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Designing a Personal Branding Model for Managers in Governmental Organizations

ABSTRACT

Given the importance of personal branding as a key managerial competency, the purpose of this article was to propose a personal branding model for managers and to evaluate it in the Gilan Province Tax Administration. Since the aim of this study was to expand existing knowledge on personal branding and to apply it within the organization, the research method was developmental–applied in terms of purpose, and a mixed-methods design in terms of data nature. The statistical population in the qualitative phase consisted of professional and academic experts, while in the quantitative phase it included all heads, managers, and experts with more than 10 years of work experience in the Gilan Province Tax Administration. First, in the qualitative phase, data obtained from literature review and expert interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, resulting in the extraction of dimensions, components, and indicators of managers’ personal branding across 5 dimensions, 14 components, and 45 indicators. Then, in the quantitative phase, the model developed in the qualitative stage was evaluated in the Gilan Province Tax Administration using structural equation modeling in three steps: measurement model fit, structural model fit, and overall model fit, employing PLS software. Following the obtained results, the current status of each dimension, component, and indicator in the model within the Gilan Province Tax Administration was determined and reported. Managers in governmental organizations can use the findings of this study to develop and strengthen their personal brands.

Keywords: Personal branding, personality traits, behavioral traits, social traits, value traits, professional–functional competencies

Introduction

Personal branding has become a strategic and influential concept in contemporary organizational environments, especially as managers increasingly operate within competitive, networked, and highly visible professional landscapes. The idea that individuals must intentionally cultivate and manage their professional identity gained initial prominence through arguments emphasizing that “the brand called you” represents a transformation in the way individuals present themselves and are perceived within their careers [1]. Since then, personal branding has evolved from a simple metaphor to a multidimensional academic construct that encompasses psychological, communicative, behavioral, and strategic dimensions. The acceleration of digital communication and the expansion of knowledge-based industries have further amplified the importance of personal branding for managers, who must now differentiate themselves not only through their technical competencies but through their perceived authenticity, values, and relational skills [2–4].

In the modern era, the visibility and accessibility created by digital platforms have fundamentally reshaped the mechanisms through which personal branding occurs. The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has enabled managers to craft

narratives, present expertise, connect with audiences, and construct a professional identity beyond organizational boundaries [5]. These digital transformations have increased the strategic value of personal storytelling, identity curation, and consistent brand expression, reinforcing earlier perspectives that personal branding is not optional for individuals seeking influence and recognition but a requirement within competitive professional ecosystems [6, 7]. Because visibility is now an essential form of currency in professional advancement, many studies argue that managers must actively engage in digital presence-building to communicate their leadership identity and expertise [8, 9]. Online platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for managers to position themselves as thought leaders, expand professional networks, and create lasting impressions among internal and external stakeholders [10, 11].

Beyond the technological dimension, personal branding encompasses a broad set of internal and external characteristics, including personality traits, behaviors, values, skills, and professional capabilities. Research consistently demonstrates that personality-related attributes—such as authenticity, charisma, ethical commitment, integrity, optimism, and reliability—form the core of an individual's brand essence [12, 13]. These traits contribute to the emotional and psychological resonance that stakeholders associate with a managerial figure. Similarly, behavioral characteristics such as communication style, interpersonal sensitivity, cooperation, conflict management, and leadership behaviors represent observable manifestations of the personal brand and influence how managers are perceived in day-to-day interactions [14-16].

Another essential dimension of personal branding lies in value orientation. Studies highlight that ethical values, justice-orientation, faith-based commitments, and humanistic principles shape the trustworthiness of a brand and provide the moral foundation upon which professional credibility is built [17-19]. Values not only guide managerial decision-making but also affect how followers judge authenticity and consistency—two crucial attributes in personal branding frameworks. Research demonstrates that managers who successfully integrate their values into their public identity create stronger and more coherent brands that resonate more deeply with organizational members and external audiences [20, 21].

Professional competencies are another core pillar of managerial branding. These include technical skills, decision-making ability, emotional intelligence, specialized expertise, and problem-solving capacities [22, 23]. When communicated effectively, these competencies strengthen perceptions of capability and reinforce a manager's authority. Scholars argue that the professional brand is not merely built upon what individuals claim about themselves but on demonstrable evidence of competence, performance, and contribution [4, 24]. Therefore, integrating professional achievements with the narrative elements of personal branding enhances perceived legitimacy and career advantage [25, 26].

The literature also emphasizes that personal branding does not occur in isolation from the organizational environment. Culture, leadership norms, communication patterns, and institutional expectations strongly influence the branding opportunities available to managers [6, 27]. Organizations increasingly recognize the strategic value of managerial branding because highly branded managers serve as symbolic assets, enhancing institutional reputation, shaping organizational culture, and improving stakeholder relations [11, 28]. Personal branding practices among managers create stronger alignment between individual and organizational values and contribute to employer branding strategies that improve talent attraction, public trust, and workforce engagement [16, 29]. In this context, the branding of managers is both an individual activity and an organizational resource.

Despite growing interest, several gaps remain in the scholarly understanding of managerial personal branding. Many existing studies focus broadly on employee branding or on branding in the context of celebrities, athletes, or digital

influencers rather than on managerial roles that involve authority, responsibility, and symbolic power [12, 18]. Further, research often isolates specific dimensions—such as skills, personality, or digital presence—without offering integrative models that capture the complexity of managerial identity [30, 31]. Scholars argue that managerial personal branding must be conceptualized as a holistic framework that reflects interactions between internal traits, observable behaviors, professional competencies, social presence, and value systems [21, 24].

A recurring concern in the literature is the absence of standardized frameworks for evaluating personal brand equity. Recent research highlights the need for measurement tools that systematically assess managers' brand strength, consistency, credibility, and distinctiveness [32]. Theoretical refinement is hindered by the lack of unified definitions of personal branding constructs, making it difficult for organizations to implement evidence-based branding development programs. Furthermore, contextual studies suggest that personal branding is shaped by cultural, societal, and political environments, indicating that branding models must be adapted to fit local expectations and norms [19, 33]. Studies in Iran, for instance, demonstrate that sociocultural expectations influence how managers construct their identity and how their credibility is assessed by different audiences [16, 18]. These findings argue for the development of contextually grounded personal branding frameworks that incorporate local cultural values, organizational realities, and national patterns of professional behavior.

Given these theoretical and practical developments, the importance of designing a comprehensive model of managerial personal branding becomes increasingly clear. A robust model provides managers with a structured understanding of the attributes that influence their perceived identity and equips organizations with tools to support leadership development and succession planning [23, 29]. Furthermore, the integration of digital identity management, value expression, organizational behavior, and professional competencies reflects the complex interplay of factors that shape a manager's influence and effectiveness [15, 25]. Personal branding has become a powerful mechanism through which managers enhance their visibility, articulate their unique strengths, and communicate value propositions that support organizational success.

In light of these considerations and the extensive yet fragmented body of existing research, the present study addresses the need for a comprehensive, multidimensional, and contextually sensitive personal branding model specifically for managers. The aim of this study is to design and validate a comprehensive model of personal branding for managers.

Methodology

Since the objective of this study was to develop existing knowledge in the field of managers' personal branding and to apply and test it within a governmental organization, the research is developmental–applied in terms of purpose. Additionally, based on the time of implementation, this study is cross-sectional, meaning that the data were collected within a specific time frame. The unit of analysis is the individual, and organizational managers were the subjects of investigation. Moreover, considering the nature of the data, the study is classified as mixed-methods, combining both qualitative and quantitative data.

In the qualitative phase, theoretical foundations and prior studies were reviewed, and interviews with experts were conducted for the purpose of model development. The statistical population in this phase included scientific literature and both organizational and academic experts. Academic experts were selected based on criteria such as holding a PhD in Public Administration with a specialization in Human Resource Management or Organizational Behavior, having at least 10 years of teaching experience in this field, holding an academic ranking of assistant professor or higher, and having scholarly outputs

such as books, research projects, or scientific–research articles related to the study topic. Organizational experts were selected based on criteria such as holding a master’s degree or higher, having a field of study relevant to their job, and possessing at least 20 years of work experience in that position.

In the quantitative phase, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to examine, validate, and test the proposed model within the selected sample. The statistical population in this phase included all heads, managers, deputies, and experts (with at least 10 years of work experience) at the Gilan Province Tax Administration, totaling 159 individuals. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, 112 participants were selected through convenience sampling.

To achieve the study’s objectives, in the first step, using thematic analysis, the managerial personal branding pattern in governmental organizations was extracted. In the second step, the measurement model, structural model, and overall model were fitted using partial least squares structural equation modeling with PLS software. Finally, in the last step, the dimensions, components, and indicators identified for the managerial personal branding model in governmental organizations were ranked within the Gilan Province Tax Administration.

Findings and Results

In this study, thematic analysis was applied to analyze qualitative data obtained from texts and semi-structured in-depth interviews, with the aim of designing a personal branding model for managers in governmental organizations and identifying its dimensions, components, and indicators. The thematic analysis process, based on coding themes, is explained below.

There is no single universal method for coding in qualitative research. In this study, the Attride-Stirling (2001) approach—one of the most widely used coding methods in thematic analysis—was employed. This approach is based on constructing a thematic network. A thematic network consists of three categories of codes and concepts: (1) basic themes, (2) organizing themes, and (3) global themes. The method includes the following stages:

• Data review:

In the present study, theoretical foundations were reviewed to collect qualitative data, and texts and documents related to the research topic were carefully examined. Reviewing literature and scientific documents led to the formation of an initial conceptual model and supported the design of more detailed interview questions. As noted earlier, to obtain additional and updated data, experts were also considered as the qualitative statistical population, and expert identification continued through purposive judgment sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved. In total, 16 individuals were selected as the sample and were interviewed through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. During the interview process, the research topic and interview dimensions were clarified for the experts. Before conducting interviews, an interview protocol was prepared, and the main questions to be asked were formulated. These questions, which could be further divided into more specific questions during the interview if necessary, included the following:

- Please define personal branding from your perspective.
- What activities and actions are required for personal branding?
- What characteristics do brand-oriented managers in executive agencies possess?
- What methods are effective for developing and enhancing managers’ personal branding?
- What priorities should brand-oriented managers have?

- What are the behavioral characteristics of brand-oriented managers?
- What are the personality characteristics of brand-oriented managers?
- What specialized competencies should brand-oriented managers possess?
- How do brand-oriented managers differ from others in society in terms of their approach?
- What local and cultural characteristics should managers in Iran's executive agencies possess, considering national conditions?

• Coding the data:

In the next stage, the researcher repeatedly read the data to become fully familiar with them and then generated initial codes from the collected data. These codes represent features that are meaningful or interesting to the researcher. The initial codes and key points in the data constitute the basic themes, which serve as the foundation for constructing higher-level themes. In this stage, a total of 71 codes were identified; after removing duplicate codes and merging similar ones, 45 basic themes were obtained. Since no new codes emerged in the last two interviews, theoretical saturation was achieved and the interview process was concluded.

• Extracting themes:

At this stage, initial codes and key textual points from interviews and documents were merged and synthesized to derive organizing and global themes. Organizing themes are developed by combining and summarizing basic themes (initial codes). The researchers created a set of themes and then refined them. Through an iterative process between the text and the subthemes, using a deductive approach and repeated review and refinement, the global and core themes were extracted. As a result, the data were placed into coherent and logical categories.

• Preparing the final report:

The thematic structure and categories, along with descriptions of coding stages, were presented and explained. Examples of the data were provided, and the analytical results were linked to the research questions and the relevant theoretical foundations. In this way, the basic, organizing, and global themes related to managers' personal branding were identified.

Figure 1

MAXQDA Software Output in The Theme Extraction Stage

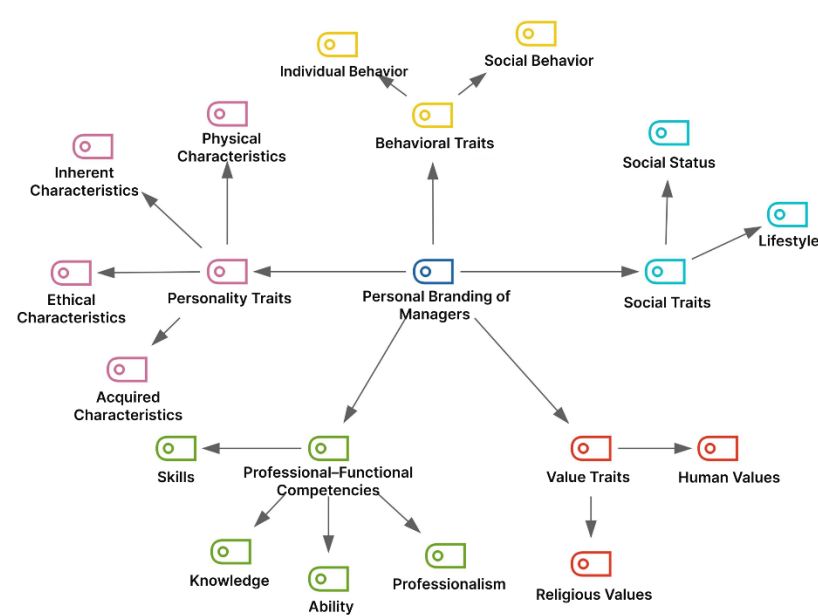
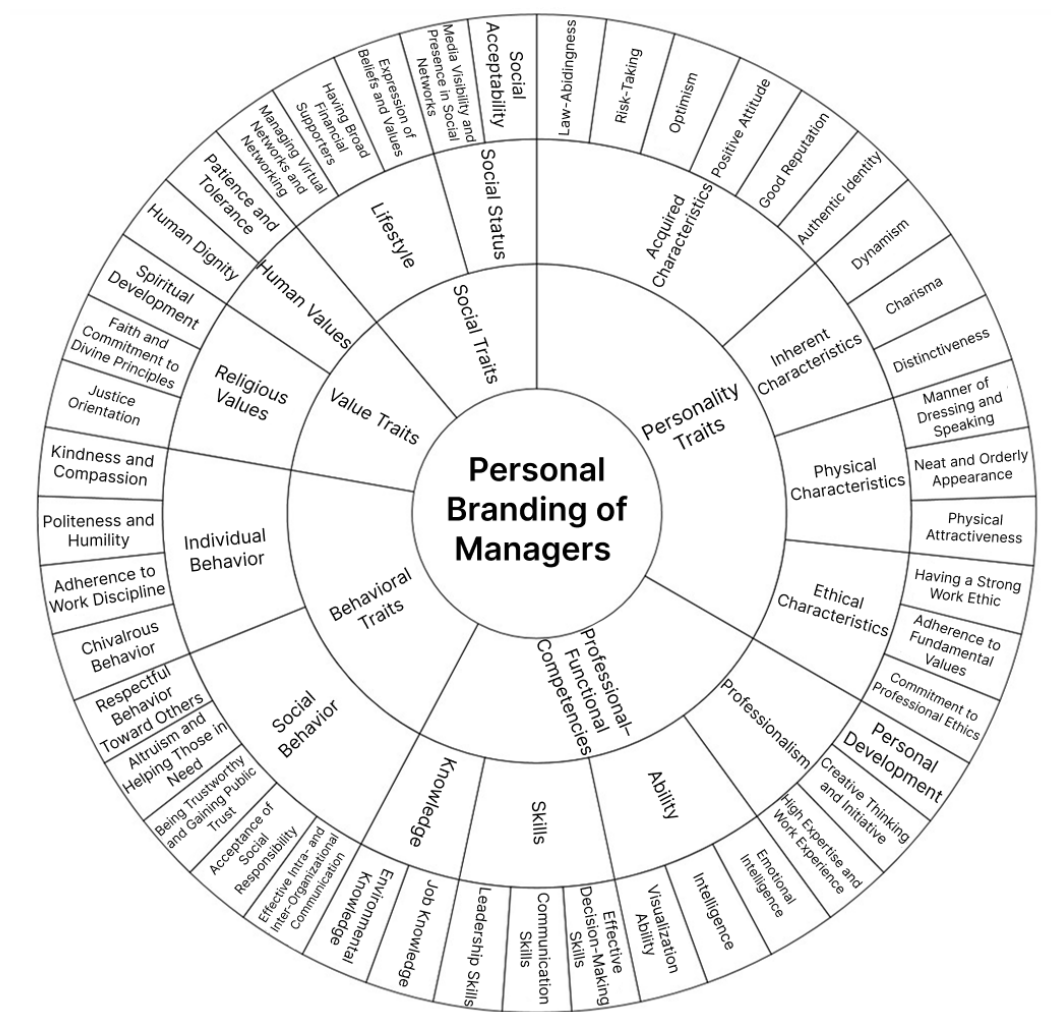


Table 1*Results of Thematic Analysis*

Basic Themes (Concepts)	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
Commitment to professional ethics; adherence to fundamental values; having a strong work ethic	Ethical characteristics	Personality traits
Physical attractiveness; neat and orderly appearance; manner of dressing and speaking	Physical characteristics	
Authentic identity; good reputation; positive attitude; optimism and positive thinking; risk-taking; law-abidingness	Acquired characteristics	
Distinctiveness; charisma; dynamism	Inherent characteristics	
Kindness and compassion; politeness and humility; adherence to work discipline; chivalrous behavior	Individual behavior	Behavioral traits
Respectful behavior toward others; altruism and helping those in need; being trustworthy and gaining public trust; acceptance of social responsibility; effective intra- and inter-organizational communication	Social behavior	
Social acceptability; media visibility and presence in social networks	Social status	Social traits
Expression of beliefs and values; having broad financial supporters; managing virtual networks and networking	Lifestyle	
Environmental knowledge; job knowledge	Knowledge	Professional–functional competencies
Leadership skills; communication skills; effective decision-making skills	Skills	
Visualization ability; intelligence; emotional intelligence	Ability	
High expertise and experience; creative thinking and initiative; personal growth and development	Professionalism	
Having patience and tolerance; possessing human dignity	Human values	Value traits
Spiritual development; faith and commitment to divine principles; justice orientation	Religious values	

Figure 2*Final Model of Managers' Personal Branding in Governmental Organizations*

To evaluate the model in the Gilan Province Tax Administration, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used as described below.

Structural equation modeling using the partial least squares approach consists of the following three main stages:

In this model, reliability (examining Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho_A reliability), convergent validity (examining the average variance extracted (AVE)), and discriminant validity (examining the Fornell–Larcker matrix) are assessed.

Table (2) presents the results of the measurement model evaluation. It should be noted that the acceptable numerical value for factor loadings is 0.40 (Holland, 1999), and for AVE is 0.50. Additionally, acceptable values for Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho_A reliability are 0.70 and above.

Table 2

Convergent Validity and Reliability Assessment of Research Variables

Latent Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Human values	0.732	0.737	0.810	0.681
Religious values	0.777	0.747	0.779	0.551
Personal branding	0.949	0.957	0.953	0.525
Ability	0.855	0.856	0.912	0.776
Social status	0.748	0.783	0.848	0.736
Professionalism	0.758	0.783	0.807	0.584
Ethical characteristics	0.712	0.757	0.838	0.638
Knowledge	0.719	0.720	0.840	0.724
Social behavior	0.743	0.842	0.836	0.542
Individual behavior	0.716	0.743	0.774	0.570
Lifestyle	0.728	0.729	0.802	0.575
Professional–functional competencies	0.849	0.870	0.882	0.516
Skills	0.777	0.788	0.871	0.692
Social traits	0.753	0.763	0.835	0.506
Value traits	0.752	0.782	0.836	0.514
Acquired characteristics	0.760	0.807	0.838	0.581
Inherent characteristics	0.764	0.717	0.743	0.505
Behavioral traits	0.765	0.847	0.828	0.591
Personality traits	0.894	0.906	0.911	0.514
Physical characteristics	0.731	0.768	0.764	0.527

Given the results in Table (2), since AVE values exceed 0.50 and Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho_A values exceed 0.70, the constructs' reliability and convergent validity are confirmed.

Table (3) shows the Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity results for the model constructs. It should be noted that the requirement for approval of discriminant validity through the Fornell–Larcker criterion is that the numerical values on the diagonal must be greater than the other matrix values. According to the results in Table (3), discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 3

Discriminant Validity Assessment for Model Dimensions

Personality	Behavioral	Value	Social	Professional–functional	Personal Branding
–					
0.72	–				Personal Branding
0.72	0.68	–			Professional–functional
0.71	0.55	0.70	–		Social
0.72	0.48	0.56	0.71	–	Value
0.77	0.55	0.70	0.66	0.71	–
0.72	0.62	0.60	0.60	0.62	0.63

The second stage of evaluating the research model is assessing the structural model using model quality indicators (coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2)), as well as path coefficients and their significance.

The first criterion in evaluating the structural model is the significance t-values between latent variables. By running the bootstrapping command in PLS, these values appear on the model's paths. If t-values exceed 1.96, the relationships between constructs are confirmed at the 95% confidence level.

Figure 3

Managers' Personal Branding Model (Significance Mode)



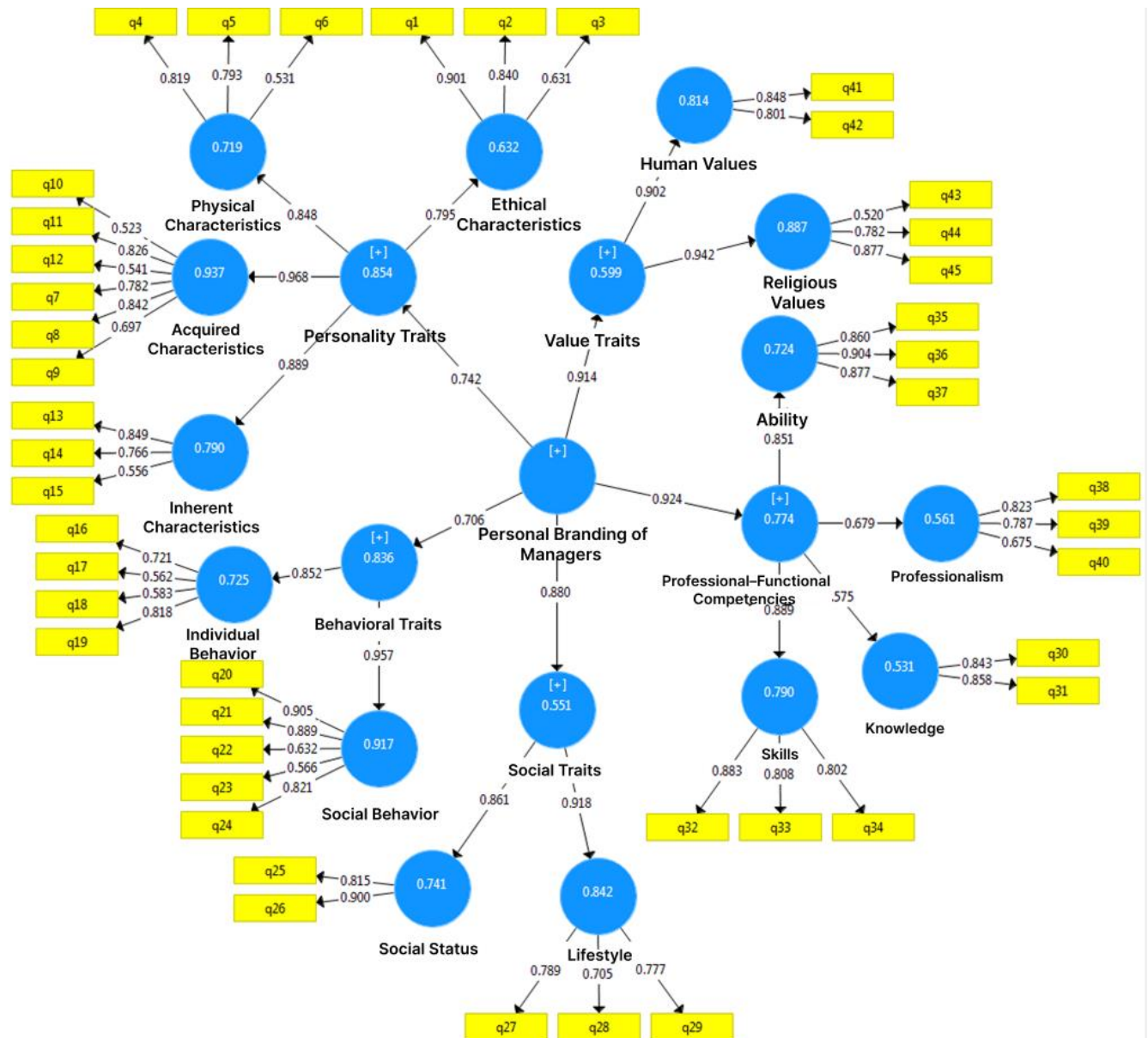
In Figure (3), the t-values for the structural model are shown. Since all path values exceed 1.96, the structural model is confirmed.

The second criterion for evaluating the structural model is assessing the R^2 values for endogenous latent variables. R^2 indicates the percentage of variance in the endogenous variable explained by exogenous variables. R^2 values are computed

only for endogenous constructs, while exogenous constructs have R^2 values of zero. According to Chin (1998), R^2 values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, moderate, and strong, respectively.

Figure 4

Managers' Personal Branding Model (Standard Mode)



As an example, the R^2 value for value traits is 0.599, indicating that its related components explain 59.9% of its variance, while the remaining variance is attributed to other factors not included in the model.

The third criterion for assessing the structural model is the predictive relevance index (Q^2). This index, introduced by Stone and Geisser (1974), determines the model's predictive power for endogenous constructs by running the blindfolding procedure in PLS software (Stone, 1974; Geisser, 1974). According to these researchers, models with acceptable structural fit must be able to predict the endogenous variables of the model. This means that if the relationships among constructs are correctly specified, the constructs exert sufficient influence on each other, and the hypotheses are adequately supported.

Henseler et al. (2009) proposed three threshold values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as indicators of low, medium, and high predictive power for this index (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

Table (4) presents the Q^2 values for the research variables.

Table 4

Calculation of the Predictive Relevance Index

Variable	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 = 1 - (SSE/SSO)$
Human values	37.02	16.32	0.56
Religious values	62.61	37.09	0.41
Ability	54.87	28.40	0.48
Social status	36.19	13.65	0.62
Professionalism	61.58	47.18	0.23
Ethical characteristics	45.32	36.00	0.21
Knowledge	32.20	20.59	0.36
Social behavior	92.84	46.58	0.50
Individual behavior	74.32	52.17	0.30
Lifestyle	58.52	31.53	0.46
Professional-functional	184.42	142.89	0.23
Skills	55.07	27.98	0.49
Social traits	89.12	57.77	0.35
Value traits	89.38	67.28	0.25
Acquired characteristics	111.46	68.68	0.38
Inherent characteristics	160.00	119.30	0.25
Behavioral traits	271.15	197.82	0.27
Personality traits	65.89	46.39	0.30
Physical characteristics	37.02	16.32	0.56

According to the results, since the Q^2 values for the model constructs are appropriate with respect to the three benchmark values, it can be inferred that the model's predictive power for these constructs is at a desirable level.

The only overall fit index embedded in the partial least squares structural equation modeling approach is the GOF (Goodness of Fit) index. Values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 have been introduced as weak, medium, and strong thresholds for this index. To assess the overall model fit, which simultaneously evaluates both the measurement and structural components of the model, a GOF value of 0.666 was obtained. Given the benchmark values, this indicates a strong overall model fit. As shown in the formula, this index is derived from the product of the mean of the R^2 coefficients and the mean of the communality values, both of which were computed in previous sections.

Next, based on the path coefficients obtained from structural equation modeling, the ranking of the dimensions, components, and indicators of managers' personal branding in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is determined.

Table 5

Ranking of Model Components in the Gilan Province Tax Administration

Dimensions	Rank	Components	Rank	Indicators	Rank
Personality traits	4	Ethical characteristics	4	q1	1
				q2	2
				q3	3
		Physical characteristics	3	q4	1
				q5	2
				q6	3
		Acquired characteristics	1	q7	3
				q8	1
				q9	4
				q10	6
				q11	2
				q12	5

Behavioral traits	5	Inherent characteristics	2	q13	1
				q14	2
				q15	3
		Individual behavior	2	q16	2
				q17	4
Social traits	3	Individual behavior	2	q18	3
				q19	1
				q20	1
				q21	2
				q22	4
		Social behavior	1	q23	5
				q24	3
				q25	2
				q26	1
				q27	1
Professional–functional competencies	1	Social status	2	q28	3
				q29	2
				q30	2
				q31	1
				q32	1
		Lifestyle	1	q33	2
				q34	3
				q35	3
				q36	1
				q37	2
Value traits	2	Professionalism	3	q38	1
				q39	2
				q40	3
				q41	1
				q42	2
		Human values	2	q43	3
				q44	2
				q45	1

Based on Table (5), the ranking of the personal branding dimensions in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is as follows: professional–functional competencies (0.924), value traits (0.914), social traits (0.880), personality traits (0.742), and behavioral traits (0.706).

The ranking of the components related to the personality traits dimension in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is as follows: acquired characteristics (0.968), inherent characteristics (0.889), physical characteristics (0.848), and ethical characteristics (0.795).

The ranking of the components related to the behavioral traits dimension in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is as follows: social behavior (0.957) and individual behavior (0.852).

The ranking of the components related to the social traits dimension in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is as follows: lifestyle (0.918) and social status (0.861).

The ranking of the components related to the professional–functional competencies dimension in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is as follows: skills (0.889), ability (0.851), professionalism (0.679), and knowledge (0.575).

The ranking of the components related to the value traits dimension in the Gilan Province Tax Administration is as follows: religious values (0.942) and human values (0.902).

The ranking of the indicators related to the acquired characteristics component is as follows: good reputation (0.842), risk-taking (0.826), authentic identity (0.782), positive attitude (0.697), law-abidingness (0.541), and optimism and positive thinking (0.523).

The ranking of the indicators related to the inherent characteristics component is as follows: distinctiveness (0.849), charisma (0.766), and dynamism (0.556).

The ranking of the indicators related to the physical characteristics component is as follows: physical attractiveness (0.819), neat and orderly appearance (0.793), and manner of dressing and speaking (0.531).

The ranking of the indicators related to the ethical characteristics component is as follows: commitment to professional ethics (0.901), adherence to fundamental values (0.840), and having a strong work ethic (0.631).

The ranking of the indicators related to the social behavior component is as follows: respectful behavior toward others (0.905), altruism and helping those in need (0.889), effective intra- and inter-organizational communication (0.821), being trustworthy and gaining public trust (0.632), and acceptance of social responsibility (0.566).

The ranking of the indicators related to the individual behavior component is as follows: chivalrous behavior (0.818), kindness and compassion (0.721), adherence to work discipline (0.583), and politeness and humility (0.562).

The ranking of the indicators related to the lifestyle component is as follows: expression of beliefs and values (0.789), managing virtual networks and networking (0.777), and having broad financial supporters (0.705).

The ranking of the indicators related to the social status component is as follows: media visibility and presence in social networks (0.900) and social acceptability (0.815).

The ranking of the indicators related to the skills component is as follows: leadership skills (0.883), communication skills (0.808), and effective decision-making skills (0.802).

The ranking of the indicators related to the ability component is as follows: intelligence (0.904), emotional intelligence (0.877), and visualization ability (0.860).

The ranking of the indicators related to the professionalism component is as follows: high expertise and work experience (0.823), creative thinking and initiative (0.787), and personal growth and development (0.675).

The ranking of the indicators related to the knowledge component is as follows: job knowledge (0.858) and environmental knowledge (0.843).

The ranking of the indicators related to the religious values component is as follows: justice orientation (0.877), faith and commitment to divine principles (0.782), and spiritual development (0.520).

The ranking of the indicators related to the human values component is as follows: having patience and tolerance (0.848) and possessing human dignity (0.801).

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study reveal that personal branding among managers is a multidimensional construct shaped by personality traits, behavioral characteristics, social attributes, value orientations, and professional–functional competencies. The empirical findings showed that among the major dimensions, professional–functional competencies occupied the highest rank in predicting managerial personal branding, followed by value traits, social traits, personality traits, and finally behavioral traits. This ranking underscores that in organizational contexts—particularly within public-sector environments such as tax administration—competence, skills, abilities, and professionalism constitute the most powerful signals influencing how managers are perceived, evaluated, and trusted. These results align with theoretical frameworks that emphasize the role of professional expertise and demonstrated capability in establishing a strong managerial identity [4, 22,

23]. Scholars argue that for managers, competence forms the core of their perceived value proposition, and it differentiates them within competitive organizational structures where performance expectations are high [25]. The importance of skills, abilities, and professionalism found in this study is consistent with research indicating that managerial personal branding depends heavily on knowledge mastery, leadership capability, and the capacity to produce results [26, 30].

The results also demonstrate that value orientations—particularly religious and human values—are strong determinants of personal branding. Religious values such as justice orientation, faith, adherence to moral principles, and spiritual growth ranked highly among indicators, showing their strong influence within the cultural environment in which the study was conducted. These findings are compatible with literature emphasizing that personal branding must reflect cultural norms, ethical expectations, and localized values to be credible and compelling [18, 19]. Values constitute a central dimension of authenticity, which is repeatedly cited as essential to sustaining a believable and admired personal brand [17, 20]. Studies in Iranian and non-Western contexts argue that managers' personal credibility is grounded in visible adherence to moral principles, respect, and justice, which significantly shape public trust and organizational legitimacy [12, 13]. The strong ranking of value traits in the present study supports this argument and reaffirms that personal branding is not merely a performance-based construct but is deeply embedded in value-driven behavior and moral character.

Social traits—including lifestyle and social status—were also found to significantly influence managerial branding. Lifestyle factors related to expression of beliefs, networking ability, and presence in virtual environments strongly contributed to branding outcomes. The high ranking of social visibility, particularly through media and online networks, reflects global shifts in branding dynamics, where digital identity and mediated presence have become integral components of public perception [5, 7, 8]. This is in agreement with contemporary research that identifies digital traceability, online engagement, and network participation as central mechanisms through which managers build reputation, increase perceived accessibility, and communicate professional competence [6, 9]. Studies show that digital environments reshape personal branding by enabling managers to control their narrative, amplify accomplishments, and cultivate strategic relationships [10, 15]. The results of this study thus reinforce the growing recognition that managerial branding extends beyond organizational boundaries and is increasingly shaped by participation in digital ecosystems.

In the dimension of personality traits, acquired characteristics such as good reputation, risk-taking, authenticity, positive attitude, and optimism ranked highest, reflecting their strong influence on managerial brand perception. The prominence of these attributes aligns with research emphasizing that personal branding is built upon internal identity structures that communicate confidence, reliability, and psychological coherence [4]. Positive attitude and optimism, for instance, have been shown to contribute to strong interpersonal impressions and influence followers' perceptions of leadership potential [14, 15]. The importance of authenticity mirrors findings from qualitative studies on managers and public figures, which indicate that stakeholders are more likely to trust and admire individuals whose personal brand appears genuine and value-driven [25, 32]. The high ranking of good reputation as an attribute reinforces identity theories that argue reputation serves as a cumulative signal of past performance and ethical behavior, forming a foundational pillar of personal brand equity [24, 26].

Behavioral traits, although ranked lower than other dimensions, remain essential components of personal branding. Social behavior—particularly respectful interaction, altruism, communication effectiveness, trustworthiness, and acceptance of social responsibility—ranked higher than individual behaviors. These findings correspond with literature emphasizing the relational nature of personal branding and the role of interpersonal practices in shaping perceptions of warmth, competence,

and social legitimacy [11, 33]. Studies consistently show that leaders who demonstrate compassion, humility, and fairness enhance their personal brand by fostering a sense of connection and psychological safety among organizational members [20, 27]. In this context, the findings support the view that although technical and intellectual competencies form the backbone of a manager's brand, long-term brand sustainability depends on social conduct that reflects integrity, respect, and supportive leadership behavior [21, 29]. The relatively lower ranking of behavioral traits compared to professional competencies, however, suggests that in technical public-sector settings, performance and expertise may overshadow interpersonal attributes in determining managerial brand strength.

The strong overall explanatory power of the model, as demonstrated by the structural equation modeling results, indicates that managerial personal branding is influenced by the interplay of internal dispositions, external behaviors, social and cultural identity markers, moral foundations, and functional competencies. This multidimensionality is consistent with integrative frameworks proposed in prior research, which argue that personal branding should be conceptualized as an ecosystem in which various identity components interact to produce a cohesive and distinctive managerial persona [16, 30, 31]. The model generated in this study builds upon these frameworks but distinguishes itself by empirically ranking the relative influence of each dimension and by integrating culturally specific components such as religious values, social acceptability, and behavioral expectations that align with the sociocultural structure of Iranian public organizations [18, 19]. This suggests that managerial personal branding cannot be universally applied but must be adapted to cultural context, organizational structure, and societal expectations.

These findings also support broader theoretical arguments that personal branding is both self-constructed and socially co-constructed. That is, managers actively shape their brand through strategic behaviors, skills development, and communication efforts, but audiences—including employees, stakeholders, and the public—play an equally critical role in evaluating, validating, and amplifying that brand [2, 25]. The emphasis on professional competence and values found in this study affirms that successful brands are those that align internal identity with external perceptions in ways that generate trust, admiration, and perceived value [7, 20]. The results thus contribute to ongoing efforts to refine personal branding theory by offering an empirically grounded model that integrates psychological, behavioral, cultural, and competency-based elements within a single framework.

The findings of this study also have implications for leadership development and human resource management. The prominence of competencies and values suggests that personal branding should be incorporated into managerial training programs, performance evaluations, and organizational communication strategies. Research shows that organizations benefit when managers project strong and coherent personal brands because these brands enhance organizational reputation, support cultural alignment, and promote effective stakeholder engagement [11, 23, 28]. By identifying the components that most strongly influence branding outcomes, this study provides a foundation for evidence-based interventions aimed at strengthening managerial identity in public institutions. The integration of digital branding elements further highlights the need for training that prepares managers to navigate online environments strategically and ethically.

The present study is limited by its focus on a single public-sector organization, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Cultural, organizational, and environmental differences may influence the salience of certain branding dimensions, and the model may behave differently in private-sector, international, or decentralized organizations. The reliance on self-reported and perceptual measures also introduces the possibility of response bias,

particularly in dimensions related to values and behaviors. Additionally, the cross-sectional design prevents the examination of how personal brands evolve over time or in response to organizational changes.

Future research should expand the model across diverse organizational settings, including private industries, hybrid organizations, and international environments, to examine contextual variations in branding determinants. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insight into how managerial brands develop, strengthen, or deteriorate over time. Researchers may also explore the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, algorithmic visibility, and digital reputation systems in shaping managerial branding dynamics, particularly as professional identity grows increasingly intertwined with digital ecosystems. Further examination of the reciprocal relationship between organizational brand and managerial personal brand may yield valuable theoretical advancements.

Practical implications arising from this study highlight the need for organizations to integrate personal branding into leadership development programs, strategic communication initiatives, and human resource policies. Managers should be encouraged to cultivate strong digital identities, articulate their values clearly, and demonstrate competencies that align with organizational goals. Organizations can support this process by offering branding workshops, communication coaching, mentoring systems, and opportunities for public engagement that allow managers to strengthen their visibility and credibility.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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