Ladders, samurai, and blue collars: Personal branding in Web 2.0

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Abstract

Drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze, Eva Illouz, and Mark Andrejevic, this paper critiques the personal branding literature, particularly as it applies to Web 2.0 social media. I first describe the three-part logic of personal branding: dividuation, emotional capitalism, and autosurveillance. Next, in a sort of mirror image to the self-help literature of personal branding, I offer a critical "how to" guide to branding oneself in Web 2.0. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of why personal branding can be seen as a rational choice, given the circumstances of globalized capitalism and precarious employment. Individuals who brand themselves willfully adopt the logic of capitalism in order to build their human capital. However, I ultimately argue that the obsession with personal branding is no antidote for life in precarious times.

Keywords

personal branding, Web 2.0, autosurveillance

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