

The Personal Branding Process of Historical Knowledge Influencers: A

Case Study of Dr. Wit Sittivaekin and Nat Klinmalee (Farose)¹

Max Immonen²

R-Titaya Supsinwiat

Abstract

As Thailand's creator economy expands, historical knowledge influencers have emerged as non-traditional communicators who make specialized content accessible to general audiences. Yet the personal branding process of this creator category remains understudied. This study examines how historical knowledge influencers on digital platforms construct personal brands through the DCCM framework (Discover, Create, Communicate, Maintain) and edutainment. Addressing the limited research on history-focused creators in Thailand's creator economy, the study employs a qualitative comparative case study design, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with two purposively selected influencers at the macro- and mega-influencer levels on YouTube. Data were analyzed through theoretically driven reflexive thematic analysis and triangulated with publicly available secondary sources. The findings reveal that personal branding develops through four connected stages: discovering inimitable life capital, creating an authentic brand core, communicating through platform-specific

¹ APA7th Citation: Immonen, M & Supsinwiat, R. (2026). The personal branding process of historical knowledge influencers: A case study of Dr. Wit sittivaekin and Nat Klinmalee (Farose). In *Proceedings of the ICA Regional Hub Thailand 2026: Official Concurrent Event of the 76th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA)* (pp. 314-280). Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

² Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Max Immonen at the Faculty of College of Social Communication Innovation, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand or by email at : Maximmonen22@gmail.com

storytelling, and maintaining consistency while adapting organically. Edutainment is most evident in the Create and Communicate stages, while in the Maintain stage it is expressed through the preservation of a substance-to-entertainment balance that aligns with the creator's identity. The study contributes to marketing communication by showing how creator-led personal branding can broaden public access to historical knowledge and reduce inequalities in knowledge dissemination.

Keywords: personal branding, historical knowledge influencers, edutainment, DCCM Framework, creator economy, digital communication

In the rapidly transforming digital society, the influencer profession has emerged from evolving concepts and technologies, tracing back to the theory of opinion leadership proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), which later evolved into the concept of the key opinion leader, an individual with credibility who can shape consumer decisions (Wang, 2023). With the rise of social media, influencers-now defined by personality, content, and direct audience engagement-gain credibility and shape brand relationships (Mulholland et al., 2025; Silveira et al., 2023). This study argues that influencer success lies in constructing a credible brand rooted in substance and engagement, rather than expertise or follower count.

This study is situated within the conference theme of communication and inequalities. Historical knowledge has traditionally been associated with formal education and academic language, creating barriers for general audiences. Personal branding through edutainment is a mechanism by which non-traditional communicators can lower these barriers, thereby widening access to specialized knowledge across diverse audiences.

The expansion of digital media and the global growth of internet users have driven the emergence of the creator economy, an internet-facilitated ecosystem that allows individuals to create content, grow an audience, and monetize their talent through digital platforms (Peres et al., 2024). In Thailand, the expansion of social media platforms, digital content consumption, and platform-based income opportunities has contributed to the rapid growth of influencer careers, with Thailand ranking second in Southeast Asia in terms of the number of influencers (Nation Thailand, 2025). Influencers can also be classified by content specialization, spanning categories such as gaming, beauty, lifestyle, education, and entertainment, among others (Santora, 2024).

Although lifestyle, entertainment, and beauty influencers remain highly visible, niche influencers focusing on knowledge-based content are gaining increasing attention, as their material is grounded in credible sources (Dataxet, 2024). In this context, historical knowledge influencers have become a notable niche segment within Thailand's creator economy.

Historical knowledge occupies a distinctive position among knowledge-based content. As Popa (2022) argues, history functions not merely as a record of past events but as a form of social memory that connects individuals to the world beyond their immediate experience, enabling them to orient themselves across time. Digital platforms have begun to shift this dynamic, creating space for historical content to reach wider audiences through more engaging and approachable formats. It is within this context that historical knowledge influencers have emerged as intermediaries between specialized historical knowledge and the general public.

An example of this phenomenon is FAROSE, or Nat Klinmalee, the creator of FAROSE and FAROSE Podcast. He presents complex, knowledge-based content through accessible, entertaining, and conversational storytelling, enabling him to cultivate a strong community of followers who remain actively engaged with his content. The personal identity

and audience relationship that he developed in digital spaces also expanded into physical spaces through the talk show FaraTalk, which sold out repeatedly from 2023 to 2026, increasing capacity from 2,500 to 3,000 seats and adding multiple same day showtimes (Taatile, 2026; ThaiTicketMajor, 2024, 2025; Thesky, 2023).

Similarly, Dr. Wit Sittivaekin, the host of 8 Minute History, is another prominent historical knowledge influencer who transforms academic content into accessible and engaging learning experiences. The first round of 8 Minute History On Stage reportedly sold out quickly, leading the organizer to open an additional round in response to audience demand (Zipevent, 2023). Together, the cases of FAROSE and Dr. Wit suggest that success as a historical knowledge influencer depends less on expertise or follower count than on the strategic construction of a credible, distinctive, and relational personal brand connecting audiences across online and offline spaces for which the DCCM and edutainment frameworks jointly offer a robust analytical lens.

These developments indicate that success in the creator economy depends on building a compelling personal brand rather than simply amassing followers. This study contends that the DCCM and edutainment frameworks jointly offer a robust lens for understanding how historical knowledge influencers achieve this by translating expertise into approachable and engaging content.

Despite this growing interest, the literature still lacks in-depth studies of the personal branding process of historical knowledge influencers specifically. Prior research has largely measured influencer credibility and engagement quantitatively or analyzed disseminated messages without examining the perspectives of the content creators themselves. This study, therefore, addresses this gap by examining the personal branding process of historical knowledge influencers in Thailand and the role of edutainment throughout the process. It also aims to offer

practical guidance for those seeking to build sustainable personal brands as historical knowledge influencers and to strengthen the empirical base for branding theory in Thailand.

This study contributes to marketing communication and inclusive engagement by demonstrating how personal branding through edutainment serves as a mechanism for accessing historical knowledge. By enabling non-traditional communicators to transform complex content into accessible formats, the creator economy challenges gatekeeping structures in knowledge dissemination, a dynamic that is directly relevant to the conference theme of communication and inequalities. Theoretically, the study does not present iteration as a new principle of branding. Instead, it clarifies how the connected stages of the DCCM process are enacted in the context of digital creators.

Research Objective

To examine the personal branding process of historical knowledge influencers.

Research Question

How do historical knowledge influencers in Thailand construct their personal brands through the DCCM framework and edutainment?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of the Influencer

iPlan Digital (2023) defines influencers as individuals who exert influence within online social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, by virtue of their large followings.

Campbell and Farrell (2020) propose a five-tier classification of influencers that goes beyond follower counts to consider distinctiveness, accessibility, expertise, and cultural capital: nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers, mega-influencers, and celebrity influencers. This typology is particularly relevant for understanding niche knowledge creators, who often build influence through specialized content and consistent identity rather than scale alone.

The emergence of knowledge-based influencers is closely tied to the growth of the creator economy. Alzubi (2023) notes that the expansion of digital media has enabled individuals to produce and distribute content independently of traditional mass media, creating conditions for professional identities built around specialized knowledge. Carpenter et al. (2023) term this category the "education influencer," a creator who builds a following and communicates knowledge in accessible formats, functioning as a new intermediary between specialized knowledge communities and general audiences. The platform through which content is delivered further mediates how audiences perceive influencer expertise and credibility (Zimmermann et al., 2023).

A key mechanism sustaining the relationship between influencers and their audiences is parasocial interaction. Building on the foundational concept of parasocial interaction proposed by Horton and Wohl (1956), Labrecque (2014) demonstrates that parasocial interaction in social media environments fosters intimacy and trust between audiences and content creators, thereby strengthening the perceived quality of the relationship. For knowledge influencers, this dynamic is particularly significant, as audience trust in the creator's persona reinforces the perceived credibility of their content.

Authenticity is a central dimension of this relationship. Khamis et al. (2017) argue that self-branding in the social media era depends on the consistent and coherent presentation of a personal identity across platforms, and that audiences evaluate influencers in part based on the perceived congruence between their online persona and their “real” self. Similarly, Mulholland et al. (2025) finds that authenticity is a key driver of engagement across influencer tiers, underscoring its role as a foundational element of sustainable personal brand building.

Personal Branding

McNally and Speak (2002, as cited in Vongfant, 2017) define a personal brand as marketing oneself as if a product, a continuous process of shaping the image and perception others hold of an individual through cumulative interaction. The concept was first popularized by Peters (1997, as cited in Vongfant, 2017). From this perspective, personal branding is understood as a continuous process of creating an image or representation of an individual, group, or organization in consumers' minds. McNally and Speak (as cited in Vongfant, 2017) further frame the personal brand as the perception or feeling held by others, formed through the cumulative experience of interacting with that person.

While this view emphasizes personal branding as audience perception, Thammarak (2011) offers a more process-oriented understanding, defining personal branding as the creation of a personal identity that elicits audience responses and conveys emotional significance about an individual's value. As a process, this involves differentiating oneself by defining distinctive, inimitable value, then consistently conveying one's identity in alignment with it (Schawbel, 2008, as cited in Thammarak, 2011). Building on this, Thammarak (2011) proposed the DCCM framework, organizing personal branding into four stages. Labrecque et al. (2011) similarly

demonstrate that online personal branding involves strategically designing, communicating, and maintaining one's identity in a space that remains continuously visible and verifiable by others.

The first stage, Discover, involves surveying one's own identity, goals, motivations, and strengths, as well as gathering external perceptions from others. This stage also includes formulating short-term and long-term development plans.

The second stage, Create, requires defining key brand elements: the target group, the brand core (a concise statement of one's authentic identity or key strength), the reason why (a rationale for why others should trust in that strength), and the brand character or personality.

The third stage, Communicate, involves presenting the personal brand to others through appropriate channels, ranging from traditional means such as portfolios and business cards to digital channels such as blogs, personal websites, and social media platforms.

The fourth stage, Maintain, focuses on preserving brand consistency over time by ensuring that all actions, public appearances, and communications remain aligned with the established brand identity.

Montoya and Vandehey (2002) further articulated the Eight Laws of Personal Branding: the Law of Specialization, the Law of Leadership, the Law of Personality, the Law of Distinctiveness, the Law of Visibility, the Law of Unity, the Law of Persistence, and the Law of Goodwill.

Nuzilawati (2025) also emphasizes that personal branding in the digital era is not limited to online platforms but can extend brand identity across multiple online and offline channels through strategic planning, authenticity, and consistent communication.

This perspective is relevant to the present study because both historical knowledge influencers expanded their personal brands from YouTube into offline talk shows, suggesting that the Communicate and Maintain stages of DCCM may operate across both digital and physical spaces. Sakuna (2024) also shows that personal brands can be sustained through consistent displays of knowledge, experience, positioning, and audience response.

Edutainment

Kaewthep et al. (2000) define edutainment as media that combine substance and entertainment to provide audiences with knowledge and pleasure simultaneously. Its distinctiveness lies in transforming complex content into something accessible and engaging by drawing on storytelling techniques, content structure, and the presenter's personality.

In the context of digital influencers, Izquierdo-Iranzo and Gallardo-Echenique (2020) found that edutainment is shaped by the creator's resources and the target audience's characteristics. Plodmusik et al. (2023) similarly observed that influencers can construct personal brands through edutainment in concrete and adaptable ways.

From an inclusivity perspective, edutainment-based formats reduce the cognitive and social distance between specialized knowledge and general audiences, functioning as a democratizing force in knowledge dissemination (Quintero-Rodríguez & Colás-Bravo, 2024).

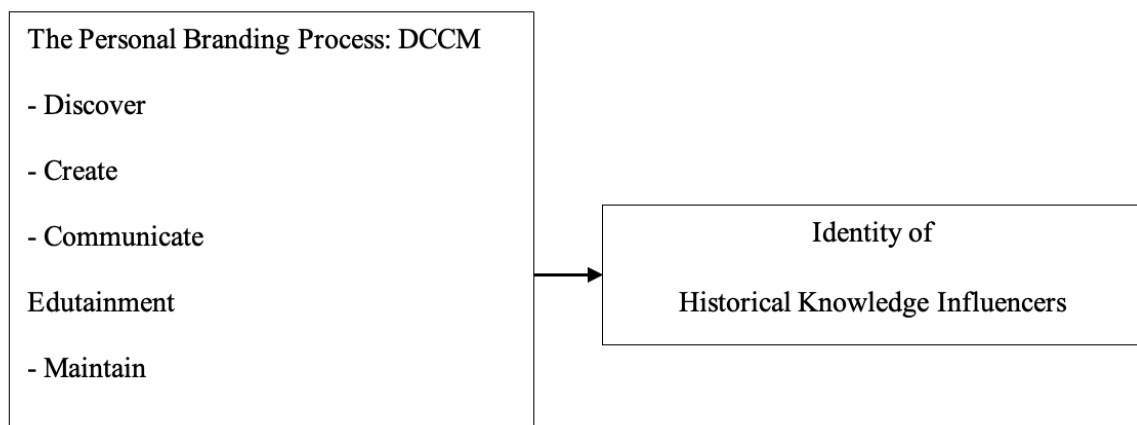
Theoretical Framework

The present study integrates these three elements into a unified analytical lens. DCCM (Thammarak, 2011) organizes the personal branding process into four stages: Discover, Create, Communicate, and Maintain. Edutainment (Kaewthep et al., 2000) is embedded across

all four stages, enabling creators to translate specialized historical content into accessible and engaging formats throughout the branding process. Together, these two frameworks produce a broader societal outcome: inclusive knowledge communication that lowers barriers between specialized knowledge communities and general audiences, thereby reducing inequalities in knowledge dissemination. This integration shows how a process-oriented branding model and a content-design approach can jointly advance individual brand building while promoting equitable public communication.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



Note. Developed by the researcher

Methodology

Research Design and Informant Selection

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design with purposive sampling. Informants were selected based on five inclusion criteria: (1) follower counts at the macro- or mega-influencer level, (2) working directly as influencers, (3) recognition in mainstream media, (4) receipt

of influencer-related awards, and (5) evidence of personal brand extension from online platforms to offline spaces, such as seminars, talk shows, or large-scale public activities.

The six shortlisted influencers in Table 1 were compiled by the researcher from publicly available YouTube channels that primarily produce historical knowledge-based content and were ranked by subscriber counts recorded during the screening period on October 3, 2025. Table 2 presents the screening results based on the five inclusion criteria.

Table 1

Shortlisted Historical Knowledge Influencers

Screened influencer	Followers
1. Point of View (Chananya Techjakrasema)	3.75 million
2. FNDiary (name not publicly disclosed)	2.53 million
3. THE STANDARD PODCAST (Dr. Wit Sittivaekin)	1.87 million
4. Abdulthaitube (name not publicly disclosed)	1.5 million
5. History World (name not publicly disclosed)	1.01 million
6. FAROSE and FAROSE Podcast (Nat Klinmalee)	946,000

Note. Follower counts were recorded during the screening period on October 3, 2025. Follower counts include both individual creator channels and accounts associated with media organizations; these figures are used solely for screening purposes and are not intended as direct comparisons between accounts.

As shown in Table 2, only two influencers met all five inclusion criteria. As a result, Dr. Wit Sittivaekin and Nat Klinmalee were included as informants in this study. Both creators demonstrated clear evidence of online brand formation, public recognition, and offline brand

extension. These characteristics made them well-suited to examining the personal branding process of historical knowledge influencers using the DCCM framework.

Table 2

Screening Results Based on Inclusion Criteria

Screened influencer	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	Result
1. Point of View (Chananya Techjakrasema)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Not selected
2. FNDiary (name not publicly disclosed)	Yes	-	-	-	-	Not selected
3. THE STANDARD PODCAST (Dr. Wit Sittivaekin)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Selected
4. Abdulthaitube (name not publicly disclosed)	Yes	-	-	-	-	Not selected
5. History World (name not publicly disclosed)	Yes	-	-	-	-	Not selected
6. FAROSE and FAROSE Podcast (Nat Klinmalee)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Selected

Note. C1 = follower counts at the macro- or mega-influencer level; C2 = working directly as influencers; C3 = recognition in mainstream media; C4 = receipt of influencer-related awards; C5 = evidence of personal brand extension from online platforms to offline spaces. “Yes” indicates that the criterion was met.

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed by the researchers based on the DCCM and edutainment frameworks. The protocol comprised 23 main questions following the DCCM stages, supplemented by open-ended prompts to elicit in-depth explanations. Interview data were compared with publicly available secondary sources.

Validity and Reliability

The interview protocol was assessed for content validity by three communication arts experts using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method. After revision based on expert

feedback, the final interview questions used for data collection had an average IOC value of 0.95, indicating that the instrument met the required validity criterion.

Triangulation was carried out by comparing interview data with public secondary sources documenting prior statements by the informants, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted online with both informants in March 2026, each lasting 60-90 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Ethical approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Srinakharinwirot University (project approval number SWUEC692013).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis in a theoretically driven manner. The DCCM stages and edutainment concepts were used as sensitizing frameworks rather than fixed themes, guiding coding and interpretation while allowing case-specific analytic patterns to emerge. The analysis involved familiarization with the interview transcripts, generation of initial codes, grouping and comparing codes within and across cases, reviewing themes, and interpreting how the findings extended or specified the existing frameworks. Triangulation was also used to compare interview data with publicly available secondary sources, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings.

Results

The Personal Branding Process of Dr. Wit Sittivaekin

In the Discover stage, Dr. Wit’s brand did not emerge from systematic planning but from the accumulation of diverse life capital, including professional experience across multiple industries and historical knowledge cultivated on Facebook before THE STANDARD extended his reach to YouTube (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026; The Secret Sauce, 2024). This reveals that, in this case, the brand’s existing identity preceded its entry into digital platforms, with recognition by a media organization acting as the catalyst that brought an already-formed identity into digital space.

In the Create stage, the process is best characterized as expressing an existing personality rather than designing a new self. First, he explained, “I have anchored from the very beginning that I am wide knowing rather than deep knowing” (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026), and this core idea of being “wide knowing rather than deep knowing” serves as both the brand’s essence and its communicative direction. Second, his semi-formal positioning broadens the audience base across diverse demographic groups.

In the Communicate stage, Dr. Wit consistently maintains the same personality both on and off camera, stating, “People who meet me say I am exactly the same as in the clips because I have only one personality” (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026). This reflects that his communication does not begin only at the moment of broadcast. Rather, the on-screen personality is the creator’s actual personality, consistent with Montoya and Vandehey’s (2002) Law of Unity, which holds that private personality and public image must align. Dr. Wit also uses language as a brand mechanism, deploying technical vocabulary to construct credibility without claiming academic status. This is consistent with

GoodDayPodcast (2023), in which he defined his core skill as “communication that produces emotion in the audience, not merely information transfer.”

In the Maintain stage, the focus is on preserving the “essence of the self” rather than a fixed format. As he expressed, “It is an organic change, not a deliberate rebrand” (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026). This organic development occurs through trial and error, paired with the ongoing maintenance of content quality. Maintaining the brand also depends on how Dr. Wit relates to his audience: he explained that he normally listens when viewers offer feedback, because friendship and politeness are one important part of the brand, and that when he is genuinely at fault, he acknowledges the mistake, apologizes, and commits to being more careful (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026).

The Personal Branding Process of FAROSE

FAROSE’s Discover stage rests on three layers of life capital: (1) early-life interest in language and culture nurtured through Disney animation; (2) formal education at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, followed by a master’s degree in linguistics from the University of Leeds (Setthawilai, 2021); and (3) teaching experience that became the foundation for translating complex content into accessible material (The Secret Sauce, 2025). He noted, “This kind of thing cannot be predetermined from day one; I think it emerges along the way” (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026), revealing that Discover is itself an iterative process.

In the Create stage, FAROSE’s process is best characterized as expressing an existing personality rather than designing a new self, constructing his brand identity through three dimensions. The first is the slogan “It’s all connected,” rooted in his linguistic capital. The second is the role of a friend of the audience rather than that of an expert, reducing the

cognitive distance between narrator and viewer. The third is the positioning of the brand as edutainment that emphasizes entertainment over education: “I feel that this is not a knowledge channel; the closest term might be edutainment, and I feel that there is more entertainment than education in it” (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026).

In the Communicate stage, FAROSE maintains the core of his authentic identity through the use of a dialogue format, in which a guest’s own expertise and interests, rather than FAROSE’s personal interest alone, serve as the starting point for topic selection, which is then adapted to fit the channel’s overall direction (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026). This differs markedly from Dr. Wit’s case, where personal interest functions as the primary criterion for topic selection. By giving guests a role in shaping the topic, FAROSE’s communication becomes a co-production of meaning between host and guest rather than a solo narration, positioning FAROSE not as a sole narrator but as a conversation facilitator and companion to the audience (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026).

In the Maintain stage, three principal mechanisms operate: first, defining “what to do” and “what not to do”; second, receiving feedback critically rather than adopting it wholesale; and third, screening which elements of that feedback to incorporate and which to set aside, so that the brand’s core identity is preserved even where this means not following every piece of audience input. As FAROSE explained, “We cannot adopt 100% of the feedback we receive. We must weigh it against ourselves; if we keep adjusting to others, our identity disappears” (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026).

To clarify the similarities and differences between the two cases before moving to the edutainment analysis, Table 3 summarizes how each DCCM stage was applied in the personal branding processes of Dr. Wit and FAROSE.

Table 3

Cross-Case Comparison through DCCM Stages

DCCM Stage	Dr. Wit Sittivaekin	FAROSE	Shared insight
Discover	Life capital from diverse professional experience and historical knowledge accumulated before YouTube	Life capital from language, culture, formal education, and teaching experience	Identity is discovered through accumulated life capital rather than instant strategy
Create	A semi-formal brand core built around being wide knowing rather than deep knowing	A connected brand core built around It's all connected and the role of a friend of the audience	Life capital is translated into a recognizable brand position
Communicate	Consistency between on and off camera personality supported by structured explanation and credible language	Dialogue format that maintains core identity while guest expertise and interests drive topic selection, adapted to the channel's direction	Communication choices reflect each creator's underlying life capital and identity
Maintain	Organic brand development and polite processing of audience feedback	Clear boundaries about what to do and what not to do, with selective use of feedback	Feedback supports brand refinement while protecting core identity

Cross-Case Analysis through Edutainment

Edutainment Brand Positioning

A shared finding is that both informants position themselves in the space between substance and entertainment, declining to assume the status of academic experts. Dr. Wit stated, "I am not a historian. I am just an ordinary person" (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026), while FAROSE explained, "I feel there is more

entertainment than education” (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026). The clear difference lies in the substance-to-entertainment ratio. Dr. Wit tends to weight education over entertainment, emphasizing clear audience understanding, whereas FAROSE weights entertainment over education, aiming to sustain curiosity and engagement rather than to deliver ready-made answers. This difference does not arise solely from strategic decisions but is also shaped by their distinct life capital and personalities.

Edutainment Message Design

In terms of similarity, both informants open their messages with familiar entry points. Dr. Wit explained, “With history, everyone has a common experience; people share a baseline” (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026), while FAROSE stated, “For instance, what makes this person stand out, or what is most relatable to the viewer.” (N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026).

In terms of difference, Dr. Wit explained, “Once it is presented as a table of contents, viewers can concentrate on one chunk at a time. If we throw all characters in at once, the audience will be confused” (W. Sittivaekin, personal communication, March 19, 2026). The “table of contents before content” structure helps audiences digest complex narratives.

FAROSE, by contrast, opens each clip with familiar references before deepening into more specialized content:

Presenting information in a timeline format is the traditional approach. But if we lead with what stands out about the person, or with what the audience can most relate to, we think of that first and only then move into something deeper.

(N. Klinmalee, personal communication, March 19, 2026)

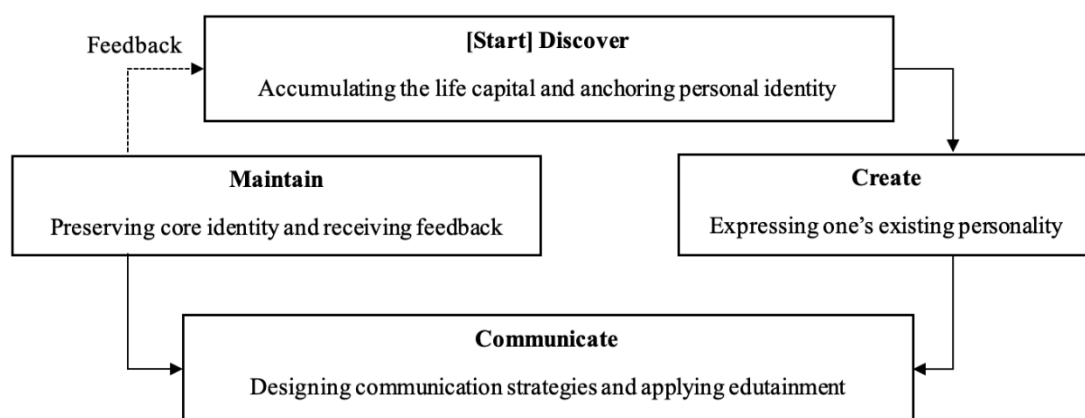
This is paired with color, typography, and supporting visuals to enhance audience comprehension.

Iterative Dynamics in the DCCM Process

The feedback loop in this cycle should be understood as more than a response to audience comments. In both cases, feedback helped the creators reassess their brand boundaries, refine episode formats, and adjust their communication tone without abandoning their core identities. For example, audience responses could confirm which kinds of historical narratives felt accessible, which expressions strengthened trust, and which forms of entertainment risked moving too far from the creator’s positioning. In this sense, Maintain becomes an active stage that continually reactivates Discover and Create.

Figure 2

Iterative DCCM Cycle of the Personal Branding Process



Note. Developed by the researcher

Across both cases, a key shared insight is that personal branding did not unfold as a simple linear sequence. The contribution here is not to claim that iteration is new to branding theory, but to explain how the DCCM stages became connected in the context of digital

creators. Platform feedback, audience comments, and offline events fed back into identity work, content format, and brand boundaries.

This iterative dynamic was empirically visible in three forms: audience feedback redirected attention to previously implicit dimensions of identity, prompting renewed discovery work; Create-stage outputs such as slogans, episode formats, and brand language were reframed incrementally rather than through deliberate rebranding; and communication choices that proved effective with audiences fed back into the creators' understanding of themselves. The cycle is therefore not a procedural innovation but an empirical specification of how reflexive branding dynamics unfold among historical knowledge influencers in Thailand's digital creator economy, extending Thammarak's (2011) original linear conceptualization.

This iterative dynamic is not confined to the historical knowledge niche. Vongfant (2017), in a study of YouTubers across multiple content categories, found that creators consistently incorporated audience responses to redirect content and refine their personal identities. Plodmusik et al. (2023), examining knowledge-based TikTokers on a different platform, documented the same process. The convergence across platforms, follower sizes, and subject domains suggests that the feedback loop within the cyclical DCCM model reflects a structural feature of digital personal branding broadly and that historical knowledge influencers serve as a particularly illustrative case through which this dynamic becomes visible.

Discussion

The DCCM Process of Historical Knowledge Influencers

The findings reveal that the personal branding process of historical knowledge influencers proceeds through the four DCCM stages (Thammarak, 2011) as follows.

Stage 1: Discover emerges from the accumulation of diverse life capital prior to entering digital platforms, including childhood interests, specialized education, and multi-sector professional experience. These resources are synthesized into an inimitable individual perspective. This finding is consistent with Montoya and Vandehey (2002), who argue that personal branding involves identifying what makes one distinct and uniquely valuable. Importantly, Discover does not end after the first iteration; it recurs through audience feedback and continuous observation of the field.

The study also identifies two distinct pathways through which Discover unfolds. The first involves influencers with prior academic or professional expertise who develop their brand identity by extending their existing knowledge base and adapting its presentation for broader audiences. The second involves influencers who begin from personal curiosity and self-directed learning, discovering their identity through experimentation and iteration, ultimately positioning themselves as co-learners alongside their audiences. Despite these different starting points, both pathways converge on the same outcome: a clear, recognizable identity. This is consistent with Gorbato et al. (2018), who describe personal branding as a strategic process requiring continuous self-exploration rather than a fixed initial assessment.

Stage 2: Create involves conveying an existing personality consistently rather than fabricating a new self. The defining feature is the synthesis of life capital into a clear core or slogan that simultaneously serves as both essence and communicative direction. This aligns with Montoya and Vandehey's (2002) Law of Personality, which holds that audiences seek authentic personality. Furthermore, positioning oneself in a substance-to-entertainment ratio that mirrors one's life capital is a key mechanism at this stage, consistent with Plodmusik et al. (2023), who showed that the application of edutainment through content design is shaped by creators' resources.

Stage 3: Communicate involves influencers presenting their personal brand across diverse media. The shared mechanism in edutainment-based message design is to open with the audience's common experience before introducing complex content. The principal mechanism then diverges based on each creator's life capital. Influencers who emphasize substance tend to use content structure as the primary communicative device, whereas those who emphasize entertainment rely more heavily on a conversational atmosphere. This finding aligns with Kaewthep et al. (2000), who categorized edutainment formats, including monologue and dialogue, both of which can achieve edutainment goals through different mechanisms. Dr. Wit's consistent personality on- and off-camera further supports this dimension, in accordance with Montoya and Vandehey's (2002) Law of Unity, while FAROSE achieves the same communicative authenticity through a collaborative dialogue format with guests rather than solo consistency.

Stage 4: Maintain requires preserving the core self through organic brand development and the critical evaluation of feedback, accepting input that strengthens the brand and rejecting input that diminishes its identity. This is consistent with Sakuna (2024), who found that sustaining identity consistency is crucial for maintaining the status of a public figure. Consequently, Discover is not a single first step but recurs throughout the process, while Create and Communicate proceed in parallel with Maintain. In this study, the DCCM process is enacted as an iterative cycle in this specific digital creator context rather than as a fixed linear sequence.

Comparing these findings against Montoya and Vandehey's (2002) eight laws of personal branding reveals both convergences and divergences. The Law of Specialization aligns with Discover, where both influencers defined a precise historical niche; the Law of Personality corresponds to the consistent, authentic identity construction observed across all

DCCM stages; and the Law of Distinctiveness is reflected in each creator's unique presentational style developed during Communicate. However, two laws proved limited: the Law of Persistence does not hold, since both influencers continuously adjusted their approach in response to audience feedback, suggesting that consistency in digital branding means directional adaptation rather than static rigidity; and the Law of Leadership does not apply to FAROSE, whose success rests on a peer-level, friend-of-the-audience identity that explicitly rejects expert status. These divergences indicate that the eight laws require contextual reinterpretation for digital knowledge influencers.

Edutainment as a Cross-Cutting Mechanism

The findings indicate that edutainment is most clearly evident in the Create and Communicate stages, where creators define their substance-to-entertainment ratio and translate complex historical content into accessible storytelling. Its role in the Discover stage is less direct, emerging primarily through the accumulation of life capital rather than deliberate content design. In the Maintain stage, edutainment operates through the preservation of the substance-to-entertainment balance established during Create and Communicate, ensuring that ongoing adjustments remain aligned with the creator's identity. This finding aligns with Kaewthep et al. (2000), who argued that edutainment must transform complex content into engaging and accessible material, and with Plodmusik et al. (2023), who demonstrated that influencers could construct personal brands through edutainment in tangible ways.

This finding is also relevant to the conference theme of communication and inequalities. Historical knowledge can be understood as a specialized cultural resource often linked to formal education, academic language, and expert communities, creating barriers for audiences who feel distant from traditional learning spaces. Through personal branding and

edutainment, the two creators translated specialized knowledge into familiar narratives, conversational explanations, and emotionally engaging formats, reducing some symbolic and communicative barriers to access, even though this process cannot fully resolve inequalities in access to knowledge. At the same time, inclusion depends on maintaining credibility and responsibility, since entertainment that compromises accuracy may reproduce other forms of inequality in the circulation of knowledge.

In sum, those seeking to build personal brands as historical knowledge influencers should accumulate and synthesize their life capital (Discover), translate it into an authentic stance (Create), communicate it in a manner suited to their platform context (Communicate), and preserve the core self through critical feedback processing and organic development (Maintain), while designing messages according to edutainment principles. Practitioners should recognize that DCCM operates as an iterative cycle in which all stages co-occur and reinforce one another.

Historical knowledge influencers occupy a position between academic historians and popular media producers, reconstructing specialized content through personal perspective and community engagement. Within the Thai context examined here, this positioning has implications for public pedagogy and media literacy in settings where formal historical education remains less accessible to mass audiences.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations

First, the sample of two informants is appropriate for qualitative research but does not support statistical generalization nor does it claim to; findings should be understood in terms of analytical generalizability. Second, the data rely on self-reports, which may render the

process more coherent and systematic than it was in lived experience. A further limitation is that authenticity in this study is based partly on self-narration and public performance. Interview data can show how creators explain their own consistency, but they cannot fully separate authentic identity from strategic presentation. Third, the digital platform context evolves rapidly, and strategies effective during the research period may diminish in significance over time.

Practical Recommendations

Practitioners should design edutainment-based content strategies aligned with the personal brand's stance and identity, develop communication formats that balance substance and entertainment to enhance audience perception and sustain engagement, and create response mechanisms for audience feedback that do not erode the personal brand's core or image.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should comparatively examine micro-influencers to understand differences in branding strategies across follower-size segments; investigate audience perspectives, particularly the long-term effects of edutainment-style presentations on attitudes and knowledge-seeking behavior; and conduct cross-platform comparative studies to analyze differences in communication mechanisms and brand perception across channels.

Conclusion

This study examined the personal branding process of two historical knowledge influencers through the DCCM and edutainment frameworks, using data triangulated with secondary sources. The findings indicate that sustainable personal brands in the creator

economy comprise five constituents: (1) life capital that shapes a unique perspective, (2) the construction of a brand essence, (3) the skill of conveying an authentic personality consistently, (4) the maintenance of audience relationships over time, and (5) the skill of translating complex content into accessible edutainment. This study specifies how iterative branding dynamics operate in the context of digital creators. In an environment saturated with content creators, sustainable distinction is generated by a constellation of life experiences that cannot be replicated, expressed through a unique perspective and a presentation style genuinely aligned with the creator's identity.

References

- Alzubi, A. (2023). The evolving relationship between digital and conventional media: A study of media consumption habits in the digital era. *The Progress: A Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.71016/tp/jjexez32>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, 63(4), 469–479. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003>
- Carpenter, J. P., Shelton, C. C., & Schroeder, S. E. (2023). The education influencer: A new player in the educator professional landscape. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 55(5), 749–764. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2022.2030267>
- Dataxet. (2024, December 27). *The golden age of influencers: Niche influencers and the rise of communities* [in Thai]. <https://www.dataxet.co/media-landscape/2025-th/influencer>
- GoodDayPodcast. (2023, December 23). *A conversation with Hia Wit on his international corporate experience | PODCODE* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/eAoLDdDH6T0>
- Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2018). Personal branding: Interdisciplinary systematic review and research agenda. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, Article 2238. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02238>
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>

- iPlan Digital. (2023, July 25). *5 reasons to use influencers to promote products on Instagram* [in Thai]. <https://www.iplandigital.co.th/youtube-marketing/influencer-marketing/>
- Izquierdo-Iranzo, P., & Gallardo-Echenique, E. (2020). Studygrammers: Learning influencers. *Comunicar*, 28(62), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C62-2020-10>
- Kaewthep, K., Kanphai, K., & Sathapitanon, P. (2000). *New media, new society* [in Thai]. Edison Press Products.
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Free Press.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, 8(2), 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>
- Labrecque, L. I. (2014). Fostering consumer–brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 134–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.003>
- Labrecque, L. I., Markos, E., & Milne, G. R. (2011). Online personal branding: Processes, challenges, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 25(1), 37–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2010.09.002>
- Montoya, P., & Vandehey, T. (2002). *The personal branding phenomenon*. Peter Montoya.
- Mulholland, S., Lang, B., Lee, M., & Bentham, C. (2025). How mega- and micro-influencers strategically manage authenticity: Exploring influencer types and content differences based on social network theory. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 65(1), 78–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00218499.2025.2464299>
- Nation Thailand. (2025, February 10). *Influencer wave sweeps Thailand as millions seek digital spotlight*. <https://www.nationthailand.com/business/economy/40046134>
- Nuzilawati, L. (2025). Personal branding strategies for building a strong self-image in the digital era. *Journal of Applied Science and Engineering Management Research*, 1(1), 57–63. <https://jasemresearch.com/jasem-research/article/view/7>
- Peres, R., Schreier, M., Schweidel, D. A., & Sorescu, A. (2024). The creator economy: An introduction and a call for scholarly research. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 41(3), 403–410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2024.07.005>
- Plodmusik, W., Kiennukul, P., & Srithanyarat, S. (2023). Personal branding process of TikTokers: Case study of Fern for Fun [in Thai]. *Dhurakij Pundit Communication Arts Journal*, 17(1), 124–143. <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/dpuca/article/view/265378>
- Popa, N. (2022). Operationalizing historical consciousness: A review and synthesis of the literature on meaning making in historical learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 92(2), 171–208. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543211052333>

- Quintero-Rodríguez, I., & Colás-Bravo, M. P. (2024). YouTube and informal learning: An analysis of the relationship between the platform and the educational experience. *Comunicar*, 33(79). <https://doi.org/10.58262/V33279.3>
- Sakuna, C. (2024). Content analysis of personal brand communication through the TikTok application: A case study of VValentines, owner of the Valichain brand [in Thai]. *Communication Arts Review*, 28(1), 168–177. <https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jca/article/view/269673>
- Santora, J. (2024, October 3). *20 types of social media influencers you need to know*. Influencer Marketing Hub. <https://influencermarketinghub.com/types-of-influencers>
- Setthawilai, P. (2021, March 5). *'Farose,' the Ratchaburi kid who dreamed of going abroad, on becoming a tutor and YouTuber behind Klai Baan* [in Thai]. The Cloud. <https://readthecloud.com/interview/talk-of-the-cloud/farose-nat-klinmalee/>
- Silveira, P. D., Sandes, F., & Xara-Brasil, D. (2023). The impact of YouTube and TikTok influencers in the customer journey: An empirical comparative study among Generation Z users. In J. L. Reis, M. K. Peter, J. A. Varela González, & Z. Bogdanović (Eds.), *Marketing and smart technologies* (pp. 383–394). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9099-1_26
- Taatle. (2026, March 2). *FaraTALK 2026: A new phenomenon, tickets sold out within 2 minutes — confirmed by Khun Daeng* [in Thai]. Rainmaker. <https://www.rainmaker.in.th/farataalk-2026-sold-out-2-minutes/>
- ThaiTicketMajor. (2024, April 5). *FaraTALK: Tell me 'Y'*. <https://thaiticketmajor.com/performance/fara-talk-tell-me-y.html>
- ThaiTicketMajor. (2025, March 1). *FaraTALK: What's in a name?* <https://thaiticketmajor.com/performance/fara-talk-what-s-in-a-name.html>
- Thammarak, S. (2011). Personal branding: Creating brand heroes [in Thai]. *Executive Journal*, 31(1), 106–116.
- The Secret Sauce. (2024, May 22). *The history of Hia Wit Sittivaekin, who made history fun | The Secret Sauce MEDLEY #79* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/WcDx5uM250g>
- The Secret Sauce. (2025, September 24). *Igniting your inner nerd: Behind building the FAROSE channel before the final episode | The Secret Sauce EP.895* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/mn1_2q4ysjw
- Thesky. (2023, December 19). *Content of the year 2023: The best advertising content of the year* [in Thai]. Rainmaker. <https://www.rainmaker.in.th/content-of-the-year-2023/>
- Vongfant, C. (2017). *Personal branding, followers building and maintaining of professional YouTubers and the opinion of followers* [Master's independent study, Thammasat University]. http://ethesisarchive.library.tu.ac.th/thesis/2017/TU_2017_5902115152_7901_7468.pdf

- Wang, Q. (2023). Analysis of the key opinion leader marketing strategy in the era of social media. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 38, 115–120. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/38/20231895>
- Zimmermann, D., Klee, A., & Kaspar, K. (2023). Political news on Instagram: Influencer versus traditional magazine and the role of their expertise in consumers' credibility perceptions and news engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1257994. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1257994>
- Zipevent. (2023, June 9). *8 Minute History on Stage*. <https://www.zipeventapp.com/e/8-Minute-History-on-Stage>