Building a Personal Brand as a CEO: A Case Study of Vivy Yusof, the Cofounder of FashionValet and the dUCk Group

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Abstract
Social media is a new platform for CEOs to build their image and create a strong personal brand to represent themselves and their company. This research examines an outstanding Malaysian fashion icon and social media-savvy businesswoman with over a million followers on Instagram, Vivy Yusof, the youngest Malaysian e-commerce mogul and an example of a successful CEO who has used personal branding to build an empire in the fashion industry. The objectives of this research are to identify the type of messages Vivy Yusof communicates to her audience through her personal Instagram posts and to identify the ways Vivy Yusof’s audience engages with her posts on Instagram. Her Instagram post content is classified using the Honeycomb framework that comprises seven functional building blocks, namely, presence, relationships, reputation, groups, identity, conversations, and sharing. In this study, the content of Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts is categorized by how she focuses on the various functional building blocks in her posts and the implications these blocks have on how her audience interacts with the posts. Her social media presence confirms the importance of CEO personal branding because of her role and influence on the masses evidenced by the willingness of her followers to interact (through likes and comments) and engage with her posts on any subject matter, relating either to her business or personal life. The study contributes to a growing body of literature on personal branding strategies by shedding light on the association between content strategies and engagement with social media content.

Keywords
CEO, personal brand, Instagram, fashion, Honeycomb framework, user engagement, Vivy Yusof

Introduction
Traditional brand research has focused on generic terms for product or business brands. Social media has changed the way branding is approached by introducing the concept of a personal brand. A personal brand helps people effectively market themselves and their personalities. As such, social media and active involvement on social media significantly influence personal branding (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Jacobson, 2020; Karaduman, 2013). The phenomenon of social media has induced a change in branding strategy, with new actors and new influencers making an impact. Most often, personal branding prevails among celebrities, athletes, politicians, and public figures because these individuals need to be noticeable and unique and publicize their competitive advantage to continuously acquire influence and power (Glucksman, 2017; Gorbatov et al., 2018). Many CEOs utilize personal social media accounts to create personal branding by posting about their personal life, building interaction among users, and being transparent about their lifestyle and company activities. CEOs’ active involvement on social media can significantly influence brand engagement even among noncustomers (Andreini et al., 2020; Erdoğanuş & Esen, 2018; Karaduman, 2013).

Personal Branding
Tom Peters introduced the concept of personal branding in his article “The Brand Called You,” which was published in Fast Company magazine in 1997 (Peters, 2017). Since then, personal branding has become increasingly important in the digital age of social media marketing (Figurska, 2016). Nevertheless, there are some misunderstandings of the meaning of personal branding; people typically regard the self-marketing of a brand or product as personal branding. According to Rampersad (2008), personal branding is related to the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and
perceptions a person may create in the minds of others who come across that person’s name or meet them face-to-face. Personal branding relates to the development and management of personal brand identity by individuals who apply marketing concepts to themselves for advertising purposes. A personal brand distinguishes a person from others, influences how others perceive the brand owner, creates a favorable reputation, and develops a sense of uniqueness (Figurska, 2016).

In recent years, businesses have begun to recognize the importance of creating a CEO personal brand as it is particularly impactful on company reputation and business performance as well as markets themselves (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). With the rise of social media, many CEOs have begun to participate in social media as an integral part of both public relations and marketing campaigns. According to Taylor (2019), the top 10 most connected leaders on social media are Doug McMillon (Walmart), Brent Saunders (Allergan), Ramon Laguarta (PepsiCo), Adena Friedman (Nasdaq), Dan Schulman (PayPal), Hans Vestberg (Verizon Communications), Ben van Beurden (Royal Dutch Shell), Mary Barra (General Motors), Lynn Good (Duke Energy), and Ed Bastian (Delta Air Lines). In these cases, the CEO became the face of the company and part of the public perception of their company’s value and culture.

Strong personal branding can help firms draw investors’ and customers’ attention (Keller, 2009). Personal branding also contributes to the creation of an emotional connection and resonance with target audiences, thus building attraction and fostering loyalty (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). Unfortunately, about 61% of Fortune 500 CEOs do not have a presence on any social media channel, and fewer than 12% are active on more than one channel, although CEO branding is increasingly important (Conner, 2018). Furthermore, a Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC) report featured a survey conducted by Brunswick, an advisory firm specializing in critical business issues, which tracked the social media presence of 790 business leaders and showed that only 48% of CEOs in the Standard and Poor’s 500 (S&P 500) and Financial Times Stock Exchange 350 (FTSE 350) have a social media presence (Taylor, 2019).

Social media has changed the interaction interface between CEOs and customers and permits them to engage in both personal and real-time interactions. CEOs have responded to this change in understanding consumer behavior by making social media an essential and integral component of their personal branding strategy. Many CEOs are increasingly involved in social media activities that are linked heavily to the notion of celebrity CEOs (Scheidt et al., 2018). According to Andreini et al. (2020), CEO brand image consists of a personality dimension and the corporate dimensions of reputation and leadership. Either deliberately or inadvertently, CEOs are building a persona on social media and becoming public figures and inspirational leaders (Fleck et al., 2014). CEOs’ appearance and credibility on social media have begun to impact company performance (Bai et al., 2019; Nadkami & Herrmann, 2010) as they represent their company’s values and act as effective spokespersons for their brand or product (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2019; Ferns et al., 2008).

Occasionally, CEOs share posts that reveal information about their personal lives as well as a combination of product and company branding. CEOs understand that their business image and reputation are strengthened by their social media presence and engagement (Weber Shandwick, 2012). The opportunity to reach customers directly and interact in real time is a crucial dimension of social media engagement, which in turn is a key dimension of social media strategy (Schultz, 2016). Moreover, different content types facilitate various levels of interactivity, determined by the degree to which users can be influenced through posts they are interested in and more likely to respond to. As a consequence of the rapid growth of social media, a major concern for CEOs is how CEO personal branding can be leveraged to reach customers and strengthen customer engagement, and it is closely linked to the notion of CEOs’ personal brands. While CEOs have become recognized as a brand, there has been limited insight into the key dimensions of social media post content that determine personal branding for business leaders based on their social media posts that contribute to online engagement (Lijnjua et al., 2018). This study seeks to explain CEOs’ personal brand post engagement in the form of likes and comments on the basis of post content. Arguably, an understanding of CEOs’ personal brand posts will, with help from this study’s empirical evidence, allow us to determine how CEOs make use of their social media posts and which posts contribute to engagement activity.

CEO personal branding on social media is a new research problem, so there is a lack of empirical research in this area. Much has been written about the power of a CEO creating a personal brand, but there is very little empirical evidence regarding successful CEO personal branding strategies. The present research considers an outstanding Malaysian fashion icon and social media–savvy businesswoman with over a million followers on Instagram, Vivy Yusof, the cofounder of FashionValet and founder of the dUCk Group. Forbes describes her as the youngest Malaysian ecommerce mogul and an example of a successful Malaysian businesswoman who has used personal branding to build an empire in the local fashion industry (Low, 2017).

**Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development**

**Honeycomb Framework**

Previous research has primarily focused on commercial brand content and individual user interactions, and the product or service marketing strategy is often overemphasized (Coursaris et al., 2016). In 2011, Jan Kietzmann, Kristopher
Hermkens, and Ian McCarthy (Kietzmann et al., 2011), a group of professors from Canada, created the Honeycomb framework to identify major social media activities by considering the reasons why users engage with social media. Through the lens of its seven functional building blocks, the Honeycomb framework plays a critical role in understanding media use and unpacks the characteristics of social media activities. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), there are seven social media building blocks that are neither mutually exclusive nor do all blocks need to be included in a particular social media context. The building blocks are identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups.

The seven functional building blocks of the Honeycomb framework help increase understanding of the key functionalities of different social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Foursquare, YouTube, and Facebook. The Honeycomb functional blocks can help social media users understand the social media landscape and identify the blocks that influence their audience the most. According to previous studies, different types of content in a post can elicit different responses from users (Luarn et al., 2015; Schultz, 2016).

The present research uses the lens of the Honeycomb framework as a social media content typology for CEO personal branding activities. The aim of this research is to understand how CEOs use social media in their daily lives articulated through human activities. The human element is at the forefront of personal branding strategy. Without the human element, the factors that make a user’s personality relatable would not be visible. The Honeycomb framework contributes to the human element of social media content strategy, which makes this framework stand out from other forms of content strategy. The analysis of the type of CEO personal brand posts based on the seven blocks of the Honeycomb framework contributes to a new understanding of creating a CEO’s personal brand and unpacking online users’ engagement, thus integrating the social interactions between online users in the analysis of personal brand creation. Different content types facilitate various levels of engagement, determined by the degree to which users can be influenced through what they are interested in:

- **Identity**: Content that reveals identity and shows personal characteristics and personality is one of the most essential parts of creating a CEO’s personal brand (Osnat & Sam, 2018). Motivated online users are likely to react to this type of social media content. According to Lueck (2015), personal posts with identity content, such as posts that expose personality and reveal the user’s personal life to create a personal brand, motivated online engagement. This study proposes that online users are more likely to engage with identity content than with other types of content.

- **Conversations**: The ability to motivate online user interaction directly through social media content is a key dimension of personal branding strategy. From the uses and gratifications theory perspective, conversations content is an element of social media posts that is designed to motivate online participation behaviors, such as providing comments and feedback and participating in online discussions (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Dolan et al., 2016; Luarn et al., 2015). The present study proposes that online users are more likely to engage with conversations posts than with other types of posts. Therefore, this study suggests that conversations content generates a higher level of online engagement than does the other types of content.

- **Sharing**: The sharing block represents the extent to which online users exchange, distribute, and receive user-generated content through social media, including text, audio, and visual posts. In general, the sharing characteristic represents social media functions that allow users to share any type of social media content with and among users. In the case of CEO personal branding activities in social media posts, sharing content contains information associated with specific products, brands, and related marketing activity. Previous studies have indicated that sharing content related to product or service advertising in brand posts motivates online engagement (Barreto & Ramalho, 2019; Coelho et al., 2016; Dolan et al., 2016; Taecharungroj, 2016). Hence, this study proposes that online users are more likely to engage with sharing content than with other types of content.

- **Presence**: The presence block indicates the extent to which the audience knows whether other people are available and accessible online. It includes knowing where others are in the virtual and/or real world and whether they are available. In the case of CEO personal branding activities in social media posts, the function of the presence block is related to sharing information regarding the CEO’s presence at company activities or corporate functions to promote brand visibility. Furthermore, attaining various forms of product- and company-related event information has been suggested as the most important feature for CEOs to share on social media (Grafström & Falkman, 2017; Linjuan et al., 2018).

- **Relationships**: The relationships block refers to the extent to which audience members relate to one another. Kietzmann et al. (2011) affirmed that “relate” means that two or more users have some form of association that leads them to converse, share objects of sociality, meet up, or simply follow each other as a friend or fan. In the case of personal brand social media activity, the relationships block demonstrates the relationships between the CEO and his or her close friends. Social media content related to personal life stories about friendship and friend appearance is
among the most important content for online engagement in celebrity personal branding (Lueck, 2015) and CEO personal branding (Yue et al., 2019).

- Reputation: The reputation block represents the extent to which the audience knows the social standing of others. In the case of personal brand social media activity, the reputation block is associated with the social media user receiving recognition for their leadership and company achievements. A study by Men and Tsai (2016) revealed that CEOs’ leadership and reputation drive engagement through CEOs’ social media content.

- Groups: The groups block refers to the extent to which the audience is organized or forms communities. In the case of personal brand social media activity, the groups block is related to a CEO’s activities as a team with his or her group of employees. Groups content aims to capture the most important concerns of the CEO and employees in terms of teamwork and working culture. The appearance of a CEO with employees influences perceptions of organizational culture and allows the public to see and connect with that. Previous studies have shown that online users tend to have positive attitudes toward working activity and environment in social media content (Grafström & Falkman, 2017; Linjuan et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** CEO personal branding demonstrates different degrees of online engagement based on different types of content in social media posts.

### The Cofounder of FashionValet and the dUCk Group: Vivy Yusof

Vivy Yusof is the cofounder of FashionValet and the dUCk Group with her husband, Fadzarudin Anuar. FashionValet, which was established in 2010, is a multi-million-dollar company and one of Southeast Asia’s leading fashion e-commerce platforms. The company provides a wide range of exclusive collections from local and regional designers in Southeast Asia. The brand is best known for its wide range of *premium and luxury product lines*. This company started humbly with only three people and 10 brands. By 2017, the company had grown to about 200 employees and more than 170 brands (Syida Lizta, 2019). The company set up offices and warehouses in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. In 2015, FashionValet started expanding from online to offline by launching three physical stores in Malaysia.

The dUCk Group launched in 2014 and became one of the fastest growing brands in Malaysia, as well as on an international scale. It has four physical stores in Malaysia and one in Singapore. The dUCk Group is also well-known for its collaborations with famous local and international brands. The dUCk brand started as a lifestyle brand that sold headscarves and expanded to accessories, cosmetics, stationery, and home and living products. However, the main product line is the dUCk scarves. Today, dUCk scarves have become a phenomenon in Malaysia and more than 4 million have been sold. The dUCk scarves are also well-known for their limited editions from strategic collaborations with international brands, such as Bowerhaus, Swarovski, Royal Brunei Princess, Disney, and Mattel. The limited edition products from the dUCk brand, especially dUCk scarves, have frequently sold out in less than 1 day and often in less than an hour, as soon as they hit the online store (Syida Lizta, 2017).

Vivy Yusof is an outstanding Malaysian entrepreneur, fashion icon, and an active social media influencer for her business. She has been featured in local magazines, such as *Hijabista*, *HerWorld*, and *Prestige*, and international media, including *The New Yorker*, CNN, BBC, and Forbes. Vivy Yusof is the face and leading voice of FashionValet and the dUCk Group, and the success of these two brands can be largely attributed to her. She has gained more than 1.8 million followers on her personal Instagram account and that number is continually growing. Her followers represent approximately 12% of the total of 14 million Instagram users in Malaysia. Vivy Yusof posts about her normal personal life activities and products and things about her company, but, more importantly, each of her posts gains high engagement from her audience.

### Research Objectives and Research Questions

The core goal of this research is to investigate personal branding activities that capture users’ attention, using the seven key building blocks of the Honeycomb framework. According to a previous study, the type of content in a post elicits varying responses from users (Coelho et al., 2016). There are two primary research questions in this study:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** How does Vivy Yusof build her personal brand through Instagram posts that capture users’ attention based on the seven key building blocks of the Honeycomb framework?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** What are the relationships between Instagram post types and user engagement, based on reactions (likes) and connection (comments) to the posts?

### Research Methodology

This study presents a content analysis of Vivy Yusof’s personal Instagram, @vivyyusof. Instagram was chosen as the primary context, given its popularity among online users and advertisers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Instagram offers users an opportunity to engage with posts through likes and comments. Vivy Yusof’s personal Instagram posts over a
6-month period between January 1 and June 30, 2019, were downloaded using 4K Stogram, an Instagram viewer and downloader. This time period was chosen to cover both the normal season and the festive season surrounding the Hari Raya Aidilfitri on June 3, 2019. These different seasons may elicit a different pattern of posts and user engagement behaviors. As Hari Raya Aidilfitri is celebrated as one of the main festivals in Malaysia, it is the most anticipated season for FashionValet every year (Cheong, 2017). Moreover, online users may have more time to engage in social media activities and shop online for festive apparel during this season. Vivy Yusof’s posts were analyzed individually to determine the nature of the content and match each post with the appropriate Honeycomb framework block.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study was conducted using qualitative coding techniques and quantitative statistical analyses. For the qualitative coding techniques, the content analysis was used to interpret the content of each post on Vivy Yusof’s personal Instagram. The Instagram posts were the unit of analysis. Interpreting the characteristics of Instagram post content for each category presented a challenge, especially considering the combination of images, videos, symbols, and text (Shafizan, 2019). To establish the foundation of personal branding as an advertising vehicle, it was paramount that the coding process captured the parameters of the narrative (i.e., visual or text post) in which the brand (i.e., FashionValet or dUCk) was embedded. Data were categorized based on the seven categories of the Honeycomb framework, namely, identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. A codebook was developed as a research instrument with detailed descriptions of the seven honeycomb categories and supporting examples of related images. This study employed two coders to examine all the Instagram posts using this codebook. The coders were instructed to assign each Instagram post to a category block from the Honeycomb framework. The content categorization of posts according to the seven blocks of the Honeycomb framework was an operationalization of the independent variables.

A research team member gave the two coders a short coding training for the initial 30 posts. During the training process, there were several discussions regarding the differences and areas in the codebook that needed further clarification. Then, the actual coding was conducted. The coding process was done iteratively with discussions between the coders and the research team member to reach a consensus on any disagreement. The total inter-coder agreement ranged from 89.47% to 100%, with an average of nearly 92.15%. It is clear that the inter-coder rates are considerably higher than .70, which is the maximum recommendation. The coding showed a reasonably high degree of reliability and reproducibility (Wang et al., 2017).

| Table 1. Summary of the Distribution of Vivy Yusof’s Instagram Posts Over 6 Months. |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------|---------|---------|
| Month                          | No. of days | No. of posts | Likes  | Comments |
| January                        | 31       | 64           | 2,846,219 | 16,467  |
| February                       | 28       | 65           | 2,744,771 | 17,241  |
| March                          | 31       | 57           | 1,972,267 | 10,375  |
| April                          | 30       | 55           | 1,977,273 | 11,924  |
| May                            | 31       | 64           | 3,446,335 | 26,577  |
| June                           | 30       | 50           | 3,038,310 | 17,134  |
| Total                          | 181      | 355          | 16,025,175 | 99,718  |

For the quantitative technique, this study used the analysis of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine online engagement rates based on the type of Instagram post and the seven blocks of the Honeycomb framework. An engagement rate is a metric that measures the level of the social media influencer’s and followers’ interactions through responses in the forms of likes and comments (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). This calculation was used in this study and provides an extensive view of how online users react to a particular post (He & Xu, 2016). When it comes to branding and marketing practices, users’ reactions are regarded as the intention to purchase a specific product or brand (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Momany & Alshboul, 2016).

The dependent variables in this study are likes and comments, and the independent variables are the Instagram posts categorized based on the seven blocks of the Honeycomb framework. If a post had many likes, it may indicate that its content was interesting, which increases its probability of being liked by users. Moreover, a high number of comments on a post represents the degree of success or impact because it suggests that users invested their time and effort to share their opinion.

**Findings**

Based on the timeline used in this research, Table 1 shows the distribution of the number of posts and the total numbers of likes and comments on Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts over the 6-month period.

A total of 355 posts were analyzed over the 6-month period. The average number of posts per month was approximately 59, which means that Vivy Yusof consistently posted about two posts per day. The collected data show that there was a huge difference in the numbers of likes and comments. The total number of likes for Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts over the six months was 16,025,175, which shows high engagement from her followers as they kept showing their support for Vivy Yusof through likes. Based on the data collected, every post from Vivy Yusof got at least 3,000 likes and five comments. Vivy Yusof received a total of 99,718 comments on her Instagram posts. The media format used within the posts was primarily photos, at 51.8%. Albums
Table 2. Media Format of Vivy Yusof’s Instagram Posts.

| Media format of post | Frequency | %   |
|----------------------|-----------|-----|
| Photo                | 184       | 51.8|
| Album                | 94        | 26.5|
| Video                | 77        | 21.7|
| Total                | 355       | 100 |

compared 26.5% of the posts, as shown in Table 2. Albums are a type of post that contain multiple photos. Videos were used the least frequently in posts, at 21.7%.

Answering RQ1: How Does Vivy Yusof Build Her Personal Brand Through Instagram Posts That Capture Users’ Attention Based on the Seven Key Building Blocks of the Honeycomb Framework?

Based on the Honeycomb framework, there are seven elements of social media, namely, identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. An analysis of the text in Vivy Yusof’s posts was conducted to identify which elements matched her posts the most. The analysis of Vivy Yusof’s posts using the Honeycomb elements revealed some of the most important motives for Vivy Yusof’s posts.

Table 3 shows that Vivy Yusof frequently posted sharing content (42.3%) and identity content (42%). The sharing posts consisted of information about her brands, products, and new launches, as she is a product ambassador. These posts were rendered for marketing purposes. The third and fourth highest numbers of Instagram posts were related to Vivy Yusof’s presence (4.5%) and reputation (3.7%). These were followed by relationships (3.4%), groups (2.3%), and conversations (2%).

Identity block. Identity posts comprised the second highest number of posts on Vivy Yusof’s Instagram, at 42%. The identity posts told stories of her personal life and were mainly about her family. She is a wife and a mother of three children. Despite her hectic work schedule, Vivy Yusof constantly posts about her daily activities, providing her audience with a brief glimpse into her real-life story, which people do not normally see. Her sense of humor and candid moments with her children make her Instagram posts genuine and unique about her. The top two posts with the most likes were posts about her wedding story, and the video from her wedding gained over 1 million views. The rest of Vivy Yusof’s posts that had the most likes were candid posts with her three children, especially the youngest child, Sarah. Vivy Yusof’s posts have charismatic and personal touches and the authenticity needed to attract many viewers to connect with her. Vivy Yusof also often posts about her ambitious entrepreneurial journey, offering insight into her work life and inspiring viewers, especially women, to be their best selves so they can accomplish more.

Conversations block. Yusof initiated conversations, as she is dedicated to engaging with her viewers and prompting responses. For example, near the end of Ramadan, Vivy Yusof asked her followers “How are you feeling on this last day of fasting?” She also tried to engage with her viewers by asking for suggestions. This gave the viewers an opportunity to share their opinions, tips, and wisdom.

Sharing block. The sharing block represents the element of sharing information and products related to a marketing message. Vivy Yusof’s sharing posts comprised the highest percentage, at 42.3% of her total posts. Most of Vivy Yusof’s posts show her wearing the latest fashion outfits and new product designs that are sold by FashionValet and the dUCk brand. By providing daily outfits or “outfit-of-the-day (OOTD)” inspiration and tagging all the pieces worn, Vivy Yusof makes it easy to influence users to buy the same outfits that she wears directly through FashionValet. Vivy Yusof’s sharing posts also encourage users to check in for regular updates on what will be the next big thing in the fashion product line available through FashionValet. Vivy Yusof also seems to have her own identity and has high engagement with customers and social media users. Several brands have shown an interest in making her a product ambassador. Vivy Yusof has shared her reviews of several products that she has used, such as Dyson and Mandarin Hotel KL.

Presence block. Presence on social media platforms refers to posts that reveal the location and time of business events. These posts make up 4.5% of Vivy Yusof’s total posts. Vivy Yusof always maintains a digital presence on her social media channels as she posts updates about her presence at company-related or special invitation events. For example, Vivy Yusof participated on a panel for Invest Malaysia 2019, organized by Maybank, and shared about her successful business achievements. She also spoke on a panel at an International Women’s Day event organized by Love Bonito. This event sought to inspire and empower young future leaders with practical tips and the next steps to discover and pursue their own passions. One of the primary goals of every personal branding campaign is to show the credibility of one’s entrepreneurial skills, excellent business experience, and tremendous achievement at a young age.

Relationships block. The relationships block represents the extent to which Vivy Yusof depicts her social relationships...
with her close friends, beyond her relationships with her family and staff. Vivy Yusof has a good circle of healthy friendships and has strong bonds with each of her friends. Her relationships posts represent 3.95% of her total posts. These posts portray the value and importance of friendships and are filled with sincerity and compassion. They demonstrate that, despite her hectic schedule with her family and career, Vivy Yusof can still have a good time with her close friends.

**Reputation block.** In this research, the reputation block represents the elements of recognition for Vivy Yusof’s achievements that she shares on her Instagram account. Her reputation is related to the success of both FashionValet and dUCk scarves, which she founded when she was still relatively young. She has been featured on the international media channel @vice. Her latest recognition was being appointed to the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) board of directors. This represents a recognition of Vivy Yusof’s potential as a successful entrepreneur and gives a boost to the morale of UiTM students and encourages them to explore new business opportunities. This post gained the highest number of comments from viewers who wished to congratulate her.

**Groups block.** Vivy Yusof seems to have her own group comprised of her community of employees at FashionValet and the dUCk Group. Her posts regarding groups represent 2.3% of her total posts. These posts highlight the employees at various levels in her company, specifically at team outings, celebrations such as festivals, team-building events, and corporate social responsibility activities. Vivy Yusof also posts about her team to help showcase her company and brand culture and value. These posts highlight her relationships and show that she truly cares about her employees at the various organizational levels.

**Answering RQ2: What Are the Relationships Between Instagram Post Types and User Engagement, Based on Reactions (Likes) and Connection (Comments) to the Posts?**

This study used an ANOVA to test the hypothesis and answer RQ2. At the time of the data collection, Vivy Yusof’s Instagram account was recorded to have high engagement scores. As of April 1, 2019, she had 1.8 million followers and had produced a total of 10,234 posts. An analysis of the number of likes and comments on Vivy Yusof’s weekly posts shows that the lowest number of likes documented throughout the data collection period was 101,724 likes, whereas the highest number was 661,504 likes.

Frequency statistics are summarized in Table 4. Based on the results of a one-way ANOVA, the results show a significant primary effect of the content type. Instagram users were more likely to like brand posts related to identity (M = 60,500.22, SD = 30,453.36) than they were to like posts related to relationships (M = 44,874.12, SD = 18,737.58) and groups (M = 44,847.12, SD = 29,341.46). In addition, the results show that people were less inclined to like posts related to presence (M = 40,132.75, SD = 17,645.92), reputation (M = 39,174, SD = 52,169.02), conversations (M = 37,902.14, SD = 21,298.94), and sharing (M = 31,311.15, SD = 16,790.07).

The results also show that reputation posts (M = 801.62, SD = 2,189.34), conversation posts (M = 520.29, SD = 535.90), and identity posts (M = 344.72, SD = 293.03) exhibited the significantly highest engagement of comments compared with other types of posts. Hence, reputation and conversation posts were the most likely to elicit comments and encourage interaction among users. Fewer comments were made on groups posts (M = 211.63, SD = 276.65), presence posts (M = 187.69, SD = 111.76), sharing posts (M = 183.05, SD = 195.67), and relationship posts (M = 178.25, SD = 95.12). In other words, Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts related to relationships were the least likely to motivate viewers to comment.

In general, based on her number of followers, we can assume that the level of engagement between Vivy Yusof’s posts and brand connectedness is high, as suggested by previous studies (Gaspar et al., 2016; Phua et al., 2018).

**Discussion**

Although it seems that many CEOs have actively engaged in social media, it is not yet clear how their content may impact online users’ attention and engagement. In this study, the
Honeycomb framework was adopted to study the various types of posts on the CEO’s personal social media accounts and their influence on user engagement. This study indicates that the posts that tend to produce the highest engagement among users in the form of likes are identity, relationships, and groups. In addition, the posts related to reputation, identity, and conversations are found to have the highest engagement in terms of comments from online users. Consistent with previous studies, the emotional and human dimensions of content within personal social media posts with relationships and reputation content were found to be crucial in attracting users’ attention in the form of likes and comments as compared with sharing and presence posts featuring a commercial element.

Identity posts exert a strong effect on the level of online engagement, both in terms of likes and comments. Identity is central to CEOs’ personal brand of sharing information and engaging with online users. Identity posts were found to comprise the second largest number of Vivy Yusof’s posts but exhibited the highest engagement by facilitating likes. This may be because people like to know Vivy Yusof’s personality and about her children who feature prominently in her Instagram posts. However, the identity posts placed third regarding the number of comments on Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts. These findings suggest that a CEO’s personal brand is portrayed through the CEO’s identity and unique personality. The identity posts differentiate Vivy Yusof and help her stand out, so she consistently attracts many viewers (Conner, 2018). The findings indicate that the posts that people liked the most on her Instagram account were about her personal life and entrepreneurial journey. Vivy Yusof stands out the most from the growing Instagram crowd by showing her loyal followers her real, authentic self. She knows how to attract potential followers by actively posting more identity content compared with other types of posts. This study supports the notion that being brand-authentic affects social media user behavior and enhances people’s trust, thus promoting brand selection and greater relationship development (Arya et al., 2019; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Jennifer, 2020).

Conversations posts exhibited the second highest level of commenting. This might be because conversations posts are an effective way to encourage users to comment or express their opinions related to something that the users care about and are interested in. Through conversations posts, Vivy Yusof not only engaged with her users but also got to know the users better and gained some useful information from them. According to previous research, conversations posts give viewers the opportunity to chime in with their opinions, tips, and participation (Dolan et al., 2016). Inviting people to join the conversation makes them feel like the company cares about what they have to say and increases their sense of belonging to the brand. The conversations posts displayed the second lowest number of likes among all the post types.

Surprisingly, sharing posts received the lowest number of likes and comments among all types of posts. A possible explanation for this finding may be that most users who view Vivy Yusof’s posts prefer to know about her private life story than the marketing messages from FashionValet and the dUCk brand. It is undeniable that Vivy Yusof has become a powerful marketing influencer, and her role as the primary model of her companies’ brands and a fashion icon immediately turns her posts into purchasing decisions. Her role as a company brand model is apparent not only on her personal social media account but also on the official FashionValet and dUCk brand websites and social media channels. It is widely reported that her social media presence represents a tremendous contribution to her companies’ branding and sales performance (Conner, 2018). With more than 1.8 million followers on Instagram, Vivy Yusof

| Dependent variable | Honeycomb framework | n  | M       | SD      | Min | Max   | F    | p       |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|---------|---------|-----|-------|------|---------|
| Like               | Identity            | 149| 60,500.22| 30,453.36| 4,972| 165,720| 16.47| .00*    |
|                    | Conversations       | 7  | 37,902.14| 21,298.94| 6,493| 65,697|      |         |
|                    | Sharing             | 150| 31,311.15| 16,790.07| 6,389| 98,680|      |         |
|                    | Presence            | 16 | 40,132.75| 17,645.92| 19,545| 83,639|      |         |
|                    | Relationships       | 12 | 44,874.12| 18,737.58| 22,712| 85,222|      |         |
|                    | Reputation          | 13 | 39,174.08| 52,169.02| 8,052| 208,674|      |         |
|                    | Groups              | 8  | 44,874.12| 29,341.46| 11,896| 99,002|      |         |
| Comment            | Identity            | 149| 344.72  | 293.03  | 47  | 1,565 | 4.64 | .00*    |
|                    | Conversations       | 7  | 520.29  | 535.90  | 26  | 1,556 |      |         |
|                    | Sharing             | 150| 183.05  | 195.67  | 38  | 1,709 |      |         |
|                    | Presence            | 16 | 187.69  | 111.76  | 37  | 438  |      |         |
|                    | Relationships       | 12 | 178.25  | 95.12   | 65  | 419  |      |         |
|                    | Reputation          | 13 | 801.62  | 2,189.34| 55  | 8,063|      |         |
|                    | Groups              | 8  | 211.63  | 276.65  | 20  | 826  |      |         |

Note. ANOVA = analysis of variance; n = number of posts; F = F value; p = p value.
*p ≤ .05.
has leveraged this immense opportunity to enhance brand visibility in marketing the FashionValet and dUCk Group brands (Conner, 2018).

Presence posts received a moderate number of likes and comments among Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts. These posts encouraged her followers to keep checking her account for information regarding her company-related events, including corporate and government sector events at which Vivy Yusof was a specially invited guest. Empirical evidence suggests that social media content about CEOs’ activities affects customer loyalty (Jin et al., 2018). Customers engage with a range of product and service information, including information regarding activities and events (Vivek et al., 2012).

Relationships posts received the second most likes among all the post types, demonstrating that people value them highly. The relationships posts featuring Vivy Yusof’s close friends attracted people’s attention and many people were willing to like the posts. However, they displayed the lowest level of comment activity. These findings show that the posts sharing her personal moments with close friends have practical value and appeal, and receive many likes.

Reputation posts were found to be highly influential and exhibited the highest engagement through facilitating comments. Vivy Yusof’s posts relating to reputation and demonstrations of what she is good at helped differentiate her from others and position her as an expert in her business. Previous studies have indicated that the reputation of a CEO and their appearance on social media is strongly associated with company performance (Bai et al., 2019; Conner, 2018; Erdoğan & Esen, 2018). According to Linjuan et al. (2018), public engagement with CEOs through social media is motivated by the CEOs’ reputation of leadership capability and task attraction. In contrast to the high number of comments, Vivy Yusof’s reputation posts received few likes compared with other posts.

Finally, groups posts received a high number of likes and an average number of comments. Therefore, the groups content somehow influenced user engagement on Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts. The appearance of a CEO with employees influences perceptions of organizational culture and value (Erdoğan & Esen, 2018).

Conclusion

The most theoretical contribution of this study is the offer of some insights on the use of social media functional building blocks such as the honeycomb model of Kietzmann et al. (2011) for the analysis of how CEOs construct their personal branding and create online engagement using Instagram. To the best of our knowledge, this is a new angle that has been neglected in previous studies, primarily focused on companies’ brand image in mechanical ways. The CEO’s personal branding gives the company’s brand a human dimension by allowing brands to create an emotional connection with the online users and become parts of their lives.

This investigation explored the CEO’s Instagram content based on the seven functional building blocks of social media engagement proposed by Kietzmann et al. (2011): identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. In addition, these building block also represented activities in the CEO’s everyday life, including personal, social relations, commercial, and working activities. These functional building blocks of social media can be used to discover and understand on how to use social media effectively. Different content types encourage varying levels of engagement, which are defined by the extent to which users can affect how they respond to posts based on what they are interested in.

As a cofounder of FashionValet and the dUCk Group, Vivy Yusof’s personal Instagram account outperforms her official company social media platforms significantly in terms of the number of followers. Vivy Yusof has 1.7 million followers on her Instagram. Compare that with FashionValet, which has 741K followers on its verified company Instagram, and there are about 516K followers on the official The dUCk Groups Instagram. Vivy Yusof makes a significant impact on her personal Instagram account. Anything she is wearing from FashionValet receives an immediate response in the form of likes, page views, purchases, and an endorsement from the media. This study tried to determine which of the functional blocks of Instagram engagement were more critical for Vivy Yusof to understand how she should engage with it. Considering the findings obtained in this empirical study, we concluded that Vivy Yusof should focus on the identity, relationships, and groups functional building blocks of Instagram engagement in the form of likes. The findings also revealed that these three building blocks are more related to her personal life story with family, her close friends’ relationships, and activities in groups with her employees. On the contrary, the CEO’s personal brand posting from the functional blocks of reputation, sharing, groups, and conversation were not effective to gain higher engagement in the form of likes.

CEOs serve as the face of their company, which means that a CEO’s brand is interconnected with their company’s brand. Social media takes CEO personal branding to the next level. A CEO’s personal social media platform is about more than creating a personal brand for the CEO because it reflects the company and product brand identity. Thus, a CEO’s personal brand enables the CEO to demonstrate and share their personal brand image and shape company brand associations through their personal social media posts (Andreini et al., 2020; Scheidt et al., 2018). Furthermore, the personality of the CEO is unique for each individual person and also similar to the company brand identity that is exclusive to each company (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018).

This study makes several contributions to the fields of CEO personal branding, social media, and engagement. This study contributes directly to understanding online user engagement with, and attitudes toward, CEO social media as
it uses data from actual online user interactions with a real CEO on Instagram. This study shows that personal identity in posts highly influences the number of likes and comments on the posts, which suggests that this type of post plays an essential role in stimulating engagement. Therefore, CEOs need to focus on strengthening their personality posts when engaging with online users. Although many studies have found that CEOs can leverage branding to act as effective spokespersons and provide endorsement for company and product brands in commercial marketing activities (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2019; Bai et al., 2019; Ferns et al., 2008; Zeitoun et al., 2020), in practice there is less engagement in terms of likes for content related to company and brand appearance in presence posts. One explanation may be that online users prefer to learn more about a CEO’s personal life and social relationships rather than company- and product-related information. However, the appearance of CEO personal brand endorsement in corporate publicity, as part of company and product brand strategy, remains imperative for company performance, reputation, and increasing product sales (Andreini et al., 2020). The use of CEO personal branding to increase company and product visibility could be better received in other advertising channels such as the company’s official website and social media channels, as well as in official TV programs and other advertisement channels.

In terms of managerial implications, the brand industry should be aware of the importance of CEOs joining social media and actively establishing a social media presence because of the growing trend of CEOs transparency and authenticity on social media (Men et al., 2018). As such, CEOs should share appropriate messages and information consistent with company values, image, culture, and business objectives, which allow the public to understand and connect with that. These findings should encourage CEOs to prepare an effective user engagement strategy that facilitates interactivity among users and enhances the CEO’s personal brand. The findings from this study provide a guide for CEOs regarding which content characteristics to put in personal brand posts and the types of content that motivate engagement. This knowledge will allow CEOs to develop more appropriate content to influence users’ engagement. For example, presence posts may not be the most effective posts to influence users and increase the level of likes and comments, which represent the potential of CEOs to promote brands and products in the market and to gain valuable feedback and opinions from current and potential customers. On one hand, CEOs who want to increase the number of likes on their posts could incorporate the elements of identity, relationships, or groups into presence posts. Identity, relationships, and groups posts can increase engagement through likes. On the other hand, to achieve a high level of comments on presence posts, CEOs can utilize the elements of reputation, identity, and conversations posts, which help stimulate comment activity.

By using the Honeycomb framework as demonstrated in this study, CEOs can audit their current behavior in their Instagram posts and shape their followers’ engagement behavior. This study reveals that Vivi Yusof’s success in building her personal brand is very much aided by her personality, characteristics, and values, which match well with her associated company brand. The challenge for CEOs is to attract online users’ attention to CEO personal brand posts and influence users to engage in terms of likes and comments on Instagram. The engagement rate provides feedback on the popularity of different types of posts and can help CEOs improve the visibility of posts and influence participation.

Although this study provides valuable findings, it has several limitations. First, the findings are based on limited Instagram data over a 6-month period in 2019. To further understand the broader pattern of Vivy Yusof’s Instagram posts, future studies could collect a larger amount of data over an extended period of time to reveal a more detailed pattern of output. Second, the manual process of data analysis is more time-consuming than computer programming mechanisms. Finally, this study provides an in-depth understanding of one particular case and the findings are unique to this context. Therefore, this study has not attempted to generalize the findings to all contexts of CEO personal branding. Understanding different contexts of CEO personal branding requires further investigation.

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