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Chapter 4

Chapter 4. Personal Brand Equity: Scale Development and Validation³

ABSTRACT

Crafting a personal brand has become a common tactic for contemporary employees. Despite the burgeoning literature on topics associated with personal brands, the conceptualization and measurement of *personal brand equity* (PBE) has received little attention. Our study attempts to close this gap by providing a definition of PBE and developing a 12-item scale to measure the construct. This article reports on the development and validation of the PBE scale in four different samples (total $N = 1,558$) and explores the mediating role of PBE in the relationship among self-promotion, career achievement aspiration, and perceived employability. First, exploratory ($N = 311$) and confirmatory factor analyses ($N = 706$) supported a three-dimensional structure of PBE (brand appeal, brand value, and brand awareness). In two samples ($N = 263$ and $N = 278$), we established the convergent and discriminant validity of the PBE scale. Finally, in a two-wave study ($N = 249$), we demonstrated that PBE fully mediates the relationship between career achievement aspiration and perceived employability, with career self-efficacy weakening the relationship between PBE and perceived employability. Our scale offers new opportunities to understand and measure the career behaviors of contemporary employees by considering their personal brand positioning and their career-related outcomes.

Keywords: personal brand, self-presentation, career.

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4.1 Introduction

The world of work has been in a flux, as evidenced by several trends in the labor environment. First, there has been an increase in the number of employees pursuing interorganizational career mobility, often referred to as “boundaryless career” behavior (Guan et al., 2019), which prompted a related stream of literature on the need to develop career competencies (Akkermans, Paradniké, Van der Heijden, & De Vos, 2018; Akkermans & Tims, 2017; Blokker, Akkermans, Tims, Jansen, & Khapova, 2019). Second, the number of freelancers and contract workers is rising, prompting a need to explain how individuals present and promote themselves to gain employment in the context of external labor markets (O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006; Schilling & Steensma, 2001). Finally, information and communication technologies have been entering all facets of human work and life, offering more opportunities to individuals to present who they are and what they can provide to potential employers (Gandini, 2016; Harris & Rae, 2011). Furthermore, because of such technological advances, traditional work relationships are waning, an online presence is a necessity, and the agency in career management has shifted from organizations to individuals (Parker, Khapova, & Arthur, 2009). These shifts in the world of work have led to the ability to promote the professional self, with the intent to develop greater personal brand equity (PBE), a career reality if not a career necessity (Gandini, 2016). In fact, not proactively managing one’s career may lead to deleterious career outcomes, such as lower employability or financial consequences (Crant, 2000; Hall, 2004; Seibert et al., 2001).

Although practitioners have embraced the concept of personal brand, there are only a few academic articles on this topic. A search for “personal brand*” on Amazon.com returns over 300,000 results, while a recent literature review on the topic comprises only 100 academic articles (Gorbatov et al., 2018). This literature review suggests that having strong PBE leads to a

wide range of beneficial outcomes for workers, such as greater compensation, career opportunities, and self-esteem. However, most of the academic articles included in this literature review are either conceptual (Bendisch et al., 2013; Bridgen, 2011; Hearn, 2008a) or qualitative (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Parmentier et al., 2013; Tarnovskaya, 2017) in nature, showing a clear need for more empirical work. To propel empirical research in this area, a reliable and valid measure of PBE is needed. Some attempts have been undertaken to measure constructs that are related to PBE, such as professor brand equity (Jillapalli & Jillapalli, 2014), personal branding and personal brand performance (Kucharska & Mikołajczak, 2018), the personal brand of a business CEO (Chen & Chung, 2016), or the athlete brand (Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013). However, these scales lack either generalizability (they are too context-specific) or methodological rigor (they fail to meet several established scale development standards).

The goal of the present study is threefold. First, we establish a definition of PBE. Second, to advance contemporary career research, we develop and validate a scale to measure the strengths of one's personal brand. Third, we examine the relationships between PBE and other career-related constructs (i.e., career achievement aspiration, perceived employability, and career self-efficacy).

4.2 Theoretical Background

4.2.1 Defining PBE

In defining PBE, we draw upon the streams of career and marketing literature on branding. The marketing literature on brand building (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993) contributes concepts such as 'differentiation', 'perceived quality', 'target audience' and 'brand positioning' that are customarily used in the studies of personal branding (Cottan-Nir & Lehman-Wilzig, 2018;

Evans, 2017; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). In career studies, *personal brand* is defined as “a set of characteristics of an individual (e.g., attributes, values, and beliefs) rendered into a differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience” (Gorbatov et al., 2018, p. 6). PBE is the realization of a personal brand, similar to marketing a product brand, where “customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory” (Keller, 1993). Thus, similar to marketing a product brand, PBE is a function of brand image and brand awareness (Noble et al., 2010).

Integrating these multidisciplinary views, we define PBE as the accrued perception of the value of an individual’s professional and personal qualities in the minds of the target audience. Keller (1993) suggested three key concepts in understanding customer-based brand equity: *consumer response to marketing, differential effect, and brand knowledge*. By applying the lens of the PBE definition and transposing the marketing science to personal branding, we elicit three dimensions of PBE that are consistent with Keller’s widely accepted model: *brand appeal, brand value, and brand awareness*.

First, a personal brand must be appealing to the target audience by developing a personality and a set of attitudes that help achieve that objective, a characteristic that we call *brand appeal*. By appealing to various audiences, individuals can emphasize different traits of their brand that they want others to associate with them (Aaker, 1997). For example, in their study of the webpages of 100 consultants, Pagis and Ailon (2017) discovered that conveying friendliness was one of the main objectives in their personal branding attempts. In a different study, Hedman (2017) found that Swedish journalists tended to brand themselves as audience oriented, networking, and individualistic. This finding corroborates the idea that, in their personal

branding attempts, individuals develop brand appeal based on the needs and preferences of their distinct target audiences.

The second dimension, *brand value*, concerns the differentiated benefits that the target audience attaches to the person's work or what that target audience thinks this person can do for them. The marketing literature identifies three types of brand benefits (Keller, 1993). Specifically, a personal brand can communicate functional (e.g., "My work will meet or exceed your expectations"), experiential (e.g., "Working with me is rewarding"), and symbolic (e.g., "Working with me provides access to my network") benefits. Stronger PBE also depends on the degree of differentiation of such benefits. Evans (2017, p. 296) argued that "the key to successful self-branding is to create and maintain a distinctive, believable, and desirable brand position that differs from others in the career/job marketplace". Differentiation makes a personal brand competitive, ensuring greater advantages in a competitive labor market to achieve such goals as getting a job, a project, an assignment, a promotion, or any other prestigious or valuable opportunity (Parmentier et al., 2013). Drawing on marketing theory (Keller, 1993), we define two ways in which a personal brand can be differentiated: work-product-related (e.g., distinctly recognizable work output) and person-related (e.g., clarity of the professional story or comprehensive online profile) attributes. Achieving this differentiation facilitates greater brand awareness, meaning that a personal brand comes first in the minds of a target audience in relation to a particular industry, type of work, or service, which is the third PBE dimension – *brand awareness*.

Brand awareness is conceptualized as the ease of recognition and recall of a certain brand in the minds of the target audience (Keller, 1993). According to Keller (1993b), personal brand awareness is important as it facilitates personal brand salience when one thinks of a professional

area, it can affect hiring or contracting decisions, and it influences personal brand formation and the strength of personal brand associations in the personal brand image.

4.2.2 PBE and Related Constructs

To contextualize PBE in relation to other constructs, we first look through the lens of the self-presentation literature (Goffman, 1956; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Meyrowitz, 1990).

According to the dramaturgical perspective on self-presentation behavior, one will “mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey” (Goffman, 1959, p. 16). Goffman referred to such activity as “front stage” and “back stage performances”, which are constructed to gain acceptance from the audience. Therefore, the process of building PBE can be conceptualized as dramatic realization in the self-presentation theory, which takes place in the front and back stage, as well as off-stage. As self-presentation can be understood as a career enhancing strategy (Gould & Penley, 1984), we expect positive correlations between PBE and concepts associated with self-presentation behaviors.

Zinko and Rubin (2015) provided an overview of the constructs that have been studied in the self-presentation literature, specifically discussing reputation, status, image, fame, celebrity, pedigree, legitimacy, credibility, branding, and impression management. We argue that PBE has some overlap with these constructs but has distinguishing features as well. Reflecting on such constructs as fame, celebrity, and pedigree, we argue that they are closely related to the brand awareness dimension of the PBE. However, these constructs can only be applied to a very narrow category of workers, for instance, CEOs (Bendisch et al., 2013; Cottan-Nir & Lehman-Wilzig, 2018), while PBE offers broader application possibilities across job levels, functions, and industries, including self-employed workers (Gandini, 2016) and academic (Noble et al., 2010; Paivi & Back, 2017; Van Noorden, 2014), precarious (Vallas & Christin, 2018; Vallas &

Cummins, 2015), and stigmatized (Cunningham et al., 2017; Phua & Caras, 2008) employment. We posit that concepts such as popularity, admiration, and prestige are already more appropriate to be used in the context of the workplace than fame, celebrity, and pedigree. While pointing at the same qualities of being known to others and exhibiting positive affect, popularity, admiration, and prestige can pertain to anyone, irrespective of organizational and social hierarchies. Popularity in the professional setting is understood as “being generally accepted by one’s peers” (Scott & Judge, 2009, p. 21), admiration refers to “an emotion elicited by individuals of competence exceeding standards” (Onu, Kessler, & Smith, 2016, p. 2), and prestige is defined as the “social rank that is granted to individuals who are recognized and respected for their skills, success, or knowledge” (Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013, p. 105). These concepts are similar to but distinctively different from PBE. Acceptance or being known are only some of the facets of the PBE construct, and the concept of popularity does not fully cover the idea of delivering value or differentiation, which are central to a strong personal brand. Admiration is similar to PBE in conveying the idea of standing out and having differentiated value, but admiration is an emotion, while PBE, in addition to emotional factors, also includes cognitive and attitudinal factors. In addition, admiration presupposes a degree of elation or adoration – qualities that are not necessarily associated with PBE. Prestige is concerned with attaining a higher social rank, while PBE, on the other hand, is not necessarily related to social hierarchy but rather to visibility in the employment market (Khedher, 2019). In addition, popularity, admiration, and prestige are distinct from PBE because they can exist independently of the individual’s actions, while constructing a personal brand requires agency (Gorbatov et al., 2018). The same reasoning applies to reputation, “a perceptual identity formed from the collective perceptions of others <...> over some period of time as observed directly and/or

reported from secondary sources” (Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007, p. 165). While PBE is similar in some respects to reputation (Noble et al., 2010; Schlosser et al., 2017), reputation can exist independently of any conscious attempt to manage it, while deliberate effort is required to create the desired PBE.

Impression management, being one of the manifestations of self-presentation, is another construct that we must take into consideration. While impression management consists of several facets, such as ingratiation, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation, the facet of impression management most related to PBE is self-promotion, which is concerned with pointing out one’s “abilities or accomplishments in order to be seen as competent” (Bolino & Turnley, 1999, p. 190). Although PBE and self-promotion overlap significantly, self-promotion does not necessarily capture the differentiated nature of PBE, which requires a strategic approach to projecting one’s professional self. An outcome that could be achieved with intimidation tactics of impression management is dominance, defined as “induction of fear, through intimidation and coercion, to attain social rank” (Cheng et al., 2013, p. 105), which, albeit distinct from other constructs due to the connotations of imposition and coercion, does belong to the same nomological field as it is, similar to all the previously reviewed concepts, a socially constructed perception of self in the minds of others as a result of self-presentation to gain a share of voice or social hierarchy. The relationship between PBE and dominance is rather inconspicuous. Pratto et al. (1997), in a series of four experiments, demonstrated that people with a high social dominance orientation choose and are selected into hierarchy-enhancing roles, thus enhancing their PBE. Both dominance and prestige relate to attaining a higher social rank, but while we expect the relationship between prestige and PBE to be closer than the relationship between dominance and PBE, all three are thought to be conceptually related.

Finally, there is also some overlap between PBE and personality on the basis of socioanalytic theory, which views personality in two ways: from the position of the actor and from the position of the observer (Hogan, 1982; Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996). The latter, in essence, equates personality to reputation, and the authors argued that this understanding is most pertinent to the study of self-presentation behaviors, as “personality is most evident in and consequential for social interaction because people are social animals and it is during interaction that human nature is primarily expressed” (Hogan et al., 1996, p. 470). Using HEXACO as the conceptual framework for understanding personality (Hough, Oswald, & Ock, 2015), we expected PBE to demonstrate an inverse relationship with the honesty-humility factor of personality since personal branding requires the proactive positioning of the self vis-à-vis the referent group, while high scores for honesty-humility would indicate a lesser preoccupation with using social relationships for personal gain or promoting the self. Extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience should positively relate to PBE, as people who are more confident, planful and organized, and imaginative are more likely to engage in proactive career behaviors related to designing, promoting, and maintaining their personal brand. At the same time, the emotionality and agreeableness factors of personality should not relate to PBE since qualities such as better adjustment, controlling one’s temper, or being lenient to others are not associated with one’s personal branding effectiveness.

4.2.3 PBE and Career Success

For employees, attaining career success is the primary objective behind PBE. By building PBE, a career seeker engages in a variety of activities to analyze and distill personal and professional strengths and limitations to create the desired personal brand and communicate it to the target audience. Such activities require reflexivity and lead to a better understanding of one’s

professional self, both perceived and desired (Adams, 2003; Wee & Brooks, 2010). Strauss et al. (2012) found that the clarity of ‘future work selves’ is positively related to engaging in proactive career behaviors, which, in turn, have a positive effect on career success (Crant, 2000). Judge and Hurst (2007) provided evidence from longitudinal research that a high self-concept is linked to greater career success.

An established measure of career success is employability, a concept that has emerged as a response to the decline in the traditional form of employment, is characterized by lifelong employment and the organization’s responsibility for the careers of employees (Baruch, 2001; Shoss, 2017). Employability can be defined as “work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunities” (Fugate et al., 2004, p. 16). Employability is a psychosocial construct that is robustly positioned in the literature as one of the key characteristics of boundaryless career seekers (Van Buren, 2003). Employability positively impacts a number of outcomes that are important to modern-day workers, such as self-esteem and seeking employment (Chen & Lim, 2012; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007), performance (De Cuyper et al., 2014), and better health and well-being (Berntson & Marklund, 2007; Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, Witte, & Alarco, 2008).

According to Fugate et al. (2004), employability comprises three components: personal adaptability, career identity, and social and human capital. A personal brand “identifies, clarifies, and communicates a professional identity” (Cederberg, 2017), which is a process that creates social and human capital, and arguably, those who excel in personal branding are more adaptable to the needs of the ever-changing labor environment. Logically, it follows that PBE has a positive effect on employability.

Hypothesis 1: PBE is positively related to employability.

Several factors predict employees' engagement with activities related to establishing and maintaining a personal brand. Considering PBE's specific focus on successful career outcomes, we believe that one such predictor is career achievement aspiration, which is concerned with professional growth and advancement in one's field (Gray & O'Brien, 2007). For example, in their studies, Gregor and O'Brien (2016) found that young women with high career achievement aspirations prioritized their careers over their partners, giving prominence to recognition in their career and further education in the field. The need for self-esteem and rewards, as well as greater cultural and social capital, have been recognized as drivers of personal branding behaviors (Gorbatov et al., 2018). Similarly, the desire to be among the best in one's field and to obtain promotions in one's organization is likely to be associated with the feeling of ease in finding a job or achieving a coveted career move. Rodrigues et al. (2019) provided empirical evidence that core self-evaluations (comprising the self-esteem element) are strongly and positively related to perceived employability, and De Vos et al. (2011) found a positive relationship between competency development and perceived employability.

Hypothesis 2a: Career achievement aspiration is positively related to PBE.

Hypothesis 2b: Career achievement aspiration is positively related to employability.

We further propose that PBE is a more proximal outcome of career achievement aspiration than employability. While career achievement aspiration is an important motivational factor for engaging in proactive career behaviors that ultimately enhance employability, PBE can be construed as an already existing form of human and social capital. Therefore, we hypothesize that career achievement aspiration is positively related to PBE, which, in turn, positively impacts employability.

Hypothesis 3: PBE mediates the relationship between career achievement aspiration and employability.

Moreover, we propose that career self-efficacy plays an important moderating role in the relationship between PBE and perceived employability. Career self-efficacy is understood as one's belief in the personal ability to successfully manage one's own career (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998). Career self-efficacy is known to be positively related to proactive career behaviors and career success (Day & Allen, 2004; King, 2004). Thus, higher levels of career self-efficacy are associated with greater resourcefulness and having a broader repertoire of career management techniques. This background leads to the hypothesis that greater confidence in one's career management abilities makes people rely less on alternative career tools, such as PBE, in achieving employability.

Hypothesis 4: Career self-efficacy weakens the positive indirect effect (through PBE) between career achievement aspiration and perceived employability.

4.3 Present Study

The extant empirical studies of personal brands use measures that have not been subjected to rigorous construct validity analyses. With this paper, we aim to develop a reliable and valid measure of PBE that could help advance the research in the field. We were guided by the procedure for construct measurement and validation recommended by MacKenzie et al. (2011). Based on the PBE definition, in Phase 1, a pool of potential items was generated and reviewed by a panel of experts for its face and content validity. In Phase 2, we factor-analyzed the new 12-item scale and evaluated its reliability and stability. In Phase 3, we examined the psychometric properties of the new scale, and in Phase 4, convergent and discriminant validity was assessed.

Finally, in Phase 5, we tested our hypotheses regarding the relationships among PBE, career achievement motivation, perceived employability, and career self-efficacy.

4.4 Phase 1: Item Development and Content Validity Assessment

The aim of this phase was to develop a pool of items to measure the personal brand construct, conduct the content validity assessment, and refine the items to ensure ease of comprehension. We designed the measure by drawing on its definition and following established procedures for scale development (DeVellis, 2012; Hinkin, 1998).

We constructed the scales to measure PBE using the deductive approach (Hinkin, 1998). Drawing on the three facets of PBE (*brand appeal*, *brand value*, and *brand awareness*), a pool of 36 items was constructed to capture the three dimensions of personal brand (see Appendix 4.11). For example, to measure personal brand awareness, we developed items such as “I am known outside of my immediate network” and “An expert in my professional field would not think of me first” (reverse coded).

The items were reviewed for clarity and content validity by an industrial and organizational psychologist and a marketing professor, which resulted in a few enhancements to the wording to avoid unnecessarily lengthy items, jargon, redundancy, or ambiguity (DeVellis, 2012; MacKenzie et al., 2011). Subsequently, we asked 15 Ph.D. students to reply to an electronic survey regarding test readability and face validity of the statements. Seven responses were received (a 46% response rate) with minor suggestions for revisions in wording, and all 36 items were deemed fit for factor and reliability analyses.

4.5 Phase 2: Factor Structure

To assess the factor structure and reliability of the PBE scale, a two-step approach was used with two different samples. With Sample 1, we assessed the dimensionality of the personal

brand scale by submitting the 36 items to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which enabled us to test for the composite reliability of the scale and establish a parsimonious set of items. Then, the retained items were submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for Sample 2 to test the multidimensional nature of the personal brand construct and compare the first-order and second-order models for fit and parsimony (Johnson, Rosen, & Chang, 2011).

4.5.1 Phase 2 Method

4.5.1.1 Participants and Procedure

In total, 1081 responses were collected using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk samples are now widely used for academic research and are considered reliable and valid, especially for exploratory research and pilot studies (see, for example, Brooks, Gino, & Schweitzer, 2015; Schaerer, Kern, Berger, Medvec, & Swaab, 2018). All the items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 5=*strongly agree*). After boxplot and visual analyses, 64 responses were removed (due to outliers, consistent answering, and missing values), resulting in a total sample of 1,017 respondents. The demographic characteristics of the sample are as follows: 540 males (53.1%), 477 females (46.9%), and an average age of 33 years ($SD = 10.06$). Geographically, 557 participants (54.8%) were from the USA, 348 (32.4%) were from India, 25 (2.5%) were from Canada, and the rest of the participants (less than 2%) were distributed across various countries. The majority of the participants were either employed full-time (810, 79.6%) or part-time (149, 14.7%), and the rest were unemployed or retired. We did not impose any boundary conditions on the participants, as personal branding is not specific only to those who have employment (Gorbatov et al., 2018). As Fokkema and Greiff (2017) warned against performing the exploratory and confirmatory analyses on the same sample, we randomly split the dataset into two samples using the automated SPSS sorting function. The 36 items

generated in the previous stage were submitted to the EFA using SPSS v.25 software on a randomly selected 30% of the sample (Sample 1; $N = 311$). This size was guided by the conservative advice of Nunnally (1978) that the ratio for EFA should be at least 10:1; another rule-of-thumb suggests the use of 300 cases (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). To understand the relationships among the set of measured variables, we applied principal axis factoring with promax rotation, as recommended by Floyd and Widaman (1995).

The aim of the CFA was to confirm that three dimensions comprised the PBE construct, to confirm the distinctiveness of those dimensions, and to confirm that the loading of each item on the relevant factor was significant. The CFA was performed on Sample 2 ($N = 706$) using AMOS v24. Five models were tested to identify the model with the best fit: (1) the null baseline model in which the correlations among the observed variables are constrained to be 0, which is the “independence” model in AMOS; (2) a one-factor model in which the personal brand scale measures one overall factor rather than three individual factors; (3) the uncorrelated factors model in which the three factors of the personal brand scale are independent constructs, i.e., orthogonal; (4) the correlated factors model in which the three factors of the personal brand scale are related to one another; and (5) the hierarchical model in which a second-order factor accounts for relations among the three personal brand scale factors.

We employed seven indices to assess model fit (Noar, 2003; Schreiber et al., 2006): chi-square/ df ratio (χ^2/df); relative fit indices, including the normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and Tucker Lewis index (TLI); the comparative fit index (CFI); and parsimony-adjusted measures, including root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and p of close fit (P_{close}). For the chi-square/ df ratio, which indicates the closeness of fit of the model, a score of 3 or less indicates a good fit (Kline, 2016). NFI values greater than .95 indicate a good fit

(Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008), while, for the IFI, values greater than .90 indicate a good fit (Bentler, 1990). Hu and Bentler (1999) suggest cutoff values close to .95 for the TLI and CFI and a cutoff value close to .06 for RMSEA. P_{close} is a p -value test on RMSEA that needs to be greater than .05 to reject the null hypothesis that the computed RMSEA is greater than .06 (indicating a poor fit).

4.5.2 Phase 2 Results

The EFA analyses showed that the four reverse-coded items loaded on the same factor. Since these items belonged to different factors, we attributed these joint loadings to response behavior rather than to the underlying factor structure (Weijters & Baumgartner, 2018). Items with loadings of $< .35$ were removed. This decision resulted in 15 items that loaded onto three factors (5 items per factor). A qualitative exploration of the items revealed that one item in each factor was conceptually different from the rest. In the *brand appeal* factor, the item “The work that I deliver meets or exceeds what I promise” (loading .50) signaled work quality and not how appealing the personal brand is. In the *brand value* factor, the item “I am more likely to succeed professionally than others” (loading .50) was related to personal success and not to the benefit for others. In the *brand awareness* factor, the item “I am frequently contacted by others for advice or services” (loading .73) did not measure awareness but the action that others take based on that awareness. After removing those items, the resulting scale consisted of 12 items, with four items loading on each factor (Table 4.1), explaining 63.3% of the variance. All the loadings were above the minimum cutoff value of .40 (Hinkin, 1998). The Cronbach’s alpha of each scale was above the minimum cutoff value of .70 (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

Table 4.1.

Personal Brand Scale Items, Their Factor Loading (Sample 1), and Standardized Regression Weights (Sample 2)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	F1 (brand appeal)		F2 (brand value)		F3 (brand awareness)	
			loading	β	loading	β	loading	β
I am appealing to work with.	4.00	.82	.73	.66				
My professional strengths are clear.	4.03	.81	.64	.61				
I have a positive professional reputation.	4.00	.81	.60	.70				
I have a positive professional image among others.	4.04	.79	.59	.68				
I am regarded as delivering higher professional value compared to others.	3.78	.89			.75	.71		
I am considered a better professional compared to others.	3.71	.93			.73	.64		
I am a preferred candidate for projects and tasks.	3.85	.89			.50	.69		
I have a reputation for producing high value results.	3.85	.90			.49	.69		
I am often recommended by others to their professional contacts.	3.61	1.00					.77	.69
I am known in my professional field.	3.74	.99					.75	.80
My name is well known in my professional field.	3.54	1.06					.70	.82
I am known outside of my immediate network.	3.54	1.02					.68	.72
Cronbach's alpha (Samples 1 and 2)			.74	.76	.83	.78	.83	.84

Note. The reported EFA loadings are from the pattern matrices (Sample 1; $N = 311$). Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Loadings $< .35$ are suppressed for better visualization. The reported

standardized betas are obtained from a CFA (Sample 2; $N = 706$). M and SD reported for combined Samples 1 and 2 ($N = 1,017$).

Table 4.2.

Goodness of Fit Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the Personal Brand Scale (Sample 2)

Models	χ^2	df	$\chi^2/\text{df ratio}$	CFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Null	3276.02***	56	49.64	-	-	-	-	.26	.000
One factor	639.94***	66	11.85	.82	.81	.82	.78	.12	.000
Uncorrelated factors	816.24***	54	15.12	.76	.75	.76	.71	.14	.000
Correlated factors	174.02***	51	3.41	.96	.95	.96	.95	.06	.07
Hierarchical	274.59***	89	3.09	.96	.94	.96	.95	.05	.16

Note. $N = 706$. CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index, IFI = incremental fit index, TLI = Tucker Lewis index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, PCLOSE = p of close fit.

*** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

The results of the CFA on the five tested models are presented in Table 4.2. The correlated factors model and the hierarchical model showed a better model fit than the other models.

The chi-square difference test did not demonstrate a statistically significant difference between the two models $\Delta\chi^2(89) = 100, p = .20$. Therefore, for the sake of parsimony, we chose the hierarchical model as superior. The standardized regression weights for all the items were above .60 (Table 4.1).

4.6 Phase 3: Psychometric Properties of the Scale

4.6.1 Phase 3 Method

4.6.1.1 Participants and Procedure

We conducted psychometric analyses on data from 1,558 subjects from four different samples. Each sample was collected via an electronic survey containing the PBE measure, demographic questions, and other measures for the purposes of establishing the convergent, discriminant, and criterion-related validity of the construct.

Samples 1 and 2. As described in Phase 1.

Sample 3. We collected 343 responses via an online survey by emailing a link to the researchers' contacts and posting it on social networks. After the initial data analysis, 80 responses were removed (due to outliers, consistent answering, and missing values), resulting in a total sample of 263 participants. Of these participants, 109 (41.4%) were male and 154 (58.6%) were female, with an average age of 27 years ($SD = 9.48$). Most of the participants resided in the Netherlands (189, 71.9%) or China (61, 23.2%). One hundred and twenty participants (45.6%) were employed part-time, 79 (30%) full-time, 39 (14.8%) not employed and not looking for work, and 22 (8.4%) not employed but looking for work. Sixty-five percent of the sample had

five years of work experience or less. This sample was used for another study, so we only collected the measure of PBE for this paper's psychometric analyses.

Sample 4. The responses in this sample were collected at two times, two weeks apart, from business administration bachelor's degree students at a large public Dutch university. The students received research credit for their participation. Since our goal was not to measure change in the variables but to mitigate common method bias by measuring the independent and dependent variables separately, two weeks is a reasonable time difference (R. E. Johnson, Rosen, & Djurdjevic, 2011). At Time 1, we received 284 responses, six of which were duplicates. In each instance, we retained the first response received. Then, we deleted six other responses that contained missing values. This decision resulted in a total sample of 278 students (age: $M = 19.53$, $SD = 1.43$; 30.9% female; 86.3% Dutch; work experience in years: $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.45$; time at university: $M = .64$, $SD = .45$). At Time 2, 280 responses were collected, 33 of which were duplicates. Again, we retained only the first responses. The final sample at Time 2 consisted of 247 cases (age: $M = 19.53$, $SD = 1.46$; 32.8% female; 86.6% Dutch; work experience in years: $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.92$; time at university: $M = .63$, $SD = .47$).

4.6.1.2 Measures.

PBE was measured using the 12-item scale developed in the previous phases. The participants provided their answers on a 5-point scale, with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

4.6.2 Phase 3 Results

4.6.2.1 Reliability

Internal consistency reliability, or the homogeneity of the items within the scale, was assessed by examining the coefficient alpha (DeVellis, 2012) on the four samples. The

coefficient alpha estimates of reliability were .89, .88, .86, .84, and .86 in Samples 1 through 4, respectively (Sample 4 was measured at two different times). These estimates are considered “very good” (DeVellis, 2012). The stability of the PBE scale was assessed in the short term (two-week difference) using Sample 4. PBE at Time 1 was significantly correlated with PBE at Time 2 ($r = .70, p < .001$), demonstrating scale stability (test-retest reliability).

4.7 Phase 4: Convergent and Discriminant Validity Evidence for the PBE Scale

To establish convergent validity, we examined the relationships between PBE and constructs that should be significantly related to it. Conversely, discriminant validity is established when PBE has low or null correlations with conceptually dissimilar constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Hinkin, 1998). Our convergent validity analyses centered on the concepts in the nomological field of PBE, as discussed above. We expected that PBE would be positively related but distinct from self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, and admiration. We also looked at the various factors of personality in establishing the convergent and discriminant validity of the PBE scale using the HEXACO model of personality (Hough et al., 2015). We did not expect variance in PBE related to demographic characteristics, such as gender or age. However, work experience should be positively related to PBE, even in a student sample.

4.7.1 Phase 4 Method

4.7.1.1 Sample and Measures

The analyses in this phase were performed on Sample 4. In addition to PBE (reported in the previous phase), the following measures were collected at Time 1 with the purpose of establishing convergent and discriminant validity. All the responses were collected using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Self-promotion was measured with the 6-item scale of Bolino and Turnley (1999). An example item is “I make public my talents or qualifications”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .81.

Popularity. We measured popularity using the 8-item scale developed by Scott and Judge (2009). An example item is “I am socially visible”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .83.

Reputation was measured with the 12-item scale of Hochwarter et al. (2007). A sample item is “I have a good reputation”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .83.

Prestige was measured using the 8-item scale of Cheng et al. (2010). A sample item is “Others seek my advice on a variety of matters”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .69.

Dominance was measured using the 8-item scale of Cheng et al. (2010). A sample item is “I am willing to use aggressive tactics to get my way”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .81.

Admiration was measured with the 7-item skill subscale of the multidimensional admiration scale from Sarapin et al. (2015). A sample item is “I am outstanding in my field”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .81.

Personality was measured with the 24-item Brief HEXACO Inventory developed by De Vries (2013), consisting of six factors: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. The Cronbach’s alphas for the six factors of the HEXACO scale were, respectively, .40, .49, .53, .41, .50, and .58. Such lower alpha reliabilities were noted by the author of the scale and, when countered by high levels of self-other agreement and test-retest reliability, were deemed “acceptable levels of validity loss” (De Vries, 2013, p. 878)

The participants were asked to indicate their work experience (number of years). The demographic data were retrieved from the research database using the participants' unique research number, preserving their anonymity. The participants' ages were measured in years.

4.7.1.2 Strategy of Analysis

To demonstrate the distinguishability of PBE from other theoretically related constructs, we ran three analyses establishing its convergent and discriminant validity. First, we performed the Fornell-Larcker test on Sample 3 to provide evidence for the construct validity of the PBE scale. Internal construct validity is established when the convergent and discriminant validity of its components are demonstrated. To test for convergent validity, we calculated the average variance extracted (AVE), which should be higher than .50 to demonstrate convergent validity (MacKenzie et al., 2011). Malhotra and Dash (2011) consider AVE a strict conservative measure, claiming that convergent validity can be established statistically through CR values alone ($> .70$); similarly, Fornell and Larcker (1981) asserted that "on the basis of [reliability] alone, the researcher may conclude that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate, even though more than 50% of the variance is due to error" (p. 46). For a scale to demonstrate discriminant validity, its maximum shared variance (MSV) must be lower than the AVE and the square root of the AVE must be greater than the interconstruct correlations (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010). Second, the zero-order correlations were examined between PBE measured at Time 2 and the other constructs measured at Time 1 in Sample 4. The temporal separation mitigates the common method bias that is potentially present when measures are collected in the same survey (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To demonstrate convergent validity, PBE should be related to theoretically similar constructs, and conversely, divergent validity is demonstrated when the correlations with dissimilar constructs are nonsignificant or

low (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Finally, for the chi-square difference tests, PBE and each related construct (i.e., popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, and the factors of personality) were separately modeled as one- and two-factor measurement models to ensure that the constructs were distinguishable and not convergent to the point of redundancy. A lower chi-square value for the one-factor model or a nonsignificant chi-square difference indicates that the two constructs may be redundant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

4.7.2 Phase 4 Results

The results of the Fornell-Larcker test did not show PBE construct redundancy based on its convergent and divergent validity. The AVE values were, respectively, .53, .51, and .56 for the brand appeal, brand value, and brand awareness subscales (Table 4.3), exceeding the required value of .50. The CR measures for the three subscales were also higher than the cutoff value of .70 (.82, .80, and .83, respectively). Based on these AVE and CR values, we can establish the convergent validity of the PBE scale.

Table 4.3.

Personal Brand Model Validity Measures (Sample 3)

		CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3
1.	Brand appeal	0.82	0.53	0.32	0.84	0.73		
2.	Brand value	0.80	0.51	0.32	0.82	.57***	0.71	
3.	Brand awareness	0.83	0.56	0.31	0.90	.22 [†]	.56***	.75

Note. $N = 263$. CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted, MSV = maximum shared variance, MaxR(H) = maximum reliability. Significance of correlations:

[†] $p < .10$, *** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

Table 4.3 shows that the MSVs for all three factors of the PBE scale are lower than the respective AVE values, and the square root of the AVE exceeds the correlations between the scales, proving discriminant validity. Therefore, we establish the discriminant validity of the PBE scale, which suggests that response biases are likely to be insignificant.

Bivariate correlations between PBE and other variables, presented in Table 4.4, provide evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. PBE was significantly related to popularity ($r = .38, p < .001$), reputation ($r = .52, p < .001$), prestige ($r = .53, p < .001$), dominance ($r = .28, p < .001$), admiration ($r = .60, p < .001$), honesty-humility ($r = -.14, p = .02$), extraversion ($r = .22, p = .001$), conscientiousness ($r = .20, p = .002$), and openness to experience ($r = .17, p = .007$). PBE was significantly related to work experience ($r = .17, p = .008$) but unrelated to age ($r = .08, p = .21$). PBE was also unrelated to gender ($r = -.02, p = .82$), GPA ($r = .09, p = .17$), emotionality ($r = -.08, p = .23$), and agreeableness ($r = -.10, p = .11$).

Table 4.4.

Means, Standard Deviations (SD), Correlations and Cronbach's Alphas of the Study Variables (Sample 4)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	19.53	1.43	278	-										
2. Gender	.69	.46	278	-.01	-									
3. Work experience	3.10	1.92	278	.08	.02	-								
4. Personal brand equity T1	3.26	.52	278	.08	-.02	.21**	.84							
5. Personal brand equity T2	3.32	.52	247	.08	-.01	.17**	.70**	.86						
6. Career achievement aspiration T1	3.89	.51	278	.09	.08	.10	.42**	.39**	.73					
7. Career achievement aspiration T2	3.80	.58	247	.12	.13*	.12	.46**	.52**	.60**	.84				
8. Perceived employability T1	3.36	.62	278	.14*	-.03	.18**	.48**	.44**	.29**	.36**	.67			
9. Perceived employability T2	3.53	.60	247	.04	-.03	.19**	.50**	.63**	.32**	.42**	.66**	.71		

10. Career self- efficacy T1	3.97	.50	278	.05	.15*	.05	.31**	.26**	.37**	.37**	.29**	.32**	.80	
11. Career self- efficacy T2	3.96	.54	247	.11	.15*	.15*	.27**	.45**	.30**	.47**	.28**	.47**	.65**	.84
12. Self- promotion	2.85	.76	278	-.04	-.01	-.06	.44**	.29**	.22**	.28**	.28**	.24**	.06	.03
13. Popularity	3.68	.53	278	.02	-.01	.24**	.39**	.38**	.21**	.28**	.36**	.39**	.23**	.26**
14. Reputation	3.56	.46	278	.06	.00	.12	.58**	.52**	.39**	.36**	.35**	.42**	.33**	.29**
15. Prestige	3.73	.43	278	.02	.06	.10	.46**	.53**	.36**	.42**	.37**	.48**	.47**	.53**
16. Dominance	2.90	.71	278	.01	.01	.09	.34**	.28**	.27**	.26**	.30**	.22**	.10	.02
17. Admiration	3.15	.58	278	.00	-.01	.14*	.61**	.60**	.41**	.49**	.37**	.44**	.32**	.31**
18. Honesty- Humility	3.25	.70	278	-.04	.08	-.03	-.24**	-.14*	-.13*	-.15*	-.17**	-.13*	.03	.05
19. Emotionality	2.54	.75	278	-.01	-.07	-.06	-.08	-.08	-.10	-.11	-.09	-.10	-.38**	-.26**
20. Extraversion	3.95	.59	278	-.06	.04	.15*	.21**	.22**	.22**	.22**	.26**	.34**	.31**	.27**
21. Agreeableness	2.94	.61	278	-.03	-.08	.09	-.11	-.10	-.24**	-.18**	-.06	-.10	-.02	.00
22. Conscientiousness	3.37	.63	278	-.04	.00	-.05	.20**	.20**	.21**	.10	.08	.13*	.11	.14*
23. Openness to Experience	3.53	.74	278	.11	.06	.00	.19**	.17**	.26**	.22**	.22**	.28**	.23**	.20**

Table 4.4 (continued)

	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
12. Self-promotion	.81											
13. Popularity	.35**	.83										
14. Reputation	.33**	.44**	.83									
15. Prestige	.16**	.43**	.55**	.69								
16. Dominance	.45**	.19**	.35**	.15*	.81							
17. Admiration	.33**	.33**	.57**	.51**	.30**	.81						
18. Honesty-Humility	-.36**	-.14*	-.05	-.06	-.42**	-.21**	.40					
19. Emotionality	-.04	-.13*	-.17**	-.26**	-.01	-.21**	.10	.49				
20. Extraversion	.16**	.43**	.23**	.35**	.09	.12*	.00	-.17**	.53			
21. Agreeableness	-.24**	-.08	-.19**	-.18**	-.47**	-.08	.15*	-.10	-.06	.41		
22. Conscientiousness	.05	-.02	.22**	.16**	.01	.11	.05	.11	.12	-.04	.50	
23. Openness to Experience	.14*	.06	.23**	.24**	.21**	.17**	-.14*	.05	.19**	-.16**	.23**	.58

Note. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal (in bold). Gender coded as 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; two-tailed tests.

Finally, we performed chi-square difference tests via CFA to determine the significant correlations between PBE and nine other constructs: popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, honesty-humility, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. As expected, for all the constructs, the two-factor models (i.e., when the covariance between PBE and the related construct was freely estimated) were preferable to the one-factor models (i.e., when the covariance between PBE and the related construct was set to 1.0): popularity, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 116.61$; reputation, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 62.62$; prestige, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 64.47$; dominance, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 128.76$; admiration, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 48.80$; honesty-humility, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 21.48$; extraversion, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 87.49$; conscientiousness, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 71.99$; and openness to experience, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 100.53$. These results provide evidence that PBE is a construct that is distinct from popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, honesty-humility, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience and is not redundant with any of these nine constructs.

In sum, the results of Phase 4 show that our measure of PBE is convergent with, yet separate from, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, honesty-humility, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and years of work experience. Our PBE scale is discriminant from emotionality, agreeableness, age, and gender. These findings provide support for the convergent and discriminant validity of our PBE scale.

4.8 Phase 5: Hypotheses Testing

The purpose of this study was to test our hypotheses regarding the relationships among PBE, career achievement aspiration, perceived employability, and career self-efficacy.

4.8.1 Phase 5 Method

4.8.1.1 Sample and Measures

These analyses were performed on Sample 4, and the measures were discussed in the previous phase. In all instances, the participants were asked to respond using the 5-point scale with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In addition, the following constructs were measured at both times.

Career achievement aspiration was measured with an 8-item scale developed by Gregor and O'Brien (2016). An example item is "I plan to obtain many promotions in my organization or business". The Cronbach's alphas for this scale were .73 at Time 1 and .84 at Time 2.

Perceived employability was measured with the 5-item scale developed by Berntson & Marklund (2007). An example item is "My experience is in demand on the labor market". The Cronbach's alphas were .67 at Time 1 and .71 at Time 2.

Career self-efficacy was measured by the 7-item scale developed by Dobrow and Higgings (2005). An example item is "I believe that I can do what I need to do in order to make my career successful". The Cronbach's alphas were .80 at Time 1 and .84 at Time 2.

4.8.1.2 Strategy of Analysis

First, the partially disaggregated measurement model was assessed for fit using CFA. PBE was included as a two-level latent variable in the model, as the relationships between the individual items comprising the scale were of focal interest. We created parcels for all the other variables, as advised by Little et al. (2002), which allows for a better understanding of the relationships among the constructs. Structural equation modeling (SEM) (maximum likelihood estimation; AMOS v.24) was used to test the hypothesized model (M0), where career achievement aspiration was related to perceived employability via PBE and moderated by career

self-efficacy. Two alternative models were tested: a fully constrained model (M1), where the structural path from career achievement aspiration to perceived employability was constrained to 1.0, and a model without a direct path from career achievement aspiration to perceived employability (M2). To perform the moderation analysis, we mean-centered the values for personal brand and perceived employability and calculated an interaction term. We also conducted additional analyses in which PBE was iteratively replaced in M0 with one of its factors.

4.8.2 Phase 5 Results

The fit of the baseline measurement model, including career achievement aspiration (T1), PBE (T1), career self-efficacy (T2), and perceived employability (T2), was acceptable: χ^2 (143) = 263.35, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.84$, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .06, Pclose = .09. The alternative model M1 did not provide a better fit to the data: χ^2 (144) = 288.61, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.00$, CFI = .90, TLI = .88, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .07, Pclose = .02. The indices for the alternative model M2 were similar to those of the baseline model (χ^2 (144) = 263.38, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.83$, CFI = .91, TLI = .90, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .06, Pclose = .10), with a nonsignificant chi-square test ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = .03, $p = .86$). As the CFI value for the baseline model was slightly higher, we proceeded with the analyses using the baseline model M0. Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas, and correlations among all the study variables.

We conducted an SEM analysis with a bootstrapping test with 5,000 resamples using percentile bootstraps (Hayes, 2009). The model explained 61% of the variance ($R^2 = .61$, $p < .001$) and is graphically represented in Figure 4.1. The results revealed that, while career achievement aspiration was positively related to perceived employability ($r = .29$, $p < .01$ at Time

1 and $r = .42, p < .01$ at Time 2), the relationships were not significant ($\gamma = .02, p = .85$) when controlling for PBE. Career achievement aspiration was positively related to PBE ($\gamma = .62, p < .001$), and PBE, in turn, was positively related to perceived employability ($\beta = .54, p < .001$), suggesting full mediation. Thus, Hypotheses 1-3 were supported.

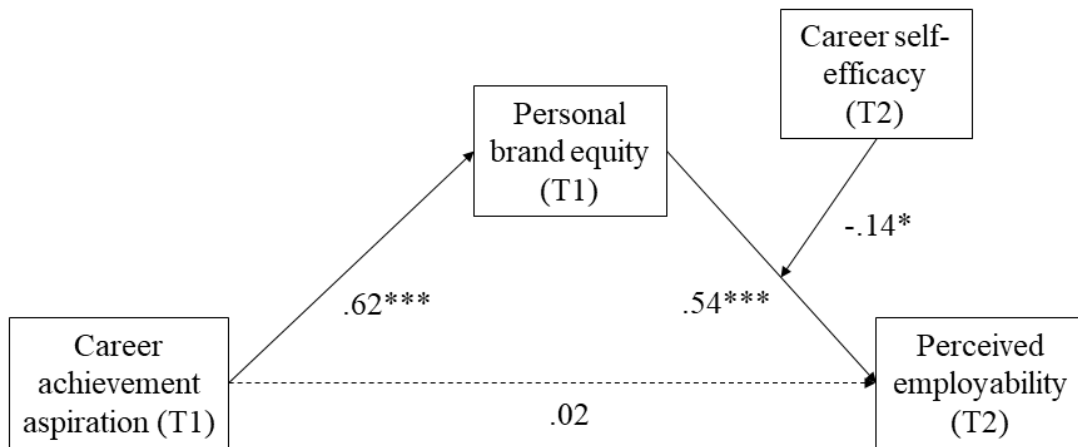


Figure 4.1. Moderated mediation model showing the positive causal effect of career achievement aspiration on perceived employability mediated by PBE with a second stage moderation effect by career self-efficacy. The regression results are reported in standardized betas.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

The interaction term between PBE and career self-efficacy related to perceived employability was significant ($\beta = -.14, p = .02$). The simple slopes analyses indicated that career self-efficacy dampens the positive relationship between career achievement aspiration and perceived employability through PBE (Figure 4.2). This result suggests that, at lower levels of PBE, career self-efficacy weakens the positive effects of having a strong personal brand leading to a perception of being employable.

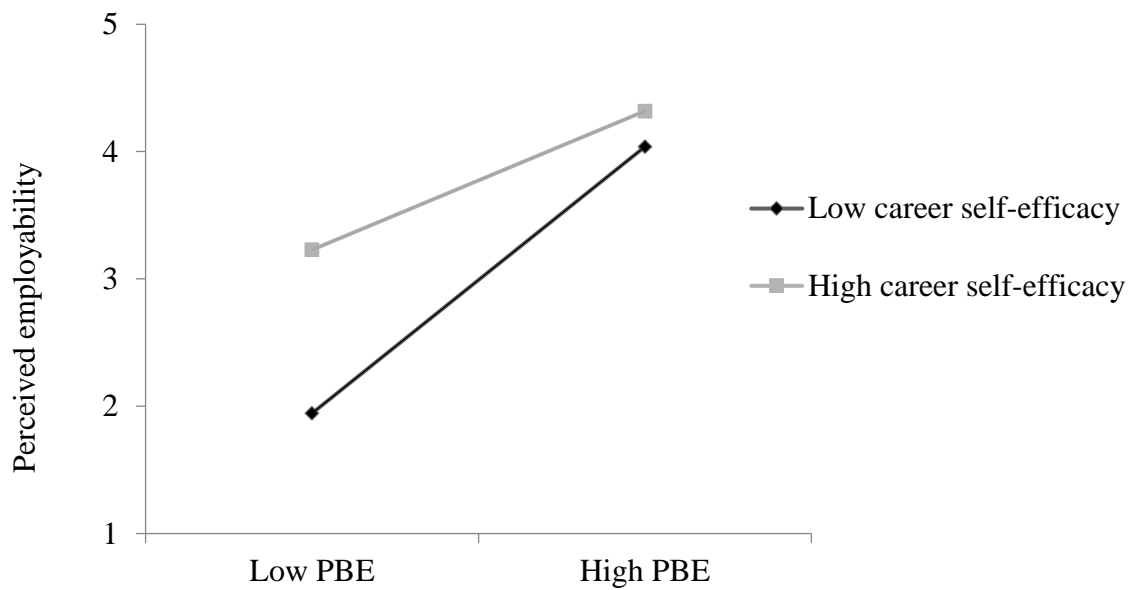


Figure 4.2. The interaction between PBE and career self-efficacy in relation to perceived employability (Sample 4).

The bootstrapping test confirmed a positive indirect effect of career achievement aspiration on perceived employability via PBE (indirect effect = .49, 95% CI [.25, .90]). When moderated by career self-efficacy, the indirect effect was .34 at the 95% CI [.09, .72]. These findings provided support for Hypothesis 4.

4.8.3 Additional Analyses

Although the findings presented above support the hypothesized model, we proceeded to explore how each aspect of personal branding affects perceived employability. We tested three additional models in which the latent personal brand factor was replaced by one of the following latent factors: (1) brand appeal, (2) brand value, and (3) brand awareness. As shown in Table 4.5, all three models demonstrated good fit to the data. Career achievement aspiration was positively related to brand appeal ($\gamma = .47, p < .001$), brand value ($\gamma = .53, p < .001$), and brand awareness ($\gamma = .44, p < .001$). Additionally, in each of these models, PBE was positively related to

perceived employability: Model 1 $\beta = .39, p < .001$; Model 2 $\beta = .32, p < .001$, Model 3 $\beta = .36, p < .001$. The relationship between career achievement aspiration and perceived employability remained nonsignificant across the three models: $\gamma = .37, p = .07$; $\gamma = .18, p = .07$; and $\gamma = .17, p = .06$. These additional findings suggest that, in this study, brand value was the most important aspect of PBE for perceived employability.

Table 4.5.

Goodness of Fit Indices of the Alternative Models (Sample 4)

Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	CFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
M1. Brand appeal	81.55***	38	2.15	.92	.86	.92	.88	.07	.07
M1 ₀ . Null model	604.62***	55	11.00	-	-	-	-	.20	< .001
M2. Brand value	57.01***	38	1.50	.97	.92	.97	.96	.05	.60
M2 ₀ . Null model	726.07***	55	13.20	-	-	-	-	.23	< .001
M3. Brand awareness	60.33***	38	1.59	.97	.92	.97	.96	.05	.49
M3 ₀ . Null model	795.75***	55	14.47	-	-	-	-	.24	< .001

Note. $N = 247$. CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index, IFI = incremental fit index, TLI = Tucker Lewis index, RMSEA

= root mean square error of approximation, PCLOSE = p of close fit.

All chi-square difference tests were significant at $p < .001$.

*** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

4.9 Discussion

The goals of our study were to establish a definition of PBE, develop and validate a PBE scale, and examine the relationships between PBE and other career-related constructs (i.e., career achievement aspiration, perceived employability, and career self-efficacy). As such, this study provides several important contributions to the theoretical understanding of PBE and provides opportunities for practitioners to use the PBE scale in self-development, career guidance, and leadership training.

4.9.1 Theoretical Implications

Our study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, we clearly defined PBE as the accrued perception of the value of an individual's professional and personal qualities in the minds of the target audience. Then, on the basis of this definition, we developed a new 12-item PBE scale comprising three dimensions: brand appeal, brand value, and brand awareness. The PBE scale was found to possess all the requisite psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and validity), which were confirmed by four different samples. Furthermore, we showed that PBE is conceptually different from other established constructs in the self-presentation and career literatures (e.g., Gorbatov et al., 2018; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). PBE was related to but distinct from self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, and admiration. PBE was also positively correlated, as expected, with certain factors of personality (extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience), while honesty-humility was negatively correlated with PBE ($r = -.14, p = .02$), and PBE diverged from emotionality and agreeableness. These outcomes are aligned with the established literature on personality differences and self-presentation behaviors (e.g., Fox & Rooney, 2015; Krämer & Winter, 2008; Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014). PBE positively correlated with work experience, which seems to support the argument

that personal brands encapsulate elements of social and human capital (Saleem & Iglesias Bedós, 2013; Vallas & Christin, 2018).

Our study also provides evidence of the criterion-related validity of PBE. Specifically, we examined a moderated mediation model linking PBE with career achievement aspiration, perceived employability, and career self-efficacy. These findings respond to the need for a better understanding of how personal brand is related to other career concepts (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Parmentier et al., 2013; Resnick et al., 2016). Our study demonstrated a positive relationship between PBE and employability, providing additional evidence supporting the qualitative findings of Khedher (2019), who explored the effects of personal branding on graduate employability through 54 in-depth interviews. Indeed, as we hypothesized, articulating personal brand value, making it appealing to the target audience, and increasing brand awareness increases social and human capital, which, in turn, positively impacts employability. Next, we found that PBE fully mediated the relationship between career achievement aspiration and perceived employability. These results are in line with previous research on employability. For example, Praskova et al. (2015) found that career strategies (such as self-presentation) mediated the relationship between calling, which can be understood as an orientation toward work that is perceived as one's purpose in life (Hall & Chandler, 2005), and employability. In our study, career achievement aspiration had a positive impact on one's perception of the easiness of finding gainful employment only through having a personal brand that is appealing, communicates value, and is well known to the target audience. Finally, we found that self-efficacy moderated the mediation effect of PBE between career achievement aspiration and perceived employability such that it was dampened at higher levels of career self-

efficacy. This finding calls for future research on the conditions under which PBE positively or negatively relates to career- and work-related outcomes.

4.9.2 Practical Implications

The PBE scale can also be utilized by career seekers as a diagnostic tool. By measuring one's brand appeal, brand value, and brand awareness, as well as soliciting others' views, individuals can gain valuable insights into how to adjust the positioning of the professional self to gain the desired career outcomes. Several scholars highlighted the importance of self-awareness in building an effective personal brand (Gander, 2014; Wetsch, 2012). Furthermore, this scale can be used as a tool for leadership development courses that aim to enhance the participants' self-awareness and understanding of personal career trajectories. For example, Brooks and Anumudu (2016) demonstrated how a personal branding course was deployed in a large consulting firm to increase self-awareness through developing identity narratives.

4.9.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, validity studies were performed on a homogenous sample of students. Therefore, an important next step is to validate this scale in more diverse samples. Of particular interest would be studies on gig economy participants (Gandini, 2016; Scolere, Pruchniewska, & Duffy, 2018) who may benefit more from higher PBE than workers pursuing traditional careers. Students may also be less likely to consider separating their personal and professional identities, striving for greater authenticity, which could be a concern for professionals (Molyneux et al., 2018; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Sihi & Lawson, 2018). While there are several calls to make the personal brand "authentic" (Pruchniewska, 2018; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018), such a goal is associated with emotional labor and potentially damaging personal disclosures (Bridgen, 2011; Vallas & Cummins, 2015), which potentially

moderate the relationships between PBE and other variables. Another limitation is related to the fact that, while we collected time-lagged data, our primary objective was to minimize common method bias, and we were unable to claim causality in any of the described relationships between PBE and the related constructs. We suggest that future research use study designs that allow for addressing questions of causality. For instance, MacKenzie et al. (2011) recommended the experimental manipulation of the construct to more conclusively establish scale validity.

In the model that we used to cross-validate the measure of PBE, only employability was included as an outcome variable. Previous studies indicated other positive outcomes, such as self-realization, social capital, financial gains, and career opportunities (Paivi & Back, 2017; Rangarajan et al., 2017; Vallas & Hill, 2018). In a similar vein, future studies should also explore the antecedents of PBE, for instance, career events (e.g., Schlosser et al., 2017), role or industry (Cederberg, 2017; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017), and individual characteristics (Pihl, 2013; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). Additionally, the negative effects of PBE could be examined. It is plausible to hypothesize that very high levels of PBE could result in feelings of resentment and jealousy in others, similar to the improper use of impression management behaviors (Crant, 1996; Luginbuhl & Palmer, 1991), which is supported by Thompson-Whiteside et al.'s (2018) qualitative findings that female entrepreneurs are wary of self-promotional tactics to communicate their personal brand. This finding is in line with Rudman (1998), who argued that self-promotional activities carry a cost for women and not for men, so continuing to study gender in personal branding is a welcome avenue in personal branding research.

4.10 Conclusion

Today, as the agency for career management has moved to the worker, “individuals need to take charge of their own career and career progression, rather than the organization [and] careers

should be individually driven by one's personal values rather than organizational rewards” (Wang & Wanberg, 2017, p. 549). As a response, research on personal brands has been growing recently. We hope that our contributions will enable researchers to enhance the collective understanding of personal brands as well as assist career seekers and career counselors in diagnosing PBE to make informed career decisions.

4.11 Appendix

PBE Items Pool

1. My work has a distinctive style.
2. I have a positive professional image among others.*
3. I have a positive professional reputation.*
4. I am appealing to work with.*
5. My personal values are reflected in my work.
6. My professional strengths are clear.*
7. Working with me is no different than working with others in my professional field. (r)
8. The work that I deliver meets or exceeds what I promise.
9. My work is highly valued by others.
10. Working with me provides access to my network.
11. Working with me provides access to my expertise.
12. I am regarded as delivering higher professional value compared to others. *
13. Working with me is rewarding.
14. It is great to work with me.
15. Working with me is a positive experience.
16. Being associated with me offers many benefits.
17. There are no significant benefits of working with me. (r)
18. I have a distinct professional image.
19. I have a reputation for producing high value results.*
20. I am considered a better professional compared to others.*
21. My work stands out.

22. My work is distinctly recognizable.
23. What I offer professionally is no different than others. (r)
24. My professional story is clear.
25. My professional online profile has endorsements and/or recommendations from others.
26. I have clear expertise in my professional area.
27. I am regarded as an expert in my professional domain.
28. My work stands out from the work of others.
29. I am a preferred candidate for projects and tasks.*
30. I am more likely to succeed professionally than others.
31. I am known in my professional field.*
32. My name is well known in my professional field. *
33. I am known outside of my immediate network.*
34. I am frequently contacted by others for advice or services.
35. I am often recommended by others to their professional contacts.*
36. An expert in my professional field would not think of me first. (r)

Note: The asterisked items indicate retained items in the final 12-item scale. Items marked with (r) indicate a reverse-coded item.