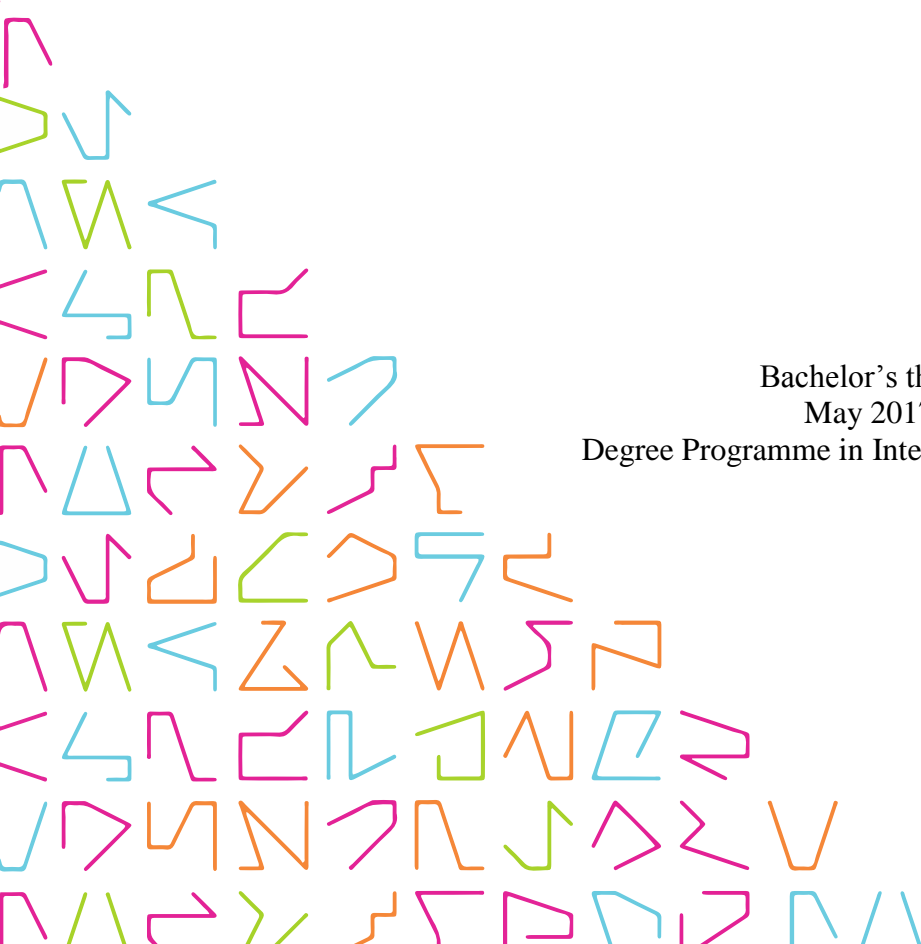


PERSONAL BRANDING

A practical guide for building a personal
brand as a student using social media

Stefan Angyus

Bachelor's thesis
May 2017
Degree Programme in International Business



ABSTRACT

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Personal Branding

A Practical Guide for Building a Personal Brand as a Student Using Social Media

Bachelor's thesis 68 pages, appendices 2 pages

May 2017

Today in the digital era, an increasing number of companies have extended their hiring process much beyond the traditional application process. They use the online environment for scouting new talents everywhere in the world. For this reason, having a professional online presence is not only a must, but also an advantage for increasing the chances of being successful in a job search endeavor. This is where the concept of personal branding comes into play. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate and build a professional personal brand guide for online environment.

In order to answer this question, the thesis was structured in two separate qualitative research methods. The goal of the first one was to present the theoretical framework regarding the necessity and importance of personal branding in today's job market, followed by general guidelines and practical tools that can be used for building the professional personal brand (the portfolio) and ways to promote it using different social media channels. The second research focused on presenting two study cases with the goal of showing how the personal brand were built in those particular cases.

Following the results of the two research analyses, the thesis then showed how the findings were applied in a practical implementation case by going through the entire personal brand building process. This includes setting the goal, creating the product ([personal website](#)), building the portfolio (selecting the projects), and selecting marketing methods using social media.

Finally, the thesis concluded with a practical step-by-step guide for building a personal brand in online environment, from showcasing the "products" as a portfolio, to social media promotion strategies.

Key words: personal branding, brand identity, online portfolio, social media

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

CMS	Content Management System
WYSIWYG	What You See Is What You Get
HTML	Hyper Text Markup Language
CSS	Cascading Style Sheet
GUI	Graphical User Interface

1 INTRODUCTION

Today when people stay on average 4.4 years in a work place (Meister 2012), building a personal brand as a professional is not anymore a choice, but a necessity. Having a personal brand image is the best “Survival Strategy” on the labor market, as Susan Chritton is mentioning in her book *Personal Branding For Dummies* (Chritton 2014, 287). This is valid not only for people with work experience, but also for those who just start their career.

Due to this trend, the thesis focuses on the subject of building a professional personal brand by answering the question: what is personal branding and how to build it using digital tools?

1.1. Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to help students start their professional visibility and build their online presence already while studying. In order to achieve this, the objective is to create a practical guide with the most relevant steps involved in building a professional image through a personal brand.

1.2. Thesis structure

The thesis starts with introducing the concept of personal branding by explaining what it is and why it is needed. It then continues with describing the necessary digital tools for building an online professional presence. In order to gain insight into how professionals build their personal brand two study cases were chosen for analysis. After drawing together all the research results, the thesis then presents a practical implementation of building a personal brand. Finally the paper concludes with a practical guide which highlights the necessary steps for building a personal brand, which can be implemented by anybody.

1.3. Research methods

The thesis is based on two qualitative research analyses, with the goal of collecting the necessary data both from a theoretical perspective (the first research focused on the concepts and assessing today's work market) as well as a practical point of view (the second research focused on two professional brands study cases and a hand-on experience in building a personal brand).

The first research collects information on three important topics: **1) what is personal branding and who needs it** (where a secondary data collection was used); **2) the importance of a personal brand in today's work market** (where it was used both a primary data collection through a face-to-face interview with an expert in communication - Katleena Korteso, who is a Finnish key note speaker, writer and blogger - as well as a secondary data gathered from diverse sources as books, articles and online publications); **3) what are the necessary tools for creating a professional online presence and how to promote it on social media** (where the information was gathered using an investigative research as a combination of primary and secondary data collection, through direct experience with the media channel or/and published resources).

The second research was also conducted as an investigative research for which primary data collection was gathered by direct observation and analysis of two professionals in how they built their brand identity with their products as well as through their behavior towards the target groups on different social media channels. The goal of analyzing the two brands was to understand the process which leads to the creation of a successful brand image. The two brands were chosen based on the following criteria: first the two companies were built around one person only and the second the marketing strategies for creating the business identity are different.

In addition to these two study cases a third case was analyzed from the perspective of a jobseeker. The three study cases were selected to introduce one example of each persona presented in subchapter [2.4](#). This way it can be analyzed and concluded what are the main differences between an entrepreneur, a leader and a jobseeker's personal brand.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PERSONAL BRANDING

2.1. What is Personal Branding

There are two main types of branding: corporate and personal. The corporate branding refers to the process involved in the creation of a unique name and image for a company in the customers' mind (Williams 2015). By comparison, the personal branding is a self-marketing strategy which promotes an individual's professional skills and products (Klapinger & Cain 2015).

Due to the fact that personal branding is strongly related to the individual, every time someone provides a service it is important to be known as a professional, competent, trustworthy and respected person in the community. Michael Dulworth (2008), defines personal brand as "... the sum total of the qualities people associate with the person, good and bad. The personal brand is primarily determined by how others see the person and only partly determined by how he/she sees himself / herself" (Dulworth 2008, 64).

There are two characteristics that can measure a personal brand: its strength and its quality. The strength refers to the clarity of the image coming to people's mind when thinking of the brand. If the image they have about the brand is clear and they know the brand's qualities and strengths, the brand can be classified as a strong brand. The quality of a brand can be determined by the type of qualities associated with the brand. Positive qualities like trustworthy and professionalism will help to create a high brand quality (Dulworth 2008, 65).

2.2. Personal image or personal brand

The **personal image** and the **personal brand** must not be confused. The personal image is the first impression a person creates in the mind of others. What others can observe at the first glance. For instance the way a person talks to people, the way he / she is dressed or how interacts with others in the community. By comparison, the personal brand refers to the values and personality of an individual, their character, behavior and attitudes toward others and society in general (McNally & Speak 2002, 4).

2.3. Four brand identity perspectives

When building a brand the creation process can be approached from four identity perspectives: the brand as product, person, organization or symbol. Following is a short description of all these approaches. Analyzing the core elements of each identity is useful in building an efficient brand (Aaker 2010, 78).

2.3.1 The brand-as-product

The core elements of a **brand-as-product** consist of: 1) the product scope (what type of products are associated with the brand), 2) its attributes (what functional or emotional benefits can produce to the customers), 3) its quality/value (a high quality and value of a product can position the brand to the high end market of its category), 4) its use (how and in what occasions is the product used), 5) its users (what type the users are, what gender, what age or what hobbies they have) and 6) country of origin (a high rated country of origin increases the brand's positive perception) (Aaker 2010, 79-82).

The [STUDY CASE 1](#) – THE ENTREPRENEUR - MINNA PARIKKA brand presented in Chapter [5](#) is an example of “Brand as a Product” identity.

2.3.2 The brand-as-person

When the brand identity is built as a person, the core elements of it are: its personality and its customer relationship. Its personality can be perceived the same way like people's personality. A brand can be seen as casual, formal, trustworthy, competent or intellectual, to list only a few characteristics. A brand personality “can help create a self-expressive benefit”, with which the customer shows his/her personality (Aaker 2010, 83-84). The same way people have different personalities (friendly, charismatic, dominant or just plain), brand personalities work similarly (Aaker 2010, 83-84). The relationship between the brand and the customer can be determined by their individual personality.

One type of brand which corresponds to this category is presented in the Chapter [6](#) as [STUDY CASE 2](#) – THE LEADER – TEELA CUNNINGHAM.

2.3.3 The brand-as-organization

The identity of a **brand-as-organization** is built on the company's attributes and local vs. global market. This kind of brand is more concerned about the attributes of the organization than the products or services. The innovation, culture and values of the company are some of the attributes of a **brand-as-organization** identity (Aaker 2010, 82).

2.3.4 The brand-as-symbol

The **brand-as-symbol** is represented by its visual imagery, metaphors and the brand heritage (Aaker 2010, 84). An easily recognizable image can be the essence of a strong brand. One aspect of a strong visual brand symbol is having a distinctive logo. For example, a logo with a metaphor (slogan) would strengthen the brand image in the mind of the customers. The heritage is represented by the brand's history and the image people have created about the brand over the years of its existence (Aaker 2010, 84-85).

2.4. Who needs a Personal Brand

In Katleena Korteso's words: "I strongly recommend having an online portfolio, even if one doesn't look for a job. It's a sort of an insurance in case if one ends up unemployed." So to answer the question in the title, everyone needs an online presence for promoting their professional skills and brand image (Korteso 2017, [Appendix 1](#))

According to Suzannah Scully's (2014) presentation from the Stanford Alumni Career Services, everyone who is active and has something to offer needs a personal brand, be it jobseekers, entrepreneurs or leaders (Scully 2014). People from these categories want the same outcome from their personal brand, which is, to be known as specialists in their field. Chapter [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#) cover all three persona types.

The main difference between these categories consists in the target audience and the way they approach the brand building process. The jobseekers are building their brand targeting the employers. They want to be perceived as a great asset to the company. The entrepreneurs are focusing towards the marketplace from where they could bring new customers to their business, new partners or investors. For leaders, the audience is their organization or the industry they are acting in (Scully 2014). The focus group of the thesis is the fresh graduates who are looking for a job in their field of study.

What differentiates the jobseekers from each other is the same thing as in business; the unique value proposition. The unique value proposition of a person consists of the individual talents, skills and products (Scully 2014). In today's digital world, one of the best ways to promote an individual's brand is by having an online presence to exhibit one's personal portfolio.

Suzannah Scully in "Ask a Career Coach: Personal Branding 101" (video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR3k7Ef9kJI&feature=youtu.be&t>)

3 ONLINE PORTFOLIO

A portfolio is a collection of work samples showcased by a person in a paper or digital format to emphasize the skills he or she can bring to the new possible partnership or collaboration (Encyclopædia Britannica).

An online portfolio is a virtual collection of text, image and / or video files. Selecting the right digital outlet depends on the person's technical skills and needs. The options range from ready to use platforms that require only the creation of an account, to fully customizable websites for the tech savvy.

There are two main possibilities for creating an online portfolio: using a community based website portfolio or building a stand-alone personal website.

3.1. Community based website portfolio

Community based website portfolios are favored by creative individuals from different fields like illustration, branding, advertising, publishing, architecture or fashion. The main advantages of having the portfolio on a community based website are the network of professionals with similar interests, the exposure on a specialized platform and the built-in maintenance of the website.

The thesis introduces three of the most popular platforms from this category: Behance, DeviantArt and Tumblr.

3.1.1 Behance

Behance is a portfolio service provider where the members showcase their work. In addition to being a portfolio platform it is also a portal for those looking to hire an artist. Several companies use the platform to post open positions and to search for professionals in different fields for their creative projects.

History

Behance was founded in 2006 in New York City by Scott Belsky and Matias Corea with the slogan “Showcase and Discover Creative Work” (Huang 2016). In 2012, the company was acquired by Adobe Systems (crunchbase.com) and in 2016 the number of Behance members grew over 7 million (Huang 2016).

Description

The website accepts all types of content from text to video files, but it is optimized for image based content. There is no limit on uploads regarding the size or the number of files (Nishu 2014). The platform offers one predefined layout with very limited options for customization like text formatting and background color. The website is responsive, which means that the website is adjusting itself to the device it is viewed on, desktop or mobile (Sloan 2016).

Behance is a free portfolio hosting website for creative people from disciplines ranging from advertizing, architecture, branding and copywriting to textile design, visual effects and web design.

3.1.2 DeviantArt

DeviantArt is a portfolio community website which hosts the largest virtual creative community. The type and field of artists varies from beginners to well established artists and from traditional to digital art. The community offers also professional critiques to its members.

History

The website was launched in 2000 by Angelo Sotira, Scott Jarkoff and Matthew Stephens (DeviantArt) in Los Angeles, USA. By the beginning of 2017, DeviantArt had reached 26 million users (DeviantArt Job board). In February 2017, according to Tech Crunch, the platform was acquired by Wix.com (Lunden 2017).

Description

The website is optimized for visual content (image and video), allowing the members to upload unlimited number of media files. The platform offers only one predefined design

with no possibilities to make changes on the portfolio's layout. In addition, there is the online shop feature for those who want to sell their work.

There are two membership types for DeviantArt subscribers: Community and Core Members. The Community account is free of charge and gives the users access to the basic features of the platform, while the Core Membership entitles the members to: set the price for the articles they sell, buy items at discounted price and ad-free portfolio (Heidi 2015). Depending on the device the platform is viewed, the website visitor can choose between the desktop version or mobile interface.

3.1.3 Tumblr

Tumblr is a basic blogging platform with emphasis on visual communication where the users can share and like existing blog posts of other members (Nishu 2014).

The website is specialized for visual content such as image and video.

History

The website was launched in 2007 by David Karp in New York, USA. In 2013 the company was acquired by Yahoo (Tech Crunch). Today the platform has over 400 million users.

Description

The platform offers several templates that the users can choose from to personalize their blog. Also there is the option of accessing the code (HTML and CSS), for those with programming knowledge. Additional customization can also be done by installing paid themes (First site guide).

The membership for Tumblr is free of charge. To be able to view the portfolio both on mobile and desktop devices, there is the option to choose a responsive template as not all themes are responsive. (First site guide)

3.2. Stand-alone website portfolio

Stand-alone websites are intended for individuals who want to create a strong personal brand image and need to be able to scale the website later on. The two main benefits of creating a stand-alone website are the whole proprietorship of the website and the flexibility to personalize it.

There are three possibilities of building a website depending on one's familiarity with the software technology by using: a web programming editor, a CMS software or a drag-and-drop website building platform.

3.2.1 Web programming editors

Using a **web programming editor** is preferred by highly skilled people who are familiar with website design and programming. They can create a fully functional and unique website that fulfils all their needs. A website built with a web editor is a self-hosted website which means that it can be moved from one hosting provider to another without losing any content (Coyle 2016). The drawback is the difficulty in updating and upgrading it.

This is the most flexible option which offers the most freedom in design while also being the most expensive and time consuming. One example of a web editor is Adobe Dreamweaver.

3.2.2 CMS software

CMS software can be utilized by both types of users, those who possess programming skills as well as those who do not. Some of the software programs from this category are WordPress, Joomla and Drupal. The main benefits of these platforms are the predefined templates they offer, in addition to a large number of plug-ins that can be installed to further personalize the website. Another reason for their popularity is that a website created with an open source CMS is self-hosted. This gives the owner flexibility to change the web hosting company if one decides to do so (Coyle 2016).

The CMS software has two main characteristics, the cloud-based Graphical User Interface (GUI) tools and the What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get (WYSIWYG) interface. The GUI tools allow the user to create a fully functional website by only drag and drop the design elements into the webpage. The WYSIWYG interface is the feature that allows the user to see the look of the website at any moment of the building process (Beautiful life).

WordPress

WordPress is an open source platform created in 2003 by Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little to help bloggers create their own online blog. The platform is the most popular among the blog users and it supports over 60 million websites, which amounts to 20 % of the existing websites that are online (WordPress).

Post formats: There are no limitations on the type of content supported by WordPress.

Design: WordPress offers hundreds of free templates (Mening 2017) categorized in themes. In addition, there are countless plug-ins available to customize the website. The platform also gives the tech-savvy the possibility to fully personalize the website by accessing the code.

Growth: The websites created with WordPress are easily scalable. Due to its flexibility many ecommerce and membership websites are built with this CMS.

Responsiveness: WordPress is considering the responsive design very important for its customers, so they decided to make all templates mobile friendly.

3.2.3 Drag-and-drop website building platforms

People who do not have programming skills have the option of creating an online portfolio by using drag-and-drop **website building platforms**, like [Wix](#) or [Weebly](#). These platforms are **fully hosted**, meaning that the company which provides the software is also hosting the website. The drawback is that once built, the website cannot be moved to another hosting provider. (wp beginner).

Wix

Wix is a cloud-based building platform which provides Graphical User Interface (GUI) tools to create a website for business or personal use. Wix offers also free hosting services for the websites created on its platform.

The company was founded in 2006 by Avishai Abrahami, Nadav Abrahami and Giora Kaplan in Tel Aviv, Israel. According to W3techs website, in 2016 Wix has exceeded 90 million users which count for 0.3% of the market share (W³Techs).

Post formats: The platform supports all types of content, text, images and video.

Design: There are over 500 fully customizable, designer-made templates available on the platform. These templates are organized based on the main purpose of the website (ecommerce, company website, newsletter, blogging platform, image portfolio, etc) and offer features and optimization for different types of information (image, articles or video) (Benninger).

Growth: The platform allows its users to create various websites ranging from one-page personal websites to complex business and ecommerce websites. It is also scalable, so the user can add new pages afterwards (Beautifullife).

Membership options: Wix offers two subscription types, free and paid. The free option displays Wix ads and the website content is limited to 500MB. The premium plans are coming with additional benefits like no Wix ads on the website, up to 20GB storage space, online store and the site booster app which improves the search engine optimization (Wix).

Responsiveness: Wix offers two options for its layouts, desktop and mobile. In order to activate the mobile-friendly view the user has to enable it, otherwise the mobile device is displaying the desktop version (Wix Help Center).

Weebly

Weebly is another cloud-based drag-and-drop website building and hosting platform which allows the user to create a website for personal or business use. According to the company, the platform is rated the highest website building mobile app in the App Store and Google Play (Weebly).

The company was founded in 2007 in Pennsylvania. In 2016, over 40 million entrepreneurs were using Weebly for their business (Weebly). The same year 0.2% of the total websites were created on Weebly's platform (W³Techs).

Post formats: The platform is optimized for blogging, ecommerce, business and video, practically any type of content.

Design: Weebly offers hundreds of templates categorized on different activities making it easy for the users to choose the one that corresponds to his / her preferences.

Growth: Weebly is a scalable platform which allows the user to add or change pages and features at any time. This is very helpful for an online portfolio when new projects can be added periodically.

Membership options: There are two possibilities to subscribe to this platform, free or paid. For the free membership the user has access to the drag-and-drop website builder, 500MB storage and non-stop online technical support. The Premium plans include unlimited storage, ecommerce features and "100% Happiness Guarantee" refund within 30 days in case the user is not satisfied with the services (Weebly).

Responsiveness: All designs are mobile friendly on Weebly. The WYSIWYG interface makes it possible to switch between the desktop and mobile view while designing the website. This way the user can instantly see how the website looks on both device types.

3.3. Summary

Having an online portfolio which showcases professional work should be a constant in one's life. As Katleena Kortesuso points out, "the online image is a preview to a person's work life. It is a shortcut for the employer to examine one's skills, network and level of communication." (Kortesuso 2017, [Appendix 1](#))

The two options of building an online portfolio either on a community website or a stand-alone website have both advantages and disadvantages, which are presented below.

3.3.1 Community based website

Advantages

- There is no need of tech skills to create an online portfolio.
- It requires only uploading the information to the website.
- Depending on the personal needs, the user can choose between a free and a premium subscription.
- It takes as much time as to create a membership profile.
- No maintenance required, as the website company is providing the maintenance.
- Creating a portfolio on a community website gives the new members better chances to be discovered.
- The community members can receive professional feedback.
- Companies looking for new collaborations are visiting community websites all the time for new talents for their upcoming projects.

Disadvantages

- The layout of the portfolio cannot be customized, all portfolios look the same.
- The portfolio cannot be moved to another website hosting provider.
- It might be difficult to be found because of the big number of members.

3.3.2 Building a stand-alone website with versus without programming skills

When it comes to building a stand-alone website it is clear that both categories of people can do it, those who have coding skills (using a web programming editor or a CMS software), as well as those who do not possess these skills (using a website building platform with a drag-and-drop feature). The advantages and disadvantages of these two options are listed below.

Building a website using a web programming editor

Advantages

- It offers endless options for design and functionality.
- It is easy to change the web hosting provider without altering the website.
- Can be added new features later on.
- It is scalable.

Disadvantages

- It requires either programming or money to hire a web developer.
- It is time consuming.
- It requires one additional step which is to register to a web hosting provider.
- It requires a professional to maintain the website.

Building a website using a CMS software

Advantages

- It offers endless options for design and functionality.
- It has the easy drag-and-drop builder interface.
- WYSIWYG feature is available for all CMS options.
- It is easy to change the web hosting provider without altering the website.
- Can be added new features.
- It is scalable.

Disadvantages

- It is time consuming.
- Often it requires one additional step which is to register to a web hosting provider.

Building a website using a drag-and-drop website building platform

Advantages

- Programming skills are not required.
- Easy drag-and-drop builder interface is available for all users.
- WYSIWYG feature is offered by all platforms form this category.
- The platforms are scalable.
- There is a wide range of membership options, from free with limited features to reasonable price with several additional features.
- Quick to build, it is time saver.
- It is easy to maintain it.

Disadvantages

- Lacking the option to move the website to another web hosting provider.
- Limited options for customizing the website for free membership.
- Cannot be added new features that are not provided by the building platform.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA

The previous chapter presented different options to create an online presence for showcasing professional skills. This chapter focuses on methods for promoting the online portfolio using social media for creating the brand image.

4.1. Social media overview

Social media represents a collection of online tools and services that enable and facilitate the interaction between individuals and groups (Encyclopædia Britannica).

Social media is used for two main purposes, personal and business. As a personal tool, people use the platforms to interact with each other or to connect with potential employers. As a business tool, social media is used for interacting with customers and promoting products and services (Coles 2014, 4). As the thesis focuses on creation of a personal brand for an individual, the emphasis is mainly on social media as a promotion tool.

Social media has several advantages over the traditional communication channels.

Price: Social media is free to use. This is a great advantage due to the fact that traditional media promotion always cost regardless of its type: phone message, radio, TV or newsletter.

Time: The fact that a post reaches instantly everybody in a group, makes social media one of the fastest ways to communicate. Research shows that social media platforms have peaks of usage at different times and days. Businesses use this information to maximize the reach of the audience on each platform (Pollard 2015). The following infographic is showing when different social media users are most active (Ellering 2016).

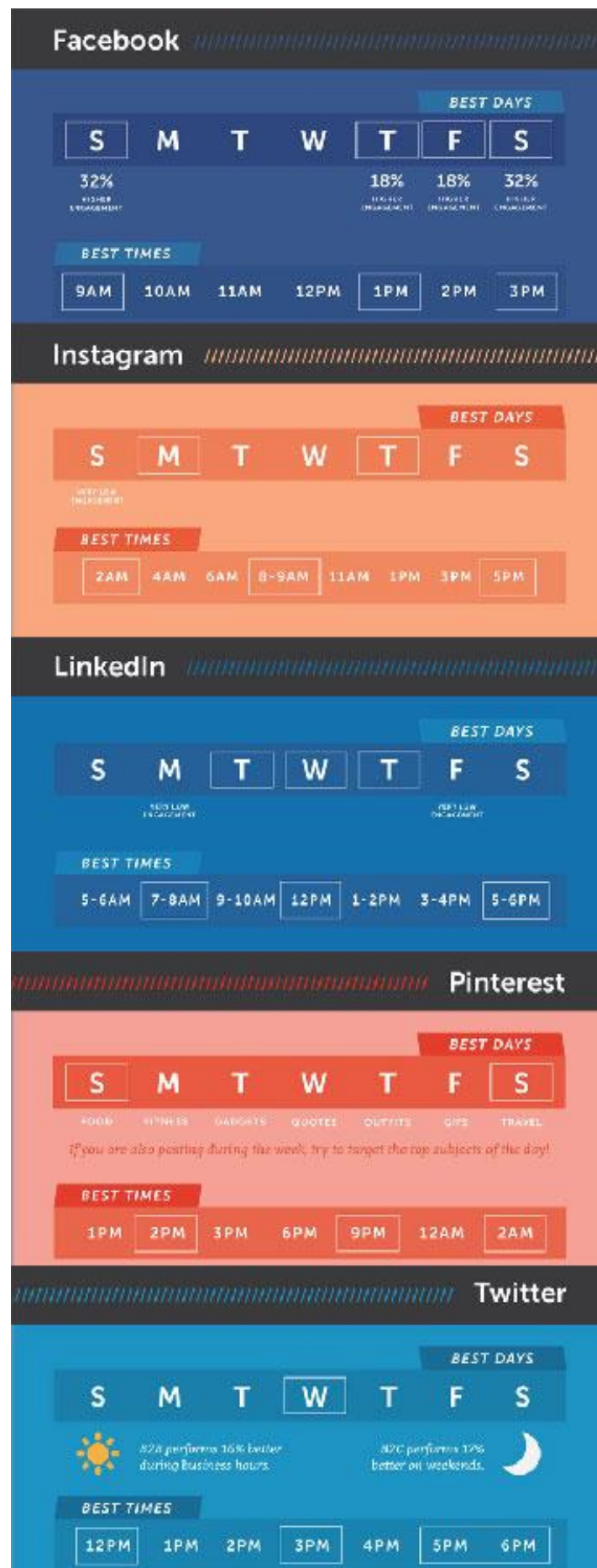


FIGURE 1. Social media usage timing (coschedule.com)

Communication: Social media allows the two-way communication enabling feedback from the customers (Coles 2014, 5). This is a big advantage over the traditional media which is limited to one-way communication. In order to receive feedback with the traditional media, additional tools need to be used like surveys or customer relations offices.

In conclusion, the ease and flexibility of networking and interaction with others made social media the most efficient type of media communication these days (Safko 2012, 5).

4.2. Social media platforms

Social media platforms are websites which provide an online communication channel allowing its users to interact in real-time.

Kit Smith analyzed the usage of different social media platforms and published the results on Brandwatch (Smith 2016). The results show that at the beginning of 2016 there were 3.17 billion internet users (Smith 2016). More than half of them i.e. 53.43%, were on Facebook. The following two platforms, Youtube and LinkedIn, represent 31.54% together (Smith 2016). Below is a graphical representation of the research published in March 2016, showing the people's first choice in using social media (Smith 2016).

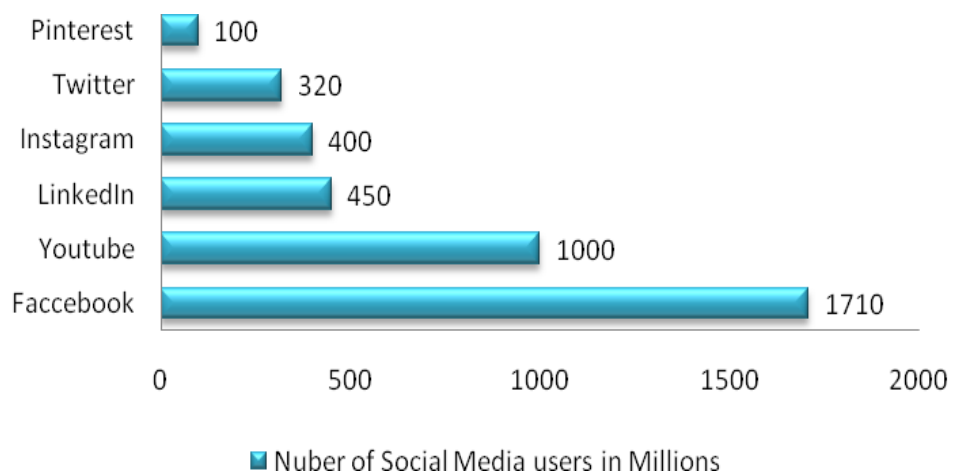


FIGURE 2.Social media users worldwide March 2016 (Smith)

Some of the most used social media platforms are described in the following chapters.

4.2.1 Facebook

Platform history

The company was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. Today the company's headquarters are in Menlo Park, California, US.

Facebook was created as an exclusive platform for the Harvard University students. As the popularity of the platform increased, students from other universities were allowed to join. In 2006 Facebook decided to go worldwide (Hall 2010)

Platform description

Anyone eligible (over thirteen) with a valid email or a mobile phone number can sign up for free.

Devices: The platform is optimized for mobile and desktop devices, which gives the users the possibility to create and share content from either device.

Activity types: Facebook allows its users to write, share content and comment on other people's posts. In addition to these, there is also the feature of private messaging. The type of content posted or shared can be text, video or image.

Groups: The platform offers the possibility to create or join existing groups. A group represents a community of members who share similar interests. The groups can be private or public.

Account types

Depending on the needs and preferences, the platform offers two account types, personal account and Business Page.

Personal account: The personal account is for private use like interacting with friends and family members. For someone to see others' personal account must be member of Facebook and only people accepted as friends can participate in conversations. The personal account can have up to 5000 friends and follow up to 5000 accounts or pages, but it can have an unlimited number of followers (Facebook Help Center).

Business Page: The Business Page is optimized for Google search and allows the owner to create several Pages, for example if the company owns different brands it might want to create a page for each brand. These pages are visible to everybody, with or without a Facebook account (Coles 2014, 37). In addition to these, the Business Page has the metrics feature which provides relevant data regarding the visitors' engagement with the Page (Facebook Help Center).

Conclusion

By comparing the two options the Business Page has a clear advantage over the personal account. First, the content of the page is ranked higher in Google search, which increases its chances to be found by the internet users. The second advantage is the wider reach of internet users. Due to the fact that it is visible to everyone (not limited to only Facebook users) the business page is more suitable for promotion than a personal account. The third advantage is the availability of analytics feature which offers the possibility to use the metrics of the account activity for business decisions. Even if originally the account was created as a personal account it is possible to convert it to a Business Page and benefit from the advantages it brings.

4.2.2 Instagram

Platform history

The company was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010 in San Francisco, California. In April 2012 the company was acquired by Facebook (Gavaghan & Warren 2012) and by the beginning of 2016 the platform reached 400 million users.

Platform description

Instagram is another free social media platform intended for sharing images and short videos. A profile can be created with a Facebook account, email or a mobile phone number.

Devices: The platform was developed as a mobile-only experience, with the goal of taking pictures and sharing them online. Later, at the end of 2012 Instagram decided to

expand its accessibility to desktop users and launch the web version of the platform (Instagram 2013).

Activity types: The mobile app is the full featured platform on which images and short videos up to 60 seconds can be posted (Instagram blog). The desktop version is more limited allowing only browsing, liking and commenting on others' posts (Instagram bog).

In addition to the standard uploads , in August 2016 the company introduced **Instagram Stories**, a feature which allows to upload photos and short videos which stay online for 24 hours. After this time they are deleted automatically (Instagram blog). The users can interact with each other on the platform by adding comments to other members' posts or answering to received comments. The **Instagram Direct** feature can be used for sending private messages to one or more people.

The platform uses hashtags to search posts on specific topics. They are part of the text associated with the post and work as keywords for searches. This is why using the right hashtag to describe the image or video (i.e. subject, location, content, etc.) it is the most important thing for a post to be found when a search is made on any of those keywords. As an example when someone is typing #oldcar in the search box, the result will show all posts containing this hashtag. In a similar way hashtags are used for creating communities of people who want to be part of certain activities like participating in challenges around specific subjects and interests.

Groups created with hashtags: For generating interest around a topic it is enough to create new hashtags which contain words relevant to the subject and then promote the idea. The more people start using those hashtags, the more visibility the group will have.

For example to create a community around the topic of the projects belonging to students of BA in TAMK, we can start using the hashtag #BAtamkPortfolio (hashtags are not case sensitive). Every time a student makes a post about a project can use this hashtag. This will make it possible to see at once all types of projects the students have. The community will be able to interact, give feedback and comment on each other's

ideas. In a similar way one can create dedicated hashtags for individual courses, projects, or even academic years.

Account types

There are two types of profile that can be created on Instagram, private or public. By default all accounts on the platform are public and visible to everyone. To share the posts only with selected people, the profile must be set as private (Instagram help center).

From personal to business use

Instagram is becoming an important promotional tool for businesses. A good example is the way IKEA used the platform in its marketing campaign for the Russian PS 2014 Collection ([FIGURE 3](#)).



FIGURE 3. IKEA PS2014 Collection (Instagram)

The Instagram page for this campaign is built to work very similarly to a website. For example, when someone wants to look at the table collection it is enough to click the **Tables** image to open the picture. Once the image is open, by tapping it, the picture gets populated with labels of each object ([FIGURE 4](#)).

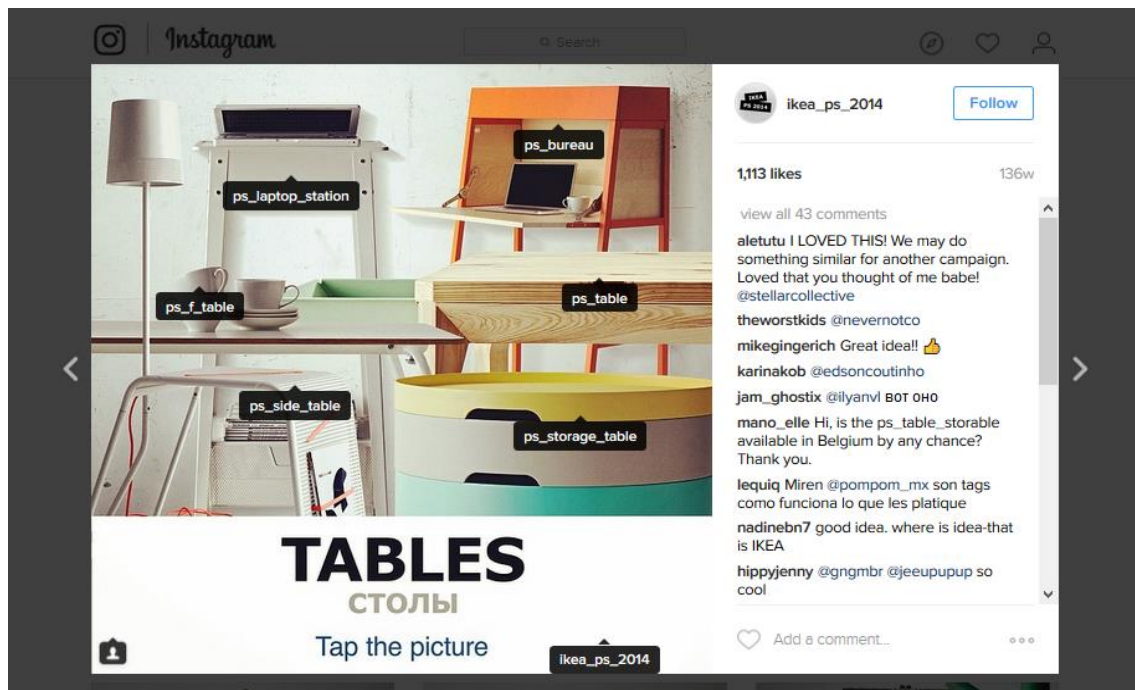


FIGURE 4. IKEA PS2014 Collection (Instagram)

These labels function as links which will open an individual account page created specifically for that object. In addition to the pictures, the individual account contains also a description of the product ([FIGURE 5](#)).

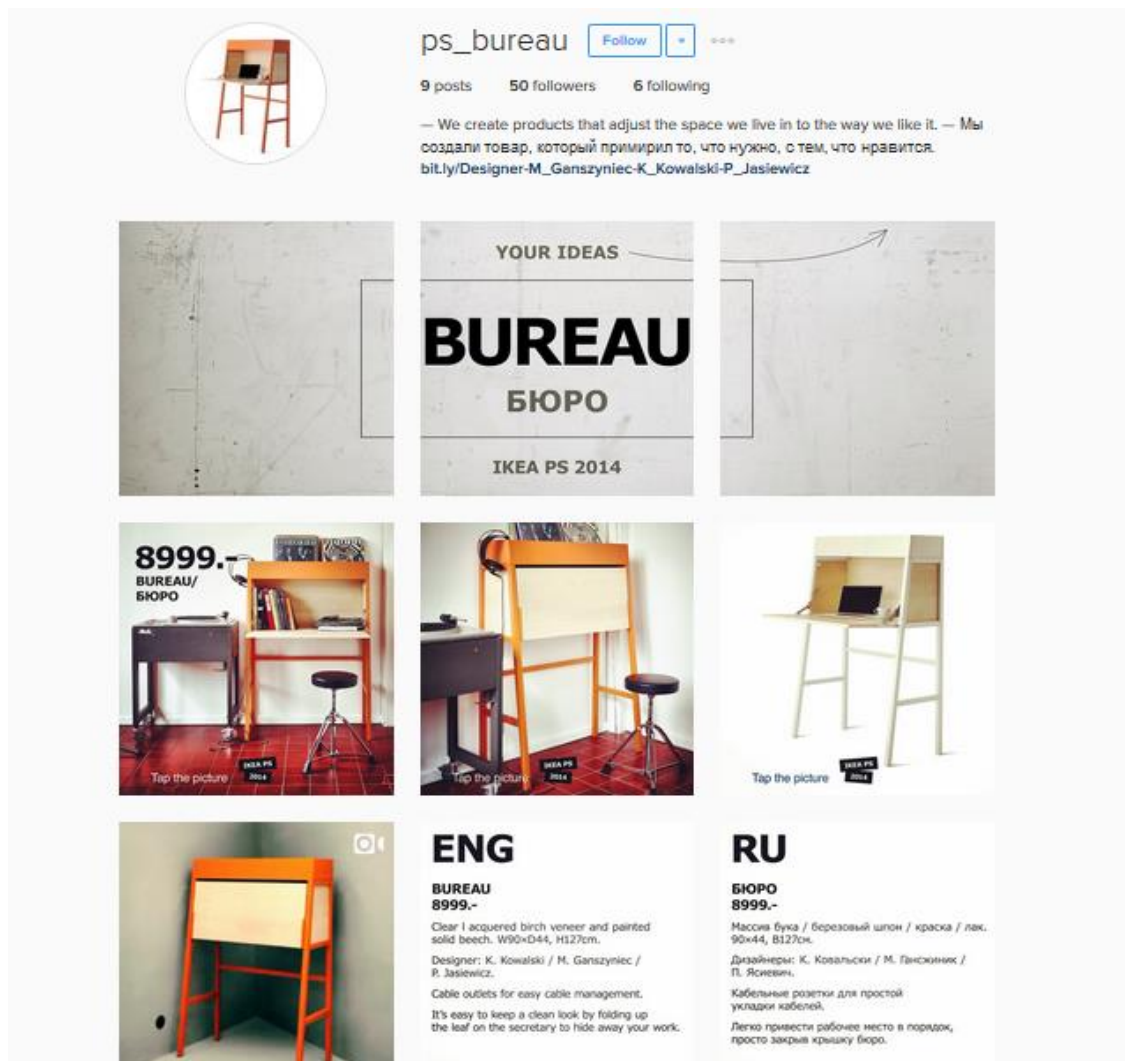


FIGURE 5. IKEA PS2014 Collection (Instagram)

With this original marketing campaign, the company creates a seamless browsing experience by using each product image as a launching step to the next one.

Conclusion

With Instagram developed as a mobile experience and the number of mobile device users surpassing the one of fixed device users since 2014 (see [FIGURE 6](#)), it really makes sense to use this platform in the self promotion process (Chaffey 2017).

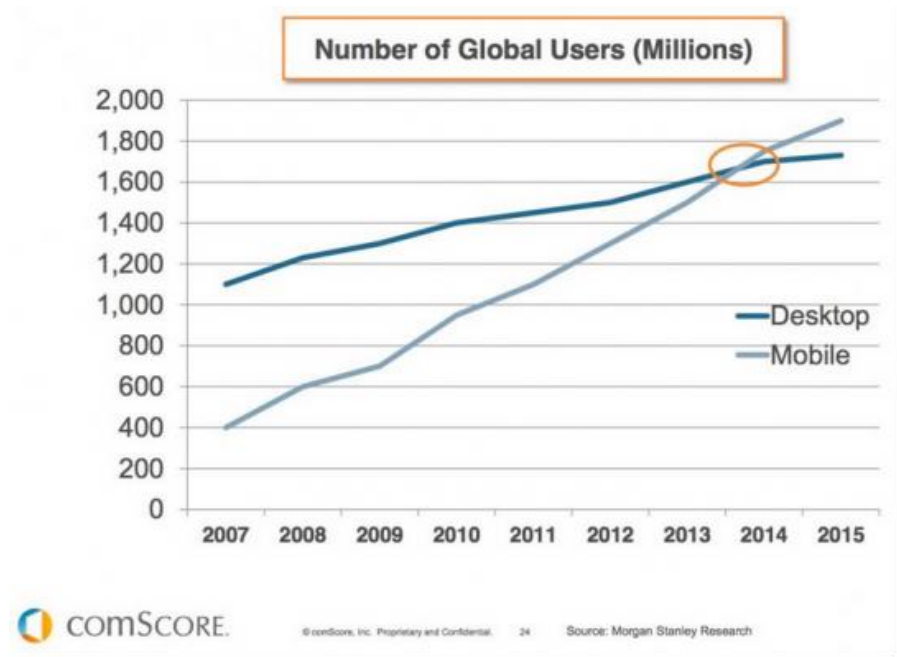


FIGURE 6. Internet use on mobile vs desktop devices (Caffey 2017)

Research shows that 80% of people are more likely to read an article containing visual elements (hubspot.com).

According to Emilie Doolittle (2015), the visual IQ is growing faster than the overall IQ. Since 1940 until 2020 they predict that the visual IQ will be 60% higher than the overall IQ (FIGURE 7) (Doolittle 2015)

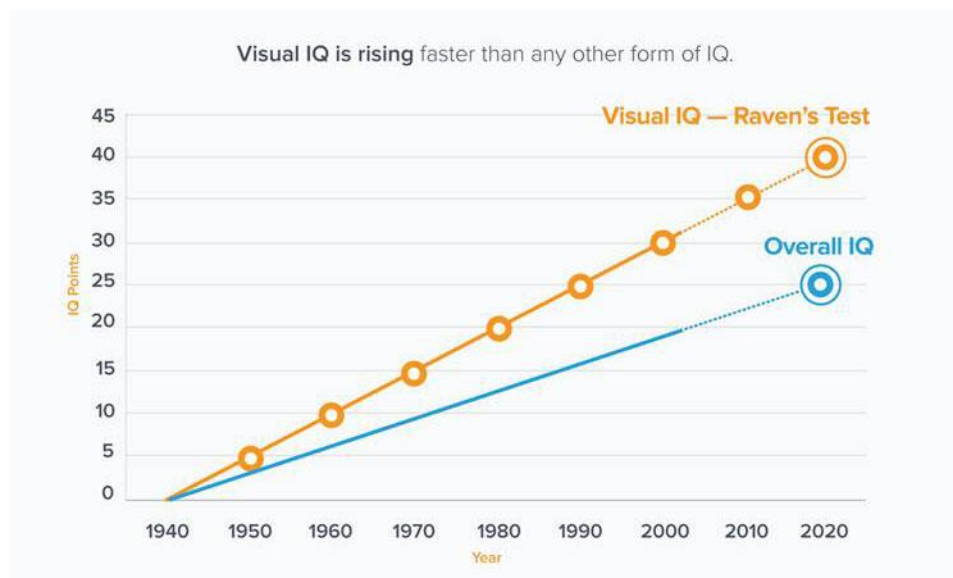


FIGURE 7. Visual IQ vs overall IQ evolution (Doolittle 2015)

Taking into consideration the dominance of the visual intelligence and the fact that Instagram is a visual media it is more than beneficial to use this platform as a promotional tool.

To set up a profile on Instagram is easier than on Facebook because of its simplicity and intuitive user interface.

4.2.3 LinkedIn

Platform history

LinkedIn was founded by Reid Hoffman in 2002 in Palo Alto, California and it was launched in 2003 (LinkedIn). The goal of the platform was to create a virtual place where people can build professional networks through connections (LinkedIn). In 2005, LinkedIn created a new feature, which allowed companies to post job listings on the website and search suitable candidates for their open positions (Gregersen 2011).

The number of LinkedIn members worldwide in 2016 has surpassed 450 million users (individuals and companies) in over 200 countries (LinkedIn). This makes LinkedIn the largest professional online community.

Platform description

Anyone with a valid email address or a Facebook account can join LinkedIn. Once a profile is created, LinkedIn offers a template containing predefined fields, which represent the most relevant information in a CV like: work experience, education, skills and interests.

Devices

LinkedIn was created as a desktop platform developing all its features for this type of devices. In addition to the web version, the company offers the “LinkedIn mobile app”, a collection of apps, which allow the user to access the same information as through a web browser. Currently the mobile version is compatible with the iOS and Android devices but not with Windows (LinkedIn Help).

Activity types

Creating a professional profile

As mentioned above, LinkedIn is offering its members the possibility to create a professional online profile where they can share information about work experience, education, professional certificates, language skills and other relevant information.

Building a professional network

As the platform's name suggests, one of the main features of LinkedIn is finding and creating connections between its members. In order to achieve this, the website uses various matching criteria based on the information people have on their account like: education, skills, work place, location or interests.

For example connecting with former classmates can be done with a click of a button by using the feature called "Find Alumni". With these connections, the user can build his or her professional network.

Blogging

LinkedIn offers the "long-form posting platform" as a tool for blogging. A post published on this platform becomes part of the publisher's profile and it is shared with his or her connections and followers (LinkedIn Help).

Searching for job opportunities

Job related actions that can be done on this platform are: creating alerts, saving existing jobs and applying for open positions.

It is possible to create search filters for job positions. Each member with a free account can create and save up to 10 job alerts with different search filters based on different criteria like: industry, company, location, job function, experience level or / and job title.

The "Save" feature makes a copy of the job description to the user's account. The copy remains available for viewing even after the position was removed from the website by the publisher.

There are two possibilities to apply for a job on LinkedIn. One option is with the “1 Click Apply” feature, which automatically sends the applicant’s LinkedIn profile to the employer. The other option is by using the “Apply on company website” feature. By using the second option, the applicant is redirected to the hiring company’s page from where the jobseeker can follow the instructions.

Both options make the application process very easy and fast for the applicant and the employer.

Groups

LinkedIn allows its members to create and join existing groups. People use groups to share content, look for answers, find jobs and make business contacts (LinkedIn Help).

There are two types of groups: Standard and Unlisted. The creator of the group is the Owner or Manager and has administrative role.

The **Standard Group** is similar to a public group and it shows in search engine results. To grow the group, all members can invite their first degree connections to join. The content can be created by any member of the group, it is open to comments to all members and it is visible to all LinkedIn members (LinkedIn Help).

The **Unlisted Group** is similar to a closed group and it does not show in any search engine results. The content posted on this type of group is visible only to the group members. New members can be added only if they are invited by the group owner or manager (LinkedIn Help).

Account types

There are two membership possibilities, free and the paid premium account.

The free subscription allows the members to create a professional profile, connect with other members, see available open positions and create up to ten job alerts with different search criteria.

The premium service offers additional benefits to its members like: InMail (the platform's email service), more results for their searches and access to the profile of all applicants for an open position (LinkedIn).

4.2.4 SlideShare

Platform History

SlideShare was launched in 2006 with the goal of creating a place where people could share knowledge easily. Today the website is one of the top 100 most-visited in the world, with 70 million visitors per month (SlideShare).

SlideShare is a platform in itself owned by LinkedIn since 2012. With a LinkedIn account all members have free access to use this platform.

Platform description

SlideShare is a free sharing platform for presentations, documents and infographics. The accepted document formats are: Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Adobe PDF, OpenOffice Presentation Document and most text files (.txt) (LinkedIn Help).

All presentations uploaded on SlideShare can be easily linked to the user's LinkedIn profile. SlideShare can be used as a tool to showcase personal skills like: data visualization and visual communication. The topics of the uploaded material on this platform show the interests of the account owner.

Devices

SlideShare is optimized for both device types, mobile and fixed. The desktop version is the full featured platform, which can be used at its maximum potential by uploading content, commenting on others' presentations and reading the profile's analytics. For mobile devices, the platform offers the "SlideShare Mobile App" which allows watching and downloading presentations from the app to the device (SlideShare).

Activity types

On SlideShare the user can upload content and download other members' presentations. It is also possible to leave comments on other members' material.

With the “Clip Slide” feature, it is possible to save individual slides into the personal collection called “My Clipboards”, for future reference (SlideShare).

The statistics can be displayed with the “Analytics” feature, which is showing data on the viewers’ traffic and behavior such as likes, comments and downloads. This is useful as it offers information about which material is more successful and what topic is more appreciated. There is the option to display the information for only one material or for all at once (SlideShare).

Conclusion

Used together, LinkedIn and SlideShare represent a great option for professional promotion purposes. While LinkedIn is a built in CV website, which additionally offers the option of blogging, SlideShare is a platform for visual content.

There are three main advantages of having a LinkedIn account. First is that all companies consider having a professional presence on LinkedIn not only a nice to have, but a must. The second advantage is that by using the tools offered by LinkedIn (i.e. SlideShare), the presentations look by default professional. The third advantage is the ability to create a personal network of professional contacts.

4.2.5 YouTube

Platform history

YouTube is a video sharing platform which was launched in May 2005. The company was founded by Jawed Karim, Steve Chen and Chad Hurley in California, USA. In 2006 Google has acquired YouTube and continued to develop it since (Ace X). The platform has 95% coverage of the internet users and it is available in 76 different languages in over 85 countries (YouTube).

Lately, YouTube viewers shifted more towards mobile use, to the extent that nowadays more than half are using mobile devices to access the website (YouTube).

Platform description

YouTube is a free platform on which people share and watch videos. By having an account on any of Google services such as email (gmail), Google+, Google Play, Drive or YouTube, the user automatically has access to all other accounts with the same login credentials.

Devices

The platform is optimized for desktop and mobile devices with Android and iOS operation systems.

Activity types

The main activities on this platform are to watch, upload and share videos. The YouTube members can be divided in two categories, consumers and content creators.

The consumers are people who use the channel as an information platform for the topics they are interested in. Even though they are not content creators, they can contribute to other people's channels by commenting, liking and sharing their videos. At the same time they can follow channels and organize them by creating playlists.

The content creators share their material with the online community. They can be individuals or companies. Individuals make videos related to their areas of interest like music, life style, science, product reviews or DIY tutorials on different subjects (e.g. crafting, art, IT or business). Companies use the platform for promotional purpose such as for a new product launch, a new ad campaign (e.g. Christmas or Black Friday) or for brand building.

In 2007 the company launched the "Partner Program", which allows the content creators to be paid for their viral content (Dickey 2013). Following this launch many content creators have realized that YouTube can be an additional income source. This is the main feature that sets YouTube apart from the other social media channels presented in this paper.

Conclusion

As visual communication is the most effective type of communication (UK Essays), YouTube or any other video sharing platform can be a great choice for presenting a pro-

fessional portfolio. There are some obvious advantages of using video instead of traditional text presentations.

By creating a video type of presentation, the creator is way ahead of the crowd as those are not yet common practice. The second advantage is that, indirectly the person shows additional skills of: filming, editing or even creative approach by using special effects and music. By being more entertaining than a text CV format, a video presentation is a much more interesting “read”. The fourth advantage is that a presentation video is much more personal than just text on a screen or a paper.

4.3. Summary

Social media is the most effective, wide reaching and free method of marketing. As Katleena Korteso points out in her interview ([Appendix 1](#) Personal Branding.).

using the right social media platform for promotion is the best way for creating contacts and a professional network.

The goal of social media is to facilitate the communication between the members of a community. The methods people communicate fall in three main categories: text, image and video. Each platform is built around one or more of these communication methods.

From all the platforms, LinkedIn is different in the way that it is intended to be used for professional network building. For the same reason, its “child” SlideShare is a formal platform where the members share presentations on different subjects.

The other platforms (Facebook, Instagram or YouTube), are very informal, meaning that they can be used for personal, private or hobby related topics also.

For those who prefer the written communication, Facebook is the best suitable platform from the channels described above.

The visual communication is the main feature of Instagram. This platform is preferred by people with more interest towards visual expression, like creating pictures or video based content.

The video communication is present in platforms optimized for this type of content. From this category we can mention Instagram for short videos and YouTube for longer content.

To sum it up, there are several options to promote ourselves on social media using different communication methods. In addition to those presented before, there many other platforms that are very popular like: Twitter, Pinterest, Vimeo, Periscope, Reddit or Snapchat.

In order to use efficiently social media for self promotion, the users have the option of choosing the platform they are the most comfortable with and it best suits their needs.

5 STUDY CASE 1 – THE ENTREPRENEUR - MINNA PARIKKA

5.1. The person

Minna Parikka is a Finnish fashion designer, who established her brand after her name in 2005. The brand is specialized in design of shoes for all age groups and genders. In addition to shoes, Minna designs also gloves.

She made her decision to become a shoe designer since she was a teenager. After obtaining her degree in footwear design in England, she looked for inspiration in the major fashion cities around Europe (London, Milan and Barcelona). In 2005 Minna returned to Helsinki, where she started building her brand (Minna).

5.2. The website

<http://www.minnaparikka.com/en/>

Her [online portfolio](#) is built as a stand-alone website (see subchapter 3.2). The website is an online shop showcasing the entire range of shoes and accessories available in the store. As the brand is Finnish and operating globally, the website offers two language versions, one in Finnish for the domestic market and another in English for the international clients.

In addition to the shopping feature of the website, the *About* page and the *Contact* information represent the most personal touch that Minna brings to her website, which otherwise is very formal and business oriented.

5.2.1 Logo

The brand's logo is representative for Minna's both personal and business philosophy. In her own words "Life is too short to take style too seriously" (Minna).



FIGURE 8. MINNA PARIKKA Logo

The logo is very descriptive for the brand as Minna uses elements of it in her collection names like “Bunny Collection” ([FIGURE 9](#)) or “Pompom Collection” ([FIGURE 10](#)) and in her designs.



FIGURE 9. MINNA PARIKKA Bunny Collection



FIGURE 10. MINNA PARIKKA Pompom Collection

5.3. Social media

The social media channels used by the brand are: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest, with Instagram being the most used. The posts on these channels are focused on business information and updates such as: brand promotion, sale campaigns, product presentation, celebrities wearing MINNA PARIKKA products or job openings. The interaction with the fans and followers is very limited, both as self initiated actions and as replies to other people’s posts.

In addition to marketing the brand and its products, the social media has a second functionality as a portal to the online shop which can be reached with only a click of a button.

As the brand is operating internationally, most posts are in English. To reach a bigger number of people, the same content is shared on several platforms.

5.3.1 Instagram

The brand uses two Instagram accounts, one for promoting the whole range of products [@minnaparikkashoes](#), and the second one focusing on products for kids and babies [@minnaparikkamini](#). The content on both accounts consists of announcing sale promotions, new products and new collections.

5.3.2 Facebook

The brand uses two Facebook profiles. The first one, "[MINNA PARIKKA](#)" is targeted towards the international customers and has all the posts in English. The second one "[MINNA PARIKKA UNIVERSUM](#)" is the Helsinki based flagship store's Facebook account and is dedicated to the domestic market where the followers and fans are interacting mostly using the Finnish language.

The **international account** is updated with posts that are promoting products and sale campaigns of the brand. The platform is used also for advertising job opportunities in the company.

The **domestic account** is updated less frequently than the international account, once or twice a week. The channel's content consists of shop related posts like new window displays, pictures from the shop with new collections or images with Minna Parikka's collaborators.

5.3.3 Pinterest

<https://fi.pinterest.com/minnaparikka/>

The [Pinterest account](#) is the strongest marketing tool of her social media despite it not being the most frequent one updated. The account has a total of fifteen boards, offering a full view of the brand through diverse topics such as: seasonal collections, age group collections, the brand story, the Flagship store, celebrities wearing the shoes, promotional campaigns or press releases.

The most successful board is the one containing the ad campaign for the Spring/Summer 2014 collection [MINNA PARIKKA x JANINE REWELL](#). The big number of interactions on this board (over 7000pins) shows the board's popularity. The success is due to a creative mix of graphic design, strong color, imagery and body painting that while drawing the viewer in, are also making the shoes the star ([FIGURE 11](#)).



FIGURE 11. Spring/Summer 2014 (Rewell 2014)

5.3.4 Twitter

<https://twitter.com/minnaparikka>

The [Twitter account](#) is the least used social network platform by Minna's brand. The content consists of posts from the brand's website, sharing of posts from Facebook and Instagram, or retweeted articles from other online sources.

5.4. Summary

In a very competitive market like fashion, Minna found a way to differentiate her brand from the competition by adding elements of childish innocence and fun to her designs. While the brand image is very playful, accessible, easygoing and informal, the social media uses a very business oriented and formal approach.

5.5. Personal thoughts

Minna could increase the brand's awareness on social media by interacting more with her fans and creating "call-to-action" events like raffles or challenges. One example might be to give a prize to the person who is posting the most creative image on social media wearing her products. The reward can consist of postcards, posters with Minna's signature or leather key rings. The second example could be to organize challenges on different topics like shoe or accessories design, window displays or other fashion related subjects. The rewards could be a creative meeting with Minna or, for the design challenge, the winners can be showcased on her website.

6 STUDY CASE 2 – THE LEADER – TEELA CUNNINGHAM

6.1. The person

Teela Cunningham is an American freelance graphic designer with an added interest in hand lettering. She creates video tutorials helping people to improve their graphic design and lettering skills. These videos are shared on her YouTube channel. In addition to YouTube, Teela teaches online classes on her [website](#), [SkillShare](#) and [Brit+Co](#). The brand is named Every-Tuesday, reflecting the timing of her video tutorial uploads.

6.2. The website

<https://every-tuesday.com/>

An interesting fact is that Teela redesigned her website while this research was ongoing. The thesis uses this opportunity to analyze the role played by the website in the brand's identity by looking at the reasons behind the change and how those changes were implemented.

After four years of creating content, Teela had a more clear idea about her brand values: accessibility, friendliness, ease of use and an overall satisfied user experience. This was the motivator behind the decision of renewing the design so that these values would be better reflected by the website. In her words, she wanted “to put a face to the business and give visitors the feeling that behind the Every-Tuesday website it is a real person”. Thus the brand's motto became: “The business is Teela” (Cunningham 2017).

Teela presents the reasons and objectives behind the website change and the new design, in a very clear and practical video (link <http://bit.ly/2q2Agsy>).

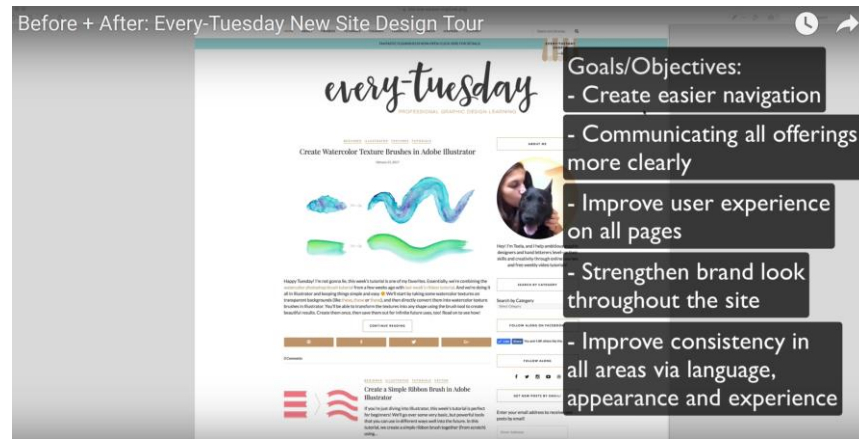


FIGURE 12. Teela Cunningham on the reasons behind new website design

In order to reach her goal of showing the person behind the brand, Teela focused the homepage more on the person behind the business (i.e. herself) by creating a friendly welcome through her picture and a warm self-introduction message. On the functionality side, the user experience is improved by offering a better accessibility to the information and easier search criteria.

Both versions of the website are stand-alone (see subchapter [3.2](#)). The old one was built using WordPress, a CMS software (see subchapter [3.2.2](#)) (Cunningham 2017). Despite offering a high level of flexibility, WordPress still has some limitations due to the pre-defined design and functionality of the themes and plug-ins. By contrast, the new website was built with a web programming editor, thus offering full control to the programmer over the look-and-feel and functionality of the website (see subchapter [3.2.1](#)).

[FIGURE 13](#) and [FIGURE 14](#) show the two versions of the website's homepage.

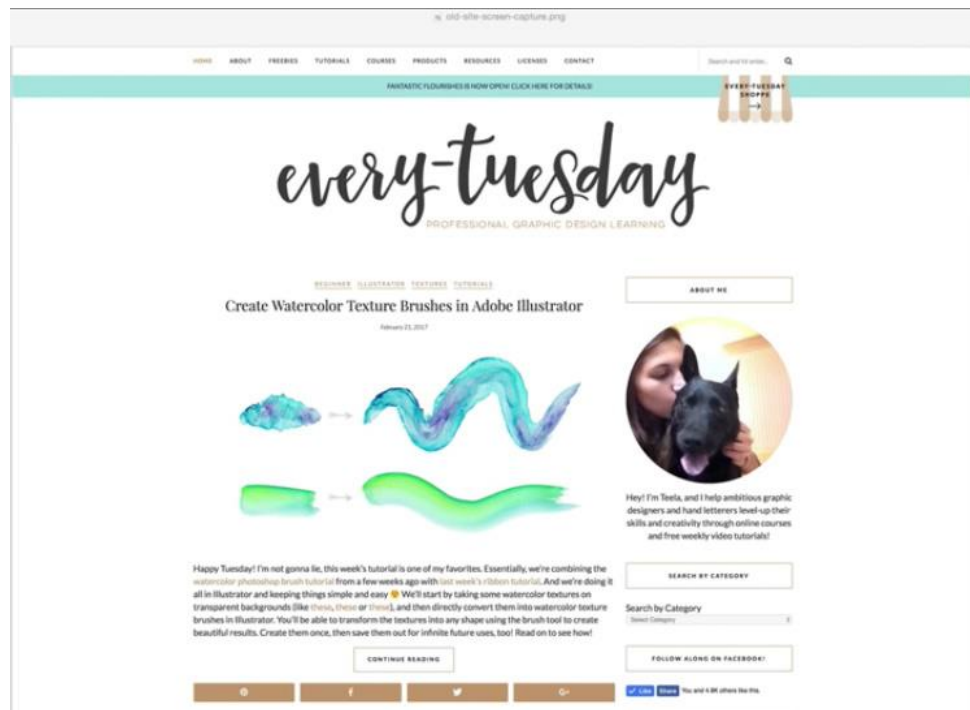


FIGURE 13. Every-Tuesday old homepage (Cunningham 2017)

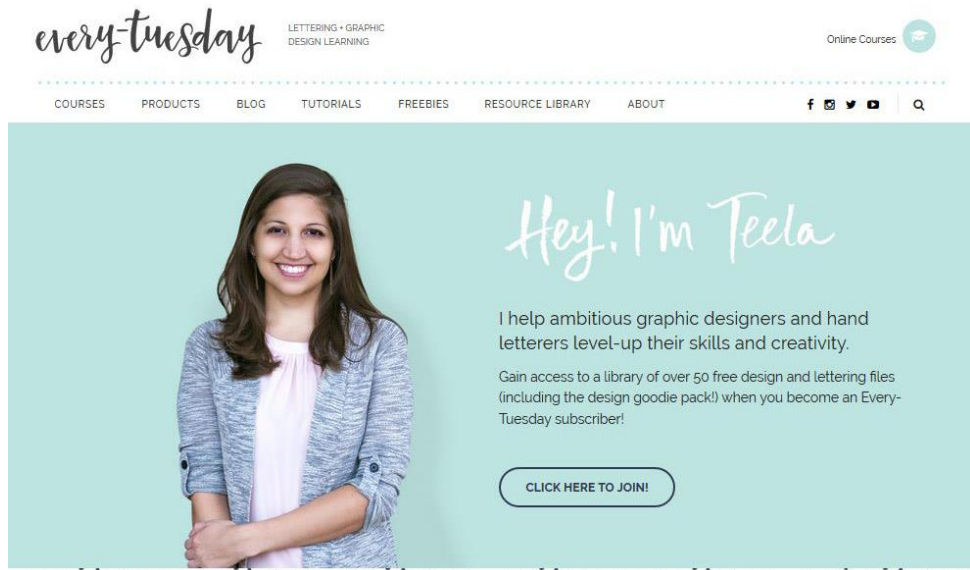


FIGURE 14. Every-Tuesday new homepage (Every-Tuesday 2017)

The website is showcasing Teela's portfolio and her online shop. The main activity of her business consists of offering professional graphic design classes and digital products to those interested in graphic design and lettering. Some of the products offered through the online shop are: font type collections, vector images, business card and print templates.

6.2.1 Logo

The logo is the name of the brand, for which Teela uses her personal designed fonts, “Tuesday Script” (Every-Tuesday 2017).

every-tuesday
PROFESSIONAL GRAPHIC DESIGN LEARNING

FIGURE 15. Teela Cunningham's logo (Every-Tuesday 2017)

The brand's characteristics are the clean and flowing lines which are giving an organic and handmade feeling to the graphics created by Teela. These are emphasized through the combination of digital and traditional art. The digital art is recognizable in the clean shapes, solid colors and visual effects of the work, while the traditional art is present in the colorful watercolor backgrounds and the hand written looking lettering (e.g. the logo).

Another important characteristic of the brand is the consistency. This is applicable both to the frequency with which Teela creates video tutorials (each week) and to her design style. Samples of her lettering and graphic design are shown in the following images.



FIGURE 16. Font lettering presentation (Every-Tuesday 2017)



FIGURE 17. Graphic ornaments (Every-Tuesday 2017)



FIGURE 18. Invitation template (Every-Tuesday 2017)

6.3. Social media

Teela uses Instagram, Facebook, Youtube and Twitter for promoting the products she is offering on different social media platforms, like online classes, tutorials or new products in the online shop. The main channel is YouTube, with a plethora of tutorials and sneak-peaks into the new products, while the other platforms are supporting the business with information on new updates.

Teela is interacting very often with her followers on all social media platforms answering to their questions, giving feedback and showing her appreciation towards those who compliment her work.

6.3.1 Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/everytues/>

Due to the type of business Every-Tuesday is practicing (educational), Teela creates visual content in form of video tutorials to share her knowledge. For this purpose she uses YouTube. This is also the main social media channel for Every-Tuesday and the most popular, with the biggest number of followers.

The channel is updated weekly with interesting tutorials presenting helpful tips and tricks for those interested to learn or to improve their skills in graphic design and use digital tools in the creation process. In addition to uploading video content, Teela is very responsive to her followers' comments, answering questions and offering feedback when requested.

6.3.2 Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/everytuesday/>

The content on [Instagram](#) promotes the products by using images and short videos of the most recent work. The video uploads are time-lapsed, where the viewer can see in one minute the outcome of a full tutorial which in real time can be up to 20 minutes long. Additionally, images representing work in progress or experiments with different mediums are also posted here (@everytuesday).

6.3.3 Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/everytues/posts/>

Teela is posting content on [Facebook](#) almost every day. The platform is used to promote her work and share tips about the graphic design and lettering field. Facebook and YouTube are the platforms where she interacts the most with her fans and followers (Every-Tuesday 2017).

6.3.4 Twitter

<https://twitter.com/teelacunningham>

[Twitter](#) is the least used social media platform. The content on this platform consists of information about new video tutorials, new products in the online shop, upcoming online classes and tips from other online resources (Cunningham 2017).

6.4. Summary

Teela has been able not only to survive, but flourish in the industry due to her unique selling proposition and the very direct and personal brand promotion approach. The unique selling proposition consists of the combination of traditional and digital art she uses in her products, while the personal marketing approach is reflected in the continuous interaction with her followers on all her social media channels.

6.5. Personal thoughts

Teela Cunningham is the perfect example of a well done personal brand building.

Differentiation - Teela has a product that is unique in the sense that it is a mix of digital and traditional art.

Marketing - She is consistent in creating content and updating her social media with news about upcoming classes, products and offers.

Online community - Teela is there for her followers to interact with them whenever they need. She is humble, approachable and very responsive.

Call-to-action - Teela uses call-to-action on her website offering different treats to the visitors. On the social media she announces new products that can be purchased or freely downloaded from the website.

Her followers are being engaged in different discussions like what they would like to learn about in the future, how long the tutorials should be or what kind of projects they would like to see her doing. In other words, she customizes her business and products based on the users' needs and requests.

7 STUDY CASE 3 – THE JOBSEEKER – STEFAN ANGYUS

According to Career Builder's survey published in April 2016, 60% of the employers are using social media channels to research their job candidates (Career Builder 2016). Because everything we share online reflects back on ourselves, it is an illusion that only a business person has a personal brand. We as individuals build our brand every time we put ourselves online. By knowing this, we can use the internet to our advantage and make every action of our online presence become a conscious act towards building a positive personal brand image.

The two examples of Minna Parikka and Teela Cunningham show how they used the internet to build their own personal and business brand. The following part of the thesis describes how the same principles used for building a personal brand for a business can be applied also when building a personal brand for an individual.

The study case used as example is represented by my journey towards building a personal professional brand image. The next part of the thesis describes the decisions involved during the entire process, such as: website hosting provider, website design, the content selection and the social media platforms used.

7.1. The website

The two main factors that influence the design of a website are its purpose and the target audience.

Depending on the main goal of the website, this should be built with a different primary functionality. Analyzing the two examples given in the previous chapters it can be seen that the main purpose of Minna Parikka's website is to offer the customers a platform where they can buy her products. For this reason her website is built as an online store. At the same time Teela Cunningham's main goal is creating an online community, which prompted her to design the website as a personal business place where she can interact with her followers. By comparison, my main goal was to create a portfolio for

showcasing my professional skills, so this was my main consideration in the design process.

Regarding the target audience, while Minna's website is aimed towards her clients and Teela's towards her online community, my website is targeted towards the employers.

The creation of the website involved the following steps:

- Selection of the host provider
- Selection of the content
- Organization of the content
- Design of the website

7.1.1 Website hosting provider

The provider was selected based on four main criteria: stand-alone vs. community website, level of technical knowledge required for building the website, flexibility in personalizing the layout and price.

[Wix](#) and [Weebly](#) were the two options which met my desired requirements: stand-alone website, ease of use (drag-and-drop and WYSIWYG features described in the chapter [3.2](#)), flexibility to create the layout, and free membership option. In the end, Weebly was selected due to its discreet advertising (small in the footer) and a higher level of flexibility (possibility for changing the theme also after building it) (Weebly).

7.1.2 Building the portfolio

The works selected in a portfolio have a dual role: on one hand, they should reflect the professional skills of the individual, while on the other hand should represent the type of work they are interested in doing further. In my case these were business and marketing concepts presented in visual form.

Knowing already from the beginning of my studies that I intend to build a personal website for showcasing the professional skills, I made the creation of visual projects a

high priority. For this reason, by the end of my third year I already had several projects that were suitable for an online portfolio. In addition to the projects done in school I also created a few personal self-initiated projects that were related to my fields of interest. These were a personal branding project which included the creation of the logo and stationeries (presented in subchapter [7.1.5](#)) and a fashion trend analysis project.

7.1.3 Organizing the website content

Once the content of the website is decided, the next step is to organize the information on separate topics so that the visitors can find easily what they are looking for.

As already stated the main goal of the website is showcase a group of works / projects. In addition to its main purpose, any website should contain the following: Home, About and Contact pages. In my particular case the Homepage is a slideshow with snapshots of personal projects which has the goal of presenting the first time visitor a quick overview of the website content. The About page has the role of introducing the person behind the portfolio, by offering the most relevant personal and professional information. The contact page is a simple form which the visitors can use to send messages that are coming directly into my personal inbox.

7.1.4 Selecting the portfolio content

The role of a professional portfolio is to reflect the person's skills and goals, so it should be selected accordingly. Additionally it can also contain projects related to the field of interest, which have a supporting complementary role in the individual's career.

In my case, the portfolio is organized around the following topics: marketing, branding and fashion. The content related to marketing was divided in **Presentations** and **Videographics**. The Presentations section contains PowerPoint visuals of business and marketing projects, while the Videographics section displays business and marketing concepts presented in a dynamic visual form as motion graphic videos.

A snapshot of the website's menu is shown in the [FIGURE 19](#) below.

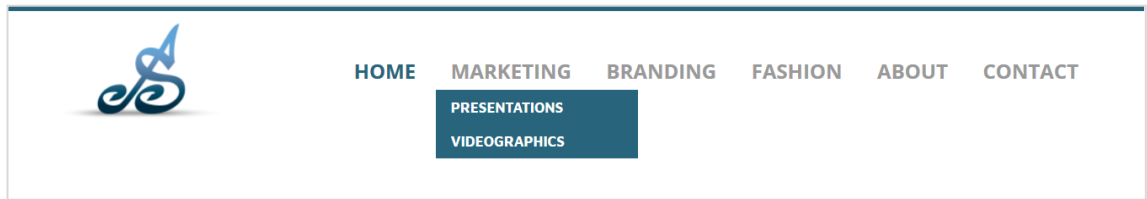


FIGURE 19. Personal website menu (Angyus 2016)

7.1.5 Personal branding

The most popular visual items of a brand are its logo, the colors and the fonts. These can be used both on digital products as well as on printed items.

In creating the logo for my personal brand I decided to use a simple and classic design showcasing the name's initials. At the same time an additional touch of modernity was given by using custom made hand lettering fonts with a subtle 3D look of a discreet shadow ([FIGURE 20](#)).



FIGURE 20. Stefan Angyus brand logo (Angyus 2016)

The color swatch used for the brand contains two shades of blue as seen below.

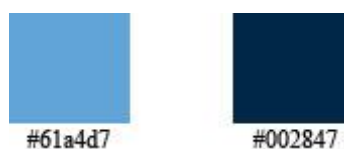


FIGURE 21. Personal brand color swatch (Angyus 2016)

The same color palette was implemented also in the design of the website and stationery items. Two of these pieces can be seen below: the business card and the envelope ([FIGURE 22](#) and [FIGURE 23](#)).



FIGURE 22. Business card (Angyus 2016)



FIGURE 23. Envelope design (Angyus 2016)

7.2. Social media

As shown in subchapter [4.1](#), social media can be used both as a promotional tool as well as connecting with other professionals and potential employers. Being present and active on social media can represent a huge advantage for an individual when deciding to look for job opportunities.

As already presented in subchapter [4.3](#) each social media platform is dedicated to a different type of content. That is why it is important to select the right media channel by considering the type of the content one desires to promote the most.

In my case, because all the material is visual, I decided to use [Instagram](#) for showcasing static images, [Vimeo](#) for the videographics and [SlideShare](#) for the traditional PowerPoint presentations. In addition to the above, [LinkedIn](#) is a must have social media platform for showcasing in a professional way the work experience and skills.

7.3. Summary

While having a portfolio website is a very good thing, it is only the first step in a life-long process. Building a personal professional brand requires an active involvement in the community and continuous content creation.

As students we can take advantage of today's digital world by starting to build a professional portfolio either with school projects or personal work. This way when the graduation comes and we start looking for a job, we can already have a platform to begin from in our professional life.

In addition to the portfolio we can use social media to connect and interact with other students or established professionals, thus building a professional network for our future. There is really no such thing as "too early" when it comes to start creating a professional image in the online community.

8 PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BUILDING A PERSONAL BRAND

This chapter summarizes the findings of the thesis and presents a step-by-step guide for building a personal brand. The material is intended to be used by students who would like to start building their online presence already while studying, regardless of their technical skills and website building experience.

8.1. Selecting the portfolio work

The content of the portfolio must contain the most relevant projects to emphasize both the skills and the type of work the person would like to pursue.

8.2. Deciding on the type of website – community based vs. personal

Once a portfolio is selected and depending on its purpose there are two possible options to showcase it: on a community website (see subchapter [3.1](#)) or on a personal website (see subchapter [3.2](#)). In order to select the best alternative, the person needs to answer at least the following questions:

- What type of content is showcased?
- What is the purpose of the website?
- Who is the target group?

Depending on the answers to these questions it can be decided what type of website best suits the user's needs. It can be either a community based website, a personal website or both.

8.3. Selecting the web service provider

When choosing a community based website, it is enough to create an account and start uploading the content. For the option of a personal website, there are several things to consider. Among these the most relevant are: the level of technical skills required in building it, price, flexibility in creating the layout and the features offered.

8.4. Designing the website

When creating a personal website the most important thing is to have a good organization of the content and a clean design so that every individual project can be easily found.

8.5. Promoting the portfolio on social media

There are two things to consider when using social media for promotion. One is the channel the user is the most comfortable with and the second is the type of content used to promote the brand, either text, static image or audiovisual.

9 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The thesis started by introducing the concept of brand and showing that personal branding is a combination of our persona and our professional skills. Despite the fact that the concept of branding was among us for a long time, it gained a new prominence with the digital revolution. Both components that are required in building a brand, the product and its marketing are facing radical changes in the way they are presented, respectively executed. Traditionally the product would be exhibited in a shop window, while the promotion would be done by word-of-mouth or using traditional media channels. Now with the help of the internet, the shop window (or physical binding folder) corresponds to a web portfolio, while the promotion and marketing can easily be done by using social media platforms.

Next the research uncovered different available options to create an online portfolio depending on the user's needs and technical skills. The research showed that there are pros and cons for each type of portfolio. A community based portfolio, offers the value of being part of a group, which is an easy way to make connections and contacts, but it is seen as an amateur's portfolio. A personal website on the other hand, shows professionalism and active involvement in creating a good image. The drawback is that without a strong SEO (Search Engine Optimization) it will remain an "isolated island" never found by anybody. For this reason the best option would be to use both, thus taking advantage of the strengths provided by each of them.

After analyzing some of the most common social media platforms, it can be concluded that in order to create an efficient promotional campaign it is necessary to learn the characteristics of each channel to be able to choose the ones that would best represent one's needs. It is important to understand not only the differences between each channel but also their subtleties so that they can be used at their maximum efficiency.

After the research answered general questions about personal branding, the thesis focused on three study cases, each for a different type of brand persona. The first two cases (the entrepreneur and the leader) offered insights into the main differences that made these two unique and successful in their own business field. While the entrepreneur brand type (Minna Parikka) focused its marketing efforts into advertising, product pro-

motion and image, the leader type of brand (Teela Cunningham) focused more on building a community and bringing in more followers by listening to requests and implementing a customer based business model. The third study case was based on the jobseeker persona. By contrast with the first two cases, which were analyzed from an outside perspective, this third case was in fact a practical implementation of a personal brand building. The hands-on direct experience gained through the practical implementation of building an online presence, as a starting point in creating a brand image, became the resource for the practical guide presented in chapter [8](#).

Finally the thesis draws together the research findings as well as the practical experience into a collection of guidance steps for starting one's own personal brand online.

Thus, the research question from the [INTRODUCTION](#) received an answer which can be implemented in a very practical way by anybody, regardless of their "products" (i.e. projects) or technical skills in website building. This concludes that the thesis was successful in reaching its goal of answering the question what is personal branding and how to build it using digital tools?

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Personal Branding.

The importance of a professional portfolio and building a social network 1 (2)

[Katleena Kortesus](#) is a non-fiction writer and communication expert, with over 30 publications. She is also a communications educator in the field of topics such as social media, professional branding and clear language. She kindly agreed to offer her expertise on the topic of personal branding, the importance of a professional portfolio and building a social network. The interview was conducted in Tampere on 12 April 2017.

SA: Today when looking for a job, what is your opinion about having an online portfolio with finalized work which showcases the person's professional skills? Is it important, and why?

KK: I strongly recommend having an online portfolio, even if one doesn't look for a job. It's a sort of an insurance in case if one ends up unemployed.

The portfolio can be for instance a blog, a website, an [about.me](#) page or a LinkedIn profile. The most important thing is that it must be interesting, honest, up-to-date and informative.

SA: Is having a personal website enough to promote our professional skills? In this case, what is the role of social media in creating a professional brand image and how it should be used?

KK: The way I see it, the online presence is a substitute and verifier for one's face-to-face presence. In most cases, online presence isn't enough because usually one has to show his/her face in a job interview. But the online image is a preview to a person's work life. It is a shortcut for the employer to examine one's skills, network and level of communication.

(continues)

Katleena Kortesuso interview on Personal Branding.

2(2)

The professional brand image must always be honest. One simply can't give wrong impressions, pretend anything or use fake recommendations. Otherwise it will have a backfire effect sooner or later.

Of course, a professional brand image must be constructed with the right social media services. For instance, a hairdresser or a designer needs an Instagram account since he/she must be able to show his/her works. A musician needs a Youtube channel and a *B2B consultant needs a LinkedIn account and a blog.*

SA: Is it enough to have a personal website (or an online portfolio) promoted online using social media to create a personal brand? Is there something else that could improve our personal brand?

KK: I think the website isn't enough. One needs also 2-3 social media accounts where one can create his/her audience and network. I recommend this kind of a combination:

- 1) Way to contact journalists, politicians and other influencers (usually Twitter, at least in Finland)*
- 2) Way to promote one's skills and work (a blog, Youtube channel, Instagram account or Slideshare account)*
- 3) Way to communicate with audience (Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook)*
- 4) Way to be in touch with personal friends and relatives (usually Whatsapp or Facebook, also Snapchat)*