



Storytelling Branding as a Moderator of Personal Branding on Personal Image: Evidence from YouTube Content Creators

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Abstract

Background: YouTube has transformed content creators into personal brands competing to establish credible and distinctive images. However, the effectiveness of personal branding may depend on how creators communicate their identities through storytelling.

Objective: This study analyzes the moderating role of *storytelling branding* in the relationship between personal branding and the personal image of YouTube content creators.

Methods: This quantitative explanatory study surveyed 256 Indonesian YouTube users selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using an online questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS.

Results: Personal branding significantly and positively influenced personal image ($\beta = 0.533$; $t = 7.987$; $p < 0.001$). *Storytelling branding* also had a significant positive effect on personal image ($\beta = 0.342$; $t = 4.905$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, *storytelling branding* significantly strengthened the relationship between personal branding and personal image ($\beta = 0.114$; $t = 2.207$; $p = 0.027$).

Conclusion: Consistent personal branding enhances content creators' personal images, while authentic, emotionally engaging, and coherent storytelling strengthens this effect. YouTube content creators should therefore integrate strategic storytelling into their personal branding practices.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital platforms has encouraged individuals to transform into personal brand entities, particularly in the context of video-based media platforms such as YouTube (Dezuanni, 2019; Hou, 2019). Content creators no longer function solely as conveyors of information or entertainment but also as human brands that consciously construct their identities, reputations, and long-term relationships with audiences (Elia Mastantuono, 2024; Ki et al., 2020; Wigayha, 2025). In this context, personal branding serves as a primary strategy for shaping audience perceptions of a content creator's credibility, uniqueness, and consistency (Moulard et al., 2015; Scolere et al., 2018).

Effective personal branding is believed to contribute to the formation of a positive personal image in the minds of audiences, including perceptions of professionalism, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Xiao et al., 2018). However, empirical phenomena indicate that strong personal branding does not always lead to a favorable personal image (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Lo & Peng, 2022; Szántó et al., 2025). Many content creators possess high levels of competence and maintain consistent content production but still struggle to develop an image that audiences appreciate or trust (Dekavalla, 2020; Pertiwi & Sanusi, 2023). This condition suggests that additional factors influence the effectiveness of personal branding in

shaping personal image (Balaban & Mustătea, 2019).

One factor receiving increasing attention in the digital marketing literature is storytelling branding. Storytelling enables the communication of personal identity and values through authentic, emotional, and coherent narratives, allowing audiences not only to understand the conveyed messages but also to emotionally connect. In the context of YouTube content creators, storytelling branding represents an essential element because the platform provides extensive opportunities for developing personal narratives through visual, auditory, and experiential content that is shared consistently over time.

However, most previous studies have positioned storytelling as an independent variable that directly influences engagement or image formation, or as a mediating variable that explains the relationship between content characteristics and audience behavior (Hughes et al., 2019). Research that explicitly examines the role of storytelling branding as a moderating variable in the relationship between personal branding and personal image remains limited, particularly within the context of YouTube content creators.

This study addresses the identified research gap by positioning storytelling branding as a moderating variable rather than an independent or mediating variable, representing a departure from previous research approaches (Hughes et al., 2019). The novelty of this research lies in its integrative conceptual framework, which empirically examines the moderating role of storytelling branding in the relationship between personal branding and personal image using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), specifically among YouTube content creators in Indonesia. By doing so, this study provides a theoretical contribution by demonstrating that the effectiveness of personal branding depends on the quality of narrative communication, thereby extending the understanding of both personal branding theory and storytelling branding literature.

Based on these conditions, the research problem formulated in this study is: What role does storytelling branding play in moderating the influence of personal branding on personal image among YouTube content creators. This question is important to address to understand why certain personal branding strategies are more effective in shaping personal image when communicated through strong, authentic, and meaningful storytelling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal Branding in the Context of Digital and Creator Economy

Personal branding in the digital era has evolved into a strategic concept that is not only associated with self-image but also serves as a key instrument for creating individual differentiation and competitive value within the digital space. Personal branding on the YouTube platform can establish strong emotional connections with audiences through content consistency, authenticity, and active interaction with followers. This study demonstrates that the theory of personal branding proposed by Montoya remains relevant within the context of contemporary social media.

Personal branding is strongly influenced by cultural contexts and digital self-presentation strategies. In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, social media users tend to develop personal branding through visual aesthetics, identity consistency, and alignment with prevailing social norms. This finding reinforces the notion that personal branding is not merely an individual strategy but is also shaped by broader social and cultural factors.

Personal branding represents a strategic process for building self-reputation through social media, particularly among Generation Z, who are highly active on digital platforms (Eugeni, 2022). In this context, personal branding functions not only as a self-promotion tool but also as a mechanism for establishing credibility and trust among audiences.

Personal branding among content creators, such as YouTubers, is highly dependent on unique value propositions, communication styles, and consistency in delivering messages to audiences. This finding indicates that the success of personal branding is determined not only by the content produced but also by the clarity and strength of the identity being constructed.

However, most existing research on personal branding remains focused on descriptive and exploratory dimensions, with limited studies examining the causal relationship between personal branding and other variables, such as personal image, through comprehensive empirical models. Furthermore, existing approaches are still predominantly qualitative, creating

opportunities for further research using quantitative approaches, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Personal image refers to the perception formed in audiences' minds toward individuals based on their interactions, communication patterns, and self-representations. In the digital context, personal image is an outcome of a consistently implemented personal branding process. Authentic and consistent personal branding can create a positive image on social media through continuous engagement with audiences.

Furthermore, studies within the YouTube context indicate that personal image is frequently constructed through a combination of visual identity, communication style, and values conveyed by creators. The consistent implementation of personal branding enables creators to develop an image as inspirational and trustworthy figures. This finding indicates a strong relationship between personal branding and the formation of personal image.

In addition, personal image is closely associated with audience perceptions of credibility and trust. Recent studies suggest that audiences are more likely to trust creators who demonstrate clear and consistent personal images compared with those who lack a strong identity. Within this context, personal image becomes an important factor influencing audience loyalty and decisions to follow or subscribe to digital content.

Nevertheless, research on personal image remains relatively limited compared with studies on personal branding. Many studies position personal image merely as an implicit outcome rather than explicitly measuring it as an independent research variable. This limitation indicates a need for further conceptual development of personal image as an independent theoretical construct.

Moreover, studies examining the direct relationship between personal branding and personal image through quantitative approaches remain scarce. Therefore, further research is required to empirically examine these relationships using structural models, such as SEM, to provide deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying personal image formation.

Personal Image as an Outcome of Personal Branding

Personal image refers to the perception formed in audiences' minds toward individuals based on their interactions, communication patterns, and self-representations. In the digital context, personal image represents the outcome of a consistently implemented personal branding process. Authentic and consistent personal branding can create a positive image on social media through continuous engagement with audiences.

Furthermore, research within the YouTube context indicates that personal image is often developed through a combination of visual identity, communication style, and values conveyed by creators. Consistent application of personal branding enables creators to establish an image as inspirational and trustworthy figures. This finding highlights the close relationship between personal branding and personal image formation.

Additionally, personal image is associated with audience perceptions of credibility and trust. Recent studies indicate that audiences tend to trust creators with clear and consistent personal images compared with those who lack a strong identity. In this context, personal image serves as an important determinant of audience loyalty and decisions to follow or subscribe to content.

However, research exploring personal image remains relatively limited compared with personal branding studies. Many existing studies consider personal image only as an implicit consequence rather than explicitly operationalizing it as a measurable research variable. This indicates a conceptual gap in positioning personal image as an independent theoretical construct.

Furthermore, empirical studies investigating the direct relationship between personal branding and personal image through quantitative approaches remain limited. Therefore, further research is necessary to examine these relationships using structural models, such as SEM, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how personal image is formed through personal branding processes.

Storytelling in Branding and Content Creation

Storytelling has become a key element in modern branding strategies, including personal branding on social media. In the context of YouTube, storytelling is not only used as a messaging

technique but also as a tool to establish emotional connections with audiences. Research by Dinar Cahya Nurani & Lelita Azaria Rahmadiva (2025) shows that unique and consistent storytelling can serve as a key differentiator in creators' personal branding, particularly in specific content genres such as horror.

Furthermore, research by Muhammad Adnan Faidh et al. (2025) revealed that storytelling based on reflection and personal experiences can strengthen audience engagement and cultivate an authentic creator image. In this context, storytelling functions as a bridge between creators' personal identities and audiences' perceptions.

From a broader perspective, storytelling also plays an important role in shaping the meanings and values that brands or individuals aim to communicate. Recent studies indicate that effective storytelling can enhance audience brand recall and strengthen emotional connections. Therefore, storytelling represents a strategic element in developing strong personal branding.

However, most existing studies still position storytelling primarily as a communication strategy rather than as a measurable construct within a research model. Theoretically, storytelling has the potential to influence the relationship between personal branding and personal image.

Moreover, limited research has examined the role of storytelling as a moderating variable in the relationship between personal branding and personal image. In fact, storytelling has the potential to strengthen or weaken the effect of personal branding on personal image formation, depending on the quality, authenticity, and consistency of the narrative constructed.

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed: H1: Personal Branding has a positive and significant effect on the Personal Image of YouTube content creators. H2: Storytelling Branding has a positive and significant effect on the Personal Image of YouTube content creators. H3: Storytelling Branding moderates the relationship between Personal Branding and Personal Image, such that the effect of Personal Branding on Personal Image is stronger when Storytelling Branding is high. The proposed structural model suggests that Personal Branding (PB) directly influences Personal Image (PI), Storytelling Branding (SB) directly influences PI, and the interaction term $SB \times PB$ influences PI as the moderating effect.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to test the causal relationships between variables. This method was chosen because it was able to explain the role of storytelling branding in strengthening or weakening the influence of personal branding on personal image empirically and measurably. The object of the research was YouTube content creators, with the unit of analysis being audience perceptions of the content creators they followed. The research population consisted of audiences who actively consumed YouTube content in Indonesia. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the criteria that respondents had subscribed to at least one content creator channel and had regularly watched content within the previous three months. The targeted sample size ranged from 200–300 respondents, in accordance with the recommendations for SEM-PLS analysis.

A total of 256 valid responses were obtained through an online survey. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) having subscribed to at least one YouTube content creator channel, (b) actively watching content within the previous three months, and (c) being aged 18 years or above. The demographic profile of respondents consisted of 58.2% females and 41.8% males, with 67.6% aged 18–25 years (Generation Z), 24.2% aged 26–35 years, and 8.2% aged 36 years and above. In terms of educational background, 52.3% held a bachelor's degree, 31.6% were senior high school graduates, and 16.1% held postgraduate degrees. Regarding YouTube usage intensity, 71.5% of respondents reported watching YouTube content daily, while 28.5% reported watching content several times per week.

The questionnaire consisted of 36 items measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Personal Branding (PB) was measured using 12 items adapted from Moulard et al. (2015), covering three dimensions: credibility (4 items), uniqueness (4 items), and consistency (4 items). Personal Image (PI) was measured using 12 items adapted from Balaban & Mustătea (2019), covering professionalism (4 items), trustworthiness (4 items), and personal attractiveness (4 items). Storytelling Branding (SB) was measured using 12 items adapted, covering story authenticity (4 items), emotional appeal (4 items), and narrative coherence (4 items). All items were pilot-tested with 30 respondents and demonstrated

acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70.

This research was conducted in accordance with established research ethics principles. All respondents provided informed consent prior to participation. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The personal branding variables were measured through the dimensions of credibility, uniqueness, and consistency. Personal image variables were measured based on perceptions of professionalism, trustworthiness, and personal attractiveness. Meanwhile, storytelling branding was measured through story authenticity, emotional appeal, and narrative coherence.

Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. This method was selected because it could accommodate complex models involving latent variables and testing moderation effects simultaneously. The analysis included the evaluation of the measurement model (validity and reliability) and the structural model, including the moderation effect test of storytelling branding.

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated based on the following criteria: (a) convergent validity, with outer loading values ≥ 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50 ; (b) internal consistency reliability, with Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70 and Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70 ; and (c) discriminant validity, assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, in which the square root of AVE for each construct was required to exceed its correlations with other constructs, along with cross-loading analysis. The structural model (inner model) was evaluated using R-square values, path coefficients, T-statistics (threshold ≥ 1.96), and P-values (threshold < 0.05). The moderation effect was tested using the product indicator approach in SmartPLS 4.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

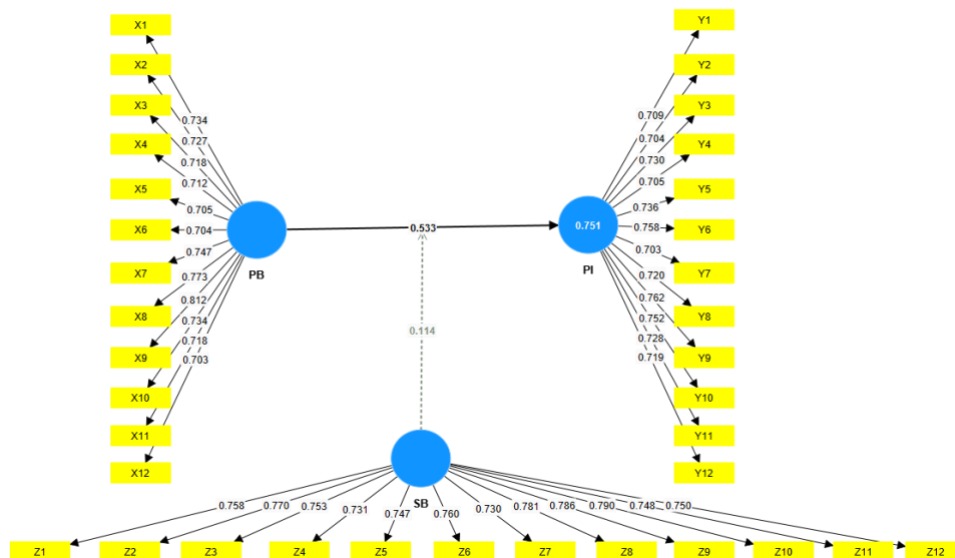


Figure 1. Validity Test

The results of the convergent validity test showed that all indicators in each construct had an outer loading value above 0.70. This indicates that each indicator can represent the construct it measures well. The outer loading value ≥ 0.70 indicates an adequate level of validity because the indicator has a strong correlation with latent constructs.

Average Variance Extracted AVE

The convergent validity test was then carried out by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) value. AVE measures the extent to which the variance described by the construct is greater than the variance caused by measurement errors. A variable is considered valid if its AVE value is more than 0.5. The results of the calculation of the average variance extracted value, (AVE) can be seen in the following table:

Table 1*Average Variance Extracted AVE*

Variable	Average Variance Extracted AVE
PB	0.537
PI	0.529
SB	0.576

Based on the table, it shows that all variables have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.50 which means that all variable/dimensional indicators are declared valid.

Discriminating Validity Test

The purpose of this study is to identify whether the construct has adequate discrimination by comparing the loading value of the desired construct, which should be higher compared to other constructs. In the Smart PLS application, the validity of the discriminator is tested using cross loading and Fornell-Larcker values.

Table 2*Cross Loading*

Indicator	PB (X)	PI (Y)	SB (Z)
X1	0.734	0.635	0.535
X2	0.727	0.559	0.497
X3	0.718	0.499	0.510
X4	0.712	0.525	0.492
X5	0.705	0.538	0.597
X6	0.704	0.585	0.571
X7	0.747	0.609	0.581
X8	0.773	0.663	0.643
X9	0.812	0.732	0.641
X10	0.734	0.620	0.549
X11	0.718	0.623	0.541
X12	0.703	0.659	0.580
Y1	0.610	0.709	0.565
Y2	0.570	0.704	0.545
Y3	0.582	0.730	0.477
Y4	0.584	0.705	0.472
Y5	0.570	0.736	0.583
Y6	0.608	0.758	0.570
Y7	0.526	0.703	0.491
Y8	0.599	0.720	0.525
Y9	0.633	0.762	0.637
Y10	0.655	0.752	0.639
Y11	0.649	0.728	0.611
Y12	0.645	0.719	0.698
Z1	0.619	0.653	0.758
Z2	0.675	0.625	0.770
Z3	0.581	0.562	0.753
Z4	0.528	0.588	0.731
Z5	0.517	0.525	0.747
Z6	0.601	0.598	0.760
Z7	0.548	0.550	0.730
Z8	0.597	0.594	0.781
Z9	0.626	0.607	0.786
Z10	0.564	0.595	0.790
Z11	0.550	0.542	0.748

Z12	0.582	0.688	0.750
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Based on the cross loading table, all have the highest loading factor value in the target construct in the target construct compared to the loading factor in other constructs, so it is declared valid.

Fornell Larcker Criterion

This method applies an approach that compares the square root values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the relationships between constructs in the model. If the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation value between that construct and the other constructs in the model, then the model is considered to have good discriminant validity.

Table 3

Fornell Larcker Criterion

Variable	Personal Branding	Personal Image	Storytelling Branding
Personal Branding	0.831		
Personal Image	0.733	0.778	
Storytelling Branding	0.759	0.727	0.769

The test results showed that the square root value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) in each construct was greater than the correlation value between other constructs. Construct Personal Branding (PB) has an AVE square root value of 0.831, higher than its correlation with Personal Image (0.733) and Storytelling Branding (0.759). The Personal Image (PI) construct shows the square root value of AVE as 0.778, which is also greater than the correlation of Personal Branding (0.733) and Storytelling Branding (0.727).

Meanwhile, the Storytelling Branding (SB) construct has an AVE square root value of 0.769, higher than its correlation with Personal Branding (0.759) and Personal Image (0.727). Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs in this study have met the Fornell-Larcker criteria, so that the measurement model is declared to have good discriminant validity and is suitable for use at the next stage of analysis.

Reliability Test

In the realism test the tool used to measure the realism of a construct is Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability, the expected value of Cronbach's alpha is above 0.7 Meanwhile, the composite reliability value of 0.6 - 0.7 is considered to have good realism.

Table 4

Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
PB	0.922	0.924
PI	0.919	0.920
SB	0.933	0.934

Based on the Reliability Test Table showing that Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability values are greater than 0.70, it can be concluded that each variable has a high level of reliability.

Coefficient of Determination

This test measures the extent to which dependent variables can be explained by independent variables in the model. The R' value ranges from 0 to 1, with the classification of high (> 0.75) strong, medium (> 0.50) moderate, and low (> 0.25) weak. The increase in R2 values shows that the model is becoming more effective in describing the relationships between variables.

Table 5*Coefficient of Determination*

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
PI(Y)	0.751	0.747

Based on the test results presented in the Table, an R-Square value of 0.751 was obtained for the personal image (PI) variable. This value shows that 75.1% of personal image variations can be explained by personal branding (PB), storytelling branding (SB), and interaction between personal branding (PB) and storytelling branding (SB) (PB x SB) as independent variables in this study model. Meanwhile, the remaining 24.9% were influenced by other variables outside the research model.

In addition, the Adjusted R-Square value of 0.747, which is only slightly reduced compared to the R-Square value, indicates that the model still has stable explainability, even though it involves more than one independent variable as well as interaction constructs (moderation). This indicates that the research model is not biased due to the complexity of the model.

Path Coefficient

To analyze the extent to which one variable affects another, a measuring tool is used that can be measured through its degree of significance. The path coefficient can have a magnitude between 1 and -1, where the closer it is to a value of 1 or -1, the stronger the relationship. In this test, the significance value of the path was obtained from the value of the original sample on the model path.

Table 6*Path Coefficient*

Variable	Original Sample (O)
PB -> PI	0.533
SB x PB -> PI	0.114

Based on the test results on the path coefficient table, it is known that all paths between variables in this research model have a positive coefficient value, which indicates a unidirectional relationship between the variables studied.

Personal Branding (X) Path to Personal Image (Y)

Based on the test results, the value of the path coefficient between Personal Branding (PB) and Personal Image (PI) was 0.533. This value shows that there is a positive influence between personal branding on personal image. This means that the stronger the personal branding built by YouTube content creators, the higher the personal image formed in the eyes of the audience. Thus, personal branding has an important role in shaping the audience's perception of the professionalism, trust, and personal attractiveness of a content creator.

The Role of Storytelling Branding (Z) as a Moderation Variable for the Relationship between Personal Branding (X) and Personal Image (Y)

The test results showed that the path coefficient value for the interaction of Storytelling Branding x Personal Branding (SB x PB) against Personal Image (PI) was 0.114. This positive coefficient value shows that storytelling branding plays a role as a moderation variable that strengthens the influence of personal branding on personal image.

This indicates that when content creators can convey stories that are authentic, emotional, and have a coherent flow, the influence of personal branding on the formation of personal image will be stronger. On the other hand, if the branding storytelling conveyed is less attractive or inconsistent, then the influence of personal branding on personal image tends to be weaker.

Bootstrapping Test

Hypothesis testing was carried out by analyzing the path coefficients in SmartPLS using the bootstrapping method to identify direct influences between variables. This process is carried out after the evaluation of the external and internal models meets the necessary conditions and

shows significant influence. The purpose of this hypothesis test is to test and verify predetermined hypotheses and predictions.

In hypothetical model testing, the value obtained can be determined by checking the P-Value. The hypothesis is accepted if the P-Value is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) and to determine the direction of positive or negative influence, it can be seen from the path coefficient value contained in the original sample value in the table output.

Table 7*Direct Effect Testing*

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Remarks
PB -> PI	0.533	0.533	0.067	7.987	0.000	Significant Impact

Based on the test results table, the direct test between variables shows the following results:

H1: Personal Branding (PB) on Personal Image (PI) Based on the table, the path coefficient value (original sample) was obtained of 0.533 with a P-value of 0.000 and a T-statistical value of 7.987. These results show that Personal Branding (PB) has a positive and significant effect on Personal Image (PI). This is evidenced by a P-value of less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$), so that the first hypothesis (H1) is acceptable. Thus, it can be concluded that the better the personal branding that is built, the more it will significantly improve the personal image.

Table 8*Indirect Testing*

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Remarks
SB x PB-> PI	0.114	0.112	0.051	2.207	0.027	Significant Impact

Based on the table of test results, indirect testing (moderation) between variables shows the following results:

H2: Storytelling Branding (SB) moderates Personal Branding (PB) against Personal Image (PI)

Based on the table, the original sample coefficient value was 0.114, with a P-value of 0.027 and a T-statistics value of 2.207. These results show that Storytelling Branding (SB) can moderate the influence of Personal Branding (PB) on Personal Image (PI) significantly. This is evidenced by a P-value of less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$), so that the second hypothesis (H2) is acceptable. The direction of the influence of moderation is indicated by the value of the path coefficient of positive value, which indicates that Storytelling Branding strengthens the relationship between Personal Branding and Personal Image.

Table 9*Total Effect*

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Remarks
PB ->PI	0.533	0.533	0.067	7.987	0.000	Significant Impact
SB -> PI	0.342	0.345	0.070	4.905	0.000	Significant Impact
SB x PB-> PI	0.114	0.112	0.051	2.207	0.027	Significant Impact

The conclusion of the results of the research hypothesis test shows that the results of the influence test directly indicate that Personal Branding (PB) has a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI), so Hypothesis 1 (H1) is accepted. In addition, Storytelling Branding (SB) has also been shown to have a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI), which shows that Hypothesis 2 (H2) is accepted.

Furthermore, the test results showed that the interaction of Storytelling Branding (SB) and Personal Branding (PB) had a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI). This indicates that Storytelling Branding acts as a moderation variable in the relationship between Personal Branding and Personal Image, so Hypothesis 3 (H3) is accepted.

Thus, it can be concluded that Storytelling Branding strengthens the influence of Personal Branding on Personal Image. This means that Personal Branding not only has a direct effect on Personal Image, but will also have a stronger influence when supported by good Storytelling Branding.

Discussion

Discussion of Personal Branding on YouTube Content Creator

In finding out how Personal Branding is on YouTube content creators, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to respondents who are the audience or followers of content creators. The Personal Branding (PB) variable is measured through several indicators that reflect an individual's ability to build self-image, uniqueness, consistency, and credibility on digital platforms. Based on the results of data processing, all indicators in the Personal Branding variable have an outer loading value above 0.70, which shows that each indicator can represent the construct well. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.922 and Composite Reliability of 0.924 indicate that these variables have a very high level of reliability.

This shows that in general, content creators have been able to build a strong and consistent personal branding in the eyes of the audience. Good personal branding is reflected in how content creators can convey their identity, values, and uniqueness of content that distinguishes them from other creators.

Thus, Personal Branding is an important foundation in shaping audience perception, especially in increasing the attractiveness, trust, and professionalism of a content creator on the YouTube platform.

Discussion of Personal Image on YouTube Content Creator

The Personal Image (PI) variable in this study describes the audience's perception of a content creator's self-image. These variables are measured through various indicators that reflect professionalism, appeal, and credibility in the eyes of the audience.

The results showed that all indicators had an outer loading value above 0.70, as well as a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.919 and a Composite Reliability of 0.920. This shows that the Personal Image variable has an excellent level of validity and reliability. In addition, the R-Square value of 0.751 shows that 75.1% of the Personal Image variables can be explained by Personal Branding and Storytelling Branding. This indicates that the research model has a strong ability to explain dependent variables.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Personal Image formed by YouTube content creators is quite strong and significantly influenced by how they build personal branding and convey storytelling in their content.

Discussion of Storytelling Branding on YouTube Content Creator

Storytelling Branding (SB) is the ability of content creators to convey messages through interesting, authentic, and emotional stories. These variables are measured through various indicators that describe the strength of narrative in content.

The results showed that all indicators had an outer loading value above 0.70, with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.933 and Composite Reliability of 0.934. This indicates that the Storytelling Branding variable has a very high level of reliability.

This shows that storytelling is one of the important strategies in attracting the attention of the audience. Content creators who can tell stories in an interesting and consistent manner tend

to find it easier to build emotional closeness with the audience. Thus, storytelling branding not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a strategy to strengthen the identity and self-image of a content creator.

Discussion of Personal Branding on Personal Image on YouTube Content Creator

Based on the results of the path analysis on the inner model, it is known that Personal Branding (PB) has a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI). This is indicated by the path coefficient value of 0.533, which indicates a unidirectional relationship between the two variables. This means that the better the personal branding built by YouTube content creators, the higher the personal image formed in the eyes of the audience.

The results of statistical testing showed a T-statistical value of 7.987, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.96, and a P-value of 0.000, which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis that Personal Branding influences Personal Image is acceptable and proven to be statistically significant.

The results of this study show that personal branding has a very important role in shaping the audience's perception of a content creator. Strong personal branding reflects identity, uniqueness, and consistency in delivering content, so that it can create a positive self-image. In the context of YouTube, audiences not only judge the quality of content, but also how a creator presents themselves authentically and consistently. Personal branding serves as the main foundation in building trust and personal appeal. When a content creator can build a clear and consistent self-image, it will be easier for the audience to recognize, remember, and trust the creator and will strengthen the personal image formed in the audience's mind.

Discussion of Storytelling Branding on Personal Image on YouTube Content Creator

Based on the results of the path analysis on the inner model, it is known that Storytelling Branding (SB) has a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI). This is shown by the path coefficient value of 0.342, which indicates a unidirectional relationship between the two variables.

The results of statistical testing showed a T-statistical value of 4.905, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.96, and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Thus, the hypothesis that Storytelling Branding influences Personal Image is accepted.

These findings show that storytelling branding has an important role in shaping the self-image of a content creator. Through engaging, authentic, and emotional storytelling, creators can build a deeper connection with their audience. The stories conveyed not only serve as entertainment, but also as a medium to convey values, experiences, and self-identity. Storytelling is one of the main strategies in creating engagement and emotional closeness. Audiences tend to connect more easily with content that has a clear storyline and is relevant to their experience. This makes the personal image formed stronger and more memorable.

In addition, storytelling branding also helps clarify the message that content creators want to convey. With a structured and engaging delivery, audiences can more easily understand the character and values brought by creators, thus strengthening a positive perception of their personal image.

Discussion of the Role of Storytelling Branding in Moderating the Relationship of Personal Branding to Personal Image on YouTube Content Creators

Based on the results of the moderation test (indirect effect), it is known that the interaction between Storytelling Branding and Personal Branding ($SB \times PB$) has a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI). This is shown by the path coefficient value of 0.114, the T-statistics value of 2.207, and the P-value of 0.027 (< 0.05). Based on the results of the total effect test, it is known that all variables have a positive and significant influence on Personal Image (PI). Personal Branding had the largest influence with a coefficient of 0.533, followed by Storytelling Branding of 0.342, and a moderation effect of 0.114. This shows that Personal Branding is the main factor in forming a Personal Image, but its existence will be more optimal when supported by Storytelling Branding.

These results show that Storytelling Branding plays a role as a moderation variable that strengthens the relationship between Personal Branding and Personal Image. In other words, the

influence of personal branding on personal image will be stronger when supported by good storytelling branding. These findings indicate that personal branding built by content creators will be more effective if communicated through interesting and meaningful storytelling. Personal branding that is only displayed informatively tends to have less of a strong impact than personal branding that is packaged in the form of an emotional and authentic story.

Storytelling branding serves as a bridge that connects the identity built by creators with the perception formed in the minds of the audience. When storytelling is done consistently and relevantly, personal branding messages will be easier to receive, understand, and remember by the audience. On the other hand, if the storytelling used is less interesting, inconsistent, or irrelevant, then the influence of personal branding on personal image tends to be weaker. This shows that storytelling branding is not only a complement, but also a very important reinforcing factor in building self-image in the era of the creator economy.

These findings are consistent with prior research by Kim (2026), who demonstrated that narrative-based communication enhances brand meaning through social engagement. Narrative persuasion amplifies the impact of brand messaging in digital environments. However, the present study extends these findings by providing empirical evidence that storytelling branding functions specifically as a moderating mechanism rather than merely as an independent driver of brand outcomes. This contrasts with Hughes et al. (2019), who positioned storytelling primarily as a direct predictor of engagement. The moderating effect identified in this study (path coefficient = 0.114, $p = 0.027$) suggests that the conceptual mechanism underlying this strengthening effect operates through enhanced audience emotional processing: when personal branding messages are delivered through authentic and emotionally resonant narratives, audiences develop deeper cognitive and affective connections with the creator, thereby amplifying the impact of personal branding on image formation. This finding aligns with the elaboration likelihood model, which posits that narrative-rich messaging increases central route processing and attitude persistence.

Thus, success in building a personal image does not only depend on how strong personal branding is, but also on how the personal branding is communicated through effective storytelling.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of storytelling branding in moderating the influence of personal branding on personal image among YouTube content creators in Indonesia. Based on the SEM-PLS analysis of 256 respondents, three key findings emerged. First, Personal Branding has a positive and significant effect on Personal Image (path coefficient = 0.533, T-statistics = 7.987, $p = 0.000$), confirming that consistent identity construction, credibility, and uniqueness are fundamental determinants of audience perception. Second, Storytelling Branding has a positive and significant direct effect on Personal Image (path coefficient = 0.342, T-statistics = 4.905, $p = 0.000$), indicating that narrative-based communication independently contributes to image formation. Third, Storytelling Branding significantly moderates the relationship between Personal Branding and Personal Image (path coefficient = 0.114, T-statistics = 2.207, $p = 0.027$), demonstrating that the effect of personal branding on personal image is amplified when supported by authentic, emotionally resonant storytelling.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending personal branding literature by empirically establishing storytelling branding as a moderating variable, a role previously untested in the YouTube content creator context. This finding enriches the understanding of how narrative strategies interact with identity-based branding to shape audience perception.

The practical implications suggest that YouTube content creators should integrate storytelling techniques into their personal branding strategies, particularly by developing authentic, emotionally engaging, and coherent narratives that reinforce their personal identity and values.

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference; future research should adopt longitudinal approaches. Second, the sample was limited to Indonesian YouTube audiences, which may restrict generalizability. Future research should replicate this model across different platforms and cultural contexts, and incorporate qualitative methods to explore the mechanisms of storytelling moderation in greater depth.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Mohamad Hadi Prasetyo was solely responsible for the study's conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, interpretation, manuscript preparation, review, and final approval. The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the published work.

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