

The portfolio technology as competitive tool of personal branding development

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Abstract. The increasing competition in the labour market emerged the problem of graduates' adaptation. The education system helps to live and work effectively in a rapidly changing world. Nowadays, the major purpose of education is personal, social, and professional competences. Indeed, the ability of the graduates to analyse and effectively use information is one of the most demanded. Therefore, an independent work of the students takes a significant place in the curricula of higher education institutions. However, to be competitive in the labour market is the one urgent task of the modern education. The purpose of this study is to determine empirically the effectiveness of portfolio technology for personal branding development in terms of competitiveness. Indeed, the process of personal branding development is relevant since the employment of graduates is included in the university's accreditation indicators. Despite the portfolio technology has been introduced into the higher education system, according to our research, it does not achieve its goals. The reason is the formal and unjustified attitude of the education system towards the technology. However, our research shows a high ranking of motivation to master self-presentation skills, professional career, etc. Therefore, there is a need to address this contradiction through the effective management. The sociological survey method allows us to describe the process under study and identify the difference between educational institutions. Indeed, the skill of personal portfolio development depends on the objectives of the educational process at the university. Moreover, many students are not informed about the portfolio technology. We possess it a result of insufficient management in terms of personal brand development. In general, according to research results, mastering of portfolio technology as a tool for personal branding and competitiveness is quite poor.

Keywords: portfolio technology; personal competition; personal branding; self-presentation; professional community

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Introduction

Indeed, two trends in the labour market define the studying of personal branding and portfolio as a competitive tool.

- firstly, the growing competition for jobs and demands of employers;
- secondly, the development of digital technologies for self-presentation and business contacts.

Modern digitalisation increases the level of competition within professional community. Indeed, social media provides new opportunities for employees. Nowadays, they can choose the mode of work: on-line or off-line. Therefore, the competitiveness within the professional communities increased. Moreover, some professional communities capitalise their professionalism. For example, doctors of narrow specialisation having developed a personal brand usually involved into the paid health care; teachers became popular tutors;

design engineers establish personal design bureaus, etc. All mentioned above form the competitiveness requiring the skills of self-presentation.

Therefore, it is necessary to determine the concept of brand. The term was borrowed from marketing and business industry and its main definitions are related to the concepts of a trademark. According to Mazilkina E.I., brand is a promoted trademark or image resulting from various marketing efforts [9, p. 11]. O.G. Vazhnova suggests two types of definitions of brand concept. Firstly, there are individual attributes: the name, logo, and other visual elements (fonts, design, colour schemes, and symbols) to distinguish a company or product from competitors. Secondly, it is the image and reputation of a company, product, or service for the customers and partners [3, p. 8]. Knyazeva M.A. possesses brand as a trademark characterised by a certain perception on the part of the target audience [8, p. 67]. According to the educational literature, brand can be understood as the reputation, image, and recognition of a trademark to distinguish from competitors for the consumers of goods and services. It is relevant to the production of goods or the provision of services by legal entities. Therefore, many people percept the term brand as corporate brand or company brand. However, development of opportunities for individuals allows them to capitalise their professional achievements through their skills, image, and reputation. It provides the introduction of personal brand concept. The concept of a personal brand is developing. According to Zeynelova A.E., a personal brand is the perception of a person by the others [6, p. 18]. The personal brand is becoming widespread within professional communities. It concerns with the desire of publicity, provided by expanding personal presentation through the social networks. A personal brand is a public image of a person in a particular niche, i.e. medicine, education, beauty, business, art, etc. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to be a certified specialist; it is more important to have an experience and charisma. Today, consumers critically consider any advertising activity and mostly focused on a specific person. It provides the prevalence of the personal brand over the company one because of competition. Teamwork and personal characteristics are a priority to select specialists in any field. The crisis economy requires businesses to reduce costs. As a result of optimisation, only highly competitive specialists having the ability to attract attention to themselves remain in the staff. Along with this, they attract attention to the company and increase the value of company product or service. Personality becomes primary one [4, p. 50].

The modern interpretation of personal brand concept is the image and reputation of a particular person and consumer expectations on the service provided. Moreover, a personal brand is closely related to its personal socially significant qualities, the service provided or the product itself [11, p. 91]. The brand's reputation itself allows consumers of services to wait for the quality and professionalism [5, p. 50].

Therefore, in modern competitive economic conditions, the demand of employers is growing and changing towards assessing the applicant's level of competence rather than basic education. Hence, the issue of professional personal positioning is becoming particularly relevant.

Methods

One of the most effective tools to compete and show ones' competence is a portfolio. It is an opportunity to demonstrate achievements in a particular field of activity and impress a potential employer. The formation of a new trend through the presentation of personality in various fields of professional activity acquires portfolio management skills. With the transition to the Bologna process, Russian universities introduced the requirement to keep a portfolio for each student. Working with a portfolio in a practical, professional, and socio-educational environment contributes to the development and assessment of students' competencies. It allows graduates to develop their professional qualities, and effectively present their achievements to future employers [13, p. 138].

Many Russian scientists studied a professional portfolio and its role in the development of personal competitiveness. A.G. Asmolov researched issues of personal and professional development related to the portfolio as a tool of self-presentation [1]; V.A. Bolotov developed the methodological basis of the portfolio as a tool for evaluating professional achievements [2]; I.A. Zimnaya studied issues of professional competence and its reflection in the portfolio [7]; N.F. Radionova investigated the role of the portfolio in the system of professional development of a teacher [14].

The concept of a portfolio, as a business card of an individual or an organisation, has gained importance with increasing of competition in the labour market. To attract the attention of employers or clients, employees collected samples of completed works or certificates of achievements in the profession. Initially, it was a kind of dossier.

The idea of using a portfolio in education is widespread and to be actively applied in Russia with the transition to the Bologna process. It began to develop the technology of graduate competitiveness as a result of a student's activity after completing a certain educational stage and preparing for future professional activity. In this regard, the development of the concept began within the framework of pedagogical science.

The Russian specialists have different approaches to the definition of the concept of portfolio. For instance, Stefanovskaya T.A. considers the technology of portfolio as the organisation of the pedagogical process, a set of actions improving the relationships between the components of the pedagogical process in accordance with a certain theoretical paradigm [15].

Selevko G.K. defines portfolio technology as a system of constituent components of the pedagogical process, based on a scientific basis and contributing to the achievement of the intended results [16].

D. Meyer considers portfolio technology as a purposeful product and a collection of students' works, demonstrating their efforts, progress, achievements [10].

Subsequently, the concept was transferred to the higher professional education. Nevertheless, the term portfolio is widely used in many areas of human activity and has a large number of definitions and characteristics. However, there is no generally accepted interpretation of this concept yet. Nowadays, the Russian educational system understands this term as a folder of individual achievements.

Nevertheless, portfolio technology allows student to accumulate and competently evaluate the personal educational results for special periods of studying. It includes diplomas and other papers on specific results achieved by students in various events, contests, etc. According to this particular approach, portfolio motivates the student's activity, develops productive learning skills, encourages students' activity and independence, expands educational opportunities and self-education, etc.

Therefore, economic situation requires changing of the labour market. It provides qualitatively reconsideration of graduates professional activity. The priority moral and psychological qualities of a successful employee are initiative and independence, creativity, the ability to cooperate, high motivation for professional development and career growth. It provides the mobility and competitiveness of the employee. Hence, the portfolio technology is an effective tool for assessment a person in terms of his or her professional or educational activity. However, it is necessary to study the issue of the portfolio technology empirically in the higher professional education system.

Results

This research is a continuation of the analysis results. The purpose of the research was to determine the structure of university students' competitiveness, empirical substantiation of ways to improve the quality of personal competition skills, willingness to build a professional activity strategy in accordance with the objectives of the university's educational process. The beginning of the research was published in a Journal "The structure of students' personal competitiveness as a determinant of the formation of educational process objectives of an educational institution" [12].

The study was conducted using a Google form survey; a total sample size was 600 people. The object of research is students of Yaroslavl State Technical University (YSTU) (1-4 year of Bachelor's degree; 1-2 year of Master's degree; all the institutes); Kostroma State Agrarian Academy (KSAA) (1-4 year of Bachelor's degree; Economics faculty).

The sociological survey method allows us to determine the proportion of respondents with the different skills to form a personal portfolio. The results obtained show the difference in students' preparation for using portfolio as a personal competitiveness tool.

Table 1 – Proportion of YSTU and KSAA students with personal portfolio management skills (% of respondents)

Privacy Strength	YSTU	KSAA
Yes, I am always careful about its content	5.5	5.1
Yes, I am not always careful about its content	27.5	59.0
No, I am not careful about its content	45.3	28.2
I do not know what it is	27.5	7.7

Source: Authors

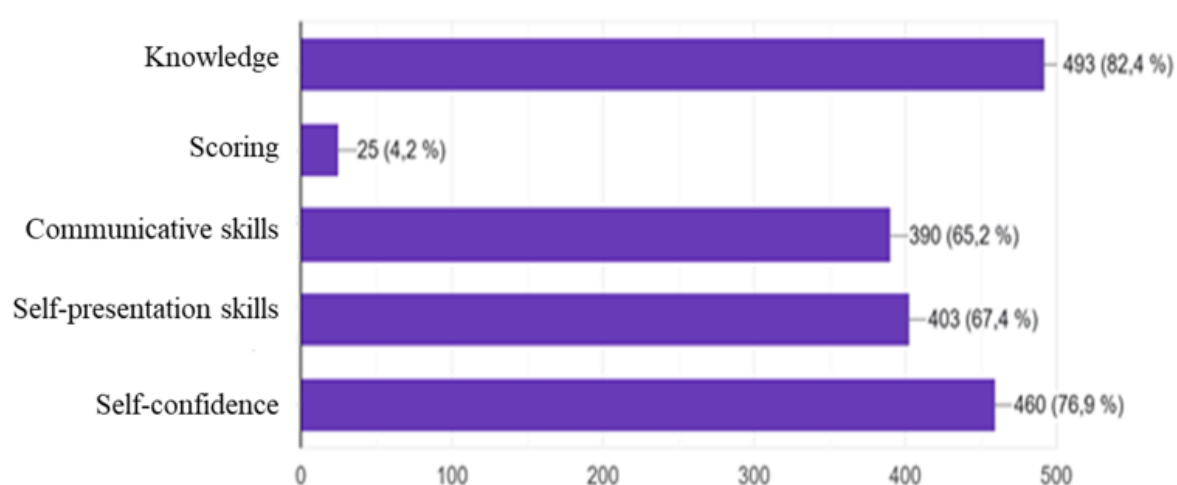
Indeed, the research results are as follows:

- the development of personal portfolio management skills depends on the objectives of the university's educational process;
- the proportion of the students interested in developing personal brand skills is quite low for both universities;
- there is a significant difference in the number of the students considering personal brand skills unnecessary (the share of those in both university is quite high); it confirms the role of the educational institution;
- many students are not informed about the portfolio technology. We possess it a result of insufficient management in terms of personal brand formation and development;
- in general, according to research results, mastering of portfolio technology as a tool for personal branding and competitiveness is poor.

The trends of rapid production renewal in modern conditions determine the high demands on the new generation of specialists. It requires the students' activity, independence, flexibility, non-standard thinking, general and professional culture. Indeed, earlier, the purpose of education was the formation of the knowledge, skills, and qualities of a person necessary for work. Nowadays, specialist training involves the development of personality qualities relevant to achieving success in any professional activity.

However, an employment of the university graduates requires the development of the job selection criteria.

What do you think employers pay most attention to when hiring? (select three options)

**Figure 1.** YSTU students' views on the job selection criteria (% of the respondents)

Source: Authors

What do you think employers pay most attention to when hiring ? (select three options)

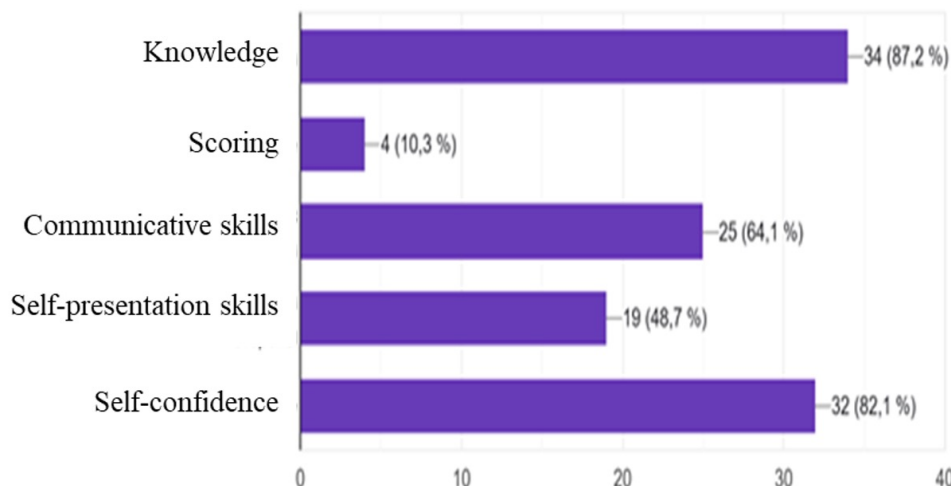


Figure 2. KSAA students' views on the job selection criteria (% of the respondents)

Source: Authors

According to the comparative analysis, there is a difference in the assessment of criteria such as "diploma grades": 4.2% versus 10.3% and "self-presentation skills" 67.4% versus 48.7%. It may indirectly indicate differences in local labour markets. However, to contradict knowledge, skills, and abilities to the personality qualities requires the achievement of success in the professional activity. To address the problem, the following question was asked:

What challenges you might face when applying for a job? (select three options)

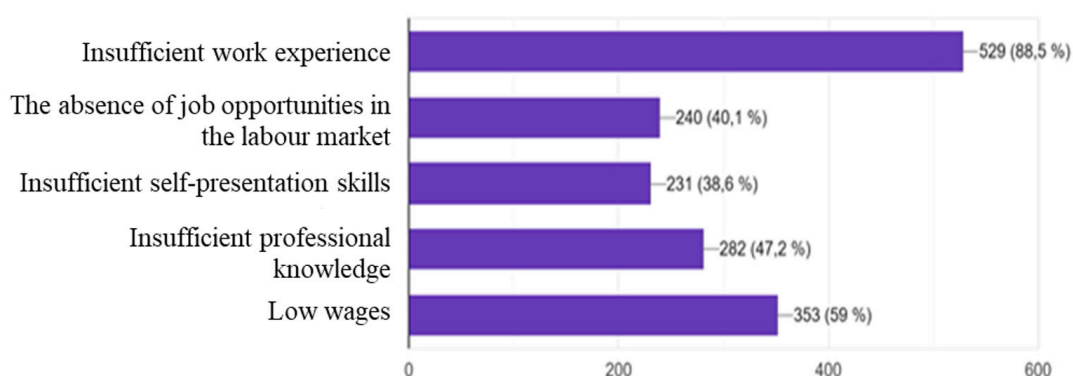


Figure 3. YSTU students' assessment of difficulties in employment (% of the number of respondents)

Source: Authors

What challenges you might face when applying for a job? (select three options)

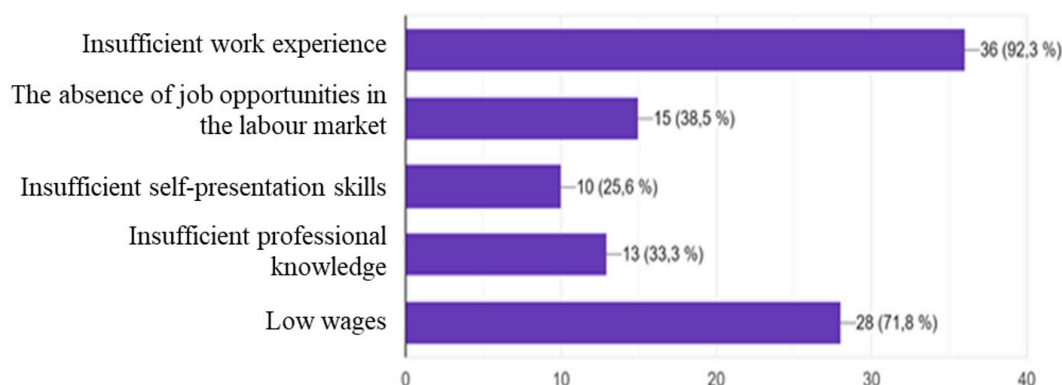


Figure 4. KSAA students' assessment of difficulties in employment (% of the number of respondents)

Source: Authors

To the question: "How do you assess the level of competition for young professionals in the labour market in your city?":

Table 2 – Respondents' assessment of the level of competition in the local labour market (% of the number of respondents)

Assessment	YSTU	KSAA
The competition is high, it is difficult to get a job in the specialty	52.2	47.8
The competition is not very high, it is not difficult to get a job in the specialty	48.7	51.3

Source: Authors

The results of the study revealed a significant contradiction since the higher education system ignores the possibility of using the portfolio methodology as a tool for personal competitiveness. According to the study, 94.3% of YSTU students and 86.8% of KSAA students consider important the professional and career growth. To the question: "Which of these personal qualities would you like to develop for yourself, since you are not good enough at it yet?"

The ability to show oneself needs to be developed chose 73.5% of YSTU and 55.2% of KSAA students.

Conclusion

Nowadays, on the competitive labour market, having a portfolio is of particular importance to increase one's competitiveness. A portfolio is a collection of works, achievements, and projects demonstrating a specialist's professional skills, experience, and personal qualities.

One of the key advantages of a portfolio is the opportunity to demonstrate real examples of the achievements and competencies to potential employers or clients. The portfolio as convincing evidence of the candidate's competence and reliability in the conditions of high competition in the labour market.

In addition, the portfolio promotes personal and professional development. Regularly updating of a portfolio helps to track professional growth, analyse achievements, and set new goals. It allows the specialist to be competitive in the labour market and ready for new challenges.

In the education, the portfolio also establishes the competitiveness of future specialists. In universities, a portfolio in a special professional, and socio-educational practice for development and assessment of students' competencies. This allows graduates to develop professional qualities, and effectively present their

achievements to future employers.

The effectiveness of a portfolio as a competitive tool is determined by following factors: firstly, it is the relevance of portfolio materials; secondly, it has a clear structure and logical presentation of information; thirdly, the portfolio shows the professional growth and development. A portfolio is a fashion trend, and a necessary tool of a modern professional. It ensures a career development, establishes business contacts, and increases graduates' personal value in the labour market.

However, an empirical study conducted at two universities revealed the ineffective use of this tool for building a personal brand and competitiveness. Despite of motivation to develop self-presentation skills, and a desire to pursue a career in the profession, practice of using portfolio technology does not achieve its goals.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Irina V. Popova – writing – original draft.

Marina B. Abramova – data curation, formal analysis, validation.

Alexey V. Zorin – conceptualization, project administration, writing – review & editing.

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