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Identifying and Measuring the Importance of the Lawyer's Personal Brand Elements – A Quantitative Research

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Abstract. *Personal branding represents a very important issue in assessing the value created in any activity. Some jobs can't exist anymore without personal branding. More than that, some existing professional categories have to adapt these days, by adopting personal branding strategies, even though in the past it was no need for that. This article focuses on such a professional category – the lawyers. By conducting a quantitative research among professional lawyers, the authors tried to identify the main aspects that compose the personal brand in this liberal profession, and, also, to measure the importance of these aspects. By bringing into discussion the specific aspects of creating and maintaining the lawyer personal brand, the article brings not only a theoretical contribution, but, also, a practical one, as it represents a valid opinion that might be used by academia or other lawyers. The research aimed to answer the following questions: What are the main issues that define the lawyers personal brand?; What is the importance of each component of personal branding in the law services?; What are the most important elements when choosing a lawyer? The research findings revealed a series of interesting conclusions – most of the lawyers are not preoccupied by their image and other elements defining their personal brand, but the reputation and experience are very appreciated by the when choosing a lawyer.*

Keywords: personal brand, lawyer, professional experience

Introduction

In the course of their activity, liberal professions rely on building and attracting a clientele to the same extent as commercial activities carried out by other professionals. However, unlike commercial professionals, freelancers do not enjoy full freedom in bringing public awareness to their work, as the latter are limited in their activities by a series of regulations designed to protect the dignity of the profession they practice. The legal field is by no means exempt from such restrictions. On the contrary, given the importance of legal professions in a society and the values that practitioners of these professions represent, the protection of their dignity is of particular importance. Therefore, the law and the statutes of various legal professions impose harsh limitations on the activities of building a personal brand. Among these the focus is on how the status of the profession of lawyer regulates the options for informing the public on the services offered in order to attract new clients.

Lawyers, unlike other liberal professions, do not enjoy complete freedom in making themselves known, as they are bound to comply with a number of legislative constraints designed not to encourage the increase in the number of trials. In the beginning, the activity of lawyers was seen as an eccentric business, and the belief was that it did not required branding in order to grow, as its development occurred on its own, without the need for actions to make itself known in the market. When Romania became a member of the European Union, Romanian lawyers had to align

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to certain standards and by creating a brand for themselves they could attract clients from the countries of the European Union.

The concept of personal branding has been relatively newly introduced in the category of advertising methods, being an efficient means that serves to identify services and to differentiate them from competitors. The brand is a guarantee of performance and service quality, increasing the value perceived by consumers and reducing the complexity involved in choosing a lawyer.

The present research is based on the conclusions of a previous qualitative marketing research aimed to identifying the ways through which the relationship between lawyer and client is formed, the elements that support the maintenance and development of this relationship, identifying the opinions and attitudes of lawyers regarding the concept of brand and personal branding, as well as its effectiveness from the lawyer's point of view. The qualitative research gave rise to several conclusions on how the relationship between lawyer and client is formed and maintained, while also identifying the elements specific to forming a personal brand; these conclusions were considered as premises of the present research. The qualitative research revealed that lawyers appreciate that a personal brand can develop in years of work and experience, being synonymous with reputation, while lawyers coming from other legal professions benefit from a personal brand from the start, being identified according to the position they previously held, position that clients associate with the notion of knowledge (both in terms of information and people). At the same time, the qualitative research revealed that in terms of building and developing the personal brand, few lawyers resort to elements through which to build a brand; they believe that word-of-mouth recommendations are the best way to make themselves known and appreciated.

In order to complete the image created by the qualitative research and the conclusions that have emerged in relation to the conceptual approaches regarding branding, a second quantitative research is proposed, in order to validate or invalidate the results or to add new elements compared to previous research. Thus, the directions of the new research consist in checking the conclusions from the qualitative research from the clients' perspective, in order to establish the methods through which they choose a lawyer, as well as the aspects relevant to them regarding the personal brand of the lawyer.

Literature review

Wetsch (2012) states that the formation and development of the personal brand is a necessity for personal and organizational success, and it is necessary to adopt a gradual plan for the application and promotion of the brand. To this end, in addition to creating and developing personal skills, the personal capacity of using communication technologies should also be improved. This helps to form strong links in communication networks through the media and the internet, which is beneficial in both personal and professional development.

Karaduman (2013) outlined the idea that a personal brand is the process by which people and their careers are transformed into brands and differs from reputation management and impression management through its very purpose. Furthermore, in the same lecture it was stated that the personal mark includes, without limitation, the physical appearance and personal knowledge, which lead to a distinct and unique characterization, creating a memorable impression of the person. (pp 465-473).

Rampersad (2008) defines personal branding as a personal perception or emotion about a person, usually reflecting who we are, what we believe, what we do and how we do it. He also considered that personal branding has become our reflections that are implemented in our actions.

Kheder (2014) talks about the fact that personal branding is a new concept related to the marketing strategies that a person adopts to promote themselves on the market, following three

phases: the first phase is *creating the brand* that has the role of establishing an identity, in the sense of identifying elements that differentiate them in order to stand out in the crowd, elements that match the expectations and the superior needs of the people, *positioning* is the second phase, having the role of developing the brand, by presenting it through non-verbal cues, verbal disclosures and socialization networks, and the third phase is *brand assessment,* which refers to its recognition on the market, in order to lead to financial gains, professional recognition and improved personal relationships. (pp. 29-40)

Through a qualitative research (Lupșa-Tătaru, 2019) on personal branding, strategic tools for the development of small businesses led by women have been identified and analysed, while the research also focused on the development of female entrepreneurship in Europe and Romania.

The concept of "brand". Brand building. The PCDL model

The brand is a name, sign or symbol used to identify the products or services of a manufacturer and used to differentiate it from the competition, being at the same time a key element in the development process, determining the attachment process of the consumer to the product.

To approach the concept in a broader sense, Kevin Lane Keller (2001) claims that the brand is a set of visual, auditory or other elements, the brand being, rather, the differential effect of the consumer's reaction to the product and in the opinion of Al Ries (2002), the brand has a its own identity, different from the identity of the company with which it is associated, its power lying in the power of a word to remain in the minds of consumers. Scott Bedbury (2004), the author of the book "New Brand World", explains the meaning of the notion of branding, stating that it means improving something so that it acquires value and meaning for consumers.

By highlighting how the brand is built, the conceptual model for brand building in competitive markets known as the PCDL model was proposed. (Bhimrao, 2008). The four elements of this model are: brand positioning, brand message communication, brand performance and brand equity capitalization.

Brand elements are the visual and sometimes physical tools that serve to identify and differentiate a company's products or services. Their proper selection and coordination is crucial when it comes to brand equity. When building a strong brand, the following brand elements are essential: Name, Logo, Tagline (or slogan) and Brand Story. Since these elements have not been analyzed by the literature specifically for each profession, they have been developed in this paper specifically for the lawyer, to see their importance from the point of view of consumers. The model proposed consists of the following essential elements:

- **The lawyer's name** considered both as the actual assigned name and as the cube reputation by which the lawyer is known.
- **The lawyer's image** seen as the experienced aspect of the lawyer and the way in which he is viewed by clients.
- **The lawyer's slogan** represents the message that the lawyer sends in order to be chosen by clients and to strengthen the position on the services market.
- **Professional experience and reputation of the lawyer** is a last element analysed in terms of the lawyer's brand, reflecting a clear and relevant image in terms of the services offered.

We specify that these elements have been established so that the lawyer's brand performance is consistent and useful in order to define general branding guidelines

Methodology

Defining the purpose of the research

The present quantitative research aims *to identify and to measure the importance of the lawyer's personal brand elements.*

The research aims to analyse the consumers' view regarding the choice of a lawyer and to identify the characteristic elements relevant to the client in forming and maintaining the relationship with the lawyer.

The objectives of the research are the following:

- Identifying and analysing the characteristics that form the lawyer's brand
- Measuring the importance of the elements of the lawyer's personal brand.

Research methodology – choosing the method to collect information and designing the questionnaire

The research was carried out in relation to existing studies on quantitative research in this field (David J. Franz, 2023; Linda Saulīte, Deniss Ščeulovs and František Pollák, 2022; Junyun Liao, Jiawen Chen, 2023); the results showed that research can become more sustainable if it focuses on investigating how participants interpret the study material without using measurable assumptions. By using the questionnaire, we expect to obtain valuable information and opinions on the lawyer-client relationship, from the viewpoint of consumer experiences.

The paper was based on a qualitative research conducted among lawyers that identified from practice the elements that define the lawyer brand and these elements were measured in the quantitative research. So, in order to analyse the brand elements of the lawyer, the respondents were asked to distribute 100 points regarding each of the following elements: 1. Lawyer's name, 2. Lawyer's image, 3. Lawyer's slogan, 4. Lawyer's experience and reputation.

In order to obtain the most relevant results possible, a **survey-based research method** was used, and the tool used is **the questionnaire**. In general, the survey-based research aims to describe consumer behaviour, to ascertain opinions and attitudes, to identify the reasons for marketing actions, to identify the values shared by consumers. As such, an investigation can reveal necessary information that was the basis of the decision-making process, as well as analyse the consumer's behaviour regarding the client lawyer relationship, identify the reasons for the choice of lawyer, identify the manner in which the service offered by the lawyer is perceived in relation to his attributes, in relation to the attributes of the brand or other elements considered useful in research and identify the preferences manifested toward the brand and measure the satisfaction or dissatisfaction related to the use of the legal service.

Surveys based on the use of computers have several advantages, among which: they are less expensive; data is collected and processed extremely quickly; questions are often closed questions, which allows the efficiency of processing answers; offers the possibility of setting up a sequential sample. On the other hand, one of the main drawbacks that may appear in such investigations is: the sample is not representative; the questionnaire cannot be too long and most of the questions are closed questions, which may limit the research.

The questionnaire was chosen in the electronic format, on the premise that it offers outstanding benefits for researchers, being a valuable tool that offers many benefits, including extensive access to participants, their opinions and experiences, greater efficiency in data collection and reduced research costs. Overall, the electronic questionnaire in the quantitative research can be regarded as a valuable tool with remarkable benefits, mainly in terms of extensive access to study participants, their opinions, experiences, etc., as well as high efficiency in data collection and low research costs.

The design of the questionnaire started from the objectives of the research, each objective being assigned one or several questions. The questionnaire was designed with 20 questions, of which, the first question, was designed to separate the respondents who had hired a lawyer from those who had not and have them directed to the appropriate questions. The last five questions were designed to identify the profile of the respondents, namely their level of studies, occupation, income. The remaining 16 questions were organized around the proposed objectives.

The research was conducted during September 2022 and the questionnaire was active for one month, during which interested persons were able to provide answers. The link to access the questionnaire was promoted with the help of the main social networks: Facebook and WhatsApp. Statistical data processing was carried out in the IBM SPSS Statistics. 2.2. software.

- **Selection and composition of the sample**

From the point of view of the distribution of respondents based on socio-psycho-demographic criteria, it was deemed consistent with the distribution present among the investigated population. In this regard, among others, the results of the periodical research published by the National Institute of Statistics were used.

In order to achieve the desired probability of guaranteeing results of 95% and a maximum error of +/- 5%, the sample size was determined at a minimum of 353 respondents.

According to the National Institute of Statistics report, at the most recent census, carried out in 2022, there were 19,038,098 people in Romania, of which 14,428,192 people aged 18 to 85 (or over 85).

Table 1. The structure and determination of weighting factors

Statistic INS 01.01.2022	Total	Under the 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51- 60	Over 60
Total	15669090	666077	531.4215	3442525	3662210	3002392	4895355
Man	8733798	342352	1249232	1766337	1865124	1476388	2034365
Woman	9137131	323725	953138	1676188	1797086	1526004	2860990

Source: Authors own research According to the National Institute of Statistics report.

To determine the statistical size of the sample, the calculation formula $n= (t^2 *p+q)/e^2$ was used, formula described by Cătoiu, namely:

$$n=(t2*p*q)/e^2$$

n – "sample size"

z – "coefficient associated with the probability of guaranteeing the research results (confidence level) pre-established by the researcher (its value is taken from statistical tables)"

p – "the non-percentage weight of the sample components that are characterized by a particular attribute"

q – "the non-percentage weight of the sample components not characterized by a particular attribute shall be determined with the relation (1-p)"

e – "margin of error"

Thus, with **a probability of guaranteeing results of 95%**, a margin of error **of ±5%** and **an estimated value of *p* of 0.5** (given the difficulty of estimating the value in this context) the calculated size of the sample would be:

$$n=1.96^2*0.5*(1-0.5)/0.05 = 385$$

Given the particularly wide audience and its characteristics, the sampling method chosen accordingly was **non-probabilistic**, combining **the "snowball method"** with **the oriented sampling method**.

For reasons related to the response rate the sample has reduce at 353 responses.

Results and discussions

1. Profile of respondents

In order to have the best possible profile of respondents, we chose the following variables:

a) Age

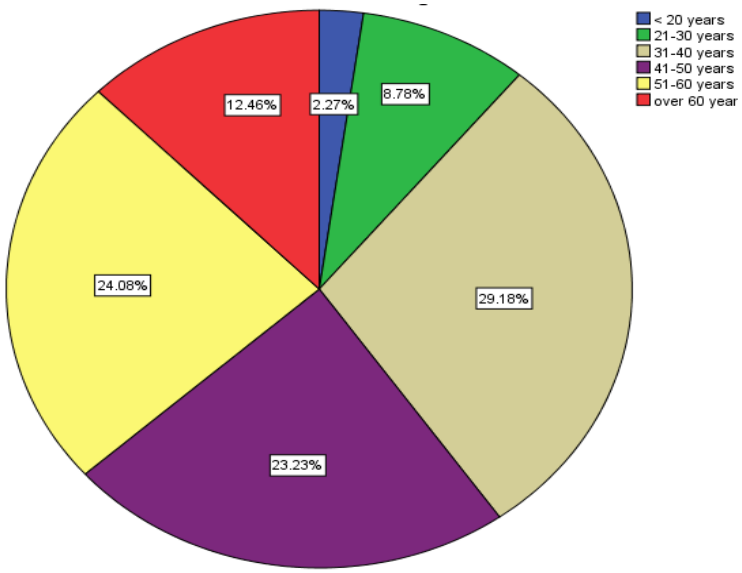


Figure 1. The age of respondents

Source: Authors own research.

The questionnaire was addressed to people over 18 years without an age limit. Of the 353 respondents, 67.7% are men and 32.3% are women. Most of the respondents are over 31 years of age, respectively 29.2% between 31 and 40 years of age, 23.8% between 41 and 50 years of age, 24.1% between 51 and 60 years of age and 12.5% over 60 years of age.

b) Monthly income

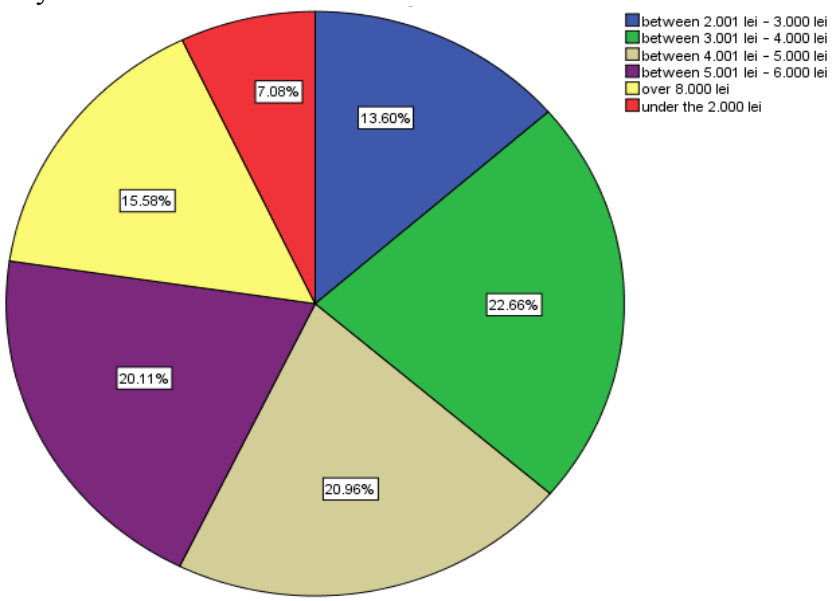


Figure 2. The monthly income of respondents

Source: Authors own research.

In terms of the monthly income of the respondents, most have an income that exceeds the average income in Romania, respectively 19% have an income of over 4,000 lei, 20.15% over 5,000 lei and 15.9% have an income of over 8,000 lei.

c) Employment status

In terms of employment status, 50.4% of respondents are employed, and with regard to their level of studies, 26.6% have high school studies, 36.5% have university studies and 36.8% have post-graduate studies.

2. **Identifying and analysing the characteristics that form a lawyer's brand**

a. **Lawyer's name.** The analysis found that 33.4% of respondents attributed 10 points to the lawyer's name, 30.6% awarded 20 points and 7.4% awarded 30 points. By adding the percentages, we find that 71.4% of the total respondents awarded less than 30 points to the name of the lawyer.

Table 2. Answers received regarding the lawyer's name

The lawyer's name

Points	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10	118	33.4	33.4	33.4
20	108	30.6	30.6	64.0
30	26	7.4	7.4	71.4
50	52	14.7	14.7	86.1
70	49	13.9	13.9	100.0
Total	353	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' own research.

Thus, although the name is the first characteristic that describes a brand, from a customer's point of view, it is not an important element in choosing a lawyer. It should be noted that according to the statute of the profession of lawyer, the name is the one held by the lawyer as a person, being forbidden to choose another name. Even in the case of establishing a law firm, it is mandatory to use the name of the associated lawyers. From this point of view, the fact that the name is not important is justified, because it is the one held by the person from birth, and it would be unreasonable to have to change the name for the lawyer to achieve success.

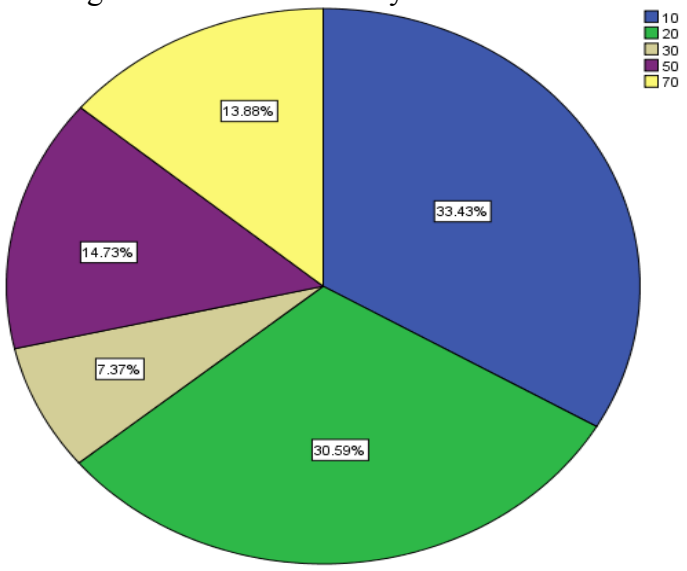


Figure 3. The percentage of respondents and the points awarded to the name of the lawyer.

Source: Authors own research.

b. **The lawyer's image** is also an element that is not important in choosing a lawyer, from the client's viewpoint. Thus, 34.8% of respondents awarded 10 points, 46.2% awarded 20 points and 12.2% awarded 30 points to this element. Therefore, 93.2% awarded under 30 points to the lawyer's image, thus being the least important element from the client's point of view. This result contradicts the opinion of the lawyers, as resulting from the qualitative research, because they considered that a lawyer should present an impeccable image in front of the client and not only in the sense of being neat and clean, but an image that shows that they are a powerful and self-confident person.

Table 3 Answers received regarding the image of the lawyer

The lawyer's image

Points	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10	123	34.8	34.8	34.8
20	163	46.2	46.2	81.0
30	43	12.2	12.2	93.2
50	2	.6	.6	93.8
70	22	6.2	6.2	100.0
Total	353	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' own research.

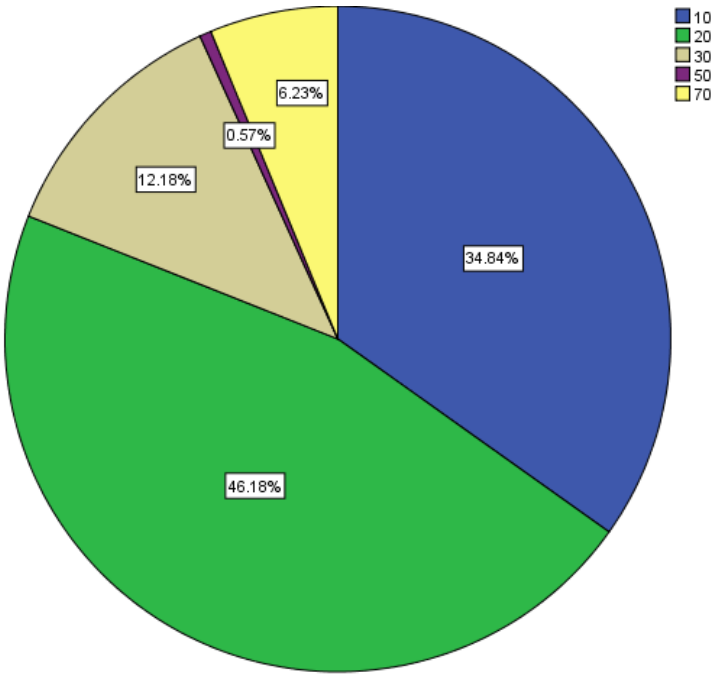


Figure 4. The percentage of respondents and the points awarded to the image of the lawyer

Source: Authors own research.

c. **The lawyer's slogan**, although it is an important element in the description of the brand, is not seen by consumers as relevant in this field. Thus, 100% of the total respondents awarded less than 25 points to the lawyer's slogan, of which 65.2% awarded 10 points, being the highest percentage of respondents who awarded the least points.

Table 4 Answers received regarding the lawyer's slogan

Points	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10	230	65.2	65.2	65.2
20	80	22.7	22.7	87.8
25	43	12.2	12.2	100.0
Total	353	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' own research.

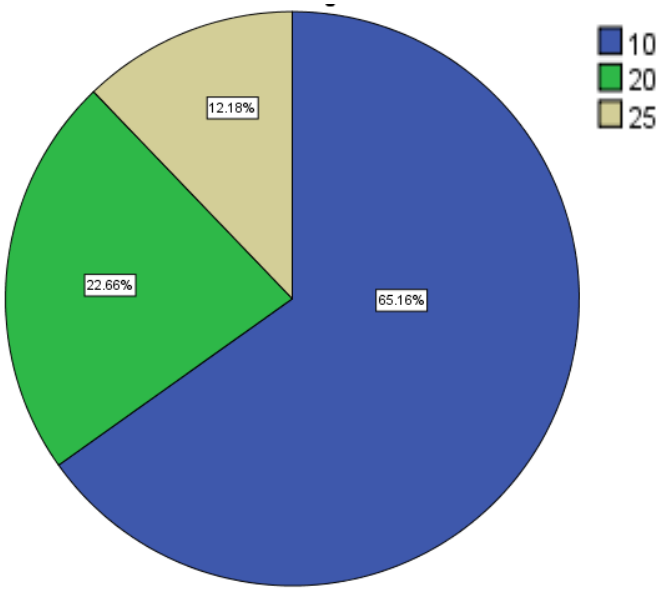


Figure 5. The percentage of respondents and the points awarded to the slogan of the lawyer

Source: Authors own research.

d. **The lawyer's professional experience and reputation** is the only brand element that was awarded the most high-level points, over 50 points, namely: 18.4% awarded 50 points, 5.7% awarded 60 points and 21% awarded 70 points. In total, 45.1% of the customers have awarded over 50 points to this brand element. Therefore, in this field, consumers are not attracted either by the lawyer's name or image, nor by the lawyer's slogan, relevant for them being their professional activity. Therefore, in order to create a personal brand in the field of law, one needs to show reliability and professionalism in solving the consumer's problems, requiring a much longer period than usual consumer brands.

Table 5 Answers received regarding the lawyer's professional experience and reputation

The lawyer's professional experience and reputation

Points	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10	123	34.8	34.8	34.8
25	43	12.2	12.2	47.0
30	28	7.9	7.9	55.0
50	65	18.4	18.4	73.4
60	20	5.7	5.7	79.0
70	74	21.0	21.0	100.0
Total	353	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' own research.

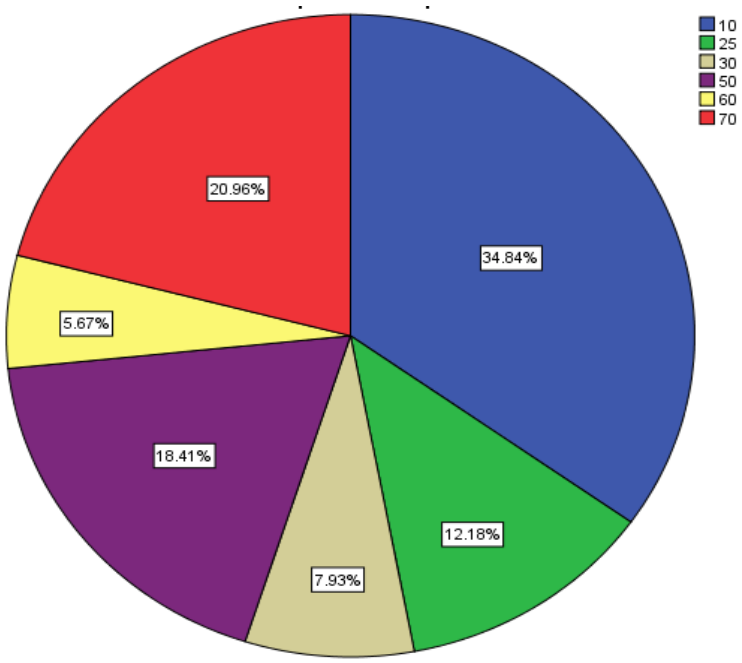


Figure 6. The percentage of respondents and the points awarded to the professional experience and reputation of the lawyer

Source: Authors own research.

2. Measuring the importance of the elements of the lawyer's personal brand

a) Analysing the correlation between one of the elements of the brand, namely ***the image of the lawyer and the age of the respondents***, we find that the highest score (respectively 70 points) was offered by 8 people aged between 51 and 60 years, followed by 6 people aged between 31 and 40. At the same time, the lowest score (10 points) was attributed to the image of the lawyer by 36 people aged 31 to 40 years, and 36 people aged 41 to 50. Furthermore, 20 points were awarded by 48 people aged 31 to 40 and 46 people aged 51 to 60.

Correlated with the number of respondents in each category, 70 points were awarded by 9.1% of the people over the age of 60, 13.6% of the people aged 31 to 40 assigned 20 points and 10.2% of the people aged 31 to 50 awarded 10 points. Therefore, most points were awarded by people over the age of 60 to the lawyer's image, and people under the age of 60 awarded the fewest points to the lawyer's image, as not relevant in forming a personal brand.

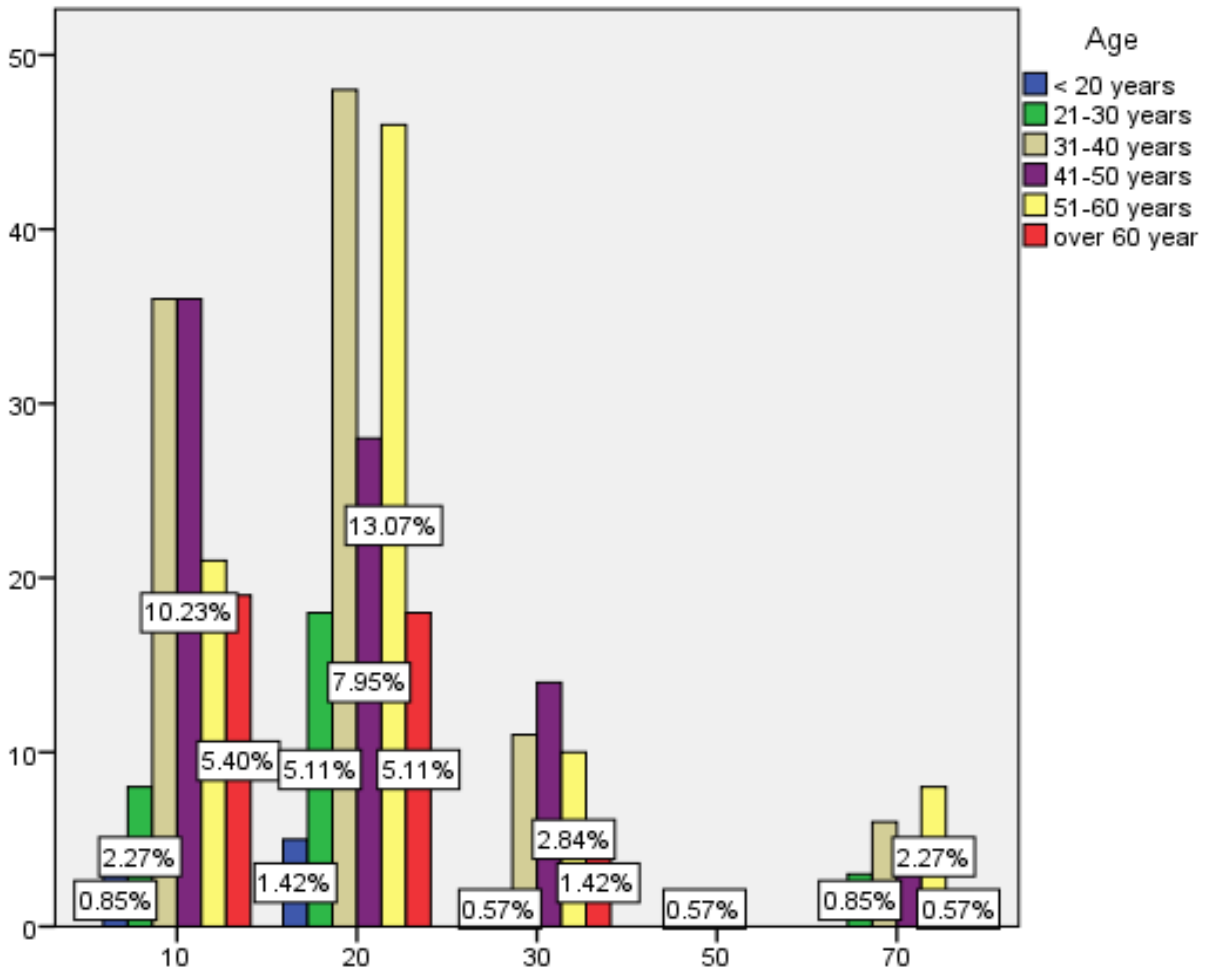


Figure 7. The points awarded by the respondents according to their age to the image of the lawyer
Source: Authors own research.

b) If we analyse the correlation between ***the lawyer's slogan and the age of the respondents***, we find that the highest score (namely 25 points) was offered by 15 people aged 41-50 years, followed by 11 people aged 31-40 years At the same time, the lowest score (10 points) was awarded to the lawyer's slogan by 64 people aged between 31 and 40 years and 56 people aged between 41 and 50 years.

Analysing the personal brand from the point of view of the lawyer's slogan and the number of respondents in each category, 25 points were awarded by 4.2% of the people aged 41-50, 7.9% of the people aged 31 to 40 awarded 20 points and 18.1% of the people aged 31 to 50 awarded 10 points. Thus, the lawyer's slogan was awarded the most points by people between 41 and 50, and people between 31 and 40 years of age awarded the least point to the lawyer's slogan, considering that it is not relevant in forming a personal brand.

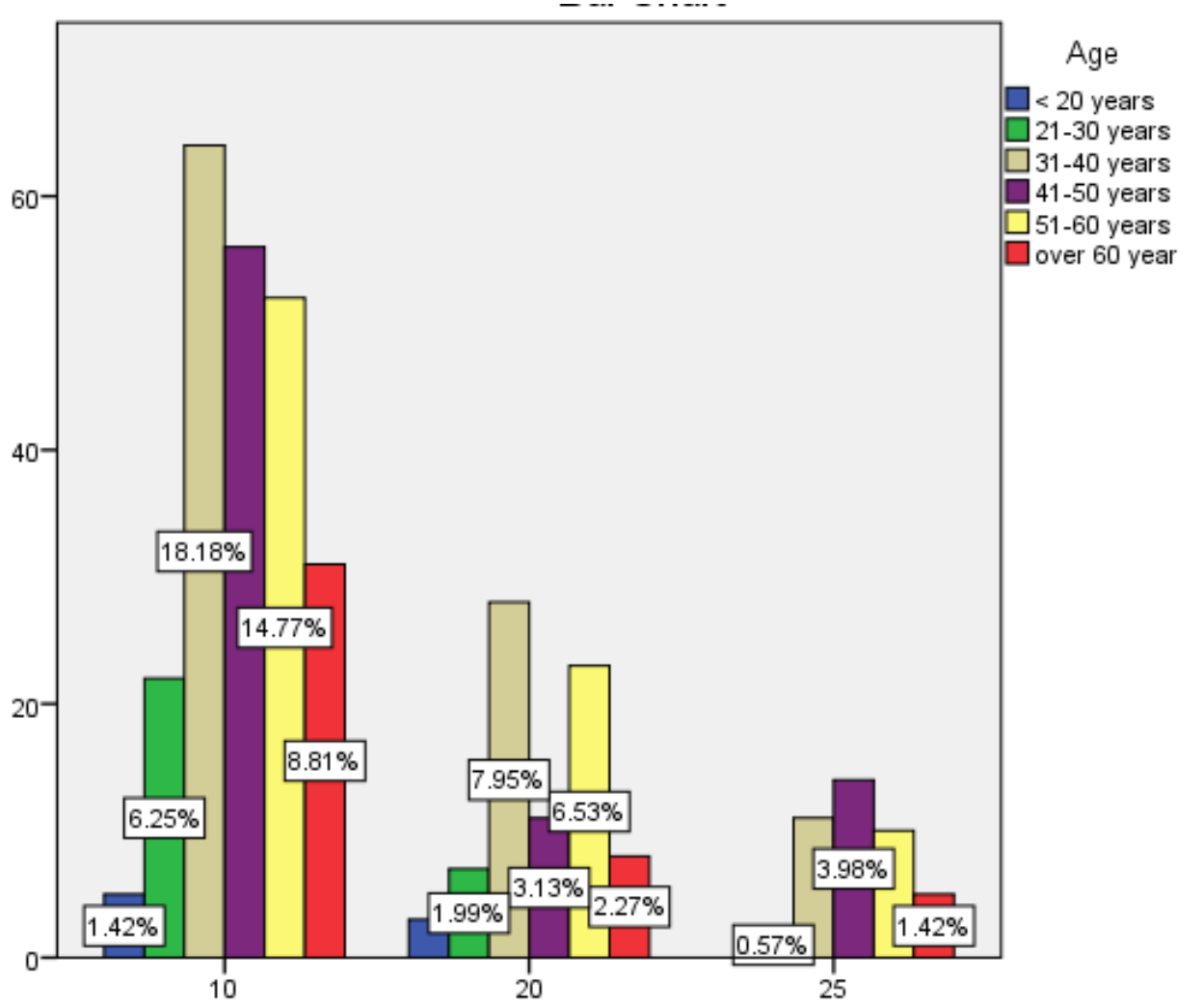


Figure 8. The points awarded by the respondents according to their age to the slogan of the lawyer
Source: Authors own research.

c) Another brand element analysed is ***the name of the lawyer in correlation with the age of the respondents,*** which reveals that the highest score (namely 70 points) was awarded by 15 people aged 31 to 50 years, followed by 9 people aged between 51 and 60. The lowest score, namely 10 points, was awarded to the image of the lawyer by 34 people aged between 31 and 40 years, and by 29 people aged between 41 and 50 years. Furthermore, 20 people aged 31 to 40 awarded 50 points, 9 people aged 51 to 60 awarded 30 points and 28 people aged 31-40 awarded 20 points.

Correlating the responses received with the number of respondents in each category, 70 points were awarded by 18.2% of the people over the age of 60, 17.9% of the people between the ages of 41 and 50, and 14.6% of the people between the ages of 31-40. At the same time, 10 points were awarded by 62.5% of the people under 20, 44.8% of the people aged 21-30 and 33% of the people aged 31 to 40. In conclusion, the lawyer's name was awarded the most points by people over 60, and people under 20 awarded the fewest points to the lawyer's name, as not relevant in forming a personal brand.

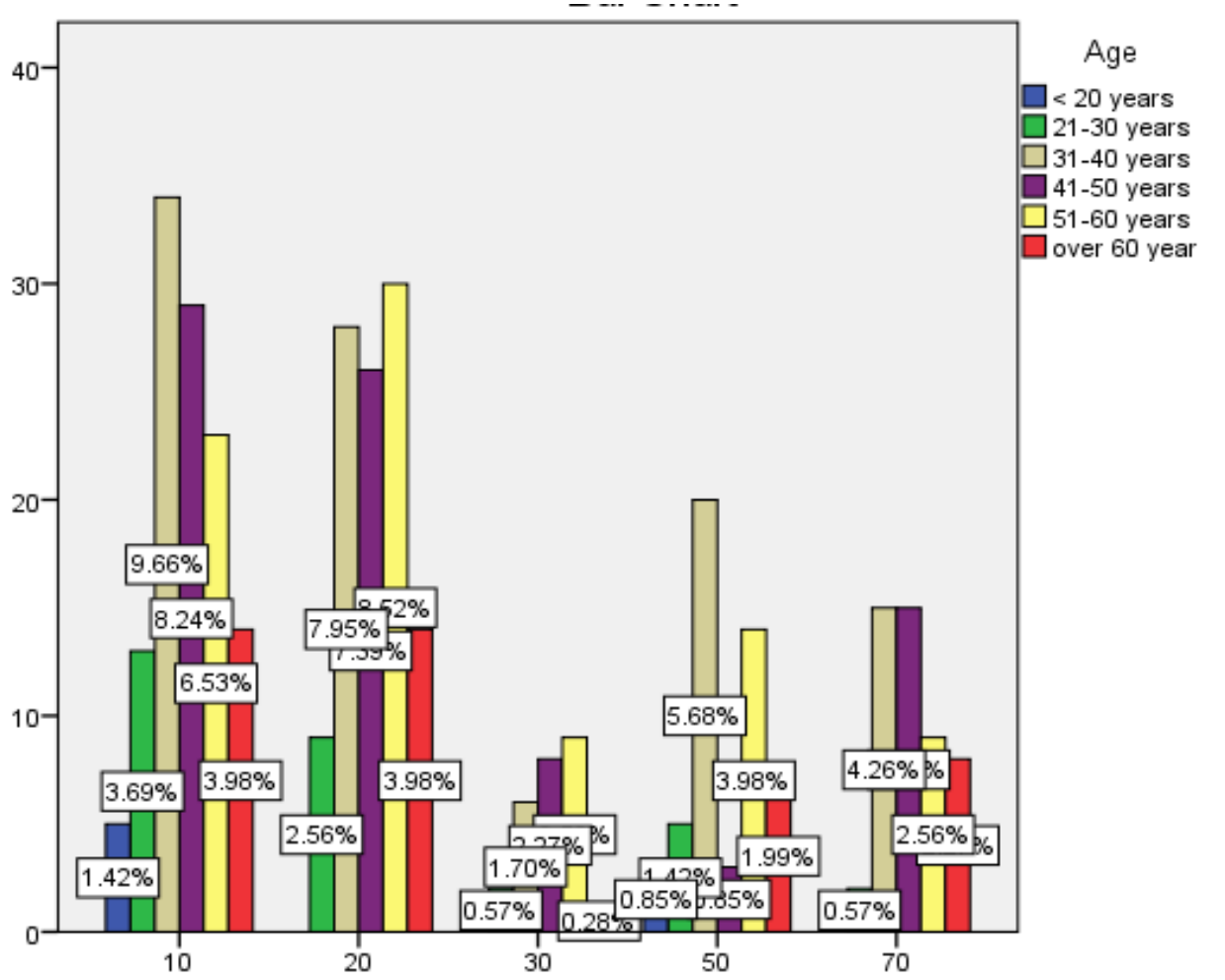


Figure 9. The points awarded by the respondents according to their age to the lawyer's name

Source: Authors own research.

d) With regard to the correlation between ***professional experience and reputation and the age of respondents***, we find that the highest score (namely 70 points) was offered by 21 people aged 31 to 40 years, 21 people aged 41 to 50, followed by 12 people aged 51 to 60. The lowest score (10 points) was awarded by 41 people aged 31 to 40, 31 people aged 51 to 60 and 23 people aged 41 to 50.

Analysing these results in correlation with the number of respondents in each category, 70 points were awarded by 37.5% of the people under the age of 20, followed by 25% of the people aged 41 to 50 and over 60. In terms of the minimum score, it was awarded by 38.6% of people over the age of 60, 39.8% of the people between the ages of 31 and 40, and 36.5% of the people between the ages of 51 and 60. As a conclusion, most points were awarded by people under 20, and the fewest by people between 31 and 40, who deemed that reputation and professional experience are not an important element in forming a personal brand.

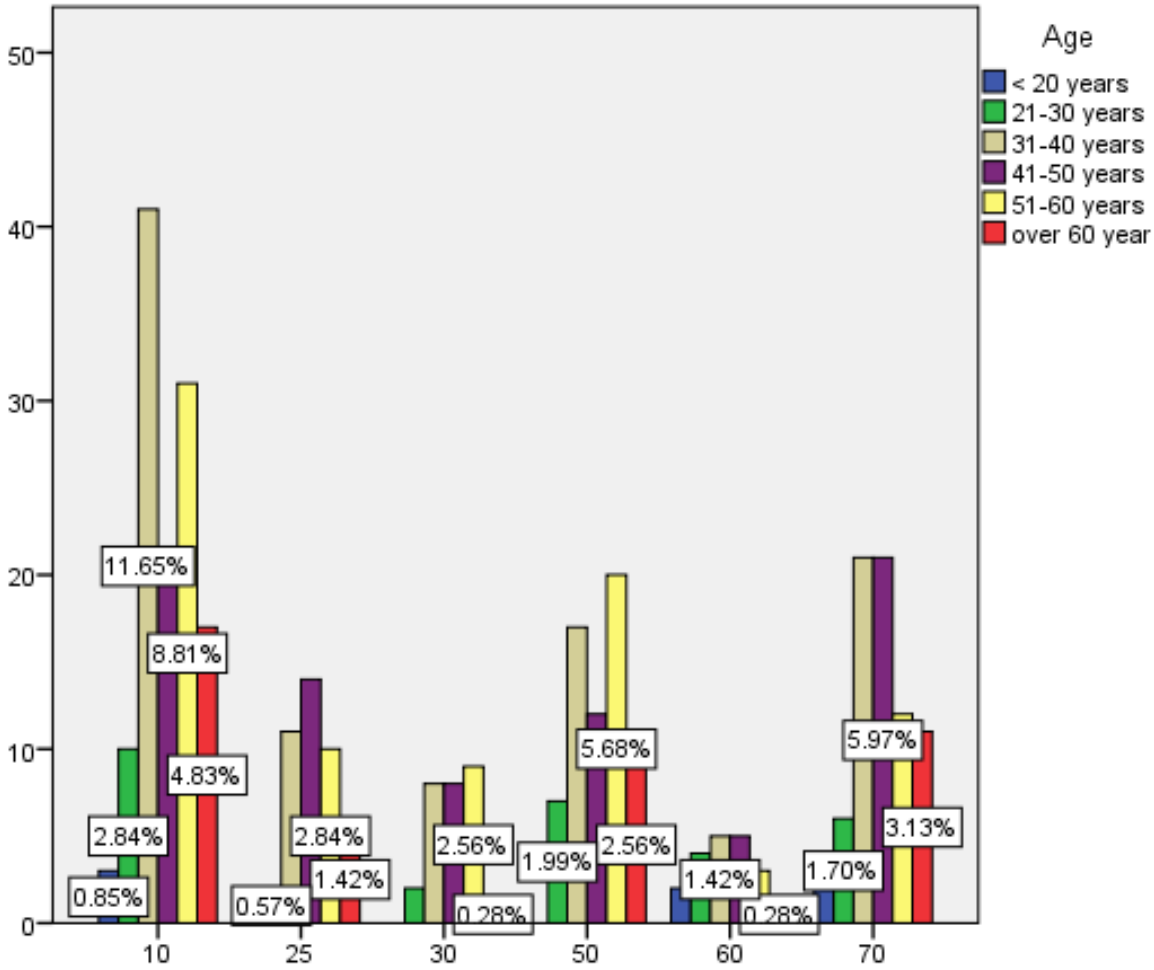


Figure 10. The points awarded by the respondents according to their age to the professional experience and reputation of the lawyer

Source: Authors own research.

Conclusions:

In this field, consumers are not attracted either by the name or image of the lawyer, nor by the brand slogan, the professional activity being the most relevant element in their view. In order to create a personal brand in the legal field, one has to show reliability and professionalism in solving consumer problems, requiring a much longer period than usual consumer brands.

So, 93.2% of respondents awarded less than 30 points to the lawyer's image, which makes this the least important element from the client's point of view, 100% of the total respondents awarded less than 25 points to the lawyer's slogan, of which 65.2% awarded 10 points, this being the highest percentage of respondents who awarded the least points and 45.1% of respondents awarded more than 50 points to the lawyer's personal experience and reputation, of which 21% awarded 70 points.

In terms *of the lawyer's slogan,* most points were offered by people aged 41 to 50, while people between 31 and 40 attributed the fewest points, deeming it a non-important element in forming a personal brand.

The lawyer's image was awarded the most points by people over 60, while people under this age awarded few points, deeming it a non-important element in forming a personal brand.

The highest score (namely 70 points) was awarded by persons under the age of 20 to the lawyer's professional experience and reputation, and the lowest score (10 points) was awarded by people aged 31 to 40.

The name of the lawyer received the highest percentage of votes (70 points) from people over 60, while people under 20 gave the least points to this element.

In conclusion, the lawyer's name and image are not of great importance in order to build a brand, in accordance with other studies that analysed the brand (Carnevale M., 2023; Ghosh T., 2022; Kato T., 2019, John M.T., 2020) in contrast to other studies (Ito Y., Hara k., Kobayashi Y., 2020; Marianoab A. M., Silvaa M. C., Melloc M.T., Santose M. R., 2022) that attributed great importance to these elements. Through research, it was discovered that the brand in law is different from the brand in general, in the sense that an important element is the experience and professional reputation of the lawyer, thus creating the brand is a long-term process.

In an economy dominated by competition and increasingly focused on image development, the personal brand is a strategic tool for achieving financial success. However, building a personal brand is a long-lasting and progressive process that develops over a person's lifetime.

The research brings both theoretical contributions, as it brings a particularity in the field of lawyers services, as the specialized literature is extremely poor in this field and, as well as it brings practical contributions, as we measured the importance of the elements that define the brand in law services; the results of this research can be used by specialists in the field who propose to build a brand in the field.

The research has limits in terms of methodological design, with the analysed responses coming from a small sample.

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