aggregation, threshold values were determined for each of the blocks. The block was considered to have been selected by the respondent if all activities in the block were rated at least 4 (4 means taking action). Accordingly, the following threshold values were established, which are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Threshold values and score range for questions from the PBS, PBP, PBD, PBCV and PBC blocks.

Question Block	Min	Max	Threshold Value
PBS	4	20	15%
PBP	5	25	19%
PBD	5	25	20%
PBCV	5	25	21%
PBC	9	45	25%

### 3.2.1. Social Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

#### Hypothesis H1 Verification

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the SoC block of questions was 0.94, indicating that the questions were consistent, and therefore the questions were aggregated. Subsequently, frequency distribution was determined with a division into three classes, denoting: 1—low SoC; 2—average SoC; 3—high SoC (Table 4). Table 5 and Figure 3 show the indications of the individual PB blocks in relation to the SoC classes.

**Table 4.** Frequency distribution for SoC divided into three classes.

SoC	n	%
Low	230	23%
Average	458	46%
High	312	31%
Total	1000	100%

**Table 5.** Contingency table for PB blocks by SoC level (percentage calculated relative to block size).

SoC	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
Low	230	61 27%	59 26%	61 27%	105 46%	17 7%
Average	458	131 29%	157 34%	164 36%	252 55%	44 10%
High	312	172 55%	200 64%	224 64%	242 78%	106 34%

Figure 3 shows the percentage of indications of each personal branding activity group in relation to the SoC level. An activity group is considered an 'undertaken activity' above

the accepted cutoff line (dashed line in the graph). The greater the number of ‘undertaken activities’ (bars above the cutoff line for a given SoC level), the greater the diversification of activities undertaken in personal branding.

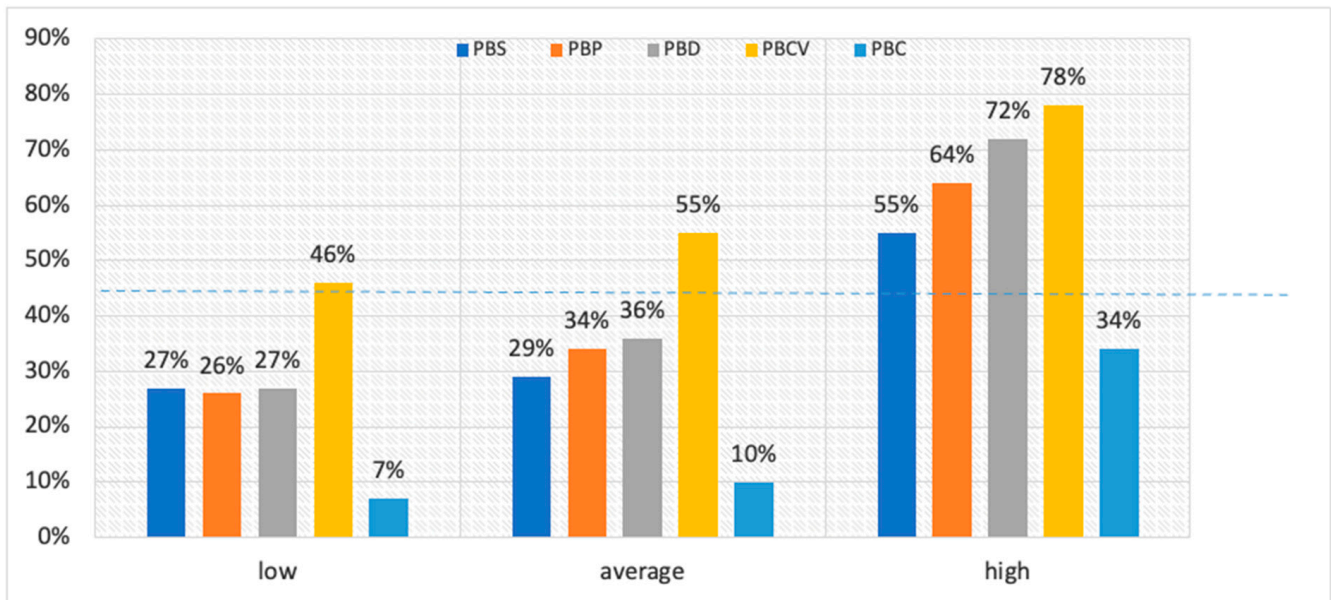


Figure 3. Bar chart of the percentage of individual blocks by SoC level.

The diversification of personal branding (PB) activities can be seen in those with high social capital (SoC). PBS, PBP, PBD and PBCV blocks were selected by at least half of the people with high SoC. Among people with low SoC, no such differentiation was apparent. Blocks of activities were chosen at a low rate; only PBCV was chosen by almost one in two people with a low SoC. Similarly, differentiation of PB was not evident among people with average SoC. The action blocks were chosen at a low rate, and only the PBCV was chosen by at least one in two people with an average SoC. In each group, the most frequently, though unevenly, indicated area of activity was that related to the subjective assessment of the fulfillment of professional and nonprofessional promises made in the context of personal branding (PBCV). It is also worth noting that the least frequently selected block in all groups was the PBC block.

### 3.2.2. Components of Economic Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

#### Hypothesis H2 Verification

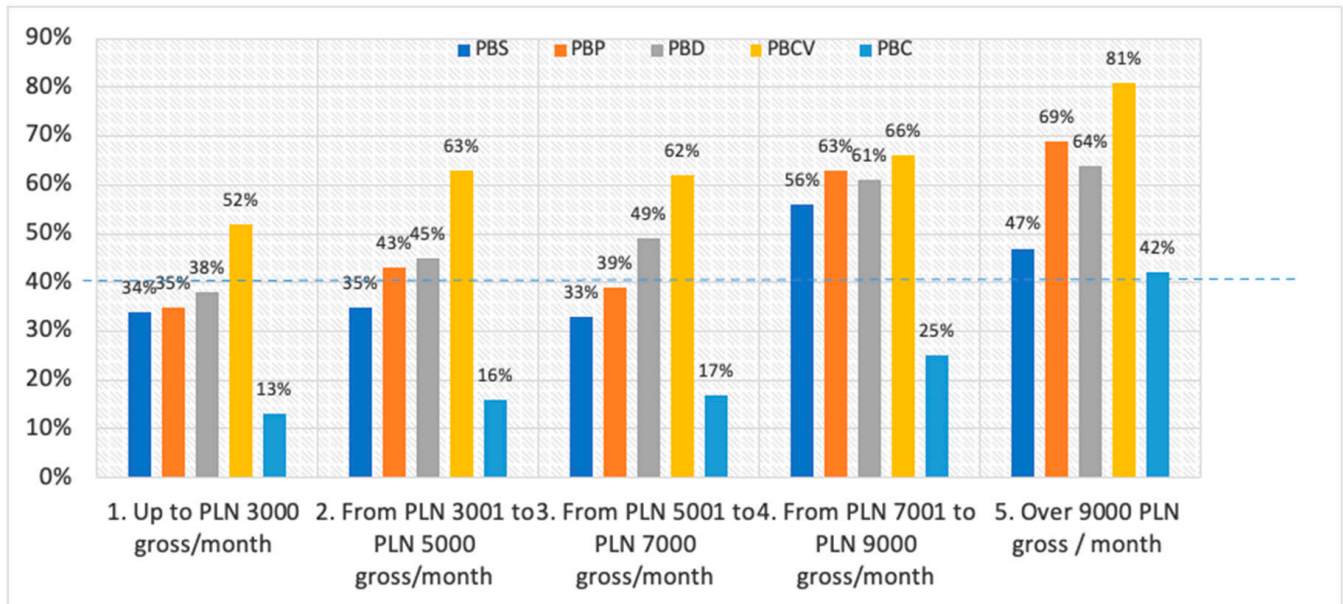
The level of earnings was divided into classes. The specifications of the individual PB blocks in relation to the EC1 classes are shown in Table 6 and Figure 4.

Table 6. Contingency table for PB blocks by earnings level (percentage calculated relative to block size).

EC1	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
Up to PLN 3000 gross/month	346	119 34%	120 35%	132 38%	179 52%	45 13%
From PLN 3001 to PLN 5000 gross/month	409	145 35%	175 43%	184 45%	259 63%	66 16%
From PLN 5001 to PLN 7000 gross/month	150	50 33%	59 39%	74 49%	93 62%	26 17%
From PLN 7001 to PLN 9000 gross/month	59	33 56%	37 63%	36 61%	39 66%	15 25%
Over 9000 PLN gross/month	36	17 47%	25 69%	23 64%	29 81%	15 42%

Figure 4 shows the percentage of indications of each group of personal branding activities in relation to the level of earnings. An activity group is considered an ‘undertaken

activity' above the accepted cutoff line (dashed line in the graph). The greater the number of 'activities undertaken' (bars above the cutoff line for a given level of earnings), the greater the variety of personal branding activities undertaken.



**Figure 4.** Bar chart of the percentage of individual blocks by earnings level.

Differentiation in personal branding (PB) activities was evident among those earning between PLN 7001 and 9000 gross/month and those earning over 9000 gross/month. The blocks chosen by the vast majority of people in these groups were PBP, PBD, PBCV and, for around 50% of respondents, PBS. The lower the earnings, the lower the level of PB differentiation. The smallest PB variation appeared in the group with the smallest monthly earnings.

#### Hypothesis H3 Verification

Table 7 and Figure 5 show the indications of the individual PB blocks in relation to the EC2 classes.

**Table 7.** Contingency table for PB blocks by financial situation assessment (percentage calculated in relation to the block size).

EC2	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
Very bad	25	9 36%	9 36%	9 36%	11 44%	5 20%
Bad	65	18 28%	19 29%	21 32%	30 46%	5 8%
Average	496	163 33%	175 35%	188 38%	280 56%	65 13%
Good	354	139 39%	172 49%	185 52%	230 65%	61 17%
Very good	60	35 58%	41 68%	46 77%	48 80%	31 52%

Figure 5 shows the percentage of indications for each group of personal branding activities in relation to the subjective assessment of the financial situation. A group of activities is considered an 'undertaken activity' above the accepted cutoff line (dashed line on the graph). The greater the number of 'undertaken activities' (bars above the cutoff line for a given level of assessment of financial situation), the greater the variety of activities undertaken in the field of personal branding.

The greatest diversity of PB was presented by the group of people assessing their financial situation as very good. All of the PB blocks were selected by at least half of the respondents. Little differentiation of PB was noted in the groups assessing their financial situation as bad, very bad and average, and these are very similar choices.

It also seems interesting that the correlation between EC1 and EC2 is statistically significant but moderate. The Spearman coefficient is only 0.037 ( $r = 0.37; p < 0.001$ ). The higher the earnings, the higher the assessment of the financial situation. Surprisingly, the correlation is not stronger. This can be influenced by the number of people in the family, and different perceptions of the financial situation assessment—depending on both expenditure and expectations.

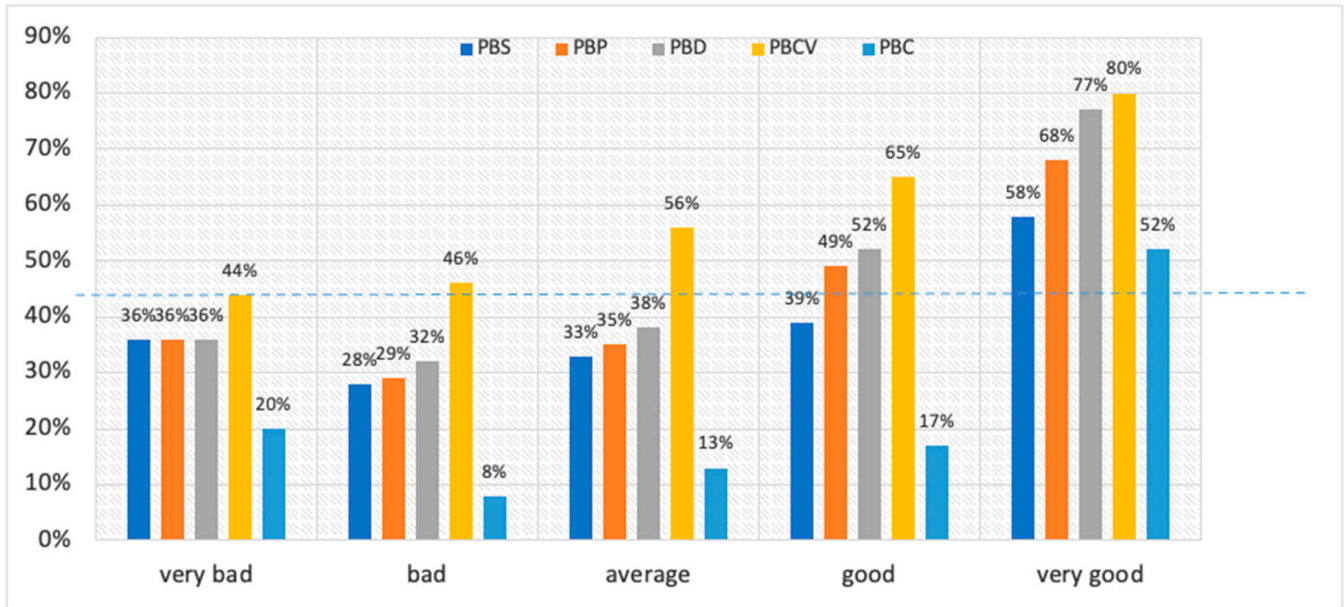


Figure 5. Bar chart of the percentage of individual blocks by assessment of financial situation.

### 3.2.3. Components of Cultural Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

#### Hypothesis H4 Verification

Table 8 and Figure 6 show the indications of the individual PB blocks in relation to the CCE classes.

Table 8. Contingency table for PB blocks by education (percentage calculated in relation to block size).

CCE	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
Primary or secondary general	183	62 34%	65 36%	68 37%	99 54%	27 15%
Vocational (vocational/technical school)	338	106 31%	139 41%	150 44%	193 57%	53 16%
Higher—Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	168	58 35%	68 40%	66 39%	92 55%	23 14%
Higher—Master’s degree or equivalent	302	134 44%	139 46%	160 53%	211 70%	60 20%
PhD or DSc	9	4 44%	5 56%	5 56%	4 44%	4 44%

Figure 6 shows the percentage of indications for each group of personal branding activities in relation to education level. A group of activities is considered an ‘undertaken activity’ above the accepted cutoff line (dashed line in the graph). The higher the number of ‘undertaken activities’ (bars above the cutoff line for a given level of education), the greater the variety of activities undertaken in the field of personal branding.

The differentiation of PB for education was low. The percentage of people with a Master’s degree or a PhD or DSc degree choosing more activities was higher, but the variation was not large.



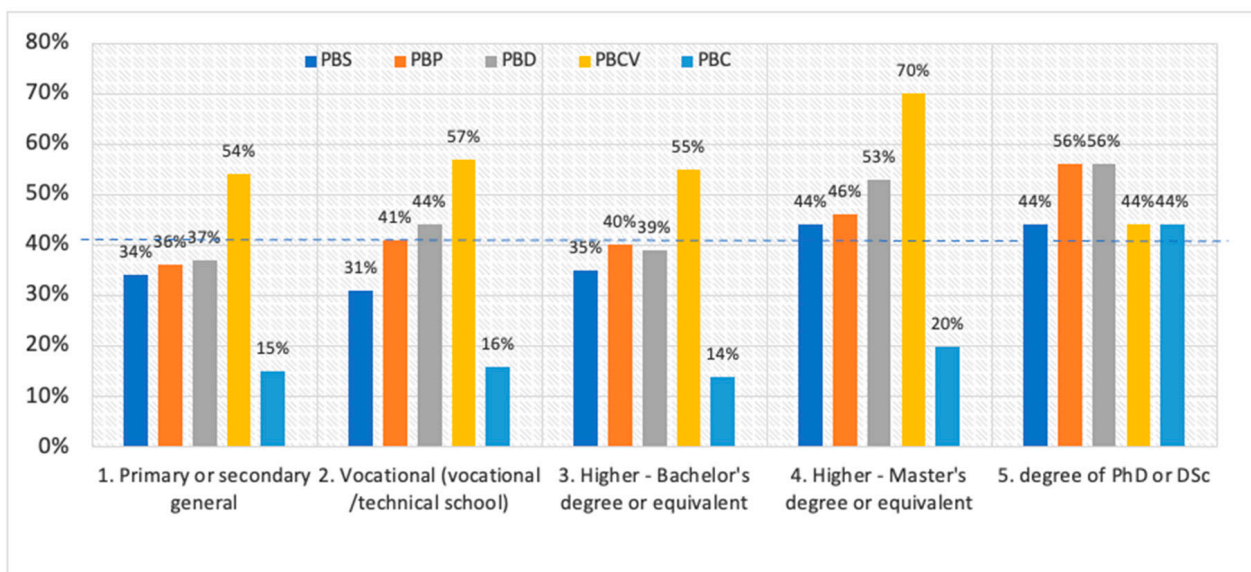


Figure 6. Bar chart of the percentage of individual blocks by educational level.

Hypothesis H5 Verification

The CCS block consisted of questions on the number of books read during the year, the book subject area, the frequency of magazine reading and the subject area of articles read. For the question on the number of books read, the following ranks were adopted:

- Up to five books per year—1;
- Between 6 and 10 books per year—2;
- More than 10 books per year—3.

Responses were ranked in relation to the subject area of the books read (Table 9).

Table 9. Table with ranks assigned according to the subject area of the books read.

Subject Area	Definitely No	Rather Not	Difficult to Say	Rather Yes	Definitely Yes
business, management, marketing	0	0	0	1	2
Psychology, personal development	0	0	0	1	2
Culture, art, design	0	0	0	1	2
Biographies	0	0	0	1	2
Fantasy, science fiction, horror	0	0	0	1	2
Classics	0	0	0	1	2
Crime fiction, thriller, sensation	0	0	0	1	2
Fiction, romance	0	0	0	0.5	1
Non-fiction	0	0	0	1	2
Adventure novel	0	0	0	0.5	1
Handbooks (house, garden, health, beauty)	0	0	0	0.5	1
Economy, economics, finance, society	0	0	0	1	2

The aggregated responses were then divided into a frequency distribution of three classes:

- 14 and more—high level of the variable;
- 7–13.5—average level of the variable;
- 0–6.5—low level of the type of content sought in magazines and journals.

Reading frequencies of articles were assigned the following ranks:

- Several times a month or less—1,
- Several times a week—2,

- Every day—3.

The responses were ranked according to the subject area of the articles read, as shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Table with ranks assigned according to the subject area of the articles read.

Subject Area	Definitely No	Rather Not	Difficult to Say	Rather Yes	Definitely Yes
Business, management, marketing	0	0	0	1	2
Economy, economics, finance	0	0	0	1	2
Psychology, personal development	0	0	0	1	2
Practical household advice	0	0	0	0.5	1
Politics	0	0	0	1	2
Culture, art, design	0	0	0	1	2
Sports, automotive	0	0	0	0.5	1
Lifestyle, fashion	0	0	0	0.5	1
Social issues	0	0	0	1	2

The aggregated responses were then divided into a frequency distribution with three classes:

- 10 and more—high level of the variable;
- 5–9.5—average level of the variable;
- 0–4.5—low level of the type of content sought in magazines and journals.

After aggregating the data, a frequency distribution was constructed with three classes, denoting low CCS, average CCS and high CCS, respectively. Table 11 presents descriptive statistics for the CCS block.

**Table 11.** Descriptive statistics for the CCS block.

	n	Mean	Mdn	Min	Max	SD
CCS	1000	14.29	14.0	4.0	20.0	3.161

Table 12 and Figure 7 show the indications of individual PB blocks in relation to CCS classes.

**Table 12.** Contingency table for PB blocks by CCS level (percentage calculated relative to block size).

CCS	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
Low	541	139 26%	158 29%	177 33%	263 49%	50 9%
Average	379	167 44%	194 51%	208 55%	266 70%	77 20%
High	79	57 72%	64 81%	64 81%	70 89%	40 51%

Figure 7 shows the percentage of indications of each group of personal branding activities in relation to the level of readership. An activity group is considered an ‘undertaken activity’ above the accepted cutoff line (dashed line in the graph). The greater the number of ‘activities undertaken’ (bars above the cutoff line for a given reading level), the greater the variety of personal branding activities undertaken.

The differentiation of PB can be seen in the average CCS class, and even more so in the high CCS class, where at least half of the people choose each of the PB blocks.

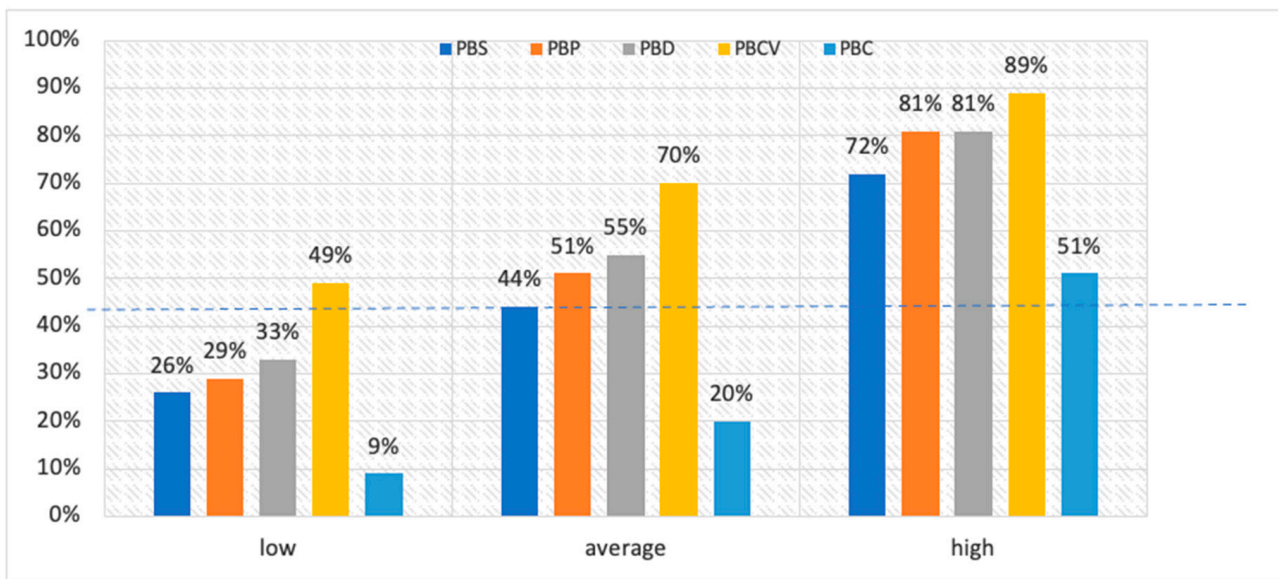


Figure 7. Bar chart of the percentage of individual blocks by CCS level.

Hypothesis H6 Verification

Reliability was determined for the CCA block. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.95. The questions were consistent, so the questions were aggregated. A frequency distribution was then determined with a division into three classes, defined as: 1—low CCA; 2—average CCA; 3—high CCA. Table 13 presents descriptive statistics for the CCA block.

Table 13. Descriptive statistics for the CCA block.

	n	Mean	Mdn	Min	Max	SD
CCA	1000	188.94	186.0	74.0	275.0	27.211

Figure 8 shows the percentage of indications of each group of personal branding activities in relation to the level of attitudes focused on a sense of agency, self-esteem, a sense of achievement, openness to change and creativity. An activity group is considered an ‘undertaken activity’ above the accepted cutoff line (dashed line on the graph). The greater the number of ‘activities undertaken’ (bars above the cutoff line for a given level of supportive attitudes), the greater the variety of activities undertaken in the field of personal branding.

Table 14 and Figure 8 show the indications of individual PB blocks in relation to CCA classes.

Table 14. Contingency table for PB blocks by CCA level (percentage calculated relative to block size).

CCA	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
Low	30	3 10%	2 7%	1 3%	2 7%	2 7%
Average	767	222 29%	253 33%	281 37%	429 56%	69 9%
High	203	139 68%	161 79%	167 82%	168 83%	96 47%

There is almost no variation in the choice of PB blocks in people with low CCA. A clear variation in PB appears in people with high CCA.

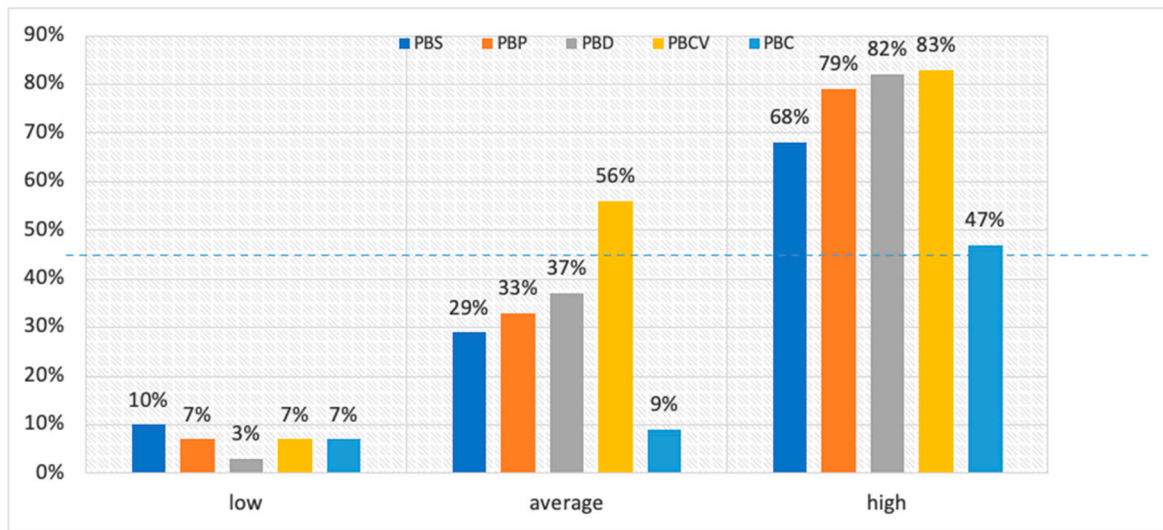


Figure 8. Bar chart of the percentage of individual blocks by CCA level.

### 3.2.4. Occupation in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

#### Hypothesis H7 Verification

The relationship between freelance, creative or individual achievement-based occupations and the variety of activities undertaken within personal branding was explored. For this purpose, the number of PBS, PBP, PBD, PBCV and PBC blocks selected by respondents was counted by the type of occupation. The characteristics of the survey sample in relation to occupation are presented in Table 15. Occupations were listed in five groups. The qualification of each of the listed occupations to a particular group was based on the assessment of the level of creativity, the extent of decision-making and independence in the activities performed and the dependence of the work effect on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individual.

Table 15. Table of numbers (with percentages) of occupations performed.

CCA	n	%
Designer, artist, lawyer, doctor, marketer, manager, entrepreneur, scientist	191	19%
Psychologist, psychotherapist, coach, trainer	38	4%
Engineer, service worker, sales representative, specialist other than those listed above	274	27%
Civil servant, teacher, uniformed services employee	192	19%
Farmer, gardener, forester and fisherman, salesperson, employee in simple jobs	305	31%
Total	1000	

Table 16 and Figure 9 show the indications of individual PB blocks in relation to each occupational group.

Table 16. Contingency table for PB blocks by occupation performed (percentage calculated in relation to block size).

Occupation Group	n	PBS	PBP	PBD	PBCV	PBC
1	191	80 42%	102 53%	112 59%	130 68%	41 21%
2	38	13 34%	14 37%	14 37%	15 39%	9 24%
3	274	100 36%	118 43%	130 47%	170 62%	46 17%
4	192	66 34%	70 36%	71 37%	110 57%	27 14%
5	305	105 34%	112 37%	122 40%	174 57%	44 14%

Figure 9 shows the percentage of indications for each group of personal branding activities in relation to the profession. A group of activities is considered an ‘undertaken activity’ above the adopted cutoff line (dashed line on the graph). The greater the number of ‘activities undertaken’ (bars above the cutoff line for a given group of occupations), the greater the variety of activities undertaken in the field of personal branding.

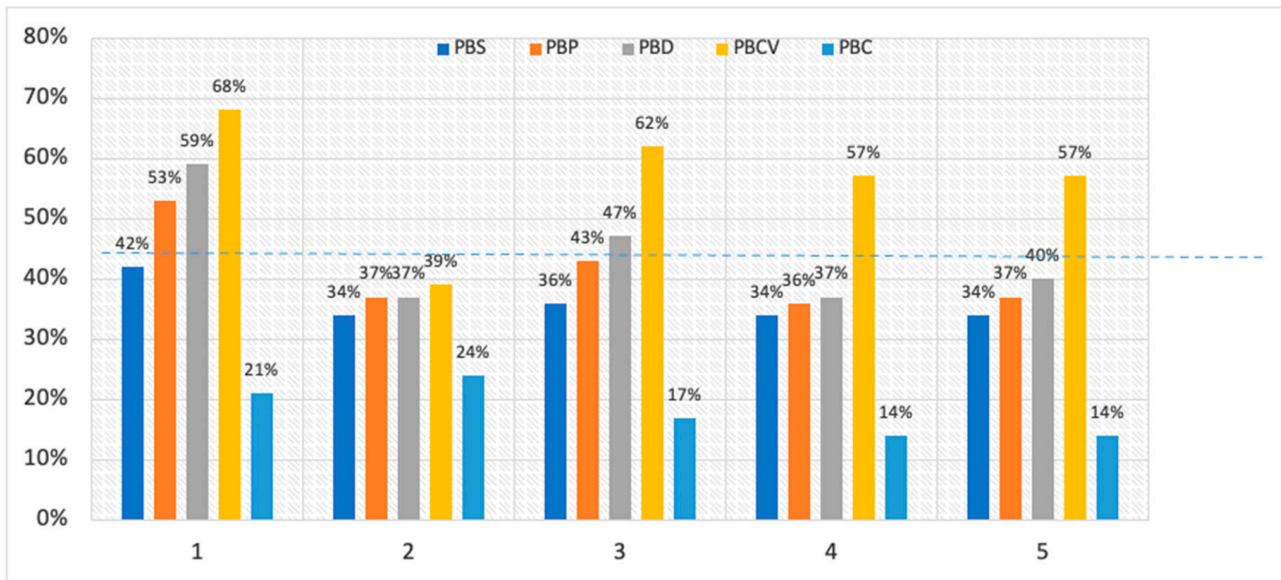


Figure 9. Bar chart of the percentage share of each block by occupation.

Accordingly:

- 1—designer, artist, lawyer, doctor, marketer, manager, entrepreneur, scientist;
- 2—psychologist, psychotherapist, coach, trainer;
- 3—engineer, service worker, sales representative, specialist other than those listed above;
- 4—civil servant, teacher, uniformed services employee;
- 5—farmer, gardener, forester and fisherman, salesperson, employee in simple jobs.

The greatest variation in PB can be seen in the first group of occupations (designer, artist, lawyer, doctor, marketer, manager, entrepreneur, scientist). Three blocks exceeded 50%, although only in one of the blocks. The least differentiated results were observed in group 2 (psychologist, psychotherapist, coach, trainer). The PBCV block excelled among blocks in all groups.

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1. Social Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

People with more social capital undertake a greater variety of personal branding activities. However, at this stage of knowledge, it is difficult to decide how high this capital needs to be for this differentiation to be evident. It seems, however, that the possibility of freely obtaining substantive and emotional support from various people may be an important factor influencing the conduct of activities in the field of building a personal brand in a long-term and effective way.

##### 4.2. Components of Economic Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

Individuals with higher incomes show greater variation in their personal branding efforts. This is particularly evident among those earning more than 25 per cent above than the average salary in Poland in 2021 [58] (the time of the survey). Differentiation in personal branding activities can also be seen among those who consider their financial situation to be very good. The greater variation in personal branding activities among these



respondents may be due to beliefs that building a personal brand requires a lot of financial resources, so there may be a psychological barrier to doing so in lower-income individuals. However, this may be due to the perception that personal branding is important only at a certain stage of one's career, and thus already at a point when the individual can assess his or her financial situation as good or very good. Such a conclusion is consistent with the data obtained during interviews with individuals who have managed to achieve success and build a personal brand [14].

An interesting observation is a relatively low correlation between the amount of earnings and the subjective assessment of material situation. This may be due to many factors. As already mentioned, the causes can be objective factors like the number of people in the family. However, they can also be more subtle and subjective feelings, resulting from an individual's high expectations of his or her material status or the relationship between earnings and expenses, such as mortgage payments, the purchase of luxury goods or investments and many others. In the future, it is worth taking a closer look at which of these two components of economic capital is the more important factor in the context of engaging in personal branding activities.

#### *4.3. Components of Cultural Capital in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process*

The level of education does not seem to make much difference in the variation in personal branding activities. The literature so far has covered at least a dozen different professions in connection with personal branding, from aristocrats, professors, CEOs and painters to YouTubers, influencers and many others [2]. These individuals can undoubtedly vary greatly in terms of their level of education. Perhaps, then, the differentiation of personal branding activities would be more noticeable if the area of education (e.g., medical, marketing, humanities, etc.) or a combination of level and area of education was taken into account. However, these issues were not addressed in this study. Formal education is one of the components of cultural capital. When attempting to determine the role of education in the processes under study, both the degree of this education (e.g., primary, secondary, university) and the field of knowledge to which it relates can be taken into account. Education in programming, engineering sciences, medicine, physics, psychology, philosophy and many others is not only about specific knowledge but also about a range of skills and competences that are specific to each of these areas and at least partly different from the skills and competences relevant to other types of education. Perhaps, then, the relationship between the field of education and the diversity of personal branding activities would be clearer than the relationship between educational level and the diversity of personal branding activities analyzed in this study. At this stage, however, this is only a possible hypothesis to inspire further research. Readership seems to be much more important in this matter. The variation in personal branding activities undertaken is evident to some extent among those with an average reading level, but it is only among the group with a high reading level that the variation is clear. In comparison with the educational results, it is possible to wonder whether, for a holistic approach to personal branding, self-education and self-development through, among other things, reading the relevant items is not more important than formal education. Confirmation would mean that self-education in various forms can be a very important factor in shaping the personal branding process. This is one of the questions worth considering in the future. There are very large differences in the extent to which different personal branding activities are undertaken by people with different attitudes. People who have a strong sense of agency, self-esteem, sense of achievement, openness to change and creativity engage in a variety of personal branding activities—in contrast to those in the group with low levels of the aforementioned attitudes. Not only did they not engage in diverse personal branding activities but overall, they engaged in very few such activities.

#### 4.4. Occupation in Relation to the Differentiation of Activities in the Personal Branding Process

Occupation seems to be relevant for the differentiation of personal branding efforts only in professional groups that are associated with high creativity, autonomy and responsibility for the outcome of work (designer, artist, lawyer, doctor, marketer, manager, entrepreneur, scientist). There were no significant differences between the other occupational groups included in the survey. However, it is interesting to note that in the group of professions that require individual independence and at least some creativity, but where the outcome of the work depends more on the client or patient (e.g., psychologist, psychotherapist, coach, trainer), the diversity of the activities undertaken in terms of personal branding was the lowest. At this point, however, it should be noted that this was the group of occupations least represented in the survey, with only four per cent of indications (Table 15). This group is worth looking into in future studies, especially since representatives of the personal development industry seem to be very active in communicating their personal brands. Another interesting observation is the distinctive involvement of respondents in activities related to the fulfillment of the brand promise, regardless of their occupation. It seems, then, that those who work professionally and engage in building their own personal brand first and foremost want to perform their professional tasks well. This underscores the role of the value delivered to the audience and the fulfillment of the promise in defining a personal brand.

#### 4.5. Theoretical Implications

This article makes several contributions to the literature regarding the process of personal branding and, in particular, the factors that determine this process. First of all, unlike many other studies on personal branding [2,12], the above results focus not on the effect of working on a personal brand but on the resources necessary to start this work and conduct it in a structured and long-term way.

The second significant conclusion is the confirmation that social, economic and cultural capitals influence the way in which the process of personal branding is carried out, and, in particular, the differentiation of activities undertaken as part of this process. This is in line with the general assumptions of Bourdieu's theory of capitals [33,40], which relates to the possibility of succeeding in different fields depending on one's capitals, investing in them and multiplying them. These results are close to the interpretation of the theory of capitals in relation to personal brand proposed by Manel Khedher—'the gap between those who have a strong personal brand and those who don't depend on effective investment and acquisition of adequate social and cultural capital' [17] (p. 21).

Personal brand is an important driver of employability, particularly for knowledge workers [19]. However, personal brand cannot be considered only in this context, if only because of the wide application of the concept not only among full-time employees at different levels but also among CEOs [21], the self-employed [16] or celebrities [59]. The results presented show that personal branding practices are used by very diverse professional groups, which confirms the observations of the above authors. This article therefore contributes to a more comprehensive view of the concept of personal brand.

The last contribution concerns how to define a personal brand, which, as mentioned at the beginning of the paper, is analyzed on various levels [2,11,12]. The presented results seem to confirm the approach that 'a personal brand is a person who consciously undertakes actions to identify, produce and communicate through auto-narration the values that by a specific group of recipients can be considered as the most satisfying of their needs' [14] (p. 114). This emphasizes both the importance of the content and the quality of the work done and its communication with the public. Building a brand as an expert in any field without knowledge and skills in this sphere, even with the best possible brand communication, seems to be insufficient for a sustainable personal branding process.

#### 4.6. Practical Implications

This article analyses the influence of start-up capital on the differentiation of actions that an individual takes in terms of personal branding. The results presented thus appear to be of the greatest relevance to individuals who are embarking on a journey of conscious personal branding or who are at the stage of redefining their personal brand or at least evaluating their efforts to date. The results highlight the particular importance of a wide range of resources that positively influence the diversity of personal branding activities undertaken. It is important to note that diversity here specifically means taking actions from each of the groups of activities relevant to the personal branding process: self-discovery, strategic planning, personal and professional development, realization of the brand promise and personal brand communication.

An individual who is planning to build a personal brand or wants to improve the effectiveness of his or her actions should therefore pay particular attention to the capital (social, cultural and economic) he or she possesses at the time. It would therefore be important to look at the network of personal and professional contacts in search of people who can provide support in the planned activities, and perhaps to expand this network accordingly. Networking can take place through social media platforms or actively taking part in conferences but also by taking the initiative to build relationships within the teams in which the individual already operates. However, it is not about collecting contacts. An individual should pay attention to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the people he or she invites into his or her network. Mentoring support programmed, which can be attended at various stages of professional development, can also be an excellent tool in this regard.

The second group of factors that an individual has a relative influence on are the components of cultural capital. When planning a career path or building a personal brand in a certain specialization, individuals can significantly improve their linguistic, cognitive and communicative competences as well as their expertise in a certain area on their own, if only by reading relevant books, magazines and articles. Continuous work on personal and professional development seems to be an important factor in being able to undertake effective personal branding activities. Such developmental efforts are definitely aided by supportive attitudes and beliefs, which can also be developed [36]. All of these elements build cultural capital, and while some level of this capital is indeed the result of the socialization process from an early age, the individual can consciously shape it later in life [49,60].

For the differentiation of personal branding activities, economic capital is also not without significance. However, an individual's influence on its augmentation in the short term may be limited. It is also worth noting that personal branding is seen as one of the tools aimed ultimately at multiplying an individual's economic capital. Therefore, it can be assumed that balancing activities leading to the enlargement of the different components of personal capital (cultural, social, economic) at different stages of brand development may prove to be the most effective solution.

And, finally, an individual who wants to consciously build his or her personal brand should pay special attention to the quality of his or her work and the fulfillment of the promise that this brand will make. After all, while it is hard to disagree that in today's world 'work does not speak for itself' [19] (p. 1) communication alone is definitely not enough to build a strong and lasting personal brand.

From the perspective of an organization that would like to support its managers or employees in the personal branding process, it may be important to expand development programs. Cultural and social capitals, according to accepted concepts, are internally differentiated constructs and, perhaps precisely because of their complex nature, also influence the differentiation of personal branding activities. It is therefore worth looking at the development programs conducted by organizations not only from the perspective of enhancing knowledge and skills strictly related to the work performed but also from that of more fully developing employees and leading to proactive and more diverse actions

in terms of personal branding. And yet an employee or manager's personal brand can support the organization's brand [24,61].

## 5. Conclusions and Limitations

An individual's initial capital in terms of a combination of cultural, social and economic capital is related to the diversity of personal branding efforts. However, the individual elements that can be considered components of such a combination appear to have a different impact on the measures taken; in the case of factors such as readership (in qualitative and quantitative terms), the impact appears to be significant, but not in the case of, for example, educational level.

The survey presented here was conducted on a representative group of Polish internet users. And although the sample was large, the conclusions presented cannot be generalized to the whole of Polish society or more broadly. Nor is it possible to be certain that the results presented would be similar between groups with certain specific characteristics, e.g., middle managers or entrepreneurs. A comparison of different professional groups using even more sensitive research tools may bring interesting and more specific conclusions for a given group. It would also be valuable to explore in more depth the impact of knowledge disciplines in education on the personal branding process.

The results presented also encourage further questions, such as which of the factors examined have the most significant impact on the overall approach to the personal branding process and to what extent this approach is able to provide individuals with effective, efficient and sustainable personal branding. These questions seem not only interesting but also important today, so it is worth seeking answers to them in further research.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the fact that participant recruitment and data collection were carried out by an external, specialized, commercial research institution operating in accordance with national and European legal standards. The survey only included respondents who voluntarily self-registered for the research panel and were remunerated for their participation. All participants were assured anonymity and informed why the research was being conducted, how their data would be used, and that there were no risks associated with their participation in the study.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available upon request from the author.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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