Chapter 4

OPRAH WINFREY AS A PERSONAL BRAND

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of brand characterizes, describes, identifies a product and has several features, which distinguishes a particular product from others. It is as well possible to define the concept within the scope of individual characteristics, given that it highlights, represents, expresses the features of an individual, such as the body language, culture, temperament, uniqueness, personality, emotions, vocal behaviors, clothing and lifestyle. An individual, who has a personality, appeal, positively perceived values, trend connections and increased value potential can also be perceived as a brand due to such factors. One or several of the features such as leadership qualities, personality traits, point of difference, being visible and acknowledged, distinct and unique, persistent and stable, and gracious are the commonly associated factors with an individual, who becomes a brand. The present study focuses on the values and personal brand of Oprah Winfrey, who influenced plethora of individuals in the US and managed to become a name that resonates.

1. BRAND AS A CONCEPT

Brand is defined as "as a name, term or symbol, which describes and identifies a product, or as a combined form of such features, which distinguishes a particular product from other products" (Uztuğ, 2002, 15). Another definition emphasizes that a brand is "a name, term, sign symbol (or a combination of these) that identifies the maker or seller of the product or service through discerning it from its competitors." (Kotler& Armstrong,1999, 45). A brand affects and shapes the consumers and their decision-making process on a purchase, especially helps distinguish the tangible products, and is the focus of its marketing and advertising activities (Yükselen, 1994, 8, as cited in Aktuğlu, 2008, 11). In summary, a brand is the distinctive positioning of a good, product or person compared to its competitors.

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The word, "brand," has several meanings. Murphy (1990) argues that a brand is not only made up of physical products, but also consists of certain privileged qualities that specifying the individual and includes a mixture of intangible and tangible features that render products different.

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers."(Wood, 2000, 543). In other words, a brand is any sign, such as a letter, logo, or shape, that allows to distinguish the goods and services of an enterprise from the goods and services of another (Marangoz, 2007, 460). The latter definition particularly emphasizes that a brand is indeed a distinctive feature that renders a product or an individual different from others. The abovementioned definitions commonly are based on a product or service.

Personal brand is defined as "an identity definition of an individual, based on his/her essence, rhetoric and image, in delivering a message for his/her target audiences/customers, creating difference and in adding value to his/her character, occupation and relationships through everything that individual possesses" (Çayıroğlu, 2010, 35). Montoya (2002 cited Berggren & Mohn, 2007, 11) argues that, building of a personal brand depends on "managing how others perceive you, while you are becoming a Personal Brand." Such control on perception should entail an extremely strategic manner, allowing other individuals consider that their perceptions are genuine, rather than influenced. Therefore, perception management intervenes in building a personal brand. Numerous studies were conducted on personal branding in recent years. Concurrently, professions such as image management, content production, being a youtuber or influencer emerged in practice. Such professions somehow elucidate the perception of personal branding.

Montoya emphasized that it is essential to acknowledge that personal brand is not personal image. Personal image includes choices in clothing, driving a certain brand of car, whereas personal brand is associated with recognizing perception. It designates the means to perceive others, how these perceptions affect one's behavior and how these perceptions coudl be managed beneficially. Individuals who intrinsincly accept such understanding become able to build a personal brand. Building a personal brand, however, does not define an individual in a holistic manner. Public perception is added to the actual personality, skills and values of an individual. Therefore, an individual does not only build a personal brand through his/her subjective self, but also builds it through the reflection and acceptance of his/her values and characteristics, added to subjective self, by the society (Montoya 2002 as cited in Berggren & Mohn, 2007, 11) The personal brand works the same

path with a brand. An individual, who builds a personal brand, shares own values, personality and talent related ideas through communicating with an audience. According to Montoya, personal brand refers to "a personal identity that stimulates meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that person stands for." (Montoya 2002 as cited in Berggren & Mohn, 2007, 11).

2. BUILDING A STRONG PERSONAL BRAND

Occasionally it might not be necessary to make an effort to build a personal brand. An individual could instinctively build a personal brand through his/her skills; however, a strong and permanent personal brand requires effort and stability. There exist several principles for building a strong personal brand.

Montoya introduced eight laws for building a personal brand and called it "eight 'laws' of personal branding"(Montoya 2002 as cited in Berggren & Mohn, 2007, 11). These eight laws should be followed in order to create a successful personal brand. Currently, they function for the assessment of personal branding and constitute a list of rules, still expanding and expected to develop further in the future.

The eight 'laws' of personal branding are as follows (Berggren&Mohn, 2007, 11):

1. Law of Specialisation. Brands should focus on one domain of specialisation.

2. Law of Leadership. The individual behind the personal brans should be well respected, talented and acquainted in own domain.

3. Law of Personality. The personal brand should be positioned on top of all characteristics of the individual, including the fallible ones.

4. Law of Distinctiveness. A personal brand should express the individuals in ways that are different from others in the same domain.

5. Law of Visibility. Personal brands need to be consistently and repeatedly observed.

6. Law of Unity. The individual's temperament should be in unity in private life and in public.

7. Law of Persistence. A personal brand should be built to develop further. The individual It should adhere to this belief and it should not be a temporary trend or enthusiasm.

8. Law of Goodwill. The brand is expected to be more effective once there is goodwill.

A strong brand personality should at least follow two of these laws.

3. "OPRAH" AS A PHENOMENON

The reason behind accepting Oprah Winfrey as a brand phenomenon lies in the fact that she was recognized through a brand image different than the usual images and that she created an identity. The main reasons were, as an African American host, she became more prominent when compared to other TV show hosts and celebrities in the US, she appeals to the audiences and she is treasured (Thompson, 2007, 14).

Winfrey's success and the way she fascinated the audiences were as well closely related to her investment in culture and media productions. Her book club, communication style, biography, and her relationship with the audiences positioned her at an important place. Such connections broadened her production, expanded her circulation and led her be known as a phenomenon, "Oprah". Several columns and artices referred to Oprah as the "caring talk show host" based on her racial and humanitarian approaches. The "caring talk show host" image was based on the perceptions of the audiences on Oprah as "one of them", since she listened to her guests opening up to her, she sympathized with them, cried and laughed together, and empathized and helped them. Such attitudes made Oprah accessible to people. The most significant fact in Oprah Winfrey brand phenomenon is that the Oprah Winfrey Show became the voice of those who wanted and strived to, but was not able or failed to, eliminate the class conflict and built a bridge spanning the gap of class differences. Several people criticized her for considering material growth as a way of salvation, and others regard to her as a spiritual leader (Thompson, 2007, 14). Whatever the judgement is, Oprah Winfrey was able to turn her so-called weaknesses into opportunities and managed to become a phenomenon.

4. OPRAH'S SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis is used for strategic planning and strategic management in organizations. It is effectively used to build organizational and competitive strategy. System Approach suggests that organizations are entities that interact with their environments and consist of various sub-systems. Therefore, an organization exists in two environments, namely the own and outside environments. Strategic management practices require the analysis of these environments and such analysis process is called as the SWOT Analysis (Gürel & Tat, 2017, 995).

The SWOT analysis of personal brand management enables the individual to create a roadmap that indicates who this individual is, his/her strengths, weaknesses, external threats and opportunities and presents a direction in life. Oprah's SWOT analysis is presented in Figure 1.

Strengths	Threats
Voice of women	Comes from an underpriveleged life
Humanitarian	Forced into an incest relationship
A pioneer for change	Criticized by African American community
A mediator for dialogue	
Social problem solver	
Volunteer to prevent AIDS	
Trendsetter	
Perfectionist	
Winner	
Weaknesess	Opportunities
Being African American	Turned her weaknesses to opportunities
Large body figure	(used them as points of distinctiveness.)

Figure 1. Oprah Winfrey's Swot Analysis

Oprah's strengths, especially observed in her communication with women in her show, stem from being the voice of women who failed to express themselves, to make themselves heard, to bring themselves forward and who needed help. She has a humanitarian disposition. She has an identity that listens to other individuals, their problems and seeks solutions as if they are her own. She is an entrepreneur for change, she is the first person who initiates in need of a charity campaign. She serves as an intermediary for dialogue, for instance, strives to bring together family members who were apart for years. She has a socially constructive, restorative and integrative identity. She was also involved in projects that had a sound impact on significant health problems threatening the entire society. She initiates change and she is the first voice in any activist movement. She is a perfectionist and does not quit anything she starts; therefore, she is perceived as a winner and a persistent individual. Her weaknesses and aspects (which she managed to use them positively based on the principles of building a personal brand of difference) that are criticized by a particular community are her African American roots and her large body figure. The threats that have the potential to damage her brand image in community's perception are coming from an exceptionally underprivileged life, being forced into an incest relationship by close family members and being criticized by other African American individuals. Her opportunities lie in her ability to manage to turn all her weaknesses into chances and to use them as points of differences in building her personal brand.

5. OPRAH'S SELF POSITIONING

"Brand positioning is defined as the permanent and particular place in target consumers' mind, occupied through marketing and advertisement. Positioning is

the point of initiation for creating a strong recognition among the competitiors and achieving advantage in competition. Brand positioning is the totality of processes involved in occupaying a certain place in cosumers' minds." (Parlak, 2018).

Enterprises started to make efforts to create tangible or intangible differences for their own brands compared to competitor brands, due to increased competitiveness in late 1960s and lack of significant differences between products and brands (Tosun, 2010, 33):

1) Positioning aims to occupy a place in the minds of individuals in order to expand this space later and communication established at the right time and consequences highly contrbutes positioning.
2) Positioning is rather about the mind of the consumer than the tangible actions.
3) In order to achieve successful positioning, it is essential to be first in occupying a place in the minds of the consumers through the use of a discerning characteristic.

Positioning strategy is generally expressed through applications that define a product and the related brand for the consumers and that occupies a certain place in consumer mind compared to the competitors of that certain brand. Positioning strategies are highly significant in brand management, since the perception of a brand in the consumer mind is constantly supported through communication as an element that defines and differentiates a brand. Brand positioning is an important part of brand identity and brand value, which communicate with target consumers and indicate the advantages offered compared to other brands (Kırdar, -, 241).

Keller, distinguished between equity and competitive differentiation in brand positioning process. For instance, the Swedish watch company Tritoni offers the affordable TRIWA line as a brand to the market. The Italian brand personality represents a competitive differentiation and the Swedish mechanism represents equity. Equity is particularly related to the competitive differentiation while positioning a brand among other common brand structures. Positioning Swatch and Mercedes (within luxury cars concept) represents equity through connections such as passion for sports and quality and differentiation through hedonism, sex and seriousness (Keller, 1993, 1-22).

Brand positioning is directly related to the function of a product represented by the brand and its competitors. Physical or functional aspects of the product initiates the positioning of the brand. Accurate positioning is highly significant in achieving the brand value. Incorrect positioning, despite the success of an identity or product, results fith failure of building a brand. Therefore, a distinctive, crea-

tive and striking positioning is essential. Differentiation and positioning are two inseparable concepts. Unless differentiation is achieved, positioning in consumer mind is not possible (Pira& Kocabaş& Yeniçeri, 2005, 107). Differentiation appear as another distinctive feature. It is essential to especially position the distinctive feature of the product to be different from others and to make a difference in consumer mind. The individual should possess a distinctive aspect, either in terms of personal or corporal features, to build a personal brand.

The differentiation strategy in Oprah Winfrey's brand personality is her positioning as an African American. However, African American female audiences considered this as a problem perceiving Winfrey as an African American caregiver for the dominant white society. A sociological study conducted with the audience in 2003 on talk shows framed this problem as follows: "Aggressive and attracted attitude of the audience against television talk shows." The audiences were invested in Oprah Winfrey Show due to her dignity and unique stance. According to the researchers, Winfrey's followers were commonly middle-class women and "they felt comfortable, they found Oprah Winfrey natural and honest, as if she were their friend." The African American female audience, on the other hand, claimed that such situation was based on unstable emotions. The words used in describing Winfrey, "natural" and "honest," were warning signs, given that these words were used synonymously with a caregiver in advertisement and visual media since the mid 19th century. Fans associated such relationship between whites and caregivers with Oprah Winfrey Show since its beginning. Winfrey's followers finally acknowledged her as their friends and fellow sufferers. Winfrey's show was considered informative, since they were occasionally steered to contemplate on the inequalities in society. Particularly media producers were behind such perception. Indeed, the shows were based on finding a romantic partner, a dream job, decorating a home, organizing perfect parties, sharing delicious recipes and raising exquisite children. Winfrey has created a niche in media, which was never created before, for the women to speak and through her show, she presents the titles and the audiences in tears at home believe that they can elucidate all their problems and everything will be solved through Winfrey's support (Thompson, 2007, 41). Herein, Oprah Winfrey was positioned like a benevolent, friendly, sincere, problem-solving, caring African American caregiver. Nevertheless, she is honest, one of them, she is their partner, just like a therapist. She listens to everyone and makes their dreams come true. Therefore, she succeeded in turning her distinctive African American feature into an opportunity.

5.1 Oprah Winfrey and her Self-Positioning in Terms of Hereditary Genes

Majority of the audience attached importance to her hereditary status, particularly how such status was perceived. In a matter of public event, Winfrey was prevented to enter a store by the sales representative and store manager while others were comfortably entering at the closing time. The first edition of the New York Post alleged that the sales representative told Winfrey that "there were problems with North Africans recently in the store." The comments, including Winfrey's, pointed out that heredity was the driving factor in this incident, although Winfrey's prevention from entering the store was not linked with clear questions based on heredity. However, other commentators accuse Winfrey to forget being an African American and burden her with a very strong reminder. The point ignored by these commentators was Winfrey did not take heredity personal she took various confrontations against her rather social. For instance, the radio show host Don Imus repeatedly made analogies with Winfrey, on heredity-based motifs such as "Brown Cow." (Harris&Wathson, 2007, 15). Such humiliating actions resulted in greater commitment and support of the fans towards Oprah. Thus, Oprah's reputation and success increased.

Oprah was ranked first among the Time Magazine's 100 most important people in 1998, despite such racial discrimination. She won the Outstanding Talk Show and Best Talk Show awards at the 7th and 9th Emmy Awards, respectively. Winfrey's ascend to such position began at the age of 19 through becoming the first African American woman on WTVF-TV in Nashville. Later she made her own local show program, People Speaking in 1984, before moving to Chicago. The Oprah Winfrey Show appeared first in Chicago in 1986 with its new name as a morning show and became a national show. The same year, Winfrey was nominated for the Show Academy Award. She was also nominated for the Golden Globe Award for her role as Sophia in the Steven Spielberg movie, The Color Purple (1985). Undoubtedly, efforts continue to enhance her fame and personality to further strengthen Winfrey's already powerful position in film and television (Wilson, 2003, 56).

Winfrey approaches weight loss the same way she approaches other sensitive issues – through speaking publicly about what seems to be a personal topic thus the viewers could access any improvement in Winfrey's diet and exercise program. Hence, Winfrey created all these stages for the consumption of her audience. On November 15, 1988, Winfrey announced that she lost 65 pounds with her diet plan, Optifast, and highlighted it through showing a carload of animal fat of 65 pounds and proudly presenting her size 10 jeans. Such presentation resulted with

a major recovery of liquid diets of the 1970s. Once the diet was proven to have no long-term success, Winfrey explicitly shared this fact based on her weight gain and search for a new dietary alternative (Thompson, 2007, 20).

Despite the physical effects of being subject to high poverty and backwardness, Winfrey repeatedly stated that the psychological barriers she faced were more challenging. In this respect, her success biography was significantly different from the well-known prominent (male) success biographies. Rather than her indescribable level of abilities, Winfrey portrayed herself as an intensified version of problems that plagued ordinary women – loss of self-confidence, sexual assault, obesity, failed romantic relationships. These features that made up Winfrey's personality took the plastic celebrity icons down from the fetish level. She became was famous for being harassed and sharing it with the public. Her disclosures are personal and internal. Winfrey actively developed the theme of psychological damage by justifying her life story through compartementalization, while preparing her biography. She also confessed her personal tragedies. She revelaed her failed relationships, being sexually abused during childhood, and the constant and numerous attempts she made to lose weight. Such internal events made her loved in the States and one of the most demanded hosts in the country. Winfrey says she still has a hard time thinking of herself as a famous person (Wilson, 2003, 92).

5.2. Positioning of the Oprah's Large Body Frame

In folk culture, body is represented through the associations between the uterus and soil, belly and fertility. The universe is represented through the body itself. Cosmic, universal and large body images corresponded to a transition, meaning life is inexhaustible, acknowledging the cycle of death and life is eternal. Thus, large bodies and festivities represented the liberation in transcendental possibilities for creating unrestricted life and new meanings. Possibilites for renewal and change symbolized certian power against chaos. Yet, people were accustomed to smooth, polished and 'classic' body image endorsed by televisions and global markets, contrary to such fact. Oprah, on the other hand, made verbal and non-verbal violation of taboos, expanded her range of motion and rejected the existing order (Wilson, 2003, 183).

Bakhtin emphasized the historical aspects of festivities and grotesque body: such body image, in historical aspect, combines the theme of immortality and the growth of human culture. Polpular-festivity images construct the multi-nucleus of the total system. The large body image indicates being interwined with the utopian, social, historical and cosmic themes, yet being in constant change and renewal

of the culture (Bakhtin, 2011, as cited in Sözen, 2009, 67). However, Bakhtin's model was not always valid. Once Oprah attracted all the attention to the body, she would become the subject of a discussion of large body frames of a gender.

Oprah's big black body is the central image of her show contradicting the white, smooth, rounded, finished bodies prevalent in advertising and serve bourgeois capitalism. Consequently, Oprah and the grotesque body irritates the processes of commodification and commercialism (Wilson, 2003, 186). In this context, Oprah represents a synthesis, created as an antithesis, against the conception of the expected, stereotypical advertising clichés. She demonstrates that a unique and personal brand could be built without submitting the common order, incorrect consciousness, alienation and commodification to become a brand personality.

6. OPRAH'S IMAGE

Individuals influence others through their personal style, professionalism and charisma. A personal image is the image of a certain individual. Hereditary physical characteristics and temperament of an individual are intact to a certain extent. The way to walk, sit, present posture represents the effects of instruction, creation and conditioning; however, clothing prefereneces are the personal choices. The elements of personal image are appearance, body language, communication skills (way of listening, thinking and presenting oneself) (Sampson, 2006).

Brand image is defined as the holistic picture of a brand in the mind of the consumer. The factors that affect the formation of such image are brand recognition, attitude and trust in brand quality. Brand image consists of brand-reflected perceptions based on associations in consumer memory. Such considerations help summarize that brand image is a broadly subjective and perceptual phenomenon, shaped by consumer opinions on rational or emotional bases (Howard & Keller, as cited in Uztuğ, 2003, 40).

Brand image is a significant research domain in marketing literature. (Keller, 1993, cited Noble, etc. 2010, 316) defined the brand image as the "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory." (Keller, 1993, as cited in Noble, etc. 2010, 316) also emphasized sub-dimensions of brand image through (a) types of brand associations, (b) favorability of brand associations (c) strength of brand associations. These three dimensions were associated with academic reputation. The types of such associations address brands and categories contextually. As in the academy, a research domain is based on the associations between the methodological or analytical techniques, editorial positions and articles, or discipline and managerial leadership positions. Several assocaiations are based on the components of assessment and evaluation.

Television broadcasting, which became the most powerful tool in influencing the masses during the history of civilization to date, now belongs to global monopolies that is beyond national monopolies. Hence, viewers are guided and informed by those who monopolize global information. Such monopolization not only takes place in news networks but also in series that became tutorials for behavioral instruction. These series offer simulated experiences through artificial images, within the ordinary daily life of the audiences. They drift the audiences away from the problems of daily life into artificial worlds. Despite their diverse appearances, these series are occasionally replicas of one another and "they aim to repeat the 'justification' of the perception and evaluation of real life, rather than acquiring a recollection to understand the external realities."(Yazıcı, 1997, 120). In Oprah's talk show, all visually structured elements create the perception of the "real" and "acceptable" and strive to engage the audience with such aura.

7. OPRAH'S BRAND MANAGEMENT

In highly and continuously competitive markets, companies are in an intense exploration to exist and stand out among the competitors. The diversity efforts initiated with the introduction of new products evolved over the course of low-cost production and total quality management practices, towards customer service and relations. Consequently, efforts to achieve customer satisfaction reveal the importance of brand management.

Brand management includes two main areas of activity. The first is to realize brand awareness through creating a brand image and rendering it resistant to time and other effects. The second is to strengthen the brand.

1) Creating a new category and a new market by de-merging or merging

The prerequisite of creating a strong brand today is to especially create new markets rather than addressing the existing market. Therefore, building a brand for a product first requires differentiation from existing categories, since consumer mind is focused on categories. For instance, once a brand name, such as Marlboro, is mentioned the categorical image of masculine cigarettes appears in consumer mind (Tosun, 2010, 24).

2) Decision-making on brand positioning

Positioning, at the center of brand management, is the study of designing what the brand offers to the target audience and the brand image that needs to be created. Positioning commonly includes determining the position appropriate for the target market and ensuring that the target market appeals to the particular brand.

3) Designing the brand identity and planning brand communication strategies to convey the identity elements to the target audience.

The feasibility of the brand positioning decisions is achieved through communicating the intended positioning to the target audience. Therefore, it is essential to select tangible and intangible elements that primarily create the desired associations due to the determination of positioning (Tosun, 2010, 25).

4) Brand Audit

Assessing the efficiency of the brand communication in creating the desired associations of the brand identity for a target audience is a significant phase of brand management. The evaluation of all brand-relates works is called the "brand audit."

5) Increasing Brand Equity and Value

Maintaining and increasing brand equity requires constant review of brand-product portfolios, hierarchies, thus the branding strategies. Furthermore, maintaining brand communication revisions through necessary updates is another factor in increasing brand equity and value (Tosun, 2010, 26).

Shattuc (1997), American TV shows from the perspective of Freud's psychoanalysis and concluded that the increase in daytime talk shows and the political movements in the US during 1960s and 1970s were influential in their logic "we can do it." However, he explored the cultural and historical conditions to correctly explain such phenomenon (Shattuc, 1997, as cited in Furze, etc.2011)

Oprah is a product with a famous personality. Technological progress produced a wide spectrum and an attempt to explain its effects on subjectivity. The relationship between technology and essence is the key that realized Oprah and her popularity. Oprah's intimate relationship with her guests and audience and the meanings produced by the show were sole products of the Oprah Winfrey Show. The nature of self and its significance are the two key traditions of thought within American culture that explains such phenomenon (Wilson, 2003, 53-54). More importantly, Oprah Winfrey established a relationship with the audiences as an African American woman. In this respect, Oprah's personality becomes of fundamental importance.

Her position became more visible in the last 20 years, with respect to her struggle to establish civil rights. The intertextual references in Winfrey's scripts in The Color Purple (1986) and Beloved (1999) helped her identity to become an image in consumer mind with an emphasis on the African American traditional narrative. Oprah is a celebrity who reflected the improvement potential of the worldview on African American community (Thompson, 2007, 108).

African American literature facilitated such improvement and created a transformation. Rescue was a mainstay, and for the first time, the success of a collective history was achieved through the success of an individual history. She is an integral part of the historical movement of the family, social constitution, social groups and individual success. and self-completion as shared sources of strength. Despite a certain group of individuals believe that Oprah show is a result of subjectivity, it is possible to state that it is marked by institutional and commodified culture, yet significantly shapes the African American discourse (Thompson, 2007, 108).

CONCLUSION:

As a personal brand, Oprah Winfrey has become a phenomenon both due to her appearance and life and has managed to a household name. While developing this brand, she particularly utilized the law of differentiation among the rules of brand development and preferred to become a brand by selecting the unknown, difficult path rather than the most traveled one. She always used her African American and oversized body in brand positioning, image creation and brand management. She gave the message "I am one of you" through her warm, loving and charitable identity. Her presentation, communication style, oratory strength, empathy skills were part of the characteristics that a brand identity should possess. She is a strong personality who has succeeded in turning her opportunities into advantages without hiding her weaknesses, especially due to her high self-awareness. Thus, she knew how to position herself as a brand, managed her brand through positive strategies, and became a household name for all Americans.

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