

Chapter 47

Brand Journalism and Personal Branding in Academia

Hada M. Sánchez Gonzales
Universidad de Sevilla, Spain

ABSTRACT

The book chapter seeks to highlight the importance of brand journalism and personal branding within the university context. First, the focus is on determining how universities are adapting to the changing needs of their audience by utilising new narrative techniques. Second, we must determine whether brand journalism in turn allows for the construction of personal branding. If so, we would like to know whether teachers coming from the Schools of Communication / Information of universities in Spain have created their personal brands, in addition to what criteria and tools had to be taken into consideration for its creation. In conclusion, a lack of progress in regards to the development of a personal brand as well as personal branding in academia is observed.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter of the book discusses the importance of brand journalism in universities and the use of personal brands by Spanish university professors. Firstly the term brand journalism is emphasised, taking into consideration the evolution of journalism in relation to the needs of the audience which has converted from an ignored mass into a fifth power. The public decides what, how, when and where they will consume news due to a suppressed need to consume quality information.

Given this scenario, multinational companies have seen a clear advantage when publishing their own news without the need for intermediaries (the traditional media). Companies known around the world such as Coca Cola, Red Bull and Microsoft have become editors of their own content. Second, the chapter will delve into how universities are seeking to transmit the importance of knowledge to users as well as their contributions to improve the progress of society using brand journalism. To do this, specific cases regarding use of university brand journalism will be analysed at both the international and national level, although commitment is timid due to academic institutions' lack of knowledge regarding the matter at hand. In addition, the chapter will present academics' opinions concerning the term in question and its applications in educational settings.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7116-2.ch047

Secondly we will insist on the necessity for Spanish university professors to utilise personal branding. Clearly, the presence of the Internet and the emergence of the Social Web have helped different professionals to more closely reach their audience. A journalist does the same in order to attain greater visibility, given that “the visibility that the net gives us has enormous potential when it comes to sharing content and reaching other audiences which weave a community around the professional, in turn building credibility” (Yuste & Cabrera, 2014: 22).

Undoubtedly, the need for academics to create personal branding on the Internet is increasingly important. The secret is in adding extra value to professional actions. This leads us to understand that each task or project performed by the teacher should be considered a rewarding challenge capable of transmitting an emotional attitude that adds value to their brand and likewise, benefits the University and in turn its brand. To determine the use that professors make of personal branding, we have supported our study with quantitative and qualitative techniques while keeping in mind the theoretical review, document analysis and surveys given to academics.

The main objective of the chapter focuses on promoting the importance of brand journalism in the educational context and the use of personal branding by professors who teach at Schools of Communication in Spain. We begin on the following premises which we will try to respond to throughout the chapter: on one hand, we will reveal questions about the importance of brand journalism in the educational context. Do universities use brand journalism to become known and obtain recognition? Do they try to directly report to a segmented and specialised public? Is it considered a new way of communicating? Does it promote the employment of unemployed journalists? Does it build a reputation or is it trying to sell? Should brand journalism be implemented as class content within the curriculum?

Likewise, the chapter attempts to answer the following questions about teachers’ use of personal branding: what criteria should be taken into consideration when creating the personal brand? Do you think that what the Internet says about you and your work is important? What tools do you consider important for building a digital identity? Should a professor’s personal brand convey an emotional stimulus to anyone interested in their work?

BACKGROUND

Brand journalism is assuming greater prominence in business and media, while the attitude of the audience has changed and the advertising practice has lost efficiency. However, in no way is this a new form of communicating. Approximately one hundred and twenty years ago, according to Abiad (2014), *The Furrow* emerges in 1895 to attractively publicize agricultural content with an added value. “John Deere - the world’s leading agricultural machinery manufacturer - had the good idea of setting up a free publication for his potential clients”, which helped him to convert Deere tractors into the most highly demanded tractors on the market. The magazine is still being published today. It is obvious that another technology was used at that time to publicize such content. Today, with the help of the Internet and web 2.0 and 3.0, the technological change is indisputable owing to the fact that the magazine contents can be more widely spread at a cheaper price. In any case, the way of telling the story to reach the audience prevails.

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