Dramaturgical Perspective of Online Personal Branding

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ABSTRACT: *Personal branding is a new marketing concept related to the marketing strategies that a person adopts in order to promote his self in the competitive market place. The popularization of personal branding is generally attributed to the rising of the Web 2.0. We propose a theoretical foundation for online personal branding by using the dramaturgical framework of Goffman (1959). Building a personal brand involves creating a personal, performing a digital portrait using strategic reveal of information to make an image accessible to a networked audience, this self requires constant self-surveillance and monitoring in a day-to-day life. Personal branding is a formula for the achievement of personal and professional success in the competitive market place.*

1. Introduction

Traditionally, brands have been associated with businesses, products, organizations, or services, but today researchers recognize that brands can also be human [1] [2], [3]. Once considered a tactic only for celebrities and leaders in business and politics, personal branding becomes an important marketing task for everyday people [4] [5], [6], [7] [8]. The Web 2.0 has enabled anyone to create profiles and web pages, which makes the Web a perfect platform for personal branding [9], [10].

The nature and content of many jobs is fundamentally changing, new cultures, mindsets and skills will also be necessary. Today, job market is competitive, challenging, and requires substantial effort in order to pursue successfully. Finding a job and managing career progression increasingly involves understanding and deploying networks effectively. The emergence of personal branding in the late 1990s was a result of the same economic forces that influenced product branding as a communication method that job seekers began using branding as a method to position themselves in the competitive employment environment the same as marketers presented their products [11], [12]. Freelancers, contractors, or consultants, job seeker, or any number of workers with uncertain futures can be thought as brand. In this way, building and maintaining a personal brand is becoming a critical differentiator between the proactive and the reactive members of society, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establishing reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence [13].

The academic literature examining it is still under-developed and the popular nature of the phenomenon among practitioners invites further examination. Some authors argued that personal branding was indirectly introduced in Erving Goffman's [14] – the presentation of self in everyday life, sing theatre as the metaphor for understanding human behavior as staged performance. Goffman's (1959) ideas about self-presentation are key to mediated communication [15]. Individuals are seen as working to manage information about oneself. The premise is that, through habit or conscious design, everyone attempts to control to some degree the ways that they appear to themselves and to others [16]. In this paper, we establish a theoretical base for the emergence and practice of online personal branding by using the framework of Goffman (1959).

2. Personal Branding Phenomenon

2.1 Personal branding definitions

In Personal branding, branding approach that was used to promote products is applicable to individuals. The structured process of brand building is comparable to that of launching new product brands, and personal branding does the same for people as the marketers do for products [19]. Personal branding is defined as varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace [11], [12]. That people can be considered as brands, everyone has a personal brand and that regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business, and everyone has a chance to be a brand worthy of remark, that, personal branding if applied correctly can transform any person into a brand in any field [17], [18].

Since the late 1990s, personal branding has become increasingly popular as subjects of self-improvement books, Web sites and consultancy services. The practice of personal branding is predicated on the assumption that everyone has a brand but most people are not aware of this and do not manage it strategically, consistently, and effectively. A major selling proposition is the fear that if individuals don't manage their own brand, then someone else will manage it for them [12], [20], [21].

The emerging online environments of the internet represents an increasingly competitive attention economy wish poses a significant challenge for those in business wishing to have their voice heard. The culture of Web 2.0 facilitates identity construction and self promotion. Due to stronger media interest, with the popularity of internet and information and communication technology, the branded self that results is highly visible, creating a new version of self governance in response to employment uncertainty [12], [22]. Personal branding is a recognized word in contemporary management and the field of modern career planning as an individual approach and a deliberate effort made by individual, taking advantage of it to achieve personal and professional success [12].

2.2 Personal branding process

The process of personal branding involves three phases, the first phase is to establish a brand identity, the second phase is to develop the brand's communication, and the third phase is to evaluate the of the personal branding outcome process, achieving work-related objectives.

2.2.1 Personal brand identity

Researchers argue that personal branding is essentially an inside-out process that is based on the strengths and uniqueness of the individual in relation to a target market [8], [12], [18]. Personal brand identity is based on inherent internal characteristics that make a person different, unique, and stand out from the crowd to compete in the world of work and external elements encompass the person's relationship with other people. Personal brand should be founded on authenticity, the brand proposition is the promise of value to the market demand and should clearly reflect a person's purpose, uniqueness, passion, professionalism, expertise, and values.

2.2.2 Personal brand communication

Personal branding is centered on the promotion of the self through an active marketing communication effort of one's brand identity to a specific target market. Individuals highlight their positive attributes that are of value to their target audience while at the same time differentiating themselves from other individuals in the marketplace [23].

Career branding tools as professional blog, social networking accounts, LinkedIn profile, Twitter account constitute digital assets to achieve personal visibility and manage one's online reputation.

Individuals use social media as a method to share information via text, images, audio and video messaging with each other to create and reinforce communication activities, that allows the creation and exchange of user generated content used to create

and grow a powerful, distinct, meaningful, and memorable personal brand that is authentic and a true representation of the person.

2.2.3 Achieving work related objectives
Personal branding is usually for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment [12]. As brand is built for the satisfaction of the market, to become a brand requires recognition by the marketplace of such a status. The basic objective of this step is to determine whether the branding efforts had achieved the branding goals and met personal aspirations. The mismatches between self-stated goals and judgments by others represent branding failures [10]. A strong personal brand makes a person different, unique, and stand out to compete in the world of work through managing and influencing the perception that others have of a person.

3. Dramaturgical Perspective of Online Personal Branding

In the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Goffman (1959) uses a dramaturgy metaphor to explain the self-presentation during social interaction. He believed that his theory could be applied to all social activities. Each encounter can be described as a performance, where the participants adopt the roles of performers and audience. During the performance, each participant acts out a persona - the self - according to his or her understanding of the encounter and aims. The self, that is being performed and presented to get other people to see things in a certain way. Goffman called this impression management, like performers on stage, individuals must have an idea of how their actions will be interpreted.

The dramaturgical framework of online personal branding (figure1) involves (a) Brand Character: to develop a personal band identity, individuals plan their actions in social settings by reading the character of the situation to learn what self-presentational attributes are most relevant to a situation of that type. (b) Brand Performance : a brand communication occurs through performance, constructing cognitive scenarios in which a person expresses and manifest those attributes using a range of self-presentational strategies (c) Brand assessment: personal brand assessment requires an awareness of the interpretation others place on their own acts, to compare a self-stated branding goals with others feedback.
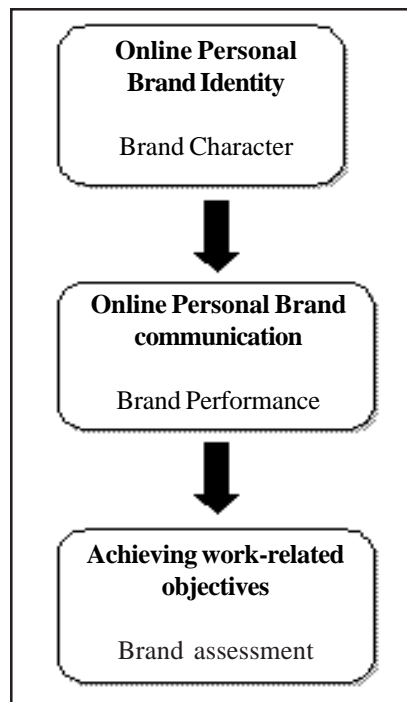
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Figure 1. Online Personal Brand Process

3.1 Character development: Personal brand identity
The starting point for a process of brand building is to first create a clear understanding of the internal brand identity. According

to a self-branding discourse, each person has an inherently set of interests, skills, and values which can be discovered through self-awareness. Following Goffman's insights, personal branding begins with the development of a brand character. To adopt certain roles has little to do with objective characteristics tied to those roles and much to do with how individuals engage in role making, adopting attributes and behaviors consistent with their expectations of those positions. Defining a personal brand dimensions and refining them into a personal brand platform involves identifying the competencies, standards and style that go into each relationship people have with others [24].

A personal online brand is a brand that is created and developed by an individual as a way of differentiating oneself in the ever-growing digital marketplace [25]. Social media technologies instruct people to inculcate a self-conscious persona allowing a self-consciously construct image of themselves that is presumed to be authentic yet marketable [26], [27], [10]. As a result, revealing personal details becomes a way to appear authentic while maintaining carefully constructed personae that fit within an acceptable image. For contemporary job seekers, authenticity provides assurance the personal brand has encompassed the work the employee loves doing [20], [21].

3.2 Performing: personal brand communication

For online personal branding, brand communication occurs through performance. Performing involves the demonstration and enactment of desired identity in an attempt to control image projected and to influence the impressions that others form (Goffma,1959). Taking place in the virtual world, personal brands can be experienced on different types of social media sites such as facebook, twitter or blogging, and that each site has its own unique architecture, culture and norms.

Users visit these sites with different intentions, interact in diverse ways, and produce content across these sites [10]. They adopt a brand strategy to manage their online information and are conscious of their online efforts to express a specific identity to others [26]. They construct identities by digitally associating themselves with signs, symbols, material objects, and places, set up personal profiles that display who they subscribe to, recent activity, friends, comments and favorite videos. In writing down what makes a user unique, that user is creating a profile for an online audience [28]. A key challenge for users is the selection of information to post online, after filtering out information that was not aligned with their branding strategy, and thus to maintain a consistent image through choices to reveal pieces of personal information through online platform.

Self-branding is not only about creating an image of oneself, but of making that image accessible to others. Self-presentation assures a visual identity and constitutes the link people make between what something looks like on the outside and what is on the inside. Self-presentation becomes a strategic way to display and garner status, and tangibly translates into material rewards. For freelancers, contractors, consultants, or job applicants, self-promotion is necessary to distinguish themselves from other and thus stand out in the competitive job market [29]. In this process, strategically appealing to followers becomes a carefully calculated way to market oneself as a commodity in response to employment uncertainty [22], [11].

3.3 Interpreting: personal brand assessment

A correctly performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character. Brand image depends on information posted by the focal person, information posted by others, and the marketplace reaction to the presented information, which generally is based on visible behavior, nonverbal behavior, and other observable cues [26].

Personal branding is about taking control of the process that affects how one is perceived by others and managing those processes strategically to achieve personal and professional goals [19]. It assumes that a successful self-brander will have fans, an audience, and a community of people interested in their actions. Thus, self-branding produces a different set of status markers than traditional entrepreneurship, specifically, visibility and attention.

Users rely on their own experience and feedback, comparing their self-stated branding goals with those from the written assessments and personality judgments to determine whether they had achieved their branding goals. The mismatches between their self-stated goals and judgments by others represent branding failures [11].

Based on the interpretation, the user, if he has follow-up opportunities, can either (1) adjust subsequent scripting and performing actions to better fit the current audience; or (2) target a different audience. A more extreme option may be to disregard the reviews as being ill-informed or wrong [30], [11].

Tracking personal and related information by using search engines have gained popularity by recognizing people's interest in

information about other people on the WWW [31].   Therefore end users have increased their efforts in actively monitoring and shaping their information online [32]. Users have to maintain a watchful eye over our brands as they begin to exist seemingly autonomously online on social networks. Thus, users confront and learn about the rationalized techniques of surveillance when they sign up for and use a Web 2.0 site. By engaging in autosurveillance, they are merely adapting this logic to their own ends [29].

4. Conclusion

Because online personal branding has received much attention in practitioner venues, but little in the academic arena, we propose a theoretical foundation for personal branding by using the framework of Goffman (1959), the process through which an actor engages in impression management behavior. The dramaturgical perspective is particularly well-suited to study the active construction of online personal brand. Online Personal branding is a new marketing concept that a person adopts in order to promote oneself in the competitive market place, using the potential of Web 2.0. This process involves three phases. The starting point for a process of brand building is to create a clear understanding of the internal brand identity inculcate a self-conscious persona allowing a desired construct images of themselves that is presumed to be authentic and marketable. The second phase is to develop the brand self presentation, users set up personal profiles and adopt a brand strategy to manage and display personal information through online platform. The third phase is interpreting the audience feedback, by engaging in autosurveillance, to compare a self-stated branding goals with marketplace reaction.

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