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Application of Social Media for Personal Branding: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract:

The present context of digitalized era promotes the need of branding in an online context. The use of social media for personal branding has been a fast-growing trend and such tools are being competitive in the contemporary business environment. Empirical studies are found clarifying how personal branding carried out through social media whilst claiming further investigations in line with the challenges and issues attributed in different markets, generations and countries. Social media platforms are promptly growing resulting empirical studies to investigate effectiveness of different social media tools and strategies. Alongside, this study attempts to investigate how social media has been utilized for personal branding applications. Paper followed an extensive literature review to build a discussion on theoretical and empirical contents related to social media use in personal branding whilst a rationale is made on the relevance of the theory of social capital. Paper attempts to appreciate the application of social capital theory to explain the theoretical foundation in the use of social media for personal branding whilst trust is highlighted as an additional notion within. The literature review was executed addressing to key sub contents related to personal branding and social media. It reviewed journal articles as the main source of information to organize the contents with empirical justifications. Finally, paper discusses the concepts of brand image, brand identity and brand positioning in personal branding and how active involvement of social media results online personal branding.

Keywords: Brand Identity, Brand Image, Brand Positioning, Personal Branding, Social Capital Theory, Social Media.

1. Introduction

The enormous embracing of social media has turned the Web into a social space and has provided unique ways of supporting social processes along with the management of data, information, and knowledge (Razmerita, Kirchner, & Nabeth, 2014; Siriwardane & Dissanayake, 2018). In the past decades it has witnessed a harsh increase in the use and popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Twitter which are increasingly embedded into the structures, forms and processes of everyday communication (Herold, 2018).

Alongside, social media comprises a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, internet discussion boards and forums, and social networking websites, to name a few (Dahlhoff, 2016). The 21st century is observing an explosion of internet-based messages transmitted through these media. They have become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behavior including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behavior, and post-purchase communication and evaluation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The usage of social media is increasing sharply in the past few decades and the social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram increasingly rooted into the forms of day today communication (Cara Brems, 2017; Siriwardane et al., 2018).

The digital era demands industries to transform their business models specially emerging economies (Rassool & Dissanayake, 2019). Supportively, role of social media has been a pivotal matter for marketing communication that results competitiveness. Thus, the development of information and communication technology has made branding easier resulting more relationships with consumers (Siriwardane et al., 2018). With the rapid embracement of social media, the boundaries between private life and professional life has been darkened. In the late 1990s, the term "Personal Branding" was developed and tend to digitalize with the user-friendly nature of social media environment like Blog, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (Kleppinger, Cain, & Pharm, 2015). It denotes that social media has made communication on different levels convenient and affordable and it provides a good platform for branding at a cheaper price. Everyone has a personal brand, whether they knew it or not. It's how a person is viewed by others. The most important thing is that the person is the one that creates the perception others have on himself (Cleveland, Jodi, Philbrick, & Ana, 2015). Personal branding is personal perception or emotion for a person which is considered as a unique personal identity. Same as product branding, personal branding requires capturing and promoting a person's uniqueness and strengths to a target market (Labrecque, Markos, & George, 2011).