




# Designing a Localized Model of Personal Branding in the Food Industry

Mercedeh Mortazavi Rad<sup>1</sup>, Mahmoud Ahmadisharif <sup>2,\*</sup> and Alireza Roustas<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Department of Business Management, ShQ.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran; 

<sup>2</sup> Department of Business Management, ShQ.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran; 

<sup>3</sup> Department of Business Management, ShQ.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran; 

\* Correspondence: m.sharif@qodsiau.ac.ir

**Citation:** Mortazavi Rad, M., Ahmadisharif, M., & Roustas, A. (2025). Designing a Localized Model of Personal Branding in the Food Industry. *Business, Marketing, and Finance Open*, 2(6), 1-12.

Received: 17 March 2025

Revised: 11 July 2025

Accepted: 20 July 2025

Published: 01 November 2025



**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. Published under the terms and conditions of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

**Abstract:** Today, the role of personal branding in business is highly prominent; therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine personal branding specifically in the food industry and to design a localized model in this context. Accordingly, the present research falls under the category of exploratory mixed-method studies, consisting of two stages. The first stage is qualitative, applying the grounded theory approach, and the second stage is quantitative, which, from the perspective of data collection, is descriptive-survey in nature. The statistical population of this study comprises experts in the food industry in Iran. In the first stage, 19 of them were selected as the sample using a non-probability snowball sampling method. Based on the extraction of 12 key questions from existing sources, an interview was designed in this regard, and the required data were collected. This process resulted in 441 propositions, which were coded and categorized into first-, second-, and third-level concepts using grounded theory methodology with the aid of MAXQDA qualitative software, ultimately leading to the development of a qualitative model. In the second stage, a statistical sample of 100 managers and experts in the food industry, who had sufficient knowledge of the subject under investigation and were introduced by the aforementioned 19 participants through snowball sampling, was considered. A questionnaire containing 29 questions derived from the categories obtained in the qualitative phase was then administered to them. Data analysis was carried out using structural equation modeling with the partial least squares (PLS) approach via SmartPLS software, which confirmed all hypotheses derived from the qualitative research. The findings revealed that causal conditions (personal characteristics, business characteristics) have a significant effect on personal branding, and that strategies (identity tools defined in behavior, appropriate tools for image building, social networking, social responsibility, adopting a distinctive and differentiated approach, focusing on objectives, market analysis), influenced by contextual conditions (cultural values, political, economic, and social issues, beliefs and convictions, dynamic world) and intervening conditions (feedback and suggestions, differences between virtual space and the real world, audience expectation levels, social norms) as mediating variables, have a significant impact on outcomes (advancing company objectives, saving time and costs, achieving internal satisfaction, attracting and retaining audiences, gaining reputation, improving the quality of communications).

**Keywords:** Branding, Personal Branding, Personal Brand Image and Equity

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary networked economy, personal branding has emerged as a critical competency for individuals seeking to establish, maintain, and enhance their professional and social identity in competitive markets

[1]. The concept refers to the strategic process by which individuals define, communicate, and manage the perceptions others hold of them, often with the aim of achieving professional advancement, enhancing marketability, or differentiating themselves in saturated industries [2, 3]. The rapid expansion of digital communication channels—particularly social media—has amplified the scope and impact of personal branding, transforming it into an essential element of both individual and organizational success [4, 5].

The origins of personal branding as a formalized concept can be traced to self-marketing strategies where individuals employ similar tools and principles as corporate brands to create a unique and consistent professional identity [6, 7]. In the modern business environment, personal branding extends beyond mere self-promotion to encompass authenticity, value creation, and the establishment of trust-based relationships with target audiences [8, 9]. This multidimensional approach involves integrating one's values, skills, achievements, and personality into a cohesive narrative that resonates with stakeholders [10, 11].

The academic literature emphasizes that personal branding is both an individual and organizational concern, particularly in industries where trust, visibility, and reputation are central to long-term success [12, 13]. Organizations increasingly recognize that employees' personal brands can reinforce corporate branding, create competitive advantages, and facilitate stronger engagement with customers and business partners [14-16]. In the food industry, where consumer decisions are strongly influenced by perceptions of authenticity, quality, and ethical conduct, personal branding serves as a bridge between corporate reputation and individual representation [17, 18].

A growing body of research underscores the role of social media platforms as dominant arenas for personal brand construction and dissemination [19, 20]. Social media provides unique opportunities for two-way interaction, real-time engagement, and personalized storytelling, allowing individuals to communicate values, share expertise, and cultivate loyal communities [21, 22]. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges, such as managing the blurred boundaries between personal and professional identities, responding to public scrutiny, and navigating the rapid spread of information in virtual environments [23, 24].

The strategic dimension of personal branding involves deliberate identity design, content management, and stakeholder engagement [25, 26]. Scholars argue for a systematic approach to measuring personal brand equity to assess the effectiveness of branding strategies and guide their refinement [27, 28]. Such approaches consider both qualitative aspects—such as emotional connection and perceived authenticity—and quantitative indicators, including audience reach, engagement rates, and brand recall [11, 29].

In practice, personal branding within industries such as food manufacturing and retail involves aligning one's professional image with the values, standards, and market positioning of the organization while also reflecting personal values and expertise [17, 18]. This alignment strengthens brand coherence, reinforces consumer trust, and enhances the credibility of both the individual and the organization. In this regard, training and organizational support play an instrumental role in equipping employees with the skills and resources necessary for effective brand building [15, 16].

Furthermore, global market trends reveal that personal branding is increasingly being integrated into public relations, political marketing, sports management, and entrepreneurship [12, 13, 22]. In the sports sector, for example, personal branding strategies are leveraged to enhance athletes' market value, secure sponsorships, and foster fan loyalty [19, 20]. These strategies are transferable to other sectors, where visibility, differentiation, and relationship-building are equally critical [8, 9].

From a theoretical perspective, personal branding is situated at the intersection of marketing, communication, psychology, and human resource management [2, 3]. It draws on concepts such as self-presentation, impression

management, and identity theory while also integrating elements of brand equity models traditionally applied to products and organizations [1, 26]. Recent studies have advanced the conceptual framework for personal branding, highlighting the interplay between internal factors—such as personality traits, values, and competencies—and external influences, including cultural norms, industry standards, and technological developments [27, 28].

The post-pandemic environment has further intensified the relevance of personal branding, as remote work, digital communication, and globalized competition reshape professional visibility and career progression [4, 22]. In such contexts, the ability to convey credibility, adapt to changing communication channels, and maintain engagement with diverse audiences has become indispensable [5, 10]. The literature also emphasizes the need for cultural sensitivity and context-specific strategies, as personal branding practices may differ significantly across regions and markets [13, 18].

Given these trends, there is a growing academic and practical need to develop localized models of personal branding that account for industry-specific characteristics, cultural values, and contextual constraints [14-16]. Such models can guide professionals in aligning their personal brands with organizational objectives while also fostering authenticity, adaptability, and long-term brand equity [7, 25].

Accordingly, the present study aims to design a localized model of personal branding in the food industry. This sector offers a compelling context due to its reliance on trust, quality perception, and ethical standards, all of which are heavily influenced by the personal image and credibility of key actors

## 2. Methodology

In this study, qualitative and quantitative methods were employed sequentially; therefore, the research method is classified as exploratory mixed-method. The systematic approach attributed to Strauss and Corbin was used for data analysis. This approach (grounded theory) consists of three main procedures: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Based on the selected research method, theoretical sampling was employed as the sampling technique in the qualitative phase of the present study, implemented through the snowball technique. In this method, sampling typically begins with simple random selection and continues until data saturation is reached, with each subsequent participant being introduced to the researcher by the previous one. Generally, the researcher seeks to purposefully select samples based on the type of specific information required.

In the qualitative phase of this study, interviews were conducted with 19 managers in Iran's food industry. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, depending on the level of interest and knowledge of the interviewee regarding the topic. To enhance validity, feedback was provided to the interviewees, and they were engaged in the research process in a manner that did not influence their responses. Furthermore, after each interview, the model obtained up to that point was presented, and any comments made by the interviewee regarding the model were discussed.

To ensure the reliability of the study, both internal and external evaluation methods were used. Accordingly, the coded data were shared with a number of experts to obtain their opinions regarding the labels and coding process. Additionally, the model was presented to several experts for feedback, and after making the necessary revisions at each stage, the final model was developed.

In the quantitative phase, the statistical population consisted of experts in the food industry in Iran. To determine an appropriate sample size representative of the statistical population, purposive sampling was used. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire. In this study, the questionnaire consisted of 29 items and was distributed to 100 participants using the snowball sampling method. To assess the face validity of the questionnaire, the

judgments of several experts and faculty members were utilized. Validity in the quantitative section was measured using Smart PLS software through both convergent and discriminant validity methods. The reliability of the research in the quantitative section was evaluated using Smart PLS software by calculating Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho\_A.

After collecting and coding the questionnaires, along with other gathered information, SmartPLS 3.3.3 software was used to perform statistical tests for analyzing the data obtained from the samples. The small sample size was the primary reason for employing the PLS method.

### 3. Findings and Results

In this study, the grounded theory method was used. Coding in grounded theory is a type of content analysis aimed at identifying and conceptualizing discussable topics that exist within large volumes of data. In fact, during the analysis of an interview, the researcher will realize that the interviewee, while speaking, uses words and expressions that highlight discussable topics related to the phenomenon under investigation. Coding should be conducted with an open mind and without resorting to preconceived ideas. The founders of grounded theory emphasize that one should not prepare ideas in advance and then, through searching the phenomenon under investigation to find supporting evidence, limit the data obtained from the initial stage of grounded theory (coding). The results of the coding process are presented in the table below.

**Table 1. Dimensions, Components, and Indicators of Personal Branding in the Food Industry**

Dimensions	Components	Indicators
Causal Conditions	Personal Characteristics	Personality and individual attitude; Knowledge and expertise; Lifestyle; Interests and preferences; Innate and acquired abilities
	Business Characteristics	Features of the commercial brand; Thinking process of the brand creator
Contextual Conditions	Cultural Values	National culture; Individual culture; Cultural conflict
	Political, Economic, and Social Issues	Global current affairs; Political, economic, and social challenges
	Beliefs and Convictions	Individual beliefs; Religious beliefs; National beliefs
	Dynamic World	Technological changes; Expansion of virtual space
Intervening Conditions	Feedback and Suggestions	Positive feedback; Negative feedback
	Difference Between Virtual Space and the Real World	Difference between online and offline personality; Reduced perception and understanding in virtual space
Strategies	Audience Expectation Level	Initial audience expectations; Product experience and generalizability
	Social Norms	Restrictions and regulations in virtual space; Social restrictions and regulations
	Identity Tools Defined in Behavior	Importance of honesty in behavior; Adherence to do's and don'ts; Maintaining the true self
	Appropriate Tools for Image Building	Product endorsement by celebrities; Alignment of social values with the brand; Continuous presence; Product presentation through past memories
	Social Networking	Communication with audiences; Communication with colleagues; Information transfer and awareness creation; Communication through Q&A; Use of incentive methods; Use of hashtags; Continuous interaction and stable relationships
	Social Responsibility	Concern for the environment; Concern for hygiene and health; Contribution to societal improvement
	Adopting a Distinctive and Differentiated Approach	Meeting audience needs; Sending attractive content; Providing significant services; Offering unique and high-quality products; Focusing on competitors' shortcomings; Distinctive and non-imitative behavior; Raising awareness
	Focus on Goals	Alignment between personal brand and company objectives; Avoidance of scattered topics; Development of strategy and intellectual policy
	Market Analysis	Choosing an appropriate market; Identifying competitors

Outcomes	Advancing Company Objectives	Evaluating potential employee characteristics; Career success; Increased sales; Utilizing borderless virtual space; Providing a suitable platform for online advertising
	Saving Time and Costs	Reducing the time and cost of finding customers; Reducing the time and cost of branding; Reducing the time and cost of market reporting; Reducing advertising costs
	Achieving Internal Satisfaction	Sense of pleasure from feedback; Sense of pleasure and satisfaction from performing the work
	Attracting and Retaining Audiences	Increasing followers; Increasing likes and views; Influencing audience purchase decisions; Increasing loyalty
	Gaining Fame	Increasing the brand owner's fame; Increasing the company's brand fame; Loss of privacy
	Improving Communication Quality	Increasing intimacy in communication; Audience participation in business development; Better assessment and understanding of the brand owner; Gaining trust and credibility

**Table 2. Reliability Results for Latent Variables**

Second-Order Latent Variables	First-Order Latent Variables	Variable Symbol	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Causal Conditions	Personal Characteristics	IC / CC	6	0.877 / 0.919	0.878 / 0.920	0.907 / 0.933
	Business Characteristics	BF	3	0.748	0.757	0.856
Personal Branding	PB	5	0.898	0.899	0.925	
	Cultural Values	CV / UC	4	0.766 / 0.916	0.775 / 0.919	0.851 / 0.928
Contextual Conditions	Political, Economic, and Social Issues	SI	3	0.745	0.748	0.855
	Beliefs and Convictions	BB	4	0.738	0.741	0.836
Intervening Conditions	Dynamic World	DW	3	0.740	0.740	0.852
	Difference Between Virtual Space and the Real World	DC / IN	3	0.827 / 0.916	0.832 / 0.921	0.897 / 0.929
Strategies	Social Norms	SN	3	0.715	0.731	0.841
	Audience Expectation Level	WL	3	0.700	0.710	0.837
Outcomes	Feedback and Suggestions	FB	3	0.767	0.778	0.865
	Identity Tools Defined in Behavior	IB / ST	4	0.801 / 0.976	0.823 / 0.978	0.873 / 0.978
	Appropriate Tools for Image Building	PI	5	0.869	0.885	0.908
	Social Networking	SO	8	0.927	0.932	0.941
	Social Responsibility	SR	4	0.730	0.767	0.833
	Adopting a Distinctive and Differentiated Approach	AA	8	0.903	0.903	0.922
	Focus on Goals	FG	4	0.794	0.805	0.867
	Market Analysis	MR	3	0.809	0.810	0.887
	Advancing Company Objectives	AC / CN	6	0.807 / 0.957	0.809 / 0.958	0.862 / 0.961
	Saving Time and Resources	SS	5	0.771	0.783	0.847
	Achieving Internal Satisfaction	GS	3	0.708	0.710	0.837
	Attracting and Retaining Audiences	AR	5	0.796	0.797	0.860
	Gaining Fame	GF	4	0.767	0.771	0.852
	Improving Communication Quality	IQ	5	0.800	0.806	0.863

Reliability in this study for all Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, and composite reliability values exceeded 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability in the quantitative section.

**Table 3. Convergent Validity for Latent Variables**

Second-Order Latent Variables	First-Order Latent Variables	Factor Loading	Communality Values	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Causal Conditions	Personal Characteristics	0.878	0.770	0.620 / 0.671
	Business Characteristics	0.757	0.573	0.666
Personal Branding	—	0.899	0.808	0.711
Contextual Conditions	Cultural Values	0.775	0.600	0.590 / 0.563
	Political, Economic, and Social Issues	0.748	0.559	0.662
	Beliefs and Convictions	0.741	0.549	0.560
	Dynamic World	0.740	0.547	0.658
Intervening Conditions	Difference Between the Real and Virtual Worlds	0.832	0.692	0.743 / 0.587
	Social Norms	0.731	0.534	0.640
	Audience Expectation Level	0.720	0.518	0.632
	Feedback and Suggestions	0.778	0.605	0.682
Strategies	Identity Tools Defined in Behavior	0.823	0.677	0.637 / 0.719
	Appropriate Tools for Image Building	0.885	0.783	0.667
	Social Networking	0.932	0.868	0.668
	Social Responsibility	0.767	0.588	0.561
Outcomes	Adopting a Distinctive and Differentiated Approach	0.903	0.815	0.596
	Focus on Goals	0.805	0.648	0.622
	Market Analysis	0.810	0.656	0.724
	Advancing Company Objectives	0.809	0.654	0.510 / 0.608
	Saving Time and Resources	0.783	0.613	0.529
	Achieving Internal Satisfaction	0.710	0.504	0.632
	Attracting and Retaining Audiences	0.797	0.635	0.552
	Gaining Fame	0.771	0.594	0.591
	Improving Communication Quality	0.806	0.649	0.558

As shown in the table above, derived from the Fornell and Larcker (1981) method, the square root of the AVE for the latent variables, located on the main diagonal of the matrix, is greater than the correlations between them, which are arranged in the cells below and to the left of the main diagonal. Therefore, the constructs in the model have stronger interactions with their own indicators, and the discriminant validity of the model is at an acceptable level.

In this study, the overall model fit (GOF) is equal to 0.726. Since this value is greater than 0.36, the model fit is evaluated as strong. Based on these results, the research hypotheses are assessed.

The  $Q^2$  criterion indicates the predictive power of the model. Accordingly, considering the model fit based on the  $Q^2$  criterion, as shown in the table below, the evaluation for all variables can be considered strong.

**Table 4.  $Q^2$  Criterion for Latent Variables**

Second-Order Latent Variable	First-Order Latent Variable	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 = 1 - \text{SSE/SSO}$
Causal Conditions	Personal Characteristics	600.000 / 900.000	241.001 / 584.231	0.598 / 0.350
	Business Characteristics	300.000	119.656	0.601
Personal Branding	—	5000.000	212.430	0.575
Contextual Conditions	Cultural Values	400.000 / 1400.000	212.392 / 858.231	0.469 / 0.386
	Political, Economic, and Social Issues	300.000	151.731	0.494
	Beliefs and Convictions	400.000	233.766	0.416
	Dynamic World	300.000	143.600	0.521

Intervening Conditions	Differences Between the Real and Virtual Worlds	300.000 / 1200.000	151.807 / 764.290	0.494 / 0.363
	Social Norms	300.000	147.313	0.509
	Audience Expectation Level	300.000	145.540	0.515
	Feedback and Suggestions	300.000	136.699	0.544
Strategies	Identity Tools Defined in Behavior	400.000 / 3600.000	192.043 / 1761.642	0.520 / 0.511
	Appropriate Tools for Image Building	500.000	216.587	0.567
	Social Networking	800.000	310.569	0.612
	Social Responsibility	4000.000	214.811	0.463
	Adopting a Distinctive and Differentiated Approach	800.000	373.373	0.533
	Focus on Goals	400.000	196.252	0.509
	Market Analysis	300.000	134.214	0.553
Outcomes	Advancing Company Objectives	600.000 / 2800.000	334.544 / 1666.636	0.442 / 0.405
	Saving Time and Resources	500.000	284.193	0.432
	Achieving Internal Satisfaction	300.000	154.643	0.485
	Attracting and Retaining Audiences	500.000	269.013	0.462
	Gaining Fame	400.000	218.146	0.455
	Improving Communication Quality	500.000	258.447	0.483

**Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Significance Level	Regression Coefficient	Result
1	Causal Conditions	Personal Branding	0.000	0.907	Supported
2	Personal Branding	Strategies	0.000	0.311	Supported
3	Contextual Conditions	Strategies	0.000	0.390	Supported
4	Intervening Conditions	Strategies	0.000	0.308	Supported
5	Strategies	Outcomes	0.000	0.945	Supported

The results of hypothesis testing, as presented in Table 5, indicate that all proposed relationships in the conceptual model are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The highest regression coefficient was observed in the relationship between strategies and outcomes ( $\beta = 0.945$ ), suggesting that strategies play a crucial role in achieving positive consequences in the context of personal branding in the food industry. Additionally, causal conditions showed a strong and direct impact on personal branding ( $\beta = 0.907$ ), while contextual and intervening conditions had moderate yet significant effects on strategies ( $\beta = 0.390$  and  $\beta = 0.308$ , respectively). These findings confirm the robustness of the model and the alignment between theoretical expectations and empirical evidence.

**Table 6. Structural Model Fit for the Variables**

Endogenous Variable	Exogenous Variable	Path Coefficient	t-value	R <sup>2</sup>	Result
Causal Conditions	Personal Characteristics	0.988	309.318	0.920	Supported
	Business Characteristics	0.960	313.557		
Contextual Conditions	Cultural Values	0.902	42.372	0.919	Supported
	Political, Economic, and Social Issues	0.867	38.221		
	Beliefs and Convictions	0.874	23.067		
	Dynamic World	0.906	49.929		
Intervening Conditions	Feedback and Suggestions	0.903	44.771	0.921	Supported
	Audience Expectation Level	0.915	50.508		
	Difference Between Virtual Space and the Real World	0.825	14.421		
	Social Norms	0.897	45.148		
Strategies	Identity Tools Defined in Behavior	0.909	46.785	0.978	Supported

Outcomes	Appropriate Tools for Image Building	0.929	50.244	0.958	Supported
	Social Networking	0.961	107.846		
	Social Responsibility	0.922	51.701		
	Adopting a Distinctive and Differentiated Approach	0.953	103.286		
	Focus on Goals	0.920	52.242		
	Market Analysis	0.879	22.544		
	Advancing Company Objectives	0.941	75.633		
	Saving Time and Resources	0.915	47.265		
	Achieving Internal Satisfaction	0.884	29.073		
	Attracting and Retaining Audiences	0.925	63.619		
	Gaining Fame	0.885	32.932		
	Improving Communication Quality	0.937	67.234		

The results presented in Table 6 demonstrate that all path coefficients are positive, statistically significant, and associated with high t-values, confirming strong relationships among the constructs in the structural model. The  $R^2$  values for the main endogenous variables—causal conditions (0.920), contextual conditions (0.919), intervening conditions (0.921), strategies (0.978), and outcomes (0.958)—indicate a high explanatory power of the model. Notably, the strongest path coefficients were observed between personal characteristics and causal conditions ( $\beta = 0.988$ ) and between social networking and strategies ( $\beta = 0.961$ ), suggesting these factors are highly influential in shaping personal branding in the food industry. Overall, the structural model exhibits excellent fit and predictive capability, providing robust support for the proposed theoretical framework.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that all hypothesized relationships in the localized personal branding model for the food industry were statistically significant, with high path coefficients and strong  $R^2$  values. The structural model demonstrated that causal conditions, represented by personal characteristics and business characteristics, exert a substantial influence on personal branding ( $\beta = 0.907$ ). This aligns with previous studies emphasizing that the foundation of personal branding lies in individual traits, values, expertise, and the strategic alignment of these personal attributes with professional roles [1-3]. As [6] suggests, authenticity and consistency in expressing one's personal identity are crucial in building credibility and trust, particularly in industries like food, where brand reputation is closely tied to perceived quality and ethical practices. Similarly, [14] and [17] argue that personal branding in the Iranian context must consider both intrinsic characteristics and professional competencies to resonate with stakeholders.

The results further reveal that personal branding significantly impacts the adoption and implementation of strategies ( $\beta = 0.311$ ). This finding supports the assertion of [4] that personal branding acts as the strategic driver for all subsequent branding activities, influencing how individuals select identity tools, engage in social networking, and adopt distinctive positioning. The significant path between contextual conditions and strategies ( $\beta = 0.390$ ) underscores the role of cultural, political, economic, and technological factors in shaping personal branding practices. This finding corroborates earlier research showing that contextual awareness is a critical determinant of branding effectiveness, as personal brand messages must adapt to cultural values, societal norms, and market dynamics [13, 18, 28].

Intervening conditions also significantly influenced strategies ( $\beta = 0.308$ ), indicating that factors such as audience expectations, feedback, social norms, and the differences between online and offline identities play a mediating role

in shaping brand-related actions. This finding aligns with the work of [23] and [21], who highlight that in digital environments, brand-building efforts are continuously shaped by audience engagement and real-time feedback loops. Additionally, the impact of online–offline identity gaps echoes the concerns raised by [22] regarding the consistency of brand presentation across different contexts, particularly in post-pandemic digital branding landscapes.

The strongest relationship in the model was observed between strategies and outcomes ( $\beta = 0.945$ ), reinforcing the notion that well-formulated and contextually relevant personal branding strategies lead to tangible results such as career advancement, audience loyalty, and enhanced communication quality. This is consistent with [8] and [9], who argue that strategic personal branding yields measurable benefits in terms of both market positioning and relationship management. Similarly, [29] found that in sports branding, structured strategies significantly improve fan engagement and sponsorship opportunities, a principle equally applicable to the food industry in fostering customer trust and loyalty.

The dimensions of strategy identified in this study—identity tools defined in behavior, appropriate tools for image building, social networking, social responsibility, adopting a distinctive approach, focusing on goals, and market analysis—mirror the multi-component frameworks proposed by [27] and [25], who emphasize that personal branding should be operationalized through clearly defined and measurable actions. In particular, social networking emerged as a high-loading component, reflecting the increasingly central role of digital platforms in brand communication [19, 20]. This confirms the argument of [5] that online interaction styles significantly influence perceived brand personality.

The strong influence of cultural values and political, economic, and social issues on strategy development reflects findings from [12] and [24], who highlight that brand narratives must align with local contexts to maintain relevance and authenticity. In the Iranian food industry, where consumer trust is influenced by cultural authenticity and social responsibility, aligning personal brand strategies with societal expectations enhances both brand resonance and loyalty [15, 16]. This is consistent with [11], who found that managers in service industries must integrate cultural and organizational values into their personal branding to ensure alignment with corporate identity.

The significance of intervening conditions, such as feedback and social norms, reinforces the dynamic and responsive nature of personal branding. [10] and [26] argue that feedback mechanisms not only help refine brand messages but also contribute to stakeholder trust by demonstrating adaptability and openness to improvement. Moreover, addressing audience expectations is a central aspect of maintaining brand relevance, as indicated by [28], who found that professionals with adaptive branding approaches are more successful in sustaining long-term audience engagement.

The empirical results also support the proposition that the integration of social responsibility into personal branding strategies generates positive outcomes. The inclusion of environmental, health, and community-oriented initiatives in personal brand narratives resonates with the findings of [3] and [22], who note that socially responsible branding appeals to values-driven consumers and enhances perceived credibility. This is particularly relevant in the food industry, where issues of sustainability, quality assurance, and public health are prominent in consumer decision-making [17].

Importantly, the high explanatory power of the model ( $R^2$  values exceeding 0.90 for all main constructs) demonstrates its robustness and practical applicability in the food industry context. This aligns with [7] and [1], who highlight the need for empirically validated models that capture the multi-dimensionality of personal branding. Furthermore, the grounded theory approach employed in the qualitative phase ensured that the

identified components and relationships were firmly rooted in industry-specific realities, echoing methodological recommendations from [25] for developing contextually grounded personal branding frameworks.

Overall, these findings contribute to the literature by confirming that personal branding in the food industry is shaped by a complex interplay of personal, contextual, and intervening factors, and that strategically designed branding activities lead to meaningful professional and organizational outcomes. This study extends prior work by integrating cultural and industry-specific considerations into a comprehensive model, thereby offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance for professionals seeking to enhance their personal brands in competitive markets.

While this study provides significant insights into the localized model of personal branding in the food industry, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within the Iranian context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and economic environments. Cultural values, industry practices, and consumer expectations vary considerably across regions, and the applicability of the proposed model to other countries or sectors requires cautious interpretation. Second, although the mixed-methods design strengthens the validity of the results, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases related to social desirability or selective memory. Third, the study's cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture the longitudinal evolution of personal branding practices over time, particularly in response to changing market and technological conditions. Finally, the focus on the food industry, while providing depth, means that further research is needed to assess whether the model holds across different industries with distinct branding challenges and dynamics.

Future research should aim to test the localized personal branding model in diverse cultural and industrial contexts to assess its adaptability and external validity. Comparative studies across sectors—such as hospitality, technology, sports, and creative industries—could reveal sector-specific variations in branding strategies and outcomes. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in understanding how personal branding evolves over time, especially in response to disruptive events such as technological innovations, economic crises, or shifts in consumer behavior. Additionally, future research could explore the role of emerging digital tools, including artificial intelligence and augmented reality, in shaping personal branding narratives and enhancing audience engagement. Incorporating objective performance metrics, such as brand equity scores, social media analytics, and career progression indicators, could provide a more comprehensive evaluation of branding effectiveness.

For practitioners, the findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating personal branding strategies with cultural values, industry standards, and organizational goals. Professionals in the food industry should invest in building authentic, consistent, and value-driven personal brands that resonate with both internal and external stakeholders. Leveraging social media platforms for sustained engagement, adopting socially responsible initiatives, and maintaining consistency between online and offline personas are essential for credibility and trust. Organizations can support employees by providing training in digital communication, brand storytelling, and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that personal branding efforts align with corporate identity while fostering individual differentiation. Finally, systematic monitoring of audience feedback and market trends can help professionals refine their branding strategies, maintain relevance, and achieve sustainable professional growth.

#### **Authors' Contributions**

Authors equally contributed to this article.

## Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

## Acknowledgments

Authors thank all participants who participate in this study.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

## Funding/Financial Support

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

## References

- [1] W. Kucharska, "Personal branding-A new competency in the era of the network economy. Corporate brand performance implications," in *Corporate social responsibility in the manufacturing and services sectors*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2019, pp. 19-34.
- [2] M. Khedher, "Conceptualizing and researching personal branding effects on the employability," *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 99-109, 2019, doi: 10.1057/s41262-018-0117-1.
- [3] S. Gorbato, S. N. Khapova, and E. I. Lysova, "Personal branding: interdisciplinary systematic review and research agenda," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 9, p. 2238, 2019, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02238.
- [4] P. Montoya, *Personal Branding Strategies on Social Media*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2024.
- [5] R. Ramli, "Express Brand Personality as Personal Branding," 2021, doi: 10.15405/epsbs.2021.06.02.3.
- [6] G. C. Coyote, *Impressions: The Power of Personal Branding in Living an Extraordinary Life*. Wisdom House Book, 2014.
- [7] W. Kucharska, "Consumer social network brand identification and personal branding. How do social network users choose among brand sites?," *Cogent Business & Management*, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 1315879, 2017, doi: 10.1080/23311975.2017.1315879.
- [8] S. Dewan, "The Role of Personal Image in Personal Branding," *Centro de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación*, vol. 118, pp. 29-38, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/8307108.pdf>.
- [9] G. Dumont and M. Ots, "Social dynamics and stakeholder relationships in personal branding," *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 106, pp. 118-128, 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.013.
- [10] S. Scheidt, "Personal branding of top managers," 2021. [Online]. Available: [https://research.utwente.nl/files/268025014/Thesis\\_Stefan\\_Scheidt.pdf](https://research.utwente.nl/files/268025014/Thesis_Stefan_Scheidt.pdf).
- [11] W. Muszyńska, "Personal branding of managers in service companies," *E-mentor*, vol. 5, no. 92, pp. 53-60, 2021, doi: 10.15219/em92.1540.
- [12] A. S. Hendrayana, "Does Personal Branding Influence More Than Political Marketing And Pull Marketing? The Choice Decision Of The Beginner Voters In Governor Election," *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH*, vol. 8, no. 11, 2019.
- [13] I. Kusumah, T. Iskandar, S. Sumantri, D. Harding, A. Rizal, and E. Widiarti, "The Influences of Social Expectation Toward Leader Power, Leader Practices And Personal Branding to Establish The Leader Trust (Case Study on the Leadership of Bandung and Purwakarta Region on Gen-Z)," *World Scientific News*, vol. 108, pp. 64-73, 2018.
- [14] A. Hassanpoor, Y. Vakili, H. Norouzi, and F. Khamoie, "Identify the dimensions and components of employee personal branding by mixed method (Case study: Iran Insurance Industry)," *Management Research in Iran*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 91-116, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://ensani.ir/fa/article/download/437194>.
- [15] R. Malayi, S. A. Sayed, R. Hovida, and J. Rizanah, "Designing a Personal Branding Model for Employees with Emphasis on Organizational Training (Case Study: Administrative Staff of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran)," *Management Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 699-720, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.magiran.com/paper/2317317/>.
- [16] R. Mollaei, A. Siadat, R. Hoveida, and J. Rizanah, "Designing a Model of Personal Branding for Employees With an Emphasis on Organizational Training: The Case of the Administrative Staff of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Iranian Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 699-720, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.magiran.com/paper/2317317/>.

- [17] M. Mortazavi, M. Ahmadi Sharif, and A. Rousta, "Identifying the effective factors in personal branding in the food industry based on the grounded theory method," *Iranian Journal of Operations Research*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 158-174, 2021.
- [18] Q. Zarei, S. M. R. Mohammadi, and S. Abadi Sani, "Identifying and Prioritizing Factors Influencing Personal Branding of Managers in Business Companies on Social Networks," *Brand Management*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 214-258, 2023. [Online]. Available: [https://bmr.alzahra.ac.ir/article\\_7071.html](https://bmr.alzahra.ac.ir/article_7071.html).
- [19] J. Park, A. S. Williams, and S. Son, "Social Media as a Personal Branding Tool: A Qualitative Study of Student-Athletes' Perceptions and Behaviors," *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2020, doi: 10.25035/jade.02.01.04.
- [20] Z. Sharifzadeh, N. T. Brison, and G. Bennett, "Personal Branding on Instagram: An Examination of Iranian Professional Athletes," *Sport Business and Management an International Journal*, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 556-574, 2021, doi: 10.1108/sbm-01-2021-0007.
- [21] J. Jacobson, "You are a brand: social media managers' personal branding and "the future audience"," *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, pp. 1-1, 2020, doi: 10.1108/JPBM-03-2019-2299.
- [22] E. S. J. Pazmino and S. M. Pack, "A Post-Pandemic Exploration of International Student-Athlete Personal Branding and Fan Interaction via Social Media," *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 67, no. 11, pp. 1322-1339, 2022, doi: 10.1177/00027642221118289.
- [23] S. Scheidt, C. Gelhard, and J. Henseler, "Old Practice, but Young Research Field: A Systematic Bibliographic Review of Personal Branding," *Frontiers in Psychology*, pp. 1-18, 2020, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01809.
- [24] J. Molares-Cardoso, C. López de Aguilera, and B. Legerén Lago, "The importance of personal branding as an element of public relations: an international experience," *Comunicação e Sociedade*, pp. 19-35, 2020, doi: 10.17231/comsoc.0(2020).2738.
- [25] P. Szántó, Á. Papp-Váry, and L. Radácsi, "Research Gap in Personal Branding: Understanding and Quantifying Personal Branding by Developing a Standardized Framework for Personal Brand Equity Measurement," *Administrative Sciences*, vol. 15, no. 4, p. 148, 2025, doi: 10.3390/admsci15040148.
- [26] P. Szanto and L. Radácsi, "Defining personal brand, personal branding and personal brand equity," *Prosperitas*, pp. 1-11, 2023, doi: 10.31570/prosp\_2022\_0043.
- [27] J. Vinmalar, "A Study on Personal Branding - Theoretical Concept," *International Journal of Engineering Technologies and Management Research*, vol. 12, p. 1, 2025, doi: 10.29121/ijetmr.v12.i(4SE).2025.1621.
- [28] M. Smolarek and J. Dzieńdziora, "Impact of Personal Branding on the Development of Professional Careers of Managers," *European Research Studies Journal*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 133-147, 2022, doi: 10.35808/ersj/2833.
- [29] D. Dašić, M. Ratković, and M. Pavlović, "Commercial Aspects of Personal Branding of Athletes on Social Networks," *Marketing*, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 118-131, 2021, doi: 10.5937/mkng2102118d.