The Role of Personal Branding and Self-Marketing in Terms of Looking for a Job in Slovakia and Hungary

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Abstract: In the 21st century, self-marketing is an essential tool for job seekers, which can distinguish them from the rest of the candidates. They can easily address the targeted employer and convince the employer that he found the most appropriate candidate for the vacant position. The main objective of our primary research was to map the self-marketing activity of potential job seekers on the Slovak and Hungarian labour markets, and determine whether there are any differences how well-prepared the candidates are on the Slovak and Hungarian labor market in terms of job seeking. The research took place in 2021 and the first half of 2022. The researchers applied an online questionnaire survey. A total of 602 responses were received both for the Slovak and the Hungarian questionnaire. 548 responses could be evaluated from the submitted responses. Microsoft Excel 2016 was used to code the obtained data and prepare diagrams. The hypotheses were tested with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 25. According to the obtained research results, the Hungarian respondents proved to be professionally more prepared for job interviews than the Slovak job seekers, while the Slovak candidates reached better results in appearance and first impression in the interview process.

Keywords: self-marketing; personal brand; job seeking; labor market

JEL Classification: E24; M30; M31

1. Introduction

In the modern business environment, not only the businesses but the individuals as well have to insist on building the best possible image for themselves (Wziatek-Stasko, 2014). It is essential both in private and professional life. When assessing our own potentials, we have to examine the following three components: self-concept, self-presentation and reflection. The optimal situation is when the mentioned components are balanced. In this case, what the individual thinks about himself/herself and what is presented about himself/ herself is judged similarly by the external environment. In most of the cases we cannot talk about this optimal situation, since difference can be detected between the self-concept and reflection. Self-presentation is where the individual can significantly improve his/her competitiveness as well as has an opportunity to present or change himself/herself in a way that will result in favourable reaction of the environment. It means that certain areas of self-presentation can be shaped. Certain areas might change in long-term, while others change in short-term (Törőcsik, 2017). Not only the private life questions require the balance of self-concept, self-presentation and reflection of the individual, the balance of these components is also crucial

in the world of work. This study is trying to approach this question in terms of the job seeking process.

When applying for a job, the applicant often does not have adequate time to make deep impression. This is the reason why it is important that in addition to professional experience, the personality of the candidate has to be attractive enough to obtain positive feedback on the job interview. This is the point where the personal brand and self-marketing has to be emphasized, which can significantly contribute to tackle obstacles on the labour market and find the appropriate job.

2. Literature Review

Since the late 1990s, self-marketing and personal branding have become increasingly popular topics addressed by self help and personal development books, websites and consulting services. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the 21st century, it had little impact on marketing as discipline and does not matter whether we talk about scientific research or textbooks (Shepherd, 2005). It would be extremely important, since the university degree and the appropriate qualification are not enough to make the individual competitive on the global labour market. It is required from the individuals to obtain the appropriate skills of self-marketing in order to prove that they are the most appropriate candidates for the vacant position (Manai & Holmlund, 2015).

2.1. Personal Branding

According to Ujvári (2019), the personal brand equals to the individual itself. The personal brand of the individual is determined how others feel about the individual. These include both the positive and negative qualities. In terms of marketing, development of self-brand is similar to development of any other brand. According to Shepherd (2005), it is not surprising that the proposed branding and marketing principles for business and products are also recommended for individuals who would like to build and improve their personal brand.

In terms of personal branding, the individuals and their careers can be identified as a brand characterized by performance-related promises, special design and labels (Lair et al., 2005). Building a personal brand is a complex process, which is not exempt from tensions (Fogde, 2011). The personal brand is created by the individual – how others feel about the individual and what impact the individual has on the others. Building personal brand is perceived as an activity about defining and displaying personal strengths and being aware of their impact on the others (Nagy et al., 2018). According to further definition, personal branding is a strategic process of creating and maintaining positive impression based on the combination of unique characteristics, which indicates a certain promise to the target market (e.g. labour market) or target audience through a differentiated communication and established image (Gorbatov et al., 2018). Since personal branding is focusing on preference of selected personal skills and characteristics and surpassing others, the tensions resulting from this fact cannot be avoided. We should think about what happens if someone would like to live and behave as a limited version of herself/himself (Shepherd, 2005). It is important,

that in addition to being marketable, the individual should remain honest. Mentioning the negative qualities on job interviews can prove that the individual is aware of his/her weaknesses and shows willingness to work on his/her personal brand (Fogde, 2011).

When examining the personal brand, it is important to emphasize that the term has different meaning than self-marketing. One of the aims of this study is to define the difference between these concepts.

2.2. Self-Marketing

According to Manai and Holmlund (2015), self-marketing is defined as tool used to communicate the skills of the individual to a wider audience in situations of building networks, including the situation of applying for a workplace positions. According to Shepherd (2005), self-marketing is a variety of activities used by individuals to become known on the market, often with a purpose to be recognized on the labor market and make the process of finding a job easier. Self-marketing has been practiced for several decades in film and pop industry, sports, but the phenomena is becoming increasingly practiced also among the business and political leaders.

Self-marketing and its various aspects have not been thoroughly examined yet. Nevertheless, this study is important in order to understand how graduates are looking for job and prepare for job interviews, how do they obtain and utilize their skills, abilities, knowledge and how they build their personal brand in order to make themselves visible on the labour market. Self-branding as a strategy is becoming more and more important. A brand-centric view of self-marketing skills is one of the possible ways of getting workplace promotion, where the mental health and networking are important issues (Manai & Holmlund, 2015). The field of self-marketing is currently dominated by recruitment specialists, career consultants and self-help gurus. Practical approaches and career-related advice predominate; the comprehensive conceptual framework of self-marketing rooted in the discipline of marketing is not clear; there are only few examples of strategic thinking based on fundamental marketing principles. Both self-marketing and personal branding are dominated by intuitive approaches, while professional advice is often based on unfounded case study experiences. Incorporating these activities into marketing, where the current practices can be appropriately theorized and evaluated, has been an issue for a long time (Shepherd, 2005). Shepherd's ideas described above were born more than 15 years ago. Although the number of scientific research in the field of self-marketing is not adequate, there can be found many valuable results. The framework of self-marketing and the criteria according to which the individuals can be categorized in terms of self-marketing was elaborated.

Manai and Holmlund (2015) developed the new framework for self-marketing skills based both on the existing scientific literature and an empirical research. The model (Table 1) was adapted to the context of job search, but it can be applied in another environment as well. The model consists of three main elements, which differentiate the different aspects of self-marketing: the core of the brand, goals of the brand and the activities of the brand.

Table 1. Self-marketing brand skills (Manai and Holmlund, 2015, p. 17)

SELF-MARKETING BRAND CORE
Core Identity: Education, skills, personality, values, experience, etc.
Extended Identity: Characteristics around the core identity such as abilities, cultural aspects, etc.
Value Proposition: Functional, emotional, self-expressive, and relationship benefits

SELF-MARKETING BRAND GOALS
Denting: Presenting oneself in a confident manner and standing out from the competition
Binding: Team work and the ability to be a functioning and productive member of the team
Leaning: Exposing oneself to risk and knowing how to profit from this
Refusing: Showing good and firm character, the courage to refuse an issue that one is against if such an issue comes up

SELF-MARKETING BRAND ACTIVITIES	
Self-Evaluation: Using introspection, i.e. looking inward; specifically, the act or process of self-examination, or inspection of one's own thoughts and feelings.	Strategy Building: Taking action to achive goals.

Shuker (2010) determined four aspects of self-marketing and classified the individuals into 2-2 groups. The four aspects are the following: engagement (groups: passive and active), focus (groups: internal and external), time (groups: retrospective and prospective) and classification (groups: segregated and integrated).

2.3. Personal Branding and Self-Marketing on the Labor Market

It is positive that the interest in self-marketing and personal brand is increasing, which requires a deeper understanding of building and managing personal brand on the labour market (Gorbatov et al., 2018). Part of the scientific literature is focusing on development of personal brand of the individual on the social networking sites. In the 21st century, it is important both for the researchers and professionals to identify the most appropriate social networking sites that serve the development of personal brand (Hillgren & O'Connor, 2011). These sites are important for the organizations and job advertising agencies to check the candidates and form first impression about the candidate based on the activity provided on social networking site.

In addition to researchers, knowing the opportunities for building personal brand can be useful also for job seekers who are directly affected. Based on the research of Reicher (2018), job seekers are present in large number on LinkedIn, Skype and Viber in addition to the most popular social networking site, the Facebook. Facebook is mainly attracting the secondary school graduates, while LinkedIn those, who completed their university degree. However, it is important to emphasize that LinkedIn is specifically related to the world of work, while Facebook serves more entertainment role. Koprivová and Bauerová (2021) warn the attention to the fact that representatives of Generation Y already like using their smartphones, which is even more characteristic for the representatives of Generation Z. This is the generation is dominating the higher education and self-marketing plays a prominent role in preparing for searching a job.

According to the research results of McCorkle et al., (2003), the female graduates and those close to obtaining their degree are more prepared for looking for a job. The authors also emphasized that those individuals who are reluctant to job hunting and have no clear idea about their career path and what kind of job to choose, they are less prepared for looking for a job. Based on the research results of the mentioned authors, the main objective of this study is to examine whether there is a difference between the job seekers in Hungary and Slovakia in terms how prepared the candidates are to enter the labour market.

3. Methodology

The goal of our primary research was to map the activities related to self-marketing and determine whether there are differences between the jobseekers of Slovakia and Hungary in terms of how prepared they are to enter the labour market and find a job. The survey took place in 2021 and the first half of 2022. We applied a questionnaire survey. Since the pandemic (COVID-19) was an obstacle to in-person interviews, we distributed the questionnaire to the students of our faculty using the mail system of the university and applied the snowball method on social media. We sent our questionnaire to 100 of our friends using the social networking site Facebook, who were asked to send it to 5 more friends after completing it. In addition, we contacted four partner universities of J. Selye University, where the contact persons forwarded the questionnaire to the students. We sent the questionnaire to 100 of our friends using the social networking site Facebook, who were asked to send it to 5 more friends after completing it. Since the questionnaire was sent by e-mail, shared through partner institutions, and published on social media at the same time, and the filling in was completely anonymous, the differences between the people who completed the questionnaire from the three sources cannot be identified.

We prepared a bilingual (Slovak, Hungarian) questionnaire in Google Forms. The questionnaire was divided into four main parts. Respondents had to answer three demographic questions, which focused on gender, age and place of residence. After that, our group of questions examining self-marketing in job interviews assessed the respondents' agreement with the statements we formulated on a five-point Likert scale. The next question focused on what or who they use to prepare for the job interview, followed by a series of Likert-scale statements. This focused on the respondents' appearance at job interviews. Our questionnaire therefore consisted of a total of six questions.

When conducting the research, the main objective was to maintain the balance between the male and female as well as the Hungarian and Slovak respondents (Table 2). The balance in the number of respondents between the countries was met, however, the female respondents dominated the survey in both of the researched countries.

Table 2. Respondents' gender

	Slovakia		Hungary	
	N	%	N	%
Women	175	65.79%	166	58.87%
Men	91	34.21%	116	41.13%
Total	266	100.00%	282	100.00%

The average age of the respondents is 28.9 years (minimum: 18; maximum: 62; standard deviation: 9.77).

We received a total of 602 responses both for the Slovak and Hungarian questionnaires. The responses obtained from the respondents who were already looking for a job were relevant. The questionnaire ends at this stage for those who have never tried looking for a job. A total of 548 questionnaires submitted by the respondents could be evaluated from the total number (602) of obtained questionnaires, mainly because the reason mentioned above. Two hypotheses were formulated before conducting the research:

- H1: In the case of Slovakian and Hungarian respondents, there is a significant difference in how much they agree with the statements related to the job interview.

Since the degree of agreement with the statements can only be examined separately as a hypothesis, we divided the H1 hypothesis into fourteen sub-hypotheses (Table 3):

Table 3. Sub-hypotheses of H1 hypothesis

H1.1:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I feel confident during in-person communication and making formal phone calls."
H1.2:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I handle formal correspondence with confidence, I am aware of formal requirements."
H1.3:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "Before a job interview I formulate questions regarding the position I applied for."
H1.4:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "Before the job interview, I check the information about the company activity."
H1.5:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I feel usually nervous before a job interview."
H1.6:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I maintain eye contact during the job interview."
H1.7:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I generally feel fine and relaxed on job interviews."
H1.8:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I am self-confident on job interviews."
H1.9:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I am aware of my strengths."
H1.10:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I find it easy to talk about my positive qualities on a job interview.
H1.11:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I am aware of my weaknesses."
H1.12:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I find it easy to talk about my negative qualities on a job interview."
H1.13:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "I feel stressed when one or more people ask questions on a job interview."
H1.14:	There is a significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the degree of agreement with the statement: "It is stressful when my foreign language skills are tested on a job interview."

Our second hypothesis was the following:

- H2: There is a significant difference both in Slovakia and Hungary what kind of help the respondents use when preparing for a job interview.

The null hypothesis of the H2 alternative hypothesis is that there is no relationship between the variables, so:

- H0: There is no significant difference between the respondents' country of residence and the kind of help they use when preparing for a job interview.

The obtained data was coded and the diagrams were prepared in Microsoft Excel 2016. We used IBM SPSS Statistics 25 program to test the research hypothesis.

4. Results

The research results can be divided into three main parts. At first, the respondents had to decide whether they agree and in what measure with the listed job interview statements. These statements were related to self-marketing of the respondents. In order to compare the responses obtained from the respondents of both countries, we applied mean and standard deviation (Table 4). Agreement with the statements were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1- do not agree at all, 5 – completely agree).

Table 4. Self-marketing on job interviews – agreement with the statements among the Slovak and Hungarian respondents

	Slovakia		Hungary		Total	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel confident during in-person communication and making formal phone calls.	3.57	1.059	3.96	.980	3.77	1.037
I handle formal correspondence with confidence, I am aware of formal requirements.	3.78	1.027	4.00	.998	3.89	1.017
Before a job interview I formulate questions regarding the position I applied for.	3.52	1.189	3.62	1.123	3.57	1.155
Before the job interview, I check the information about the company activity.	4.18	1.066	4.24	.983	4.21	1.024
I feel usually nervous before a job interview.	3.76	1.258	3.54	1.190	3.64	1.227
I maintain eye contact during the job interview.	3.76	.970	3.94	1.004	3.85	.991
I generally feel fine and relaxed on job interviews.	2.72	1.059	3.00	1.033	2.86	1.054
I am self-confident on job interviews.	3.19	.992	3.60	.947	3.40	.989
I am aware of my strengths.	3.86	1.013	3.98	.935	3.92	.975
I find it easy to talk about my positive qualities on a job interview.	3.47	1.010	3.48	1.084	3.47	1.048
I am aware of my weaknesses.	3.96	.997	4.04	.908	4.00	.952
I find it easy to talk about my negative qualities on a job interview.	3.02	1.017	3.09	1.077	3.05	1.048
I feel stressed when one or more people ask questions on a job interview.	2.89	1.321	2.66	1.279	2.77	1.303
It is stressful when my foreign language skills are tested on a job interview.	3.11	1.258	3.05	1.388	3.08	1.325

Based on the obtained results, it is more characteristic for the Hungarian respondents, that they feel self-confident making formal phone calls, in-person interaction or handling formal correspondence. The Hungarian respondents are more prepared for the job interviews than their Slovak counterparts since they obtained higher average in the research results. They formulate questions to prepare for the job interview and check the activities conducted by the company they apply for. The mentioned factors might cause that the Slovak respondents feel more stressed before a job interview, since a well-prepared candidate for a position can decrease a stress level experienced before and during a job interview. The eye-contact with the interviewer is more frequent in case of the Hungarian respondents, as well as they feel confident and relaxed during the job interview. There is no big difference between the average of the countries (Slovakia, Hungary) in terms that the respondents are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, how easy they find to talk about their positive and negative qualities, however, Hungarians achieved higher average in the mentioned aspects as well. The last two statements were about how stressful the respondents are when they are asked questions from more interviewers or they foreign language skills are tested on the interview. The Slovak respondents achieved higher average in case of these two questions.

In order to determine whether the aforementioned differences were statistically significant, we performed a hypothesis analysis. In our case, the independent variable is the residence of the respondents (Slovakia or Hungary), which is a nominal variable measured on a non-metric scale. The dependent variable is the degree of agreement with the listed statements, measured on a Likert scale. Such variables are identified by Sajtos and Mitev (2007) as scale-type variables measured on a metric scale. If the independent variable is measured on a non-metric scale and the dependent variable is measured on a metric scale, we need to use analysis of variance (ANOVA) during hypothesis analysis. The two assumptions of ANOVA are homogeneity of variance and normal distribution. We tested the variables, and neither of the two conditions were met at the same time, so instead of the analysis of variance, we have to use a non-parametric test, the Wilcoxon test. Due to its length, the analysis is illustrated in two tables, Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Wilcoxon test to test hypothesis H1 – first part

	H1.1: I feel confident during in-person communication and making formal phone calls.	H1.2: I handle formal correspondence with confidence, I am aware of formal requirements.	H1.3: Before a job interview I formulate questions regarding the position I applied for.	H1.4: Before the job interview, I check the information about the company activity.	H1.5: I feel usually nervous before a job interview.	H1.6: I maintain eye contact during the job interview.	H1.7: I generally feel fine and relaxed on job interviews.
Z	-4.293[b]	-2.614[b]	-1.011[b]	-.414[b]	-2.549[c]	-1.500[b]	-3.122[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.009	.312	.679	.011	.134	.002
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test							
b. Based on negative ranks.							
c. Based on positive ranks.							

The result of the Wilcoxon test is significant if p<α (α = 0.05). From Table 5, we can read that in the case of the first seven statements, there are four statements in which the difference between the residents of the two countries is statistically significant. These are the following: hypothesis H1.1 (I feel confident during in-person communication and making formal phone calls.), hypothesis H1.2 (I handle formal correspondence with confidence, I am aware of formal requirements.), hypothesis H1.5 (I feel usually nervous before a job interview.) and hypothesis H1.7 (I generally feel fine and relaxed on job interviews.).

Table 6. Wilcoxon test to test hypothesis H1 – second part

	H1.8: I am self-confident on job interviews.	H1.9: I am aware of my strengths.	H1.10: I find it easy to talk about my positive qualities on a job interview.	H1.11: I am aware of my weaknesses.	H1.12: I find it easy to talk about my negative qualities on a job interview.	H1.13: I feel stressed when one or more people ask questions on a job interview.	H1.14: It is stressful when my foreign language skills are tested on a job interview.
Z	-4.448[b]	-1.155[b]	-.213[b]	-.765[b]	-.835[b]	-2.348[c]	-.803[c]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.248	.831	.445	.404	.019	.422
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test							
b. Based on negative ranks.							
c. Based on positive ranks.							

Based on Table 6, the results of two additional hypotheses are significant, these are H1.8 (I am self-confident on job interviews.) and H1.13 (I feel stressed when one or more people ask questions on a job interview.).

We were able to accept six of the forteen sub-hypotheses of the H1 hypothesis (H1.1, H1.2, H1.5, H1.7, H1.8 and H1.13), in the case of the rest (H1.3, H1.4, H1.6, H1.9, H1.10, H1.11, H1.12 and H1.14), the null hypothesis was accepted, according to which there is no significant relationship between the investigated variables.

Regarding the job interviews, the respondents were also asked, whether they asked someone for advice on communication and behaviour on job interviews. If this aspect is examined in terms of the individual countries (Figure 1), certain deviations can be detected.

Asking advice from family members, friends and acquaintances was more typical for the Hungarian respondents. 30% of the Slovak respondents ask advice from a person who already works for a company they apply for employment. In the case of Hungarian respondents this ratio was lower. The ratio of those relying on themselves when preparing for job interview was higher among the Slovak respondents. Preparing for job interview with the help of books, journals, newspapers were not typical among the respondents neither in Hungary nor in Slovakia.
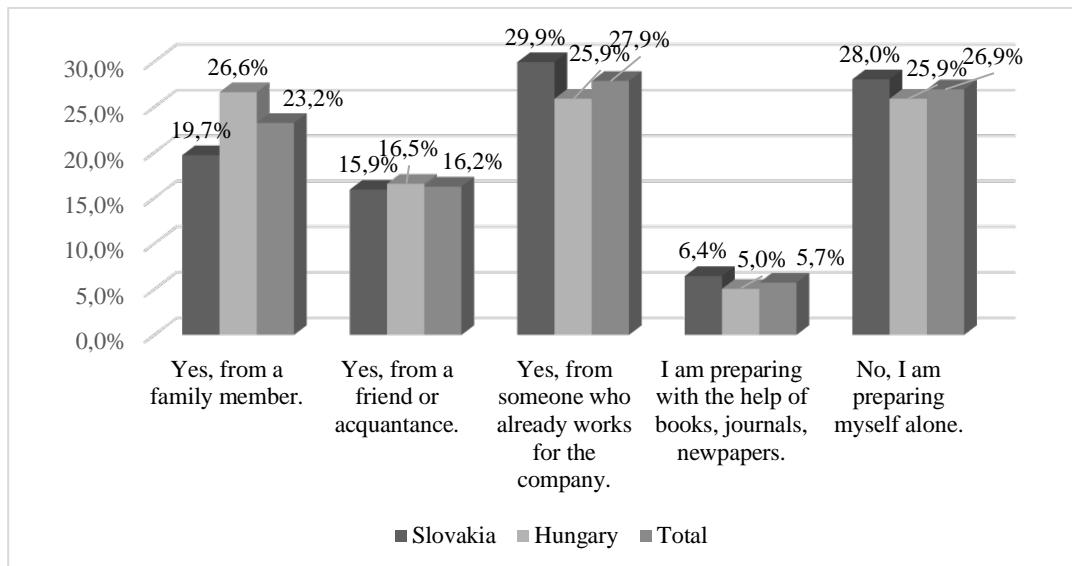
Figure 1. Asking for advice before the job interview among the Slovak and Hungarian respondents

In order to examine whether the differences were significant, we applied a statistical test. Since the independent variable (residence of the respondents) and the dependent variable (advice before the job interview) are both measured on nominal scale, we applied the Chi-square Test (Table 7) to test hypothesis H2.

Table 7. Chi-square Test to test hypothesis H2

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.307[a]	4	.366
Likelihood Ratio	4.324	4	.364
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.465	1	.116
N of Valid Cases	542		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.10.			

Based on the test results, where at the degree of freedom 4 and the significance level is 5%, the deviation between the two variables is not significant ($\chi^2(4)$ = 4.307, p > 0.05). Hypothesis H0, which states that there is no significant deviation between the variables is approved, while hypothesis H2 was rejected.

In addition to the mentioned statement series, the respondents had to express their opinion regarding further statements (Table 8). These statements were associated with another field of self- marketing, so the focus was put on the appearance of the candidate. We considered it important to deal also with this aspect of self-marketing, since not relevant number of literature sources we found regarding this question. Despite the fact that the skills and competencies of the candidate are crucial to get the job, the first impression about the candidate is determined by the appearance. The level of agreement with the statements was measured on a Liker-scale (1 – absolutely disagree, 5 – maximally agree).

The first statement was a widely used statement also in everyday life. We examined whether the respondents agree with the sentence that „Clothes do not make the man". According to the average, the proportion of those who disagree with the statement was higher in Hungary.

Table 8. Appearance on job interviews – agreement with the statements among the Slovak and Hungarian respondents

	Slovakia		Hungary		Total	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Clothes do not make the man.	2.56	1.288	2.45	1.135	2.50	1.212
I follow the latest fashion trends.	3.04	1.184	2.79	1.086	2.91	1.140
I am aware what patterns and colors to wear.	3.95	.989	3.70	1.156	3.82	1.085
I consciously plan my daily outfit.	3.64	1.094	3.55	1.225	3.59	1.163
I always wear shoes that match my outfit.	3.70	1.160	3.69	1.200	3.69	1.179
I always carry a bag that matches my outfit.	3.30	1.247	3.22	1.286	3.26	1.266
I always take care of my nails.	4.11	1.040	4.33	.898	4.23	.975
I always take care of my hair.	4.23	.898	4.30	.945	4.27	.922
If there is some dirt on my clothes, it does not prevent me of wearing it.	1.85	1.070	1.89	1.149	1.87	1.110
If my shoes are a bit dirty, it does not prevent me of wearing them.	2.24	1.185	2.26	1.215	2.25	1.199

Following the latest fashion trends was more characteristic for the Slovak respondents, however the average barely exceeded the value 3, which means both agreement and disagreement with the statement. The Slovak respondents proved to be more aware what kind of patterns and colours to wear, and it is also more characteristic for them that they consciously plan their daily outfit. Wearing the shoes matching an outfit and choosing a bag to outfit is rather characteristic for the Slovak respondents. Neat nails and hairstyle were characteristic for the respondents of both countries; however, the ratio was a bit higher with the Hungarian respondents. The last two questions examined whether the respondents feel disturbed by wearing shoes or clothes a bit dirty. A bit dirty shoes and clothes were unacceptable for the respondents from both countries, however in both cases the Slovak respondents were close to absolute disagreement with this statement.

5. Discussion

The results of our primary research focused on two fields of self-marketing. The first series of statements (Table 4) focused on the extent the participants in the research prepare for the job interview, how do they feel, how disturbed they get by certain phenomena.

During the testing of the H1 hypothesis, we performed the Wilcoxon test for fourteen sub-hypotheses. The test result was significant in six cases (H1.1, H1.2, H1.5, H1.7, H1.8 and H1.13). According to the means and the results of the hypothesis test, Hungarian respondents are more confident during personal communication and telephone conversations, as well as during written communication. Slovakian respondents are more nervous before a job interview and are more bothered by being asked questions by several people at the same time. To a greater extent, Hungarians feel fine, relaxed and confident during the job interview. These results all support the fact that it would be beneficial in Slovakia to put more emphasis on the education of younger generation (high school students, university students) about the world of work and job interviews, as we can see that more prepared candidates are self-confident and feel relaxed on job interviews. Courses strengthening self-marketing skills

appeared at universities abroad in the previous millennium. Useful theoretical background in the field self-marketing plan was introduced by McCorkle et al. (1992), which is based on the marketing plan model of Kotler (1998), consisting of the following components: situation analysis, self-marketing objectives, objective and positioning strategies, marketing mix strategies, assessment and monitoring. Although the draft has existed for 30 years, based on the research of Manai and Holmlund (2015), the university students miss the courses aimed at self-marketing. Significant differences were detected among the students since some of them made themselves attractive with the help of video CVs and PowerPoint presentations, while others felt themselves lost in this field, as they were not aware of innovative technologies, and could not make themselves attractive on the labour market. It is also worth teaching the students about such "small things" as how it has a positive effect if they approach the job interview with a good mood, courage and self-confidence. Ruben et al. (2015) point out that the research of several authors (e.g., Abel & Deitz, 2008; DeGroot & Motowidlo, 1999; Imada & Hakel, 1977) has already proven that that immediacy behaviour is related to positive job interview outcomes.

When testing Hypothesis H2, we came to conclusion that there is no significant difference based on the respondents' place of residence in terms what kind of help they ask for when preparing for a job interview. According to Figure 1, the Slovak respondents ask help from those working for the company the vacant position is advertised or they simply prepare themselves for the job interview. The Hungarian respondents ask help from their family members in preparation. The research of Schudlik et al. (2020) also points to the importance of proper preparation for a job interview. According to research results, more than two-thirds (67.7%) of their respondents prepare for job interviews with conversations, 43.8% with various online videos, and 32.5% with the help of relatives and friends. Categories considered as professional preparation were used by 20.4% of the individuals. It is important to point out that the preliminary preparation for the job interview is not a negligible activity if the applicant is really committed to getting the job. Caldwell and Burger (1998) emphasize that, although the applicant's personality is of great importance, conscious preparation during studies, building an impressive resume and seeking out information about the given organization are also important for getting the job.

The second series of statements focused on other aspect of self-marketing, the appearance. The results show that the Slovak respondents follow fashion trends to a greater extent the Hungarian respondents, and are aware what to wear on job interviews. Johnson and Roach-Higgins (1987) described that already in the last century, several researches (Kelley et al., 1974; Kelley et al., 1976) proved that in order to achieve a good first impression, the right clothing is very important in job interviews. Recruiters may assume that an applicant who is not aware of dress codes will also make mistakes in professional situations. According to Rucker et al. (1981) the most appropriate outfit on job interviews is generally the form-fitting multi-layered outfit and the least appropriate outfit is generally the loose-fitting single-layered outfit. In certain cases, appearance may be a critical factor. One such situation is when the interviewer has little or no information about the applicant's abilities,

motivation and experience. The other case is when the interviewer has to choose from applicants who have very similar abilities, motivation and experience.

Examining the two series of statements, we can conclude that the Hungarian respondents are more likely to be ahead in terms of professionality, while the Slovak respondents achieved better results in terms of first impression and appearance on job interviews. Since most of the individuals participating in the research were university students, the findings of the conducted research might be useful for the institutions of higher education, as the areas where the respondents still need improvement – self marketing – were identified. The previously mentioned self-marketing plan would be useful for the Slovak and Hungarian institutions of higher education, but it is important to take into consideration those specifics that were identified in our research regarding the specific sample.

5. Conclusions

The theoretical part of this study addressed the issue of brand building and self-marketing. Based on the introduced scientific background, the difference between the two concepts can be defined as personal brand is a phenomenon, while self-marketing is an activity: self-marketing is an activity used to develop personal brand. Self-marketing is an activity needed by every individual both in private and professional life. The purpose of conducting our research was to map the self-marketing activities of people present on the Slovak and the Hungarian labor market, and identify whether there is difference between the job seekers of two countries in terms how well-prepared the respondents are to enter the world of work. The results and conclusion of our research were summarized in the previous chapter. The practical benefit of this study can be found in the fact that the formulated questions and statements during the research can be used by further authors, since we identified two important fields of self-marketing: professionality and appearance. When processing the scientific literature available, we found only few research results addressing those aspects that measure the self-marketing of job applicants. This is why we think that we managed to provide useful ideas and results in this field that serve scientific purpose. As a barrier to our research activity, it has to be mentioned that the pandemic situation did not allow us to use a methodology based on personal interviews. As for the future goals, we find it important to work with a more transparent sample than we presented in this study, so the online questionnaire both in Slovak and Hungarian language is still available. Our further goal is to extend the research to other Central-European countries, in order to make a comparison on greater scale, as well as to examine self-marketing also within specific sectors.

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