

## Parallax Self-Branding: A Conceptual Model for Multi-Dimensional Identity Marketing in Influencer Branding

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### Abstract

In today's complex social media platforms, every person and their identity manifest in varying forms and layers which is important for brands to recognize and cater through social media marketing when they opt for influencer marketing. Every interaction online is unique and each message needs to have a specific message. But traditional branding, rather influencer marketing fails to address these multifaceted identities of their target audience and fail to connect at a deeper level and be part of their customers' being "self". The current strategies and way to performing influencer marketing is mass and generic remaining only to the surface of the audience mind. To address this, this paper proposes a model for Parallax Marketing, what the current social media and influencer marketing needs in current time. This model advocated that the current social media audience have and love hearing to multi-layer of personalities not just hence brands needs to show through influencer marketing not just aspirational side, but also other distinct layers of personality such as social self, individual self to form deeper psychological connection with the audience. This model proposes that brands can leverage the AI analytical capabilities to analyse and cater to different layers of consumer identities ultimately fostering stronger brand attachment.

**Keywords:** Audience Engagement, Authenticity in Branding, Influencer Marketing, Multi-Dimensional Identity, Parallax Self-Branding, Social Identity Theory

### Introduction

The rapid expansion and penetration of social media is transforming the landscape of influencer marketing. In influencer marketing, influencers help brands bridge the gap between the brands and the consumers by posting relatable contents across social media platforms. In such kind of marketing, the main brand loses their total control over the message as the influencers influence part of it. Due to the close knit relationship social media help them form with the influencers, consumers want now more than just aspirational content but also contents which express them and help the audiences get to know them as a person holistically as they want more authentic and personal touch with the influencers as they want to see their influencers as a person with multi-dimensional character layers of daily life and not just the glittery side of influencer branding (Audrezet et al., 2020; Cocker & Cronin, 2017). This has created a market which demands multi-layer personality representation of the influencers.

Although this is a growing trend and need in the current customers base, the current research literature and the industry lacks a structured model to guide the brands on how to approach and leverage this growing need for multi-dimensional identity of influencers. Even though some influencers unconsciously and non-strategically present their varying side of personality but it lacks any strategic approach and structured and coherent process. This leads to missed opportunity to attract more audience and customer base. This paper proposes a framework to

address this gap by providing a structured model for brands to follow build better audience attraction and gain better monetization. The parallax Self-Branding Model is a conceptual model that provides influencers and brands to form a structured approach to multi-dimensional branding. Based on social psychology and identity theory, the model emphasizes strategically engaging five core identity layers namely aspirational, practical, social, critical, and experiential with each layer catering to different aspects of audience identities, enabling influencers to foster deeper loyalty by addressing the varied needs and emotions of their followers. This layered approach not only strengthens the influencer's connection with their audience but also supports a sustainable monetization strategy by facilitating diverse brand collaborations.

This model aims to bridge the gap between intuitive influencer practices and structured academic theories, offering a roadmap for building an authentic, flexible personal brand. By situating influencer branding within established theoretical constructs, this paper aims to advance the understanding of multi-dimensional identity marketing, providing influencers and marketers with a robust tool to thrive in today's competitive digital ecosystem.

### Literature Review

Previous researches on branding have primarily focused on connecting with consumers and making them view the brands as 'personality'. However, the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2001; Leal et al., 2024) has stated that people derive a sense of self with a group they belong to and adapt their personality and behaviours accordingly to better align with the expectations of that group. This underscores the very dynamic nature of identity or personality an individual carries as they shift from one "self" to other based on social situation and audience. For example someone who embodies an aspirational, may shift to embody different characteristics as social or critical depending on the situation around. Furthermore, studies (Oyserman et al., 2012; O'Reilly, 2024) also emphasise the situational and fluid nature of one's identity, mentioning that it is not static but is dynamically constructed depending on social cues and goals.

These principles and findings are of utmost relevance in the arena of influencer branding where influencers try to adjust and match emotional needs and mood of their audience to build a lasting audience base. For example, when an influencer adopts an aspirational self to inspire the followers for success while demonstration of practical self helps address everyday issues. This foundation of fluidity of identity helps influencers embody multiple selves to enhance relevance and strengthen their personal brand.

The theory of dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959; Jin et al., 2022) further amplifies the concept of multi-dimensional identity by terming it as "performance", where individuals present themselves in a way that suits the "stage" (social context) and "audience" (social group). This perspective is highly relevant to influencer marketing as the influencers operate in high visibility platforms and perform by creating contents that resonate with their follower base and shift their approach depending on the social media platform using different social media platforms as a stage to enact different roles.

Moreover, recent studies have reaffirmed the relevance of Goffman's framework in the context of digital marketing. A study by Leary and Kowalski (1990) says that self-presentation involves not only motivation (the desire to create a specific impression) but also

impression construction (the strategies used to achieve this) (Wang et al., 2023). For the influencers this reflects the need for curating their interaction with their followers to showcase different identity layers that fits the “stage” and the “audience”.

In the growing digital economy with audience expectations so high with respect to brand authenticity and relatability, major brand are more and more inclining towards influencer marketing who have already built a audience base of authenticity. With this growing digital content, audiences are also looking for more authenticity in influencers before deciding whom to follow. Studies have shown that audiences prefer influencer who showcase their natural and authentic self even when promoting brands or showcasing aspirational lifestyle (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Another study by Labrecque et al. (2011) highlights the role of authenticity in fostering trust and loyalty, which is especially relevant in the context of influencer marketing. Influencers openly share their personal struggle, vulnerabilities and imperfections which help them build relatability. This is reaffirmed by Schouten et al.'s (2007) findings which states how transparent content is important in building stronger brand communities. Studies (Farivar & Wang, 2025) have also shown that when influencers can connect with audience authentically across dimensions and platforms whether by success stories or daily challenges, they position themselves as a trusted figure among the audience holistically, which reinforces the purpose of this paper of studying multi-dimension approach of the Parallax Self-Branding Model.

Moreover, authenticity enhances emotional engagement of the followers as noted by Morhart et al. (2015). The study argues that authentic self-presentation evoke stronger response from followers. If influencers can address different aspects of their followers, aspirational, practical, social and beyond in the digital space, they can build deeper and lasting connection with their followers. This posits not only a strategic advantage but also a need for the evolving audience demands.

While the existing literature primarily focuses on either aspirational or relatable dimensions, in recent years, influencers are increasingly engaging in multi-dimensional content creation and without being confines in one single arena and to address all aspect of their audience. For instance, an aspirational content may also appeal to a follower who is driven by self-improvement (Amornpan, 2024; Petrescu et al., 2025). At the same time, contents focusing on practical or functional aspect helps the influencer appear grounder in their branding (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

The recent studies such as those by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), also highlight the importance of varied types of content to foster community engagement. Their study emphasises that influencers who showcase and address personal challenges or societal issues are considered more grounded, transparent, and authentic. Similarly, experiential, sensory or lifestyle-driven based content offers a aesthetic or escapist appeal to the followers addressing their need of adventure (Schouten et al., 2007).

Thus, the importance of presenting a multi-dimensional identity is paramount in the context of brand collaborations for influencers to seamlessly align and realign themselves (Kaplunova et al., 2024). By aligning their different layers of their identity with different brand categories, influencers diversify their range of potential partnership across genre with

brands without losing brand consistency or alienating audience sentiment. Studies also suggest that (Childers et al., 2018; van Reijmersdal et al., 2024) when influencers diversify their brand partnership with authentic self-presentation are more likely to retain audience and their trust as the followers perceive those brand as an extension of the influencer's identity rather than pure transactional arrangement. This underscores the importance of a parallax self-branding for influencers to better align their holistic persona with diverse brand broadening monetization opportunities.

### Research Gap

While influencers naturally often showcase not just their one aspect of the personality but this unstructured demonstration of varied personality layers lack strategic structure. Shifting between various layers of personality is currently more intuitive and reactive than strategic which if not handled properly can often lead to lack of audience trust or inconsistency in audience perspective of the influencer's brand. This inconsistency can alienate certain audience segments or undermine a cohesive personal brand if the transitions in the identity is unplanned. Additionally, the lack of a structured approach in leads to the missed opportunities for the influencers for brand partnership. Influencers having the potential to represent brands from diverse segments often find it difficult to transition with personal brand identities back and forth with the brands collaboration without disturbing audience sentiment.

On the other hand, marketers also find it difficult to find the influencer who best represent their brand and has the audience base that their product needs within the context of multi-dimensional context. The parallax Self Branding Model addresses this gap by offering a structured approach to balance and align difference identity layers ensuring authentic and strategic collaboration.

### Methodology

Primarily based on secondary research, the paper adopts a theoretical methodology to study the problem and develop the Parallax Self Brading Model by integrating foundational theories across disciplines such as social psychology and identity studies with observed trends in influencer marketing. The paper synthesises frameworks with practical insights and proposes the model as a guide for adaptable and structured way to build multi-dimensional personal brands for influencers.

The study extensively analyses and draws inferences from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2001) and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgic perspective offering a robust foundation for understanding the individuals adopt and adapt their various "selves" based on social context and audience. The social identity theory posits the dynamic nature of identity a person can have, emphasising people's natural adjustment to their behaviours to better align with the group they engage with at a given moment. This adaptation is particularly relevant to influencers who must strategically present different facets of their identity to resonate with a diverse audience segment. Similarly, Goffman's dramaturgic perspective presents identity as a performance, where people tailor their self-presentation based on the "stage" (context) and "audience" they address. These theoretical foundations provide the conceptual grounding for applying multi-dimensional identity strategies to influencer branding.

Apart from the theoretical foundation, the model also incorporates insights from observed influencer marketing trends. The study also analyses how more and more influencers

instinctively share varied aspects of their personal identity and risk losing audience trust and brand consistency. While this current approach demonstrates their intuitive and reactive presentation of their multi-dimensional identity, it lacks the cohesion and intentionality to better align with the overall persona of the influencer, resulting in inconsistent brand, audience disengagement and underutilization of the potential monetization opportunities. By analysing these current practices, the study attempts to identify patterns and gaps that can be addressed through a structured framework.

The study integrates these theoretical and practical perspective through conceptual synthesis to develop a cohesive framework. The proposed model organizes influencer identity into five core layers- aspirational, practical, social, critical and experimental where each layers better aligns with specific audience segments and brand collaborations. The influencers present these different layers as different “selves” of their holistic personal identity or brand to built a better aligned and adaptable personal brand.

This methodology of structured analysis results in this adaptable framework that shall enable future influencers and marketers to navigate the increasingly complex influencer marketing and digital space. By aligning their overall personal brand identity with these different layers or “selves”, the influencers position themselves to built a more sustainable and authentic and relatable personal brand which fosters long-term audience loyalty and expanded monetization opportunities.

## Findings

Citations	Findings
Tajfel & Turner (2001); Oyserman et al. (2012)	Identity is adaptable and context-driven, allowing individuals to shift their "selves" to align with group expectations and goals. Influencers use this adaptability to resonate with diverse audience segments.
Goffman (1959); Leary & Kowalski (1990); McQuarrie et al. (2013)	Identity is performed strategically to meet audience expectations. Influencers tailor their roles across platforms, balancing multiple identity layers to maximize engagement.
Audrezet et al. (2020); Labrecque et al. (2011); Morhart et al. (2015)	Authenticity through sharing imperfections, challenges, and relatable moments fosters trust and emotional resonance, leading to deeper audience engagement.
Labrecque et al. (2011); Schouten et al. (2007); Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019)	Transparency and relatability in content enhance audience trust and loyalty, strengthening community connections

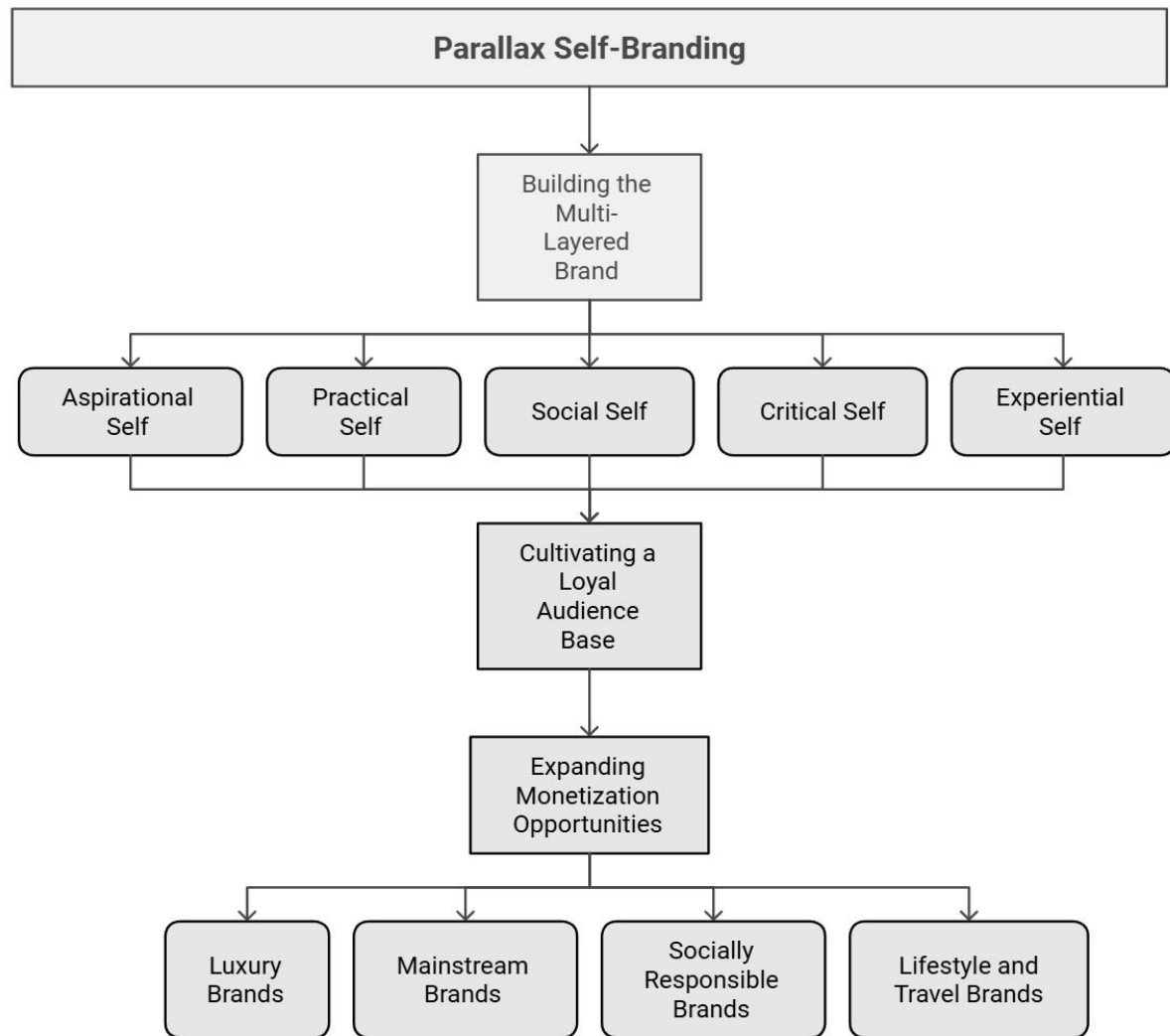
	around the influencer's brand.
Oyserman et al. (2012); McQuarrie et al. (2013); Thompson & Hirschman (1995)	Multi-dimensional identity strategies— aspirational, practical, social, critical— address diverse psychological and emotional needs, deepening audience connections.
Childers et al. (2018); Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019); Morhart et al. (2015)	Aligning identity layers with specific brand goals enables influencers to maintain authenticity while diversifying partnerships across categories.

### Proposed Comprehensive Model: Parallax Self-Branding Model

After an extensive analysis of the theoretical and practical studies, the following Parallax Self-Branding Model Is proposed which addresses the current gap in the influencer branding practices. The model focuses on building different layers to the personal brand of the influencer, thus enabling the influencers to better align their content with various audience segment without damaging authenticity. Hence this approach of building a personal brand identity inclusive of varied “selves”, helps the influencers build a flexible, loyal ‘cult’ following their holistic personal brand rather than just a type of content or product. The following is an explanation of each step in the model as depicted in Figure 1:

**1. Building the Multi-Layered Brand:** The model's foundation lies in strategically and intentionally crafting a personal brand that reflects the multi-dimensions of the influencer's identity with each layer serving a unique ‘self’ and purpose with different audience segments. **Aspirational Self:** This layer of the identity shall invoke the sense of success, achievement and idealize a persona. Content types such as success stories, luxury brand collaborations or personal milestones serves this purpose, inspiring the followers to strive for their own aspirations and a successful life. This aspirational self resonates deeply with followers who are driven by ambition and self-improvement, positioning the influencer as a role model or figure of inspiration to follow along the way.

**Practical Self:** This layer of their identity emphasises the relatability of their personality with the audience as a fellow human being by showcasing life hacks, everyday routine and accessible advices. This helps audience connect with the influencer on a more deeper level building long-term loyalty as it feels real and relevant to their own daily lives. This practical self-aligns seamlessly with brands of mainstream, functional or utility products.



*Fig. 1: Parallax Self-Branding Model*

**Social Self:** This layer of their personality focuses on community engagement and shares experience and responsibility. Through interactive content, collaboration and group challenges, the influencers can curate a sense of belongingness with their audience where they harbour a feeling of mutual belonging and collective community. This layer of their personality shall encourage active participation among the followers strengthening brand community.

**Critical Self:** This layer of their personality helps built trust through showcasing vulnerability and transparency. As influencers share their reflections and take on personal challenges, societal issues or mental health, it builds better bonding in the influencer's community. At the same time this 'self' helps them attract socially responsible brands seeking to engage in meaningful conversations.

**Experiential Self:** As the digital media evolve, audience expect more entertainment and adventure-driven content and engagement with their influencers. This experiential layer of their personal brand feeds to that need of the audience appealing to the followers seeking

escapism, inspiration or aesthetic enjoyment, broadening the influencer's appeal across audience and brand segments.

Through this strategically curated layer of personality, the influencer create a well-rounded personal brand that resonates with diverse audience and brands, integrating all aspects seamlessly integrated into the holistic personal brand.

**2. Cultivating a Loyal Audience Base:** After the foundation of multi-layered personality is formed, the influencers shall focus on nurturing a loyal audience that connects and build a community.

This approach not only help the influencers showcase their different persona but also help the followers feel seen and understood through shared aspects. Such as a follower motivated by ambition seeking aspirational content may relate better with aspirational content but someone seeking practical aspect to connect with may find relatable, everyday posts. Additionally, a single follower is motivated by different type of content based on their personal life and circumstances, this a range of layered persona helps address varied need of engagement for the followers. This helps build a loyal "cult" following cantered around the influencer's holistic persona not just one aspect. The influencer cultivates on this shared relatability by strategically balancing content types and self-presentation to foster a lasting engagement with the followers.

**3. Expanding Monetization Opportunities:** With a loyal audience base which resonates with diverse layers of the influencer's personality, the influencer can broaden the brand collaborations and potential monetization opportunities.

**Luxury Brands:** The aspirational layer of the influencer's personality aligns with the luxury and high-end brands which provide premium product, service or experience. This attracts the followers driven by aspirational self themselves seeking to emulate their success or lifestyle.

**Mainstream Brands:** Collaboration with brands reflecting practical, daily utility or functional product or services aligns with their practical self. Influencer's practical 'self' allow them to represent mainstream brands which caters to the follower's practical needs reinforcing grounded and authentic branding.

**Socially responsible Brands:** The influencer's social and critical self, help them to collaborate with brands that emphasise sustainability, social impact or wellness. By engaging with brands in meaningful collaborations the influencers amplify their personal brand message of transparency and purpose-driven branding.

**Lifestyle and Travel Brands:** With the experimental self that invokes the followers drive for adventure and curiosity, the influencers can collaborate with brands that are lifestyle, travel and creativity focused with visually appealing and sensory-rich content.

Thus, this flexible monetization strategy helps the influencers to work with a varisty of brands and across genre without compromising their personal brand coherence in the view of their followers. Thus this not only help them express themselves better holistically but also help the followers feel heard and seen building a lasting persona brand and community.



### **Practical Implications**

**Diverse Brand Partnership:** The proposed model of Parallax Self-Branding shall enable influencers to participate in a diverse set of brand partnerships across category or genre. Influencers can utilise their aspirational aspect of their brand identity to represent luxury brands appealing to a segment of audience influenced by their success or lifestyle. At the same time, their practical aspect of personality enables them to seamlessly integrate mainstream and functional brands, offering relatability across genre with across audience segments. On the other hand, the critical self shall allow them to align with brands invoking social responsibility providing a platform to engage with meaningful collaborations around the arena of sustainability, health or social justice. The experiential content will help the influencers to partner with lifestyle and travel brands offering visually appealing and rich sensory narratives. This multi-layered identity branding ensures influencers can diversity their personal brand authentically with diverse brands without compromising their brand coherence leading to better monetization opportunities.

**Enhanced Audience Connections:** The proposed model suggests influencers to build their personal brand with a multi-layered identity, it helps them foster better connection with their audience by addressing the different facets of followers' identity or aspects. A mix of aspirational stories that inspire ambition, practical tips that provide utility and transparent reflections that encourage trust ensures the followers feels seen, heard and relatable across various emotional and psychological dimensions. This helps deepen the connection of the influencer with the followers and the followers recognise the influencer as a genuine and multi-dimensional person rather than just a single-faceted content creator. As audiences demand more and more authenticity and genuinely, this approach enables influencers to maintain relevance and foster a better relationship with the followers.

**Guidance for Marketers:** The model offers brand marketers a strategic framework to identify the most suitable influencer for their brand campaign. As brand marketers look for the perfect influencer for their brand, they shall recognise the influencer's different aspects of the identity brand which aligns the most with their brand, product and target audience. For examples, a luxury brand may focus most on influencers with emphasis on aspirational self while social responsibility brands shall prefer to collaborate with influencers known for engaging in critical self. This alignment improves the authenticity and effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns, as sponsored content feels more natural and resonant to the audience. The model thus acts as a bridge between influencer branding and targeted marketing strategies, maximizing campaign impact.

**Sustainable Monetization:** By presenting multiple identity layers, the Parallax Self-Branding Model equips influencers with a flexible content strategy that adapts to changing audience preferences and market trends. This flexible nature of their brand identity helps them remain relevant and relatable regardless of shift in consumer behaviour or branding priorities. The influencers can align and emphasise on different aspects of their identity to align with emerging market trends or audience need while ensuring more monetary opportunity. This not only help them keep brand consistency at large but also help sustain audience engagement through diverse set of personal identity aspects.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

While the proposed model offers a structured framework for multi-dimensional influencer identity branding, it is primarily conceptual and requires further empirical validations. One of the areas of improvements is assessing the effectiveness of the aligning different identity layers with audience engagement or brand partnership with quantitative or qualitative data. Future research endeavours could involve case studies or experiments to assess the impact of multi-dimensional influencers personal brand identity on monetization brand partnership outcomes. Another area of improvement lies in the exploring the model's reliance on the influencer's ability to authentically balance multiple identity layers as various factors such as audience perception, platform algorithms and cultural contexts may influence how its effectiveness plays out in real context as these external factors shape the success of this proposed model across different social media platforms and geographic context. Moreover, this model even though focuses on multi-layered personality, it may not cover the complexity and intricacies of niche influencers or those with highly specific markets. It is also worth exploring how this framework can be adapted for micro-influencers or those catering to very narrow audience segments providing insights into the model's applicability across influencer scale and industry.

By addressing these improvement areas, future studies can further strengthen the effectiveness of the model in practical applications ensuring more relevance and effectiveness across context in this dynamic marketing landscape.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed model provides a extensive and structured framework for a multi-dimensional personal identity marketing in the context of influencer branding. It addresses the current gaps in the landscape of brand partnership and audience engagement strategies. If influencers organize their personal branding contents into five distinct identity layers, notably, aspirational, practical, social, critical and experiential, as mentioned in this model, this will allow the influencers to foster better connection with diverse audience segments leading to more authentic and loyal brand. This approach better positions the influencers as more genuine, authentic person with multi-dimensional personality enabling them to build a 'cult' following centered around their entire personality rather than a single product or content category. This way this model supports influencers to align their identity with diverse brand categories, enhancing monetization opportunities allowing them to collaborate with more brand categories across luxury, mainstream, social responsibility or lifestyle products, all the while maintaining consistency in their personal brand identity. Simultaneously, brands and marketers benefit from a strategic framework to identify influencers whose personal brand better aligns with their campaign goal and audience needs, enhancing the effectiveness of the influencer marketing initiatives.

While the proposed model attempts to bridge the gap between practical and academic theories of personal identity and branding, the conceptual nature of the study calls for empirical validations. The future research shall test the model's effectiveness across different marketing and branding platforms, cultures, demographics and other contexts to further refine its applicability. Nonetheless, this Parallax Self-Branding Model sets the foundation for a more adaptable and authentic approach to personal branding and influencer marketing benefiting both the influencers and marketing in an increasingly competitive and dynamic digital landscape.

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