



Cape Peninsula
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**AN INVESTIGATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN PROFESSIONAL CRICKETERS AND
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR PERSONAL BRANDS**

by

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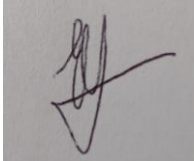
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ABSTRACT

Although the concept of personal branding has been well documented across various industries, athlete branding has not received the same level of coverage. There are numerous examples of athletes who have managed to build their personal brands on a global scale by using specific strategies and techniques and being intentional about their brand building practices. The extent to which professional cricket players in South Africa actively develop and manage their personal brands is, however, unknown. The purpose of this study was therefore to ascertain, the extent to which professional cricketers in South Africa are aware of, and actively manage their personal brands. An interpretive research paradigm was adopted with a cross-sectional mixed method research design. An online survey with a series of open-ended questions sought to address the qualitative inquiry while Likert scale items and “Yes” and “No” questions addressed the quantitative component. A mixed methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods proved useful to elicit rich and meaningful data from South African men’s and women’s national cricket teams, as well as the nation’s franchise teams, on their perceptions of personal branding. A total of 30 cricketers participated in the study. Respondents were purposely selected using a purposive sampling technique. ATLAS.ti. 9 software was used to code and analyse the data. A thematic presentation of the findings revealed that all respondents identified with and understood the term personal branding, and they understood the benefits related to effective personal branding practices. However, the degree of management and activation practices of personal branding across players differed depending on their level of playing experience and their commercial profiles. The study therefore concludes that, while professional cricketers in SA understand the importance of and benefits relative to personal branding, more priority should be placed on the intention to manage and leverage personal brands. This study highlights the importance of personal branding for athletes at all levels of sport within South Africa. It also provides athletes – and all parties involved in the management of athletes – with a list of best practice guidelines for building and managing athlete brands.

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GLOSSARY

CSA:	Cricket South Africa
FICA:	The Federation of International Cricketers Association
ICC:	The International Cricket Council
Proteas:	South African International Cricket Players (Men & Women)
RPC:	Regional Performance Centres
SACA:	South African Cricketers' Association

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research topic area by outlining the background of the research. The chapter describes the problem statement by identifying the research gaps in line with theory, practice, and policy. It further provides insight into the aims and objectives of this research and the research questions are presented in line with the set objectives. The chapter further presents a brief overview of the literature that was considered for the current research topic. A delineation of the research is highlighted and thereafter the selected methodological processes which outline the adopted research inquiry, the data collection techniques and sampling procedures are presented. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations for conducting research in this study context.

The professionalisation of sport has led to the increased use of marketing and branding in a sporting context. Beech and Chadwick (2007:37) argue that,

“If the 20th century solidified for sport managers the need to run sport organisations as businesses, then the 21st century has certainly taught us to view sport organisations as brands that can be developed and extended”.

Professional clubs, athletes, teams, and competitions are all considered brands and offer various opportunities for brand exploitation.

Branding is viewed as the marketing practice of actively shaping one’s uniqueness. Shyle (2015) reveals that a brand is what empowers businesses to break through the marketing clutter, thereby capturing the attention of their ideal customer. There appears to be consensus in the literature that branding involves making consumers believe that you have the best product or service to meet their needs; and this message needs to be clearly communicated when they first encounter your product, services, or marketing materials (Millman, 2012).

Personal branding is a more individualistic approach when considering the aforementioned definitions of a brand and branding, with the crucial premise being that people are also considered brands. Rein et al. (2006) made the claim that, when used properly, personal branding can turn any individual into a brand in any business, with reference to a sporting setting. More specifically, your personal brand can be seen as the combination of your experience, your professional network and your image, both on and offline (Shyle, 2015). Kaputa (2006) believes that personal branding is also about packaging the brand that is unique

to each individual and using various branding strategies from the marketing world to enhance their identity and communicate their unique selling proposition.

As each athlete has their own personality, name, and appearance, they may all be thought of as brands (Carlson & Donovan, 2013). An athlete's brand is defined as, "a public persona of an individual athlete who has established their own meaning and value using their name and personal intellectual property" (Arai et al., 2014:98). Athletes assist organisations by creating positive associations for their products and services and by increasing awareness, all while building their own personal brand (Colman, 2022). Notably, the terms athlete branding and personal branding can be used interchangeably. The definitions of the two terms are similar; however, in a sporting context, the application may differ.

On average, professional athletes enjoy relatively short careers; and historically, brand building practices have been seemingly uncommon, which makes the understanding of personal branding very important in the current sports landscape (Hodge & Walker, 2015). As sports marketing has evolved, it has become almost imperative for professional athletes to pay more attention to their personal brands. Athlete branding is an important topic as the research indicates that the future success of an athlete is heavily influenced by their capacity to capitalise on and market a favourable image (Hodge & Walker, 2015). As is the case with traditional products, several professional athletes have their own intellectual property and attributes that differentiate them from their sporting compatriots (Merino, 2016).

As a result of potential brand-related benefits (enhanced commercial profile and sponsorship opportunities) derived from marketing activation and brand extension strategies, Arai et al. (2013) assert that many athletes have started to see the benefits of developing their personal brands more actively. Research shows that there is a growing awareness around global athlete branding and its role in the sports marketing landscape (Hodge & Walker, 2015). While extensive research has been conducted around successful athlete brands and their associations with products and organisations in a global context (Hodge & Walker, 2015), there is limited research that specifically relates to athlete brands and the perceptions and awareness of personal branding by professional athletes in South African sport. Athlete branding literature in a South African context has historically focused on brand building and brand association efforts of top South African athletes (Brand Equity, 2017; Armato, 2023; Impey, 2020), with very little focus on athletes' perceptions of their brands and their specific brand building techniques.

1.2 Background to the research

Many sports organisations, as well as sports figures, now place a high focus on building great brands. The justification for this is that creating a strong brand might open a lot of marketing benefits. According to this view, “a brand is thought to have positive equity to the extent that consumers respond more favourably to marketing activities when the brand is identified, compared to when it is not” (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003:421).

Professional athletes must now establish and market their personal brands in the contemporary sports marketing environment, where brand sponsorships and advertising, fan interaction, and fan following are all becoming more important. The emergence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Tik Tok, as well as the changing nature of the digital era, have made it increasingly difficult for sportsmen to avoid developing their own personal brands (Colman, 2022).

While on a global scale sporting personalities are looking to position their brands, research suggests that their brands do not appear to be effectively managed, and this can impede the intended brand of the athlete (see Burton, 2017). Several studies have reported on the personal branding practices of professional athletes on a global scale. Parmentier and Fischer (2012) conducted one such study into the personal branding practices of David Beckham and Ryan Giggs. Their study found that, while these soccer players enjoyed similar levels of success on the field, David Beckham has enjoyed far more success from a commercial perspective and this success can be directly attributed to the management and growth of his personal brand. Numerous other studies (see Whitney, 2016; Adamson, 2017; Price, 2017; Reed, 2017) have conducted research into athlete brands in a sporting context globally, with a specific focus on the global reach of these elite athletes and their brands.

Very limited research exists on South African athletes and their personal branding practices. Recent studies (Impey, 2020; Armato, 2023) have focused on South African athletes and their personal branding strategies in other sporting codes. However, none of these studies has drawn specific attention to cricket players in South Africa, pointing to a theoretical gap. In the cricketing context in South Africa, AB de Villiers has enjoyed media coverage off the back of his brand building exploits (Brand Equity, 2017; Dudley, 2017); however, the focus of these studies is on AB’s current sponsors and fan following, not on his brand building management or activation strategy. Therefore, it was crucial for this study to ascertain, the extent to which professional cricketers in South Africa are aware of, and actively manage their personal brands.

It is therefore important for this research to shine a light on the athlete branding practices within South African cricket to facilitate further engagement, education, and research into this area. Understanding the significance of personal branding in sport, particularly determining the role that personal branding plays for sport personalities in South Africa, spurred on this research which aims to investigate personal branding for professional cricket players in South Africa.

The introduction of the SA20 cricket league in South Africa, as well as the hosting of the 2023 ICC Women's World Cup, highlights the continued growth and development of the game in South Africa. Furthermore, South Africa will host the 2027 ICC Cricket World Cup.

1.3 Research problem statement

As a nation, South Africa has a history of very successful athletes across multiple sporting codes with great personal branding stories to tell. There are numerous examples of successful athlete brands, some of which are discussed in this study (David Beckham, Roger Federer, Michael Jordan, etc.). However, very little research literature exists relating to athlete brands in a South African context. As a result of this limited literature, knowledge gaps have been identified in relation to brand awareness and identity constructs informing South African sport personalities who operate in a contextual setting very different to those of widely studied global sports stars.

While there are clear examples of personal branding that focus predominantly on International athletes (Sartori, 2020), as well as brand building services (GetSmarter, 2016), it remains unclear how athletes build and manage their brands in a South African context. The lack of education and resources available to younger, inexperienced players making their way through the ranks is also a concern, as players need to be educated from as early a stage in their professional careers as possible.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

The primary aim of this exploratory study was therefore, to ascertain, the extent to which professional cricketers in South Africa are aware of, and actively manage their personal brands.

The following specific objectives were identified for this study:

- To identify best practices of athlete personal brand management in international contexts through reviewing the literature and athlete examples.
- To explore the awareness, and perceptions of personal branding, and the branding practices of South African professional cricketers.
- To propose personal branding best practices for professional cricketers in South Africa.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study provides a significant contribution to the theory relating to personal branding by introducing (sport) management-specific constructs towards eliciting the perceptions and awareness of professional cricket players in South Africa. It further depicts current personal branding practices and trends of professional cricketers which could be used as a reference for future research.

This study led to the creation of a proposed personal branding best practice list of recommendations for professional cricketers, player agents and other stakeholders involved in the management of athletes in South Africa. This list of recommendations may be used across sporting codes by athletes at all age and competition levels.

The study aims to highlight the significance of personal branding for professional cricket players in South Africa. The formulation of a personal branding best practice list of recommendations will give cricket players a reference point and best practice guide on either how to start building their brand, or to make relevant changes to their current brand strategy. This will assist players in realising the potential of having a powerful personal brand.

The study is particularly helpful for more inexperienced, younger players because the findings could inform them of the significance of personal branding and how to keep it top of mind as they begin their cricketing careers. In the past, it has generally been accepted that player agents are in charge of creating and overseeing the branding plans on behalf of their athletes or clients (Arai et al., 2014). Beyond its use by cricket players, the list of recommendations will be of use to accredited player agents who manage the personal and professional affairs of sports personalities. The list of recommendations may also be utilised by professional athletes from other sporting codes to assist in their brand building journey. Furthermore, it will serve as a best practice guide for athletes seeking personal branding assistance and guidance.

1.6 Research questions

Leading from the problem statement and objectives, the following main research question emerged:

- To what extent are professional cricket players in South Africa aware of, and actively managing their personal brands?

The following secondary research questions were also proposed:

- How do professional cricket players in South Africa perceive the benefits of personal branding?
- How does the personal branding by professional cricketers in South Africa compare to best practices of athlete branding globally?

1.7 Definition of key concepts

The following key terms used in the context of this study are defined below:

- **Sports marketing**

Sports marketing, according to Freyer (2011), is based on basic marketing ideas and commercial practices. However, it depends on the understanding and imagination of marketers to recognize adequately the characteristics inherent in sports and to design problem-specific solutions. Buhler and Nufer (2014:6) define sports marketing as “the marketing of sports products by sporting organisations (marketing of sports) as well as the marketing of sports-related and non-sports products and services by companies using sports as a means”.

- **Branding**

According to marketers, “a brand can be viewed as a distinct product, service, or business, whilst branding is the act of impressing a product, service or business on the mind of a consumer, or set of consumers” (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003:435). Many people think that branding involves emotionally bonding with your target audience of consumers. as well as exposure and access (Saunders & Woods, 2018). Vaid (2003:5) regard branding as the process by which a company, a product name, or an image come to be associated with a group of ideals, objectives, or states, like youth, independence, trustworthiness, quality or performance.

- **Personal branding**

Parmentier and Fischer (2012:107) note that,

“If a brand in general can be thought of as the associations that people make with the goods or services of a particular seller, then a personal brand can be considered to be the set of associations identified with a particular person”.

A widely accepted definition of personal branding is that it involves the process of people marketing themselves and their careers as brands, which essentially is the same as any type of branding for a product or service; it’s just that it is for yourself (Nucci, 2015).

- Athlete branding

According to Buhler and Nufer (2014:7), “the sports market can be divided into two distinct sections, one being the athletes’ market and the other the spectators’ market”. In terms of athlete management, it is important to understand both markets and how they complement each other. One’s personal brand as an athlete needs to tell the story of who one is as a person, because the spectator market wants to connect with authentic, real people with whom they feel they can identify. Furthermore, athlete management encompasses multiple fields of management, and focuses on the holistic development of the individual. A primary objective of athlete management is the ability to manage and develop the athlete as a brand (Saunders & Woods, 2018).

- Professional cricket players

The term, ‘professional cricket players’ is used extensively in this study. This can loosely be defined as a cricket player that is contracted to either Cricket South Africa, or to one of the six franchise teams in South African domestic cricket.

1.8 Delineation of study

The study was limited to an investigation of professional cricket players in South Africa. The study therefore included only players contracted to one of the six cricket franchise teams in South Africa who, at the time of the study, were the Cape Cobras, the Dolphins, the Knights, the Lions, the Titans and the Warriors. The study was also limited to fully contracted Proteas men and women players. The study did not include on Senior Provincial or Club cricketers and also never included cricket players from any school or tertiary institution. The study focused on cricketers of South African nationality only, and excluded foreign or overseas cricketers that may have been contracted by a franchise at the time of this study.

1.9 Research methodology

Leavy (2017) asserts that the interpretive research approach involves the making and remaking of the social world through various patterns of interaction and interpretive processes, thereby assigning meaning to activities, events, and gestures. According to Maree (2011), most of the qualitative data analysis is built on an interpretive philosophy that aims to explore the significance and comprehend the symbolism behind the content in relation to the data. Therefore, in interpretive research, researchers value people’s subjective understanding and interpretation of their experiences and circumstances. For the purposes of this research, an interpretive research paradigm was selected, as the perceptions and awareness of athletes toward personal branding were gauged and interpreted based on their responses to personal branding questions via the online survey. An interpretive research paradigm was used to understand the perceptions and beliefs of cricketers relative to their personal brands.

1.9.1 Research method

A mixed method approach was selected for use in this study as it sought to gain an understanding of the personal branding practices of professional cricket players in South Africa.

This study was designed as an exploratory study to provide insight into the perceptions and awareness of professional athletes relative to personal branding. The nature of information gathered from the players makes this the most suited type of research. Leavy (2017:14) defines a research method as, “a tool used for the purposes of data collection or generation. Research methods are ultimately selected as they provide the best tools to produce the required data for a particular project”. Questionnaires are possibly the most used data gathering tool in sport-related research, claim Gratton and Jones (2010). An online survey with a series of open-ended questions sought to address the qualitative inquiry while Likert scale items and “Yes” and “No” questions addressed the quantitative component. Moreover, a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative questions ensure that respondents’ answers are in depth which makes them very useful for gauging the attitudes and perceptions of respondents (Hagström, 2015). For this study, online surveys were used to cope with varying levels of accessibility of the respondents.

1.9.2 Research methodology

1.9.2.1 Population, sample method and size

Individuals, groups, and organisations that make up the population are considered the study's object, as are the circumstances to which they are subjected (Welman & Kruger, 2001). According to Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009:179), “a qualitative report might acknowledge a small sample size but attempt to prove that the sample is representative of similar people within the population from which it was drawn”. Sampling is viewed by Winterton (2008:19) as a method that makes assumptions about the entire population based on a limited subset of that group. A sample can also be thought of as a smaller portion of the population (Leavy, 2017).

The professional structure within cricket in South Africa is made up of six franchise teams (Cape Cobras, Dolphins, Knights, Lions, Titans and Warriors), as well as the Proteas National Men’s and Women’s teams. There is a total of 120 professional men's cricket players in South Africa, and 14 professional women players (Cricket South Africa, 2019). The population size is 134 players, with the sample size selected being 30 players: twelve (12) franchise players, twelve (12) Proteas men players and six (6) Proteas women players. The choice of sample for selection was based on players’ demographics, including race, age, gender, and income status. This selection was done to ensure that as diverse a sample group as possible was

selected to best represent the target population. The selection criteria were chosen to provide deeper insight into the awareness and perceptions of players from different cultural backgrounds and at different stages of their careers.

1.9.2.2 Data collection

According to Ruel et al. (2016), the goal of data collection is to gather data. When compiling questions for the questionnaire used to collect data, the researcher must compose questions that will be easy enough for respondents to understand; and those questions must generate data that the researcher is able to process. Fowler (2014) agrees, stating that the layout should be simple, clear, and uncluttered. Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009) state that self-report data collection can be performed with a group of selected respondents and done via an online survey.

The research tool to be utilised for the purpose of collecting data was an online survey compiled utilising Google Forms and emailed to respondents. An online survey with a series of open-ended questions sought to address the qualitative inquiry while Likert scale items and “Yes” and “No” questions addressed the quantitative component. This data collection instrument was selected for the ease of access it provided between the researcher and the respondents.

1.9.2.3 Survey schedule

Respondents were provided with adequate space to elaborate on their thoughts or perceptions in relation to open-ended questions. The survey was e-mailed directly to the players who formed part of the sample group. All respondents within the sample group, as members of SACA, provided the researcher with their personal contact details at the beginning of the cricket season by signing a SACA membership form. The signing of this membership form granted the researcher, as well as any SACA staff member, permission to contact each player personally at any time. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from every individual selected for this study. The main purpose of the survey was to explore the perceptions and awareness of professional cricketers towards personal branding, as well as to ascertain current personal branding trends and practices.

1.9.2.4 Data analysis

The extensive method of thematic analysis allows researchers to find numerous connections between the data and the developing themes of their work (Hayes 1997). Research appears to agree that the extensive method also offers some flexibility for using both inductive and deductive methods to approach research problems (Hayes 1997; Frith & Gleeson 2004; Halldorson 2009). According to Alhojailan (2014), the approach of thematic analysis is more suitable for data analysis when the goal of the study is to evaluate different evidence sets that

are relevant to diverse situations within the same study and to extract data to determine the relationship between variables. For this study, a thematic analysis was conducted using a software program, ATLAS, ti v9, whereby the raw data transcripts were loaded into the program, transcripts were deductively coded, and themes were assigned to group the list of codes. Quantitative data was generated through Google Forms, and it was presented in Microsoft Excel in the form of graphs and charts. These charts make up the basis for the interpretation of the data and the presentation of the results.

1.10 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the CPUT Research Ethics Committee to carry out this study (See Appendix B certificate number: 2020FOBREC781). Informed consent was also obtained from each individual athlete that participated in the study as the information they provided was being used for research purposes. A letter of consent was also granted by the South African Cricketers' Association, the collective representative of professional cricketers in South Africa. Respondents understood and consented to their identities being revealed to the data collector during the data collection phase only; however, their identities would remain anonymous, and confidentiality upheld in the analysis and reporting phases. Upon entry of the respective data into the computer, the respondents were assigned a pseudonym in order to ensure anonymity where the data cannot be linked to a name.

1.11 Chapter summary

The study problem statement, research questions, and research objectives have been set out in this chapter, along with an outline of the rationale for the investigation. Furthermore, the chapter has highlighted the significance of this research and its expected outcomes. This chapter has also highlighted the methodological processes used in this study to provide answers to the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. Chapter 2 reviews both past and current literature related to the research problem area. This will clarify the main themes of the study and indicate the literature developments on this research topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to review the literature relating to branding and, more specifically, personal and athlete branding. According to Hofstee (2006:96), the literature review employs a funnel strategy in which more general ideas are covered first before examining material that is specifically relevant to the study objectives. This chapter therefore starts with a review of the literature on professionalization of sport, both globally and locally, the growth of sports marketing, the ideas of branding, sports branding, and the branding process, as well as a definition and discussion of the idea of personal branding. The chapter concludes by narrowing in on athlete branding as a concept and its related opportunities and challenges. Lastly, several conceptual models are reviewed relating to the development of an athlete brand.

2.2 The professionalisation of sport

Dowling et al. (2014) note that the professionalisation of sport has been accelerated mainly by the increase in sponsorship revenue, but also because of the growth of sport organisations, sporting eco-systems as well as sports stars operating at the elite level.

Wolfe et al. (2002) claim that sport has grown to be a sizeable international industry. The development of sport's tremendous commercial potential has been aided by the concomitant symbiotic relationships between sport and sponsorship and between sport and the media. The following sub-sections conceptualise the professionalisation of sport in different environments, namely, in an international context as well as in a local, South African context.

2.2.1 The professionalisation of sport in an international context

According to the United Nations (UN) Director of Communications, Eric Falt, due to the professionalisation of sport, the role of sport has become more concrete in business terms (Shyle, 2015). Three percent of the entire economic activity in the world is tied to sports globally (Hardy et al., 2012). Sport-related revenue in the UK is on a par with that of the food and auto industries. The corporate practices of this worldwide industry can and do have a widespread impact globally, both from a social and an environmental perspective (Dolles & Soderman, 2011).

Every year, the highest-earning soccer clubs are highlighted in the Deloitte Football Money League (2019). The top three Money League clubs collectively made more over \$2.5 billion in revenue, falling only 5% shy of the total revenue of the top 20 clubs in the 1999–2000 season (Jones, 2019). To demonstrate further, Formula 1 (motor racing) is a sport that has

experienced exponential growth in recent years due to ongoing sponsorship investments and sporting accomplishments, like annual races in China, the Middle East, and other parts of the world (Dolles & Soderman, 2011).

Consequently, in the multibillion-dollar sports industry today, generally the most gruelling (sporting) contests are fought off the field of play where athletes, events, and teams jostle for recognition in the hopes of capturing a bigger share of the sports entertainment revenue on offer. The global sports market grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.3% from 2014; and in 2018 it had burst to a value of over \$488.5 billion. It was predicted that the industry would expand at a CAGR of 5.9% to reach nearly \$614.1 billion by 2022, which had in fact happened (Shyle, 2015). According to Qara (2019), the analysis by A.T. Kearney (2018) estimated that the global sports market would be worth between \$480 billion and \$620 billion with a CAGR of 5.9%. The sports industry is rapidly growing, has intense competition, and has a promising future. Live sporting events, professional athletes, media sales, sponsorships, and tangible goods are all included (Qara, 2019). The sports sector is estimated to be worth \$39 billion in the UK alone, with the Premier League still holding sway as the most valuable league in the world. Between 2022 and 2026, total revenue is anticipated to expand at an average annual rate of 9.15% (UCFB, 2022). Similarly, as the USA's top four leagues—the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, National Football League, and National Hockey League - continue to make their mark on the rest of the world, development and evolution are predicted to soar in the years to come. By the end of 2023, it is anticipated that the US market will be worth \$83 billion (UCFB, 2022).

The professionalisation of sport has led to the increased use of marketing and branding in a sporting context. Beech and Chadwick (2007:37) argue that “if the 20th century solidified for sport managers the need to run sport organisations as businesses, then the 21st century has certainly taught us to view sport organisations as brands that can be developed and extended”. Professional clubs, athletes, teams, and competitions are all considered brands and offer various opportunities for exploitation (Shyle, 2015).

2.2.2 The professionalisation of sport in the South African context

The emergence of South Africa's democracy in 1994 paved the way for sport in the country to become more professional and provides some context relating to its subsequent growth. Sport, as a vital component of civil society, was crucial in the campaign against the Apartheid system in South Africa, according to Keim (2006). Allison (2000:69) remarks:

“... in few countries could institutions of civil society (such as sport) manipulate what appears to be a powerful state in this manner; in no other country, perhaps,

could sporting institutions have played so large a part in forming the direction that the state would take”.

The policy of Apartheid had meant that South Africa refused to select non-white players for their international sporting teams; and this refusal, in turn, restricted official contact with South Africa (Murray et al., 2018). The ban imposed by the ICC formed part of the wider sporting boycott of South Africa during the Apartheid years (Murray et al., 2018).

Significantly, sport played a key role in the fight against an unjust regime. The government and authorized sporting bodies zealously upheld the racial divide in team sports during the height of Apartheid (Keim, 2006). The professionalisation of sport in South Africa was accelerated in the years post-Apartheid. Today, sport has been identified as a key catalyst for social transformation, nation building and community development in South African society (Keim, 2006).

As a result of a very diverse population, the sports enjoyed in South Africa are often linked to history and heritage within the various populations, meaning there are numerous different sports. Due to various socio-economic reasons, certain sports have enjoyed dominance in terms of participation and sponsorship within different portions of the South African society. Soccer, cricket, and rugby are considered the top three sports in the country as they receive most of the support, both from a media and commercial perspective (Knott & Swart, 2014).

South Africa boasts the continent's most wealthy soccer league, has many prominent major event sponsors, is home to top athletes and teams, has global media broadcasters and has hosted Africa's largest-ever sport event, the 2010 FIFA World Cup. South Africa has emerged from the Apartheid-era of sporting isolation to become the largest sport business economy in Africa (Knott & Swart, 2014).

Specifically relating to cricket, South Africa returned to the international cricket stage in 1991 after the moratorium imposed by the International Cricket Conference (ICC) in 1970 was lifted.

Cricket boasts the second-largest following in sports in South Africa, after soccer (Knott & Swart, 2014). South Africa boasts a healthy school, club and franchise system which has elevated the country to the position among the leading nations in world cricket (Knott & Swart, 2014). As a result of the large following that cricket enjoys in South Africa, this study aims to highlight potential personal branding that cricket players and athletes at all levels can benefit from, if managed appropriately.

Professional cricket in South Africa consists of three distinct levels: the national team, i.e., the Proteas (International level); the franchise system (domestic level); and a senior provincial system (semi-professional level). The Proteas are the national men's cricket team that participates at international level against other cricket playing nations. The franchise system is made up of the following franchise teams: the World Sports Betting Cape Cobras; the Hollywood Bets Dolphins; the VKB Knights; the Imperial Lions; the Multiply Titans; and the Warriors. The senior provincial tier includes 13 provinces across South Africa. The Proteas Women's Team also forms part of Cricket South Africa's cricketing structures. There are also various development tiers that Cricket South Africa manages, namely Hubs and Regional Performance Centres (RPC's) as well as the KFC Mini-cricket programme (Cricket South Africa, 2019).

From a professional perspective, the Proteas cricket team has a clear brand identity called Protea Fire. The premise behind the brand is that the Protea is a very resilient flower which flourishes in adverse conditions. Franchise cricket in South Africa, while very competitive, remains very poorly supported, with teams having very low levels of brand recognition amongst its supporter bases (Cricket South Africa, 2019). Proteas players have been able to develop their commercial profile and personal brand image to a greater level when compared to franchise players because they play on the international stage and receive greater commercial exposure through broadcast as well as social media channels (FICA, 2018).

The introduction of the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition in 2008 exposed players to a much larger global audience than they previously experienced. South African players who have played, and those who still compete in the competition at present, have seen a substantial growth in terms of personal brand recognition, clearly depicted through their following on social media (Cricinfo, 2020). Proteas players also enjoy brand exposure as Proteas matches are broadcast in numerous countries globally, including the United Kingdom, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, New Zealand, Bangladesh, West Indies, and Netherlands (ICC, 2017).

2.3 Sports marketing

For this research study, it was important to define and discuss sports marketing in the context of the current study. Special reference is made to the development of sports marketing which has emerged because of the professionalisation of sport. Sports marketing has evolved over the years and become an essential tool for marketers and brand developers (Shyle, 2015). The sport industry continues to advance on many fronts with the rapid adoption of new technologies, the creation of new media opportunities, the development of innovative partnerships and the opening of new markets, all contributing to catapulting this industry to new levels of popularity (Milne & McDonald, 1999).

2.3.1 Defining sports marketing

The term sports marketing was first used by industry magazine, Advertising Age, in 1978 to characterize the practices of marketers who were increasingly using sport as a promotional tool. Sports marketing is the process of anticipating, managing, and satisfying the requirements and wants of sport consumers via the use of marketing theory and strategy. The focus of sports marketing should always be centred on the customer (organisation or individual) and providing them with products and services that seek to satisfy their needs (Parkhouse, 2005).

Sports marketing is a process that encompasses the development and use of actions related to the production, costing, distribution, promoting, and publicizing of sporting goods (Schwarz et al., 2013). The end goal of this process is to maximize the potential of a business by meeting customer requirements, achieving the company's goals and objectives in accordance with its vision and purpose, and staying one step ahead of the competition.

Davis and Hilbert (2013:8-9) define sports marketing from the viewpoint of it centering around the five sports marketing mix elements, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. This advanced definition includes people and place as part of marketing of and through sport. This, in turn, speaks to the rationale of more recent studies investigating each athlete as a sport product. The premise of personal branding correlates with the above definition in that people/athletes may also be viewed as sports products and, in much the same manner as a product engages with other elements of the marketing mix, the same principles should apply to athletes.

Furthermore, Mullin et al. (2007:11) assert that sports marketing involves various exchange processes and consists of all the activities designed to meet the needs and wants of sport consumers. They add: "Sports marketing can be divided into two specific sections: the marketing of sports products and services directly to consumers of sport, and the marketing of other consumer products or services through the use of sports promotions".

Stavros and Smith (2020) echo the above definition of sports marketing, asserting that it does, in fact, involve the marketing of sport, and marketing through sport. Direct marketing of sporting goods and services to fans contrasts with marketing through sport, which refers to the promotion of a non-sport-related good through a sporting event. Personal branding, by definition, refers to marketing through sport as it involves the development of an athlete's personal brand through their association with a particular sport (Calzada, 2013).

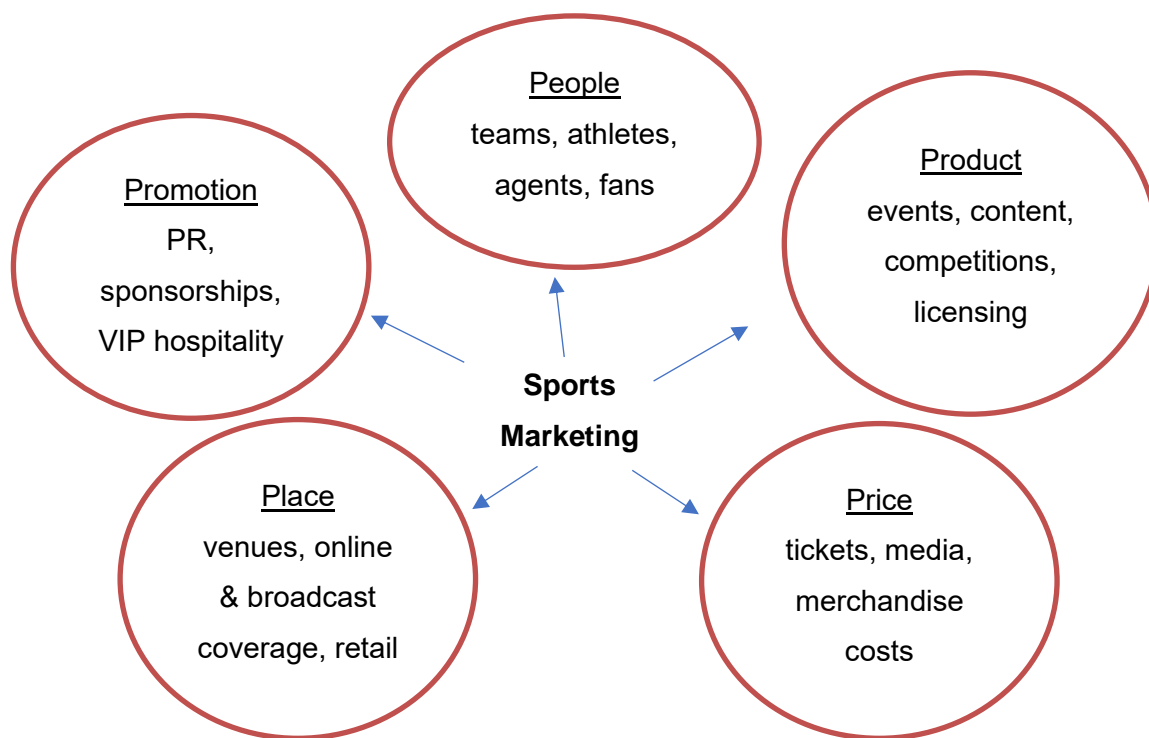


Figure 2.1: The five sports marketing mix elements (Davis & Hilbert, 2013:9)

In addition to the above definitions, sports marketing might also be seen as a process of organizing how a sport brand will be presented and how its goods or services will be delivered to build a rapport with its target audience (Stavros & Smith, 2020).

It was crucial to use Stavros and Smith's (2020) definition for the purposes of this study because it focuses on marketing through sport, specifically the personal branding of professional athletes. The following section reviews the development of sports marketing and its role within the ever-growing sporting industry.

2.3.2 The development of sports marketing

Naturally, the professionalisation of sport has led to the growth of sports marketing and the increased use of business practices such as marketing and branding. Stavros and Smith (2020) explain that branding falls under the umbrella of the broader activities of sports marketing which encompasses all the planning and implementation activities designed to meet the needs or desires of consumers.

Calzada (2013) suggests that sports marketing may be seen as the generation of money through utilizing the key assets of sport property, such as stadiums, brand facilities, and individual players, because of the industry's subsequent expansion and development.

As a result of the growth of sports marketing, sport management has come to the realization that success on the field does not always translate into success for sport organisations (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Kaynak, Salman & Tatoglu, 2007). Because of this, sport marketers now treat organisations and teams like brands and place a high premium on the value they provide to consumers through their products and/or services (Ross, James & Vargas, 2006). This point is especially pertinent to this study since it attempts to emphasize how important it is for individual athletes to view themselves as brands.

Further to the above, billions of dollars are spent in the sports marketing industry each year; more specifically, there is a growing investor interest in specific sponsorships and endorsement of both sports teams and athletes (Nucci, 2015). According to Kapferer (2012), branding has become a crucial part of any marketing strategy because the old marketing mix approach is no longer sufficient to set one's product or service apart from the competitors.

There is a significant amount of variability among 21st-century sport organisations: at one end of the scale, there are sports organisations that resemble global brands with a strong focus on commerce rather than teams in sports like basketball (Chicago Bulls) or soccer (Manchester United); on the other end, there are small, nonprofit sports organisations that are less concerned with the business's financial components and more focused on the community. These two extremes are connected by a shared urge to advertise themselves effectively (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). This is especially pertinent to this study because it emphasizes how important it is for organisations and individuals to sell themselves in a way that highlights their brand at all levels of sport.

Fullerton (2022) outlines the significant impact Covid-19 had on sport marketing in general: events were cancelled, revenue streams were directly impacted, and spectator numbers dropped. Sponsors were concerned about the return on their sponsorship investment and sports marketers were forced to invent creative strategies to extract maximum value from sponsorship and sports marketing properties.

Sports marketing has evolved at a rapid rate over the past 15 years. It has become more real-time, fast-paced, and closely monitored. Understanding fan culture, developing communication strategies, and utilising data insights have become commonplace for sports marketers (Colman, 2022).

2.4 Branding

As the core focus of this study is the phenomenon of personal and athlete branding, it was imperative to understand the concept of brand and sport branding, which will be discussed in

this section of the chapter. The branding process discussed provides a reference point for the personal branding process to be covered later in this chapter.

2.4.1 Defining a brand

The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2007) offers the definition of a brand that is most frequently used: 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". Baradell (2022) asserts that there are some integral components to any good brand. These include authenticity, values, integrity, charisma, personality, and trustworthiness.

Conversely, branding is viewed as the marketing practice of actively shaping your brand. Shyle (2015) reveals that branding is what empowers businesses to break through the marketing clutter, thereby speaking directly to their target market. There appears to be a consensus in the literature that branding involves making consumers believe that you have the best product or service to meet their needs and that this message needs to be clearly communicated when consumers first encounter your product, services or marketing collateral (Millman, 2012).

The definition of branding has evolved over time, with branding theory now being used for places and people. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005:506) expand on this by noting that places also use brands as a tool for differentiation: "places have long felt a need to differentiate themselves from each other, to assert their individuality in pursuit of various economic, political or socio-psychological objectives".

Many sports organisations, as well as sports figures, now place a high focus on building great brands. The rationale is that building a strong brand may provide a pathway to several marketing advantages. According to this view, "a brand is thought to have positive equity to the extent that consumers respond more favourably to marketing activities when the brand is identified, compared to when it is not" (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003:421). Given the goal of this research study, it was crucial to use the definition of Baradell (2022) as it refers to brand as a personality, in much the same way individual athletes have personalities, which ultimately is what encompasses their personal brand.

Personal branding is a more individualistic approach in light of the aforementioned definitions of a brand and branding, with the key premise being that people are also brands in their own right. Referring specifically to a sporting context, Rein et al. (2006) asserts that, if applied correctly, personal branding has the power to transform any person, in any field, into a brand.

The importance of personal branding and its relevance in a sporting context will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow.

2.4.2 Branding process explained

Brand building is an ongoing process; this is true not only for conventional brands but applies to personal branding as well. It is therefore important for the purposes of this study to highlight various branding process constructs and compare those constructs to personal branding process models and constructs which will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow.

Blakey (2011) discussed four main aims of the branding process, as illustrated below in Figure 2.2. The first aim of the process is brand awareness, which is closely linked to brand recognition and brand recall. Brand image does not exist without brand awareness, which is the next goal. People's perceptions of a brand are formed by their expectations and preconceptions of it. The third objective is to raise brand equity, or the value that a brand's reputation creates. Brand equity is the brand's own internal strength. The fourth objective is driving brand loyalty: "this objective requires that the consumer believes the brand is trustworthy and that the brand brings satisfaction to the consumer" (Blakey, 2011: 69-70). It is critical to accomplish all three of these goals to win customer loyalty.

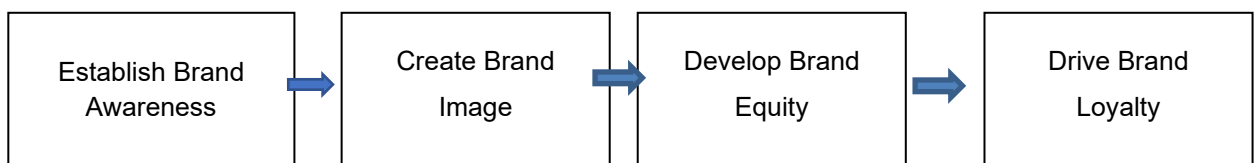


Figure 2.2: The branding process (Blakey, 2011:69)

Furthermore, De Chernatony et al. (2001) echo the above author's sentiments by stating that brands succeed when those brands are seen as an essential component of the marketing process. It is excessively narrow-minded to see branding as just naming, design, or advertising, and such views will only decrease the life expectancy of a brand. A group of practical and sentimental characteristics known as a brand enable an organisation to guarantee customers an exceptional and welcome experience.

- **Brand awareness**

Awareness of a brand is closely linked to brand identity which concerns what the business is or who the person is at its core. The job of the brand is to hold an effective awareness of its identity and be able to convey this to the consumer so that the consumer's perception of the brand matches that of the brand (Craft, 2008).

However, consumers and fans must first become aware of, and acquainted with, the brand in order for them to generate favourable and distinctive brand connections and have a sense of affinity towards it (Hasaan et al., 2016). In addition, Keller (2003) explains brand knowledge as an important component of brand awareness and the development of brand associations.

According to McLaughlin (2011), the strongest brand identification is achieved when the consumer feels a connection with the product or person. Consistent with this perspective, Montoya (2002) explains that developing an athlete brand requires that consumer are aware of the athlete and understand what makes him or her unique (Hasaan et al., 2016).

- **Brand image**

Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) define brand image as the intellectual or emotional associations that customers have with brands. On the business side, Kapferer (2008) similarly explains that it is the meaning that a corporation or individual ascribes to a brand, along with how they wish to represent that brand to their target markets.

Another perspective on brand image is provided by Boyle and Magnusson (2007), who state that brand image is a mental puzzle with three components: associated products or services, the relationship with consumers, and the social role of the brand". An example is the slogan of Football Club Barcelona: More than a club, which communicates a specific identity as the club considers it to be open-ended in meaning. Similarly, Liverpool Football Club developed a new brand identity campaign that leads with the phrase, 'We Are Liverpool: This Means More', which has the aim of connecting with consumers at a far deeper level, beyond results on the field. In the same way, athletes also need to be able to communicate their identity to their desired target market.

Concerning brand image, Arai et al. (2014) propose a model of Athlete Brand Image which can be divided into these three main areas:

- (i) Athletic attributes, achievements, capabilities, and competition style
- (ii) Personal style and appearance
- (iii) Marketable lifestyle

These areas highlighted by Arai et al. (2014) were viewed as key topics on which to gain feedback from respondents within this study to understand better the brand building practices of professional cricket players in South Africa.

- **Brand equity**

According to Keller's (2003) argument, the level of audience affinity and favourable views about a brand determines brand equity. Branding is frequently debated in relation to its capacity to create, maintain, and quantify brand equity. The increased value associated with the brand name or other brand components is known as brand equity (Aaker, 2009). However, later brand management studies recommend that brand value be regarded as its financial value and that brand equity be focused on the perspective of the consumer (Kirk et al., 2013). Both (Aaker, 1991) and Keller (2003) stress the significance of brand awareness and brand image in the process of brand building, despite the fact that several methodologies may be used to comprehend brand equity fully.

Many sportsmen do not view fan attention as a valuable or earned resource when it comes to their brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016). They either consider it a given or believe they are entitled to it since they are a well-known athlete. However, the Institute for Athlete Branding and Marketing (2018) asserts that an important aspect of building brand equity is to position oneself in a manner that creates and maximises fan support, which, if done correctly, leads to a more profitable and dynamic athlete brand.

This study aims to utilise brand equity as an investigative inquiry to understand better the key elements to include in a personal branding best practice list of recommendations for athletes in a South African context.

- **Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty is a direct result of the customer's reaction toward a brand. As this relationship develops, it often mirrors interpersonal relationships with intimacy, reciprocity and loyalty, and consumers therefore become less likely to switch their loyalty, as doing so would violate the relationship (Holt, 2004). If used properly, brand personality may be a powerful marketing tool for differentiating your brand from those of your competitors, which can then lead to the creation of marketing strategies for long-term competitive advantage and brand loyalty (Buresti & Rosenberger, 2006).

Diamantopoulos et al. (2005) agree with the above assertions, stating that a well-established brand personality can lead to greater trust and loyalty as a result of consumers forging stronger emotional ties to the brand, thus providing an enduring basis for differentiation which is difficult to emulate.

A study conducted by Jun and Yi (2020) found that personal branding interactivity is closely linked to the authenticity and emotional attachment an individual has with a brand. The authenticity and emotional attachment that an individual feels toward a brand directly affects

brand trust. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that followers' emotional attachment to influencer brands increases brand loyalty through brand trust.

The above research highlights the constructs linked to branding and branding processes. The following section will focus on how these same constructs are relevant and applicable to personal branding.

2.5 Personal branding

While the term branding has traditionally been associated with businesses, practically everyone nowadays can agree that they have a personal brand, even if relatively few actively work to build one. Hence, the question of whether we have a personal brand or not is replaced by the one of whether we are actively managing it to our advantage (Petruca, 2016). Establishing a firm knowledge of the word personal branding is the goal of this part of the chapter. The literature on the process of personal branding, as well as the significance of social media in this section, will be reviewed.

2.5.1 Defining personal branding

Tom Peters is credited with an idea he presented in his landmark work from 1997, "The Brand Called You", regarding the discovery, comprehension, and marketing of a person's distinctive qualities.

According to Montoya (2002:15), personal branding enables a person to express to the public the values, character, and personality that make up that person. One's personal brand is the sum of all the ideas, pictures, and impressions that other people have of one when they hear or see one's name (Rampersad, 2008). Machaz and Shokoofh (2016), who echo Montoya's sentiments, argue that a personal brand must be something that identifies me, a person, created from a very important personal knowledge of knowing who I am, what I want, and what my objectives are; and, from there, choosing values that align with my identity.

In addition to the above, Kaputa (2006) believes that personal branding is also about packaging the brand that is uniquely you and using various branding and marketing strategies to enhance your identity and communicate your unique selling proposition. Notably, personal branding can also be viewed as being product-based. where the person is the product (Malmi 2014:16). The Institute for Athlete Branding and Marketing (2018) remarks that personal branding is the practice of portraying the best version of oneself, by sharing content and information in which one's most marketable, authentic attributes coincide.

Essentially, personal branding is how you project your brand and its values to the world and how you ensure that your target audience knows who you are, what you stand for, and why it is worth choosing you over your competitors (Heitzman, 2022).

Montoya (2002) believes that personal branding is all about knowing how others perceive you, and seeks to address that question by allowing you to control others' perception of you. You are letting people know who you are and what you stand for, but in an unobtrusive and natural way that makes them believe they have come to that conclusion on their own (Montoya, 2002). Everyone, in reality, has a personal brand, but the majority of people are unaware of this and do not actively, consistently, or effectively manage their brand, claims Rampersad (2008:34). Rampersad's statement is central to this study, as it addresses one of the key outcomes of this research.

2.5.2 The personal branding process

Turner (2004:35) claims that additional research into the personal branding process is necessary because personal brands and brands for goods and services are only marginally different. People are not created only to serve markets, unlike products and services; rather, they serve goals other than those that result in financial gain. This is the main difference between people and products and services. People, as opposed to goods or services, respond to a range of emotions and motivations that may lead to actions that have a negative impact on brand development, endangering the process of personal branding (Shyle, 2015). Also, in contrast to product brands, person brands frequently profit from their brand value by endorsing goods or services. There is much literature that demonstrates just how much personal brand equity is used in this way (Kamins, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000).

Personal branding, according to Khedher (2014:29), is a deliberate process in which individuals work hard to promote themselves. There are three stages to this process:

- brand identity – standing out from a crowd while being aware of your target market
- brand positioning – developing an active brand communication plan
- brand image – evaluating one's brand image

Notably, as illustrated by Khedher (2014:35) in Figure 2.3 below, personal branding is a three stage process. The first step is to create a distinctive personal identity; the second is to communicate one's brand identity actively to a particular target market; and the third is to assess how this has affected one's reputation and image.



Figure 2.3: The personal branding process (Khedher, 2014:35)

Importantly, Rampersad (2008:35) asserts that creating a genuine personal brand is a four-phase process that is organic and evolutionary, as seen in Figure 2.4 below:

- (i.) Identify and develop your personal goals
- (ii.) Establish and develop your personal brand
- (iii.) Create a balanced scorecard for yourself
- (iv.) Put your own goals, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard into practice and grow them

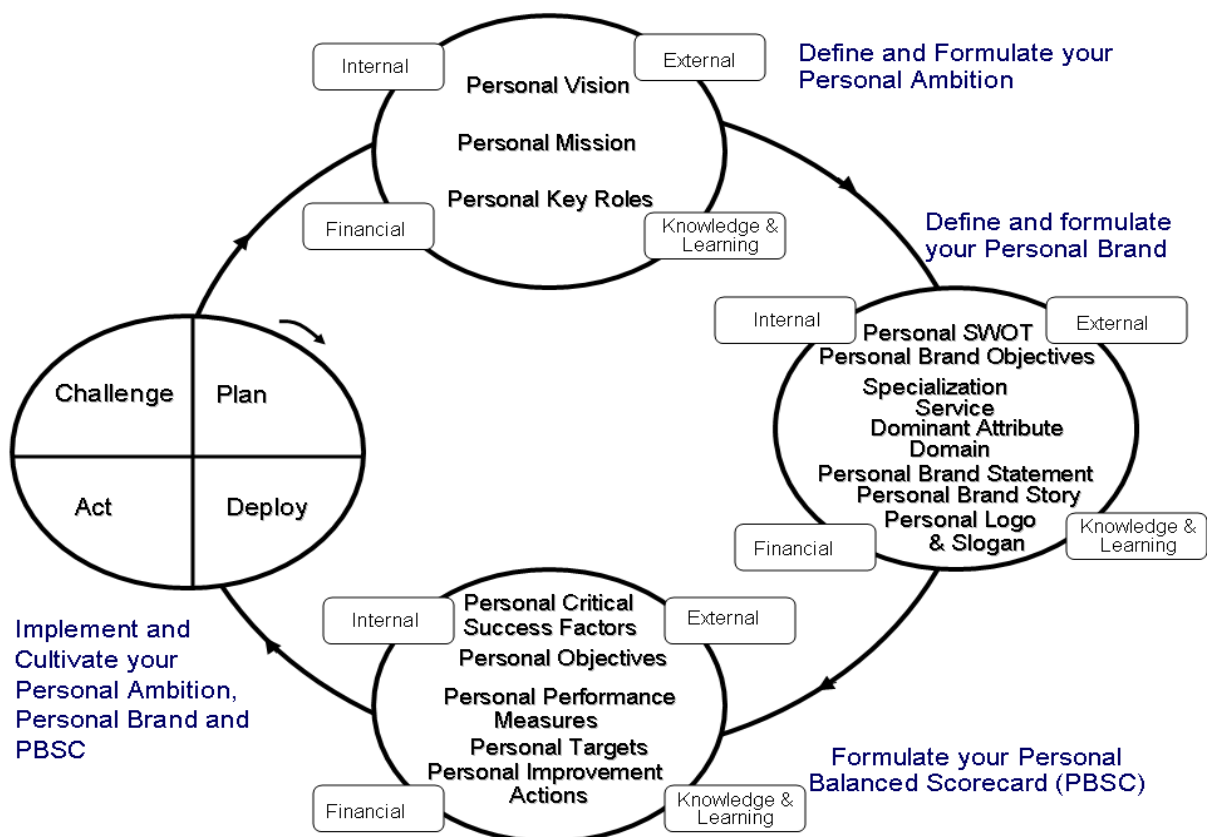


Figure 2.4: Authentic personal branding model (Rampersad, 2008:35)

Significantly, the cycle above also entails creating a compelling brand promise that may serve as a benchmark for all future actions and attitudes related to creating your personal brand and is centred on your unique personal brand story (Rampersad, 2008). Then, a person might use this tale to influence the public's emotional response in favour of their own personal brand (Rampersad, 2008). The model proposed by Rampersad (2008) is more dynamic than previous model discussed and adaptable and seeks to emphasise that building and developing a personal brand is an evolutionary process, not merely a one-off exercise. The model proposed by Rampersad (2008) provides a very good reference point for the purposes of this study, as it provides an appropriate framework for a list of recommendations in a South African sporting context. A further aspect that distinguishes the model proposed by Rampersad (2008) from that of Khedher (2014) above, is that Rampersad (2008) highlights the importance of both internal and external factors in building a personal brand. Rampersad (2008) also acknowledges the importance that knowledge and learning play in building a personal brand, along with being aware of both internal and external financial implications associated with building one's personal brand.

Based on the literature in the previous chapter relating to the generic branding process (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Saunders & Woods, 2018), a clear link exists between the generic branding process and that of the personal branding process in that it is an ongoing process (Khedher, 2014). Kevan (2015) emphasized that, as effectively expressing and sharing what you do is a crucial component of personal branding, the beginning of the brand-building process is likely to be the most difficult. This aspect of self-promotion does not come easily to most people. The following section will discuss the importance of social media and its role in the brand building process of individuals.

2.5.3 Personal branding and social media

Social media has been defined as, "Media for social interaction using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques to transform and broadcast online dialogues" (Brown, 2003). Petruca (2016) adds to the above point by describing social media as the collection of online communication channels focused on cooperation, interaction, and the sharing of material for a particular group. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, and Tumblr are a few of the most well-known social networking websites. New relationships for personal or professional purposes are the primary goal of social media interaction (Hardy et al., 2012).

The best approach to convey the significance of social media to the personal brand, according to Kevan (2015), is to think of social media as the engine and content as the fuel. Contrary to common opinion, personal branding, especially digital branding, is about the people you want to engage and influence rather than you as an individual (Arruda, 2019). A better

understanding of creating personal brands more for social than for professional purposes is now more important than ever, thanks to the rise of social media. The fast expansion of social media platforms, according to academics, has made it nearly impossible for anyone to avoid developing a personal brand (Vasalou & Jonison, 2009; Marwick & Boyd, 2010; Labrecque et al., 2011; Hardy et al., 2012).

Hill (2022) provides some insight relating to the recommended frequency of posting to social media platforms for the average person, and concludes the following:

Table 1.1: Recommended social media posting frequency (Hill, 2022)

Facebook	2 x daily average
Twitter	5 x daily average
LinkedIn	1 x daily average
Google+	2 x daily average
Instagram	1.5 x daily average

Green (2016) suggests that athletes looking to build and grow their personal brands should be posting at the following frequency:

Table 1.2: Social media frequency guide for athletes (Green, 2018)

Facebook	1 x daily average
Twitter	3 x daily average
LinkedIn	1 x daily average
Google+	2 x daily average
Instagram	2 x daily average

The difference in posting frequency between the average person and athletes can be attributed to the fact that athletes need to be more strategic with the timing and type of content posted (Green, 2016). Many social media platforms are being used by professional athletes to generate, change, share, and discuss content that has a weighty impact on their reputation, prospects for endorsements, and even their survival (Green, 2016). Athletes are realising the importance of managing their personal brand, both online and offline, thereby differentiating themselves from their competitors (Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

In addition to more lucrative marketing and endorsement deals, a strategic social media-driven athlete brand enables athletes and their brand managers to take advantage of as many as eight digital profit centres, including online advertising, affiliate marketing, sponsorships, e-commerce, guest publishing, revenue sharing, fan club and original content (Khedher, 2010). Brands will pay significantly more to work with athletes who use an internet-driven footprint to

deliver measurable influence, scalable reach, creative engagement, and definitive return on investment (Kevan, 2015).

Social media platforms represent a powerful means for athletes to brand themselves and develop relationships with fans (Kunkel et al., 2016). In the pre-social media era, athletes could only communicate with their audience through the media (interviews, newspapers, magazines etc.), which meant the elite level athletes had more opportunities to build their audience and, in turn, enter long-term image rights partnerships with top sports brands (Parr, 2021).

Today, the opposite is true: athletes of all levels, in all sports, have the ability to build and engage with audiences which they can seek to monetise, all thanks to social media. The difficulty is, whilst many athletes have inherently large audiences because of their athletic abilities, most athletes do not truly understand how to capitalise on the attention they have captured (Parr, 2021).

The sooner athletes realise their influence, the earlier they can build and leverage their audience. Simply recognising the importance of using social media and creating more content can help them build a more engaged audience that can be leveraged further along the line. Athletes should not just work at their sport; they should make their sport work for them (Quadri, 2021).

The literature clearly indicates the important role that social media plays in the brand building efforts of professional athletes. The following section will review athlete branding as a concept, and investigate athlete brands, both within an international as well as a South African context.

2.6 Athlete branding

This section defines the term athlete branding and reviews athletes who have been intentional about developing and managing their personal brands, both in an international and a South African context. It further discusses what impact athletes' brand building efforts had on their commercial and sporting exploits. According to Norton Rose Fulbright (2018), athletes are becoming increasingly aware of the finite nature of their professional sporting careers and the significance of making the most of every opportunity to make money, including the exploitation of their personal brand, both during and after their competitive years. This section also reviews the numerous benefits and challenges associated with personal branding, and finally proposes a personal branding list of recommendations to serve as a reference point for prospective athletes looking to develop their personal brand.

Athlete brands exist within a network of brand relationships. Thus, considering the joint influences of related brands at different levels (league, team, and athlete) is essential for understanding how athlete brands are built (Su et al, 2020).

2.6.1 Defining athlete branding

Quadri (2021) defines athlete branding as “the scientific, strategic and systematic execution of standing out, staying relevant and building value in the minds of current and potential fans, so as to maximize fan support (athlete brand equity)”.

According to Saunders and Woods (2018:9), “An athlete brand is the communication of an athlete’s uniqueness: their story, their style, their interests and beliefs, their behaviours and values, and of course, their athletic pursuits and activities”. Arai et al. (2014) argue that any athlete who has managed to establish value in the marketplace using their personal attributes and personal brand elements can be viewed as having an athlete brand. According to Arai et al. (2014), athlete branding refers to a specific athlete's public persona that they have developed using their distinctive attributes or other brand components in the marketplace to generate their own symbolic meaning and value. Athletes now need to consider more than just winning or losing; they also need to consider how they present themselves as a whole brand.

Notably, as sports marketing has evolved, it has become almost imperative for professional athletes to pay more attention to their personal brands. The research suggests that an athlete's future performance will depend in large part on their capacity to leverage and promote a favourable image, making athlete branding a crucial topic (Hodge & Walker, 2015). Many professional athletes have their own unique intellectual property and characteristics that set them apart from their competitors, just like traditional companies and brands do.

Athlete branding is a complex area, mainly because there is high competition in the sports marketing industry. Additionally, numerous parts are involved in building a solid personal brand and marketing strategy, as everything must be considered, from tangible elements like a logo, to intangible elements like the athlete’s persona and brand promise (Colman, 2022).

As a result of potential brand-related benefits derived from marketing activation and brand extension strategies, Arai et al. (2013) assert that many athletes have started focusing on more actively developing their personal brands. Research shows that there is a growing awareness around global athlete branding and its role in the sports marketing landscape. Extensive research has been conducted around successful athlete brands and their associations with products and organisations in a global context (Hodge & Walker, 2015).

The Institute for Athlete Branding and Marketing (2018) reveals that an authentic athlete brand is one that does not revolve around sports. Sport may be an athlete's job, but it should not be the central theme of the brand. A study found that sports fans responded more positively to character-focused stories about individual athletes, including personal attributes unrelated to on-field activity, than to performance-focused stories (Kang et al., 2016).

An athlete's personal brand should not be viewed in isolation; instead, it should always remain top of mind as the athlete makes any career or life decision. Advocates of personal branding agree that, if managed correctly, personal branding can lead to professional and financial growth as well as enhanced personal relationships (Nucci, 2015; Hodge & Walker, 2015). One of the expected outcomes of this study was to highlight the importance and relevance of brand building to professional cricket players in South Africa, and to provide a basis for these athletes to begin and/or continue the personal brand building process, thereby having the opportunity of reaping the rewards associated with such brand status. It was also important for this study to emphasise this reality to athletes across multiple sporting codes, as it seeks to highlight the benefits of athlete branding at all levels.

Brands are beginning to realise the potential of the opportunity to reach their target audiences through athletes' social platforms. Whilst traditional forms of media such as TV, radio, and print are providing advertisers with ever-diminishing the return on investment (ROI), more brands than ever understand there is a huge quantity of underpriced attention to be leveraged on social media via influencer-led marketing strategies (Parr, 2021).

Adequate research has been conducted which focuses on elite level athletes who have managed to build powerful personal brands off the back of their sporting success, such as Tiger Woods and Rafael Nadal (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Burton, 2017) (this research will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow.) Despite this, there is a gap in the research relating specifically to athlete brands and the perception and awareness of personal branding by professional athletes in South African sport. South Africa has a number of sporting icons both locally and globally, yet there is limited research on if or how they have consciously developed their personal brands or who has played a role in doing so. The following section (2.6.3), will review athlete branding in an international context and analyse how these professional athletes went about building and managing their personal brands.

According to the Johan Cruyff Institute (2023), there are three dimensions to building an authentic athlete brand:

- (i) On-field activities: Your performance and the way you act on the pitch contributes to your authentic brand and how you show your authentic self.

- (ii.) Off-field activities: Football is not the only thing that is going on in your life and that describes who you are. You have more interests and by showing that to the world, you create a more authentic image of yourself.
- (iii.) Marketing activities: Marketing activities are your intentional efforts to communicate your brand. Make sure you are yourself and always do things that resonate with your personality and values.

For the purposes of this study, the terms personal branding and athlete branding shall have the same general meaning. The only difference is that athlete branding refers specifically to the branding practices of professional athletes.

2.6.2 The benefits of athlete branding

A professional athlete's personal brand is one of the main contributors to their earning potential and sponsorship opportunities, alongside their performance on-field performance. A powerful personal brand for an athlete has the potential to result in additional money, opportunity, and fans (Montoya, 2002). This can hardly be viewed as negative for an up-and-coming athlete – or even one that has already achieved great success. A personal brand is always about developing, growing and maintaining a positive image by the people whose opinions matter most (Shyle, 2015).

Parmentier and Fischer (2012:107) assert that “the value to an athlete of a high-visibility brand can be remarkable: beyond remuneration for professional performance, the athlete can enjoy lucrative endorsement opportunities during and after his or her sporting career”. Saunders and Woods (2018) affirm that, by knowing their brand and making the impressions they want to project, athletes will find that they are also able to connect with the opportunities they seek, as well as having a smoother, more fulfilling journey in sport and in life. For some athletes, having a personal brand means getting sponsored; for others, it means landing their dream job or finally conquering their fear of talking in front of a camera. For all athletes, it offers a deeper level of self-awareness and a sense of confidence and clarity as they pursue their athletic and life ambitions. Knowing their brand can open a world of opportunities that can (in many ways) change an athlete's life (Saunders & Woods, 2018).

Craft (2008) echoes the sentiments of the authors mentioned by affirming that a strong athlete brand also has the potential to increase earning potential, both during and after an athlete's career. When properly positioned, a strong athlete brand indicates that the consumer holds it in high regard, which makes them more likely to support it than a poor or non-existent brand.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, several athletes have managed to make more money via their personal brands than from their income from clubs or teams that were willing to pay them millions of dollars. A prime example of this phenomenon would be Michael Jordan who, according to *Forbes*, remains the “most recognizable athlete of all time” (Craft, 2008).

Fundamentally, brands will seek to sponsor athletes who have built a brand which aligns with theirs in terms of values, positioning and target audience. This is where the opportunity is largest for brands. Brands can pay an athlete to reach and build a relationship with their target audience through value-based content which tells engaging stories to show what the athlete and brand represent (Parr, 2021).

From a cricketing perspective, Cube Reach (2018) outlines several benefits that cricket players can look forward to if they are intentional about developing and managing their personal brand:

- It helps define your career objectives
- It distinguishes you from fellow players (brand competitors)
- It provides a sense of fulfilment and acknowledgement
- It raises your commercial profile
- It plays a role in keeping you relevant in the game
- It assists in attracting good people and endorsements
- It drills a certain level of discipline into your day-to-day activities

For an athlete, developing a personal brand as a cricketer is a crucial first step in taking their career to a whole new level since it gives their audience a clear understanding their abilities and who they are as a person (Cube Reach, 2018).

2.6.3 Athlete branding in an international context

It was important for this study to highlight success stories relating to athlete branding on a global scale. A number of athletes have been intentional about building and managing their personal brands over a number of years. Even though the personal branding journey is unique for each athlete, there are several common attributes that these athletes have adopted that other athletes can learn from. Many of these global superstars are making more money from their personal brands than from their lucrative employment contracts (Badenhausen, 2020).

The list of athletes that follows may be viewed as best practice in terms of athlete branding. The personal branding of these individuals will be able to sustain its standing long after the athletes themselves retire from the sport that they love. Michael Jordan still receives income and royalties through his association with Nike. David Beckham, similarly, has forged

commercial relationships and engaged in commercial ventures that keep his personal brand at the forefront of people's minds.

- **Serena Williams**

Serena Williams has enjoyed unprecedented success on the tennis court, with a record number of grand slam titles behind her name. Throughout her career, Williams has shown a keen interest in the fashion industry and has made that central to her personal brand. Serena is widely regarded as the pioneer behind making fashion statements on the court and would approach potential endorsements from this viewpoint. She now has her own fashion line, demonstrating that her interest in fashion has grown beyond simple sponsorships. Serena has also made a name for herself in the entertainment sector. She has appeared in high-profile films like *Pixels* and *7 Days in Hell* as well as television series like *Law and Order*, *ER*, and *The Bernie Mac show*. Yet in the end, her move into the fashion world will be what propels her career past her playing days (Whitney, 2016).

- **David Beckham**

Burton (2017) highlighted that David Beckham's brand continues to be the most marketable of any contemporary athlete and can be compared to that of sportsmen like Michael Jordan, Tom Brady, and Anna Kournikova. David Beckham's personal brand has routinely rated highly on Forbes's list of the world's most influential and richest celebrities for the past 20 years.

By developing such a motivational Beckham brand, David Beckham has accomplished an outstanding marketing exercise in personal branding. He has made it so that businesses in every industry want to be linked with the Beckham brand. As well as Diageo, Beckham has (or is) working with several brands, some of which include Pepsi, Police Sunglasses, Sainsbury's, Armani, Adidas, Breitling, Bentley, Burger King, Walt Disney, Diet Coke and Samsung. Beckham also has his own brand of perfume and video games, as well as his own exclusive clothing range (Reed, 2017).

According to an academic study by Vincent et al. (2009), brands are seen as multiple personalities or identities in the business sector. Brand Beckham has several personalities or identities, which help his brand stay memorable, distinctive, and valuable.

- **Michael Jordan**

Michael Jordan is one of the finest examples of how to create a successful athlete brand. Michael Jordan, a basketball legend, became Air Jordan, a global icon, thanks to Nike's efforts. The brand's message was succinct and clear: If you buy Michael Jordan's shoes, your game will get better. Michael Jordan is so excellent that he warrants his own shoe brand.

Metaphorically speaking, basketball player Air Jordan can fly like Superman, while Michael Jordan the man is compared to Clark Kent (Craft, 2008).

Possibly the most recognizable athlete logo in the world is Air Jordan. The unique aspect of this logo is the fact that it was inspired by a real-life posed shot of Michael Jordan. A study by Price (2017), found that, although Michael Jordan retired from the game many years ago, his personal brand is relevant to this day and, from an endorsement perspective, he continues to be in high demand.

- **Roger Federer**

Roger Federer is undoubtedly one of the most recognizable sports brands in the industry at present and has been for some time. His personal brand value was estimated by *Forbes* to be \$37.2 million in 2017. Federer has effectively developed his own RF brand in addition to standard third-party endorsement partnerships. He currently uses that brand to raise money through the sale of branded goods and to advertise the Roger Federer Foundation (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2018).

Adamson (2017), in reviewing the Federer brand from an academic study perspective, stated that, for a brand to stand out from the competition, it must actively prove that it is unique in a manner that people care about. To remain successful, a brand needs to be alert and agile enough to adapt and transform with current trends and the marketplace. From a brand strategy perspective, Roger Federer has managed to reinvent himself throughout the course of his illustrious career, and yet managed to remain true to his personal brand.

- **Tiger Woods**

Tiger Woods has developed one of the most recognizable brands in sports, thanks to his ability to set himself apart from rivals through distinctive personality traits, physical characteristics, and athletic success (Ozanian, 2014). Notwithstanding Woods's personal issues and performance deterioration brought on by injury, Ozanian (2014) pegged the worth of Woods's brand equity at \$36 million.

However, there is a valid reason why Tiger Woods's sponsors and the world of professional golf have stuck by him and are happy to see him back at his best: it's known as the Tiger effect. According to research by the Tepper School of Management at Carnegie Mellon University, during Woods's absence from the game, the entire category of golf ball brands lost \$10.2 million in revenue. Other aspects of the game, like television ratings and tour attendance, also suffered as a result of Tiger's absence. When Tiger is winning, crowds are bigger, and so are the earnings of just about everybody in the game (Kalb, 2013). The decision by Nike to sponsor

Tiger Woods was as a result of him representing the core Nike brand attributes – an active, inspired, intense, energised, winner (Ozanian, 2014).

Forbes compiles an annual top 10 list ranking the top athlete brands across the sports industry. They utilise a formula which calculates an athlete’s brand value, which includes their earnings – excluding bonuses and salary from their sport and all investment income (Knight, 2022).

For the purposes of this study, I will briefly examine the top five sportsmen on the *Forbes* list for 2022. The list indicates the value of each athlete’s personal brand in 2022 through sponsorship and endorsement deals, and further highlights the manner in which each athlete has utilised their personal brand for commercial success. Needless to mention, each athlete on the list is operating at an elite level in their respective sports, but also provide good examples of effective personal branding.

Table 2.1: Forbes list of top 5 sportsmen for 2022 (Knight, 2022)

Rank	Athlete Brand Value	Notes
1.	Roger Federer (\$90 million)	Federer receives roughly \$86 million in off-court income from sponsors like Rolex and Mercedes-Benz
2.	LeBron James (\$80 million)	James collaborated with Cindy Crawford, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Lindsey Vonn in 2018 to start the Ladder health and wellness company.
3.	Tiger Woods (\$68 million)	Woods has made \$1.4 billion in sponsorship and endorsements since going professional in 1996.
4.	Lionel Messi (\$55 million)	Messi is reportedly paid more than \$12 million per year as part of his lifetime contract with Adidas.
5.	Cristiano Ronaldo (\$55 million)	Ronaldo’s Juventus jersey sold 520,000 units, worth over \$60 million within 24 hours of its release.

The above list indicates the top 5 athletes on a global scale with lucrative personal brands that have become brands in their own right, with the ability to garner such effective fan power and recognition that fans now follow the athletes more so than the teams they represent or the sports in which they participate.

Interestingly, in relation to the 2019 *Forbes* list, Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli (\$14 million) slotted in at number nine of the list (Ozanian, 2019); however, no cricket players featured in the top 20 in the *Forbes* list for 2022. In 2019, the brand value of Virat Kohli increased by 39% to \$237.5 million, according to research done by the advising firm, Duff and Phelps, as reported by Ambwani (2021). The study rates the most influential celebrity brands in India according to brand values determined by their endorsement agreements. The other 20 celebrities with the

highest brand valuation all play cricket. MS Dhoni, the former captain of India, is ranked ninth with a brand value of \$41.2 million, while Rohit Sharma, the country's opening batter, is ranked 20 on the list (Anon, 2020). Due to the popularity of cricket in India, not only from a viewership perspective but also commercially, India is seen as the most powerful cricketing nation under the auspices of the International Cricket Council (ICC). This is also true for Indian cricket players who, due to the magnitude of the game in India, have been at the forefront of brand building and commercial initiatives among international cricket players globally.

Australia's professional cricket players were involved in a legal dispute with the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) in 2017. The dispute centred around the players' intellectual property, with the two parties not seeing eye to eye relating to the overall value of those rights. The players, in conjunction with the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA), set out to establish their own image rights company, allowing them to sign with rival sponsors to the ACB, if they so wished. It was a landmark dispute in the history of Australian cricket, and for player image rights in general, as the governing body was forced to recognise the major role that players' personal brands play in the cricket landscape (Pierik, 2017).

As referenced earlier, substantial research has been conducted into the development, growth and management of the personal brands of athletes at the very top level of sport on a global scale. This research serves as a credible reference point for the purposes of this study as it provides a rationale behind how the top athletes have built and continue to manage their personal brands. The perceptions and actions of these top athletes may serve as examples to athletes and will be cited within the context of this study to indicate the potential benefit of effective and intentional personal branding. Undoubtedly, most athletes will not reach this elite level of personal branding, but all athletes should aim to be the best version of themselves at whichever level they perform, as a defined personal brand will assist athletes in transitioning out of the game when they eventually retire from playing the sport of their choice.

2.6.4 Athlete branding in a South African context

It was also important for this study to highlight successful athlete brands in a South African context. There are several South African athletes who have managed to become household names, both for their exploits in their respective sport, but also on the back of their brand building efforts (Impey, 2020). This section seeks to highlight these local athletes who are intentionally managing and growing their personal brands. There are few academic studies relating to the personal branding practices of athletes in a South African context, so this study aims to add to the body of knowledge in that area. For the purposes of this study, the list of athletes that follows is seen as representing best practice examples.

- **Siya Kolisi**

Siya Kolisi plays club rugby for the Stormers in Super Rugby and Western Province in the Currie Cup, in addition to leading the South African national rugby union side. In 2018, Kolisi became the first black man to be named captain of the South African Springboks in the 126-year history of the sport, making him a hero in the eyes of many. He was reared by his grandmother after being born to adolescent parents in the underdeveloped township of Zwide. In addition to winning the Rugby World Cup, Kolisi is currently a nominee for the BBC Sports Personality of the Year and one of New Africa's Most Influential Africans, accomplishments that highlight the significance of his career outside of sports (Impey, 2020).

Kolisi was the first rugby player to sign with Roc Nation before the end of 2019. They are a US talent agency run by music producer, Jay Z. His goal was to increase both Kolisi's personal profile and the profile of his humanitarian and charitable work. Together with his business ventures, Kolisi founded the Kolisi Foundation whose mission is to support and better the lives of South Africa's most vulnerable people. The Kolisi Foundation was instrumental in providing food for low-income families during the Coronavirus outbreak in 2020 (Impey, 2020).

The decision to sign up Kolisi seems to have more to do with his capacity to shape his brand based on his political and social stance than it does with his ascension to the top of rugby union. It is difficult to argue against the fact that his dedication, outlook, and on-field successes make him stand out among his colleagues on a global scale (Impey, 2020). Right now, Kolisi has endorsement and brand agreements with Adidas, Red Bull, Panasonic, as well as the global consumer goods giant, Unilever.

- **Wayde van Niekerk**

South African sprinter Wayde van Niekerk competes in the 100, 200, and 400 metre distances in track and field competitions. He now holds both the world and Olympic records for the 400 metres. Moreover, he has the fastest time ever in the 300 metres (Amato, 2018).

From the beginning of 2016, Wayde van Niekerk has been associated with the Audi brand. Following his achievement in Rio, Audi introduced The #Lane8 campaign which remembers Wayde's 2016 Olympic victory in the 400-metre sprint from the infamously difficult eighth lane. The campaign's messaging metaphorically promotes a mindset of overcoming difficulty and seeks to inspire and promote an optimistic outlook on life (Impey, 2020).

Wayde also places great emphasis on aligning with sponsors that speak to his personal brand. A few of the brands he has endorsed in the recent past include Richard Mille, Adidas, and Discovery. Wayde serves as a vital leader in many communities and in society at large as a

Discovery Vitality Ambassador. He is a #DiscoveryDreamer icon that embodies positivism for individuals of all ages (Amato, 2018).

After Wayde's achievements in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, when he shattered Michael Johnson's long-standing 400-metre men's world record of 43.18 seconds with a ferocious run from the dreaded outside lane, Repucom executive chair Kelvin Watt stated that his conservative estimates were that Wayde would earn at least R28 million a year. In 2016, Wayde held endorsement agreements with Adidas, Visa, Richard Mille, Audi, T-Systems, and Defy before competing in the Olympic Games in Rio. According to Watt, Wayde was one of the few South African athletes with a lucrative \$350,000 to \$500,000 global Adidas contract (News24, 2020). Rafael Nadal of tennis, Felipe Massa, and Romain Grosjean of Formula 1, among others, all sport Richard Mille premium ultra-lightweight sports watches.

Wayde van Niekerk uses a personal brand slogan across all his social media platforms, which is #quietstorm. According to a personal Facebook posting by Wayde in 2019, the inspiration behind the slogan is that it is in reference to his dreams, which are massive, like a storm.

- **Caster Semenya**

Speaking at the Discovery Leadership Summit in Sandton in 2018, Caster Semenya stressed the importance of building your own brand as a female athlete. She revealed that it is about knowing your worth and who you want to be associated with from an endorsement perspective.

Semenya is currently a Nike athlete; she is also an ambassador for Discovery's Vitality fitness and health programme. The Olympic and World Champion is also a Bridgestone ambassador for the "Chase Your Dream, No Matter What" campaign (European Sponsorship Association, 2020). Her association with Bridgestone focuses on her powerful story as one of the most iconic athletes in the world and her dreams for the future in an Olympic year (European Sponsorship Association, 2020).

- **AB de Villiers**

AB de Villiers is a former Proteas middle-order batsman and wicketkeeper. Even after retiring from the international game, he still plays in a number of T20 competitions around the globe, most notably for the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League (IPL). It is due to his exploits in the IPL over the years that he now has almost god-like status amongst Indian cricket supporters. He is widely regarded as one of the world's richest cricketers (Sports Khabri, 2020).

Wrogn is a fashion brand co-owned by Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli and Universal Sportsbiz Pvt Ltd. The label announced AB de Villiers as its new brand ambassador in March 2020. De Villiers endorses the brand's newly launched active collection, which features more than 100 styles of T-shirts, joggers, shorts, sweatshirts, and hoodies (Dudley, 2017). In 2017, Montblanc announced De Villiers as its new brand ambassador, stating that he would be representing the luxury brand in South Africa and India. He was chosen to be the face of Montblanc across all categories, including watches, writing instruments, men's accessories and leather goods (Brand Equity, 2017).

Furthermore, in 2017, De Villiers signed a three-year bat sponsorship deal with India tyre manufacturers, MRF, a deal believed to be worth around R28 million (Dudley, 2017). Other brands that De Villiers has been associated with include Audi and Puma. De Villiers joined forces with German footwear giant PUMA in 2006; and this association has been extended multiple times since then and is still very much active.

AB de Villiers has been intentional about building his personal brand off the back of his on-field success, both on the international stage for the Proteas, as well as during his exploits in the IPL. During his career, he has associated with brands that have matched his ambition and elevated his commercial profile and reach. While the literature relating to personal branding of cricket players on a global scale is scarce, awareness of the benefits and the practice of personal branding is limited in the South African context, which is one of the main motivations for this study. This resonates with a growing perception amongst administrators in South African cricket that professional cricket players in South Africa place very little to no emphasis on their personal brands (Eksteen, 2018).

2.6.5 Challenges of athlete branding

One of the main barriers athletes face in relation to building their brand is a lack of personal branding education (Burton, 2015). Athletes, for the most part, are invested in and focused on their main task, which is performing on the field of play. Without proper education, the importance of personal branding is simply not on the radar of most athletes (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019). In response, Hodge & Walker (2015) said that sports organisations owe it to professional athletes to support them in their branding initiatives and to stress the value of creating and upholding a positive personal brand. This is vital and relevant for athletes of all levels because the normal professional career is limited, and brand-building opportunities and practices seem unfamiliar and irrelevant.

The marketing literature points to the fact that long-term planning and commitment are paramount in building a strong brand (Aaker, 2009; De Chernatony, 2001; Keller, 1993). As a result, sports marketing experts and organisations should give top priority to practical

strategies to support players as they develop their own brands. Sport organisations should make personal branding education instantly available to athletes since they will need greater support with branding at the beginning of their careers (Hodge & Walker, 2015). Most athletes are not prepared to play the long game when it comes to personal branding as they are looking for short term success. A lack of time because of playing commitments was identified as a major brand building barrier (Hodge & Walker, 2015).

De Charnatony (2001) identified a lack of adequate motivation as a major barrier to the brand building efforts of professional athletes. Without adequate support and motivation from player agents and managers or teams, many professional athletes allow their personal brand to be built by the perceptions and opinions of those around them.

According to some researchers, there are perceived barriers for top female athletes in the brand-building process based on social role expectations (Burton, 2015; Koenig & Eagly, 2014); and these barriers can make it more difficult for athletes to develop their personal brands successfully (Ghodeswar, 2008). The results of those research studies indicate that respondents thought socialization of women and adherence to cultural and gender standards hampered a female athlete's capacity to develop and use her personal brand. The results of the research also demonstrated perceived obstacles for female athletes, such as a dearth of media coverage and a constrained ability to develop brands due to a lack of professional management (Lobpries et al., 2018).

The following section will review literature on conceptual models of athlete branding and the stages involved in building and developing an athlete brand.

2.6.6 Athlete branding: A conceptual model

According to Arai et al. (2013), and illustrated in Figure 2.5 below, the three dimensions outlined in the model of athlete brand image are practical steps. Because the public's opinions of athletes' athletic performance are so heavily reliant on sports-related data or reputations built by the media, managing the image or perception of the athlete's athletic performance will likely be the most challenging component of managing an athlete brand. On the other hand, consumers' perceptions of a marketable lifestyle are comparatively easier to manage. Brand image remains the central point to any athlete brand. Arai et al. (2013) provides a credible framework in terms of the extent an athlete needs to go into when developing his or her personal brand.



Figure 2.5: Model of athlete brand image (Arai et al., 2013:62)

Parmentier and Fischer (2012:45) also propose a model for athlete brand building which focuses on two main areas; professional image and media persona, and how those factors affect person brand equity.

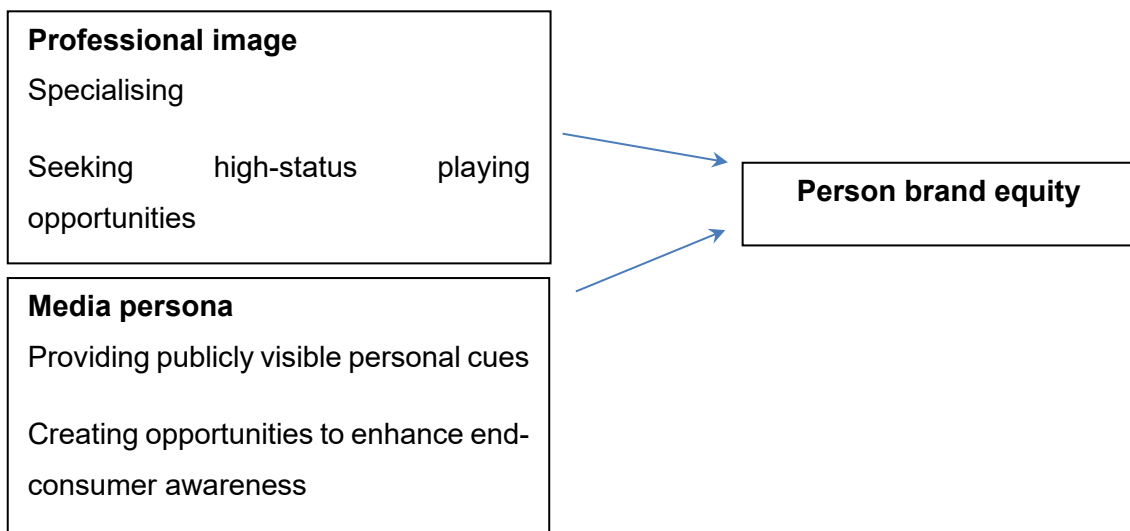


Figure 2.6: How athletes build their brands (Parmentier and Fischer, 2012:45)

Finally, Lemmons (2018) proposes an athlete brand building model which highlights three general areas that athletes should focus on when building and developing their brands:

- (i.) Figure out who you want to be a hero to.
- (ii.) Own your network and platform.
- (iii.) Create consistent Content on at least 3 social platforms.

One of the outcomes of this research study was to propose an athlete branding list of recommendations that may be utilised as a template by athletes on all levels who are interested in building and growing their personal brand. The above athlete branding models all allude to very important stages of the athlete brand building process. The model proposed by Arai et al. (2013) highlights the detail that goes into building an athlete brand, and the fact that the athlete needs to be aware of who they are and what they want to communicate through their personal brand. The model proposed by Parmentier and Fischer (2012) (Figure 2.6) is slightly more limited in its scope as it views an athlete’s professional image and media persona as being the driving forces behind building brand equity.

As illustrated in Figure 2.7 below, Saunders and Woods (2018:32) provide some further insight relating to the brand building blocks and view brand building as a three-step process, namely: (i) identifying your brand, (ii) communicating your brand and, (iii) leveraging your brand:

1. Identify your Brand	3. Leverage your Brand
	2. Communicate your Brand

Figure 2.7: The three building blocks of your brand (Saunders & Woods, 2018:32)

The brand identification stage is about an athlete reflecting on what they know about themselves, and how they want to be seen by the world. An athlete identifies what they care about and what they are interested in, their behaviours, personal values, and visual style. An athlete’s brand is derived from all areas of their life, not just those related to life as an athlete (Saunders & Woods, 2018). Building block 2 is really about the different ways athletes can communicate their brand: how the brand is communicated, as well as where. The final stage relates to leveraging an athlete’s brand; and while some athletes may choose never to leverage their brand, it is still important for them to understand the different options available. Once an athlete has identified their brand and effectively communicated it, they are then ready to leverage their brand (Saunders & Woods, 2018).

The Saunders and Woods (2018) model is the most pertinent and appropriate for the goals of this study because it successfully condenses and summarizes the most crucial elements of the brand-building process into three simple but intricate steps. Based on the results of this study, Saunders and Woods's (2018) model for athletes in a South African environment will be used and slightly modified for use in this study. Their model will therefore be utilised as a

reference in formulating a more detailed best practice list of recommendations for athletes in the context of this study. It will further provide a basis to determine the current stage at which most athletes are at in the brand building process, as well as their communication and personal brand leveraging strategies.

2.6.7 Athlete branding list of best practices

Emerging from the literature, this study has proposed an athlete branding best practice list with the intention of providing athletes with a reference point in their brand building efforts. As highlighted in a number of brand-building conceptual models (Arai et al., 2010; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Saunders & Woods, 2018), brand identification is central to, and usually the starting point for, any personal brand building journey. Before an athlete starts to build their brand, they need to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of who they are, their interests, behaviours, morals, values, and beliefs (Arai et al., 2013). This knowledge of self may then be summarised into a brand story encapsulating the individual (Saunders & Woods, 2018). For the purposes of this study and the best practice list, this process has been termed brand identification.

Furthermore, conceptual frameworks for athlete branding have also highlighted the importance of athletes communicating their brands across various platforms and mediums (Pfahl, 2009; Arai et al., 2013). Athlete branding communication platforms and methods of communication are key factors that athletes need to consider once their brand has been identified (Lemmons, 2018). Devising a branding communication plan which is both clear and consistent, and having strategies for both online and offline communication, are paramount to the success of an athlete's brand (Saunders & Woods, 2018). Creating consistent and fresh content on social media is central to any personal brand communication strategy, which is why brand communication has been included as Stage 2 in this study's list of best practice.

Research has suggested that athletes with powerful personal brands have built their brand by aligning with other highly successful and established brands and organisations (Reed, 2017; Badenhausen, 2020). Strategically forming partnerships with brands and people that align with your brand identity and affiliating with organisations and brands will provide you with opportunities post career (Impey, 2020).

Stage 4 of the best practice list proposed by this study is brand leveraging, which involves understanding and exploring the leveraging opportunities available to athletes with established brands. The literature has shown that, once an athlete understands their brand, has communicated it effectively and formed brand relationships, the athlete may then choose whether they want to leverage their brand (Lemmons, 2018; Saunders & Woods, 2018).

Table 2.2: Athlete branding best practice list

Stage 1 Brand Identification	Identifying an athlete's interests, behaviours, personal values, and style. Formulating a brand identity based on the personal and individual characteristics and traits of the athlete.
Stage 2 Brand Communication	Identifying a clear and concise communication plan (communication style/platforms/network). Creating fresh and consistent content for social media.
Stage 3 Brand Affiliation	Strategically aligning an athlete's brand with other brands and people that will provide greater exposure to the athlete's brand. Forming meaningful brand associations.
Stage 4 Brand Leveraging	Understand and explore the leveraging opportunities available to an athlete. Brand leveraging is not compulsory: some athletes may choose never to leverage their brand. However, having the option to do so is key.

2.6.8 Chapter summary

The lifespan of a professional athlete is relatively short, regardless of the sport or the level (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2018). Athletes must therefore make the most of the limited time they have as professional athletes by taking advantage of possibilities to make money, including by leveraging their personal brand, both during and after their competitive years (Lemmons, 2018).

Research has indicated that an authentic athlete brand is one that does not revolve around sport. Sport may be an athlete's job, but it need not be the driving force behind their brand (The Institute for Athlete Branding and Marketing, 2018). Successful athlete brands are those that manage to create character-focused stories relative to an athlete's overall persona, unrelated to on-field activity (Montoya, 2002). Athletes must seek to build a brand story that is personal, exciting, and intriguing, one that seeks to engage fans on a personal level.

Athletes such as Roger Federer and David Beckham have managed to build successful personal brands by viewing their brand as the central theme of their lives, not looking at their personal brand in isolation from other key life areas (Hodge & Walker, 2015; Nucci, 2015). An athlete's personal brand should always remain top of mind as the athlete makes any career or life decision, from choosing the team they represent, to the sponsors they choose to endorse. Athletes need to be thinking about their personal brand constantly; personally, or professionally, they always need to be brand conscious.

As outlined in this chapter, AB de Villiers, Wayde van Niekerk and Siya Kolisi are examples of South African athletes who have managed to build their personal brands. Very little is known regarding their perceptions and awareness toward their personal brands and the strategies they adopted in their brand building endeavours. The brand building process for international

athletes is well documented but this is not the case with athletes in South Africa. This study therefore sought to address the gap in knowledge relating to South African athletes and their brand building endeavours. The following chapter outlines how qualitative enquiries were utilised to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the mixed methods approach used to achieve the set of objectives outlined in this study. This includes discussing the interpretivist research paradigm as well as the cross-sectional mixed method research design selected for this study. The chapter further describes the data collection protocols and procedures through online surveys. It then outlines the qualitative data analysis processes, including the coding, grouping and theming of the data. In addition, the sample selection procedures provide a clear insight into the respondents within the study. Moreover, ethical considerations are highlighted for the data collection of this qualitative research study.

3.2 Research paradigm

More meanings are represented through words, other symbols, and metaphors in qualitative data (Sarstedt & Mooi 2019). “Qualitative data’s biggest strength is their richness, as they have the potential to offer detailed insights into respondents’ perceptions, attitudes, and intentions” (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019:31).

Qualitative research has grown in significance within the field of sports studies as the necessity to comprehend the underlying experiences, sentiments, and emotions associated with behaviour has become more widely recognised recently than in the past (Silvester, 2019).

The aim of an interpretive research paradigm is to gain an in-depth and holistic perspective through interviews and questionnaires using specific focus groups to investigate and understand the meaning of the participants' thoughts and motivations (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Based on an interpretive research paradigm, this study aimed to grasp respondents' views, insights, and opinions, interpret their meanings, and comprehend and analyse respondents' experiences.

Leavy (2017) states that the interpretive research approach involves the making and remaking of the social world through various patterns of interaction and interpretive processes, thereby assigning meaning to activities, events, and gestures. Therefore, in interpretive research, researchers value people’s subjective understanding and interpretation of their experiences and circumstances.

The premise of interpretive research is that social reality is not static or objective but is instead affected by individual experiences and societal situations (Bhattacharjee, 2012). This view is supported by Silvester (2019), and is illustrated with its common set of principles in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Principles of interpretive research (Silvester, 2019:68)

All interpretive research must adhere to a common set of principles:	
Naturalistic inquiry:	Social phenomena must be studied within their natural setting.
Researcher as instrument:	As researchers are considered part of the data collection instrument, they are required to use their observational skills, interpersonal skills and their ability to extract the correct information.
Use of expressive language:	Interpretive analysis includes both the documentation and interpretation of participant language, both verbal and nonverbal.
Interpretive analysis:	Two degrees of interpretation must take place. In the first, the phenomenon is viewed from the varying viewpoints of the social participants. The second stage involves comprehending the significance of the participants' experiences in order to present a narrative account of the event of interest that can explain why participants behaved in a particular way.
Temporal nature:	Interpretive research frequently focuses on understanding a social phenomenon as it develops over time rather than on providing definitive answers to research questions.
Hermeneutic circle:	To resolve their apparent discrepancy and develop a theory that is consistent with the participants' varied subjective experiences and viewpoints, interpretive interpretation is an iterative process that alternates between individual observations (text) and the entirety of the social phenomenon (context).

The perceptions and awareness of professional cricketers toward personal branding were to be analysed and interpreted. For this reason, the interpretive method of collecting data was suitable for this study.

3.3 Research design

According to qualitative research, the information gathering process is described "from the inside out", from the perspectives of the participants. By following the inside out approach, the researcher hopes to advance knowledge of social reality and highlight certain patterns and processes (Flick et al., 2004).

Consideration of one's study design is the first step in designing one's methodology, as this offers the overarching blueprint that directs the researcher in the data gathering stages (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Kumar (2011:94) defines a research design as "the plan, structure and strategy of investigation in order to obtain answers to research questions or problems validly, objectively, accurately and economically".

Gratton and Jones (2010:109) discuss seven types of research design, namely:

- Case study

- Time series
- Experimental
- Cross-sectional
- Longitudinal
- Grounded theory
- Ethnography

The cross-sectional design has been a component of the research methodology used for this investigation. A cross-sectional study design, as its name suggests, aims to take a cross-sectional sample from the entire population of interest. It is the most popular design in the social sciences, especially in sport-related research (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

A cross-sectional study design is used when the study objective is to describe a population, or a subgroup within the population, with respect to an outcome and a set of research questions; or when the study objective is to ascertain the prevalence of the outcome of interest for the population, or subgroups within the population, at a particular time (Levin, 2006).

According to Kesmodel (2018), cross-sectional studies serve multiple purposes, and are the most relevant design when assessing the attitudes and knowledge among participants within a population.

Cherry (2019) outlines some of the essential features of a cross-sectional study, including these: it is conducted at a single point in time; it allows researchers to look at a variety of characteristics at once (such as age, income, gender, etc.); it does not involve the manipulation of variables; it is frequently used to examine the key characteristics within a given population; and it can provide important information about what is happening in a current population.

The benefits outlined by Cherry (2019) are outlined in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Benefits of cross-sectional studies (Cherry, 2019)

Relatively quick to conduct	Prevalence of all factors can be measured
Researchers can collect all variables at one time	Suitable for descriptive analysis
Multiple outcomes can be researched at once	Researchers can use the findings as a springboard for further research

It was crucial to choose a cross-sectional mixed method design for this study because of the benefits listed in Table 3.2, many of which are relevant to this investigation. The researcher was able to research multiple outcomes and scenarios simultaneously, and the study provided

a springboard for future research on the topic of personal branding. The benefits also aligned with the research questions that were identified and discussed in Chapter 1.

The study sought to understand the perceptions and awareness of personal branding amongst a sample of professional cricket players in South Africa. Due to the nature of their profession, and the demands placed on them from a professional sporting perspective, it was important to adopt a design so that the study would be conducted relatively quickly, and which enabled the researcher to collect all the required data at one time. A cross-sectional mixed method research design was selected because personal branding is a highly subjective practice that professional athletes undertake in their personal/individual capacities, i.e., outside of the team environment or team context. This study sought to unpack the respondents feedback and gain a better understanding of personal branding from individual players' perspectives. The data collection and analysis will be explained in further detail later in this chapter.

3.4 Mixed Method Research Approach

The mixed method approach is adopted when a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purpose of acquiring in depth data and a greater understanding of a research topic (Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Jackson (2009), a mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem.

Furthermore, mixed methods research may be the right choice if your research process suggests that quantitative or qualitative data alone will not sufficiently answer your research question (Elliott, 2020). The mixed method approach enables a greater degree of understanding to be formulated than if a single approach were adopted to specific studies (Alhojailan, 2012). This study sought to ascertain not only the perceptions, but also the awareness of personal branding by professional cricketers in South Africa, which made the mixed methods the suitable approach.

3.5 Qualitative Research Approach

According to qualitative research, the information gathering process is described "from the inside out", from the perspectives of the participants. By following the inside out approach, the researcher hopes to advance knowledge of social reality and highlight certain patterns and processes (Flick et al., 2004).

While quantitative data may be analysed using statistical methods and transformed into averages, means and other numerical data points, interpreting qualitative data calls for a more complex framework. Researchers categorise responses often and manually examine material to draw conclusions from qualitative data (Randy & McKenzie, 2011). For example, researchers could look at transcripts or survey findings and group similar emotions. Due to this manual process, qualitative data analysis is usually slower and more labour-intensive than quantitative data analysis (Elliott, 2020).

3.6 Quantitative Research Approach

According to Atlan (2018), quantitative research produces objective data that can be clearly communicated through statistics and numbers, this is done in a systematic scientific way so the studies can be replicated by someone else in future. Researchers are able to clearly communicate quantitative results using unbiased data and statistics. When performed correctly, an analysis allows researchers to make predictions and generalizations to larger, more universal populations outside the test sample (Noble & Smith, 2015).

The researcher is objective and detached from the subjects being studied. The setting is usually contrived and data is collected using inanimate objects; it is generally deductive (Gratton & Jones, 2010: 21-23).

3.7 Data collection

Collecting data is an essential step in the research process. It is often appropriate to think of it as a component of a larger procedure that includes crucial phases both before and after any data is collected (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

While the strength of one's data may not be in doubt, the data collected should be interesting and new (Gratton & Jones, 2014). When outlining the method to be used, consideration should be given both to the collection time required and the accessibility of the participants. For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected data through an online survey. After permission was granted for this study to be conducted (by the players as well as SACA), the researcher was able to distribute the online survey electronically to the sample group.

Surveys or questionnaires are possibly the most widely used data gathering tool in sport-related research, according to Gratton and Jones (2010). The aim of this study was to comprehend how the sample group felt about personal branding; as a result, online surveys were chosen as the data gathering method.

Gratton and Jones (2010:126-127) further explain that they generally fall into one of the following four categories:

- Postal questionnaire
- Online questionnaire
- Telephone questionnaire
- Face-to-face questionnaire

According to Ruel et al. (2016), an important goal of data collection is to make the survey / questionnaire easy enough for the respondents to understand, and easy enough for the researcher to process. Fowler (2014) agrees, stating that the questionnaire layout should be simple, clear, and uncluttered.

Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009) state that self-report data collection can be performed with a group of selected participants and done via an online survey. The research instrument utilised for the purpose of collecting data in this study was an online survey, designed utilising Google Forms. A link to the survey was sent to respondents via e-mail. Google Forms is a cloud-based data management tool used for designing and developing web-based surveys. The anywhere-anytime access and other advantages (unlimited surveys, 100% free) have made Google Forms a popular research instrument in online survey research (Narayanaswamy, 2016). The free availability of the tool and automatic recording of user responses in its spreadsheet have made data collection and analysis simple.

The online survey used for this study consisted of 31 questions in total. This method of data collection was most appropriate, given the varying levels of accessibility of the respondents who were based in different provinces within South Africa. Due to the demanding schedules of professional cricket players, this method also provided a quick turnaround time as respondents could complete the survey on their mobile phones or another electronic device and in their own time. In addition, the researcher had adequate access to the cricket players via this medium. The survey served the purpose of providing a series of open-ended questions which sought to address the qualitative inquiry while Likert scale items and “Yes” and “No” questions addressed the quantitative component of the research.

The collection of data took place between September and December 2020. To ensure that the survey responses were all returned by respondents, a follow-up email was sent to a percentage of the sample group who obliged with the required submission. Respondents were advised that they were able to e-mail any questions to the researcher for clarification. The researcher received no further questions once the survey had been shared with the respondents.

The survey was divided into five main sections relating to personal branding:

- (1.) Personal branding general information
- (2.) Personal branding awareness and perceptions
- (3.) Personal branding strategies
- (4.) Personal branding global perspective
- (5.) Leveraging your personal brand

The online survey (see Appendix A) used for this study consisted of 31 questions, divided into themed sections. In each section of the survey, questions were asked to gain insight into the players' understandings relative to the study's main objectives. Both structured and semi-structured questions were posed to elicit responses. Adequate space was provided for respondents to elaborate upon and explain their answers in greater detail, where asked to do so, which provided the researcher with both quantitative as well as qualitative data.

3.8 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Narayanaswamy, 2016). Furthermore, triangulation provides researchers with the opportunity of utilising the results from one method to inform another method which covers all aspects of the inquiry (Elliott, 2020). The empirical data in this study was divided into quantitative and qualitative sections, but also combined as a result of data triangulation. An online survey with a series of open-ended questions sought to address the qualitative inquiry while Likert scale items and "Yes" and "No" questions addressed the quantitative component.

3.9 Sample selection and size

Once it has been determined what kind of information to collect and the method to use to collect it, the researcher must decide on the sample selection and size (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Usually, the population under study will be too large for data to be collected from the entire population, so a sample must be taken. By definition, a sample refers to a subset of a particular population (Gratton & Jones, 2010:110).

In the context of qualitative research, the way one selects a sample depends on what is most appropriate for one's study (Jackson, 2009). According to Welman and Kruger (2001), the population is viewed as the study object, which might include people, groups, and organisations, as well as the environmental factors to which they are exposed.

According to Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009:179), “a qualitative report might acknowledge a small sample size but attempt to prove that the sample is representative of similar people within the population from which it was drawn”. Sampling is viewed by Winterton (2008:19) as, “a process that uses a small number of items or a small portion of a population to draw conclusions regarding the whole population”.

Van der Merwe (2003) stated that a sufficiently large sample size is necessary to minimize sampling error and potential bias in qualitative research. A major mistake in sampling size, according to Gratton and Jones (2010), is assuming that the sample must represent a certain proportion of the population.

The professional structure within cricket in South Africa is made up of six franchise teams (World Sports Betting Cape Cobras, Hollywood Bets Dolphins, VKB Knights, Imperial Lions, Momentum Multiply Titans and the Warriors), as well as the Proteas National Men’s and Women’s teams. There is a total of 120 professional men cricket players in South Africa, and 14 professional women players who are contracted to Cricket South Africa (CSA). The population size is therefore 134 professional cricket players, from which a sample size of 30 players would be selected when applying the sample size indicators of Gratton and Jones (2010): thus, twelve (12) franchise players, twelve (12) Proteas men players and six (6) Proteas women players. The number of professionally contracted female players is 15% of that of their male counterparts, which is the reasoning behind why only six (6) female players were selected as part of the sample group, as per table 3.3. A purposive sampling technique was used which accounted for roughly 20% of the population. The sample was selected considering all factors relative to the population (age, race, gender, demographics, income status) so that it closely represented the entire population, with the aim of removing bias.

Table 3.3: Sample group for online survey per contract status

Contract status	No. of respondents
Proteas Men contracted players	12 x player responses
Proteas Women contracted players	6 x player responses
Franchise contracted players	12 x player responses

Respondents from each team were purposefully chosen based on age, playing experience, and race, to ensure sufficient diversity in the sample group to best represents the whole population, both from a demographic and a playing experience perspective. For the purposes of this study, the above selection criteria were used to gain deeper insight into and an understanding of the perceptions and awareness of players according to variables like the different stages of their careers, gender, and cultural backgrounds.

Proteas Men players are known to have a more established commercial footprint compared to their franchise counterparts. This is since they enjoy greater visibility by virtue of their playing for the national team and garnering international media attention. By extension, many of the South African players that have participated in the Indian Premier League (IPL) over the years have managed to attract a vast group of sub-continent followers on their social media accounts.

Based on their elevated commercial footprints, 12 contracted Proteas men players were selected to form part of the sample. Six Proteas women were selected, while a purposive sample size of 12 franchise players was also selected, based on the afore-mentioned criteria, paying special attention to select players with varying levels of playing experience and demographic attributes.

A comprehensive overview of professional cricket players' views and beliefs regarding personal branding was required for this research study to collect rich and valuable data, which is why a sample size of 30 players was chosen. Saturation was not a major factor for this data collection process because each individual's experience and perceptions are unique. The players were chosen deliberately to enable the researcher to develop a greater understanding of personal branding strategies used within South African cricket's professional hierarchy.

3.10 Data analysis and preparation

Qualitative research is comparatively difficult, organised, methodical, and frequently provides an advantageous substitute for quantitative research techniques (Randy & McKenzie, 2011). All the qualitative approaches, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), share the same setting and scope. The next section aims to provide additional insight into the analysis of the qualitative data gathered in this study which used qualitative data analysis.

3.10.1 Data preparation and coding

Atlan (2018) identifies four separate phases when getting ready to analyse qualitative data. This study has implemented these. The first phase is data familiarity; the secondly involves revisiting the research objectives; the third is developing an analysis framework; and lastly, the fourth is drawing conclusions by identifying patterns and connections in the data. This process is detailed here:

i.) Data familiarity

The first phase involves researcher engagement and familiarisation with the data. During this phase, the researcher studied each of the surveys submitted by respondents and observed basic themes and patterns.

ii.) Research objectives

The second phase involves revisiting the research objectives of the study and identifying the questions to be answered through the data collected. During this phase, the researcher started developing a rough working framework based on the survey responses and research questions. This was done via Google Forms and involved grouping responses to each question and identifying key themes. The data was then transferred to Excel in preparation for the development of the analysis framework.

iii.) Developing an analytical framework

The third phase involves the development of an analysis framework whereby broad ideas, concepts, behaviours, and phrases are identified and codes assigned to the responses derived from the transcripts. According to Skinner and Edwards (2009:134), “codes should be valid and accurately reflect what is being researched, they should be distinct and not overlap each other and should be assigned to the relevant data”. The researcher utilised the deductive approach to formulate codes aligned with the research objectives. The ATLAS.ti 9 software further identified individual codes under each code family..

iv.) Conclusion drawing

Searching the data set for themes, creating analytical categories, and indexing the data in accordance with those categories, are crucial steps in the analysis of qualitative data, according to Bryman and Bell (2007). This method, which has been used by qualitative researchers the most (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Strauss, 1987), is crucial if they want to understand qualitative data systematically.

The researcher can then make inferences from the coded data after classifying and coding the data into several divisions (Bryman & Bell, 2007). With the use of the researcher's existing field notes and secondary data-collecting sources, this approach enables the researcher to draw conclusions about the study and validate the conclusions. Researchers typically select portions of data records for systematic copying and filing under subjects (such as neighbouring, ‘nice neighbours’, etc.). This allows easy retrieval of data filed under a particular topic (Richards & Richards, 2002).

Figure 3.1 below shows an example of data extracted by coding using ATLAS.ti software.

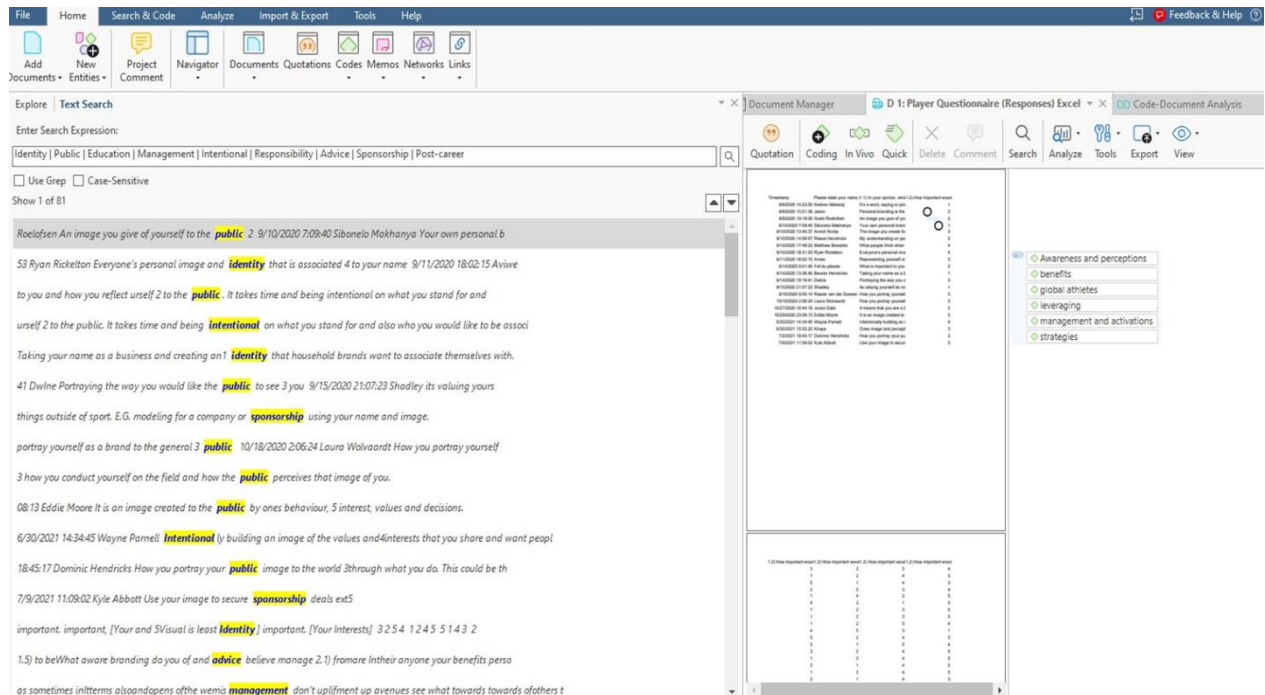


Figure 3.1: Example of data extract coding using ATLAS.ti software.

3.11 Qualitative data analysis

While quantitative data may be analysed using statistical methods and transformed into averages, means and other numerical data points, interpreting qualitative data calls for a more complex framework. Researchers categorise responses often and manually examine material to draw conclusions from qualitative data (Randy & McKenzie, 2011). For example, researchers could look at transcripts or survey findings and group similar emotions. Due to this manual process, qualitative data analysis is usually slower and more labour-intensive than quantitative data analysis (Elliott, 2020).

All the intricate designs and data analysis strategies employed in qualitative research are based on the philosophical principles of qualitative inquiry. To understand a complicated phenomenon, one must consider the many realities that the participants themselves experience. Natural settings are frequently preferred for learning how individuals create their own meanings of events or situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:115).

The thematic analysis method for data analysis entails a thorough procedure that enables researchers to spot a variety of connections between the data and the developing themes of their research (Hayes, 1997). Everyone appears to agree that it also offers some flexibility for using both inductive and deductive approaches to investigate patterns (Hayes, 1997; Frith &

Gleeson 2004; Halldorson, 2009). Alhojailan explains: "This makes the process of thematic analysis more appropriate for analysing the data when the research's aim is to extract information to determine the relationship between variables and to compare different sets of evidence that pertain to different situations in the same study" (Alhojailan, 2012:14). Deductive analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), entails coding data by attempting to fit it into a pre-existing coding framework or the researcher's analytical expectations.

The data for this study was collected via a computerised system utilising the Google Forms program. The data was grouped into sections utilising the thematic analysis approach. Analysis was conducted manually by the researcher as data was extracted from Google Forms and saved to an Excel spreadsheet, thus utilising a deductive coding approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006.). This was done to group specific responses to specific questions. The data was then further analysed with the assistance of the software package, ATLAS.ti 9. This software package was selected as it provided the optimal tool for analysing qualitative data gathered in this study. One of the main objectives of the data analysis phase was to identify codes and themes which emerged in the responses, which, following the deductive coding process, ATLAS.ti 9 was able to facilitate..

3.12 Quantitative data analysis

Statistics can be divided into two groups: descriptive and inferential statistics. These can be used in analysing quantitative data. Descriptive statistics involves using statistical methods that describe the data set. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, allow the determination of a relation or difference (Lynch, 2010:115-117). Before the process of data analysis begins, there are four steps identified by Gratton and Jones (2010: 196) that must be undertaken:

- Coding data or translating responses into common categories;
- Data entry comprises putting numbers produced in step one into a software package of choice;
- Data checking;
- Dealing with missing data.

The questionnaire consisted of a series of Likert scale items as well as "Yes" and "No" questions, which sought to address the quantitative component of the data analysis.

3.13 Validity and reliability of data

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), evaluating the dependability of study findings necessitates that researchers form opinions on the accuracy of the research in relation to the

use and suitability of the methodologies employed and the objectivity of the final conclusions. Most beginning researchers find it difficult to demonstrate rigour when conducting qualitative research because there is no established consensus regarding the criteria that should be used to evaluate this type of study (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Leung (2015) asserts that appropriateness of the instruments, processes, techniques, and data are crucial elements of validity in qualitative research. A methodology must be appropriate, the design must be valid for the methodology, sampling, data analysis, and results, and conclusions must all be valid for the methodology, sample, and context.

Hence, consistency is key to reliability in qualitative research. The reliability or credibility of qualitative research is frequently used to describe its validity. Checks for consistency are often techniques used for validating claims. To evaluate the consistency of data reduction techniques, independent coders might take samples of raw data and produce codes or categories (Skinner & Edwards, 2009). The researcher has ensured validity and reliability of this study through the careful selection of the study sample group, as well as through subsequent discussions with other professional cricketers who did not form part of the study sample group. However, their beliefs, perceptions, and practices relative to personal branding supported the study findings.

As the study focuses on professional sports persons, the results cannot be generalised to include non-sports playing persons. Even though this study may be mostly relevant to South African cricketers, the findings are deemed to be transferable to other sporting codes with athletes that have similar commercial footprints.

3.14 Ethical considerations

The ethical issues concerning the research were considered by the researcher. Goddard and Melville (2006:49) emphasise that the understanding of ethical issues when conducting research is crucial because ethical considerations help the researcher to:

- take care of people;
- avoid harming people; and
- treat the respondents' information as private and confidential (no invasion of privacy).

Ryen (2011) states that "it is the researcher's responsibility to obtain informed consent from respondents in order to establish trust, as well as to protect the respondent's privacy and confidentiality". Ethical considerations play an important role in the research process. Leavy (2017) asserts that ethical considerations underscore every aspect of social research, regardless of the topic under investigation or the approach selected.

Ethics is a critical component of any marketing research project, according to Sarstedt and Mooi (2019), because, at various phases, research frequently interacts with people (e.g., during data collection and the communication of the findings). The view of Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009:12) is that "research ethics deals with how we handle the data after we obtain them and how we treat those who engage in our studies. Each profession will have its own set of ethical standards for how to treat study subjects who are human". Bryman and Bell (2015) assert that there are ten underlying principles that need to be considered in research dissertations from an ethical perspective. This study set out to abide by these principles by seeking ethical approval from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Ethics Committee (Appendix B), as well as from the South African Cricketers' Association (Appendix C), the collective representative of professional cricketers in South Africa. Consent was also obtained from each individual athlete that participated in the study and they were assured that the information they provided was being used solely for research purposes.

The informed consent form should be presented to individuals prior to their participation in a research study to inform them of the general nature of the study, obtain their consent to participate and briefly to describe the nature and purpose of the study (Jackson, 2009). For the purposes of this study, informed consent was requested from each player selected to participate in this study. This consent was acquired via email. Respondents were notified that their participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and their confidentiality would be maintained as responses would not be linked to their name at any point in the study. Respondents were also notified of their right to withdraw their participation in the study at any stage.

All respondents within the sample group, as members of SACA, provided the researcher with their personal contact details at the beginning of the cricket season, by completing and signing a SACA membership form. The signing of this membership form granted the researcher (a SACA staff member), as well as any other SACA staff member, permission to contact individual players for both personal and work-related requests.

Clearance was not required by either Cricket South Africa or any of the Domestic franchise teams as this research did not interfere with the players' commercial and/or employment contracts or playing commitments in any way.

3.15 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research paradigm as well as the cross-sectional mixed method research design selected for this study. It further dealt with the sample group and size as well as the data collection, analysis and coding processes linked to this research. The study selected a group of 30 players as the sample group. This group consisted of players from each of the eight professional teams in South African cricket, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Respondents from each team were purposefully chosen based on age, playing experience and race, to have as diverse a sample group as possible that best represents the population, both demographically and from a playing experience perspective. The above criteria were selected to gain deeper insight into and understanding of the perceptions and awareness of players at different stages of their careers, and in relation to their gender and cultural backgrounds.

In addition to the above, this chapter dealt with the online survey design, protocol, and the dissemination of the online survey to the sample group. The data analysis and coding processes were discussed and, thereafter, the validity and reliability of the data and the ethical considerations of the study were elaborated upon.

Having reviewed the methodology of the present investigation, the following chapter thematically reveals the findings of the research, as well as discusses findings aimed at answering the research questions and set objectives.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on responses to the qualitative online survey.

The software program, ATLAS.ti 9, was used to code the data, using a thematic analysis approach. This chapter systematically outlines and discusses the common themes identified from the respondents. These themes were covered in Chapter 3.

4.1.1 Demographic information

The cricket players selected for this research study were selected from three contract status groups namely Proteas men, Proteas women and franchise players. The 12 Proteas men had an average age of 27 years. The racial composition of the Proteas men players selected was: three (Coloured), one (Indian), four (Black African), four (White). The Proteas men group was also diverse in terms of income status and playing experience, with six (6) experienced/ higher income bracket players selected, while the other six (6) respondents were lesser experienced / lower income bracket. The average age of the 12 franchise players selected was 24 years, with the racial breakdown as follows: four (Coloured), one (Indian), three (Black African), four (White). Similarly, there was a mixture of experienced and lesser experienced players (in terms of number of years as a professional cricketer) that were selected from varying income levels. The franchise group was also diverse in terms of income status and playing experience, with six (6) experienced/ higher income bracket players selected, while the other six (6) respondents were lesser experienced / lower income bracket. The average age of the Proteas women cricketers was 24 years, with the racial breakdown being two (Coloured), two (Black African) and two (White). The Proteas women selected were also at varying stages of their careers (number of years as a professional cricketer) as well as income level. The Proteas women group was also diverse in terms of income status and playing experience, with three experienced/ higher income bracket players selected, while the other three respondents were lesser experienced/ lower income bracket. In relation to the profile of the cricketers, the Proteas men had participated at both international and domestic levels, whereas the franchise men had only ever participated at franchise level. The demographic information is depicted in table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Demographic information

PLAYER GROUP	SAMPLE SIZE	AVERAGE AGE	RACIAL COMPOSITION	LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE / INCOME STATUS
Proteas Men players	12	27	Black African – 4 White – 4 Coloured – 3 Indian - 1	Experienced / Higher Income – 6 Lesser experienced / Lower Income - 6
Proteas Women players	6	24	White – 4 Coloured – 4 Black African – 3 Indian – 1	Experienced / Higher Income – 6 Lesser experienced / Lower Income- 6
Franchise players	12	24	Black African – 2 Coloured – 2 White - 2	Experienced / Higher Income – 3 Lesser experienced / Lower Income – 3

To uphold ethical practices (i.e., anonymity), the respondents will be labelled as R1, R2, R3, etc. The assigned number holds no significance for the respondent. Where necessary, direct quotations are illustrated to show consensus of respondents.

4.1.2 Development of codes

For this study, the online survey responses were collated in Google Forms, which automatically grouped responses to each question. The data was arranged into specific sub-sections by the researcher, following which codes and themes were assigned to various substantive topics linked to the research questions. Using ATLAS.ti 9, specific codes were allocated to the pertinent sections of the online survey responses. As shown in Table 3.4, the software and codes with a related topic were then grouped under a family code that refers to the study questions.

It was important to define the code, the code families, code groups and themes. The next few chapters present a thematic discussion of the findings. The family codes were developed in line with the main sections derived from the online survey. These sections address all the relevant main themes relative to the players' understanding of personal branding as a concept, as well as their own personal branding journey. ATLAS.ti 9 software highlighted the individual

codes mentioned under each of the main sections. The themes are closely linked to the family codes as these adequately answer the research questions.

The findings relative to this study will be presented thematically. The themes are listed as follows:

- (i.) professional cricketers' awareness and perceptions relative to personal branding;
- (ii.) the management and activation practices of professional cricketers;
- (iii.) the benefits of personal branding;
- (iv.) personal branding strategies utilised by professional cricketers;
- (v.) professional cricketers and the leveraging of their personal brands;
- (vi.) global athletes and their personal brands;
- (vii.) personal branding trends (commercial profile, contract status, gender)

Table 4.2: Codes and code families

Code family:	Individual codes:
Personal branding awareness and perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identity ● Public ● Education
Personal branding management and activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Management ● Intentional ● Responsibility ● Advice
Personal branding benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sponsorship ● Post-career ● Followers ● Income
Personal branding strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media ● Events ● Hobbies ● Media opportunities ● Speaking engagements
Leveraging your personal brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsibility ● Branding framework ● Branding goals ● Timing ● Personal branding Growth
Personal branding global athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Branding icons (global) ● Branding icons (SA) ● Relevance (level of athlete) ● Individual vs Team dynamic

4.2 Professional cricketers' awareness and perceptions of personal branding

The respondents were asked whether they believed they had a personal brand. The findings indicated that the overwhelming majority of respondents believed they had a personal brand, with a small minority not sure as to their personal brand status.

In response to having a personal brand, R7 stated:

"I do have a personal brand, I may not have the social media following of some of the other players in my team, sponsors aren't lining up at my door, however, many people know me as an honest, hardworking, friendly guy who loves his family and loves the game of cricket" (R7).

R4 showed a deep understanding of the term personal branding and how it relates to them as a professional sports person. To this end, the respondent stated,

"My brand is a mixture of inspirational and aspirational traits. I try to inspire through what I do, which is play cricket professionally around the world. The rest is having my audience connect with me as a person holistically which includes being a family guy and all my other interests such as fashion and food" (R4).

Conversely, R22 and R24 admitted to not having a defined personal brand but admitted it was something they were working on. These respondents further acknowledged that they had placed very little emphasis on their personal brands and conceded that they had not done enough to promote themselves (personally), outside of being cricketers: "I have chosen to focus solely on playing cricket and didn't know much about personal branding before this study" (R22). Another respondent stated, "I have never promoted my brand or myself on social media, I had no idea where to actually start but know that I am a brand" (R24).

The respondents were also asked about the importance of athletes being aware of, and actively managing, their personal brands. All the respondents felt it is important for all professional athletes to be aware of and actively manage their personal brands. Specifically, R2 referred to athletes as public property, thereby highlighting the importance of a positive public image. R11 also highlighted the importance of personal branding by stating, "I see personal branding as the perfect tool to effectively engage with existing and new fans on social media, as well as open doors for me when I decide to retire one day" (R11). In addition, R12 noted, "the lifespan of a professional athlete is very limited, therefore it's important to set your brand up so that it outlives your playing days". The respondents who admitted to not having a personal brand continued with the survey and answered all the questions, as their brand, while not active, was something they could still identify with.

4.3 The management and personal branding activation practices of professional cricketers

The respondents were asked a series of three separate questions measuring the management of their personal brands. Figure 4.1 indicates the responses of the respondents to the first question, in which they were asked about the person responsible for initiating the building of their personal brand.

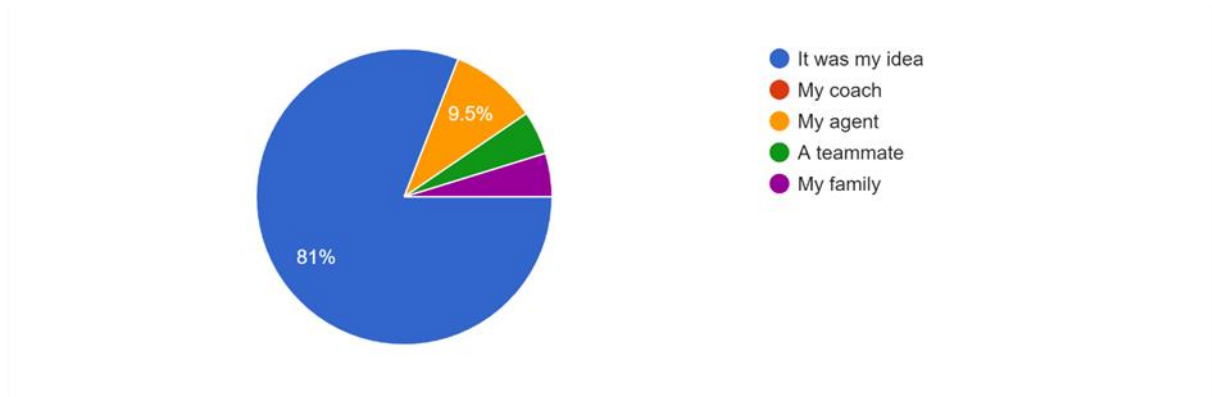


Figure 4.1: Personal brand initiator

The responses indicated that most respondents acknowledged it being their idea to start building their personal brand. A small number of the respondents admitted that their agent had initiated the idea. Surprisingly, albeit they accounted for very small percentages, teammates and family members had also contributed to awareness of personal branding for a few cricketers.

The respondents were asked about the maturity of their personal brand (length of time managing and building their personal brands). Figure 4.2 illustrates the length of time that respondents had been developing their personal brands:

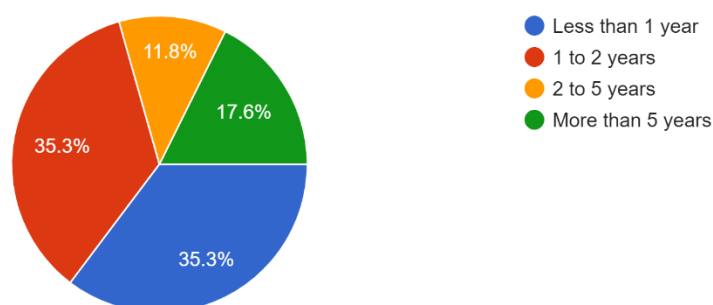


Figure 4.2: Maturity of personal brand

The responses show that the maturity of most respondents' personal brand falls within the period of two years and less, with 35.3% building their brands for less than a year; 35.3%

acknowledged that they had been active with their brands for between one and two years; 11.8% of respondents fell within the two to five years category; and 17.6% had been developing their brands for more than five years. Surprisingly, the findings indicate that all the respondents that had been developing their brands for more than two years were Proteas contracted players who had been playing professional cricket for more than five years, which implies that personal branding becomes more of a focus for players as they progress in their careers, both from an experience but also a playing level perspective.

The third question asked of respondents related to whether they were actively managing their personal brands. The purpose of this question was to ascertain the respondents' perception of their personal brand at the time of questioning.

Figure 4.3 indicates that 52.4% of respondents were actively managing and building their personal brands; 28.6% were not managing their brand; and 19% seemed unsure (they responded to the question with a 'Maybe'). The findings therefore show that slightly more than half of the respondents were actively managing their brands, with the balance of the respondents either not building their brands at all or being not sure as to their current personal branding status. Those respondents actively managing their personal brands were engaged in some form of brand building activity, online and/or offline.

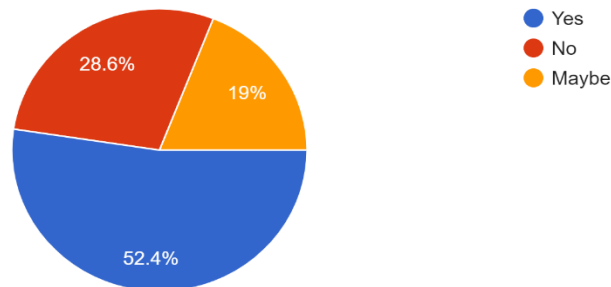


Figure 4.3: Personal brand management status

In relation to the brand building activities that's keeps their brands active, R14 had the following to say:

“I make a concerted effort to ensure that I engage with my followers on a daily basis, this helps me build authentic relationships with my fans”.

In addition, R19 stated that, “I find face to face interaction as the best vehicle to communicate my personal brand”.

4.4 The benefits of personal branding

The respondents were asked about the benefits of personal branding, and to identify those benefits that resonated with them the most. There were a few keywords which stood out in the responses (for R1, R14, R24, R26): sponsorship, post-career, followers and income.

In relation to sponsorship, most respondents had mentioned this as one of the main benefits linked to personal branding (R2, R5, R7, R16, R19). While the motivation behind building a personal brand appears to vary significantly from athlete to athlete, all respondents agreed that the biggest benefit to having a powerful personal brand is the potential career opportunities once they leave their sport of choice. R9 stated, "I believe that if I put the work in now, my brand will open doors for me when I leave the game of cricket and that's what I'm most excited about". Another main benefit of having a strong personal brand that was identified by respondents was the networking opportunities it would provide. R24 noted, "I have already met so many fascinating people through playing cricket, by building my brand it will only further expose me to sponsorship and networking opportunities once I retire". The findings also show other key benefits communicated by the respondents which included ambassadorial opportunities and providing greater life purpose.

R1 noted, "there are so many good reasons to start building your personal brand, but the one that stands out the most for me is the opportunity to engage in proper self-reflection, to sit down and think about who you are and what you want to achieve in sport and life in general". R26 replied to the question by saying, "hopefully my personal brand appeals to sponsors and brands and people get to see the real me, I would love to work with brands that align with my values and character".

4.5 Personal branding strategies utilised by professional cricketers

It was important to understand which strategies, if any, professional cricketers were utilising in their brand building efforts. Respondents' responses regarding branding strategies all followed a similar theme. An overwhelming majority of respondents identified the use of social media as their main strategy building tool. Emphasising the importance of social media to an individual's brand building efforts, the respondents stated:

"I use my social media platforms to promote my personal brand, and also promote and endorse brands or products that I use or want to be associated with. In addition, supporting causes and initiatives that align with my personal brand" (R5).

"In today's day and age, it would be impossible to engage with my followers and fans without social media. It is probably the single most powerful tool for building my brand" (R22).

“Top International athletes have used social media to build and grow their brands and I certainly take inspiration from that in my social media activities” (R1).

A significant number of respondents emphasised the importance of community engagement and social responsibility related work to promote and enhance their brand. R19 illustrated this perspective: “I am always very keen to be visible outside of cricket, get involved in community work and be seen as someone that cares for others”. In addition, R17 stated, “social responsibility work speaks to who I am as a person, I am passionate about helping those in need and I would like to make that the central theme of my personal brand”.

Respondents were then asked whether they were aware of any strategies other cricket players were using to stand out from the crowd. Responses again followed a similar theme as was the case with the previous question, with respondents highlighting the importance of social media to brand building efforts.

“In my opinion it would be almost impossible to build a credible brand without the help of social media, it’s where everyone gets their information nowadays” (R14).

“The one thing I have learnt over the past six months is that social media can either be your best or worst friend, it depends how you view it, but also how you use it. If utilised correctly it can be your greatest brand building ally” (R22).

Interestingly, a respondent referred to the importance of collaborating with international brands and other celebrities to give their brand traction, thus highlighting celebrity endorsements and co-branding. For example:

“By collaborating with reputable brands and other celebrities, it will expose my brand to their respective fan bases and potentially enhance my profile” (R13).

Another respondent echoed this view of co-branding, stating that; “there’s no faster to growing your personal brand than by teaming up with other more established brands, I will definitely look to tap into this in the near future” (R21). Another respondent pointed to athletes portraying their true self through their personal brands, promoting those things that they are passionate about outside of their sport of choice, such as, passions, hobbies, interests. For instance,

“I think your personal brand needs to be authentic, you need to show people who you are a person, outside of the sporting environment, showcase those things that you are passionate about” (R10).

Similarly, another respondent noted that,

“Fans usually look at us and think all we do is play cricket, but learning more about personal branding, it actually gives us a platform to connect with new fans who share some of our other hobbies and interests, that’s pretty cool” (R27).

The respondents were specifically asked about their social media profiles across the leading online platforms. Figure 4.4 illustrates the number of players who have active profiles across the leading social media platforms. The use of social media tools varied across the different player age groups, with no links or patterns identified in this regard.

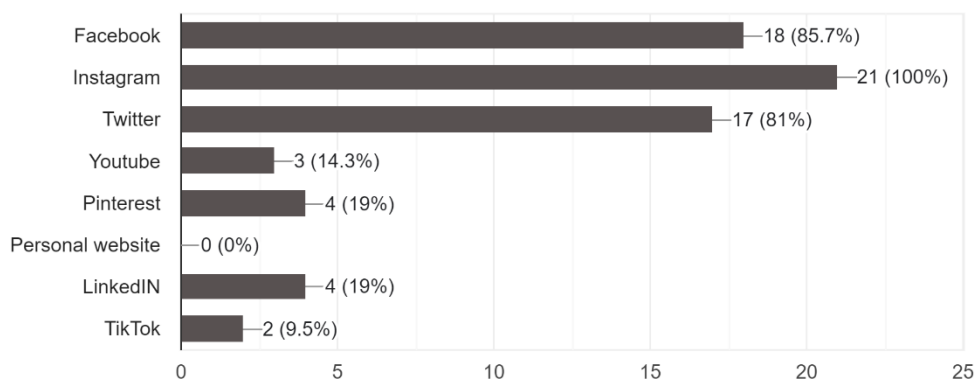


Figure 4.4: Cricketers and their social media platforms

When asked whether they actively engaged their followers via their social media platforms, 50% of respondents replied “Yes”, while most of the balance replied “No”. R3 and R7 provided additional feedback by admitting that they were not intentional about responding: “I respond at times but also choose to ignore a lot of online comments” (R3).

R4 acknowledged he /she had engaged with their followers as it was important to be seen as friendly and a people’s person. R10 responded, “yes, I always make an effort to engage with my followers as it shows that I really do value their opinion and the time they take to engage with my posts”. By contrast, R6 stated that they only posted for themselves and had no interest in comments or interaction around the posts. Likewise, R16 noted, “I prefer not to engage online as once you start engaging, I’m afraid of not having the time to reply to everyone”.

4.6 Professional cricketers and the leveraging of their personal brands

Respondents were asked: “Who do you believe is ultimately responsible for building and managing your personal brand?” Most respondents conceded that they believed the individual athlete should be responsible for this. However, they acknowledged the role of other parties and factors within that process, including agents, family, friends, and sponsors, as well as on-field performance.

R14 stated, “building my personal brand needs to be driven by the athlete, if it’s initiated by anyone else, there’s a chance the brand won’t be authentic”. In addition, R20 acknowledged, “my brand has been built at a very slow pace due to the limited time I’ve invested in it. I do believe that my family and agent will need to play an important role in growing my brand”.

Respondents were then specifically asked, “If you could choose five brands that you’d like to be associated with, please list them and state why”. The findings show that the respondents took time to think about their responses and the brands they would like to be associated with, making sure that the sponsor’s brand aligned with their personal values and/or identity. For example, R8 stated:

“Adidas, as I love their style and comfort of their shoes; Oakley, as I think their eyewear is classy and elegant; BMW, as I enjoy the thrill of speed mixed with sophistication; Rolex, as it’s a brand where style meets class and confidence”.

While all respondents listed their preferred brands, there was a clear understanding amongst all respondents relating to the important role sponsors play in the make-up of one’s personal brand, and the need for there to be some level of alignment between one’s personal brand and that of one’s sponsors. R29 noted, “in the past I would just team up with any sponsor that wanted to work with me, however, thanks to experience I have learnt that it’s all about finding the right sponsors to team up with, those who share your vision and passion”. R6 agreed, “my brand would not be at the level it is without the support of my current sponsors who supported through the low and highs of my career”.

In relation to the leveraging of their personal brands, the respondents were asked about whether they were currently utilising a plan and/or framework in building their brands. While most respondents admitted to not having a personal branding plan or framework that they followed, a few respondents were more organised in their brand building efforts. R1 stated, “my basic plan/framework relates to consistent posting on all my social media platforms and being authentic with my content”. R2 referred to a plan which they were following, that had been sent to them by their technical sponsor. As a sponsored athlete, they had tailored a social media campaign for the athlete to follow.

In response to the question of whether one’s personal brand is only relevant while one is an athlete, or if it still applies once, one transitions out of the game, all respondents agreed that a personal brand needs to be built to outlast the sport one plays. This is particularly relevant as it indicates the importance and relevance of personal branding in the minds of the respondents. Even though several respondents have admitted to not actively leveraging their brands, the majority of respondents are aware of the potential leveraging opportunities that exist should if and when they do decide to leverage their brand.

R13 remarked, “My personal brand is being built now while I am in the spotlight as a professional athlete, but it will only really work for me once I’m out of the public eye”. R25 stated, “the only reason I’m interested in building my personal brand further is the potential assistance it can provide in me eventually transitioning out of the game in a few years”. R6 agreed, saying, “our time as professional cricket players in the spotlight is very limited, one would be silly to think it lasts forever, personal branding should be as relevant to an athlete on their first day as a professional cricketer as it is on their very last day”.

When asked about the challenges and barriers to building and leveraging their personal brands, the findings show that most respondents viewed a lack of personal branding education as the main barrier to their brand building efforts: 47% admitted to having a lack of appropriate support; and 43% acknowledged that they had never had adequate motivation to set time aside to build their brands. A few respondents (R21, R26, R27) blamed a lack of time as a barrier to their brand building efforts. The contracted Proteas men players were not among the respondents who attributed a lack of personal branding education as a barrier to their brand building efforts. This trend, however, was not evident among the Proteas women, with half of them attributing a lack of brand building education to their current brand status.

The respondents were asked whether they would be interested in identifying and/or re-evaluating their personal brands Figure 4.5 illustrates their responses which highlight that a small percentage of athletes do not fully understand the benefits and importance of personal branding and lack awareness relating to the leveraging opportunities that exist. It could also indicate that, even though they were aware of the benefits, they were not prepared to invest the required effort and time to build and manage their brands.

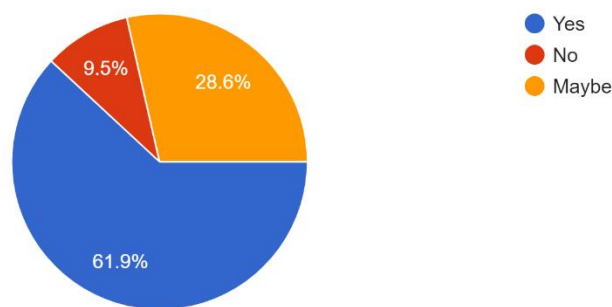


Figure 4.5: Interest in re-evaluating your personal brand

4.7 Global athletes and their personal brands

It was important to ascertain the respondents’ knowledge and understanding, not only of their own brands, but also their awareness of personal branding practices linked to global athletes across different sporting codes. This was important to ascertain as these global athletes

provide a reference point for the respondents; furthermore, they provide real life examples of the power of personal branding. To educate an athlete on the importance and benefits of personal branding may be effective, but to point them to a real-life athlete to whom they can look and from whom they can learn is powerful.

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of any strategies and techniques international cricketers were using to promote their personal brands that made them stand out from the crowd.

Based on the findings, most of the respondents agreed that cricket is lagging other sports in terms of the prominence of powerful personal brands within the sport. The following statement is representative of a few of the answers to this question:

“I think cricket is behind at the moment compared to other sporting codes such as soccer and American sports. Some of the things these athletes are doing with their personal brands we haven’t seen in cricket yet” (R4).

This response was specifically relating to fan engagement activities, as well as ambassadorial partnerships with global brands.

Most respondents agreed that athletes with powerful personal brands had a clear strategy: they used social media very creatively and they were very intentional about building their brand.

In response to the question on whether an athlete had to compete at the highest level of their sport to have a powerful personal brand, the responses were varied: 50% of respondents replied Yes, while the other 50% felt you did not need to do this for your personal brand to stand out. This question is particularly relevant to this study as the answers would serve to highlight the respondents’ understanding of personal branding and would also influence their attitude towards their own brand in both the short and long term. It was envisaged that the study would highlight the need for all athletes to start building their brands, irrespective of age and career status. Some of the responses included:

“Provincial sport is not of a high enough standard to warrant me building my brand as a franchise player” (R22).

In contrast, R16, who replied No, cited the fact that there are a number of athletes who have not played at the highest level of their respective sports, yet have still managed to build powerful, sustainable personal brands.

Respondents were questioned about their personal branding idols – athletes they looked up to from a branding point of view. Respondents voluntarily listed their preferred idols and

elaborated on why they identified most with those athletes. While responses varied greatly, the reasons behind their affection for the athlete/brand is what stood out most in the findings. Some of these responses were as follows:

“David Beckham’s personal brand is a balance of sport, family, lifestyle ad charity” (R7).

“Virat Kohli’s brand has grown as his career has grown, that has impacted me massively to focus on performing on the field before I start focusing too much on my personal brand” (R11).

“Lewis Hamilton doesn’t conform to society; he is his own person he does what he likes and he stays true to himself and his beliefs which I like” (R16).

“Elysse Perry has become the face of Australian Women’s Cricket through portraying who she is both on and off the field” (R17).

“LeBron James has had a stellar career to do with very little off-field controversies, he has also created a bursary scheme for many kids in poorer communities which is inspiring” (R24).

The findings show that respondents were able to identify those brand characteristics that resonated with them in terms of their idols and what they had done to build their personal brands. The findings show that Proteas women were the only respondents who looked up to female global athletes (to Elysse Perry and Serena Williams), indicating a link between the gender of respondents and the gender of the athletes they admire.

Respondents were asked whether they believed personal branding should be discussed within the team environment, with players sharing their opinions. Figure 4.6 illustrates their responses to this question, indicating that most respondents were keen to learn more about the topic of personal branding and were willing to engage their teammates in this area.

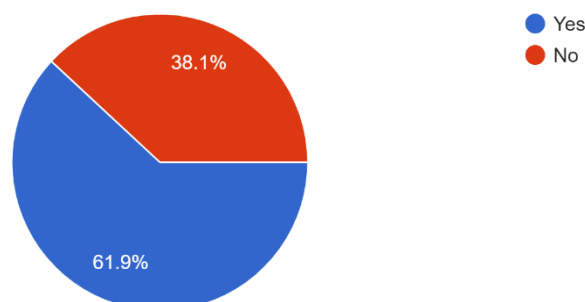


Figure 4.6: Personal branding within the team environment

Respondents were also asked about personal branding education and who they believed should be responsible for educating players on this subject. They were given the following three choices:

- (i.) CSA / SACA – CSA being the players employer, SACA being the Players Union
- (ii.) Individual Player Agents
- (iii.) Players themselves

The respondents' sentiments on this matter are illustrated in Figure 4.7:

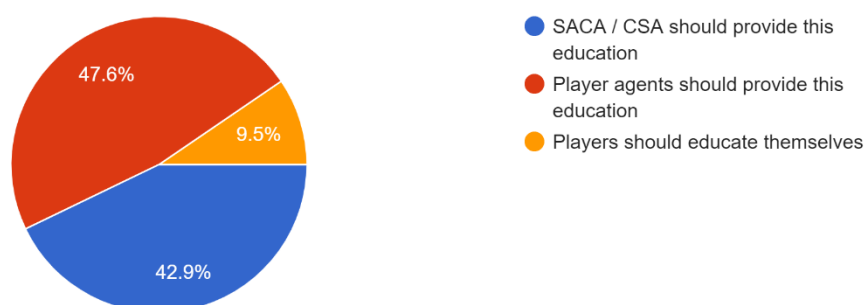


Figure 4.7: Personal branding education

This finding is particularly relevant as it provides insight into whether players view personal branding education as their personal responsibility, or whether it is something that should be initiated by CSA (employer) and/or SACA (players' union). The findings are surprising in that less than 10% of players believed they were responsible for educating themselves on personal branding.

4.8 Personal branding trends

The following were the key findings in relation to the following topics:

- (i.) Commercial profile of the athletes
The majority of Proteas men respondents were not only more aware of their personal brands, but they were also more intentional in terms of their brand building efforts when compared to franchise and Proteas women players. While the findings show all athletes were aware of personal branding as a phenomenon, athletes with higher commercial profiles seemed to place greater emphasis on their personal brands and they showed a greater awareness relating to all the detail around personal branding. All Proteas men were aware of and actively managing their personal brands, while 50% of the franchise players who were actively managing their brands were players of a higher commercial profile (social media following, fan

engagement, etc.). The Proteas women within the study were all a similar commercial profile, therefore no further deductions could be made in that regard.

(ii.) Contract status of the athletes

The three contract groups within this study as outlined in chapter 3 were Proteas man, Proteas women and franchise players. The results of this study clearly show that Proteas men players were more inclined to be intentional about building their personal brands compared to Proteas women and franchise players. The advantage of playing globally, being exposed to brands and athletes in other countries, and increased commercial opportunities, all contributed to Proteas men players wanting to develop their personal brands. There was a direct link in the findings between the contract status of athletes and their perception of personal branding. In cricket, contract status is very often also linked to age, with older players being afforded greater earning potential in the form of more lucrative contract packages (Cricket South Africa, 2019). Of the respondents questioned, 80% of athletes with top end playing contracts were actively managing their personal brands. In contrast, 15% of athletes on lower contract packages were building their brands.

(iii.) Athlete gender

Even though Proteas men and Proteas women operate on the same contract status level, there are differing perceptions around personal branding between these groups of players. This difference can be attributed to their different commercial status and the following of the game of cricket in SA where the men's game enjoys greater exposure through broadcasting and sponsorship opportunities. The men's game is well developed and established, while the women's game is still developing as it seeks to attract new fans and sponsors to the game of women's cricket. Successes in the recent World Cups have served to elevate the commercial profile of many of the Proteas women players and this should place greater focus on their personal branding exploits.

All Proteas men within the study were aware of managing their personal brands to some degree, while only 66% of Proteas women within the study were aware in that regard, indicating differing perceptions toward personal branding based on gender.

4.9 Chapter summary

The data from athlete responses were presented in this chapter in relation to their knowledge and usage of personal branding. The second section of the chapter set out participant responses in relation to their awareness and perceptions of personal branding. The responses

varied greatly in relation to the level of understanding of the term personal branding. However, all respondents showed a general basic level of understanding of the term. Respondents all expressed positive sentiments towards the term personal branding and understood its value.

Respondents were also questioned on their personal management and personal brand activation practices. Again, responses varied greatly, with some very intentional about their brand building efforts while others were aware of the benefits but were not interested in focusing on these too much at that stage of their careers. All respondents showed a very good understanding of the benefits of personal branding and how they could leverage it to their benefit.

The next section sets out respondents' views and understanding of personal branding on a global level. They were asked to identify athletes and athlete brands that stood out for them, and to explain what appealed to them most in relation to their idols and their brands. The respondents were able to identify those traits and characteristics that appealed to them as individuals and grasp the fact that a personal brand is exactly that: something that is personal to everyone, something that makes one stand out as an individual, both professionally and personally.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to ascertain to what extent professional cricketers in South Africa are aware of and actively manage their personal brands. The study looked at professional cricketers across three contract levels within South African cricket, namely the Proteas (national team) men, Proteas women as well as franchise players.

Chapter 4 revealed that, while all respondents were familiar with the term personal branding as well as its associated benefits, the management and leveraging of their personal brands differed across the player cohort, based on factors such as the commercial profile of the athletes, their contract status, as well as their gender. This chapter builds on the findings presented in Chapter 4 and aims to show significant distinctions, similarities, and developments of the themes in relation to the existing literature.

5.2 The awareness and perceptions of personal branding

Personal branding is the technique of displaying your ideal personal identity through sharing content and information in which your most marketable personality features align, according to the Institute for Athlete Branding and Marketing (2018). Furthermore, personal branding is also about packaging the brand that is uniquely you, using various branding strategies from the marketing landscape to enhance your identity and communicate your unique selling proposition (Kaputa, 2006).

The respondents showed a very good understanding of the term personal branding and what it encompasses. The views of all respondents were very similar when asked to define personal branding. One respondent stated that personal branding involves “intentionally building an image of the values and interests that you share and want people to buy into when they think of you”. This response is echoed by Arai et al. (2014:98) who define an athlete’s personal brand as “a public persona of an individual athlete who has established their own meaning and value using their name and personal intellectual property”. As outlined in Chapter 1 and based on the definition by Arai et al. (2014), it is recommended that the terms personal branding and athlete branding be viewed as interchangeable for the purpose of this study. The definitions of the two terms are similar; however, the applications may differ in a sporting context.

Personal branding, according to Montoya (2003), is all about taking charge of the story surrounding how you are seen by others. It enables you to communicate your identity and your values to others in a way that appears so natural and inconspicuous that they assume they came by it naturally.

The findings indicate consistency in opinion amongst respondents regarding the definition of personal branding and what it encompasses. To this end, a summary of the respondents' views reveal that a personal brand is the way one depicts oneself, both on and off the field, and what comes to mind when people hear one's name or see one's face. An authentic personal brand encompasses every area of an athlete's life and cannot be viewed in isolation. An athlete's personal brand should always be front of mind, regardless of an athlete's commercial profile or contractual status.

Research shows that there is a growing awareness around global athlete branding and its role in the sports marketing landscape (Hodge & Walker, 2015). Extensive research has been conducted around successful athlete brands and their associations with products and organisations in a global context (Hodge & Walker, 2015). While the term branding has traditionally been associated with businesses, practically everyone nowadays can agree that they have a personal brand, even if relatively few actively work to build one. Hence, the question of whether athletes have personal brands has been replaced by one of whether athletes are actively managing them (Petruca, 2016). Moreover, substantial research has been conducted on elite level athletes who have managed to build powerful personal brands off the back of their sporting success, thereby highlighting the importance of personal branding for professional athletes (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Burton, 2017).

The findings concur with the literature (Kaputa, 2006; Fischer, 2012; Hodge & Walker, 2015), as respondents confirmed that personal branding is an important aspect of an athlete's career. Most athletes acknowledged the potential benefits of having a powerful personal brand and were able to identify athletes who were successfully leveraging their personal brands, both in a South African and global context. Respondents also agreed on the importance of having a personal brand for professional athletes, regardless of the demographic, commercial or contractual status of the player.

5.3 Personal branding management and activation practices

As a result of potential brand-related benefits derived from marketing activation and brand extension strategies, Arai et al. (2013) confirm that it has become commonplace for athletes to start focusing on developing their personal brands more proactively. Similarly, Montaquila (2017) agrees that athlete branding has gained popularity since athletes make excellent products and the branding concept works well for them.

While all respondents agreed on and acknowledged the importance of personal branding for professional athletes, the findings indicate that some respondents had never cultivated or managed their personal brand. One respondent stated, "more people know me as just a cricketer and not necessarily much more than that just yet, I think a personal brand runs deeper than just being an athlete and I would like to explore that further". Although the results show

that some respondents had some confusion about how to manage their personal brands effectively, their perceptions are consistent with the literature (Green, 2016), and there was a clear desire among respondents to learn more about personal branding and how to use it to their advantage.

Traditionally, it has been accepted that player agents are in charge of creating and overseeing professional athlete branding plans (Arai et al., 2014). This view is echoed by Parmentier and Fischer (2012) who state that the perception exists that player agents assume the role of building athletes' personal brands, with the athlete having little to no say in how their brand is being portrayed. According to literature sources (Arai et al., 2014; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012), an athlete's personal brand can be managed and built by various individuals within the athlete's ecosystem, including player agents, family member, coaches and/or friends. The views of respondents were not consistent with the literature, however: most respondents believed it is their responsibility to manage and grow their personal brand. Most respondents agreed that, for a personal brand to be authentic, it was their responsibility to drive the process and take ownership of their personal brand. Respondent 7 noted, "I realised very early on that no one else knows me better than myself, so I'm the only one that can build my brand effectively". An example of this would be having a social media plan in place for your brand building activities. Furthermore, when discussing athletes with successful personal brands on a global scale, respondents agreed that the athletes themselves played a leading role in elevating a brand to its status. Respondents agreed that, due to time constraints, athletes may require assistance from time to time with their brand building endeavours; however, it remains the athlete's responsibility to take ownership of the brand strategy and direction.

There was consensus in the findings regarding the importance of not only having a personal brand as a professional athlete, but also actively managing it. Respondents agreed on the importance of having a personal brand for professional athletes and attributed this to several factors, such as sponsorship opportunities, ambassadorial opportunities, and networking, to name a few. Most respondents listed the afore-mentioned benefits as the main reason for wanting to develop and grow their personal brands. They recognised the potential leveraging opportunities their brand could potentially provide them with, sponsorship opportunities and other post-career benefits amongst others. The main benefit identified by respondents (relating to the importance of having a personal brand) was the role it would play in helping them eventually transition out of the game.

As discussed by Reed (2017), during David Beckham's playing career, he was very strategic in aligning his personal brand with companies and organisations that appealed to his lifestyle and personality. This was done to create a synergy between his personal brand and that of his sponsors' brands, many of whom he continued to work with long after he had transitioned out of the game. Siya and Rachel Kolisi established The Kolisi Foundation with the goal of assisting

South Africans living in underserved communities by giving resources, fostering capacity-building and horizontal learning exchanges, and mobilizing and promoting systemic change (Impey, 2020). Long after Siya Kolisi hangs up his rugby boots, The Kolisi Foundation will help him leave behind a legacy that will benefit his brand and many other people.

5.4 Personal branding and its related benefits

A strong personal brand for an athlete often brings benefits like money, a following of new fans, as well as networking opportunities. A personal brand is always about growing and maintaining a positive image by the people whose opinions matter (Shyle, 2015). “The value to an athlete of a high-visibility brand can be remarkable: beyond remuneration for professional performance, the athlete can enjoy lucrative endorsement opportunities during and after his or her sporting career” (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012:107).

The results show that respondents comprehend and concur that, if handled and utilized properly, personal branding offers various potential benefits for athletes, both during and after their playing careers. The results also show that perceptions relating to the wide range of advantages associated with personal branding were consistent. Respondents highlighted the advantage of forming strategic partnerships with brands and people that align with your brand identity. Your personal brand could provide you with access to events that expose your brand to new markets. The possibility of aligning your brand with other influencers and athletes with a greater commercial following, to be exposed to their following, was another benefit highlighted by the respondents.

Saunders and Woods (2018) affirm that, by knowing their brand and making the impressions they want to project, athletes will find that they are also able to connect with the opportunities they seek as well as have a smoother, more fulfilling journey in sport and in life. This sentiment was echoed by R5 who stated,

“I think your brand has the potential to go a long way for life beyond the sport you play. There would be different companies and brands that could potentially work with you if you have a solid brand, but this needs to be managed effectively to ensure your brand does not suffer once you retire”.

This sentiment is echoed by Craft (2008) who affirms that a strong athlete brand has the potential to increase earning potential, both during and after an athlete’s career. A strong athlete brand, when properly positioned, indicates that the customer (fans, sponsors, brands, etc.) holds it in high regard and is therefore more willing to support it than a weak or non-existent brand.

From a cricketing perspective, Cube Reach (2018) outlines several benefits cricket players can look forward to if they are intentional about developing and managing their personal brand:

- It helps define your career objectives
- It distinguishes you from fellow players (brand competitors)
- Provides a sense of fulfilment and acknowledgement
- Raises your commercial profile
- Plays a role in keeping you relevant in the game
- Assists in attracting good people and endorsements
- Drills a certain level of discipline in your day-to-day activities

Developing a personal brand as a cricketer is a crucial first step in elevating your commercial profile as it gives your audience a clear understanding of who you are as a person (CubeReach, 2018).

Respondents concurred with the literature (CubeReach, 2018; Lemmons, 2018; Saunders & Woods, 2018) in identifying and discussing all the potential benefits linked to personal branding that appealed to them. Sponsorship, and ambassadorial and networking opportunities were among the prominent drivers behind the personal branding efforts of respondents. Respondents also agreed that personal branding served as an effective tool to raise the commercial profile of players, particularly through online/social media channels.

Respondents acknowledged that, due to the nature of the sport they play, they could be forced to leave the game they love due to injury or loss of contract at any given time, therefore having a back-up plan outside of cricket was always at the forefront of players' minds, i.e., transitioning out of the game. Job security is not very high for professional athletes; players are usually contracted for a year at a time and could be forced to look for other opportunities at any given time (FICA, 2022). As discussed earlier, factors such as loss of contract and/or injury could bring an athlete's career to an end at any time (FICA, 2022). To this end, respondents acknowledged the role SACA plays in ensuring players are engaged in dual-career activities while they are contracted to ensure they set themselves up for life after cricket. The SACA Player Plus programme ensures that every contracted cricket player in South Africa has access to a Player Development Manager (PDM) whose role it is to draw up a personal development plan for each cricketer (SACA, n.d.).

5.5 Personal branding leveraging strategies

Personal branding involves packaging the brand that is uniquely you and using various branding strategies from the marketing world to enhance your identity and communicate your unique selling proposition (Kaputa, 2006). As sports marketing has evolved, it has become almost imperative for professional athletes to pay more attention to their personal brands. The

research suggests that an athlete's future performance will depend in large part on their capacity to leverage and promote a favourable image, making athlete branding a crucial topic (Hodge & Walker, 2015). A respondent, R10, echoed these sentiments: “personal branding is ineffective if not managed and intentionally leveraged by athletes”. Respondents agreed that, for a personal brand to grow and develop, the athlete needs to be intentional about building that brand. While comparing the literature and respondents' responses, the respondents agreed that a successful personal brand is dependent on the leveraging strategies adopted by the player. This corresponds with the literature (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Adamson, 2017). The findings in response to this question show that players understood the importance of not only having a personal brand, but also intentionally leveraging and managing their brand to grow and develop it. Practically, most respondents still fell short in terms of effective leveraging of their personal brands. Social media was identified by respondents as a crucial driver in leveraging efforts, despite the data suggesting some degree of obscurity in respondents' views regarding leveraging strategies. Effective leveraging thus requires intentionality on the part of the athlete to take ownership of their social media / communication strategy.

Once an athlete has identified their brand and effectively communicated it, they are then ready to leverage their brand (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). The literature further suggests that, while some athletes choose never to leverage their brand, it is still important to understand the different options available, which include brand identification and brand communication. This validates the respondents' statements concerning the importance of leveraging a personal brand. The findings further correspond with the literature, as respondents confirmed that, currently, not everyone actively seeks to leverage their personal brands. A small minority of respondents admitted to having no interest in leveraging their personal brands at this stage of their careers.

The Roger Federer brand was examined, and it was discovered that, for a brand to be successful, it needs to demonstrate actively how it differs from other athlete brands in a way that draws the interest of consumers. A brand needs to constantly monitor changes in its category, the market, and the products it offers to be successful. It also needs to be flexible and agile enough to adapt its business strategy to stay distinctive in a way that matters (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2018). From a brand strategy perspective, Roger Federer has managed to leverage and evolve his personal brand throughout the course of his illustrious career, and yet managed to remain true to his personal brand identity (Adamson, 2017).

Athletes are also keenly aware of how short their competitive careers are and realize how crucial it is to take advantage of every opportunity to make money, including using their personal brands, both during and after their competitive years (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2018). The respondents concurred with the literature, agreeing that an athlete's personal brand is relevant, both during and after one's professional sporting career. There was consensus by

most respondents that, in an ideal world, a personal brand should be managed and built during one's professional career and be able to sustain one after leaving or retiring from that career.

In response to the question of leveraging a personal brand, a few respondents alluded to the fact that they were intentionally looking to build and develop their brands while still playing so that they could potentially reap the rewards long after they retired as they viewed their brand as an important vehicle which could assist them in achieving their post-sport careers. As reported by Price (2017), Michael Johnson built his personal brand off the back of the success he achieved as an NBA player. His time as a professional athlete provided him with the platform and opportunity to build and leverage his personal brand. Similarly, David Beckham's success with Manchester United cast him into the limelight and provided him with branding and leveraging opportunities that otherwise would not have been present (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). The sport itself has therefore been identified as one of the main leveraging resources for professional athletes as they enjoy a limited period in the spotlight, with all of the media attention and enhanced social media and fan following. This time should be strategically used to identify, build, and grow their personal brands.

Many athletes are utilising their personal brands to integrate themselves deeper into better business opportunities (Merino, 2016). According to an academic study by Vincent et al. (2009), brands are seen as many identities as possible in the business sector. Brand Beckham, in this instance, has several personalities or identities, a situation which helps this brand stay memorable, distinctive, and valuable. The findings of the current study indicate a solid understanding amongst respondents relating to the leveraging of their personal brands.

One of the main barriers athletes face in relation to building their brand is a lack of personal branding education (Hodge & Walker, 2015). Athletes, for the most part, are invested in and focused on their main task, which is performing on the field of play. Without proper education, the importance of personal branding is simply not on the radar of most athletes (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019). Based on the study findings, the respondents identified several barriers that played a role in their personal brand building journey. In line with the literature, a lack of proper education was the main reason listed as a barrier by respondents.

However, according to marketing literature, creating a genuine brand necessitates commitment, intention, and some degree of long-term planning (Keller, 1993; De Chernatony, 2001; Aaker, 2009). As a result, individuals responsible for athlete development should think about efficient strategies to help athletes build their personal brands. Sport organisations should work to inform early career athletes immediately about the significance of personal branding because they may require greater support with branding at the beginning of their careers (Hodge & Walker, 2015). Most respondents agreed with this point of view, believing

that it was the CSA's and/or SACA's duty to give professional cricketers the proper personal branding instruction.

5.5.1 Social media

The best way to describe the significance of social media to the personal brand, according to Kevan (2015), is as follows: "If content is the fuel for your personal brand, social media is the engine". Researchers concur that, whether someone intends it or not, it is now nearly impossible for anyone to avoid developing a personal brand due to the rapid expansion of social media platforms (Vasalou & Jonison, 2009; Marwick & Boyd, 2010; Labrecque et al., 2011; Hardy et al., 2012). Social media was identified as a crucial driver in leveraging efforts, despite the study data suggesting some degree of uncertainty in respondents' views regarding leveraging strategies. The findings show that most Proteas Men players were actively engaged in leveraging activities on social media with the goal of growing their personal brands. These respondents highlighted the key role that social media plays in their brand building efforts. All respondents were actively engaged on various social media platforms and recognised the important role social media played in a sporting context. As professional athletes, respondents agreed that they found that social media provided both positive and negative opportunities for them. All respondents agreed that, if used correctly, social media would be the main driver behind developing an athlete's personal brand.

Professional athletes are using social media more than ever before to create, change, share, and discuss content that has a great impact on their reputation, prospects for endorsements, and even survival (Green, 2016). When analysing the responses to the question of leveraging a brand, the respondents often acknowledged the importance of it; however, very few were actively and intentionally seeking to leverage and maximise their brand. Of the respondents who were actively leveraging their personal brands online, they pointed to several techniques they were using to build their brands, including these: accepting new followers on social media; replying to all fans' comments and posts; and ensuring that their lifestyle choices (food they eat, home they live in, car they drive) aligned with the personal brand message. Based on their responses, the researcher concludes that a minority of respondents were actively leveraging their personal brands, and this can be attributed to the fact that most athletes were still in the brand building phase, as brand leveraging can only be done once a brand has been built and then communicated effectively. Another factor to consider would be lack of proper personal branding education, with most respondents attributing a lack of education as the main brand building barrier.

5.6 Personal branding trends

Roger Federer has established and effectively marketed his own RF brand which he currently utilizes to make income through the sale of branded goods and to publicize his own charitable

foundation, in addition to customary third-party endorsement contracts (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2018). Tiger Woods has developed one of the most recognizable brands in sport, thanks to his ability to set himself apart from rivals through distinctive personality traits, abilities, and performances (Ozarian, 2014).

Caster Semenya is currently a Nike athlete and is also an ambassador for Discovery's Vitality fitness and health programme. The Olympic and World Champion is also a Bridgestone ambassador for the "Chase Your Dream, No Matter What" campaign. Her association with Bridgestone focuses on her powerful story as one of the most iconic athletes in the world and her dreams for the future in an Olympic year (European Sponsorship Association, 2020). Similarly, Wayde van Niekerk uses a personal brand slogan across all his social media platforms (#quietstorm). According to a personal Facebook posting by Wayde in 2019, the inspiration behind the slogan is that it refers to his dreams, which are massive, like a storm.

The findings reflect an acute awareness by athletes relating to the personal brand practices both in a South African as well as a global context. The findings further confirm a vague awareness by respondents in relation to the trends and leveraging activities that these well-known athletes are utilising on a global scale to grow their personal brands.

5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a critical analysis of the study findings considering participant feedback and comparisons with the examined literature. The summary of the major concepts offered in the introduction at the beginning of the chapter also serves as its conclusion.

The study has revealed that respondents were all aware of the term personal branding and how it related to them as professional athletes. The findings further indicated that not all respondents were actively managing their personal brands, although they understood the benefits of doing so. The findings concurred with the literature in relation to the potential benefits that a powerful personal brand presents to athletes. This chapter also confirmed that a personal brand is ineffective if not intentionally managed and leveraged, and that there are several global athletes that provide perfect reference points and examples for aspiring athletes to look to when building and growing their own brands.

The study conclusion is provided in chapter 6, it offers suggestions for athletes and other cricket stakeholders concerned with personal branding.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Revisiting the objectives of the study, research questions and methods used

Although personal branding literature has been increasing, the perceptions and awareness of professional athletes towards the subject remains an emerging topic. This is particularly true in the South African context where very little research has been done to profile professional athletes.

As a result, the primary aim of this exploratory study was therefore, to ascertain, the extent to which professional cricketers in South Africa are aware of, and actively manage their personal brands.

The following specific objectives were identified for this study:

- To identify best practices of athlete personal brand management in international contexts through reviewing the literature and athlete examples.
- To explore the awareness, and perceptions of personal branding, and the branding practices of South African professional cricketers.
- To propose personal branding best practices for professional cricketers in South Africa.

The following main research question emerged:

- To what extent are professional cricket players in South Africa aware of, and actively managing their personal brands?

The following secondary research questions were also proposed:

- How do professional cricket players in South Africa perceive the benefits of personal branding?
- How does the personal branding by professional cricketers in South Africa compare to best practices of athlete branding globally?

6.2 Summary of key findings

This section sets out conclusions based on the previous chapter to fulfil the study's primary and secondary objectives.

1. To determine the extent to which professional cricket players are actively managing their personal brands

From the onset of this research, the aim was to investigate the extent to which professional cricket players were aware of, and actively managing their personal brands. The findings revealed that a little over half of respondents were actively managing their personal brands. Respondents felt very strongly that they were ultimately responsible for the management of their personal brand. Research pertaining to global athlete brands indicate that most athletes with established personal brands outsource the management of their brands to a third-party branding agency (Green, 2016). Global athletes prefer to focus on their on-field performance and play a supporting role in building their personal brand. The study therefore shows inconsistency in the minds of respondents compared to personal branding best practice on a global scale. The study further revealed that, of the players that were actively managing their personal brands, the majority had been doing so for less than two years. It can therefore be concluded that personal branding is a relatively new phenomenon for a large percentage of professional cricket players in South Africa.

Of the respondents who were actively managing their personal brands, social media was seen as a key component in brand building efforts. Furthermore, the study revealed that Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were the most popular platforms on which respondents communicated their personal brands. Other than social media, most respondents identified community-based work and CSI related activations as key to their brand building efforts and leveraging tools.

All respondents included in this study were asked to identify those barriers which hindered their brand building efforts. The three most prominent barriers mentioned were a lack of personal branding knowledge, a lack of appropriate support, and a lack of proper motivation. For this reason, it is recommended that all parties involved in the management of a professional cricketer's career (employer, agent, advisor etc.), educate themselves on these and other barriers experienced by cricketers by asking questions and seeking advice from player agents or SACA, and ensure that the appropriate education, motivation, and support is provided to all players at all levels. This will fill a knowledge and practice gap in the research by providing insight into the personal branding barriers experienced by professional cricketers.

2. To identify best practices of athlete personal brand management in international contexts

There are many examples of effective personal branding by athletes at an international level and on a global scale, as discussed throughout the study. All respondents were able to identify individual athlete brands which they aspired to emulate on a global scale. Athletes such as Tiger Woods, Roger Federer, Serena Williams, David Beckham, and LeBron James were among the most popular athlete brands mentioned by respondents. These global athlete brands were identified and mentioned by the respondents without being prompted by the

researcher. Interestingly, Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers were two prominent cricket players mentioned by some of the respondents. The respondents agreed that an athlete's on-field success was a major contributing factor to the success of their personal brand; however, they also acknowledged the importance of athletes being at the forefront of their brand building activities and the intentionality behind their brand building practices. The perceptions and awareness of the respondents towards these global athlete brands indicated their awareness of effective personal branding and what these global athletes are doing and have done to elevate their personal brands.

The study, however, recognised that there was less awareness among respondents relative to what other professional cricket players in South Africa were doing from a personal branding perspective, as players were not really marketing themselves from a branding perspective. Also, most players conceded that they were not actively looking at what other players were doing in this regard. Based on respondents' feedback, cricket players from other cricketing nations (India, Australia, West Indies, and England) already had a high percentage of players with established personal brands. It was conceded that South African players with powerful personal brands had built their brands off the back of their exploits in the Indian Premier League (IPL) over several years. Exposure to the Indian market and fans had allowed players like AB de Villiers, Faf du Plessis, JP Duminy and Dale Steyn to garner a significant following amongst fans. Due to the enormous fan following of cricket in India, players who had participated in the IPL over the years had seen their commercial profiles rise significantly and, as a result, their personal brands had been elevated, particularly from a social media perspective. South African IPL players have attracted significant numbers of new followers on social media.

As discussed in chapter 2, many examples of powerful personal brands exist, both on a global sporting scale and within the cricketing fraternity. As a result, there are many lessons that cricketers can learn from these athletes with powerful personal brands, some of which; brand building intentionality and leveraging techniques. However, what needs to be understood is that, ultimately, it is a very personal journey, so techniques that work for one athlete may not necessarily work for another. Cricket players need to find what is important to them, understand what makes up their personal brand, and find the most authentic manner to communicate that message to the world.

The study also found that cricket players do not necessarily have to play at the highest level to have a powerful personal brand. It was conceded that a personal brand is at its most powerful when athletes operate at the very highest level and achieve on-field success; however, that is not a prerequisite for having a powerful personal brand. Not all athletes are

going to reach the level of Tiger Woods or Roger Federer in terms of their brand personality and status within their respective sports but that does not mean that they cannot leverage their personal brands to work for them. For lower-level athletes, a proposal from this study would be that they engage in brand identification as a starting point. A defined personal brand may also provide an athlete with a clear summary of who they are and what they stand for; and it may also serve to give them greater direction from a personal and sporting perspective (Quadri, 2021).

The platforms and frequency with which the athletes communicate on social media, and the content communicated, are entirely up to the individual athlete. Once their brand is developed, this then also provides the athlete with an opportunity to engage with their personal brand at a later stage in their careers when they are ready to start managing and growing their brands (if at all). Each athlete's journey with their personal brand will be unique; however, the starting point will always be the same: brand identification, a process that is helpful, regardless of their career status or brand building intentions.

A further finding of this study is that respondents felt that personal branding should be discussed in the team environment. Even though personal branding is very much a personal journey for each individual athlete, discussing personal branding in a team environment would allow athletes to learn from one another in terms of brand building strategies and techniques and leveraging opportunities; it would also serve as an opportunity for brand building education for athletes. This is somewhat of a departure from the literature, where personal branding is very much viewed as a personal journey, unique to each athlete. It is therefore recommended that personal branding be discussed within the team environment within professional cricket teams in South Africa. Cricketers should set time aside in team meetings to prioritize these discussions to ensure that all players are aware of the various personal branding nuances. This would go a long way in ensuring that personal branding becomes more the norm rather than the exception and whether athletes are educated on the topic is not left to chance.

The findings indicated that most respondents felt that it was the responsibility of either Cricket South Africa (CSA) or the South African Cricketers' Association (SACA) to provide players with personal branding education. It is recommended that CSA and/ or SACA develop a personal branding education module that can be rolled out to players across the professional cricket system at the beginning of each season, with follow-up sessions prioritised during each season. It is further recommended that resources be deployed by CSA/ SACA to ensure that the building of players and their personal brands is prioritised. Resources would include educational material, human resources, and interactive workshops. Extensive research has been conducted on the personal branding strategies utilised by global athletes, a research gap however existed in relation to how South African athletes compare to these global icons in their

understanding and management of their personal brands. This research has addressed this gap by providing insight into the personal branding strategies of professional cricket players in South Africa, thereby providing an opportunity for these athletes to compare themselves more accurately with what athletes are doing on a global scale in relation to their personal branding management and activation practices. Furthermore, it provides a reference point for players and persons involved in the management of players in South Africa to better understand personal branding best practice strategies.

3. To explore the awareness, and perceptions of personal branding, and the branding practices of South African professional cricketers

A substantial amount of literature exists in relation to personal branding. All respondents displayed a very good understanding of the term and its relevance in a sporting context. A personal brand comprises one's message, behaviours, values, visual identity, and interests, to name but a few. Respondents were able to identify with these characteristics and articulated their level of importance in relation to a personal brand.

The respondents all agreed on the need for professional athletes to have a personal brand of their own. In terms of personal branding advice, one third of respondents admitted to not having received any advice or guidance on building a personal brand, while other respondents had received advice from either an agent, friends, or teammates. The findings show that most respondents felt they had a personal brand at the time of questioning. Furthermore, the findings indicate that Proteas cricketers (men and women) showed a higher level of awareness relating to their personal brands when compared to franchise cricketers. This study therefore addressed a gap in the literature by providing insight into the personal branding awareness of professional cricketers in SA.

4. To propose personal branding best practices for professional cricketers in South Africa

From the outset, one of the key objectives of this study was to highlight the importance and relevance of personal branding for professional cricket players in South Africa. Furthermore, a key objective was to develop a personal branding best practice list of recommendations that could be adopted and utilised, not only by professional cricketers in this country, but for athletes across different sporting codes at all levels.

Based on the study's findings, most respondents admitted to not having a personal branding framework in their brand building efforts. As the literature has indicated, building a powerful personal brand requires intentionality; it also requires a plan which sets out the characteristics of your personal brand, what your message is, the way you communicate that message, the

platforms on which your message is communicated and, finally, leveraging your personal brand.

This study has clearly indicated the importance of personal branding for professional athletes, as well as the numerous benefits associated with effective personal branding. While the athletes within this study showed a reasonable level of understanding of the topic and the associated benefits, this did not translate into them actively managing their own brands. This could be down to a few reasons highlighted in this study, some of which include limited or no brand education as well as a lack of support. This study, however, adds to the limited literature available on personal branding trends of professional athletes within specific sporting codes. This study has identified current personal branding leveraging techniques utilised by professional cricket players in South Africa, which include choosing sponsors that align with their personal brand and social media brand leveraging. It has further highlighted those personal branding benefits that appeal to professional cricketers, such as networking and sponsorship opportunities, and shed further light on the motivation driving athletes and their brand building efforts. The main motivating factor for athletes identified in this study was preparing for life after cricket.

Proteas men players show the highest level of affinity with their personal brands compared to their Proteas women and franchise counterparts. This is a somewhat worrying trend as it was a finding of this study that a personal brand is important for athletes at all levels. It must be acknowledged that this finding may, however, be attributed to the increased media exposure and global playing opportunities available to Proteas men players, such as ICC Cricket World Cups, bi-lateral cricket tours as well as the numerous T20 Leagues around the globe (Indian Premier League, Big Bash League, Caribbean Premier League, etc.). Thus, while personal branding is important for athletes at all stages of their careers, the prominence and level of athletes' brand will differ. This is significant, as Proteas men players earn significantly more than their Proteas women and franchise counterparts, which indicates the link between income status and personal branding, with personal branding becoming more relevant for players based on their income status. However, this study has shown that players believe personal branding should be relevant at all levels of a player's career, which does not directly correlate with the findings.

The list of recommendations that follows in the next section provides athletes with a frame of reference from which to start building and developing their personal brand.

6.3 Impact of this study

This study provides a significant contribution to the theory relating to the perceptions and awareness of professional cricket players in South Africa toward personal branding. All players in this study acknowledged the importance of having a personal brand for a professional

athlete, regardless of their contract or income status. It further provides insight into the brand building activities adopted by professional cricketers. The study further highlights that, for a personal brand to be effective, the athlete needs to drive the process and there needs to be a high level of intentionality behind the brand building efforts. It further adds to personal branding literature by providing data and insight into the branding practices of professional cricketers in South Africa.

This research highlights the importance of personal branding for athletes at all levels and across all sporting codes. It further sets out the various benefits to effective personal branding and highlights the barriers faced by athletes in their brand building journey. It provides an opportunity for athletes and persons involved in the management of athletes to address those barriers to ensure a smooth brand building journey for athletes looking to build their personal brands, which has been identified as a practice gap.

While only a sample of professional cricket players in SA formed part of this study, a clear trend was evident in that the brand building efforts of players was directly linked to their contractual and/or commercial status. This study found that Proteas men players were more actively managing and leveraging their personal brands than others, so it is therefore recommended that players at all levels become aware of, and passionate about, their brand building journey.

It is envisaged that the formulation of a personal branding list of recommendations provides education and clarity around building a personal brand. It is further hoped that the list of recommendations assists all athletes and stakeholders within the larger sporting community with an easy-to-use guide on personal brand building.

This study further helps CSA, SACA, as well as player agents, understand that they too have a role to play in assisting athletes in building their brands. As mentioned previously in this chapter, a policy recommendation has been proposed to include personal branding education as part of player education modules at the start of each contract season. This will provide a platform for CSA and SACA to implement education modules for cricketers and educate player agents in relation to the supporting role they need to play in the process. A recommendation of this study to young aspiring players is to start building their personal brands as soon as they can, to ensure their brand depicts them authentically, and that it is built to sustain itself well into their eventual retirement from the game.

6.4 Recommendations for athletes and athlete managers

- (i.) Professional cricket players - Based on the findings of this study, a recommendation to professional cricket players in South Africa would be to take ownership of their personal brand as soon as reasonably possible. There is no perfect time to start

building and managing a personal brand, but the best results are achieved when the player takes ownership of his/her brand. Regardless of age, gender, contract status or commercial profile, a player can start managing and building their personal brand immediately; it is not a pre-requisite to be playing at the very highest level to have a powerful personal brand. In terms of the personal branding list of recommendations, the brand diagnosis phase is critical in understanding one's true self, and identifying what is important to the player. Once the player has identified what they want their brand to look like, they would be well positioned to devise a strategy around how and where they will be communicating their brand. All aspects of a player's life, both on and off the field, contribute to their personal brand, so to always have brand top of mind when making any personal or professional decisions is very important.

- (ii.) Coaches - Based on the findings, players are keen not only to activate in this space, but also want to be educated around personal branding. This provides coaches with a great opportunity to better understand what motivates their players, and how to get the best out of their players. Coaches play a vital role in the professional careers of players, so their understanding of personal branding and the attitudes and behaviours of their players will go a long way to improving the player-coach relationship and result in not only better players but better people too.
- (iii.) Player agents - Player agents manage players' affairs in a personal capacity. Based on the findings of this study, some respondents believe it is a player agent's responsibility to build and manage an athlete's personal brand. Agents have a responsibility to educate themselves on personal branding and play a supportive role in ensuring they assist their players to build and manage their personal brands. Agents need to ensure that, in the work they do for their players, everything is aligned with and focuses on the players' personal brands, from endorsement deals to campaigns they associate with.
- (iv.) CSA & SACA - This research has indicated that almost half of the respondents believe that CSA and/ or SACA should be providing education to players on personal branding. Enhancing the personal brands of professional players within South Africa benefits the athletes, the teams they represent, as well as the entire cricket ecosystem in South Africa, which is a win-win outcome.

6.5 Limitations of this study

As this study has focused on the perceptions and awareness of professional cricketers towards personal branding, it is acknowledged that the in-depth study of cricket players only has limitations (such as the uncertainty over its degree of transferability to other sports and contexts). The study could have benefited from gaining the perceptions of professional athletes

across other sporting codes within South Africa as this would have provided a fuller perspective on personal branding trends amongst athletes within South Africa.

An additional limitation of this study is that the views of other stakeholders within cricket, who play an important role in the journey of professional cricketers (i.e., coaches, managers, mentors, agents, etc.) were not assessed. Again, this would have served to paint a clearer picture as to the status of personal branding as a topic in the larger cricket community.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

Future research could focus on the perceptions and awareness of personal branding amongst professional athletes within other sporting codes. In addition, research could also be conducted on promising school-going and university athletes regarding their understanding of and attitude toward personal branding.

CSA, SACA, players' agents and coaches could all be the subject of further research on this topic. An additional recommendation for further research is to investigate whether there will be greater education and training for professional athletes around building their personal brands in future. This study has indicated that the onus of growing an athletes personal brand lies not only with the athlete, but with all parties involved with athletes on a professional and personal level. Education on personal branding is therefore paramount for all parties involved in the management of athletes and further research would serve to ascertain whether this education is in fact happening.

A final recommendation would be to investigate professional athletes in South Africa who have since retired from their sport of choice to understand how personal branding has impacted their sporting journey over the years. This would enable a comparison to be done between current and past players, their personal branding management and activation practices, to see if and how personal branding has developed in the minds of current players when compared to their retired counterparts. Personal branding is an ever-evolving trend so research in this area would allow one to gauge how it has evolved with current players when compared to retired players.

6.7 Thesis summary

Through a mixed methods research approach, this study has investigated the perceptions and awareness of South African professional cricketers toward personal branding. This research has identified that, while professional cricketers in South Africa understand the importance of and benefits relative to personal branding, only a small percentage are actively and intentionally managing and leveraging their personal brands.

The research available on personal branding is consistent with the findings in this research, in that personal branding is a growing phenomenon and athletes are familiar with the term. It is

recommended that athletes at all levels utilise the list of recommendations outlined within this study to start their personal brand building journey.

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“AN INVESTIGATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN PROFESSIONAL CRICKETERS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR PERSONAL BRANDS”

(In partial fulfilment of “Masters in Sport Management”)

Introduction: Thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this study by answering the below questions relating to personal branding. The purpose of the research is to investigate the extent to which professional cricket players in South Africa understand, and seek to develop their personal brands’. The purpose of this survey is to obtain your perceptions and behaviours relating to your personal brand, and how that affects your decision making as a professional athlete.

Please note: By consenting to participate in this study, you acknowledge that your participation is voluntary. Confidentiality of your responses will be maintained and your name will not be linked to any of your responses in the study. Please also note that you are free to withdraw your participation at any stage.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION – PLAYER PROFILES

1.1) In your opinion, what is meant by the term “Personal Branding”?

1.2) How important would you say the following characteristics are to your personal brand? Assign a number to each characteristic, where 1 is most important, and 7 is least important.

Your Message	Your Image	Your Values	Your Interests
Your Passions	Your Behaviours	Your Visual Identity	

1.3) Do you believe it is important for every athlete to be aware of and manage their personal brand?

Yes No

Please elaborate? _____

1.4) Have you received personal branding advice from anyone in the past (parent, coach, agent, teammate, friend etc.)?

1.5) What do you believe are the benefits that can be achieved by having a personal brand?

SECTION 2: PERSONAL BRANDING AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS

(“HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR BRAND?”)

2.1) In your opinion, do you have a personal brand?

Yes No

Please elaborate your answer? _____

2.2) If you do have a personal brand, who’s idea was it to start building your brand?

(Please tick the appropriate block)

It was my idea	
My coach	
My agent	
A teammate	
My family	

2.3) If you have a personal brand, how long have you been developing it for? (years)

< 1 year	1 – 2 years	2 – 5 years	+ 5 years
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2.4) At present, are you actively managing your personal brand?

Yes No

If No, please specify? _____

2.5) As a professional athlete, does the team(s) you represent have a defined brand, do you believe the “team brand” aligns with your personal brand?

Yes No

Please explain? _____

SECTION 3: PERSONAL BRANDING STRATEGIES

(“HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY PROMOTE YOUR BRAND?”)

3.1) Please list all the activities and initiatives you currently engage in to develop and grow your personal brand?

3.2) In terms of the sport you play, what are other cricket players doing to stand out from the competition from a brand perspective?

3.3) In terms of the visual identity of your brand, how do you believe the following visual elements affect your personal brand?

(1: No, Strongly disagree; 2: No, Disagree; 3: Neutral, 4: Yes, Agree; 5: Yes, Strongly agree)

	Which of the following visual elements affect your personal brand?	1	2	3	4	5
3.3.1	My physical appearance affects my brand					
3.3.2	My brand is affected by the car I drive					
3.3.3	My dress style affects my brand					
3.3.4	My brand is affected by the colour I most associate with					

3.4) Do you have a personal profile on any of the following social media platforms?

(Please tick all appropriate boxes)

Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Youtube
Pinterest	Personal Website	LinkedIN	Other (Specify)

Other? _____

3.5) Do you actively engage your followers on the above platforms?

Yes No

If No, please specify why not? _____

3.6) How important do you believe social media to be in growing your personal brand?

On a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 indicates (strongly disagree), and 10 indicates (strongly agree), please tick the appropriate block?

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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3.7) Are there any other strategies you currently employ to develop and grow your personal brand?

Please specify _____

SECTION 4: PERSONAL BRANDING GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

(“WHAT ARE OTHER ATHLETES, IN OTHER SPORTING CODES DOING TO DEVELOP THEIR BRANDS?”)

4.1) Are there any South African cricketers you look up to from a personal brand perspective?

Please explain? _____

4.2) What are International cricket players doing from a brand perspective to stand out from the crowd?

4.3) Do you believe you have to play at the highest level of your sport in order to have a powerful personal brand?

Yes No

Please explain? _____

4.4) Are there any other athletes / celebrities that you look up to from a personal brand perspective, why?

Please explain? _____

4.6) Do you believe personal branding should be discussed in the team environment, players learning from each other?

Yes No

4.7) Do you believe personal branding education should be provided by CSA or SACA, or should it be left to each player to educate themselves?

(Please tick the statement you agree with the most)

CSA / SACA should provide this education	
Players to educate themselves	
Prefer to engage with branding specialists	

SECTION 5: LEVERAGING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

(“IF I WANT TO DEVELOP MY PERSONAL BRAND, WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?”)

5.1) By using the provided scale, please indicate who you believe is responsible for managing your personal brand:

(1: No, Strongly disagree; 2: No, Disagree; 3: Neutral, 4: Yes, Agree; 5: Yes, Strongly agree)

	Who do you believe is ultimately responsible for managing your personal brand?	1	2	3	4	5
5.1.1	I am responsible for my personal brand					
5.1.2	My agent is responsible for my personal brand					
5.1.3	My personal brand is defined by my family and friends					
5.1.4	My sponsors determine my personal brand					
5.1.5	My personal brand is built by the perceptions of others					
5.1.6	My personal brand is shaped by my on-field performance					

5.2) If you could choose, list 5 brands that you'd like to be associated with and why?

1.)	4.)
2.)	5.)
3.)	

5.3) Do you have a personal brand plan or framework that you follow, if yes, are you able to name the plan?

Yes No

5.5) In terms of leveraging your personal brand, which of the following "benefits" most appeal to you?

Assist with sponsorship opportunities	Assist with ambassadorial opportunities	Assist with career opportunities
Assist with networking opportunities	Give me greater life purpose	Other (please specify)

Other? _____

5.5) Do you believe your personal brand is only relevant while you are a professional athlete, or should it still be relevant even after you transition out of the game?

5.6) As a professional cricket player, what are some of the barriers you encountered in building your personal brand?

(Please tick all relevant boxes)

Lack of knowledge on personal branding	Lack of time (due to playing commitments)	Lack of appropriate support	Lack of proper motivation	Other reason
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Other reason, please specify? _____

5.7) How do you envisage your personal brand assisting you in life after sport?

5.8) Knowing what you do about personal branding now, what advice would you give to youngsters making their way through the ranks?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!



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Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **25 August 2020**, ethics **Approval** was granted to **Emile G Dreyer (202031462)** for a research activity for **Master of Sport Management** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis/project:	<p>An investigation of South African professional cricketers and the development of their personal brands</p> <p>Lead Supervisor (s): Prof B Knott/ Dr J Hemmonsbey</p>
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Comments:

Decision: Approved

 <hr/> Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	<p>26 August 2020</p> <hr/> Date
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14 May 2020

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This letter serves to confirm that Emile Dreyer (ID: 8307135178086) is an employee of the South African Cricketers Association (SACA), and has requested approval to conduct a study utilising professional cricket players in South Africa as his sample group.

As the players will be participating voluntarily, and will be doing so in their personal capacity, SACA has no objection to this study being carried out.

If you have any further queries or require additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Breetzke', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew Breetzke
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SA Cricketers' Association
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