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MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL BRANDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA: FREELANCE TRANSLATOR IN IRAQ CONTEXT

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Abstract

Social media platforms offer a viable means for freelance translators to connect with a larger pool of potential clients and serve as a critical source for personal brand development. Despite its potential, the use of social media for personal branding among freelance translators remains an understudied area in literature. To address this gap, this study aims to examine the motivations behind freelance translators' use of social media platforms, utilizing the uses and gratification theory, and identify critical profile features for personal branding. This qualitative study employed a two-tier approach, involving interviews with seven seasoned freelance translators to explore their motivations for using social media and their perceptions of the key features of effective personal branding. The study's second phase entailed a thematic analysis of the top ten profiles on Upwork to identify profile features employed by successful translators and compare these with the data gleaned from the interviews. The findings suggest that establishing a professional profile is a critical factor in securing more job opportunities, with a higher likelihood of success for those with a polished profile.

Keywords

Social Media, Personal Branding, Freelance Translator, Virtual Identity, Qualitative Study

1. Introduction

The current labor landscape has undergone a transformation towards a digital and freelance-oriented economy (Cappelli and Keller, 2013 as cited in, Gandini, 2016a) In this context, social media platforms have emerged as a novel working tool that enables individuals to establish a professional image and leverage connections for career advancement and professional success. The increasing prominence of social media is a well-established phenomenon that continues to gain momentum (Adams, 2013). The widespread adoption of social media platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Upwork, LinkedIn, and MySpace, has significant implications for users worldwide who can leverage these tools to enhance their professional visibility and reputation. However, this requires individuals to exhibit professional conduct and effectively showcase their skillset to gain traction in the digital marketplace. Social media has emerged as a powerful platform for users to promote their skills and expertise, including opportunities for freelancing jobs. The web provides significant advantages in this regard, including the ability to access new markets and attract potential clients, as well as offering virtually limitless virtual store space, which is a significant departure from the constraints of traditional brick-and-mortar stores (Labrecque et al., 2011). Over the past decade, social media has increasingly facilitated business transactions and become a vital component of the commercial landscape (Caers and Castelyns, 2011). As a result, a new trend has emerged whereby creative professionals, such as freelance translators, are leveraging social media platforms to earn income through self-employment. This trend has led to a rise in the number of gigs or short-term contracts, and some workers have even transformed these gigs into full-fledged entrepreneurial ventures.

Besides, what makes these SM platforms more important and use them as the source of their life was the rise of COVID-19 (Sawyer et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, coronavirus has had a negative impact on the world's economy by increasing unemployment and the closure of many companies (Dunn et al., 2020). The pandemic has been still a big threat to humanity and always being told to stay at home as much as possible; thus, the demand of working as a freelancer worker on SM became almost a necessity for them (Dunn et al., 2020). Factors found to be influencing economic sectors have been explored in several studies. As the COVID-19 pandemic has been impacting the economy of the whole world, this leads to a massive rise in

unemployment (Dunn et al., 2020). Since the COVID-19 pandemic spread globally, almost every country has been advised to take the boldest actions to stop or at least reduce the spread of the disease.

Despite the competitive nature of professional social media platforms, little research has been conducted on how individuals can effectively present themselves to stand out from their peers. This study seeks to address this gap by providing insights into how freelance translators can strategically present themselves online to position themselves as experts. The literature suggests that personal branding is increasingly important for individuals seeking to expand their work in these new online environments. While self-presentation on social media is a relatively new phenomenon, it allows users to build and maintain their brand by selectively disclosing aspects of themselves to others. This approach is consistent with Goffman (1978's) concept of self-presentation, which suggests that individuals present themselves in a way that aligns with their desired identity in a given context. Social media platforms provide users with various tools for self-presentation, including information, designs, photographs, and skills, which can be used to promote their brand. This study aims to investigate the motivation behind freelance translators' use of social media (SM) by applying the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory. Additionally, it seeks to identify the important features used by freelance translators to build their virtual identity and enhance their self-presentation on SM in order to distinguish themselves from others. The study aims to address the following research questions:

1. This study aims to explore the motivation behind the use of social media by freelance translators for personal branding.
2. The study also seeks to identify the factors that contribute to personal branding through social media as perceived by freelance translators, as well as through analyzing the top ten profiles of the online Upwork website.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media and Freelance Translators

Social media (SM) has brought a significant change in the way enterprises operate, particularly for start-ups who use SM websites for various purposes. Over the past two decades, studies have shown the popularity and power of SM channels, and marketers try to find different types of SM networks to reach their target audience. SM is an increasingly important area of personal branding, including for freelance translators. Building a brand on SM is different from the physical world, as it provides more opportunities and flexibility. Online

communities in SM have paved a new way for job-seeking, including for freelance translators. However, few studies have examined how cues in the form of online communities influence job seekers' behaviour, such as impression formation and self-disclosure tactics. Personal branding is fundamental and needs to be examined, particularly for freelance translators on social network sites.

In recent years, the number of freelance translators has been on the rise, including in Iraq, as a result of increasing globalization. However, in the past couple of decades, a significant challenge in the translation industry has been the difficulty in accurately conveying the meaning and nuance of texts. Social media has emerged as a solution that allows for a balance between conveying the intended sense of the initial text and producing a target conversion that is more effective and understandable (Shamami, 2012, Desjardins, 2017). Skilled freelance translators are particularly adept at achieving this balance (Richard, 1953 as cited in, Shamami, 2012). Moreover, the current economy has given rise to a universal marketplace for independent professional freelancers, which has enabled them to expand their customer base nationally and internationally (Green, 2018). Organizations have also begun to outsource work to freelance contractors, as they offer cost benefits and access to highly skilled workers without geographical limitations (Kazi et al., 2014). As a result, more freelance translators can be found on online platforms, especially in Iraq.

2.2. The Uses and Gratifications Theory and Motivation to Use Social Media for Personal Branding

The theory of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) is rooted in the functionalist perspective on mass media communication (Luo, 2002). This theory was developed using an inductive approach to create classifications of different motivations and functions for the use of social media (Ruggiero, 2000). The U&G theory suggests that individuals actively engage with various social media platforms and construct virtual profiles. Moreover, the theory aims to explain the reasons behind why users choose to use a particular medium and the functions that the medium provides in return (Luo, 2002). Notably, the U&G theory is widely employed in examining motivation and behavior in social media, as it seeks to provide insight into the "why" behind a user's media behavior (Katerattanakul, 2002). Additionally, . Furthermore, Katz and Blumler (1974) posited that the U&G theory is based on the idea that users have specific motivations and purposes for selecting a particular media platform that aligns with their personal goals.

The motivation of individuals for using social media (SM) has gained significant interest among business researchers (Hansen and Levin, 2016). This interest is due to the fact that differences in SM platform use can reflect different motivations of users (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). Some common motivational reasons for using SM include connecting with new people, staying in touch with friends, and general socializing (Brandtzæg and Heim, 2009, Mahmood, 2023) While SM provides unique opportunities, branding is not a new phenomenon (Brems et al., 2017). However, some researchers such as Lair et al. (2005) highlight the way in which producers sell their items as exceptional and distinctive. The term "personal branding" was propagated by and has been studied in relation to SM use (Labrecque et al., 2011, Lair et al., 2005). The potential of personal websites for creating a personal brand was first recognized by Peters (1997), who did not anticipate the emergence of social media as a platform for branding. Lair et al. (2005) argue that personal branding differs from branding at a larger scale because success is determined not by a group of users but by individual skills and motivations. Personal branding involves presenting oneself and skills in an organized manner to others. It is important to understand the motivations behind using social media for personal branding.

2.3. Profile on Social Media for Personal Branding

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in investigating the characteristics of an effective profile on social media platforms, with a particular focus on personal branding. Scholars have provided guidance to freelancers on how to create an academic and professional profile that effectively showcases their skills and expertise (Diaz-Ortiz, 2019). To optimize their profile, it is suggested that users use every section of their profile to showcase their case and highlight their skills, work history, employment, portfolio, and certifications (Hippler, 2018, Kaputa, 2012). In particular, listing the most relevant five skills and including endorsements for each skill can increase the likelihood of their profile being viewed up to seventeen times more often (Diaz-Ortiz, 2019). For platforms like LinkedIn, users are advised to focus on highlighting their particular skills and strengths, rather than providing a complete life story (Chiang and Suen, 2015). Thus, a well-crafted profile on SM can help entrepreneurs identify their strengths and connect with relevant opportunities.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Method

A qualitative research approach was applied in this study to explore the freelance translators' motivation to use SM by applying the U&G theory and to discover the important features of profile on SM. Qualitative research is a process of the reality of life that aims to understand social phenomena (Baskarada, 2014). Also, Sachin (2009) describes a qualitative research method as a set of techniques employed to decode, interpret, and translate the terms and meaning of a particular phenomenon.

3.2. Samples

3.2.1. Samples for the Interview

Using purposive sampling, data was collected through primary data collection from seven experienced freelancers in Iraq (Table 1). The selection of these participants from Iraq was based on the limited studies focused on the Iraqi context and the translators' four years of experience, as most studies have focused on translators in general. This study aims to investigate experienced translators in Iraq to gain a deeper understanding of their motivation for using SM and the important features to include on their profiles, using the U&G theory. While there are no reliable statistics on the number of freelancers in Iraq, the fast engagement of professional freelancers in social labor markets is evident, such as 84,000 Iraqi freelancers on LinkedIn (LinkedIn, 2021). And 650 professional freelance translators on Proz (Proz.com, 2021). The study involved seven Iraq-based freelancers between the ages of 26 and 40 with a balanced gender distribution (3 women and 4 men).

3.2.2. Sample for Analyzing Top Ten Profiles on Upwork

Ten exemplary profiles on Upwork were extracted as the secondary data collection method (Table 2). Upwork is considered one of the world's leading freelance websites for creating personal branding and providing services to clients worldwide (Green et al., 2018). Upwork verifies every detail of the user's account and does not tolerate any fraudulent accounts; users are required to provide a copy of their passport and ensure that their account name matches their passport name (Upwork.com, 2020). The best ten profiles were selected to describe their content and characteristics, including what is included and excluded.

3.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The current study employed a qualitative approach to investigate the perceptions of freelance translators towards utilizing social media (SM) for personal branding. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with seven participants who were freelance translators operating in the online environment. Following transcription of the interviews, data were analyzed thematically and categorized into manageable units. Two types

of codes were utilized, including open and thematic codes, in accordance with Coffey and Atkinson (1996) framework. Thematic codes were derived from the research questions which pertained to motivations for using SM for personal branding and the essential features of profiles on SM as perceived by freelance translators. Open coding, on the other hand, was conducted concurrently with data examination to identify emerging themes. The study also utilized secondary data from Upwork, a leading freelancing website, to examine the top ten profiles based on established criteria. (e.g, Shandrow, 2013) and previous studies (Photofeeler, 2014, Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014, Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018). To identify profile features, checklist variables were drawn from existing literature, including profile picture, tagline, overview, and video. This enabled a comparison between the interviewee's ideas and the top-rated profiles.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Motivations of Freelance Translator Using SM for Personal Brand

Table 3 shows the motivations of these freelance translators using SM and that need to be satisfied based on the U&G theory. The themes that were found about the motivations are: (i) online job opportunity and alternative, (ii) having free time and flexibility of schedule adjustment, and (iii) less physical effort needed and save cost.

Table 1: *Motivations of Freelance Translator Using SM for Personal Brand*

No.	The motivation to the use of SM	ID	N
1	Online job opportunity and alternative	ID 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7
2	Having free time and flexibility of schedule adjustment	ID 1, 6	2
3	Less physical effort needed and save cost	ID 6	1

(Source: Self/Authors' Own Illustration)

Theme 1: Online Job Opportunity and Alternative

The initial analyses of this study examined the motivations that drive individuals to establish a notable presence on social media (SM) platforms and offer their services to potential clients. Three of the respondents attributed their motivation for joining these platforms to job opportunities. They believed that SM offered them excellent job prospects, and as one interviewee stated, "While I use this app, my goal is to find a job" (ID3, ID4). Another interviewee shared the same sentiment, stating, "I use these platforms to find those people who

need my profession and make money in return" (ID3). These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the relationship between using SM platforms and finding work opportunities. Scholars such as Madera (2012), Ikenberry (2010), Davison et al. (2011), Adams (2013), Giannakos et al. (2013) have reported that these platforms are primarily designed for work, and their focus is on work orientation.

One interviewee mentioned that they occasionally use SM platforms to search for jobs in their free time. This individual also reported having another job and using these platforms as a means of obtaining additional work. Leftheriotis and Giannakos (2014) have also reported on similar findings, noting that some freelancers use SM as an alternative means of finding work. However, this aspect of freelancing on SM platforms has not been thoroughly explored. Despite having other job commitments, individuals may seek additional tasks that can be managed during their free time in order to earn extra income through SM. Additionally, students pursuing higher degrees may also look for jobs that can be performed remotely in their spare time, as illustrated by one participant who stated, "I am doing my study and I also work as a freelance translator at the same time because I do not need to go anywhere, and I can work remotely" (ID4). Thus, the availability of job opportunities on SM platforms can serve as a significant motivator for individuals to work as freelance translators.

Other than that, one participant commented, "I am a pharmacist, but I am now working as a freelance translator, medical translation in particular." (ID6). These findings align with previous research that highlights how SM platforms provide a viable alternative for individuals seeking additional work opportunities. It is plausible that this phenomenon is driven by an increasing demand for supplemental income among workers who may find that their primary job does not fully meet their financial needs. In such instances, turning to SM to secure a second job may be an attractive option due to the ample job opportunities offered by these platforms. The example of the pharmacist who works as a freelance translator is illustrative of this trend, as it underscores how SM can be leveraged to supplement income even for individuals who are already employed in other professions. Additionally, the findings are consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the appeal of SM for freelance translators, who can benefit from the enhanced job opportunities and ease of client outreach facilitated by these platforms.

In addition, the study also investigated whether social media (SM) is an effective tool for fresh graduates to build their personal brand. The participants' responses to this question were contradictory. While it is important for translators to have a degree to prove their

language proficiency, six participants (ID 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) considered SM as the best choice for fresh graduates due to the minimal experience requirements on these platforms. Previous research has shown that experience is not always mandatory for joining SM platforms, but rather simple information such as name and contact details are required (Labrecque et al., 2011). One participant stated that SM is the best option for fresh graduates because it is free to use (ID2). Thus, the study aimed to assess the relevance of SM in building a personal brand for fresh graduates, and some participants believed that SM platforms are valuable resources for such individuals.

This is a common issue for freshly graduated students, as many companies require job experience even for entry-level positions. This can make it difficult for them to find employment and start building their careers. However, social media platforms can offer a way for them to gain experience and build their personal brand without having to rely on traditional job experience. By showcasing their skills and abilities on these platforms, they can attract potential clients and employers and start building a reputation for themselves in their chosen industry. (Jason and Cavanaugh, 2016). Commenting on being a fresh graduate student, one of the interviewees said: "Using SM is the best choice for the freshly graduated student, it was six years ago when I graduated in my department, at that time I was not able to find a job outside and SM helped me to find a job on LinkedIn." (ID6). Indeed, SM platforms provide a more level playing field for freshly graduated students to showcase their abilities and start building their personal brand without facing the same level of discrimination they might face in traditional job markets. These platforms allow them to connect with potential clients directly, showcase their portfolio, and build a reputation based on their work. This could potentially lead to more job opportunities and career growth for fresh graduates who would otherwise struggle to find work due to lack of experience. Moreover, the flexibility and autonomy offered by these platforms can be appealing to many, especially to those who are looking for a more balanced work-life approach (Johnson, 2017).

However, another participant just said: "When I graduated from university, I did not know where to begin and how to strengthen my resume. It was difficult for companies to hire me with no experience. I went to SM, and I found my first job there, that is why I always encourage people to go there and look for jobs. Because it is complicated to hire every graduate student due to the economic crisis." (ID7). The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the job market, and many companies have had to reduce their workforce or put their hiring plans on hold. In this context, social media platforms can provide a valuable alternative for fresh

graduate students to find job opportunities and start building their personal brand. Moreover, as these platforms are accessible from anywhere with an internet connection, they allow users to overcome the geographic barriers that can limit their job options in traditional job markets. The research findings revealed a positive aspect for freshly graduated students, as they are encouraged to establish their personal brand on social media (SM) platforms rather than waiting to be employed by companies or governments. However, an important drawback was identified during an interview with one of the participants (ID1), who emphasized the possibility of wasting time without having a clear objective while engaging in SM activities. This aspect has received limited attention in previous literature. Notably, social media can easily allure individuals into spending excessive amounts of time without achieving specific goals, as noted by Malita (2011).

Theme 2: Having Free Time and Flexibility of Schedule Adjustment

The majority of participants concurred that SM affords the user the flexibility to schedule work around their availability. Various viewpoints were expressed, including the notion that time management in SM is distinct from conventional employment practices. In contrast to working in a physical location, where employees must follow the instructions of their employer, arrive and depart at specified times (Barley et al., 2017). And work in accordance with company standards within the designated time frame, SM allows individuals to set their own schedules and work at their own pace. As one interviewee said: "another reason is time management. I am a mother, and I have two kids. I do not have time to go out to work. I can work at home easily and make money through these platforms." (ID6). There are several possible explanations for this result.

One interpretation of the participants' perspectives on time management in relation to social media (SM) freelancing is that there is a greater degree of flexibility compared to traditional work. Unlike traditional work, where workers are expected to adhere to set schedules and work in accordance with company policies, freelancers are able to work at times that are most comfortable and productive for them. For example, some freelancers may be most productive at night, while others may prefer to work during the day when their children are sleeping. As such, freelancers are able to manage their own time and schedule, making time for other activities such as cooking, shopping, or taking breaks when needed. Another point given is: "also it is up to you when to start work, or wake up in the morning like the same routine 9.00 am to 4:00 pm. No! Freelancing is completely in your hand and how and when to work. Because what they need is the quality of the work." (ID6). This finding is consistent with

Green (2018), argument that freelancing emphasizes delivering high-quality work, rather than adhering to a strict schedule. Companies hiring freelancers generally do not inquire about the specific time a freelancer worked on a task, except in cases of urgent deadlines. The flexibility of being able to adjust their own schedule and have free time is a motivating factor for freelance translators to use social media platforms.

Theme 3: Less Physical Effort Needed and Save Cost

Although some pieces of literature since 2010 emphasize how SM made the burden lighter on the shoulder of freelancers, one of the interviewees put it: "I think working home is easier because you do not need to pay for transportation, or to spend so much time on the road, traffics, you have time to take good care of other stuff." (ID6). This finding may be attributed to the ease of use of SM. This result is consistent with previous studies by Stanford (2017) and , who identified factors associated with the accessibility of SM, which enables people to work remotely. It can be postulated that these online environments are less restrictive than traditional work environments. In a conventional job, employees are required to adhere to the regulations set by their employer. Conversely, virtual markets only require the freelancer to meet the deadline with the task completed. They do not concern themselves with when, where, or how the task was completed. These factors may account for the positive correlation between conventional work and the use of SM, which is easier to access. Most participants in the study had a job outside of freelancing, yet this did not hinder them from taking on freelance work and winning jobs. These findings are encouraging for individuals who seek additional employment opportunities, even if they have a full-time job. Therefore, SM can be considered a viable option for motivating individuals to work as freelance translators.

4.2. The Factors for Personal Brand through Profile on SM for Perceived by Freelance Translators

The literature has extensively examined the impact of various components of a user's profile on SM and their influence on how they are perceived by others. It has been discussed that every individual has two distinct constructions, namely, their online self and offline self. Goffman (1978) theory elucidates this concept, highlighting how individuals want to be perceived the way they desire. Interestingly, the respondents in this study perceived and emphasized that every aspect of their profile on SM matters but some are more critical and require careful consideration. This finding can be beneficial for novice freelance translators seeking to enhance their profile on SM by referring to the insights shared by experienced translators.

Table 2: *The Factors for Personal Brand through Profile on SM for Perceived by Freelance Translators*

No.	The Important Features of Profile on SM for Personal Brand	ID	Number
1	Circle connection	ID 2	1
2	Qualification	ID 1, 3, 6, 7	4
3	Experience	ID 2, 3, 4	3
4	Claiming expertise and skills	ID 2, 6	2
5	Professional profile picture	ID 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7

(Source: Self/Authors' Own Illustration)

Theme 1: Circle Connection

One of the points that was mentioned by one of the participants (ID2) was the circle of connection, which shows how many people the user already has and how big or small the circulation is. However, this participant believes that the bigger their circle of connection is, the stronger their profile looks and carries more weight to influence others. It is encouraging to compare this figure with that found by Desjardins (2017), who found that those users who have a bigger circle of 500+ connections (e.g., on LinkedIn) are examples of capable social networks. Having a large circle of connections on social media can demonstrate the user's ability to network effectively and make themselves visible to potential clients. It also indicates that the user is active and engaged on the platform, which can help build trust and credibility with clients. Additionally, knowing more clients and interacting with them can increase the chances of winning more jobs, as clients are more likely to hire someone they know and trust.

Theme 2: Qualification

Another theme that was found was showing out what the user has achieved in relation to having a certificate on a profile from the perceptions of ID 1, 3, 6 and 7. It seems that having a certificate or demonstrating one's academic background can have a positive impact on freelance translators' profiles on SM. This is in line with previous research by Bang (2019), who found that having a certificate can significantly affect the hiring process through digital media. Clients may value a translator's academic credentials, as it may suggest that they have a higher level of proficiency in the language they are translating. In a competitive market, a certificate may serve as evidence of the translator's professional status and expertise, thus making their profile more attractive to potential clients.

Nonetheless, there is only one participant who does not believe the certificate to be shown. ID 2 believes that experience is more important than showing a certificate. Some researchers such as (Desjardins, 2017) and (Horváth, 2016) argue and support the idea that a degree is not that important, and that is because translation is more generally viewed as a skill or ability rather than a profession that requires a degree or training certificate. Thereby, a certificate is essential, but for them, it does not carry that much weight and barely makes an impact on the profile. These results, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution because those who do not show their certificate or have not even pursued a degree should have a very strong history of working experience in that field.

Theme 3: Experience

A recurrent theme in the interview was a sense amongst interviewees that experience is viewed as something vital for every user on those SM to prove how good the user was in the previous tasks. Three participants (ID 2, 3, 4) asserted that job history or experience is substantial since the recruiters consider how good or bad the user was. Recruiters usually leave feedback on the user's profile when the job is done, which will have a significant influence on the process of getting hired in future works (Friedman, 2017, Kushner, 2013). Furthermore, Adams (2013) claims that the audiences usually do not know who the user is and what the user has done so far; feedback paves the way for them to evaluate the user's capability and competency. Moreover, some of the well-known websites such as Upwork, Freelancer, Fiverr launched a feature where the rates left after the job is done, affecting the top-rated badge on the website. In other words, there is a direct proportional relationship between the stars of the feedback and the user's job success score (JSS). It can be easily seen how experience and positive feedback can enhance the profile and positively influence the recruiters to shortlist the user.

Nevertheless, another point of view was just expressed by ID 1 in relation to this theme. Surprisingly, he trusts that experience and past jobs were just lessons and nothing more. That is, the user could have bad and not appropriate at some points, but now the user might have developed and enhanced their capability. This outcome is contrary to the study of Adams (2013), Friedman (2017) who found that experience has a great impact on the user's profile. The present findings offer valuable insights into the pursuit of improvement. They indicate that negative feedback or less than three stars out of five should not be viewed as an irreversible setback. Rather, such feedback belongs to the past and can be used as a stepping stone towards a better future. All users have the potential to enhance the quality of their service, thereby

increasing their chances of obtaining more job opportunities and expanding their professional network. These results are particularly relevant for individuals who have previously delivered suboptimal service due to circumstances beyond their control. Such individuals can seize the opportunity to improve their performance, creating a strong and authentic profile history that may be advantageous for their professional pursuits.

Theme 4: Claiming Expertise and Skills

Another interesting finding was about a headline. In the literature, it has been largely discovered how important a headline is. Millions of freelancers are there, and the recruiter does not have time to read every single part of the profile. Rather, since the headline is short (sometimes 5 to 10 words), the recruiters might focus this part on knowing who the user really is and what the user can offer. Stratten and Stratten (2018) have examined the headline part in profile, and they found that headline plays a substantial role in making the views easily understand what the user can offer. They also believe that writing a headline is an art, and a concise headline can give the user more credit than other users. So, these findings confirm what Stratten and Stratten (2018) and Adams (2013) discussed before. However, these results, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution because out of 7 participants, only two of them (ID 2 and 6) believed headline is sufficient for their profile while this could be a great deal for the user's profile to be engaged with as many clients and enterprises as possible. ID 2 said in particular, "The headline is very crucial in a profile; it must be very short and pursuant. Some user mentions their language pair, for example, Kurdish English translator, or a slogan about the quality of their work."

Theme 5: Professional Profile Picture

There is no doubt that a profile picture plays an important role in the way the profile is perceived by other people who visit the profile. All interviewees agreed with the importance of profile picture on SM for their freelance job (ID 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). For instance, ID 2 said, "The profile picture must be straightforward, not too general. Showing out your face, make it very simple that can be recognized easily to whom they are working with. It is the first thing that people look at." The results that have been collected from the respondents also support the evidence from previous observations such as (Adams, 2013, Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018) that they argue the fact that it is very important to present themselves professionally. As Adams (2013) states that "There is no second chance to make a good first impression." furthermore, a page with a profile picture is more viewed and hired than a profile without a picture (Kaputa, 2012). Moreover, (Diaz-Ortiz, 2019) asserts that any SM where the profile can be found with

the picture gets twenty-one times more profiles views. Additionally, uploading a profile picture makes the user fourteen times a wider opportunity to be discovered on LinkedIn and even thirty-six times more likely to get messages (Diaz-Ortiz, 2019). Therefore, these data must be interpreted with caution because many users whose profile pictures are not professional. Thus, according to these data, we can infer that a profile picture greatly impacts the way the profile is assessed and evaluated by the recruiters.

4.3. The Factors for Personal Brand through Profile on SM Evidenced by Analyzing Top Ten Profiles on Online Upwork Websites

The present study was designed to determine the effect of self-presentation on SM networks; therefore, in this stage, we discuss and analyze some key points that are taken from those profiles that were chosen (Upwork.com, 2020). In accordance with (Gandini, 2016b, Kushner, 2013), reputation on Upwork makes the profile so stronger, and it has a direct impact on the presentation of self. Upwork.com (2020) declares that a JSS is measured on Upwork based on some criteria such as project completion, long-term agreement with other parties, the client's feedback, etc. Popiel (2017) argues that anyone can shine and be successful in any kind of work they good at. That is why if we can notice these top ten profile came from a variety of different fields. However, part B of the second question in this research was what factors for personal brand through SM evidenced by analyzing the top ten profiles of online Upwork website are. The results are shown in Figure 1, including profile picture, headline, biography, simplicity, and creativity in writing the content, and feedback from clients based on their experience.

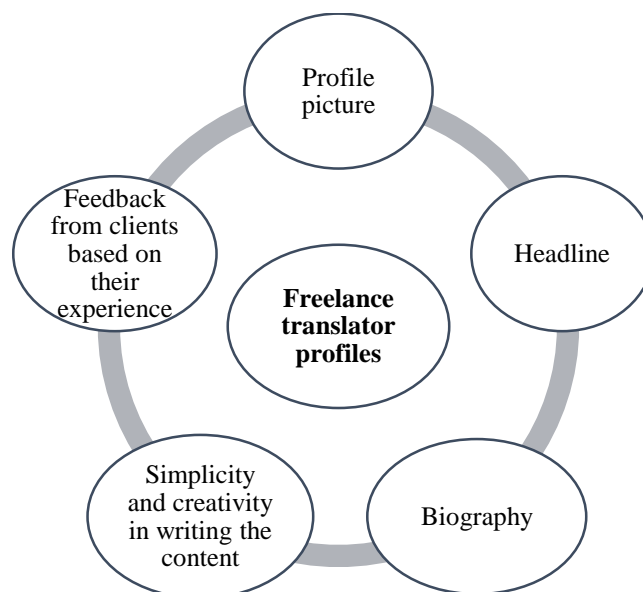


Figure 1: Findings from the Profiles

(Source: Self/Authors' Own Illustration)

Theme 1: Profile Picture

Prior studies have noted the importance of profile picture how seductive it is to engage customers to the services the user offer. The interviewees in this study also agreed the importance of profile picture. Correspondingly, all these ten profiles have a very clear and professional, and almost all of them are headshots. That is where the face clearly appears, and the clients know who they are working with. Thus, the majority of these websites prefer a picture with at least 60% of the face in the frame, as well as the picture cropped from the top of the shoulder (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018). In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that the picture is the first impression of the user. It has been suggested by Pachter (2014) that the profile picture looks more professional if the photo has a simple background to accentuate the face. A note of caution is due here since there are still lots of people whose profile picture is not professional; we need to shed light on this matter. According to these data from interview sessions and top ten profiles analysis, we can infer that taking a picture with beloved ones, pets, etc., is not a good idea to be viewed as someone professional.

Theme 2: Headline

The second most important part of the profile that was found out of those top ten profiles were basically the titles or the headline. When a user creates a profile that is because the user wants to show their services to their audiences. Undoubtedly, a customer or a client does not contact everyone who comes across their way. Rather, they look for what exactly looking for. Adams (2013) argues that headline (sometimes called tagline) should be very concise and appropriate. He claims that if the user is a translator and says, 'French translator', this does not tell the user's potential clients who the user is in specific. Rather if the headline is clearly written, for example, one of the profiles used 'Certified French legal translator with over 10 years of experience', this is immediately catching the eyes of the clients looking for someone who translates legal French texts. Thus, the headline should be more specific than a 'freelance translator' or the user's language pair. Besides, Johnson (2017), the tagline must be marketable and attention-grabbing. In other words, the tagline must be a creative, keyword-rich summary. Furthermore, two points that every user should never be used in the tagline, the first one, do not ever write about past or current position title, and the second one is to never mention that the user seeking a new opportunity (Johnson, 2017). The results are in accord with

the findings from interview session and recent studies indicating that the tagline must be precise and accurate in order to catch the attention of the visitor in the first run.

Theme 3: Biography

A strong relationship between biography (usually called bio) and the self-disclosure through the user's profile has been reported in the literature. Biography is a part where the user introduces themselves. Here the user usually talks about their ability and competency of the services they offer to promote themselves as a potential brand. The user who professionally writes their bio would stand out among peers to be shortlisted or considered when potential clients are looking for those qualifications in particular (McCabe, 2017). Besides, it has been argued by Chiang and Suen (2015) that a bio is a place where usually show off the user's achievement, talking a little bit about personalities, discussing what kind of problem they have faced in works and how they overcome it. Moreover, another reason that Chiang and Suen (2015) state that is search results. The more optimized the user's bio is, the more potential clients and traffics the user get. However, surprisingly, bio was not mentioned by the interviewees that were interviewed at all. Thereby, these data must be interpreted with caution because all these top ten profiles included a very concise and clear bio about their career and what they can offer. In contrast to earlier findings, no one from the participant talked about the importance of the bio. It is suggested that further research can look into this area.

Theme 4: Simplicity and Creativity in Writing the Content

Another point that was noticed from these ten profiles; the way they wrote and described their capabilities and potential are straightforward and concise. These results are likely to be related to high performance in writings. Although they come from different geographical places, they wrote about their potential and their virtual identity in English. That is because English is an international language whereby it can be understood by many viewers and potential clients all over the world. Guide (2020) argues that users' professional profile can be an effective way to show their viewers and clients how the user is relevant and assistance to their position or project. Therefore, these results need to be interpreted with caution because writing the content of the user's profile is key to persuade others' attention.

Theme 5: Feedback from Clients Based On Their Experience

Finally, users in these new environments basically tailor their self-presentation and how they would like to be seen by others. Previous jobs and careers play an important role to justify who really the users are. These top ten profiles have built an amazing virtual empire by

getting done so many tasks successfully, and as a result, their clients have left positive feedbacks on their profile. Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz (2018) assert that when a recruiter uses SNSs to find the most suitable freelancer for their task among the available candidates, they primarily depend on explicit data such as experience (feedbacks), skills, education. There is a directly proportional relationship between the rate of the feedbacks and the JSS. The higher the stars the user gets out of five stars, the higher score they get in the JSS, and the opposite is also correct. However, the overall job success score from all the top profile is 100%. That means all the jobs that were done by them have got full stars with positive feedbacks. Consequently, they have tailored a high-demanded profile as they won so many jobs and made their circle of connection much bigger.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study highlights the importance of creating a professional profile on social media for freelance translators to establish a personal brand and attract job opportunities, particularly during the pandemic where the financial sector has been adversely affected. The results suggest that freelance translators are motivated to develop their personal brand as it allows for greater flexibility in scheduling and cost-saving benefits. Additionally, experienced translators identified various factors that influence recruiters' perceptions, including the user's connection circle, qualifications, positive feedback, expertise, and skills. The top ten profiles demonstrated key features such as a profile picture, headline, simple content writing, and positive feedback. Future research may extend these findings to other professions such as web designing, consulting, and graphic designing. While the study was conducted in Iraq, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other countries as cultural differences may impact self-expression and identity construction. For instance, conservatism among females may limit their ability to display their real profile picture. Therefore, future research should explore these cultural factors to enhance the understanding of social media use across diverse populations.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

We [both of us] have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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