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**THƯƠNG HIỆU CÁ NHÂN TRÊN MẠNG XÃ HỘI:
THỰC TIỄN TỪ SINH VIÊN KHOA TIẾNG ANH THƯƠNG MẠI,
ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI THƯƠNG**

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Tóm tắt

Người trẻ ngày nay đang không ngừng xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân trên mạng xã hội, tuy nhiên, đây vẫn là một đề tài mới và chưa được đầu tư nghiên cứu tại Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu dưới đây là một trong những công trình tiên phong trong việc mô tả thực tiễn xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân của sinh viên Việt Nam bằng việc sử dụng phương pháp định tính và khảo sát trực tuyến với 248 sinh viên khoa Tiếng Anh Thương mại (TATM), trường Đại học Ngoại Thương. Kết quả cho thấy, nhìn chung, sinh viên chưa xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân một cách hiệu quả trên mạng xã hội, cũng như chưa có nhận thức đầy đủ về chủ đề trên, từ đó, tác giả đưa ra một số khuyến nghị để giúp sinh viên cải thiện vấn đề này.

Từ khóa: xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân, mạng xã hội, xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân trên mạng xã hội, sinh viên.

**PERSONAL BRANDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA: AN INSIGHT INTO STUDENTS
OF THE FACULTY OF BUSINESS ENGLISH,
FOREIGN TRADE UNIVERSITY**

Abstract

Although personal branding on social media is commonly practiced among young people, it remains as a new concept, and has yet to be investigated thoroughly in Vietnam. This study is one of the pioneers in describing the personal branding on social media situation among undergraduates in Vietnam. It adopts a qualitative approach, with an online survey of a total 248 students from the Faculty of Business English (FBE) of Foreign Trade University. The findings indicate that overall, students' self-branding practices on social media are ineffective, and the perceptions of participants towards this topic are incomplete. Consequently, some recommendations have been given to help

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FBE students better construct their personal brands on social media. At the end of the study, limitations and contribution of the study are also discussed.

Keywords: personal branding, social media, personal branding on social media, students.

1. Introduction

“In a tough job market, differentiating yourself from others with skills and background similar to yours is a necessity (Simons, 2012).”

In the increasingly competitive labor market, an individual is expected to prove that he/she is the right fit for the vacancy through self-marketing skills. According to researchers, personal branding can provide students with "a set of competitive skills and tools that can be utilized not only upon graduation when applying for employment but also throughout a lifetime of career changes and expanding business arrangement" (Manai & Holmlund, 2015), and should begin long before anyone starts their job search (Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015). Statistics show that the utilization and popularity of social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, have grown in the last ten years and are increasingly deep-rooted into our daily communication practice (Herold, 2017). Today, with almost all students acquiring their own social media accounts and the growing number of influencers and online celebrities, youngsters are, more than ever, encouraged to reveal themselves on Internet platforms.

Over the past decade, many studies have been conducted on the personal branding topic under the keywords of *personal branding* (Wee & Brooks, 2010), *self-marketing* (Shepherd, 2005), *personal marketing* (Kotler *et al.*, 2005), *human branding* (Close *et al.*, 2011; Moulard *et al.*, 2015), and *self-branding* (Hearn, 2008; Marwick, 2013), etc. Besides, more and more books, magazines, articles, specialized documents, training programs and personal coaches are available to give effective self-branding instructions (Khedher, 2014). About self-marketing on social media, most researchers focus on this practice in different platforms such as YouTube (Chen, 2013), Twitter (Brems *et al.*, 2016; Page, 2012; Papacharissi, 2012), Instagram (Liu *et al.*, 2017), and LinkedIn (McCorkle *et al.*, 2012; Dijck, 2013), etc. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of work investigating the self-branding practice on social media in general. Nanayakkara and Dissanayake (2020) have indicated this gap. They stated:

There is only a limited number of studies carried out on "Personal Branding in Social Media," and therefore, to fill the literature gap, more research studies, conceptual frameworks, articles need to carry out in this regard.

Some other articles examining the subject of students also mentioned this issue. Labrecque *et al.* (2011) encouraged additional research to include more diverse evaluators and expand the framework to different cohorts and cultures. Or Manai and Holmlund (2015) believed other subjects beyond their research scope, including other faculties, should also be considered in further studies to provide a more comprehensive insight into higher students' self-branding.

In Vietnam, studies on self-branding in general and on social media, in particular, are still very humble in number. *Định vị bản thân – Bí quyết xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân trên mạng xã hội* by Le (2018) is one of the few works about self-marketing in Vietnamese, by a Vietnamese, while *Xây dựng thương hiệu cá nhân của một số chính trị gia trên thế giới và bài học kinh nghiệm cho Việt Nam* examines the case of foreign politicians.

To the author's best knowledge, this present study is the first attempt to research Vietnamese undergraduates' personal branding on social media. It aims at exploring the online self-branding practices of FBE students and answering the primary question: "How can FBE students improve their self-marketing practices on social media?", which is broken down into three following secondary research questions:

- (1) Do FBE students acknowledge personal branding practice on social media and its importance?
- (2) Are FBE students' personal brand building practices, in general, and on social media, effective, particularly under employers' perspectives?
- (3) How can FBE students improve their personal branding practices on social media platforms, with the primary view to meet recruiters' expectations?

The research objectives are threefold: (1) to understand how FBE students perceive and build their brands on social media, (2) to examine whether the gap between FBE students' self-marketing practice on social media and recruiters' expectations exists, and (3) to suggest suitable strategies for FBE students to effectively market themselves online, especially to match recruiters' expectations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Personal Branding

Since the late 1990s, personal branding has become a popular subject of self-improvement books and consultancy service where advice is given for getting ahead in the labor market. The term *personal branding* was first introduced by Ries and Trout in 1980 under *individual branding* (Khedher, 2014). Until later, when Tom Peters released *The Brand Called You* (1997) did "personal branding" become popular: "We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You". Many scholars have made efforts to give definition for "personal branding," and they all share the same theme of perception. Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos believed "Personal branding is what people say about you when you are not in the room." Some researchers highlighted the relationship between self-branding and the marketplace: Personal branding is related to "concepts of product development and promotion [...] used to market persons for entry into or transition within the labor market" (Lair *et al.*, 2005). Shepherd (2005) stated that self-marketing involved various activities individuals undertake to make themselves stand out in the marketplace. Hughes (2007) suggested an interesting idea on how to define personal branding by simply adding "person" to the brand definition of American Marketing Association: Just like goods or services, persons are branded to differentiate themselves from other competitors in the market.

2.2. Building an Authentic Personal Branding

Rampersad (2008) presented the definition and importance of building authentic personal branding: "Your personal brand should be authentic; reflect your true character; and be built on your values, strengths, uniqueness, and genius. If you are branded in this organic, authentic, and holistic way, your personal brand will be strong, clear, complete, and valuable to others." It was also highlighted that authentic personal branding could "help you unlock your potential and build a trusted image." William Arruda, one of the most famous self-branding gurus, also emphasized

the role of authenticity when constructing a person's brand: "to build your brand, you have to dig deep in who you are."

"Everyone has a personal brand, but having it is not enough," said Karaduman (2013), implying the need for "a good and proactive management and a good promotion" to popularize the brands." Various authors have generated their own self-branding framework to answer the question of how one can successfully construct their personal brand. According to Arruda (2003), the self-branding process is summarized into three stages of "extract, express, and exude." In detail, an individual should, firstly, discover their value by investigating himself/ herself before building a "personal brand statement," which indicates expertise and uniqueness, according to that attribute set. Lastly, formulating a personal branding strategy is required.

Rampersad (2008) also developed his framework and model for authentic personal branding. The process includes four phases, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

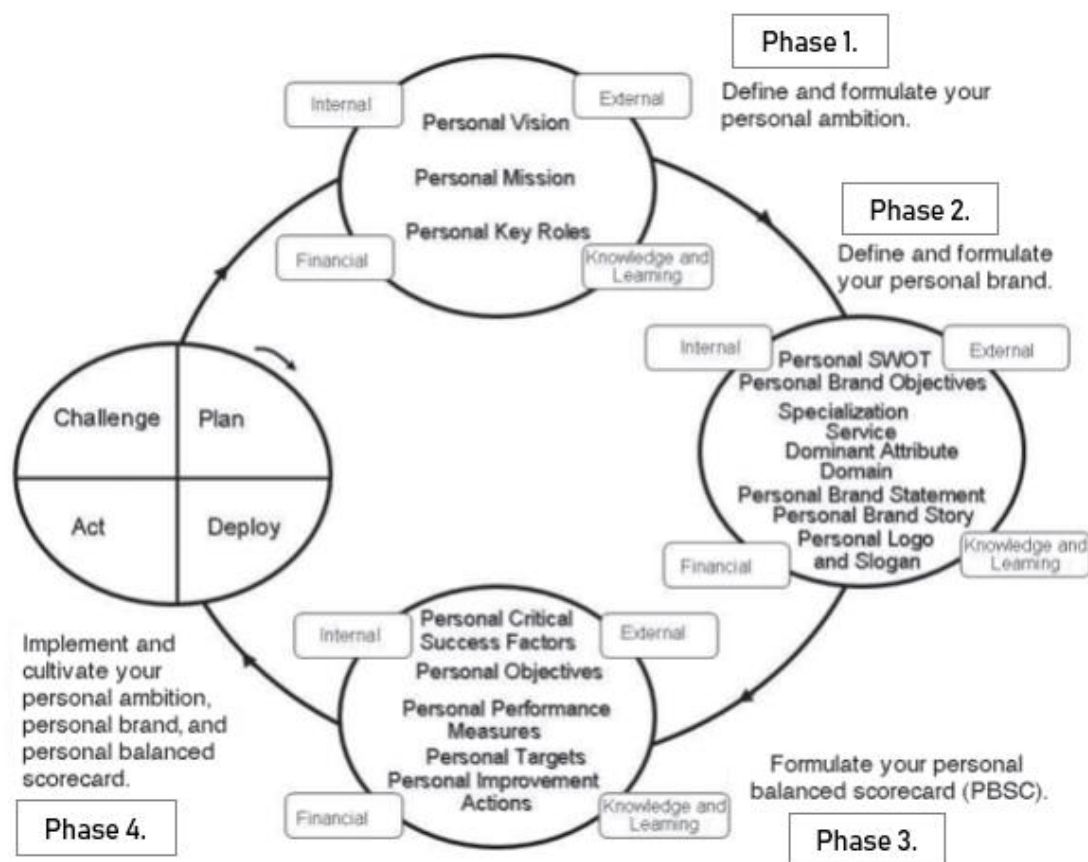


Figure 1. Authentic Personal Branding Model

Source: Rampersad (2008)

The three beginning phases involve four perspectives: internal, external, financial, and knowledge and learning. The process starts with defining and formulating the personal ambition by answering multiple questions, including "what your dreams are, who you are, what you stand for, what makes you unique and special, why you are different from others, what your values are." In phase two, one needs to develop an authentic, distinctive, relevant, consistent, concise, meaningful, and persuasive "personal brand promise" and consider it the guidance of all behaviors and actions they take. The third phase calls for a personal balanced scorecard (PBSC), an action plan to achieve brand objectives while avoiding harmful interference. Finally, the last step is

effectively implementing, nurturing and maintaining the personal ambition, personal brand, and PBSC. The model comprises four wheels, he noted, requiring individuals to continuously follow the cycle to improve in their brands and performance from time to time.

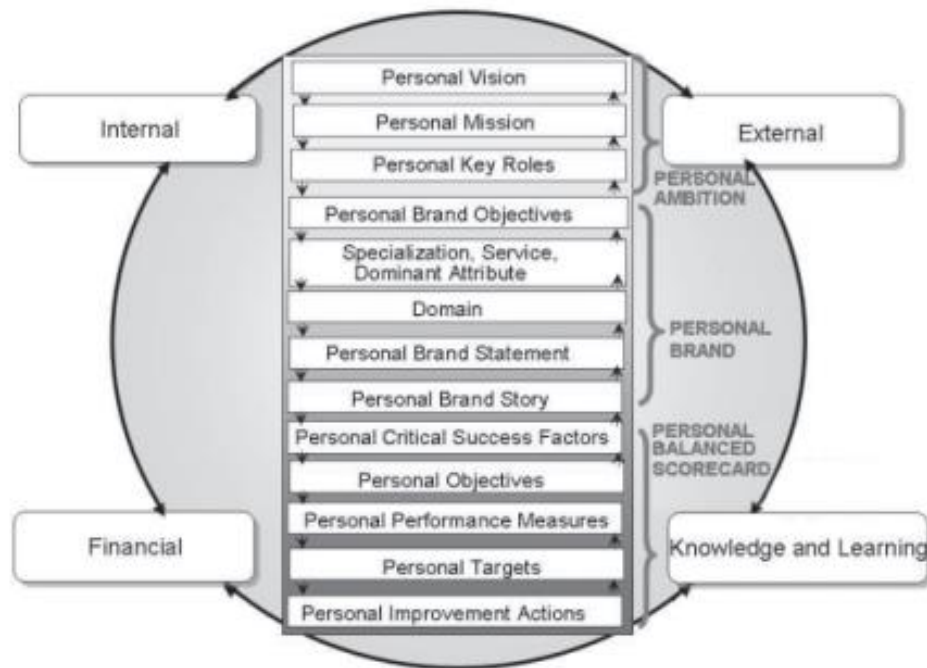


Figure 2. Authentic Personal Branding Framework

Source: Rampersad (2008)

2.3. Personal Branding on Social Media

Social media has been regarded one of the most efficient and widely used tools in developing and establishing an online self-brand (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). Montoya (2002) associated the social media development with “a genie to personal branding”. Meanwhile, McNally and Speak (2010) considered social media “the most powerful personal branding building tools created in our lifetime.”

The traditional media uses mainly newspaper to convey information, so in the old days, to self-brand, people had to pay for journalists to write about them. Today, anyone can upload their text, pictures, and video instantly from their smartphones or computers with no coding skills required and at reasonable prices. “Now the game has changed,” stated by Sirkiä, a well-known coach on self-branding.

The use of social media for self-marketing has contributed to the online influencer and micro-celebrity phenomenon. Ever since YouTube allowed monetization in 2006, it has become an industry, attracting millions of people to upload content on this platform. One can get paid through views, brand sponsorship, Google Ads, and many other methods. Other social media sites such as Instagram have also become great choices to gain reputation and earn money. Influencer Marketing Hub (2021) reported that the influencer marketing industry is expanding and expected to reach 13.0 billion dollars in 2021, creating tons of opportunities for the masses.

70% of employers use social media to screen applicants during the recruitment process (CareerBuilder, 2018), and can exclude job-seekers whose personal brands disagree with the company values (Parks-Yancy & Cooley, 2015). On employment-oriented social media sites like LinkedIn, recruiters always look for complete profiles, including job history, education, and accomplishments (Hood *et al.*, 2014; Zide *et al.*, 2014). Besides, desired position, specific skills, volunteer experience, and relevant contact are very crucial. Lastly, candidates are expected to upload professional photos to their employment-oriented social media accounts.

Managers also acknowledge that candidates join multiple nonemployment-oriented sites, where they tend to express themselves more casually. Sometimes, parts of the content delivered or shared can hurt their self-brands and become the reasons why they are not selected for the vacancies. Therefore, they tend to practice more cyber-vetting (using informal, non-institutional, online sources to investigate candidates and assist personnel selection decision-making) (Berkelaar, 2014). In 2010, Karl *et al.* listed 10 dangerous content to avoid on Facebook, one of the most popular nonemployment-oriented sites (later presented in Table 6). Those criteria have been in line with many previous studies (Minor-Cooley, & Parks-Yancy, 2020; Drouin *et al.*, 2016; Roth *et al.*, 2016; Ouiridi, 2016). To Zide *et al.* (2014), some mistakes related to grammar, spelling, or unprofessional email address may hinder the chance of onboarding, and become an important metric, especially for language learners like FBE students.

On the other hand, business owners, these days, can control current employees by accessing whatever their workers deliver online and decide if that content aligns with their enterprises' objectives (CareerBuilder, 2018). Furthermore, helping employees better market themselves on social media can be a great way to spread the companies' positive image, thereby increasing brand awareness and attracting more customers and employees. In *Divergent attitudes to social media governance* (2017), the author emphasized: "Social media can function as a site for employees to operate as corporate brand ambassadors."

3. Methodology

Not much information about self-marketing on social media has been collected in Vietnam particularly. To understand and accurately describe the personal branding on social media situation, the study adopts the qualitative research approach. The primary data are collected using a online questionnaire survey applied to 248 FBE students (N=248) during the last two week of May 2021, and are analyzed using descriptive method.

The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions, consisting of 15 questions, and divided into five sections. Besides background information (question 1 to 3), social media use among participants (question 4 to 6), awareness towards personal branding on social media evaluation (question 7 to 11), personal branding effectiveness evaluation (question 12), and personal branding evaluation on social media effectiveness under recruiter's expectations (question 13 to 15) are four criteria to examine participants' personal branding practice on social media. The study makes use of multiple question types, both close (mainly multiple choice and Five-point Likert Scale questions) and open-ended.

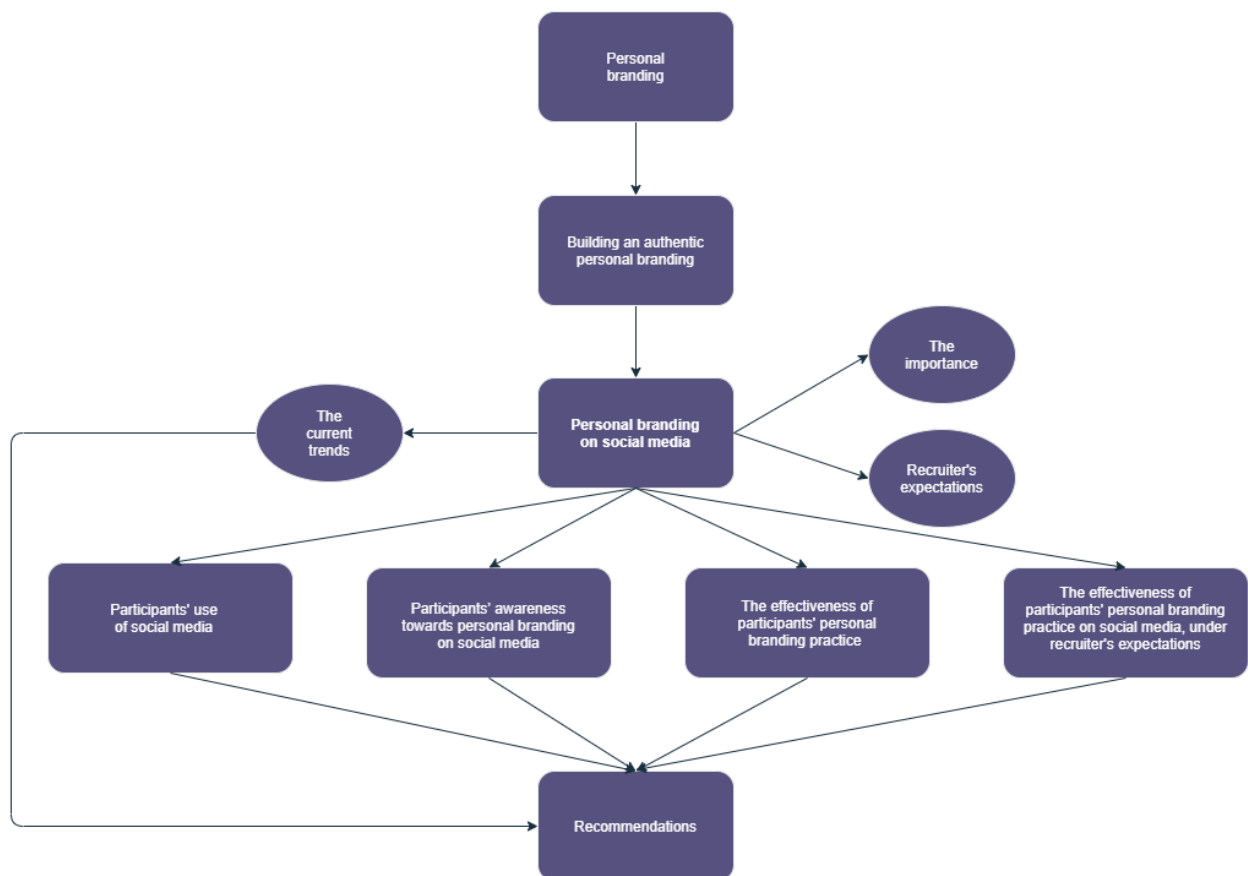


Figure 3. Research Structure

Source: Author

4. Results

The Social Media Use of the Faculty of Business English Students

Social media is getting more and more popular globally, and FBE students are not behind the trend. 100% of the participants reply “yes” to question 4 “Do you use social media?”. Findings from question 5 reveal that Facebook is the most popular sites, as 99% of students are Facebook users. It is followed by YouTube (97.6%), Zalo (94.8%), and Instagram (91.5%). LinkedIn is surprisingly not present in the top 5, with only 46.6% of all participants using it.

71.4% of participants say they have no specific purpose when choosing a social media site to use in question 6. According to the remaining 28.6% of respondents, FBE students tend to utilize social media for eight purposes. Communication is the priority as the keywords "communicate," "keep contact," "chat," or "connect" appear consistently. The second position goes to information update/search and is followed by working, entertainment, information sharing, education, and inspiration. Gaining popularity appears at the end of the list as very few students consider it a purpose to join any sites. Additionally, Facebook is not only FBE students’ favorite platform but also serves almost all purposes, except for finding inspiration.

The data suggests that a decent number of students are using social media in such a passive manner and have not fully exploited it: they are receiving information rather than offering something about themselves.

Awareness towards Personal Branding on Social Media of the Faculty of Business English Students

Table 3. Participant's Awareness Towards Personal Branding and The Effects of Social Media Appearance on Recruiter's Decision-making Process

Questions	Answers (in percentage)		
	Yes	No	Maybe/ I don't know
Question 7. Do you consider yourself a brand?	39.1%	60.5%	0.4%
Question 9. If you apply for a job, do you think the recruiter will look into your social media profile if you have one?	85.5%	2.4%	12.1%
Question 10. Do you think your social media appearance will affect the recruiter's decision to hire you?	35.5%	4.8%	59.7%
Question 11. Do you think your appearance on social media is effective in the eyes of recruiters?	66.9%	11.3%	21.8%

Source: Author

Surveyed students have not fully understood and are even unfamiliar with the term personal branding. This conclusion is drawn from 60.5% of respondents not considering themselves brands, while only 39.1% believing they are. However, nearly 90% of participants agree that social media is very likely to affect people's perceptions about somebody.

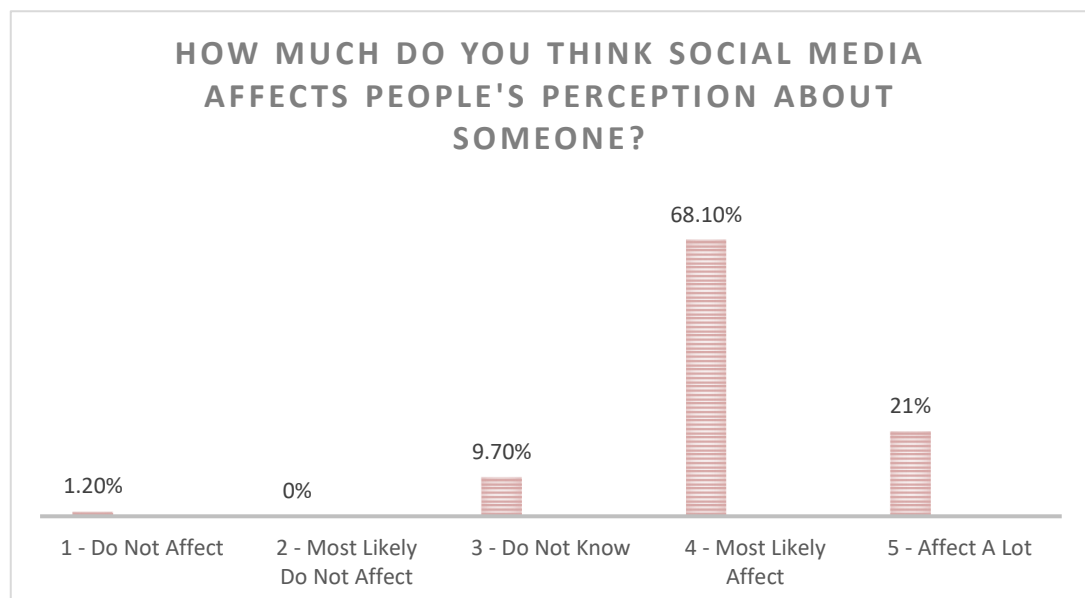


Figure 5. Participant's Opinions about the Influence of Social Media on People's Perceptions about Others (Question 8)

Source: Author

85.5% of students think that recruiters will scan their social media profiles when they apply for a job. This opinion is consistent with the aforementioned cyber-vetting. A smaller number of participants (12.1%) whose answer is “I don’t know” are skeptical about this practice.

More than half of the survey participants (59.7%) are questioning the influence of social media appearance on the hiring decision of recruiters by answering “Maybe” to question 10. Another 35.5% believe in this effect, while the remaining answer “No.”

Almost 67% of participants are confident with their appearance on social media. Only 11.3% of participants believe their profiles fail to attract recruiters. 21.8% cannot give a clear answer to this question.

The Effectiveness of Student’s Personal Brand Building Practices at the Faculty of Business English.

Table 4. An Evaluation of Participant’s Personal Branding Practice Effectiveness (Question 12)

Statements	Answers (in percentage)				
	Yes	Rather yes	Rather not	Not	I don’t know
12.1. I have clearly defined career target, a vision of myself in the future	12.5	32.2	37.5	16.1	1.7
12.2 I realize a development plan of my own career consequently	11.7	39.1	40.3	7.3	1.6
12.3 I know my strengths as an employee	14.9	37.1	12.1	35.1	0.8
12.4. I know my weaknesses as an employee	16.5	27	35.1	19.8	1.6
12.5. I know what I do better than colleagues (what makes me different)	18.1	38.7	33.9	7.7	1.6
12.6. I believe that I am competitive in the labor market	16.9	40.3	31.9	8.5	2.4
12.7. I know what I want others to think and say about me	50.8	28.6	10.9	3.2	6.5
12.8. I know what others think and say about me	4	14.1	23	42.3	16.6
12.9. I want to have a strong personal brand	55.6	13.3	6	2.4	22.7
12.10. I want to know more about methods and tools of building personal brand	56.5	15.3	4	1.6	22.6

Source: Author

Question 12 requires participants to respond to 10 statements. The data collected are analyzed following the four phases in Rampersad’s Authentic personal branding model.

The very first phrase of the model is defining and formulating personal ambition. The data show that overall, FBE students fail to complete this stage. Most students (37.5%) believe they

“rather” fail to define their career targets and who they want to be in the future; another 16.1% are unable to do so. There are more people understand their strengths as employees than weaknesses. Additionally, a high proportion of respondents have not been clear about their strengths (35.1% reply “not”) and weaknesses (35.1% reply “rather not”). Though many students (33.9%) have “rather not” figured out what distinguishes them from the others, the good news is, in total, 56.8% of FBE participants have succeeded in doing so. While more than half of surveyed students (16.9% reply “yes,” and 40.3% reply “rather yes”) believe they are competitive in the labor market, a decent number of students (31.9%) are quite unsure about their competitiveness.

It can be concluded that most FBE students can develop an adequate self-brand promise required in phase two of the model. Together with the majority of respondents acknowledging their uniqueness, more than 50% of participants are sure about what they want others to think and say about them, and another 28.6% are rather certain about it.

Phase three involves the PBSC formulation. From statement 12.1 and 12.2, it can be seen that there are more people having realized development plans than those having clearly defined career targets, which means they are trying to achieve a goal that is not clearly identified. Furthermore, the largest proportion of students (40.3%) having “rather not” and another 7.3% “not” realized their development plans suggest that FBE students have difficulty completing this phase.

From statement 12.8, there witnesses a relatively high proportion of respondents (42.4%) say they do “not” know what others think and say about them, while 23% of students report the answer of “rather not”. Besides, a rising number of respondents choose the answer “I don’t know.” The results imply that most students lack efficient self-reflection, and therefore, they are unlikely to effectively maintain or nurture their personal brand as required in phase 4.

On the other hand, the survey results reveal a great number of students interested in personal branding. 55.6% of participants want to have a strong self-brand, and even more (56.4%) are curious about methods and tools for building personal brands.

The Effectiveness of Personal Branding on Social Media, under Recruiter’s Expectations, of the Faculty of Business English Students

The section is divided into three main parts for better assessment: self-branding practices on employment-oriented sites, on non-employment-oriented platforms, and communication proficiency and email professionalism. Participants are required to rate on a Five-point Likert scale for each statement.

On employment-oriented social media sites. In question 13, students are asked to rate five statements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 means strongly disagree, and 5 means strongly agree.

Table 5 shows that items 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3 have the highest mean values (greater than 3), while the degrees of agreement on the two remaining ones are lower (2.59 for 13.4 and 2.7 for 13.5). This means respondents are generally doubtful about their profile pictures professionalism, if they have included necessary skills and if the working profile is up-to-date. Moreover, participants seem to underestimate the role of civic or volunteer activities or having relevant contacts. The standard deviation ranges from 1.025 to 1.173, indicating that the data is quite spreading out.

Table 5. An Effectiveness Evaluation of Participant's Personal Branding Practices on Employment-oriented Social Media Sites, under Recruiter's Expectations (Question 13)

Variable	Description	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
13.1	I describe my profile picture as professional	1	5	3.11	1.026
13.2	I include specific skills related to the professions I am working on/ seeking	1	5	3.36	1.025
13.3	My profile (including job history, education, and accomplishments) is complete and up-to-date	1	5	3.41	1.106
13.4	I include civic or volunteer activities on my social media sites	1	5	2.59	1.156
13.5	All of my contacts are relevant	1	5	2.70	1.173

Source: Author

On nonemployment-oriented social media sites. Question 14 makes use of 10 criteria in the study of Karl et. al. (2010), and a Five-point Likert Scale where 1 is interpreted as very unlikely, and 5 as very likely.

Table 6. An Effectiveness Evaluation of Participant's Personal Branding Practices on Non-employment-oriented Social Media Sites, under Recruiter's Expectations (Question 14)

Items	Description	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
14.1	Self-photo in the nude	1	5	1.49	0.895
14.2	Self-photo with sexual props	1	5	1.52	0.886
14.3	Comments regarding your use of illegal drugs	1	5	1.39	0.813
14.4	Self-photo with firearms	1	5	1.40	0.894
14.5	Self-photo semi-nude	1	5	2.37	1.300
14.6	Comments regarding your participation in activities which are in violation of University Policy (Student Code of Conduct)	1	5	2.20	1.259
14.7	Comments regarding your sexual activities or sexual preferences	1	5	2.70	1.652
14.8	Self-photo (sexy or provocative)	1	5	2.92	1.744
14.9	Comments regarding your personal use of alcohol	1	5	2.30	1.311

Items	Description	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
14.10	Self-photo drinking alcohol	1	5	2.31	1.402

Source: Author

With the means ranging from 1.39 to 1.52, most students state that they are very unlikely to upload or share content 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, and 14.4. The standard deviation among these four contents (from 0.813 to 0.895) indicates the small spread of data. On considering the six other contents, it can be seen that the mean has changed to above 2, indicating the higher likelihood of posting these contents than the four first ones. The data are also more widespread with standard deviations ranging from 1.259 to 1.744. Content 14.8 is the most likely to be uploaded due to the highest mean (2.92). Besides, content 14.5, 14.7, or 14.9 can also be commonly present on students' social media sites.

To sum up, overall, participants know what to avoid posting on nonemployment-oriented sites. However, there are still some harmful contents likely to be uploaded, making students' appearance on social media less effective in the eyes of employers.

Communication proficiency and email professionalism on social media. FBE undergraduates are reported to acquire impressive communication skills: most students rate themselves grade 4 out of 5. Moreover, the highest proportion of respondents believe they have professional email addresses.

Table 7. Participant's Evaluation of Their Communication Skills and Email Professionalism (Question 15)

Items	Description	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
15.1	Your communication skills quality	1	5	3.67	0.950
15.2	Your email address professionalism	1	5	3.60	1.067

Source: Author

5. Discussion

The study shows that FBE students do not fully understand the concept of personal branding. The minority of them consider themselves brands or have clear purposes before choosing a social media platform to use: mainly for communication and information acquirement. While a number of respondents believe social media can impact one's perceptions others and acknowledge the cyber-vetting practices, many still think that social media have no influence on the recruitment process. This proves that how FBE students perceive personal branding, this practice on social media, and its importance is incomplete. Not only Vietnamese students have this problem. Heli Sirkiä shared that personal branding was still a new concept in Finland, and it was considered "the icing on the cake." Mattinen confirmed the point by stating that the Finns did not really know about personal branding (Le, 2019).

The data also reveal that the actions taken by most respondents in building personal brands are not sufficient to achieve authentic personal brands. Students have difficulty covering the three stages presented in the Authentic personal branding model. It is clear that participants are

somewhat unsure about themselves and their practices as they tend to answer "rather" instead of firmly responding. On the other hand, the results indicate that most students can identify their uniqueness, and are interested in building strong personal brands and related methods. Consequently, they have the chance to effectively market themselves once they are introduced or educated about this concept. However, the problem is exposed: FBE students receive little training or encouragement to self-brand. Shepherd (2005) once raised this issue by mentioning the absence of personal branding in marketing curricular in higher education.

Personal branding practices on social media are examined on both employment-oriented and nonemployment-oriented platforms. It can be inferred that students' practices to build their brands on employment-oriented sites have not been sufficient. In detail, most participants are able to meet only two out of five expectations of recruiters. In terms of nonemployment-oriented sites, a significant proportion of respondents are aware of which contents are harmful under the recruiter's expectations. However, the likelihood of posting or commenting on some faux pas remains high, which conflicts students' confidence in their appearance on social media. With that being said, FBE students highly appreciate their communication skills and email address professionalism. These two criteria, though they seem insignificant, can greatly influence the staffing decision of many recruiters.

The research is one of the few studies in the world, and the very first one in Vietnam to examine undergraduates' personal branding practice on social media. Not simply describing the situation from student's views, it indirectly incorporates opinions and expectations of recruiters and experts to come up with recommendations helping students better construct their brands online.

6. Recommendation and conclusion

In his white paper, Jerome Joseph (2019) indicated some trends and tips highly applicable to the general personal branding or specifically on social media. From the study findings and these key trends, some recommendations are given as follows:

Self-education. People are encouraged to learn more about personal branding to understand its critical role, and convert how they see social media (from a place to get impacted to the place to present themselves and impact others' perceptions of them).

Choosing suitable sites. While using more than a social media site should be encouraged, Joseph (2019) believed that it was even more integral to identify where brand owners could optimize their ROI (Return on Investment). The tip is choosing the sites where their target audience is most active to deliver value and engage with them. Specifically, FBE students are advised to take advantage of LinkedIn, as job-seeking is one of their priorities, according to the author's observation.

Effectively managing contents and content delivery methods. Undergraduates should carefully consider before uploading anything on social media publicly: avoiding faux pas content on non-employment oriented sites and completing their employment oriented profiles to meet recruiters' expectations.

Videos and audios are on trend, and highly beneficial to boost personal brands. While student influencers should construct themed YouTube channels or podcast, ordinary undergraduates can create video resumes.

Constructing personal branding strategies. To take full advantage of self-brands, persons are advised to consciously structure strategies, utilize tactics, and better manage their brands. Rampersad's authentic personal branding model (2008) appears effective to help an individual construct his/her authentic personal brand. In detail, FBE students are required to complete the four steps of the model, focusing on carefully investigating themselves, constructing a plan accordingly and regularly applying self-reflection.

It has been found that the individuals' appearance on social media can form others' perceptions towards them. And in the context where the trend of micro-celebrities is rising, and cyber-vetting is commonly practiced, it is imperative to figure out how to effectively manage one's personal brand on social media. The study focuses on exploring the personal branding practices on social media of undergraduates from the Faculty of Business English, Foreign Trade University to give them some recommendations. It has found that most students are neither fully aware of personal branding nor paying enough attention to what they put online. Overall, FBE students do not practice personal branding consciously and have not applied any strategies to develop authentic personal brands. Under recruiters' perspectives, some practices of students on social media are considered inappropriate. However, FBE students have the potential to construct strong and effective self-brands. Some recommendations have been given to help students self-brand better.

Further research into personal branding on social media should examine the practice on a wider scope of population for a more accurate and comprehensive picture. Additionally, while this research sees the issue from students' view, it is also beneficial to incorporate experts' or recruiters' viewpoints instead of using secondary data. Therefore, students can gain some helpful advice as specialists examine their cases.

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