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## The Perceptions and Experiences of Human Resources Recruiters Regarding LinkedIn as an Online Personal Branding Representation of Recent Business Graduates

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# **The Perceptions and Experiences of Human Resources Recruiters Regarding LinkedIn as an Online Personal Branding Representation of Recent Business Graduates**

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

According to Vallas and Cummins (2015), marketers' idea of personal branding began in the eighties, but it wasn't until the late nineties when the concept became more prevalent. Tom Peters introduced the conceptualization of personal branding in 1997, and since then, this concept has become extensively popular (as cited in Shepherd, 2005). The personal branding concept unfolded from the theory of branding (Vitelar, 2019). This author asserts that a personal brand helps individuals, especially the younger generation, express their uniqueness and individuality. Manai and Holmund (2015) define personal branding as the capacity of a person to communicate their abilities when looking for a job. A central concept of personal branding is that everyone represents a brand (Shepherd, 2005). That is why it is essential to develop clear strategies to differentiate from others in the competitive and crowded market. Each person needs to be a unique brand to defeat competitors (Rangarajan et al., 2017). Using online communications and social media to develop and communicate personal branding strategies generates academic interest (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2018), so academia and business professionals want to understand better how to create solid personal branding (Vitelar, 2019). Harris and Rae (2011) point out the concept of the "digital divide," which is how knowledgeable a person is in using new forms of online communication like social media to promote themselves. The new forms of online communications enable individuals to develop a personal branding strategy (Labrecque et al., 2011). The literature points out how the concept of personal branding has evolved during the last 20 years and how new forms of online communication, especially social media, play an essential role today. Recent business graduates need to be aware and ready to develop and manage their own unique personal branding strategy to find their desired job or gain promotion within the company.

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of Human Resource Recruiters regarding LinkedIn as an online personal branding representation of recent business program graduates by using a phenomenological approach. According to Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2018), the phenomenological method can be descriptive and interpretative. The first one allows the researcher to analyze the perceptions and experiences of the participants as Human Resource Recruiters, and the second one allows the researcher to give an interpretation of the perceptions and experiences. The population of interest comprises Human Resource Recruiters that use LinkedIn and hire recent business graduates.

The recordings and or transcripts of the interviews were utilized to conduct an interpretative phenomenological analysis to identify broader themes across the data set. The identified themes follow the same order as the questions conducted during the sessions. The five themes that emerged are (1) Social platforms utilized by HR recruiters, (2) HR recruiters' experiences of using LinkedIn in recruiting recent business graduates, (3) The LinkedIn profile and personal branding, (4) LinkedIn impression management behaviors observed by HR recruiters as best practices by job candidates, and (5) HR recruiters recommendations for managing their profile to communicate a solid personal brand.

**Keywords:** *Personal Branding, Human Resources Recruiters, Recent Business Graduates, Impression Management, LinkedIn, and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).*

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