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Image and Self-representation

Social networking websites are not only used for finding friends, passing the time, playing or, in general, maintaining interpersonal communication but personal profiles also serve as "private homepages" with a layout scheme determined by the given system. More or less consciously, users use profile pages to build up their online self-images: they design their profiles according to the image created by them of themselves, or the desirable image they want to create in others of themselves. A non-verbal element of the profile page is the replaceable profile picture. This presentation deals with pictures used as profile (or rather: "profilized") pictures on social websites.

The theoretical framework of the presentation is given by the theories of marketing communications and public relations on image and that of psychology on self-construction. Marketing principles of organization image building seem to be also true of the individual's self-image building.

The study includes an empirical research as well: it analyses the characteristics of profile pictures on Facebook based on a sample of more than one thousand randomly collected pictures – with special respect to sex and age related differences and the collective samples created accordingly.

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