# The Effects of Social Media Engagement on the Authentic Personal Brand of Students of Far Eastern University, Manila

Ryan P. Hontiveros
{rhontiveros@feu.edu.ph}

Far Eastern University, Manila, Philippines

**Abstract.** The emergence of social media has created a new and different landscape in personal and professional success. Younger generations like university students who grew up as digital natives were influenced by social media engagement. As doctors, nurses, teachers, and students are becoming content creators online, the researcher deems an academic discourse in personal branding focusing on the value of presenting authenticity is significant. Premised on this context, this study aims to empirically investigate social media engagement among students to determine authentic personal brand. The data gathering generated 358 responses from FEU Manila. Using descriptive - predictive method, the results yielded relationships between variables: social media engagement and authentic personal brand indicated by their coefficients and significance level of less than .05. The effects were uncovered using Chi-square analysis. The study offered significant insights to advertising industry incorporating behaviors in social media and authentic personal brand in course modules of educational institutions.

**Keywords:** social media, personal branding, university students, social media engagement, authentic personal brand, digital natives.

## 1 Introduction

In an overly communicative society, most brands all over the world compete for parity. Every brand competes to stand out and become ahead of others to capture people's attention and a fair share of market. In essence, without brand names each product or service remains a generic commodity. It is branding that differentiates one from the other and elevates one to a pedestal in a competitive marketplace. The father of modern marketing, Dr. Philip Kotler, defines brand "as a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" [2, pp. 536].

The digital media, with the likes of social media, have brought a radical change in the manner brands talk to end users. Several studies have already agreed that the emergence of social media has influenced the building of corporate and personal brand and has become essential in developing an image that will be favorably perceived by others. The younger generation, primarily the digital natives who grew up with the internet are influenced by prolonged social media engagement, be it consuming and co-creating digital content. With the nature of social media being interactive, they became tools for communication, self-expression, and entertainment and an alternative channel for entrepreneurship.

Some educators widely use social media in education despite the lack of formal research that shows whether these platforms work because of their collaborative nature and affordability according to Cardello [4]. Hence, their engagement in social media shapes a different relationship between visual culture and digital technologies on top of the alternative learning systems. To this end, the research questions that motivate this paper are to ask the following questions: 1. What specific social media account do the respondents use to achieve selected goals in building an authentic personal brand? 2. What is the extent of social media engagement of students of FEU Manila? 3. What are the social media engagement constructs that significantly affect the criteria in building an authentic personal brand of the respondents? 4. Is there a significant relationship that exist between social media engagement and authentic personal brand of Students of FEU Manila? 5. What implications may be drawn about the effects of social media engagement on authentic personal brand? The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to empirically investigate the repercussions of university students' engagement on social media in enhancing their authentic personal brand; second, to determine if there is a significant relationship between social media engagement and authentic personal brand of students of FEU; third, to provide the advertising industry with strategic insights to effective content messaging and propose to educational institutions an academic discourse in social media that can be used in the presentation of an authentic personal brand.

The researcher deems that academic research and discourse among students in the Philippines must be empirically investigated as to what extent can frequent engagement in social media affect the enhancement and presentation of one's personal brand. Ahmad commented, "Previous studies and literature on personal branding were conducted with chief executive officers and celebrities in determining the leverage of building a successful brand yet these studies were not associated to authentic personal brand [1].

The researcher believes that this topic is unexplored in the Philippines particularly in presenting authenticity on social media among university students. Further, this study also seeks to understand if FEU student's social media engagement determines the criteria for building an authentic personal brand and whether there is a significant relationship that exists between the facets of social media engagement such as, affective, behavioral, and cognitive and the elements of authentic personal brand as identified by Rampersad [20], with consistency, relevance, authority, distinctiveness, integrity, goodwill, and persistence as criteria. The study is premised in the following null hypotheses stating that: *Ho1* - There is no significant relationship existing between the effects of social media engagement and authentic personal brand of students of FEU Manila; *Ho2* - Social media engagement facets have no significant effects on authentic personal brand of students of FEU Manila. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.


## 2  Literature Review

### Social media

In this age of digital technology, we can never imagine living a comfortable life with no cellphone and no internet. That is how technology influences people's lives. Their way of life has changed due to the convenience that technology brings. A major concern of living in the digital era is how technology shapes one's identity.

Seric [22] defines social media as a "product of internet-based applications builds on the technological foundations of Web 2.0. It is considered as any type of platform used to build online communities where users can come across and connect with each other."

Social media can be used as a virtual platform for showcasing social interaction, creativity, personal identity, storytelling, and lived experiences. The values and beliefs the creators uphold are also expressed in the kind of online behaviors and motivations they have by showcasing advocacy and good deeds.

In the realm of a developing platform, complementing mainstream, online entrepreneurship, self-promotion, and personal branding have spiked significantly in a growing trend for not only for digital natives but also for digital immigrants. The entertainment and informative value it provides them especially during the time of quarantine, are shaping their perceptions on social issues that may affect them. With the explosion of social media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, and the likes, social media enthusiasts have disrupted the way creativity and self-presentation are represented.

Explored by DiPietro, one of the platforms that defines social media is Facebook. Its processes are widely accepted for social interaction. The popularity of Facebook has turned the digitally inclined users into a community of digitally connected friends [5]. The clicking concept of liking, sharing, and adding friends has instantaneously developed digital friends. Video sharing sites like YouTube have become academic libraries for students who are looking for song and dance covers up to teaching and learning videos. Kirstin Dougan [6], viewed that YouTube regardless of its ease, content, and convenience, cannot replace the library's physical and online collections. With the risk of students exposing themselves to erroneous information, faculty members and librarian should clarify understanding and expectations in delivering media information literacy to students. Similarly, the government must start regulating the guidelines on the access of online content by the children who are not media literate enough to process the information they are exposed to.

Uyar [24], deems that the Internet amplifies everything; missteps can be costly, and it is not easy to undo the damage once it is done. In so doing, internet-based applications such as social media can make or break the reputation of a firm or a person.

Modern technology particularly social media, has empowered participants, including students, with a platform to democratize the human being in a positive way but at the same time can dehumanize them to become anti-social. Thus, it is advised that participants must uphold prudence and responsibility in how they conduct themselves in this public domain because everything they say or do can either strengthen or weaken their branding.

**Social media engagement**

Hollebeek [8], supported psychologist David Myers's ABC Theory of Engagement, which is performed when a consumer is engaged with a brand. The brand will tap a person's three multi-dimensional concept with the likes of one's behavioral (actions), cognitive (thoughts), and emotional (feelings) aspects. In his ABC Theory of Engagement, Myers [14], associated the structure of human attitude that consists of one's affection, behavior, and cognition. Khan [10] deems that social media engagement is a relative psychological perception experienced by individual interaction with social media, and, thus, it is understood that the measurement of social media engagement can be associated to these three constructs: affective engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement. Similarly, Xiaoli, et al [25], view that the measurement of social media can be associated to these constructs. As for affective, this refers to the emotional concept, whether positive or negative emotions towards a particular issue or

thing. As for behavioral, this refers to the daily habitual activity which unconsciously influence an individual's everyday life while the cognitive aspect is based on the content that when the individual understands, will comment on, and respond to, especially issues that present an individual perception in one's mind.

Existing research discussed the dominant motivations of social media engagement behaviors and their potential for co-creators as follow: liking, sharing, following, commenting, mentioning in comments, hashtags, uploading photos of oneself or "selfie," soliciting comments, and publishing multimedia stories according to Pentina, et al [18]. Explored by Reilly et al [21], these behaviors can be demonstrated upon subscription and creation of content for social media such as: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, forums, and the likes. These platforms are consequently used to gain popularity, social approval, and leadership.

## Personal brand

In the same way, what do the following people like Mark Zuckerberg, LeBron James, Jerry Sandusky, Lady Gaga, your colleagues, friends, and family members have in common? Every one of us has a personal brand. *Brand Aid,* author, Linne [11, pp.12] described a brand as what people think of you, a promise that a product or service will perform to the expectations of the customer. Brands come from different forms, be it personal goods, service, organization, a person, or an idea. In that context, brands can be persons such as celebrities and influencers via mainstream and digital spaces.

Speak [23], deems that a person can establish a personal brand which reflects all the qualities that make him/her a strong brand. To build a strong personal brand, he suggested to focus on 3C's: competence, character, and commitment to lifelong learning to enhance one's reputation that sets one apart from others. Linne and Sitkins [11] stated that personal brand management is associated with identifying the best parts of oneself and sharing them with others. Speak [23] posited that, "Who you are, what you stand for and how we lived in the hearts and minds of the people is essentially a person's unique message to the world."

Personal branding starts when people hear their name; they contemplate on the words that can describe them online and offline. Not only celebrities, influencers, or artist have a brand but everyone does. An ordinary person can leave a lasting impression out of the experience thatone communicates about oneself such as one's values, skills, and goals. The way one smiles, the choice of words, behavior in interacting with others, facial expressions, tone of voice, facial expressions, fashion statement, and creative output communicate the consistency of one's personal branding.

According to Gorbatov et al [7], a personal brand is a promise of value and performance and should match or exceed the expectations of the target market. It is a "strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself based on a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signals a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery."

In 1997, Tom Peters [15, pp. 83] introduced the concept of personal branding through a company article called "The Brand Called You". He pointed out that personal branding makes us our CEOs of our own companies, the Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketers for the brand called you.

Since the job market is expanding and competition is high, companies prefer people who have a proactive personal brand. These talents get the jobs easier, get promoted and hired faster,

get paid more, and are always on top of their careers. Cardello [4] noted that success is often built on strong personal branding because it immediately tells us who a person is, and where one's expertise lies.

One brand can find a difference, and so today companies invest in their human resources. There is an emerging industry of career and brand building professionals who conduct training to become better employees by adapting and applying marketing strategies, from developing business approaches to enhancing personal identities as viewed by Brooks et al [3]. On the other hand, Lamberton [9] views that digital and social media are used as facilitators of individual expression, as decision support tools, and as market intelligence sources in both academic research to date and corresponding practitioner discussions.

In a nutshell, companies utilize social media such as LinkedIn to look for talents to fit their team. Social media are increasingly becoming an indispensable resource for employee recruitment and employer decision-making as well as an important tool for career portfolios. With companies migrating their marketing expenses from mainstream to digital platforms, these marketing tools help to shape the likelihood of the participants to become more creative for self-promotion and exemplification to make a difference.

**Authentic personal brand**

Most studies conducted on authentic personal branding were focused on CEOs, businessman, and celebrities in determining their popularity through building a successful personal brand [1]. Authentic personal brand (APB) is one's strongest characteristics, attributes, and values that can separate one from the crowd [20]. Since 2008, Rampersad who advocates authenticity in personal branding has supported the importance of reflecting one's true character and one's authentic personal brand which must be built from one's values, strengths, uniqueness, and genius. If one is not branded on their true character, they will end up mainly selling and promoting themselves and will be perceived as egocentric; thus, branding will just be a cosmetic and dirty business. Without vision, self-knowledge, self-learning, mind set change, integrity, happiness, passion, sharing, trust, and love, there is no authentic personal branding. Based on Peter Montoya's [13], "The Brand Called You" Rampersad [19, 20], developed these criteria related to personal branding.

***Criteria for effective authentic personal branding***

*Authenticity* means a brand must be built based on a genuine personality that reflects one's character, behavior, values, and vision aligned with their personal ambition.
*Integrity* refers to adhering to the moral and behavioral codes set down by one's personal ambition.
*Consistency* relates to a need to be consistent in one's behavior; being consistent takes courage to pursue doing things repeatedly.
*Specialization* calls to focusing on one area of concentration, on a single core talent, or unique skill. Being a generalist without any specific skills, abilities, or talents cannot promote uniqueness, will not be perceived as special, and cannot make a difference. Students who are highly engaged in social media believe that a person can be successful in their chosen field of specialization and draw motivation from the success of others and may want to emulate them.
*Authority* is understood as one being a recognized expert in a certain field, extremely talented, highly experienced, and perceived as an effective leader.

*Distinctiveness* is expressed in a unique way that is different from the competitors and needs to add value from others. It needs to be clearly defined that its audience can quickly grasp what it stands for.

*Relevant* means what one person can stand for should connect to what their target audience considers to be important so that the right kind of people will subscribe to their message.

*Visibility* means a brand must be noticeable, consistently, and repeatedly, until it is embedded in the minds of the audience.

*Persistence* means giving the brand a time to grow. It should be developed organically. Persistence needs sacrifices. It takes courage and believing in oneself is the organic formula to become a successful brand. In times of adversities, a student may practice resiliency to pick themselves up and continue to persevere, and if they continue to believe they can attain their goals successfully with a positive attitude, that they can do whatever it takes to succeed and make a difference.

*Goodwill* relates to brands of today that are well loved because of their caring face through their advocacies and philanthropic deeds. People do business with people they like. A personal brand will produce better results and endure longer if one is perceived in a positive way. It must be associated with a value that is recognized as positive and worthwhile.

*Performance* is the most important element after a brand has earned fame. If one does not meet the expectations of the audience and improve continuously, personal branding cannot be achieved.

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on the holistic approach and roadmap developed by Dr. Hubert Rampersad [20] based on his own experiences and success story in formulating an authentic personal brand identity. This model consists of four phases which are the building blocks of a strong authentic personal brand:
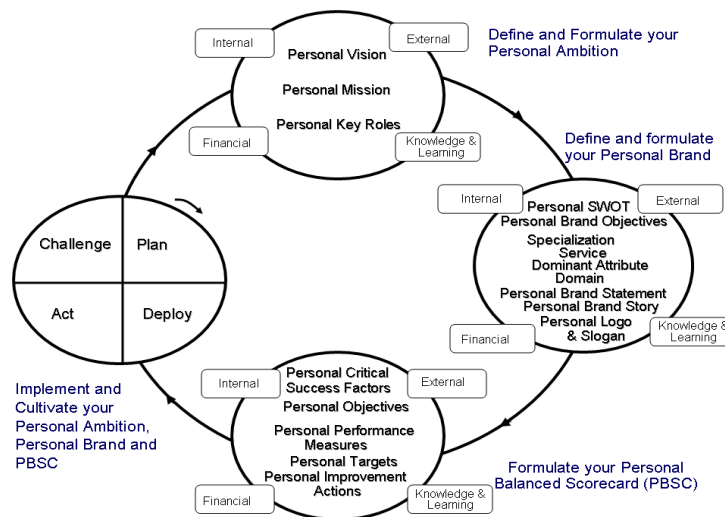


**Figure 1** Authentic Personal Branding Model (Rampersad),[22]

The first phase is to *define and formulate personal ambition*. The initial approach to defining and formulating a personal ambition is fueled by personal vision, mission, and key roles. These three cores are shaped by four perspectives that start from knowing oneself

(internal) and imbibing values and attributes toward others (external) while ambition can be achieved with access to resources (financial), knowledge, and learning that will draw balancein the brand and in one's life to synthesize the challenges one is confronted with. Taking time to understand and knowing oneself (what one really wants and stands for), responding to one's dreams with love and passion, and adding values like helping others can make a person exceptional.

With students' social media engagement, they can pursue their dreams that spark their passion and find purpose in it. While social media fuels encouragement and affirmation through engagements in Facebook from comments, likes, and shares or the subscriptions, or views they get on YouTube, these platforms also help them focus on achieving their goals and gradually experiencing success.

The second phase is to *define and formulate personal brand objectives*. The first step to this phase involves defining and formulating personal brand promise that is authentic, distinct, relevant, compelling, ambitious, and memorable.

A strategic tool, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), Analysis, will help individuals understand what their personal objectives and ambitions are, where they are now, where they are going, and how they will achieve those ambitions. By performing an inventory of their skills, they can specialize where they are good at, unleash their dominant attributes, and concentrate on their core talent. In the process, students are able to define their personal brand when they want to unleash more of their creative talents on top of their specialized skills such as painting, singing, playing musical instruments, vlogging, photography, and other forms of expressing creative freedom.

Determining the needs of the audience (domain) and tailor fitting one's content will make a person relevant. In the same way, a personal brand statement entails a total package of personal ambition, brand objectives, specialty, service, dominant attribute, and domain which can be capsulized in a unique selling proposition. The next step to this second phase is defining a personal brand story (elevator pitch) which will stimulate the audience to respond through an emotional and rational approach. Finally, designing a personal logo will help create a symbol to represent a personal brand to promote memorability.

The third phase is to *formulate a personal balanced scorecard (PBSC)*. Personal ambition and personal brand have no bearing unless individuals endure sacrifices to transform dreams into reality, and this happens only by taking action. PBSC is critical for a sustainable development of a person's potential and marketing success.

According to Rampersad [19, 20], PBSC translates one's personal ambition and personal brand into manageable and measurable personal objectives, milestones, and improvement in a holistic and balanced way. It is divided into the four perspectives: internal, external, financial, knowledge and learning. Rampersad emphasizes in this stage a development of an integrated and well-balanced action plan based on personal ambition and personal brand to reach brand objectives. PBSC is an effective strategic tool to properly manage one's priorities, measure and monitor progress towards achieving specific targets like managing and mastering oneself and a brand.

The fourth phase is to *implement and cultivate personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard*. This phase is about putting one's personal ambition, personal brand, and PBSC into reality and taking action that will implement, manage, and nurture all these building blocks. To articulate an authentic personal brand, a unique learning cycle called *Plan – Deploy – Act – Challenge* Cycle (PDAC) is proposed. This final phase suggests that individuals live in accordance with their personal ambition, personal brand and related PBSC. And if they are well-branded according to this authentic approach by consistently practicing a

thorough PDAC cycle, they will win people's hearts and open opportunities in their journey towards self-awareness, happiness, and self-esteem.

This model is an important insight for social media enablers about fine tuning personal ambition, personal brand, and PBSC as it can help customers, friends, colleagues, family, and others become satisfied with their personal brand online and offline.

## 3 Methodology

### Procedure and participants

To test the hypotheses and respond to research questions, a self-administered web-based survey was conducted to Far Eastern University in Manila during the second semester of January to May 2021. The samples came from six institutes: Accounts and Business, Architecture and Fine Arts, Arts and Sciences, Education, Nursing, and Tourism and Hotel Management. The researcher initially targeted 480 samples yet due to internet connectivity issues, 358 students agreed to respond the survey through their department chairs. The study utilized a convenience sampling technique selected in the FEU Manila population who were generally social media users.

The descriptive-predictive research method was utilized to ascertain the characteristics and behaviors of the target respondents and as related to other variables. The descriptive part of the study consists of the profile of the respondents, frequency of social media usage, social media engagement level, and authentic personal brand. The predictive part includes the variables that were studied to determine the effects of social media engagements for an authentic personal brand.

### Measuring the data

The measurement criterion variable and three types of social media engagement (affective engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement) were significantly and positively correlated with each other at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Social media engagement was measured using a valid and reliable instrument developed by Xioaoli, et al [25]. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were from 0.709 to 0.804 with an 11-item scale. A five-point Likert scale was also used with the following descriptors: 1 = "strongly disagree, 2 = "disagree," 3 = "undecided," 4 "agree," and 5 = "strongly agree."

Authentic personal brand scale was measured with the use of an instrument developed by Potgieter, et al [17]. Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to test the scale reliability ranging between 0.76 and 0.79 using a 10-item scale. The data collection tool consisted of a five-point Likert type questionnaire, where the scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, respectively. Stata 15.1 software was used to derive the following statistical measurements: a. Frequency and percentage to establish the distribution of the respondents as to their personal characteristics, social media usage, and frequency, b. Weighted Mean (WM) determines the average perception of the respondents while standard Deviation (SD) determines the extent of disparity or agreement among respondents' answers. and c. Chi-Square (X2) was used to test the hypothesis and to determine if two variables X and Y under study are related to or independent from one another.

# 4 Result and Discussion

This summarizes the results and findings of the study formulated from the data gathered by the researcher in terms of sociodemographic profile, frequency of social media use, extent of social media engagement, extent of authentic personal brand, and the significant relationship among two variables presented and their constructs.

Out of the 358 respondents, 249 of the social media users belong to the age group of 20 to 22 years old, which comprise 69.55 percent of the respondents. In terms of gender, the results show that majority of the respondents are female having a frequency of 247 out of 358 respondents, at 68.99 percent. Male respondents are outnumbered with a frequency of 111, at 31.01 percent. According to institutes in FEU Manila as shown in Table 1, majority of the samples were from the Institute of Architecture and Fine Arts garnering 32.4 percent at a frequency of 116 out of 358 respondents while the Institute of Nursing has 23.18 percent with a frequency of 83 out of 358 respondents.

Table 1 *Profile of Respondents by Institute*

| Specifications | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Accounts and Business | 24 | 6.7 | 6.7 |
| Architecture and Fine Arts | 116 | 32.4 | 39.11 |
| Arts and Sciences | 75 | 20.95 | 60.06 |
| Education | 22 | 6.15 | 66.2 |
| Nursing | 83 | 23.18 | 89.39 |
| Tourism and Hotel Management | 38 | 10.61 | 100 |

Table 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 explained the data analysis and discussions of five research questions and were complemented by related literature and studies.
1. What specific social media account do the respondents use to achieve selected goals in building an authentic personal brand?

Table 2 *Social Media Account Used by the Respondents*

| Specifications | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Facebook | 182 | 50.84 | 50.84 |
| Instagram | 53 | 14.8 | 65.64 |
| TikTok | 24 | 6.7 | 72.35 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Twitter | 43 | 12.01 | 84.36 |
| YouTube | 56 | 15.64 | 100 |

The results as described in Table 2, show that half or 50. 84 percent of the 358 respondents widely accepted using Facebook with a goal of social interaction while building an authentic personal brand. This, according to DePietro [5], is indicative that Facebook is widely accepted for social interaction and is popular to digitally inclined users as it helps in instantaneously developing digitally connected friends.

On the other hand, video sharing site, YouTube, is at 15.64 percent. This social media platform has turned into academic libraries of students, as well as a personal branding platform. However, YouTube cannot serve as an alternative to the university library and online collectives and may expose students to erroneous information as mentioned by Dougan [6]. Thus, it is the role of faculty members to help students develop critical thinking skills and synthesizing minds to discern facts from opinions present in the content of social media posts.

2. What is the extent of social media engagement of students of FEU Manila?

Table 3 *Time Spent using Social Media*

| Specifications | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 to 6 hours | 110 | 30.73 | 30.73 |
| 31 mins to 2 hours | 80 | 22.35 | 53.07 |
| 4 to 5 times a day | 47 | 13.13 | 66.2 |
| 6 or more times a day | 112 | 31.28 | 97.49 |
| less than 30 mins | 9 | 2.51 | 100 |

According to Table 3, students of FEU Manila spend six or more hours a day using social media, at 31.28 percent. It is worthy to note that the results yielded inconsistent durations of the respondent's social media habits since most of the students are also occupied complying with their academic requirements.

3. What are the social media engagement constructs that significantly affect the criteria in building an authentic personal brand of the respondents?

Table 4 *Social Media Engagement of the Respondents*

| Social Media Engagement Items | Mean | SD | Interpretation | Adjectival Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item 1: Using social media is my daily habit. | 4.26 | 0.89 | Agree | The respondents agree about their routine of frequent social media (SM) use. |

| Social Media Engagement Items | Mean | SD | Interpretation | Adjectival Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item 2: I browse social media whenever I have time. | 4.32 | 0.83 | Agree | Majority agree about their behavior of allocating time for SM engagement. |
| Item 3: Even if it is late, I take a look at social media before sleep. | 4.09 | 1.02 | Agree | The respondents agree that it is habitual to end the day by checking SM before bedtime. |
| Item 4: I often use social media to relax as a habit. | 4.02 | 0.96 | Agree | They agree that SM use is relaxing due to its engaging contents. |
| Item 5: I get fulfilled from the attention and comments of others on social media. | 3.03 | 1.10 | Undecided | They are not decisive and/or affective whether SM engagements are authentic. |
| Item 6: The support and encouragement of others on social media is very important to me. | 3.33 | 1.11 | Undecided | They cannot appreciate and are skeptic about the sincerity they get from SM engagements. |
| Item 7: In using social media, I am satisfied with the relationship between myself and my friends. | 3.80 | 0.95 | Agree | They agree that SM enhances relationship between themselves and friends. |

| Item | Mean | SD | Interpretation | |
|------|------|-----|----------------|---|
| Item 8: I feel bored when I cannot use social media. | 3.22 | 1.18 | Undecided | They are not decisive about being affected when SM is not available due to some reasons. |
| Item 9: Compared to the real world, I am happier when I socialize on social media. | 2.62 | 1.12 | Undecided | They are indecisive that SM gives them a real feeling of happiness versus interacting offline. |
| Item 10: I feel anxious when I cannot use social media. | 2.47 | 1.11 | Disagree | There is nothing to worry about without SM. |
| **Overall** | 3.52 | 0.59 | Agree | They mostly agree to the statements about SME. |

Based on Table 4, Item 2 has the highest mean rating at 4.32 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.83. It is agreeable to the respondents that it is their habit to browse social media whenever they have time. On the other hand, Item 10 has the lowest mean at 2.47 with an SD of 1.11. It is noteworthy that respondents do not agree that inability to use social media due to some reasons makes them feel anxious. Nevertheless, its use can be applied with proper discipline and regulations if needed.

Anchored on the ABC Theory of Engagement [16], affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement levels were determined in view of the respondents' social media engagement. Items 1 to 4 in Table 4 were identified as behavioral engagements viewed as outputs of affective and cognitive capacities. While those listed in items 5 to 10 were identified as affective engagements associated with feelings and attitudes.

Table 5 *Authentic Personal Brand of the Respondents*

| Authentic Personal Brand Items | Mean | SD | Interpretation | Adjectival Interpretation |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------------|---------------------------|
| Item 1: I portray an accurate picture of who I am in the world. | 3.57 | 0.88 | Agree | The respondents agree that integrity is important in presenting an authentic personal brand. |

| Item 2: I portray consistent behavior in various situations. | 3.57 | 0.87 | Agree | They agree that persistence in APB is important online and offline. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item 3: It is important that people notice me visibly. | 2.75 | 1.00 | Undecided | They are indecisive that in APB respondents need to get attention. |
| Item 4: I want people to know that I am unique in my own way. | 3.75 | 1.00 | Agree | They agree that finding one's specialization is unleashing dominant attributes, focusing on core talent. |
| Item 5: I show goodwill towards social upliftment projects in my community. | 3.84 | 0.75 | Agree | They agree that showing gestures of kindness can enable individual and community development. |
| Item 6: I see myself as a specialist in a specific area. | 3.30 | 0.92 | Undecided | The respondents cannot decide whether they have reached an authority stage in a respective field. |
| Item 7: I continuously work at improving myself. | 4.34 | 0.67 | Agree | The respondents agree about consistently improving their performance from personal to professional. |
| Item 8: My personal identity, independent from others, is important to me. | 4.06 | 0.81 | Agree | They agree that having unique attributes set them apart from others to stand out. |
| Item 9: It is important for me to always look good. | 3.44 | 1.08 | Undecided | They are indecisive that other's perception of looking good in and out does not compromise their integrity. |
| Item 10: My friends always come to me for advice. | 3.78 | 0.93 | Agree | They agree that friends see them as relevant source of advice and as experts in their respective field. |
| **Overall** | 3.64 | 0.50 | Agree | Overall, the respondents agree to the items in APB. |

In reference to Table 5, Item 7 has the highest mean rating at 4.34 with a standard deviation (SD) of .67; therefore, it is agreeable that respondents continuously work at improving themselves and aspiring for a holistic development. This affirms Rampersad's [19,20] personal balance score card that is translating into action one's personal ambition and personal brand means turning them into manageable and measurable personal objectives, milestones, and improvement in a holistic and balanced way.

Further, Item 3 yielded the lowest mean of 2.75 with an SD of 1.00. It is noteworthy that the respondents cannot decide if their aspiration for authentic personal brand, for people to notice them visibly through gestures and responses online, has any bearing. It can be concluded

that in aspiring for authentic personal brand, the respondents are not seeking for attention through their social media engagements.

4. Is there a significant relationship that exists between social media engagement and authentic personal brand among students of FEU Manila?

Table 6 *Relationship Between Social Media Engagement and Authentic Personal Brand*

| Authentic Personal Brand | Social Media Engagement | | | | | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Agree | Strongly Disagree | Undecided | |
| Agree | 115 | 4 | 12 | 0 | 89 | |
| Disagree | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | |
| Strongly Agree | 11 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | |
| Undecided | 52 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 58 | <0.0001 |

On whether social media engagement is related with authentic personal brand, using Chi-square test of independence, a p-value of less than 0.0001 was generated which falls below or less than the 0.05 significance level.

Hence, there is a strong evidence to claim that a significant relationship exists between social media engagement and authentic personal brand among students of FEU Manila. This suffices to conclude that the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship existing among the effects of social media engagement and authentic personal brand of students of FEU Manila is rejected. Also, the null hypothesis stating that social media engagement facets do not have significant effects on the authentic personal brand of students of FEU Manila is also being ruled out in favor of the alternative hypothesis.

All told, the data in Table 6 reveal further that the respondents agree that social media engagement determines authentic personal brand. This means that university students value their affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in social media to build an effective and authentic personal brand.

5. Based on the results of the study, what implications may be drawn on the effects of social media engagement on authentic personal brand?

The results of the study affirm Rampersad's [20] authentic personal brand model which states that for one to build a strong authentic brand, they need to define and formulate personal ambition which is shaped by starting to knowing themselves, imbibing good values and attributes from others, and achieving that ambition through access to resources, right knowledge, and learning. While university students are engaged on social media, the different platforms help define their personal ambition as they aspire to continuously develop themselves holistically.

Expressing themselves as to what they want and what they stand for, taking action on their personal ambitions (PBSC) to make their dreams into reality with love and passion, and adding value to those can make them exceptional individuals.

The study confirms that university students do not rely only on academic intervention for their holistic development, but they themselves are continuously unleashing their highest potential to win people's hearts and open opportunities toward self-awareness, happiness, and self-esteem.

## 5  Conclusion and future research directions

The objectives of this paper were to investigate the effects of social media engagement on the enhancement of university students' authentic personal brand and to determine if there is a significant relationship between these two variables. The results provide significant insights to academe and serve as basis for course module development and advertising industry in creating a compelling social media campaign targeting university students. The data indicate that respondents are mainly female, between 20 to 22 years old. In terms of the extent of social media engagement, university students are frequently engaged in browsing Facebook when they have time for at least six or more hours a day.  The misperception, as viewed by the respondents,that the absence of social media can  make them feel anxious is dismissed since majority of the respondents disagree with the statement.

As for authentic personal brand, it is a noteworthy insight that majority of the university students are continuously working on improving themselves since they agreed with the statement, affirming Rampersaud's authentic brand model. This study further confirms that the respondents are indecisive about the importance of getting people's attention visibly, such as showing reactions or gestures online.

The stated null hypothesis that "there is no significant relationship existing between the effects of social media engagement and authentic personal brand of FEU students" is rejected since there is a probability of a significant relationship having a p-value of less than 0.0001, which falls below the 0.05 significance level.  The results ruled out the null hypothesis stating that "social media engagement facets do not have significant effects on authentic personal brand of students of FEU Manila" in favor of the alternative hypothesis.The findings conclude that there is a significant relationship that exists between social media engagement and authentic personal brand.

In the light of the conclusions of the study, the researcher further recommends: first, social media engagement and authentic personal brand were proven to be significantly related with each other, since students and professionals are becoming social media influencers and enablers,  educational institutions must include academic discourse on social media engagement and the presentation of authentic personal brand in course modules regardless of discipline. Second, as students' engagement in social media shapes their perceptions, values, and attitudes, the consumption culture of social media, whether personal or professional is an academic and research gap that should be uncovered by the academe and the marketing communications industry. Third, a replication of the study for other locations and market segments be undertaken, if not a nationwide study, to obtain further empirical evidence to present basis for decision makers and social media enthusiasts.

## References

[1]   Ahmad, R. Hashim, L.  Harun. N.  *Criteria for Effective Authentic Personal Branding for Academic Librarians in Universiti Sains Malaysia Libraries*, International Research Symposium in Service

Management; August 11- 15, 2015. Malaysia. 2015. Available from http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/. Accessed on March 13, 2020.

[2] Belch, George E. and Belch, Micheal A. Advertising and promotion, An integrated marketing communications perspective, McGraw Hill, 2015, 10E, pp. 536.

[3] Brooks, A. Anumudu, C. *Identity development in personal branding instruction*, *Adult Learning*, 2015; Vol. 27, No 1, pp. 23-29. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1045159515616968. Accessed on March 13, 2020.

[4] Cardello, Jeff. https://webflow.com/ *18 Effective personal branding examples done right*, June 20, 2019. Accessed on February 27, 2020.

[5] DePietro, P. *Social media and collaborative learning, counterpoints*, 2015; 435, pp. 47-62. Accessed on June 16, 2021. Available from http://www.jstor.org/stable/42982123

[6] Dougan, K. Music, *YouTube, and academic libraries, influencer, building your personal brand in the age of social media*. 2016; pp. 18. Available from http://www.jstor.org/stable/44015275. Accessed on October 13, 2020.

[7] Gorbatov, S. Svetlana, N. Khapova. Jannelle, Oostrom, Evygenia, L. *Personal brand equity: Scale development and validation.* 2020. Available from https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12412. Accessed on November 21, 2020.

[8] Hollebeek, L. *Exploring customer brand engagement: definition and themes*. J. Strateg. Mark. 2011; 19, pp. 555–573. Available from doi: 10.1080/0965254X.2011.599493. Accessed on October 14, 2020.

[9] Lamberton C. Stephen A. *A thematic exploration of digital, social media, and mobile marketing: Research evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an agenda for future inquiry. 2016.* Accessed on October 13, 2020. Available from https://doi.org/10.1509%2Fjm.15.0415.

[10] Khan, M. L. *Social media engagement: what motivates user participation and consumption on Youtube?* Comput. Hum. Behav. 2017; 66, pp. 236–247. Available from doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.09.024. Accessed on October 13, 2020.

[11] Linne, L.G. and Sitkins P. *Brand aid*. New York: Penguin Books. 2015; pp. 12.

[12] Lovett, S. *Making friends with the digital natives*, Scope (Art & Design), 2009; pp. 4 Available from https://www.thescopes.org/. Accessed on October 14,2020

[13] Montoya P. Vandehey, T. *The brand called you: make your business stand out in a crowded marketplace use pre formatted date that complies with legal requirement from media matrix.* McGraw-Hill Education; USA, 1st ed, 2008. pp. 231.

[14] Myers, D. G. "*Behavior and attitudes*," in *Social Psychology*: Fourth Edition, ed. D. G. Myers (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill), 1993.

[15] Peters, T. *The brand called you*. Available from http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/10/.August-September 1999, pp. 83. Accessed on March 16, 2020.

[16] Pentina, Iryna Guilloux, Veronique, Micu Anca Cristina, *Exploring social media engagement behaviors in the context of luxury brands*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405756. Accessed on October 12, 2020.

[17] Potgieter, A., Doubell, M., Klopper, AB. *Personal branding empirical testing of the criteria for an authentic personal brand*, Research Gate.net, 2017. pp. 5. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.5176/2251-2098_EMG17.9. Accessed on February 8, 2021.

[18] Rampersad, H. K. Authentic personal branding: a new blueprint for building and aligning a powerful leadership brand, Connecticut, USA: Information Age Publishing Inc. 2008.

[19] Rampersad, H. *Authentic personal branding*, Astitva International Journal of Commerce Management and Social Sciences, 2014. Available from http://astitvajournals.astitvaonline.co.in/

[20] Rampersad, H. *How to build an authentic personal brand*, Open Society.org, Available from https://xonitek.com. August 19, 2011.Accessed on March 14, 2021.

[21] Reilly, A. Hynan, K. *Corporate communication, sustainability, and social media: It's not easy (really) being green.* 2014. Available from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.07.008. Accessed on April 2020.

[22] Seric, M. & Garbin, D. *Consumer-generated reviews on social media and brand relationship outcomes*, Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2017.1340219. 2018. Accessed on November 2020.

[23] Speak, C. *Unlock the power of your personal brand*, Available from www.mckissock.com, 2019. Accessed on April 2020.

[24] Uyar, A., Boyar, E., and Kuzey, C. *Does social media enhance firm value? Evidence from Turkish firms using three social media metrics.* The Electronic Journal Information Systems Evaluation, 21(2), pp. 131-142, available online at www.ejise.com, 2018.

[25] Xioaoli Ni, Xiaoyi Shao, Yangwen Gen, Ran Qu, Gen Feng and Yuping Wang. *Development of Social Media engagement Scale for Adolescents*. Available from https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00701. Accessed 2/2021