

**DOI** 10.2478/doc-2023-0016

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The Role of the Scientist's  
Personal Brand in  
the Reflexive Construction of  
Organizational Identity

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**Article history:****Received** 10 November 2023**Revised** 30 November 2023**Accepted** 12 December 2023**Available online** 19 December 2023

**Abstract:** Our purpose in this article is to explore the phenomenon of scientist's personal brand (SPB) to better understand the relationship between organizational culture, institutional identity, and a scientist's (self-) image. In doing so, we used Hatch and Schultz's model of the dynamic of organizational identity which links culture and image via four processes: 1) mirroring - where identity is mirrored in the image of others; 2) reflecting - where identity is embedded in cultural understanding; 3) expressing - where culture makes itself known through identity claims; and 4) impressing - where expressions of identity leave impressions on others. Qualitative research methods, based on individual In-depth interviews (IDI) with eleven scientists who represented public and private institutions in Poland, allowed the authors to examine and develop the concept of SPB within the context of an organizational identity approach. We found from the IDI four recurring themes: the idea that SPB reflects cultural understanding, mirrors images of others' expressions of identity, leaves impressions on others, and is constructed through scientists' reflexive practices.

**Key words:** scientist's personal brand, reflexivity, organizational identity, dynamics of identity

## Introduction

The transformation of the modern-day university, the evolution of educational strategies and the increased pressure to make research activities more present in the public domain highlights the importance of the organizational identity of academic institutions. Due to these factors we draw upon the multifaceted concept of 'reflexivity,' a term rich in layers and interpretations, especially

within management sciences as a construct through which we analyse scientists' personal brand<sup>1</sup> (SPB). Reflexivity is not a mere academic exercise, but a necessary lens through which the relationships between scientists and their diverse audiences are decoded and understood. The potency of reflexivity in organizational studies has been robustly discussed, particularly concerning how it shapes the dynamic between speaker and audience, suggesting a domain where rhetoric meets self-awareness, allowing a scientist to navigate adeptly through complex ambiguous and contested dialogues. A scientist's personal brand – is a composite of their professional persona, shaped by unique experiences, expertise, and the ability to engage thoughtfully with their community. This article employs the concept of reflexivity in the consideration of SPB and organizational identity within the academic community.

Scientists are part of an esteemed and socially respected profession, and the research they conduct has an impact on the lives of people, organizations, and the environment. However, academics' social importance and their roles are changing and are being re-evaluated. Currently, scientific work has increased possibilities for mobility, interdisciplinarity, and cross-border cooperation, as well as relations with businesses, governments, and the third sector. Scientists are also recognized through an institutional prism; namely, the prestige of scholars can be identified by the university that they work at (Adamski, 2016, p. 399). In scientific circles, the prestige of research is demonstrated through publications, where the value of a given study depends significantly on the rank of the scientific journal where it was published. This has consequences for SPB as the public image of scientists is gaining importance due to a wider dissemination of research results, especially with the advancement of technology such as online scientific. (Sułkowski & Dziedzic, 2020). So too, achievements in research and prestigious publications

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<sup>1</sup> The term "scientific" refers to a broad spectrum of scholarly activities, research endeavours, and accomplishments, not limited solely to natural sciences. Within this framework, "scientific" encompasses the academic work and research contributions of scholars from various fields, including social sciences, humanities, and technical disciplines.

have fundamental implications for SPB. It's important to emphasize that brand management does not dominate academic life and is not an integral part of its essence but rather scientific and research activities (Hotez, 2018, p. 5). Given the growing importance of communication and information competencies, this discussion about SPB is timely and necessary. For these reasons, this article aims to answer the question – how is the SPB of scientists created in detail?

In this ever-changing academic landscape, reflexivity emerges as an instrumental component in the construction and perception of SPB. Reflexivity, the ongoing practice of self-examination and adaptive response to external perceptions, is paramount as scientists navigate their roles within a shifting milieu that increasingly values interdisciplinary approaches, international collaborations, and multifaceted engagements with various sectors. As scientists operate within this complex web of interactions, their SPB is continuously shaped and reshaped through reflexive practices. They must constantly align their personal brand with their evolving roles and the expectations of both the academic and public realms.

This process of reflexivity is not only internal and introspective but also reactive to the external environment. It encompasses how scientists perceive their impact on society, how they integrate feedback from the academic community and the general public into their self-concept, and how they adjust their public personas in light of this feedback. Reflexivity in this context is about bridging the gap between the individual's self-perception and the collective image as perceived by the university and the wider community. Furthermore, the reflexive nature of the SPB means it is not only a tool for advancing within the academic hierarchy (based on the conventional metrics of publication ranks and scientific merit), but also an avenue for managing one's external image and societal impact. Thus, reflexivity becomes a critical lens through which SPB is analysed and understood, highlighting the importance of scientists' self-awareness and adaptability in crafting their professional identities in the public and academic domains.

## Professional Personal Branding within the Organizational Context: A Literature Review

The concept of personal brand in marketing has been well known since the early 1990s. However, because of growing possibilities for international academic communication, including technological advances such as social media which make it possible to make achievements public, this concept needs to be expanded and studied from many different perspectives. Research on the personal brand in organizational terms has been conducted in the context of branding for employees (Dhiman & Arora, 2020; Mollaei et al., 2021), professional reputation (Ferris et al., 2007; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Zinko et al., 2007; Zinko & Rubin, 2015), and impression management (Bolino et al., 2016; Dziedzic & Jastrzębowska, 2022; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Leary et al., 1986; Oliveira et al., 2016). A systematic review of personal branding has also been undertaken (Scheidt et al., 2020).

Corporate branding is a process that is built on the dynamics of organizational identity. Branding is based on learning how to influence identity dynamics in a way consistent with a strategic vision. This process involves recognizing how culture and image must influence the vision, and *vice versa*. When vision, culture, and image are compatible, the brand can anticipate and innovate, not just respond to ever-changing environmental demands (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p. 65).

People who manage their image need an audience; for celebrities, this is the media; for employees, this is primarily organizations and industry. Individual brands resonate both with individuals and with organizations, as represented by the concept of impression management and CEO celebrity (Hayward et al., 2004). Employees who have a strong reputation and position can influence how an organization is perceived; if they become heads of departments, they may gain additional resources because of their prestige (Ferris et al., 2007; Hayward et al., 2004; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). CEO celebrity means that managers can highlight that the actions of the CEO have led to an organization's positive performance (Hayward et al., 2004, p. 639).

Zinko and Rubin presented the Personal Reputation in Organization Domain model, where they demonstrated benefits not only for individuals

(such as autonomy, power, career success, and signalling) but also benefits for the organization (such as predictability, signalling, and basking in reflective glory) (Zinko & Rubin, 2015, p. 223). They also describe the influence of personal reputation as follows: the need for self-esteem, a positive personal reputation and a sense of belonging, a desire for rewards, strategic self-presentation, as well as perceptions of individuals' behaviour and organizational norms. They additionally observed deviations from norms like gossiping (Zinko & Rubin, 2015, p. 223).

A personal brand is distinguished by several qualities which constitute separate analytical categories, which the literature review identifies as personal reputation, status, image, fame, and impression management. It is possible to find direct links between a personal brand and these concepts as each is reflected in some dimension.

**Table 1. Terms related to personal brands from the literature review.**

Concept	Meaning
Status	Status beliefs are shared cultural schemas about the social status of groups based on gender, race, ethnicity, education, or occupation (Ridgeway, 2001, pp. 637–638). Occupations, possessions, behavioural patterns, demographic characteristics, and associations with others may all acquire value within a society. In turn, these aspects contribute to an individual's status value, to the extent that the individual is perceived to have a connection with them (Ravlin & Thomas, 2005, pp. 968–969).
Personal reputation	At work, personal reputation plays a role in the selection of behaviours that individuals exhibit and the audiences they choose to expose to such behaviours (Zinko et al., 2007, p. 192). Contemporary theory suggests that personal reputation is a perception by others which is collectively agreed upon, and that reputation exists in a vacuum of imperfect information. When an audience attempts to gather information regarding an individual (or organization), reputation is relied on to “fill in the blanks.” This is similar to corporate reputation theory in that personal reputation is based upon social norms as opposed to market norms (Ferris et al., 2007, p. 119).

Concept	Meaning
Impression management	Impression management is a conscious process of building expected forms of self-presentation through conscious behaviours suitable to the professional context as well as the needs of the recipient (Dziedzic & Jastrzębowska, 2022, p. 11). It is a field of social psychology that studies how individuals present themselves to others in order to be perceived favourably (Hooghiemstra, 2000, p. 61).
Image	Professionals from many industries aim to ensure the best possible reception which is inherent in creating and managing their image (Dziedzic & Jastrzębowska, 2022, p. 12). Image management implies moving from images as representation towards applying images as productive networked objects (de Groot, 2012, p. 1).
Fame	What may start as fame may become a reputation. If an event that made someone famous is repeated often enough, then it will reduce ambiguity in the future and others will be able to predict a person's behaviour under a certain set of circumstances (Zinko & Rubin, 2015, p. 219). Above, all, to be famous for something means to be talked about. What prompts these discussions – or more precisely, what someone is famous for – is not always obvious or even comprehensible. Indeed, the attribute “famous” always refers to a specific quality, which can either be connected to a regular activity (e.g. singing, skiing, or acting) or to a single occurrence (e.g. a ‘one-hit wonder’ or a political scandal). It can even be linked to something that is only a rumour (Hausladen, 2018, p. 6).

Source: The authors.

Zinko et al. developed a conceptual model of the reputation development process, which spans the antecedents of reputational aspirations to social comparisons and the self-regulation of work behaviour, as well as including deviations from behavioural norms in the situation as assessed by observers, the search for causes, and the reputation labelling process (Zinko et al., 2007, p. 173). Personal reputation can also be linked to organizational reputation, which can also affect the personal brand. Fearnley considers brand in this context and treats it as a collective experience of employees (Fearnley, 1993, p. 4). Reputation is the sum of employees' experiences, which means understanding the experiences of insiders and outsiders and which must be communicated in design processes involving employees and managers (Fearnley, 1993, p. 7). Sensemaking, as well as the interests of the dominant group, contribute to status expectations and can lead to stereotyping attitudes (Ridgeway, 2001, p. 643).

The value of a brand comes from its intrinsic strength, which is created by aligning different stakeholders and business functions that serve their interests (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p. 123). Developing a young brand is based on a network of relationships, facilitating the management of challenges in a progressive way (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p. 123).

In Hatch & Schultz's Vision-Culture-Image model, an essential part of branding is the reflection of culture, which is identified as 'hidden' knowledge. For cultural knowledge to be practical, it must be absorbed into the core essence of the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p. 131). As Edgar Schein writes, organizational culture is abstract, but it can be understood through the prism of social relationship that is visible in interactions among members the organizations (Schein, 2004). This may be related to the culture of communication: for example, high levels of interruption, confrontation, and debate; excessive emotional responses to proposed courses of action; incredible frustration about the difficulty of getting a point of view across; or a sense that every member of the group wants to win all the time (Schein, 2004, p. 4). This also applies to many issues that directly affect how an organization and its individual employees' function, such as an innovative atmosphere, flexibility, work relationships, interaction, and social responsibility (Schein, 2004). It is the innovativeness and creativity of the employees that increase the artistic processes which allow members of an organization to explore cultural self-awareness (Meisiek & Hatch, 2008, p. 420).

**Table 2. The three waves of corporate branding (Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz)**

<b>Waves</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
First wave (Marketing mindset)	The brand's manager is expected to understand marketing and consumer psychology.
Second wave (Corporate mindset)	Corporate brand managers are expected to understand organizational behaviour as well as have the cross-functional business perspective of an MBA graduate.
Third wave (Enterprise mindset)	Managers should gain a company-wide perspective and develop an awareness of symbols

Source: The authors, after Hatch & Schultz (2008, pp. 208-209).



The third wave of branding brings a perspective that involves acquiring resources and information beyond core business disciplines such as strategy, financing, marketing, HR, and communication. It also requires being familiar with sociology and anthropology for insight into symbolism and culture, an understanding of stakeholders in society, and expertise in areas such as corporate social responsibility and global economic development (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, pp. 208–209).

Organizational exposure is a challenge for organizational identity because employees talk openly about their organization, and their practices (such as social and political activities) can be observed and criticized by various important individuals or institutions. In a networked world, employees' actions can have a bearing on business practices and affect the external perception of the entire organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 116).

## Conceptualizing the Scientist's Personal Brand: A Theoretical Framework

After reviewing the literature, it is evident that the concept of the scientist's personal brand (SPB) has been explored in marketing literature, primarily viewed through the lens of personal branding (Adamski, 2016; Hotez, 2018). Nevertheless, in this specific context this concept has not been integrated into the discourse surrounding organizational identity. Sułkowski and Dziedzic previously introduced the notion of Scientific Organizational Identity Orientations (Sułkowski & Dziedzic, 2020, 2021); however, their work did not delve into aspects related to SPB. They considered the question of scientists' identity from the perspective of six orientations: prestige, economic, career, science, power, and human variables (Sułkowski & Dziedzic, 2021). The challenge scientists encounter in exploring their identity is associated with scientific matters tied to self-perception and professional values, such as the pursuit of excellence in one's field and integrity in scientific research. (Sułkowski & Dziedzic, 2021).

The concept of the scientist's brand has been explored in different articles by Adamski (2016) and Hotez (2018), and extensive research on academic

prestige has been conducted by Kwiek (2018, 2021b, 2021a) and Kwiek & Roszka (2022). The scientist's brand represents an individual's self-awareness of who they are as a scientist, what they want to show the public, what is the central problem they want to solve, and what they want to achieve through science. It also addresses the effective utilization of media and the Internet to establish a position in society or in the academic community. Consciously building a personal brand requires expertise and strategic activities (Adamski, 2016); shaping and cultivating the personal brand of scientists is perceived as a necessity because of the expectations of the information society. Hotez points out that this is due to several factors: cultivating a personal brand can contribute to scientific advancement and reshape the workplace. It can also generate strong and diverse role models but there can be a loss of contact with public opinion, and excessive focus on one's immediate environment may intensify a specific anti-scientific trend (e.g., scientific evidence of climate change or anti-vaccine movements) (Hotez, 2018, pp. 3–5).

The authors believe that looking at SPB in a broader context is crucial, adding that expert professional brands need to be created in every field. This is particularly evident in highly prestigious professions, such as doctors, lawyers, and high-ranking representatives of public administration and governments. What interests us are categories that specify a professional brand within the scientific community.

In addition, the role of the university and academia is also essential to discussions on SPB. Historically, there have been different views on academic institutions: from Immanuel Kant (Kant, 1783), who emphasized the importance of using reason and the ability to think independently, to Alexander von Humboldt (Humboldt, 1792) who pointed out that universities are a place of teaching and research. On the other hand, John Henry Newman (Newman, 1852) said that academia should teach social and moral attitudes. Nowadays, scientific branding can be treated as a step towards enhancing the public understanding of scientific endeavors, expanding knowledge about the modern world of science, as well as personal success. Hotez even argues that promoting science as a common good may become indispensable in ensuring the survival of the scientific profession.

## Methodology

The concept of SPB is based on a critical analysis of the literature dealing with organizational identity in the context of a personal brand for scientists. The authors have extended the inquiry using qualitative research: individual in-depth interviews (IDI) with eleven scientists (who represented public and private institutions in Poland) allowed us to analyse emotional and motivational belief patterns through the identity model. The collected audio material lasted around 13 hours and took 40 hours to transcribe. The IDIs consisted of in-depth conversations where scientists revealed their deep beliefs and ingrained ways of thinking. Using previously established contacts, the interlocutors conducted thorough scientific interviews.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 3. Sociodemographic data of the interviewees**

Interview code	Type of university	Gender	Academic rank	Field
<i>DHOP</i>	Public	Female	Associate professor	Economics
<i>DMSSAN</i>	Private	Male	Associate professor	Fine Arts and Management
<i>DMTSAN</i>	Private	Male	PhD	Management
<i>DOISAN</i>	Private	Male	Assistant professor	Computer science
<i>DZSAN</i>	Private	Male	PhD	Engineering
<i>EPASZU</i>	Public	Male	Professor emeritus	Philology
<i>PILW</i>	Private	Female	Associate professor	Philology
<i>PLSUJ</i>	Public	Male	Full professor	Humanities and Economics
<i>PMSSF</i>	Public	Male	Full professor	Fine Arts
<i>PSPWR</i>	Public	Female	Full professor	Economics
<i>PWMUO</i>	Public	Female	Full professor	History

Source: The authors.

<sup>2</sup> The translations were carried out by the study authors and through their transcriptions of video and audio recordings, ensuring full control over the interpretative process and preserving the integrity of the original statements made by the respondents.

The study involved two PhD holders, one assistant professor, three associate professors, four full professors, and one professor emeritus. They represent the fields of management, economics, arts, history, humanities, philology, engineering, and computer science. The study involved seven men and four women; six were employees of public universities, and five were associated with private universities.

Hatch & Schultz's model of the dynamic of organizational identity was used to conduct the analysis (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). The model explores the idea of the relationship between the "I" and "me" in Mead's theory of social identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, after Mead, 1934). This allows us to identify connections between two phases of organizational identity: namely, to associate it with images, embed it into organizational culture, and investigate how identity expresses cultural understanding through symbols.

**Table 4. Codes for SPB analysis**

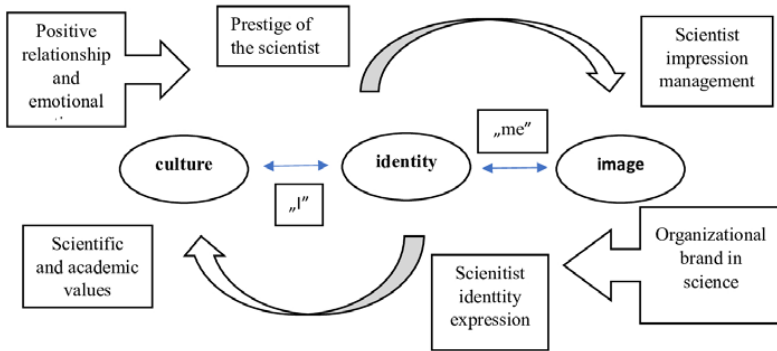
Concept	Meaning
Name of code	Description
Expression of own identity as a scientist	Individual identity and self-perception as an academic and as part of a scientific discipline.
Impression management	The image of a scientist in the scientific community.
Opinions on the prestige of scientists	The prestige of academic degrees and the rank of the university, which imposes narratives of how a scientist's prestige could potentially be received.
Organizational brand in science	The scientific brand of academic institutions, expert groups, and professional memberships.
Perception of marketized science	The marketization of science through scientific rankings and pressure related to grant procedures, i.e., obtaining funds for practical institutional, market, social, or political research. Processes detected include: the 'businessization' of the student-lecturer relationship (e.g. student course feedback on the quality of lectures exerts pressure for lecturers to make their lectures their interesting); relationship marketing and teambuilding (professional connections); scientific projects and grant policies (targeting research preferences to the needs of funding institutions).

Concept	Meaning
Positive relationships and emotional ties	Internal needs to build positive bonds and relationships resulting from a belief in the value of the scientific community.
Scientific and academic values	Belief in the scientific ethos and ethics of academic work as extremely socially beneficial, striving for the development of individuals and societies.
Students' impressions and quality requirements	SPB is associated with the promotion of a scientist's image among the student body. There is a need to make lectures more interesting, deepen communicative competencies, develop one's own self-image, and project this image to students.
The prestige of the scientist	The pressure to evaluate scientific achievements, publish, and be highly ranked.

Source: The authors.

Organizational identity connects with culture and image in four processes: 1) mirroring – where identity is mirrored in the images of others; 2) reflecting – where identity is embedded in cultural understandings; 3) expressing – where culture makes itself known through identity claims; and 4) impressing – where expressions of identity leave impressions on others (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 117). We aim to understand the role of these processes in shaping professional identity and creating a professional brand for scientists.

For this research project, we use the definition by Hatch and Schultz: “organizational image, following practices in strategy, communication, and marketing, as the set of views on the organization held by those who act as the organization’s ‘others.’” By analogy, the organizational “me” results when organizational members assume the images that the organization’s ‘others’ (e.g., its external stakeholders) form of the organization” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 120).

**Figure 1. Research process based on the dynamic identity model**

Source: Own study.

Organizational images are reflected in identity and are embedded in cultural understanding; in the process of reflecting deep cultural values and assumptions, identity can be strengthened or changed (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 124). For cultural processes of rooting values, we use Schein's description of three levels of culture: artifacts (those visible organizational structures and processes which can be hard to decipher); beliefs and values (those strategies, goals, philosophies which represent espoused justifications); and underlying assumptions (those unconscious, beliefs which are taken for granted, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, which are the ultimate sources of values and actions) (Schein, 2004, p. 26). However, the most difficult to recognize level of underlying assumptions, and which we include in this reflection, is what Schein identifies as the condition of the human mind, which "needs cognitive stability; therefore, any challenge or questioning of a basic assumption will release anxiety and defensiveness. In this sense, the shared basic assumptions that make up the culture of a group can be thought of at both the individual and the group level as psychological cognitive defense mechanisms that permit the group to continue to function" (Schein, 2004, p. 32).

## Reflexivity and the Development of the Scientist's Personal Brand: Professional Organizational Identity Discourses

SPB is related to four elements of the identity dynamic. For that reason, the authors define codes that exemplify these processes. The first element is related to the idea that identity expresses cultural understanding and is expressed in scientific and academic values. The second is related to the idea that identity mirrors the images of others and is this is revealed through organizational brand science and impression management. The third relates to the idea that expressions of identity leave impressions on others and are demonstrated through opinions on prestige, students' feedback, and requirements. The fourth element is related to the idea that reflexivity embeds identity in culture and is related to the expression of the scientist's identity and prestige.

### *Identity as an Expression of Cultural Understanding*

The first element is related to the idea that identity expresses cultural understanding and is expressed through scientific and academic values. These values demonstrate ideas that show an understanding of scientific work.

*Academic work addresses the fundamental questions of why we engage in work, conduct research, and publish our findings. The purpose is to disseminate the results of our work to individuals within our academic community. This is particularly crucial in the case of interdisciplinary research, where scientists from various disciplines should have access to the findings. The broader accessibility of this work is preferable, as it plays a crucial role in shaping intellectual development and expanding scientific potential [PILW].*

Values are the foundation of career choices, and academic values are often contrasted with business values. This means that the values prevalent in the academic environment are perceived as distinct or incompatible with those characteristics of business culture. In cultural contexts, academic values – such as the pursuit of knowledge, the development of scientific

thought, or intellectual freedom – may be seen as different from values that often dominate the business environment, such as profit, competition, or economic efficiency.

*Ethos and ethics are essential in scientific work so the researcher's brand does not go negatively, like brutal personal PR. Scientific decisions can be fluid, and we often must answer whether an ethical boundary is crossed individually [PŁSUJ].*

*I am a professor at the university. If this feeling is compared to the identity of businesspeople, it is different because the image and employer branding dominate there. The emanation of academic culture and the university tradition are much broader [PLOUGH].*

*Even though there is a world of influencers, they are individuals on the ocean's surface in terms of knowledge, and the basis and base, i.e., what is underwater, is higher education. The Internet is a fantastic source of information, but knowledge requires a book and academic work [PMSSF].*

Academic values are also linked to students' competencies, shaping their mindset and excellence.

*The university is distinguished because it teaches autonomy of independent thinking choices and broadens the student's horizons. I teach how to acquire knowledge and prepare for resourcefulness, independent thinking, and the ability to argue [PSPW].*

Academic culture reveals itself through hidden cultural assumptions that concern the belief in the resources of professorial knowledge.

*With courage comes competence and substantive knowledge that stands behind me. It is difficult to be courageous because many scientists become submissive, and it is better not to speak on an unfriendly topic. I see the same thing among students. They discuss and try to contest something, but most take what the professor says for granted. Students subconsciously do not accept that I could be wrong as a professor [PSPW].*

From a cultural perspective, students accept that a professor at the University is infallible, and they do not question his opinion; without thought practices like the culture of inquiry and discussion, there can be no inventions and innovations.



*Identity Mirrors the Images of Others*

The second element is related to the idea that identity mirrors images of others and is expressed through an organizational brand in science and by impression management. SPB resonates with the brand of universities; there is a belief that the best scientists are at the forefront of the best universities.

*Good scientists work in good universities. I was happy to leave lower-ranking universities for the University. Over time, I understood that university advertising is essential [PEUwt].*

*I am a professor at Jagiellonian University; this is a more critical identity for me than I would say: I am a professor of management, an economist, or a humanist [PLOUGH].*

*Cambridge or Harvard are brands; without them, there would be no world of politics and significant awards. I am an academic lecturer from the Lodz Film School. This brand has strong support and strength that makes various doors open wider than if I said that I am a scientist from the Higher School where I started my professional career. This wall is fragile and has no clout, even though I am the same person who was at a less prestigious university [PMSSSF].*

*Organizational identity means to what extent the institution stands behind me, and I identify with this institution. I feel part of it, expressed by saying, "my university" and not "I go to work" [PSPWr].*

Critical images of the university's brand expression in SPB are associated with a philosophy of prestige that may not be reflected in individual achievements.

*An individual brand is associated with the university; such advertising raises the prestige of those who work there, but this is not always associated with individual quality [PEUwt].*

*I do not see any benefits from the organizational brand. I don't think that being part of an organization benefits scientists. I work at a private university, and I publish all over the world. Everything I do so far is due to my commitment, not the fact that I belong to a specific institution [DMSSAN].*

This scientist's need for impression management reflects the second element of understanding identity that mirrors images of others.

*The image created and developed by the scientist makes other academics perceive him in the desired way. Nowadays, one should expect to care for one's attractiveness and value in the scientific labour market [DhOP].*

*Substantive knowledge alone is not enough. Professors had more prestige because they had a degree, enough for them to be treated with great social respect. In social media, many different people will convey similar content attractively. They may be presented from an incomplete perspective, but it does not matter to the audience [DMSAN].*

*The scientist's brand is evidenced by their perceived style, conduct of classes, participation in conferences, and whether an academic lecture is attractive. This is developed over years, e.g., work style, participating in various training, improvement, voice emission, and public speaking [PSPWw].*

Impression management in science is related to the evaluation of scientific publications through tools like the bibliometric Hirsch index (H-index), Scopus, and Google Scholar. They are used to present the visibility and importance of both individuals and groups, and so are relevant to SPB; the H-index has also been implemented in the ISI Web of Science database. In addition, scientific networking sites such as ResearchGate and Academia.edu are essential in creating contacts and access to publications.

*Competition has become immense, involving researchers worldwide who can be compared through scientific portals and social networks [PLOUGH].*

In social contacts and the sociocultural space, storytelling is a dynamic interpersonal process which gives meaning to human relationships. People can gradually refine their stories about new events, allowing them to interpret cultural meanings (Boje, 1991).

*We can cultivate an elitist culture where people engage in gossip and seek to interfere in others' private affairs. The use of narratives is crucial, as stories play a key role in depicting the character of specific individuals with whom we socially interact, for example, during a conference, complemented by regular, convenient online interactions [PŁSUJ].*

Scientists' awareness of the dominant narratives regarding scientific work directs their academic activity. Boje and Sanchez have pointed out the importance of awareness in storytelling because it provides important information for those

interested in strategic leaps; it accelerates innovations and fosters sustainable and ethical ways of working and organizing (Boje & Sanchez, 2018).

#### *Expressions of Identity Leave Impressions on Others*

The third course is related to the idea that an expression of identity leaves an impression on others through opinions on prestige, students' feedback, and institutional requirements. Lecturers are subject to the opinions of their students, who become a force of influence, i.e., creators of the academic space.

*The student is a highly demanding client, and his role as a listener is secondary. I do not undertake cooperation with non-public universities because they want to carry out classes in an attractive and not demanding way so that the student in the evaluation survey gives a favourable opinion [DhOP].*

#### *Reflexivity Embeds Identity in Culture*

The fourth element relates to the idea that reflexivity is embedded in cultural identity. It is also related to the expression of a scientist's identity and the prestige of the scientist; when expressed, SPB is related to individual identity and its external reflection.

*A personal brand is an individual identity, although an employee may benefit from affiliation with an organization with a good reputation (or significantly lose out on a bad company reputation). Corporations try to limit the importance of the personal brand by ensuring that no single employee is irreplaceable, thus reducing the risk of project failure [DOISAN].*

*A personal brand in the modern world is essential, although building it should not be the most crucial goal of a scientist. It mainly results from individual identity, but for some recipients, it is much easier to assess through the prism of organizational identity. The main task of a scientist should be to seek and communicate the truth, establish facts, and identify errors, not to sensationalize or seek fame [MTSANDr].*

Individual identity is related to organizational identity. This identity should be understood socially, as a distinct identity not only within the university,

but also within the academic discipline. This individual identity is closely intertwined with the social sphere, referring to the reference group as “significant others.” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) In sociology, this typically denotes the primary group, but in this context, it extends to include the secondary group, namely the academic discipline, and even the university itself.

*The prominent others are those in power, those who are influential and have authority. In this coupling, the level of individual identity, i.e., organizational identity, also emerges, to what extent our identification with the group, a given scientific discipline, with the university is strong, and confident this identification is a measure of the strength of organizational identity. If we identify ourselves in a permanently substantial way if this is a more critical identification than another, then I would say that identity, using the analogy – is a solid and weak organizational culture [PLOUGH].*

Academic culture shapes SPB, directing professional efforts towards obtaining scientific prestige in the academic profession. The individual scientist's prestige – and competition for it – are inherent in the university as an institution. For centuries there has been a perpetual quest among researchers, characterized by the unending pursuit of knowledge and understanding. This reflects the intrinsic human curiosity and determination that have propelled scientific advancements across generations.

*A scientist's brand is built by publications, things that allow someone to stand out from the crowd [DhOP].*

*Researchers compete through networking, influencing the pace, scope, and recognition of scientists. A simple assessment of their scholarly achievements is based on collected publications, which are then indexed and verified, for example, through e.g., by Google Scholar. Each person who dares to make their achievements public has a profile on the social network for researchers [PLOUGH].*

The cultural determinants of scientific prestige play a key role in shaping SPB, influencing not only opinions within the community but also professional relationships. These cultural factors can manifest themselves as either constructive or challenging, including – at times – stereotypical opinions. *I have such a [strong] professional brand that I [can] write negative reviews [PEUwT].*

During the construction of a scientist's brand, distortions and potentially offensive stereotypes may emerge. However, negative opinions from the community may stem from a rigorous approach to science and a commitment to maintaining high scientific standards.

## Results and Discussion

Consideration of SPB reflects its dynamic complexity, as identity undergoes a constant process of creation, change, and maintenance. Identity processes take place between different constructions of the organizational "me" and "I," where the self is socially constructed (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 128). We presented the conclusions derived from IDI, where we noted that SPB is related to four elements: the idea that identity expresses cultural understanding, mirrors images of others' expressions of identity, leaves impressions on others, and through reflexivity embeds identity in culture. The authors found that SPB is related to scientific and academic values, which is reflected in the central question: "Why do scientists work at all, why do they conduct scientific activity, and why do they publish the results of their research." The dissemination of research results and the sharing of knowledge encourages the development of scientific thought and academic potential. SPB is rooted in academic values and scientific ethos, and is established within the operational framework of higher education institutions and their hierarchical structure.

SPB does not exist in a vacuum, but is based on broad interactions about a university's brand, which resonates with the personal brand and the student body – academic culture and a university's tradition are much broader than employer brand and image management.

Narratives concerning academic culture are rooted in social awareness and concern relevant knowledge, the esteem of the scientific community, and substantive professional competences. Thus, SPB is associated with academic advancement and qualifications; there is a belief that the best scientists work at the best universities. Identifying with a university means identifying with its

values and engaging with its prestige. In SPB, critical images of a university's brand expression are associated with a philosophy of prestige that may not be reflected in individual achievements. An individual brand is associated with a specific university where scientists work; their affiliation increases the prestige of those who work there, but this does not have to be associated with individual quality.

The perception by others are reflected in the scientist's need for impression management. The image created by the scientist makes other academics perceive them in the desired way. Expectations include taking care of their attractiveness and value in the scientific labour market; in addition to scientific achievements, this also includes how scientists are perceived, what work style they have, how they communicate, and whether they can convey their knowledge effectively.

Impression management in science is related to evaluating scientific publications through bibliometric indexes such as the Hirsch index, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The Internet has expanded possibilities for comparison with other researchers worldwide, and scientific and social networking sites are used to create contacts and access publication databases (e.g. ResearchGate and Academia.edu).

"Organizational identity is not only the collective's expression of organizational culture. It is also a source of identifying symbolic material that can impress others and awaken their sympathy by stimulating their awareness, attracting their attention and interest, and encouraging their involvement and support" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 126). Individual identity is related to organizational identity, which should be understood socially. The degree of scientists' identification with a group, a specific scientific discipline, and a university serves as a measure of the strength of organizational identity. For this reason, we believe that further exploration of this problem could be facilitated through quantitative studies on SPB, as our research is limited due to the number of IDIs. The issue of scientists' identity and awareness of their image may be of particular interest.

Reflexivity, as an ongoing practice of self-examination and adaptive response to external perceptions, is paramount as scientists navigate their

roles within a shifting milieu that increasingly values interdisciplinary approaches, international collaborations, and multifaceted engagements with various sectors. As scientists operate within this complex web of interactions, reflexive practices continuously shape and reshape their SPB. They must constantly align their personal brand with their evolving roles and the expectations of both the academic and public realms.

This process of reflexivity is not only internal and introspective but also reactive to the external environment. It encompasses how scientists perceive their impact on society, integrating feedback from the academic community and the general public into their self-concept, and adjusting their public personas in light of this feedback. Reflexivity in this context is about bridging the gap between the individual's self-perception and the collective image perceived by the university and the wider community. Furthermore, the reflexive nature of the SPB means it is not only a tool for advancing within the academic hierarchy, based on the conventional metrics of publication ranks and scientific merit, but is also an avenue for managing one's external image and societal impact. Thus, reflexivity becomes a critical lens through which the SPB is analysed and understood, highlighting the importance of scientists' self-awareness and adaptability in crafting their professional identities in the public and academic domains.

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