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Selfie and Personal Branding Phenomena in the Context of the Network Economy. A Literature Review

Summary

Self-taken pictures called "selfies" shared in social media have become a worldwide phenomenon. This is due to the increased need of human being to share to other people their daily lives and to build their own personal brand in the networked world. Despite that, the subject of personal branding has not been sufficiently discussed in academic marketing literature over the past decade. The objective of the study is to present the concept of personal branding and to better understand the role selfie has, being one of the most frequently used social network, in helping people to build personal branding in the online context. Based on a literature review, authors highlight that building a personal brand in the network economy is one of the key factors influencing a personal position in valued networks.

Key words: personal branding, networked world, selfie, social media, social network.

JEL codes: M31

Introduction

Innovation, relationships, collaboration and knowledge are key determinants of the competitive advantage in the network economy. Referring to Tapscott (1989, p. 13), Powell (1990, p. 295-336), Perechuda (2007, p. 16) and Mazurek (2012, p. 12) the network economy serves as an infrastructure for contemporary processes of market coordination.

Co-creation and co-operation of network members are the essence of a consciously configured network of value. Social media are considered to be a logical consequence of changes which take place in the information society. They are an important part of the networked environment and contribute to creating value in the network (Castells 2000, p. 693-699; Mazurek 2014, p. 70-77). Social media, in general defined as networking sites (SNS), are technologically developed to allow users to create and exchange content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 59-68). The origins of social media date back to the late '90s of the XX century. They gained popularity in the first decade of this century. Social media range from blogs, social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), collaborative projects (such as Wikipedia), content communities (such as You Tube), virtual social worlds (for example Second Life), virtual game worlds (such as Warcraft), and Internet forums. In terms of engagement,

according to the above classification, the most attractive forms of social media are 'social networks' and 'virtual worlds'.

Similarly to the capital in the economic context, social relations and network connections between individuals are perceived as a resource in the context of social capital (Putnam 1995, p. 664-683). Thanks to the high quality of such relations and connections, it is possible for the said social capital to be gathered around a particular person both in the real and the virtual worlds. Reality and virtuality co-exist, intertwine and mix. It is one of characteristics of modern societies today. The network economy imposes building a relational equity which, according to Sawhney and Zabin (2012, p. 313-332), is the essence of efficiency in a network. In principle, social media, collaborative networks and professional networks serve the purpose of building relationships between people. Within this context, people are enabled to self-expressed themselves and can build their own personal brand.

The objective of the study is to present the essence of personal branding and based on a literature review highlight that building a personal brand in the network economy is one of key factors influencing personal position in valued networks and as a result a new desired skill for everyone today.

Personal branding phenomena

The personal branding dimension was introduced by Peters in the late nineties of the XX century (Peters 1997, p. 83). The crux of personal branding is a planned process of self-marketing (Karaduman 2013, p. 465-473; Khedher 2014, p. 41). At the beginning, the self-marketing idea seemed to be mainly applied to celebrities (Rein, Kotler and Shields 2007), politicians and business leaders (Shepherd 2005, p. 589-606; Schawbel 2009, p. 15), or even to non-profit organizations' leaders (Nolan 2015, p. 288-292). However, such dimension has become also useful for managers (Kang 2013; Evans 2017), scientists, higher education teachers (Gander 2015, p. 99-102), and for knowledge workers in general. For example, project team members (Kucharska and Dąbrowski 2016, p. 435-443), librarians (Ahmad et al. 2016, p. 452-458), students searching for a job (Merdin 2011, p. 104-109; Lee and Cavanaugh 2016, p. 61-68), and all average social media users, regardless their profession adopt social media to express themselves and to share their image (Lampel and Bhalla 2007, p. 434-455; Schawbel 2009; Vitberg 2009, p. 10-13; Labrecque, Markos and Milne 2011, p. 37-50).

Developing a personal brand in the social media is now a rapidly growing trend. The idea of online personal branding was broadly discussed by Lampel and Bhalla (2007, p. 434-455), Vitberg (2009, p. 10-13), and Karaduman (2013). They argued that social media have led to an era of consumer-to-consumer driven information that creates consumer's personal branding. Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011, p. 37-50), and Kucharska (2016) implied that people today use social media actively in order to create their personal brands. Seidman (2013, p. 402-407) claimed, that the second major motivation for using Facebook is self-

presentation. Also, Orehek and Human's (2017, p. 60-70) findings suggest that social media platforms can be an effective outlet for self-expression of personality.

A person's brand should be grounded in individual values, personal beliefs and interests. Poeppelman (2014, p. 112-119) suggests that examination of such characteristics leads to self-discovery and is the first step for building a successful personal brand strategy. Philbrick and Cleveland (2015, p. 181-189) present an entire personal brand strategy formulation process and highlited that effective brand management is a key component to maintaining a positive brand reputation. The process of personal branding is peculiar, introspective and requires a high level of self-awareness. Formulating a good strategy will not take only time but also a lot of personal effort. As the above literature review suggests, it is worth taking up this challenge.

Selfie phenomena

Social media provide users with an ideal venue for self-presentation (Zhao et al. 2008, p. 1816-1836). In fact, social network sites offer the ability to present themselves in a more selective and desirable manner by enhancing their profiles (Manago et al. 2008, p. 446-458; Zhao et al. 2008, p. 1816-1836). Selfies, or pictures taken of oneself and shared on social media, have become phenomenon support for the need to self-present ourselves. Halpern et al. (2016, p. 98-101) and McCain et al. (2016, p. 126-133) argue that this trend is attributable to the fact that posting and editing photos encourage users to engage in self-promoting and superficial behaviours.

Sorokowska et al. (2015, p. 119-123) exam the connections between to social exhibitionism, extraversion, and self-esteem and and selfie's frequency posting. They findings suggest that women engage in selfie-posting behaviour significantly more often than men do this and that extraversion and social exhibitionism, but not self-esteem, predict online selfie-posting behaviour in both groups of men and women. Pounders et al. (2016, p. 1879-1892) examined young women and find out that self-esteem was revealed as a motivator and an outcome of selfie-posting as well. Sorokowska et al. (2015, p. 119-123) selfie's and groupie's understand all self-making photos as selfies, but Wang et al. (2016) define "selfie" as a self-portrait picture taken by an individual using a digital camera or a smartphone for posting on social network sites and "groupie" as the self-portrait featuring more than one person. Wang et al. (2016) claim that frequent selfie viewing behaviour led to decreased self-esteem whereas frequent groupie viewing behaviour led to increased self-esteem. They explain that it is possible that the differential pattern of results is observed, linking self-esteem to selfie posting in men but not women, is related to the nature of self-esteem. What's more, Shin et al. (2017, p. 139-145) suggest that people who posted their own selfie on social media using a computer, act stronger and are more involved than people who post their photo using their mobile devices. This is due to the fact that they could have only a chance to choose the aspects they would like to emphasise and this would positively affect participants' level of self-esteem.

Eagar et al. (2016, p. 1835-1857) present selfies as a combined effect of consumption of a social media service (Instagram) and the co-production of valued content (the selfie) that recognizes the individual as an active constructor of their digital self what finally support an individual's human brand. Ozansoy Çadırcı and Sağkaya Güngör (2016, p.1-20) also claim that selfies can be used for purposes of self-extension and personal branding.

Figure 1 presents the graphical summary of Personal Branding and Selfie Framework based on the presented literature review.

Figure1

Selfie and Personal Brand Framework
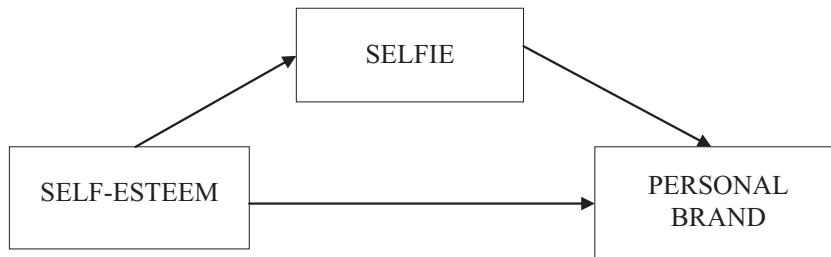
Source: Author's own study based on: Eagar et al. (2016, p. 1835-1857); Ozansoy Çadırcı and Sağkaya Güngör (2016, p. 1-20); Pounders et al. (2016, p. 1879-1892); Sorokowska et al. (2015, p. 119-123).

Conclusions

Developing a personal brand in social media is now a rapidly growing trend. Consumers today have been empowered by social media and have become more sophisticated. New lifestyles and consumption trends have emerged (O'Brien 2011, p. 32-40). Chen (2013, p. 32-347) claims that online self-branding is a rapidly growing business in its own right. YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, in particular are market leaders among user-generated content sharing websites. Gershon (2014, p. 281-295) draws attention to the fact that marketing oneself as a desirable employee on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media contributes to popularising the notion of self-branding. Pihl (2013, p. 112-127) identifies several challenges in the borderland between personal brands and corporate brands, based on studies conducted on professional bloggers in Sweden. His findings lead to interesting conclusions that personal branding efforts can generate competitive advantage for individuals who undertake entrepreneurial ventures. Furthermore, he argues why conditions for individuals to engage in personal branding might be more favourable in an entrepreneurial context than in a labour market setting. It is congruent with assumptions regarding knowledge workers as independent knowledge creators formulated by Kucharska and Dąbrowski (2016, p. 438) for their empirical research about personal branding of knowledge workers and its influence on project performance.

Selfie is often claimed as a result of narcissism (Sorkowski et al. 2015, p. 123-127; Fox and Rooney 2015, p. 161-165). In the context of presented literature review Authors claim that it is rather connected to concepts of authenticity, consumption, self-expression and personal branding. Our conclusions are consistent with Igani and Schreder (2015) findings that the selfie is connected to practices of art history, media forms, and self-portraiture. They claimed that strategic use of the selfie reveals shifts in the traditional functions of the advertising photograph, from sources of information, persuasion, and representation to emblems of social currency. In their opinion, the position the selfie not as a postmodern anomaly but as a type of image with a history.

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Zjawiska selfie i personal branding w kontekście gospodarki sieciowej. Przegląd literatury

Streszczenie

Samodzielne fotografowanie się zwane „selfie", następnie rozpowszechnianie tych zdjęć w mediach społecznościowych staje się coraz bardziej popularne, co jed-

nocześnie budzi zainteresowanie naukowców. Podobnie, tematyka kreowania marki osobistej w ostatniej dekadzie budzi coraz szersze zainteresowanie świata nauki, jak i praktyki. Mimo to literatura naukowa dotycząca tego zagadnienia nie jest zbyt obszerna. Celem opracowania jest przedstawienie istoty pojęcia marki osobistej oraz jej powiązania ze zjawiskiem „selfie". Autorzy wskazują na podstawie przedstawionego przeglądu literatury, że budowanie osobistej marki w gospodarce sieciowej jest jednym z kluczowych czynników wpływających na osobistą pozycję danej marki osobistej w poszczególnych sieciach wartości, w które dana osoba jest zaangażowana.

Słowa kluczowe: *personal branding, social media, network economy.*

Kody JEL: M31

Явления селфи и индивидуального брендинга в контексте сетевой экономики. Обзор литературы

Резюме

Фотографирование самого себя, именуемое селфи, а затем распространение фото в социальных медиа становится все более популярным, что одновременно вызывает интерес у научных работников. Так же тематика формирования индивидуального бренда в последнем десятилетии возбуждает все больший интерес мира науки и практики. Несмотря на это, научная литература, касающаяся этого вопроса, не прельщает. Цель разработки – представить суть понятия индивидуального бренда и его увязку с явлением селфи. Авторы на основе представленного обзора литературы указывают, что формирование индивидуального бренда в сетевой экономике – один из основных факторов, влияющих на личную позицию данного индивидуального бренда в отдельных сетях ценностей, в которые данное лицо вовлечено.

Ключевые слова: индивидуальный брендинг, социальные медиа, сетевая экономика.

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