

CEOs often act as a “face” of the company that they run, thus how society sees the company’s top leader is reflected in how the entire company is regarded. Steve Jobs from Apple, Jeff Bezos from Amazon or Bill Gates from Microsoft are prominent examples of the phenomena.

In 1997 Tom Peters introduced to academic and practitioner’s literature the concept of personal brand. Since then, every year there are published articles, self-help books and trainings how to build a personal brand, whereas within the academic literature the topic is highly under researched. Most importantly, we still don’t know how the personal brand works in the business context. Research so far have focused on the impact of the CEOs personal brand on the value of companies’ stock prices, loyalty and trust among customers. While still there are no research that would examine how personal brand of CEO influences the company brand. The purpose of this study is to fill this research gap.

Certainly, the importance of the CEO personal brand is increasing, as the role of the top-level executives is no longer limited to the internal management. CEOs are to represent the company, to spread companies’ mission, values and ideas. According to Brandfog report (2015) over 80 percent of US respondents agree that top managers active engagement in media creates more transparency for the brand, build better connections with stakeholders and most importantly 82 percent believe that executive media use has a positive impact on the company’s brand awareness, trust and reputation.

Since the 90s, we can observe a trend in which CEOs are increasingly active and visible within the traditional and online media. They attract attention and interest of the public opinion and as a result, they attain the “celebrity” status (e.g. Richard Branson from Virgin or Steve Jobs from Apple). For example, the private life of Elon Musk (PayPal, Tesla Motors, SpaceX) provokes more interest in the media than the activities of the companies that he runs. However, whether this has a positive influence on the company’s brand is still unclear.

In order to answer this question, I will investigate the personal brand of CEOs of Polish strongest brands.

So far, research connected with personal brand were mostly conducted in Western Europe or USA (Fetscherin, 2015; Love et al. 2017; Milbourn 2003; Nolan 2015; Solomon and Bendickson, 2016) whereas the Central and Eastern Europe has been ignored by the researchers. Additionally, those research concerned the impact of CEO brand on the company stock prices (Kubowicz Malhotra and Malhotra, 2016) or loyalty of customers (Jin and Yeo, 2011; Love et al. 2017), whereas no research so far has examined the influence of the CEO personal brand on the company’s brand.

The research is important for the following reasons. Firstly, the study will be the basis for the further discussion on the role of CEO personal brand in creating value for the company. However, this is an important topic not only from the academic perspective. As a result, the research will serve a support for companies in establishing CEO personal branding strategies. Therefore, companies will be able to adjust their personal branding activities to support the company brand.