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# SPECIFICITY OF COMMUNICATION DOCTOR – PATIENT, ONLINE, THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

Case  
study

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## Keywords

Personal marketing  
Personal brand  
Social Networks  
Medic  
Doctors

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## JEL Classification

M31

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## Abstract

*A survey in 2013 of Division Market Research Group Rentrop & Straton Romanian-German - "state services and private clinics. Comparative Analysis ", highlights the fact that into urban population in Romania, the internet is the most popular source of information on health services. According to the survey, 81.9% of respondents use the Internet to find out about the best doctors available to them. Preferences of respondents to the online environment as the main source of information translates into ease of access and the possibility of interaction, but also trust recommendations based on personal experiences, recommendations can be found through discussion forums, mostly or comments left on pages on social networking sites. In the present study we try to emphasize the specificity of communication physician - patient online through social networks.*

## Introduction

In a time when Social Media becomes the main lever for communicating personal branding of doctors, the latter are forced to adapt to the trend. Therefore, it is imperative that they identify the resources needed to manage their brand in the online environment, join conversations taking place in forums to remain competitive, relevant especially in the sight of patients. In turn, patients are demanding more from doctors in terms of the manner of communication. This includes applications for smartphones, Facebook pages, office connectivity Wi-Fi, YouTube updates and other user-friendly tools that allow patients to have access to information.

A brand represents everything is desired to transmit through the image held, from the smallest things and ending with the most important. It's a whole process of creation and maintenance without stopping, always in need of improvements and it permanently must come up with something new. The beneficiary of this product is the consumer who is in a position to decide whether outside (outside the image) corresponds to the inside (the image that the brand owner has about his product).

The brand is the most important form of communication and networking with potential customers and the brand image is built over time, receiving a value. At this the clients contribute, helping the brand to make a profit, to increase. In fact, this is the purpose of any brand: to obtain a profit from what it makes, to sell, to grow, to maintain its market position, at least.

## Methodology

The working instrument used was a questionnaire, applied to practicing doctors in state hospitals in Iasi, to St. Mary's Hospital, the Neurology Hospital, Hospital St. Spiridon and Cardiology Hospital and Health Private Center 2000, to individual offices of family doctors and private offices.

The sample taken into account included doctors, aged between 27 and 55 years, with internet access, with an account on at least a social network, specialist or family doctor and that operates in an individual office, state hospital or private clinic. The questionnaire was applied in the period July 2013 - December 2014, a total of 144 doctors.

The sample structure is shown by Figure 1 (depending on age), 2 (depending on the type of medical activity) or 3 (depending on the main job).

## The study results

It is necessary to build a strong personal brand to have a personal site visit, active. The fact that there is a constant online presence will

disadvantage strikingly the business. Also, by using a website you have the possibility to control user experience, publish articles, gain resources, promote products, raise contacts, distribute private messages to customers.

One of the most important channels of the Internet is represented by blogs. Blogs have emerged as a result of discussions in the IT communities and forums and involved online diaries from the beginning, if people wanted to share with others their personal lives. They grew in popularity with the advent of Google Blogger and LiveJournal services i.e. in early 1999. Between 2007 and 2008, over 40 million blogs have been created. With time blogs have become a trend and are now are used by everyone, from political candidates like Barack Obama to CEO such as Craig Jonathan Schwartz (Sun Microsystems). Even celebrities like Rosie O'Donnell or David Beckham find time to write down on the blog.

In the context of contemporary technical development, the Internet represents a new vector of communication, mainly used for personal brand development. Regarding the studies on the subject conducted so far, the first observation is that the concept "personal brand" appeared only recently compared with the first signs of developing general marketing. This novelty concept coupled with the fact that the development of social networks in Romania does not have a long history thus offers an original character of this paper.

Personal brand can be compared to development of a business: the more you invest, the greater profit. The strategies are solidly built and take into account a broader range of issues that could influence it in time, so it will be more resilient and with time will get strength.

The need to develop a personal brand through social networks as part of a broader strategy of brand development personal consists of the following reasons: personal identity through the Internet can be published projecting it in four directions: who you are, what you do, how do you do, where you want to go further than that, personal brand is something that nobody can discard you of, you can not be removed (Ulrich, D., Smallwood, N., 2011); from an economic point of view and financial, in terms of developing firms, the personal brand of employees can attract stakeholders (Ancient, T. et al, 2012); personal brand is one of the main tools that can provide a competitive stable advantage in the market of human resources (Olins, W., 2011). One of questions in the questionnaire addressed exclusively to doctors referred to the extent that they use online as the primary means of communication with their patients, current and potential. A percentage of 29.16% of doctors have answered yes to this question, as illustrated by Figure 4. The main advantages of this type of communication online are those concerning costs

(without the cost of a subscription to internet, there are other costs), accessibility (easy and practical to leave a message in the online environment without fear of inopportune the discussion partner), speed (the message is sent instantly), high responsiveness (messages can be viewed online at both on desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone).

As expected, most of the doctors who use online as a primary means of communication with patients are aged up to 40 years, about 80%, a situation illustrated by Figure 5.

The correlation between the use of the online environment as the primary means of communication with patients and type of activity, correlation illustrated by Figure 6, indicate that practitioners use to a greater extent the online communication with patients (60% of respondents).

Figure 7 renders the correlation between the use of the online environment as the primary means of communication with patients and main workplace of doctors. Figure illustrates that doctors in private clinics use the least the online environment for communicating with customers. Doctors in individual offices and state hospitals have accumulated a rate approximately equal (40%).

With regard of instruments used for online communication, the situation is shown by figure 8. We note that a majority share of 43.85% of the respondents chose social networks as the main tool. This is because social networks are available on most communication devices are free, easy to use, and no less important, the effect is instant. Approximately equal percentages are found in blogs and personal sites. Personal sites, unlike social accounts require special expertise, requiring knowledge of SEO to optimize views.

Although the specialty literature is generous in respect of these three social networking features, we remember the following:

- Facebook represents a social personal network that allows posting messages in various forms, from text, symbols, icons, photographs, videos, personal or professional, without any limitation, except those of legal order;
- LinkedIn is a professional network that allows the formation of networks of specialists, grouped by geographical areas of interest, or on fields, the affiliated institutions, skills, specificity; managed carefully the LinkedIn account is the most effective way to promote your personal brand professional component;
- Twitter is a network which provides an opportunity to communicate a 140-character message in a very short time to a very large masses (the best example of this is the twitter site containing selfie photos from the Oscar awards Gala, in less than two hours had more than 2.5 million distributions according [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)).

In addition to social networking, online environment also provides a number of opportunities for brand communication, personal or corporate, and I mean: individual sites, interactive or not, blogs (their number is still growing in terms of users), forums, specialized sites (specialized type group), video CVs.

Most respondents opinion that everyone has or can develop a personal brand through social networks Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, and perhaps this is one of the motivations for the majority of the time spent on the Internet at home or at work, it is dedicated to updating information on these networks.

The use, as much as possible, of social networking is of high interest to specialists and HR recruiters because a consultation of a potential employee account can pencil a portrait of the candidate before meeting. This may be a motivation for those looking for a job in order to create uniform accounts through which to convey the same idea, through different types of information (information on education, professional information, social information).

The use of any of the networks considered in the study may be the ideal way of highlighting the personal brand or improving it, because by their specificity different networks offer the possibility to publish all relevant information for personal brand, and to potential employers.

The main disadvantage may constitute the publication of personal information or information that requires the consent of other persons / institutions involved (group photos on which everyone agrees not to be made public or publishing information on the projects carried out professionally, about which the initiator - company - considers to be strategic).

Questioned about the advantages of developing a medical personal brand vis-à-vis patients in the online environment, via social media, marketing and medical professionals concluded: extraordinary lower costs compared to other means of communication; the Facebook account can be accessed from any phone and it is advantageous for the doctor who theoretically posts: he must not be at a desk, can do also in his coffee break, and may post a written text, a picture, a film - in an era in which a picture is worth 1000 words.

However, majority shares of 70.83% of respondent doctors do not currently use the online environment as the primary means of communication with customers. This may be due to the following: patients are elderly people who are not familiar with this channel of communication; lack of time (both for doctors and patients); age of the doctors also their lack of knowledge regarding surfing online.

The high percentage (20.83% and 18.75%) of doctors use as a means of communication with patients, blogs or websites professional type. If the most important advantage of blogs is represented by freedom of posts (besides gratuity offered by wordpress.ro also blogspot.ro) in the case of professional sites we mention an association with a certain specialization, with a particular group of doctors with a certain category of patients.

In proportion of 55.55% of doctors communicate with patients through personal page on social networks at the expense of the institution or company page for that work. This basically means assuming a personal brand as on the personal page you can view also personal information, education. In other words, communication with patients on a personal page involves bra a desire to communicate a completely personal brand, beyond the limit imposed by the profession.

### Conclusions

Half of respondent doctors (cumulative) have posted on the personal socialization personal information (family, friends, pictures) and professional information that refers to articles presented at conferences, interesting articles taken from colleagues or sponsors, medical experiences. A very important percentage of respondents attach importance to collaborators and a rate of about 20% posts on their homepage personal information about them.

The fact that more than 90% of the doctors surveyed allow comments on their page from patients signifies primarily a trusted own brand and the activity performed and in the second place a personal brand transparency beyond the limits of the competitive environment.

LinkedIn is ranked second after Facebook in order of doctors' preference for social networking, with a percentage of 15% (four times lower than the percentage for Facebook). Those who choose an exclusive promotion through social network LinkedIn are those who choose to promote a personal brand exclusively professional, this being the specificity of the network. The less contemplated part by these doctors is that patients must empathize with those who come into contact in order to gain a sense of confidence.

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Figure 1 - Structure of the sample depending on age

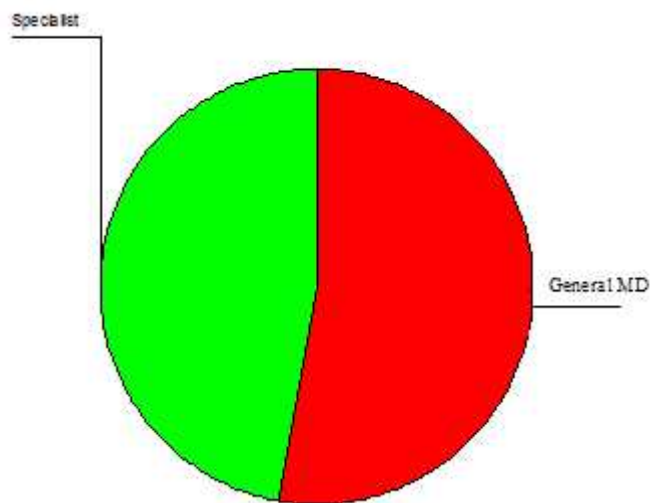


Figure 2 - Structure of the sample, depending on the type of activity



Figure 3 - Structure of the sample, depending on main workplace

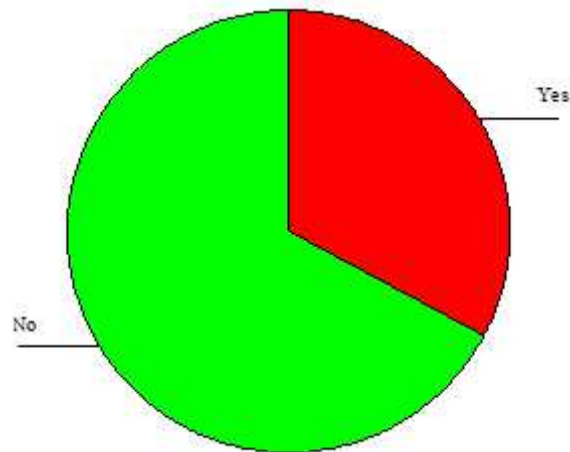


Figure 4 - The use of online environment for communicating with patients

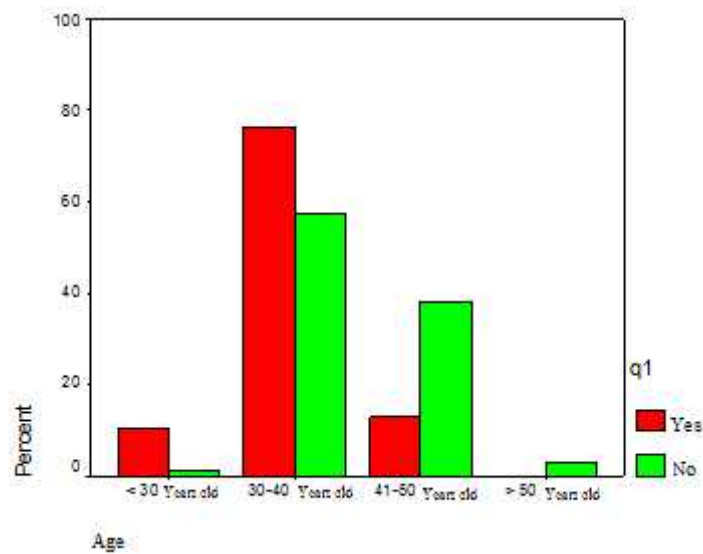


Figure 5 - Evolution of responses regarding the use of the online environment as the primary means of communication and the doctor's age

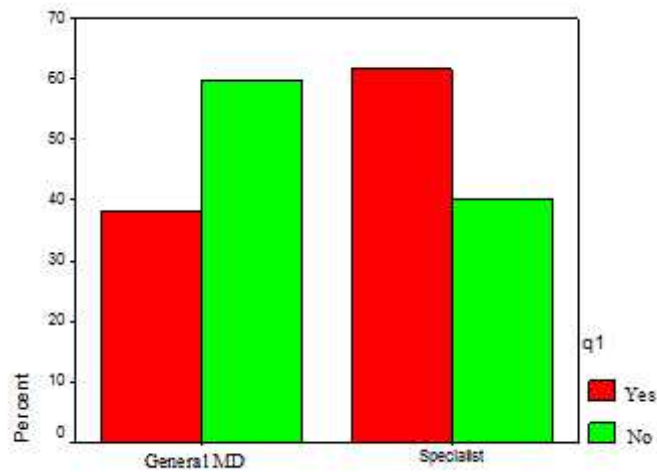


Figure 6 - Evolution of responses regarding the use of the online environment as a primary means of communication and type of activity of the doctor

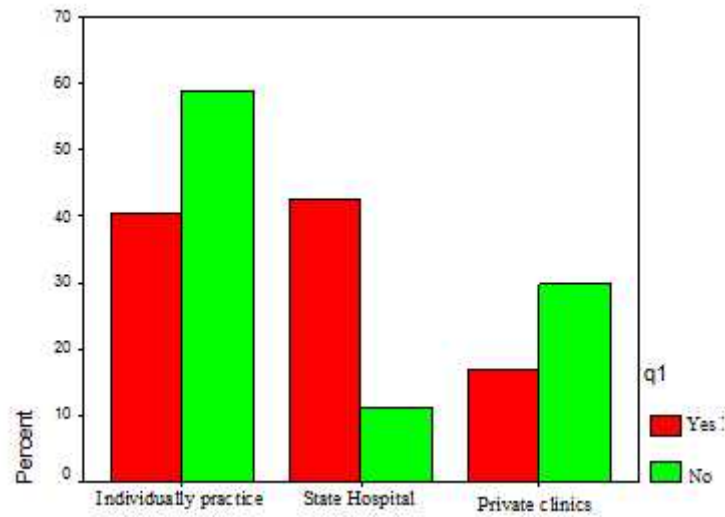


Figure 7 - Evolution of responses regarding the use of the online environment as the primary means of communication and main workplace of the doctor

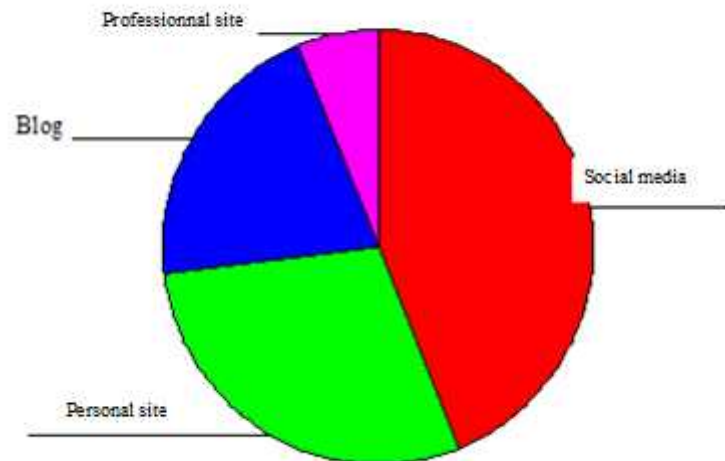


Figure 8 - Situation of online communication channels used predominantly