The Study of Thai Influencer's Component in Personal Branding Creation Through the Use of Digital Media

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The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2025
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The research examined and analysed data pertaining to the components, key characteristics, and personal brand identity of prominent individuals who have created online media in the current context. This is a mixed-method research. The sample group is influencers on YouTube channels with more than 1 million subscribers and content related to diary vlogs, entertainment programs, and interviews. The researcher employed quantitative data collection by using a coding sheet related to the components of online media creation, focusing on 15 channels on the YouTube platform. Each channel selected 20 video clips for data collection using simple random sampling. Qualitative data collection was conducted by in-depth interviews with 10 influencers who produce content on YouTube channels by using snowball sampling. The researcher found that the five most significant components of influencer branding through online media creation on the YouTube platform were as follows: (1) Establishing a humorous and entertaining identity (30.12%), (2) Developing an identity that emphasizes storytelling and the dissemination of knowledge (20.15%), (3) Generating interest by inviting celebrities from other channels to participate in video clips (14.85%), (4) Producing content that aligns with current trends (8.24%), and (5) Creating an identity that highlights physical attractiveness, such as beauty, handsomeness, or a pleasant personality (7.47%), which corresponds with the qualitative data collected. Additionally, celebrities continue to place importance on defining their roles and maintaining a consistent image through social media, often portraying characteristics such as calmness, intelligence, and unique perspectives, with audience engagement playing a crucial role in shaping content direction.

Keywords: Thai influencers, personal branding, digital media, YouTube, content creation

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Introduction

The digital media landscape has undergone rapid transformation in recent years, fundamentally altering how individuals present themselves and build personal brands online. Social media platforms have evolved from simple communication tools into sophisticated environments where content creators can establish substantial followings, generate revenue, and develop distinctive personal brands that resonate with millions of users worldwide. Within Thailand's rapidly expanding digital ecosystem, YouTube has emerged as a particularly influential platform where content creators have successfully built substantial audiences and established distinctive personal brands that drive both cultural influence and commercial success.

Personal branding in the digital age represents a significant departure from traditional forms of self-presentation and career development. While conventional personal branding focused primarily on professional advancement through controlled, formal presentations of identity, social media has transformed this process into a multidimensional practice involving continuous content creation, real-time audience engagement, and dynamic identity management. This transformation has created new opportunities for individuals to build influence and economic success through authentic self-expression and strategic content development.

Thailand's digital media landscape presents a unique context for examining personal branding strategies, as the country has experienced remarkable growth in internet penetration and social media adoption. With over 40 million monthly active YouTube users, Thailand represents the second-largest social media market in Southeast Asia, creating a fertile environment for content creators to develop successful personal brands. Thai YouTube culture has developed distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from Western markets, including a strong emphasis on personality-driven content, sophisticated integration of local cultural references with global trends, and innovative monetization strategies through brand partnerships and audience engagement.

The phenomenon of influencer marketing has grown exponentially in Thailand, with successful content creators commanding significant influence over consumer behavior and cultural trends. However, despite the commercial and cultural importance of Thai influencers, academic research examining the specific components and strategies employed by successful Thai content creators remains limited. Most existing research has focused on marketing effectiveness from brand perspectives rather than examining the personal branding strategies employed by creators themselves.

This research addresses a critical gap in understanding how successful Thai influencers develop and maintain their personal brands through digital media platforms. By examining both quantitative patterns in content creation and qualitative insights from practitioners themselves, this study aims to identify the key components that drive successful personal branding among Thai YouTube creators. The findings contribute to both theoretical understanding of digital personal branding and practical knowledge for aspiring content creators, marketers, and platform developers seeking to understand the dynamics of influence in Thai digital culture.

The research questions guiding this investigation include: What are the primary components employed by successful Thai influencers in developing their personal brands on YouTube?

How do these components manifest in actual content creation practices? What role do cultural factors play in shaping personal branding strategies among Thai creators? How do successful influencers maintain consistency and authenticity while adapting to platform changes and audience expectations?

Literature Review

Personal Branding Theory in Digital Contexts

Personal branding, first conceptualized by Peters (1997) as "the process of marketing ourselves to others," has evolved significantly in the digital age. While traditional personal branding focused on career advancement and professional identity development through controlled presentations of expertise and competence, social media has transformed this concept into a multidimensional practice involving continuous content creation, audience engagement, and identity management across multiple platforms and contexts.

Contemporary research by Khamis et al. (2017) identified five key elements of successful personal branding in digital spaces: authenticity and transparency, consistency across platforms, narrative coherence, visual distinctiveness, and audience reciprocity. These elements represent a fundamental shift from traditional branding approaches, emphasizing relationship-building and continuous engagement rather than static presentations of professional credentials. However, these elements may manifest differently across cultural contexts and specific platforms, creating a need for localized research that examines how universal principles adapt to specific cultural and technological environments.

Labrecque et al. (2011) expanded the theoretical framework by examining how digital personal branding differs from traditional marketing concepts. Their research highlighted the importance of authenticity in digital environments, noting that audiences expect genuine self-expression rather than polished marketing messages. This expectation creates both opportunities and challenges for content creators, who must balance strategic brand development with authentic self-expression to maintain audience trust and engagement.

Influencer Marketing and Digital Celebrity

The emergence of social media influencers represents a new form of celebrity that operates according to different principles than traditional media celebrities. Senft (2008) introduced the concept of "microcelebrity" to describe how ordinary individuals can achieve fame and influence through social media platforms. Unlike traditional celebrities who achieve fame through established media industries, digital influencers build their status through direct audience relationships and consistent content creation.

Marwick (2013) further developed this concept by examining how social media creates new forms of status and influence. Her research demonstrated that digital influence operates through different mechanisms than traditional celebrity, emphasizing accessibility, relatability, and ongoing audience interaction rather than distance and exclusivity. This shift has profound implications for personal branding strategies, as successful influencers must maintain a delicate balance between aspirational content and relatable authenticity.

Research by Abidin (2018) on influencer culture in Southeast Asia provided important insights into how cultural factors shape digital influence. Her work demonstrated that

successful influencers in Asian markets often employ different strategies than their Western counterparts, emphasizing community building, cultural sensitivity, and long-term relationship development over rapid growth and monetization. This research suggests that effective personal branding strategies must be adapted to specific cultural contexts and audience expectations.

YouTube as a Personal Branding Platform

YouTube's unique characteristics—including its video-centric format, sophisticated monetization structure, and algorithm-driven content discovery—create specific opportunities and constraints for personal branding. Research by Cunningham and Craig (2017) highlighted how YouTube has fostered "social media entertainment" as a distinct cultural form with its own commercial and aesthetic logics that differ significantly from traditional media production.

The platform's emphasis on consistent content creation, audience engagement, and algorithmic optimization requires creators to develop sophisticated understanding of both technical and creative factors that drive success. Burgess and Green (2018) examined how YouTube's structure shapes content creation practices, noting that successful creators must balance creative expression with strategic optimization for platform algorithms and audience retention.

In Thailand specifically, YouTube has grown to over 40 million monthly active users, making it the second most popular social media platform in the country. Thai YouTube culture has developed distinctive characteristics that reflect local cultural values and communication preferences. Research by Sinpeng (2021) on Thai digital culture identified several unique aspects of Thai social media use, including strong emphasis on personality-driven content, sophisticated integration of traditional and modern cultural elements, and innovative approaches to community building and audience engagement.

Research Gap and Contribution

While international research on influencer marketing and personal branding continues to expand, studies specific to Thai digital media creators remain limited. Existing research has primarily focused on marketing effectiveness from brand perspectives rather than examining the components and strategies employed by creators themselves. Additionally, there has been insufficient analysis of how Thai cultural contexts shape personal branding approaches on platforms like YouTube.

This research aims to address these gaps by examining the specific components that successful Thai influencers employ to develop distinctive personal brands on YouTube, utilizing both quantitative content analysis and qualitative insights from practitioners themselves. The study contributes to theoretical understanding of digital personal branding while providing practical insights for aspiring creators, marketers, and platform developers operating in Thai digital markets.

Objective

The research examined and analysed data pertaining to the components, key characteristics, and personal brand identity of prominent individuals who have created online media in the current context.

Research Framework

Figure 1
Research Framework
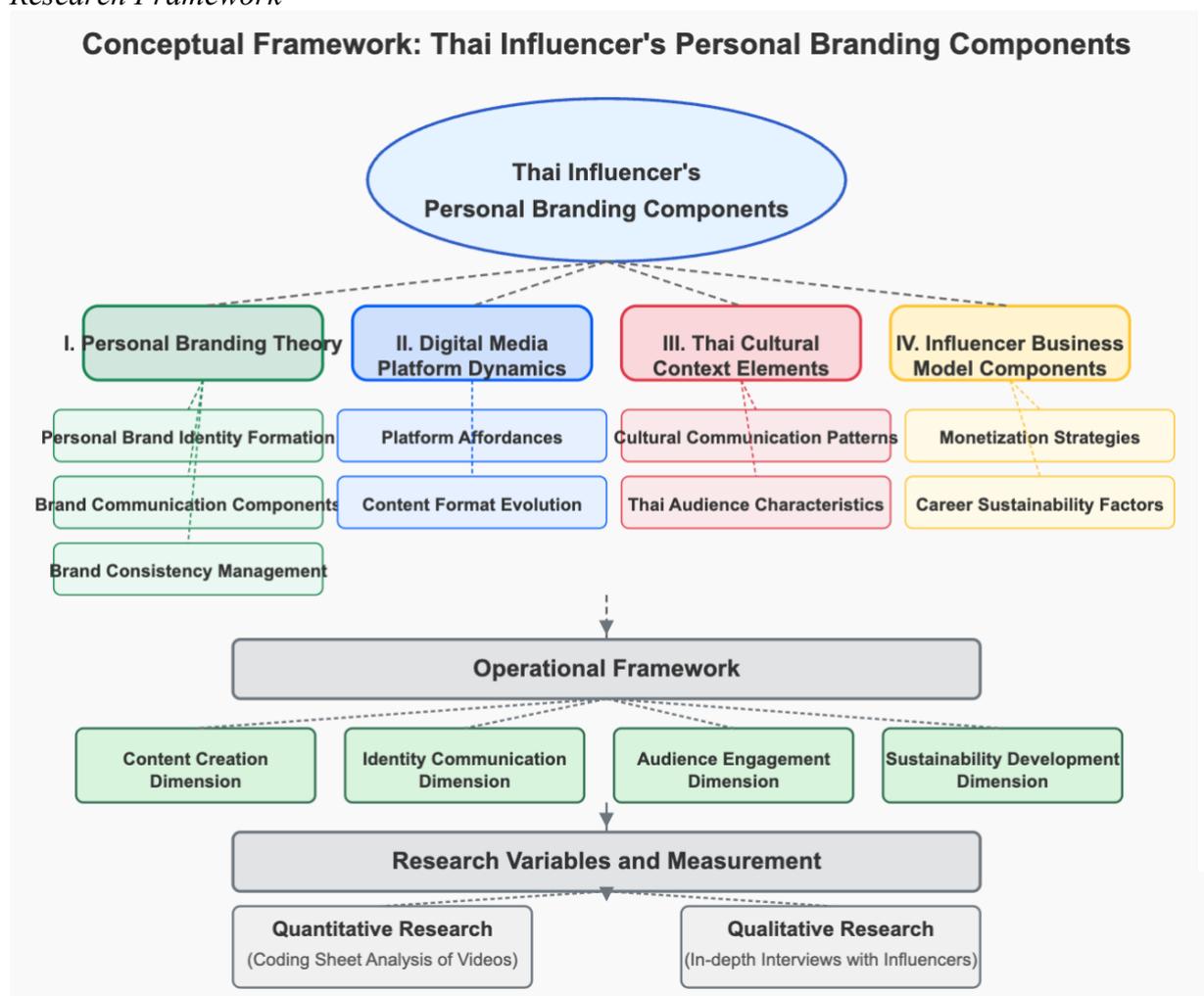
Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to provide comprehensive understanding of personal branding components among successful Thai YouTube influencers. The research combined quantitative content analysis with qualitative in-depth interviews to examine both observable patterns in content creation and underlying strategic thinking employed by successful creators.

Research Design

The mixed-methods approach was selected to capture both the measurable components of successful personal branding strategies and the contextual insights that explain how and why these strategies are employed. This approach allows for triangulation of findings, providing more robust and comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon than either quantitative or qualitative methods alone could provide.

Quantitative Phase: Content Analysis

Sample Selection: The quantitative phase examined 15 YouTube channels with more than 1 million subscribers, focusing on content related to diary vlogs, entertainment programs, and interviews. Channels were selected based on subscriber count, content category, and consistent posting activity over the previous 12 months. The selection criteria ensured examination of established, successful creators who had demonstrated sustained audience engagement and growth.

Data Collection: From each selected channel, 20 video clips were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique, resulting in a total sample of 300 videos for analysis. The random sampling approach ensured representation across different time periods and content types while avoiding potential bias toward particularly successful or recent content.

Coding Instrument: A comprehensive coding sheet was developed to analyze components of online media creation and personal branding elements. The coding scheme was developed through preliminary analysis of Thai YouTube content and review of existing personal branding literature. Key coding categories included:
  – Content format and presentation style
  – Personality traits displayed
  – Interaction patterns with audience
  – Visual and aesthetic elements
  – Collaboration and guest appearance patterns
  – Trend adoption and cultural reference integration
  – Brand consistency indicators

Reliability and Validity: Inter-coder reliability was established through training multiple coders and conducting reliability tests on a subset of videos. Cohen's kappa was calculated to ensure acceptable levels of agreement between coders. Content validity was established through expert review of the coding scheme by digital media researchers and industry practitioners.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify frequency patterns and prevalence of different personal branding components. Cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between different branding elements and channel characteristics.

Qualitative Phase: In-Depth Interviews

Sample Selection: The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with 10 YouTube influencers who produce content on YouTube channels with significant followings. Participants were selected using snowball sampling, beginning with initial contacts in the

Thai YouTube community and expanding through referrals. This approach was necessary due to the specialized nature of the population and the need to establish trust with participants who might be reluctant to discuss strategic aspects of their personal branding approaches.

Participant Characteristics: Interview participants represented diverse content categories, subscriber ranges, and career stages to ensure comprehensive understanding of personal branding strategies across different contexts. Participants included creators focused on entertainment, education, lifestyle, and mixed content categories, with subscriber counts ranging from 500,000 to over 1 million.

Data Collection Procedures: Semi-structured interviews were conducted lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each. Interviews were conducted in Thai to ensure participants could express complex ideas in their preferred language. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Interview Guide: The interview guide was designed to explore key aspects of personal branding strategy and implementation:
– Personal branding philosophy and approach
– Content creation decision-making processes
– Audience relationship building strategies
– Platform adaptation and evolution strategies
– Cultural considerations in content creation
– Challenges and opportunities in maintaining authentic personal brands
– Future planning and brand development goals

Data Analysis: Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis approach. Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' responses. The coding process involved multiple rounds of analysis to develop comprehensive understanding of the strategic thinking and practical considerations that guide successful personal branding among Thai YouTube creators.

Ethical Considerations

The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the institutional ethics committee. All participants provided informed consent for both quantitative content analysis and qualitative interviews. For the quantitative phase, only publicly available content was analyzed. For the qualitative phase, participants were informed about the research purpose, data usage, and their rights to withdraw participation at any time.

Confidentiality was maintained for interview participants, with identifying information removed from transcripts and findings. Participants were offered the opportunity to review findings before publication to ensure accurate representation of their perspectives.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The final analysis integrated quantitative and qualitative findings to provide comprehensive understanding of personal branding components among Thai YouTube influencers. Quantitative findings provided baseline understanding of prevalent strategies and patterns, while qualitative insights explained the reasoning, cultural context, and strategic considerations behind these patterns.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Quantitative Findings

The content analysis of 300 videos from 15 successful Thai YouTube channels revealed distinct patterns in personal branding components. The analysis identified five primary components that emerged as most significant in successful Thai influencer branding strategies, with clear quantitative measures of their prevalence and implementation across the sample.

Primary Personal Branding Components

Component 1: Establishing a Humorous and Entertaining Identity (30.12%)

The most prevalent component among successful Thai influencers was the establishment of a humorous and entertaining identity, appearing in 30.12% of analyzed content. This component manifested through several key characteristics that distinguished successful creators from less engaging content.

Successful implementation of humorous identity involved sophisticated understanding of comedic timing, cultural references, and audience expectations. Creators demonstrated ability to maintain lighthearted content presentation while addressing diverse topics, from serious social issues to everyday experiences. The humor was typically characterized by self-deprecating elements, observational comedy about Thai culture and society, and interactive elements that invited audience participation.

Analysis revealed that creators who successfully employed this component demonstrated consistent comedic personality across different content types and contexts. Rather than relying on scripted jokes or forced humor, successful creators integrated natural comedic elements into their authentic personalities, creating sustainable and believable entertaining identities.

Qualitative interviews confirmed that humor serves multiple strategic functions beyond entertainment value. Participants explained that humorous content creates emotional connections with audiences, makes complex topics more accessible, and provides memorable experiences that encourage sharing and return viewership. Several creators noted that humor helps navigate cultural sensitivities and social issues that might otherwise be controversial or difficult to address directly.

Component 2: Developing an Identity that Emphasizes Storytelling and Knowledge Dissemination (20.15%)

The second most significant component, appearing in 20.15% of analyzed content, involved developing identity through storytelling and knowledge sharing. This component represented sophisticated approach to personal branding that positioned creators as both entertaining and valuable sources of information and insight.

Successful implementation involved presenting educational content within personal narrative frameworks, making learning experiences relatable and engaging. Creators demonstrated ability to transform personal experiences into learning opportunities for audiences, presenting

complex topics in accessible formats that maintained audience interest while providing genuine value.

The storytelling approach typically involved narrative-driven presentations that combined personal experiences with broader insights, expertise demonstration through practical applications, and educational content that maintained entertainment value. Creators who successfully employed this component showed consistent ability to identify learning opportunities in everyday experiences and present them in compelling narrative formats.

Interview participants emphasized that knowledge sharing serves as foundation for long-term audience relationships and sustainable personal branding. Unlike purely entertainment-focused content, educational elements provide lasting value that encourages audience loyalty and positions creators as trusted sources of information and insight.

Component 3: *Generating Interest by Inviting Celebrities From Other Channels (14.85%)*

Collaborative content featuring celebrities and influencers from other channels represented 14.85% of analyzed content, demonstrating strategic approach to cross-audience engagement and brand development. This component showed sophisticated understanding of network effects and community building within Thai YouTube ecosystem.

Successful collaboration strategies involved various formats including interview formats that highlighted guest personalities and expertise, challenges and competitions that created entertaining interactions, and day-in-the-life collaborations that provided authentic insights into creator relationships and personalities.

Analysis revealed that effective collaborations required careful selection of compatible personalities and strategic timing to maximize audience engagement and cross-pollination. Successful creators demonstrated ability to maintain their authentic personalities while adapting to different collaboration contexts and guest dynamics.

Qualitative insights revealed that collaboration serves multiple strategic functions including audience expansion through exposure to new viewer bases, content diversity through different personalities and perspectives, and perceived social validation through association with other successful creators. Participants explained that strategic collaborations help establish credibility and status within the YouTube community while providing fresh content opportunities.

Component 4: *Producing Content That Aligns With Current Trends (8.24%)*

Trend-aligned content appeared in 8.24% of analyzed videos, representing strategic approach to platform optimization and cultural relevance. This component demonstrated creators' ability to balance personal branding consistency with responsiveness to evolving cultural moments and platform dynamics.

Successful trend adoption involved rapid response to emerging trends while maintaining authentic personal perspectives, adaptation of viral formats to fit individual creator personalities and brand identities, and strategic participation in cultural moments that resonated with target audiences.

Analysis showed that effective trend adoption required sophisticated understanding of which trends aligned with creator personalities and audience expectations. Rather than following every trend, successful creators demonstrated selective approach that maintained brand consistency while capitalizing on relevant cultural moments.

Interview participants explained that trend adoption serves as tool for platform optimization and audience growth while presenting challenges for maintaining authentic personal branding. Successful creators developed strategies for evaluating trends based on alignment with personal values and audience interests rather than simply pursuing viral potential.

Component 5: Creating an Identity That Highlights Physical Attractiveness (7.47%)

Physical attractiveness and visual presentation appeared as deliberate branding element in 7.47% of analyzed content. This component involved strategic attention to visual aesthetics, personal style development, and production quality that enhanced creator appeal and professionalism.

Successful implementation involved consistent visual identity across content and platforms, strategic attention to thumbnail and visual content optimization that improved click-through rates and audience retention, and personal style development that reflected creator personality while maintaining broad appeal.

Analysis revealed that visual presentation served both aesthetic and strategic functions, contributing to professional credibility and audience engagement while supporting other branding components. Rather than relying solely on physical appearance, successful creators integrated visual elements into broader personal branding strategies.

Qualitative findings indicated that visual presentation requires balance between authentic self-expression and strategic optimization for platform algorithms and audience preferences. Participants explained that consistent visual identity helps establish recognition and professionalism while supporting other aspects of personal branding strategy.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative patterns with qualitative insights revealed sophisticated understanding of personal branding strategy among successful Thai YouTube creators. The five primary components identified through content analysis were confirmed and elaborated through participant interviews, providing comprehensive understanding of both what successful creators do and why these strategies are effective.

Additional Qualitative Insights

Beyond the five primary quantitative components, qualitative interviews revealed several additional strategic considerations that influence successful personal branding among Thai creators:

Role Definition and Character Development: Participants emphasized importance of developing clear, consistent character personas that audiences can understand and connect with. This involves defining specific roles within the YouTube ecosystem and maintaining consistency across content and platforms.

Cultural Sensitivity and Authenticity: Successful creators demonstrated sophisticated understanding of Thai cultural values and communication preferences, integrating traditional concepts such as respect, harmony, and community orientation into their digital personas while maintaining authenticity and relatability.

Audience Relationship Management: Participants described personal branding as ongoing relationship-building process rather than static identity presentation. This involves continuous attention to audience feedback, adaptation to changing preferences, and maintenance of genuine connections despite growing audience sizes.

Platform Evolution and Adaptation: Successful creators showed ability to adapt their personal branding strategies to platform changes, algorithm updates, and evolving creator economy while maintaining core identity elements that define their unique value propositions.

Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to personal branding theory by demonstrating how universal principles adapt to specific cultural and technological contexts, addressing a critical gap identified in previous research. As noted by Saleem and Iglesias Bedós (2013), there has been insufficient analysis of cross-cultural applicability of personal branding practices in various cultural contexts, particularly in non-Western settings. This study provides empirical evidence supporting the argument that personal branding strategies must be culturally contextualized rather than universally applied.

The prominence of humor and entertainment in Thai YouTube personal branding (30.12%) aligns with Bourdieu's (1993) theories of cultural capital accumulation, where creators develop culturally specific assets that resonate within their particular social field. This reflects broader Thai cultural values that prioritize "sanuk" (enjoyment) and social harmony, demonstrating how personal branding theory must incorporate cultural communication patterns identified in Southeast Asian research (Sinpeng, 2021). The emphasis on knowledge sharing (20.15%) supports Giddens' (1991) reflexivity theories about how individuals build identities in fast-changing technological environments, while simultaneously addressing audience expectations for valuable content that justifies time investment.

The research extends existing literature by providing empirical evidence of how personal branding components manifest in actual content creation practices and strategic decision-making, responding to calls for more systematic investigation of branding processes over time (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2011). The integration of quantitative patterns with qualitative insights provides more comprehensive understanding of personal branding as both strategic practice and authentic self-expression, addressing limitations noted in previous research that relied primarily on European, Australian, or North American settings (Lair et al., 2005).

Furthermore, this study contributes to cultural branding theory by demonstrating how digital platforms enable culturally adaptive personal branding strategies that maintain authentic cultural identity while achieving commercial success. The findings support arguments that cultural sensitivity in branding requires deep understanding of local nuances beyond surface-level adaptation (Hofstede, 2001), while providing practical evidence of how successful creators navigate the balance between global platform requirements and local cultural authenticity.

Practical Implications

For aspiring influencers, the findings provide evidence-based guidance for developing effective personal branding strategies that resonate with Thai audiences. The identification of five primary components offers concrete starting points for brand development while emphasizing importance of authentic integration rather than superficial adoption.

For marketers and brand partners, the research provides insights into influencer selection criteria and collaboration strategies that align with successful personal branding approaches. Understanding the strategic thinking behind successful personal brands enables more effective partnership development and campaign design.

For platform developers and industry stakeholders, the findings highlight features and support mechanisms that could enhance creator success and audience engagement within Thai digital media ecosystem.

Conclusion

This research provides comprehensive examination of personal branding components among successful Thai YouTube influencers, revealing five primary strategies that drive audience engagement and sustainable success in Thailand's dynamic digital media landscape. Through mixed-methods analysis combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative practitioner insights, the study offers both empirical evidence and strategic understanding of how successful creators develop and maintain authentic personal brands in culturally specific contexts.

Suggestion

This research focused specifically on YouTube platform and Thai cultural context, which may limit generalizability to other platforms or cultural markets. Future research could examine how personal branding components vary across different social media platforms and cultural contexts, providing broader understanding of digital influence strategies.

The temporal nature of digital media creates additional limitations, as trends and platform dynamics evolve rapidly. Longitudinal studies examining how personal branding strategies adapt to changing platforms, audience preferences, and cultural shifts would provide valuable insights into brand evolution and sustainability.

Sample size considerations, particularly for qualitative interviews, suggest opportunities for larger-scale studies that could examine personal branding strategies across broader creator populations and content categories. Quantitative surveys of both creators and audiences could provide additional perspectives on effective personal branding components and their impact on audience engagement.

Future research directions include cross-platform comparison studies examining how creators adapt their personal brands across multiple social media platforms, audience perception analysis investigating how different demographic groups respond to various personal branding strategies, longitudinal studies of brand evolution tracking how successful creators adapt their strategies over time, and comparative cultural analysis examining personal branding approaches across different Southeast Asian markets.

Acknowledgements

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors acknowledge the use of AI-assisted technologies for English grammar checking, data analysis support, and organizing information presentation in this research manuscript. These AI applications were limited to technical writing assistance and did not involve the generation of research content, findings, or academic conclusions. All substantive research contributions represent original work conducted by the researcher.

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