SOCIAL COMUNICATIONS

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Brand as a means of self-actualization

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Abstract. This article is telling us about the common reasons for the formation of personal brands. The author argues that as a product of a culture of individualism and one of the innovative phenomena of modern communicative reality, the brand used as a means of self-identification and self-actualization. In a fast-changing variety of social groups and products offered by the consumer society person is getting an opportunity to orient and build its own successful life strategy.

Keywords: brand, branding, brand community,culture of individualism, personality, self-projection, self-determination, the performing self, social communication, identity, brand image

Today's information-oriented society is defined not so much by the rapid growth of knowledge in all areas of human activity, but by the fact that communication processes have increased – human interactions based on the circulation of knowledge and the emergence of opportunities to gain it rather quickly. Accelerated processes of acquiring different information promote broadening of choice for further human activities and the emergence of greater number of directions for efficient planning and realization of various activities. Using established brands kaleidoscope as a set of markers, person declares him- or herself, his or her own identity, and the information-oriented society offers prospects for the development and improvement in the occupied area.

Objective of the Article is to comprehend the origins of formation of personal brands and to understand their place and role in the consumer culture.

Focusing due attention on investigations in the field of branding (G. Featherstone, D. B. Holt, D.A. Aaker, F. Kotler), it should be noted that the works, devoted to the study of the brands' nature, are concentrated mainly on the key aspects of their development and maintenance on local and global markets. However, it is clear that the place and role of personal brands in today's information-oriented society revealed in scientific literature not wide enough, giving the issue undeservedly little attention.

Therefore, the *relevance* of this topic is consideration of personal brands in today's information-oriented society.

In terms of total society globalization and informatization, free circulation of knowledge, impetuous mediatization and destruction of "authorities", each entity gets broad opportunities in the struggle for its own successful existence, in "creating him- or herself." Being established and formed in the West, the culture of individualism penetrates into the most remote corners of the world and opposes the practice of suppression of the individual by society and/or the state. This culture makes laws that support and, if necessary, correct some experience of individuals, in other words, allow them feeling freedom and responsibility for their lives. In fact individualism is not estrangement from public life, but, first of all, a form of initiation in it, it is a cultural project of existence in society.

It should be noted that one of the main tools of culture of individualism is a lifestyle which, as Małgorzhata Jacyno marks, can be a means of individual's vivid self-expression and a way of self-liberation from pressure and restrictions he or she experiences. Lifestyle in the culture of individualism is a method of self-creation, authenticity acquisition, approbation of different versions of the own "I", conducting experiments with it, not necessarily associated with the radical and abrupt changes. This is a method of liberation and not just in the sense, inherent in the various forms and manifestations of mass rebellion. Importance given to the style of life allows seeing in it a chance for personal emancipation from things, which, in the individual's opinion, limit his freedom or opportunity to be him - or herself [4, p. 62 - 63].

Since most of the samples are dictated by fashion, which plays a role of a mechanism of social control over youth, the transience and changing of lifestyles, as if decorations, requires immediate re-orientation, otherwise one will be reputed as old-fashioned, having not enough time to digest everything offered by consumer society. Striving for something new turns into a neurotic need, based on the fear of lagging behind the others and discrepancy to the spirit of the age [8, p. 185]. By-turn, constant search for new models and impressions against a background of the ruthless utilization of the old ones instills confidence in one's own adequacy and ability to be modern.

Famous sociologist Z. Bauman calls the society of XXI century a "liquid modernity". An unprecedented increase in the diversity of things, practices, and events, pluralization in all areas of social and cultural life contribute to the intensification of competition. "Light capitalism brings to life and ensures the coexistence of authorities in such quantity that none of them is able to be respected for a long time, to say nothing of having the right for exclusiveness. When there are a lot of authorities, they begin to abolish each other, and the only effective leader in this field is the one who will choose between them [...] Authorities don't command anymore; they are looking for the inclination of the voter; they seduce and subdue", - says sociologist [1, p.71-72].

Rapidly developing technologies in the communications field allow obtaining the approval and commitment of wide audiences, to individualize personality and to take place in society without intermediate links - groups, ideologies, symbolic cultural systems. At the same time the movement of a person from local national culture to the global information space takes place. Thanks to the openness of the world, a person becomes able to transform and change the boundaries of self-perception on both physical

and spiritual levels. There is an opportunity to change the physical appearance, increase the duration of life, get a virtual name and conceal the true nature or to model the entirely new personality.

J.-P. Sartre, in the middle of the twentieth century, wrote: "A person first of all exists; a man is a creature that is directed to the future and is aware that it projects itself into the future. Man is first of all a project that is experienced subjectively, not a moss, mold and not a cauliflower. Nothing exists before this project, there is nothing on intelligible sky, and the person becomes such, what is his of her life project" [5, p. 323]. Indeed, human life becomes meaningful through the implementation of personal project. For J.-P. Sartre self-projection is the need of creative and free person for self-realization.

G.L. Tulchinsky [6] defines "auto-projection" of personality as individual's positioning and self-positioning, peculiar to the present. The author emphasizes that latest technologies and communication facilities provide exceptional opportunities of "self-projecting" identity and in virtual reality, person can achieve social recognition and fulfill himself to a greater extent than in the "real". Under self-realization is meant implementation of personal projects in an objective reality, the ability to position yourself and become someone in time and space of your own life.

In the foreground appears a choice of "project", authored by the person him- or herself. It is about a rather specific technology of development and implementation of this "project", which includes a choice of a life strategy, formation, positioning and promotion of a particular brand image and reputation, and literally it is marketing technology: the formation of your own importance, the demand for yourself - not only in the labor market but also in social relations, personal life, in everyday life. Obviously, complete refusal from statutory and role identities doesn't take place, but they become quality characteristics that are used in the technology of forming and promotion of brand. The status and role doesn't become a goal or the final result of the identification but the means of realization of the "man-project."

According to Z. Bauman, self-projection is not the subject of self-selection, but the modern life peculiarity: "Modernity replaces heteronymous definition of the social status with compulsory self-determination". It means that, if a person wants to assert him- or herself in today's rapidly changing world, consisting of the situations of risk and uncertainty, he or she must accept the terms of this world, learn how to change, become mobile.

At the same time typical for modern socio-cultural world demythologization, including decay of Christian myth, and the ensuing "humanistic" myth, is manifested in the loss of value coordinates, without which a person is unable to navigate the space of significant objects and phenomena. It is not without reason that modern philosophical literature constantly gives pessimistic assessment of the present individuality (and personality, accordingly).Within the individualistic culture the destiny of a person in modern social and cultural conditions seems to be tragic: individual, who didn't become a personality, is frustrated person, damaged, deformed. In this case, on the first place, in the conditions of collapse of the religious, political and "humanistic" myths, appears the brand myth,

often based on trust to a certain particular individual (brand owner).

Due to the consumption of brands, the individual is symbolically attached to a particular lifestyle and gets the desired social status in opinion of associates. Brands become a convenient tool for the construction of desired identification. Using brands like pieces of mosaic, person collects his or her own identity and presents it on the public court.

Today, in addition to functional, emotional and status, brands acquire a spiritual dimension, forming in the minds of consumers a stable connection of brand name with certain values and beliefs. Brands with the most powerful and advanced systems of values and beliefs, are able to unite people around their ideas and produce "brand communities" [7, p. 204], thereby contributing to the formation of collective identity. Despite the fact that individualism is typical for postmodern worldview, desire for social integration is archetypal for individual – it is a generic human feature. For the individual it is much easier to understand his or her place in the world, to find the value system's reference points and self-actualize being member of "brand community". The formation of brand communities is a modern form of the individual's desire to integrate into the society and to form a collective identity.

The modern consumer society does not suppose only functional meeting the needs - on the contrary, consumption is more and more often based on hidden meanings, and brands are used as these symbolic resources for the formation and maintenance of personal individuality and identity [2, p. 136].The consumer joins the creation of his own symbolic project in which he must establish his own identity using symbolic materials. These materials, first of all, are brands that contain most of the existing cultural meanings. Social and cultural studies are paying significant attention to the "aestheticization of social life" because it is believed that the methods used to create a personal identity relate to aesthetic or cultural orders, and in addition, these methods of self-promoting more and more often contain cultural resources and cultural capital. G. Featherstone, a sociology professor, claims that in consumption culture emerged a new personality concept – "The Performing Self", which puts in the foreground the appearance, demonstrativeness and management thoughts of others [3].

Penetration into the group through identification, the ability to be accepted into the environment, to be involved in the event, through the formation of identity, in particular, is carried out through brands that can represent and identify. They are embodied in the key symbols (logos, corporate style), words (slogans), clothes, things, places of visit, consumed values; they can be easily recognized by "friends" and not clear, not available for "others." Visual demonstration of identity, carried on the consumption market as well as in interpersonal relationships, contains a set of attributes and characteristics of brand identities, including value, spiritual and emotional layers.

Reflection of visual analysis and identification provides an opportunity to form behavioral strategy of the part accepting to its social group, and the part that wants to get into this surrounding, thanks to the reproduction of suitable strategies based on the consumption of certain brands. It is a dress code and brands that create in modern

society social and cultural filters when entering a professional field of activity, recreation and leisure sphere, building friendship and family relations, in the market and media space when singling out of the target audience, in visual culture and arts.

Thus, there is no doubt that at the present time of society informatization, active development of globalization processes and the destruction of former "authorities", the person gets wide opportunities to "auto-projection", self-realization. Contemporary culture of individualism presupposes the struggle for self-realization in the society,

otherwise not identified subject, who didn't become personality, begins to be considered defective, deformed, "alien" to the socio-space. Deliberate or indirect use of the whole kaleidoscope of existing brands, providing visual and practical self-identification evidence to society, becomes one of the modern forms of realization of the individual's desire to partake in it. Penetration into the group through identification, the ability to be accepted into the environment, to be involved in the event through the formation of identity, in particular, is carried out due to brands.

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Мантула Б.А., Проценко А.Ф. Бренд как средство самоактуализации

Аннотация. В данной статье раскрываются основные причины формирования личностных брендов. Автор доказывает, что являясь продуктом культуры индивидуализма и одним из инновационных явлений современной коммуникативной действительности, бренд используется как средство самоидентификации и самоактуализации. В быстроменяющемся разнообразии социальных групп и продуктов предлагаемых обществом потребления личность приобретает возможность сориентироваться и выстроить собственную стратегию поведения.

Ключевые слова: бренд, брендинг, культура индивидуализма, личность, самопроектирование, самоопределение, идентичность, образ бренда