

Personal Brand as a Game Changer in Building the Recognition of Doctoral Students in the Scientific and Academic Environment

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Abstract: Although personal brand has been studied in relation to the activity of doctoral students and recognition is considered the key to the development of a scientific career (Duszczuk, 2022), the literature lacks specific research on the relationship between these concepts. The aim of the article is to answer the question whether doctoral students are aware of the importance of personal brand in building their recognition in the scientific and academic environment, and what actions they take in this regard. To achieve this goal, it was decided to conduct a qualitative study in the form of individual in-depth interviews (IDI) on a group of doctoral students of Doctoral Schools (N = 6). As a result, it was found that doctoral students notice the importance of personal brand, but rather do not consider as a game changer in building their recognition.

Keywords: personal brand, game changer, recognition, doctoral student

1. Introduction

Although each of us has a personal brand (Peters, 1997), it is still the case that only a few of us are able to consciously use it to build recognition for ourselves. Nowadays meanwhile, especially in the scientific and academic environment, there is a growing need to build an expert brand (Nazemi et al., 2020). A review of the literature identified publications in which research was undertaken into the concepts of recognition and personal brand, but in which detailed attention was not paid to the relationships between them – in particular with regard to young scientists. It can be assumed that as

people beginning their scientific careers in the face of ongoing globalisation, digitalisation and constant changes in the organisation of higher education, they should be particularly interested in building brands that will ensure them recognition in the scientific and academic environment.

The aim of the article is to answer the question whether doctoral students are aware of the importance of personal brand in building their recognition in the scientific and academic environment, and what actions they take in this regard. To achieve this aim it was decided to conduct a review of the literature as well as qualitative research in the form of individual in-depth interviews on a group of doctoral students of Doctoral Schools associated with Poznań research and teaching centres (N = 6). The author of the article argues that personal brand should be considered as a game changer in building recognition among doctoral students in the scientific and academic environment.

In addition to the traditional understanding of brand (i.e. as the embodiment of the name and features of products or services), the view has spread in the literature that a person can also be a brand (Chen and Chung, 2017, p. 24). The publication of an article under the title 'The Brand Called You' in 1997 initiated the era of the personal brand (Walczak-Skałicka, 2018, p. 271), with the concept being continually enriched with meaning and reinterpreted (Rangarajan et al., 2017), which is connected to a growth in interest in the concept observed in many areas of life (e.g. in recruitment, marketing and politics). However, due to the wide range of approaches and fields in which personal brand is used (Walczak-Skałicka, 2018, p. 270), presenting one definition for the concept that can be used both for the needs of research and business practice presents many difficulties. In the literature, personal brand is understood amongst others as:

- 1) the way a given person is viewed by others (e.g. Chen and Chung, 2017; Kondor et al., 2018; Lepsza and Makowski, 2019);
- 2) a set of certain individual features (Piotrowska, 2020; Mantulenko et al., 2020);
- 3) the promise of value (Wojtaszczyk and Maszewski, 2014; Amălăncei, 2015);
- 4) simply you yourself (Walczak-Skałicka, 2018; Kucharska and Mikołajczak, 2018).

For the needs of this article, it was assumed that personal brand will be defined within the scope of the second concept, that is as a set of associations generated by a given person (Parmentier et al., 2013, p. 375), the main aim of which is to differentiate the owner of the personal brand from other people (Peters, 1997).

According to the PWN Polish language dictionary, the concept 'recognizable' means easy to distinguish from others. Using its English equivalent, we think of something that can be identified as different – usually through the use of easily recognizable features or properties (Dictionary, n.d.) or that are easy to understand (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Meanwhile, a recognizable person is one who can be easily identified (Vocabulary.com Dictionary, 2023).

As Porczyński (2013, p. 309) claimed, the concept of recognition is neutral and can be treated from the perspective of numbers (e.g. a given person is recognized by a thousand people, which makes them more well-known than a person recognized by one hundred people). Meanwhile, synonyms for the concept of recognition include, for example, fame, popularity, visibility and media success (Piotrowska, 2017, p. 163). In this article, recognition will be analysed with regard to representatives of a specific group, i.e. groups of doctoral students of Doctoral Schools.

Meanwhile, the concept of *game changer* can be understood as a newly introduced element or factor which changes an existing situation or action in a significant way (Korektor Tekstu, 2022). A *game changer* is often perceived as a person who thanks to the power of their vision, will and personality changes the way in which the rest of us live, using the features of their personality and their attitude to change to achieve this. The concept of *game changer* can also be considered from the perspective of an organization implementing a strategy so as to ensure its position as a leader on the market. In doing so, the organization looks for new and innovative products and services, ways of operating, production methods and marketing strategies. However, irrespective of whether the concept of *game changer* is considered from the perspective of people or organizations, this type of change requires

both time, determination and commitment (Kenton, 2023). This article contributes to the existing literature by filling a research gap defined as a lack of research referring to the importance of personal brand in building recognition among doctoral students in the scientific and academic environment. In addition, the review did not identify publications in which personal brand was defined as a *game changer* in building recognition – as was also stated by the doctoral students studied. The article comprises three parts. The first part presents the results of a review of research relating to the concept of personal brand and recognition, as well as the relationships between them. The second part presents the research methodology, while the third presents and discusses the research results. The article concludes with a summary, together with conclusions, limitations and recommendations for further research.

2. Research Review

Although the relationships between personal brand and recognition are signalled in the literature, a review of research in this respect found that these require supplementing.

D. A. Aaker (1996), writing about the concept of personal brand capital, stated that it remains under the influence of a set of components connected to a recognised person, that is an awareness of their brand. Put differently, it is the strength to which a specific person is present in the mind of a potential recipient of their brand, and therefore the ability of a recipient to recognize another person in a given moment and situation. Here, it is necessary to mention the concept of *brand recognition*, which in marketing is understood as the ease of recognition and remembering a specific brand in the minds of target recipients. There are also views (see Hoeffler and Keller, 2003), that increasing brand recognition should be a priority in the building of the brand, thus increasing its distinctiveness and reach.

S. Gorbатов et al. (2021) introduce the concept of personal brand equity as 'the value of a personal brand perceived by an individual resulting from its attractiveness, distinctiveness and recognition in a given professional field' (p. 508). Meanwhile, in undertaking an attempt at operationalization of personal brand equity, the authors propose a 12-point scale covering three dimensions i.e. attractiveness, distinctiveness and brand recognition. It is also worth noting that building recognition is considered to be one of the stages of *personal branding*, alongside building reputation and acquiring clients (Trzeciak, 2018, pp. 8-9). In the opinion of K. Grochawiny (2022, p. 75), this increases the chances of achieving financial success, while fame comes as a 'side effect' of brand building.

In the literature there is also no lack of references to the concept of personal brand taking into consideration the specifics of the scientific and academic environment. For example, A. Adamski (2016) posed the question on the way in which scientists can build their personal brand, and whether they should lean more towards the role of celebrity or that of expert. Jillapalli and Jillapalli (2014) considered the impact of satisfaction, trust and involvement among students or graduates with regards to a professor on the value of this person's personal brand. Meanwhile, Khrulyov and Khrulyova (2020) made an attempt to determine the importance of *personal branding* for lecturers' professional success. Focusing exclusively on a group of doctoral students, the research, which still needs to be supplemented, focused on the importance of their personal brands, especially in the context of international recognition. It is worth adding that internet sources are dominated by publications on how personal brand can help in finding employment (The Leveraged PhD, no date) or in assisting a doctoral student to set up a company (Personal Finance for PhD's, 2021). There are also publications in which the authors advise doctoral students how to build their brand (Lucieband, n.d.).

However, in terms of the concept of recognition, it was found that research in this area relates mainly to celebrities (Piotrowska, 2017), bloggers (Bulaszewska, 2019), representatives of artistic professions (Marszał, 2022) and politicians (Leszczuk-Fiedziukiewicz, 2011). This is in line with research into personal brand conducted on representatives of the above-mentioned groups, but also lawyers (Muszyńska, 2022), journalists (Żyrek-Horodyska, 2019) and managers (Muszyńska, 2021). In the case of the representatives of the above-mentioned groups, image is their trademark, while the trust built

thanks to this among recipients affects, for example, the latter's subsequent purchasing decisions (Garwol, 2020, p. 49), or encourages them to imitate such representatives and change their patterns of behaviour (Domański, 2023). The concept of recognition also arouses interest from a legal perspective, especially in the context of image dissemination, where the basic criterion for considering the presentation of a given person as an image (and therefore the subject of legal protection) is their recognition by third parties (Czajkowski, 2019). Many studies into recognition on individual people focus on their face, which the authors of such research claim is decidedly better remembered than such information as the name and surname or profession of a given person (Panko, 2017). It is also worth noting, following K. Garwol (2020), that cyberspace is the ideal domain for generating revenue thanks to recognition (see celebrities). Meanwhile, an increasingly popular form of communication is *celebrity endorsement*, in which marketing messages are constructed with the use of people recognized in the environment, thus generating a message for recipients of the need for aspiration and imitation (Wawrzynkiewicz, 2017, p. 117). However, the question arises as to how recognition has been considered in relation to people active in the scientific and academic environment. It is international recognition, achieved thanks to visits to foreign institutions and the conducting of prestigious research, which is the key to the development of a scientific career (Duszczyk, 2022). In the literature there are also views that *open access* publication contributes to increasing recognition among scientists (while at the same time enabling the fight against plagiarism and contributing to an increase in citations – also important for publishers) (Gruhn, 2013), while high quality research also considerably impacts the recognition of academic centres and the financing of further research, and thus the development of the discipline (Zakrajewski and Warchał, 2021, p. 126). However, with regards to doctoral students at the initial stage of their scientific career path, in-depth research has not been conducted identifying the need for them to build their recognition in the scientific and academic environment. Meanwhile, there are also opinions that the aim of the organization of education within Doctoral Schools is in fact increasing the recognition of doctoral students (Mikołajczyk and Naskręcki, 2017, p. 108).

The author of this article undertook earlier an attempt to determine the importance of personal brand in increasing the recognition of doctoral students in the international scientific environment, conducting qualitative research among representatives of doctoral students from European higher education institutions participating in the 1st EIBA Summer School. The results showed that doctoral students understand the concept of personal brand mainly in the category of marketing, while at the same time expressing the opinion that it could take on greater importance for them only after achieving the title of doctor. The consequence of such an approach is to postpone actions related to building personal brand, and is connected to depriving oneself of the chance to obtain positive recognition and attractiveness in the international environment. In this sense, it is not only the doctoral students themselves who suffer, but also their scientific supervisors, promoters and the scientific and educational centres they represent in general. This article is a continuation of the above-mentioned research, and relates this time to the situation in Poland.

3. Research Methodology

To achieve the adopted aim it was decided to conduct qualitative research in the form of individual in-depth interviews (IDI) among doctoral students of Doctoral Schools associated with Poznań research and teaching centres (N = 6). Such association is understood to be ongoing education, during participation in the research, in the first, second, third or fourth year of a Doctoral School founded on the 1st of October 2019 on the basis of the bill on higher education and science (Journal of Laws 2018, pos. 1668 with later amendments). According to data from the Information Processing Centre at the National Research Institute, collected via the POL-on system, in 2022 there were 1386 doctoral students (15,297 people in Poland as a whole) (Radon, no date). Table 1 presents a summary of the data characterising the research sample.

Table 1. Research sample characteristics

Category	Characteristic	Number
Gender	female	2
	male	4
Age	25-30 years	3
	31-36 years	2
	37-42 years	1
Year of education in Doctoral School	first	3
	second	1
	third	1
	fourth	1
Education programme attended at the Doctoral School	Management and quality studies	4
	Economics and finance	2
Activity in addition to education at the Doctoral School during participation in the research	Professional work	3
	Teaching at an educational establishment	2
	Work experience abroad	1

Source: own elaboration on the basis of own research.

The justification for selecting IDIs was the possibility to obtain an in-depth insight into the concept of personal brand and recognition, which are relatively poorly described in the Polish literature and are difficult to observe in the population. An additional argument for the choice of IDIs was the selection of the research sample – doctoral students are people who are active in many fields (e.g. combining education in a Doctoral School with professional work), and this was a means for dealing with the problem of gathering them together in one place, while at the same time enabling them to freely express their thoughts without being subject to external influences from the surroundings.

Purposeful selection of the research sample was applied due to the author's knowledge of the study population (the author of this article is also a doctoral student at the Doctoral School) and the adopted research aim. Recruitment of interlocutors was conducted directly, with the use of a personalized email inviting them to participate in the research and offering a written confirmation of their involvement in the form of a certificate. It was assumed that exclusively doctoral students studying at the Doctoral School would be included in the research, although this would exclude doctoral students completing an implementation doctoral programme and those following doctoral studies. As a result, interviews were conducted with two women and four men aged 25-39 years old. In qualitative research, such a number is not considered a fundamental error, as there is well documented data that saturation can be achieved with 6-12 cases (Pasikowski, 2015). The author of the article took the arbitrary decision to achieve saturation at six cases, being aware however of the limited possibilities for formulating conclusions. Bearing this limitation in mind, as well as those related to the selection of research method (including the low degree of anonymity of the collected data, the time-consuming nature of the research, and the tendency of the interlocutors to diverge from the topic of the research), particular attention was paid to a high degree of reliability at every stage of the research process (i.e. during research design, sample selection, interviewing, as well as collecting and analysing the empirical material).

It was decided to conduct standardised interviews, asking the interlocutors the same open questions in identical order. The research was conducted using communication tools, i.e. MS teams and Zoom, which are used by doctoral students on a daily basis and with which they are well-versed in the functionality. Each of the interviews consisted of four parts, that is: metrics, a part relating to the understanding of the concept of personal brand with specific reference to the scientific and academic environment, a part relating to the understanding of the concept of recognition with specific reference to the scientific and academic environment, and a part relating to the importance of personal brand in building recognition in the scientific and academic environment.

The interviews lasted from between 30 and 50 minutes and were recorded (with the interlocutors' consent). The interviews were conducted between June and October 2022. Conducting the interviews among a small group of doctoral students made it possible for the author herself to collect the empirical material and carry out its further analysis, which is particularly important for the development of the abilities of people at the beginning of their scientific career path. Transcriptions were made on the basis of the audio recordings (a maximum of one week after each of the interviews), while the 'line by line' method was chosen for coding the responses as the interlocutors demonstrated a strong tendency to diverge from the subject of discussion. Codes were generated with the aim of preserving the most precise and the simplest responses, and to avoid the author's own judgments. Initial topic threads were identified at the code generation stage, with specific codes subsequently assigned to appropriate topical threads, which were used as titles for the subsequent sub-chapters of the article. Each of the threads was described on the basis of the collective research material and was in part commented upon (Douglas et al., 2009, pp. 427-429). All the information obtained during the interviews was anonymized and used exclusively for the aims of the research, of which the interlocutors were assured.

4. Research Results

4.1. Understanding of the Concept of Personal Brand Taking Into Account the Specifics of the Scientific and Academic Environment

From the perspective of the topic of the research, it was important that each of the interlocutors declared that at least once in their personal or professional life they had come across the concept of personal brand and were therefore able to undertake its definition. The responses were dominated by those indicating the marketing nature of the concept e.g. "personal brand is the effect of self-promotional activities – more or less conscious, I mean where we appear, what others say about us, how we present ourselves" (woman, 25 years old), and "my brand is my professional calling card, but also a marketing strategy that I use both on social media and in the real world" (man, 26 years old).

In the remaining definitions, the interlocutors drew attention to the need to: 1) show an authentic 'I', 2) openly communicate ones values, skills, distinguishing features, 3) act consistently in line with our 'modus operandi', and 4) deliver value and 'sell' it to interested people/ entities. However, the interlocutors noted that in contrast to other concepts in the literature, in the case of personal brand there lacks a clear definition and precise indications of the theoretical foundations for research in this respect.

In terms of personal brand itself, at times interlocutors used it interchangeably with the concept of *personal branding*. In the literature also it is indicated that this is a common error made during translation (Gorbatov, 2018). However, these concepts cannot be used interchangeably as personal brand is the end effect of the process of *personal branding*. It is also worth noting that the research participants had the opportunity to encounter the concept of personal brand in various circumstances, mainly professional e.g. during training sessions organized at universities, workshops taking place in the workplace, or online business courses. Interestingly, one of the respondents stated that she "had the opportunity to read about personal brand in several articles – these were always papers accompanied by research, and therefore were all the more interesting for me" (woman, 33 years old).

Aware of the specifics of the scientific and academic environment, the interlocutors noted many benefits from having an attractive personal brand e.g. 1) greater interest among students during the selection of lectures, 2) increased opportunities for entering into cooperation with a research institute or other scientific body, and 3) involvement in an international research project. However, one of the respondents turned out to be critical with regard to personal brand, stating that "good research can defend itself, I have no need to publicize my achievements and promote myself" (man, 34 years old).

4.2. Understanding of the Concept of Recognition Taking Into Account the Specifics of the Scientific and Academic Environment

The interlocutors understood the concept of recognition in a very similar manner to one another – as the ease or skill of distinguishing or differentiating oneself from others. There were also statements that “you are recognisable when somebody on the street asks you for a photo or an autograph, and does not get your surname wrong” (woman, 25 years old), and that “recognition guarantees you a place in the *top of mind* among a large group of strangers” (man, 26 years old).

The respondents were also asked what benefits recognition brings in their opinion. Their responses included 1) obtaining financial benefits (through advertising, sponsoring, or the role of brand ambassador), 2) making new business contacts and developing interesting cooperation, 3) raising one self-esteem, and 4) reaching a wider audience with your own mission/ message. However, the interlocutors noted that recognition is linked to many threats, including 1) coming under greater pressure from the surroundings, 2) being exposed to unjustified criticism, and 3) being denied or having a limited right to privacy.

The research participants were a group related to the scientific and academic environment, and were therefore asked during the discussion what influenced recognition in this environment. “In this case it depends on what subject areas you deal with, what I mean is whether they are controversial, or whether you conduct research in a very narrow field which is actually of interest to people in general” (woman, 33 years old). Meanwhile, one of the respondents stated that “scientific recognition depends on which journals you publish in, at which important conferences you appear, and with which foreign professors you cooperate – especially in research projects” (man, 29 years old). On the other hand, there was the opinion that “you can talk about good and bad recognition – in the first case, for such a person as me what is important is the grants obtained, the awards or the interviews conducted with reliable sources, or in the latter case, for example, committing plagiarism or in the case of teaching grossly unfair assessment of students or unethical behaviour with regards to them” (man, 34 years old).

On the one hand, recognition for the interlocutors meant 1) the popularity of their lectures reflected in the number of students signed up to them, 2) proposals for interesting scientific and research cooperation, and 3) ease in 'acquiring' publication citations. On the other hand, recognition was linked to 1) the need to dedicate time to promoting oneself and one's activities – especially on the internet, 2) being exposed to criticism, and 3) distancing oneself from the essence of one's work in favour of undertaking actions that attract social approval and popularity.

4.3. The Importance of Personal Brand in Building Recognition in the Scientific and Academic Environment

The interlocutors perceived the connection between personal brand and recognition, indicating amongst others that “personal brand is built in order to increase recognition” (woman, 32 years old), or “one of the derivatives of personal brand, if it is built consistently and clearly communicated, is greater recognition” (man, 33 years old). On the other hand, there were also opinions (in line with views presented in the literature) that recognition is a component of personal brand, and not a result of it being built. “For me, my own brand consists of recognition, reputation, trust and how I behave” (man, 39 years old).

Referring to the scientific and academic environment, the introducers noted that “building an attractive personal brand that is in harmony with yourself and your values, but also based on professionalism, is particularly helpful in increasing recognition in the environment of professionals and scientists” (woman, 33 years old). In addition, the respondents indicated that “recognizable scientists, partly thanks to their involvement in creating their own personal brands, have a greater impact on shaping the world around us” (man, 26 years old).

In the opinion of the respondents, a personal brand dedicated to building recognition in the scientific and academic environment should: 1) be built in connection with the scientific achievements of its owner, 2) be an inspiration for students or less experienced employees, 3) be associated with substantiveness, professionalism and high ethical standards, and 4) deliver new possibilities for professional development. However, the interlocutors noted that obtaining respect or recognition is not a direct aim of the scientific activity they undertake. Instead, it was important for them to contribute to the development of their field of science and “that my surname was associated at least with the field in which I conduct research - of course very positively would be best” (woman, 25 years old).

As regards branding activity that the interlocutors already take or plan to take that would contribute to building or increasing their recognition in the scientific and academic environment, these were dominated by activity online. They consisted mainly of the publication of partial research results on LinkedIn, Twitter, ResearchGate and Academia, but also included active remote participation in international scientific conferences, initiating an international project or research, as well as setting up and actively conducting a popular science blog. Taking into account the need to maintain professionalism, while on the other hand the need to remain authentic, respondents drew attention to the fact that “you shouldn't put your name to anything of low quality, and you should always consider the consequences of your actions – in our environment it's easy to lose your good name, and rebuilding the trust that comes with it is decidedly more difficult” (woman, 33 years old).

In the final part of the discussion, it was asked whether personal brand can be considered a *game changer* in building the recognition of doctoral students in the scientific and academic environment. Despite the fact that only one of the interlocutors decidedly agreed with this statement, the majority recognized the importance of an attractive, consistently built personal brand in building one's recognition (best if begun during one's Bachelor's or Master's degrees). There was also the opinion that “even if I don't stay at the university after my studies, the benefit will be that it will be easier for me to find work, for example in a research institute” (man, 26 years old), and that “it is easy to build recognition in Poland – even without engaging too much effort in creating one's brand, but it is decidedly more difficult to become a respected scientist on a European scale” (woman, 33 years old).

Personal brand was perceived as a game changer mainly in the context of applying for positions at foreign universities and for scientific grants. On the other hand, it was noted that such activity contributes to increasing recognition in the scientific and academic environment, and also assists in obtaining financing for research activity or for conducting research in international teams. The considerations in this research can be summarized by a statement from one of the doctoral students, who said that “if you are not good at what you do, you don't develop, if you are not up to date with what is being written about in your field, if you don't participate in foreign conferences or you simply don't make an effort at your own university, even the best but artificial personal brand built in a vacuum will not help you to be recognizable” (man, 39 years old).

4.4. Discussion

This research is a response to the need to assess the importance of personal brand among doctoral students – especially in the context of building their recognition in the scientific and academic environment.

The doctoral students studied treated activity in the field of personal brand as individual actions consisting of their personal efforts and successes, which is in line with the views presented in the literature (e.g. Muszyńska and Fryczyńska, 2021). Personal brand itself is mainly defined from the perspective of the individual (Walczak-Skałocka, 2018), which was also confirmed in the responses of the participants. According to M. Szpunar (2017), academic employees are narcissistic people, however this view was not reflected in the research results. Of interest is the fact that understanding personal brand through the lens of possibilities for self-promotion and marketing, which was noted in

particular by the doctoral students, is also found in the literature (e.g. Smoleń-Wawrzusiszyn, 2019). The respondents answers show a tendency towards building the brand of an expert and not a celebrity.

However, in terms of recognition, the respondents noted both its advantages and disadvantages, underlining in this context the importance of online activity - especially publishing articles or participating remotely in scientific conferences. This can be explained by the fact that the research participants were mainly representatives of generation Y, the members of which are at ease with new technologies and actively use digital media (Spadło, 2023). The international recognition mentioned by Kłos (2022) was not however a subject of particular interest among the study respondents. The research shows that Polish scientists are decidedly less internationalized with regard to research than the European average (Kwiek, 2015, p. 66). Meanwhile, manifested online scientific activity would most certainly allow them to increase their international recognition.

Although in the literature it is indicated that the aim of organizing education within Doctoral Schools is to increase doctoral students' recognition, none of the respondents referred to the role that is played by this institution. The respondents take care themselves of both their personal brand and their recognition in the scientific and academic environment. Meanwhile, in many cases it is Doctoral Schools that provide doctoral students with financing for research, scientific work experience and publications, thereby shaping the foundations of their recognition.

The summary and conclusions from the literature review and the qualitative research among doctoral students achieved the aim of the article and provided interesting conclusions.

Firstly, it was found that despite increasing interest in personal brand itself and the fact that the concept of recognition (similarly to personal brand) is considered within the scope of many scientific fields (e.g. marketing and psychology), detailed research has not been conducted into the relationships between the concepts with regards to groups of academic employees. Very often, doctoral students only undertake conscious action at this stage of their education with regards to building their personal brands, seeking research gaps that they could fill and areas in which they could become experts, thus building their recognition in the scientific and academic environment.

Secondly, the interlocutors were able to define both the concept of personal brand and that of recognition, but none of them stated directly that the principal aim of building or maintaining their personal brand is the need to achieve recognition. For the doctoral students, personal brand was a positive feature in the context of building the above-mentioned recognition, but it cannot unequivocally be called a *game changer*.

Thirdly, the doctoral students were able to indicate many activities they could undertake (and do undertake) to build their recognition in the scientific and academic environment, but these are mainly online activities. It is also interesting that they did not perceive the role of Doctoral Schools in the context of building their recognition, although these institutions offer highly varied support for their careers (e.g. participation in NAWA programs and grant competitions). It should therefore be considered whether the support offered by Doctoral Schools is appropriate to the needs of doctoral students, and what barriers there are to doctoral students making use of such support.

Undoubtedly, a limitation of the research is the fact that the research group comprised only six doctoral students of doctoral schools associated with Poznań research and teaching centres. The research participants were a homogeneous group, which considerably limited the possibilities for drawing conclusions. Also, the selected research method (IDIs) involved many limitations, as mentioned earlier in the article. A key aspect was that due to the fact that the interviews were conducted online, it was impossible to verify the respondents external surroundings during the discussions, as well as to eliminate all the technical problems that occurred.

Since the research was conducted only on a group of doctoral students from Doctoral Schools completing their doctorates within a general academic profile, in the future it should be considered conducting interviews among doctoral students from the implementation profile who are building their scientific

brand based on professional work activity. It would seem justified to extend the scope of the research to include other scientific and academic centres in Poland, as it should be taken into account that Doctoral Schools have a certain degree of freedom in the organizing of education for doctoral students – and the forms of support provided for them may therefore be shaped in various ways.

As far as personal brand is concerned, the author of the article sees the need to supplement educational programmes for doctoral students with additional workshops in building and managing a personal brand in the scientific and academic environment. Meanwhile, in terms of building recognition, it is recommended that doctoral students familiarize themselves to a greater degree with the possibilities offered by Doctoral Schools. They should focus in particular on international opportunities, not limiting themselves to remote participation in scientific conferences, and should appreciate the importance of the accompanying opportunities for networking.

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Marka osobista jako *game changer* w budowaniu rozpoznawalności doktorantów w środowisku naukowym i akademickim

Streszczenie: Pomimo iż marka osobista była badana w odniesieniu do aktywności doktorantów, a rozpoznawalność uznawana jest za klucz do rozwoju kariery naukowej (Duszczyk, 2022), w literaturze brakuje konkretnych badań dotyczących relacji między tymi pojęciami. Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie, czy doktoranci są świadomi znaczenia marki osobistej w budowaniu swojej rozpoznawalności w środowisku naukowym i akademickim oraz jakie działania podejmują w tym zakresie. Aby osiągnąć ten cel, zdecydowano się przeprowadzić badanie jakościowe w formie indywidualnych wywiadów pogłębionych (IDI) na grupie doktorantów ze szkół doktorskich (N = 6). W rezultacie stwierdzono, że doktoranci dostrzegają znaczenie marki osobistej, ale raczej nie uważają jej za czynnik zmieniający zasady gry w budowaniu swojej rozpoznawalności.

Słowa kluczowe: marka osobista, *game changer*, rozpoznawalność, doktoranci
