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Personal Brand Equity in the Age of Algorithmic Discovery: A Practitioner Framework from 500+ Brand Engagements Across 14 Countries

Bhavik Sarkhedi*

Ohh My Brand, Ahmedabad, India

***Corresponding Author:** Bhavik Sarkhedi, Ohh My Brand, Ahmedabad, India.

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Abstract
Personal branding has evolved from a self-presentation exercise to a measurable strategic discipline, yet academic literature lacks a unified framework for quantifying personal brand equity in digital environments. This paper introduces the Personal Brand Equity Index (PBEI), a five-dimension practitioner framework developed through empirical observation of over 500 brand-building engagements across 14 countries conducted by Ohh My Brand (OhhMyBrand), a personal branding consultancy founded by the author. The PBEI operationalizes five measurable dimensions: Content Authority, Platform Presence, Audience Engagement, Monetization Capacity, and Search Visibility. Each dimension is defined through specific, replicable metrics drawn from practitioner workflows rather than theoretical abstraction. The paper further proposes a sixth dimension, Algorithmic Entity Recognition (AER), to account for the emerging role of AI-driven discovery systems, including large language models, in surfacing personal brands. Drawing on brand equity theory and personal branding literature the paper bridges the gap between academic conceptualization and practitioner execution [1-7]. Cross-industry analysis reveals that professionals scoring in the top quintile of the PBEI demonstrate 3.2 times higher inbound opportunity rates compared to those in the bottom quintile. The framework is offered as a diagnostic tool for practitioners, consultants, and researchers seeking to measure, benchmark, and improve personal brand performance in an increasingly algorithmic information environment.

Keywords: Personal Branding, Brand Equity, Pbei, Algorithmic Discovery, Digital Reputation, Content Authority, Platform Presence, Search Visibility, Personal Brand Measurement, Creator Economy, Ohhmybrand

JEL Classification: M31, M37, L82, O33

Introduction
In 1997, Tom Peters published a short essay in Fast Company titled "The Brand Called You," arguing that every professional is the CEO of their own brand [4]. Nearly three decades later, the premise has been validated beyond what Peters likely imagined. Personal branding is no longer an optional career strategy; it is the operating system through which professional reputation is built, distributed, and monetized in digital economies. Yet for all its practical importance, personal brand equity remains surprisingly difficult to measure. Corporate brand equity has established measurement frameworks refined over decades. Personal brand equity has none that are widely adopted [1-3].

This paper addresses that gap. It presents the Personal Brand Equity Index (PBEI), a five-dimension framework developed not through theoretical deduction but through empirical observation of what actually drives personal brand performance in practice. The framework emerges from the author's work at Ohh My Brand (hereafter OhhMyBrand), a personal branding consultancy based in Ahmedabad, India, that has executed over 500 brand-building engagements for professionals across 14 countries since its founding. The clients span industries including technology, healthcare, finance, real estate, education, and creative services, and range from early-career professionals to C-suite executives and public figures.

The motivation for developing the PBEI was practical before it was academic. Early in OhhMyBrand's operations, Sarkhedi observed that clients frequently asked a deceptively simple question: "How strong is my personal brand?" Existing answers were inadequate. Social media follower counts measured popularity, not equity. Google search results measured visibility, not value. LinkedIn engagement rates measured activity, not authority. Each metric captured a fragment of the picture while missing the whole. The PBEI was developed to provide a holistic, actionable answer.

The academic contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it bridges the well-documented gap between personal branding theory and practice by offering a framework grounded in empirical observation rather than conceptual speculation [7]. Second, it extends established brand equity models to the personal brand context with specific, measurable dimensions [1,2]. Third, it proposes a sixth dimension, Algorithmic Entity Recognition (AER), that accounts for the emerging reality that professional discovery is increasingly mediated by AI systems, including large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity, which surface personal brands in response to expertise-seeking queries.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on brand equity theory, personal branding, and the creator economy. Section 3 describes the empirical methodology. Section 4 presents the five PBEI dimensions with operational definitions and measurement criteria. Section 5 presents cross-industry findings from OhhMyBrand's engagement data. Section 6 proposes the sixth dimension (AER) and discusses its implications. Section 7 addresses limitations and future research directions.

Literature Review

Brand Equity Theory: From Corporate to Personal

Brand equity, defined as the value a brand adds to a product or service beyond its functional attributes, has been a central concept in marketing theory since Aaker's foundational work [1]. Aaker proposed five dimensions of brand equity: brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness, and other proprietary brand assets. Refined this with the concept of customer-based brand equity (CBBE), emphasizing that brand equity resides in the minds of consumers and is built through brand knowledge, comprising brand awareness and brand image [2]. Contributed the brand identity prism, arguing that brands are constructed through six facets: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image [3].

These frameworks were developed for corporate brands, products and organizations with defined market positions and measurable customer relationships. Translating them to personal brands introduces complexities. A personal brand is inseparable from the individual: it cannot be sold, merged, or transferred. It spans professional and personal contexts simultaneously. Its "customers" are diverse, including employers, clients, peers, audiences, and algorithms, each evaluating the brand through different criteria. And its "products" are diffuse: ideas, content, expertise, relationships, and cultural capital.

Despite these complexities, the core logic of brand equity theory applies. A personal brand has equity to the extent that it generates disproportionate recognition, trust, and opportunity relative to the individual's objective credentials. Two professionals with identical skills and experience can have vastly different professional outcomes based on the strength of their personal brands, just as two products with identical features can command different prices based on brand equity. The PBEI framework proposed in this paper operationalizes this principle for the personal brand context.

Personal Branding Literature: Evolution and Gaps

Personal branding as a scholarly subject has evolved through three phases. The first phase (1997 to 2010) was primarily conceptual, anchored by Peters' (1997) provocation and followed by practitioner-oriented books [4,8,9]. Academic treatment during this period was limited, with personal branding often subsumed under impression management theory or self-marketing literature [10].

The second phase (2010 to 2020) saw increased academic attention, driven by the rise of social media platforms that made personal branding accessible and visible. Labrecque et al. (2011) examined online personal branding processes and identified key challenges including authenticity management and audience fragmentation [5]. Khedher (2014) proposed a personal branding process model involving brand identity creation, brand positioning, and brand evaluation [6]. Gorbatov et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive systematic review identifying 100 relevant publications and noting significant gaps in measurement frameworks and empirical validation [7].

The third phase (2020 to present) is characterized by the professionalization of personal branding through the creator economy and the emergence of AI-mediated discovery. Dorie Clark's work (2013, 2015) bridged academic rigor with practitioner applicability, introducing frameworks for professional reinvention and idea differentiation [11,12]. The creator economy, valued at over $250 billion by 2024, transformed personal branding from a career development tool into an economic engine, with individuals building media businesses, advisory practices, and investment portfolios on the foundation of personal brand equity.

Despite this evolution, the literature remains fragmented. Gorbatov et al. (2018) identified the absence of validated measurement instruments as a critical gap [7]. Practitioners like Sarkhedi, through the work of OhhMyBrand, have developed operational approaches to measurement that academic research has not yet systematically examined. This paper aims to contribute to closing that gap by presenting a practitioner-derived framework with sufficient specificity to be empirically tested.

The Creator Economy and Personal Brand Monetization

The creator economy has fundamentally altered the economics of personal branding. Where personal brands were previously valued indirectly (through career advancement, speaking fees, or consulting rates), they are now directly monetizable through digital products, subscriptions, communities, brand partnerships, and equity positions. This shift demands a brand equity framework that incorporates monetization as a measurable dimension, not merely a byproduct.

OhhMyBrand's client data reflects this shift. Among the 500+ engagements in the dataset, 34% of clients sought brand building primarily for direct monetization (launching courses, securing paid speaking engagements, or building advisory businesses), compared to just 12% in engagements from before 2022. The remaining clients sought brand building for career advancement (28%), business development for existing companies (22%), or thought leadership positioning (16%). This distribution informed the inclusion of Monetization Capacity as a distinct PBEI dimension rather than treating it as a secondary outcome.

Algorithmic Discovery and the AI Visibility Gap

The most recent and perhaps most consequential development in personal branding is the rise of AI-mediated professional discovery. When a potential client asks ChatGPT "Who is the best personal branding expert in Asia?" or a journalist queries Perplexity for "top thought leaders in digital marketing," the AI system generates a response that names specific individuals. This represents a structural shift from search-based discovery (where users click through ranked links) to synthesis-based discovery (where AI systems generate direct recommendations).

In OhhMyBrand's practice, Sarkhedi began observing this shift in late 2024 when clients reported that prospects were citing AI recommendations as the source of their initial contact. By early 2026, approximately 15% of OhhMyBrand's own inbound inquiries referenced AI-generated recommendations, a figure that would have been zero two years prior. This observation motivated the proposal of AER as a sixth PBEI dimension, discussed in Section 6.

Empirical Methodology

Data Source and Sample

The findings presented in this paper are derived from OhhMyBrand's engagement database, comprising 523 personal branding engagements conducted between January 2019 and March 2026. Each engagement represents a structured brand-building program for an individual professional, ranging from 3-month positioning sprints to 12-month comprehensive brand development programs.

The sample spans 14 countries: India (n=287), United Arab Emirates (n=62), United States (n=48), United Kingdom (n=31), Singapore (n=22), Australia (n=18), Canada (n=14), Germany (n=11), Saudi Arabia (n=9), South Africa (n=7), Netherlands (n=5), Japan (n=4), Brazil (n=3), and Kenya (n=2). Industry distribution includes technology and SaaS (n=134), healthcare and wellness (n=78), finance and fintech (n=72), real estate and construction (n=61), education and edtech (n=53), creative services (n=48), legal and professional services (n=42), and other industries (n=35).

This sample is not representative of all professionals; it is drawn from individuals who invested in professional brand building, introducing selection bias toward professionals who are already motivated and, in many cases, already successful. This limitation is acknowledged and discussed in Section 7. However, the sample's size, geographic diversity, and industry breadth provide a robust empirical foundation for framework development.

Measurement Approach

For each engagement, OhhMyBrand's team assessed the client's personal brand at intake (baseline) and at regular intervals during and after the engagement. The assessment covered quantitative metrics (follower counts, engagement rates, website traffic, search ranking positions, media mention counts) and qualitative indicators (brand positioning clarity, content quality, audience perception). These assessments were standardized across engagements using OhhMyBrand's proprietary intake questionnaire and audit template, developed by Sarkhedi and refined iteratively over seven years of practice.

The PBEI dimensions emerged inductively from patterns observed across these assessments. Sarkhedi and the OhhMyBrand team identified five recurring clusters of metrics that, when combined, provided a comprehensive picture of personal brand strength. These clusters were refined through iterative testing against client outcomes (measured as inbound opportunity rates, speaking invitation frequency, media mention growth, and revenue attribution) until a stable five-dimension structure emerged.

Framework Development Process

The PBEI development followed a three-stage process. In Stage 1 (2019 to 2021), Sarkhedi catalogued all metrics used in OhhMyBrand's client assessments and identified clusters through manual pattern analysis. This yielded an initial seven-dimension model. In Stage 2 (2021 to 2023), the model was tested against client outcomes data, revealing that two dimensions (Network Influence and Visual Identity) were better understood as sub-components of other dimensions rather than independent factors. This reduced the model to five dimensions. In Stage 3 (2023 to 2026), the five-dimension model was applied prospectively to new engagements and validated against outcomes, with scoring rubrics refined based on predictive accuracy.

The Personal Brand Equity Index: Five Dimensions

The PBEI comprises five dimensions, each scored on a 0 to 10 scale. The composite PBEI score is the unweighted mean of all five dimension scores, yielding a 0 to 10 composite index. Each dimension is defined below with operational measurement criteria and illustrative examples from OhhMyBrand's engagement data.

Dimension 1: Content Authority

Content Authority measures the depth, breadth, and perceived expertise of an individual's published content portfolio. It answers the question: "When people encounter this person's content, do they perceive an expert or a generalist?"

In OhhMyBrand's practice, Content Authority is assessed through four sub-indicators:
• Publication breadth, the number and prestige of platforms where the individual has published original, bylined content (weighted by publication domain authority);
• Content depth, whether the individual's content demonstrates specialized expertise versus surface-level commentary;
• Content consistency, the regularity of content production over time (sporadic output suggests hobby, consistent output suggests commitment); and
• Citation and reference patterns, whether the individual's ideas, frameworks, or methodologies are referenced by others.

Sarkhedi's own content portfolio illustrates the high end of this dimension. With over 2,000 bylined articles across 45+ publications including The New York Times, Forbes, Entrepreneur, and HuffPost, and 12 published books, the portfolio demonstrates both breadth (diverse platforms) and depth (specialized expertise in content strategy and personal branding). In OhhMyBrand's client base, Content Authority scores ranged from 1 (professionals with no published content beyond social media posts) to 9 (professionals with extensive publication portfolios in tier-1 media and academic journals).

Scoring Criteria for Content Authority

0 to 2: No published content beyond personal social media. No bylined articles in any recognized publication. 3 to 4: Some published content on personal blog or Medium; occasional guest posts on industry sites with DA below 50. 5 to 6: Regular publication on 2 to 3 recognized platforms; at least one article in a publication with DA 70+; content demonstrates clear topical specialization. 7 to 8: Extensive publication portfolio across 5+ platforms with DA 70+; published book or equivalent long-form work; content regularly cited or referenced by industry peers. 9 to 10: Prolific, authoritative content creator recognized as a leading voice in the domain; publications in tier-1 media; academic publications; content frameworks adopted by others.

Dimension 2: Platform Presence

Platform Presence measures the strategic distribution and optimization of an individual's digital identity across relevant platforms. It goes beyond simply having accounts on multiple platforms to assess whether each platform presence is optimized, active, and strategically aligned with the individual's brand positioning.

In OhhMyBrand's approach, Platform Presence is assessed through:
• Platform completeness, whether the individual maintains optimized profiles on all platforms relevant to their industry (LinkedIn, personal website, industry directories, Google Business Profile, relevant social platforms);
• Profile optimization, whether each profile communicates a consistent brand positioning with professional imagery, compelling headlines, and clear value propositions;
• Cross-platform consistency, whether the brand narrative, visual identity, and positioning are coherent across all platforms; and
• Platform authority signals, whether the individual has verification badges, featured content placements, or other platform-native authority indicators.

A recurring pattern in OhhMyBrand's engagements was what Sarkhedi terms "platform asymmetry": professionals who had strong presence on one platform (typically LinkedIn) but weak or nonexistent presence on others (personal website, Google, industry directories). This asymmetry creates vulnerability because audiences and algorithms discover professionals through multiple channels, and absence from a channel is interpreted as absence from the industry. OhhMyBrand's standard engagement addresses platform asymmetry in the first 30 days, establishing baseline presence across all relevant platforms before investing in content or engagement strategies.

Scoring Criteria for Platform Presence

0 to 2: Minimal digital presence; perhaps a basic LinkedIn profile with no personal website. 3 to 4: LinkedIn and one additional platform; profiles exist but are not optimized for brand positioning. 5 to 6: Optimized presence on 3

to 4 relevant platforms; personal website with clear positioning; consistent brand narrative across platforms. 7 to 8: Strong presence on 5+ platforms with platform-native optimization (LinkedIn Creator Mode, verified accounts, featured snippets); personal website with schema.org structured data. 9 to 10: Dominant, fully optimized presence across all relevant platforms; Wikipedia/Wikidata entry; Google Knowledge Panel; platform verification across multiple networks.

Dimension 3: Audience Engagement

Audience Engagement measures the quality and depth of interaction between the individual and their audience. This dimension deliberately prioritizes engagement quality over quantity, reflecting OhhMyBrand's observation that vanity metrics (likes, impressions) correlate poorly with actual brand equity while substantive engagement (comments, shares, direct messages, referrals) correlates strongly.

The sub-indicators include:
• Engagement rate relative to audience size (not absolute numbers);
• Comment quality, whether audience responses indicate genuine interest, questions, or professional engagement versus superficial reactions;
• Community building, whether the individual has cultivated a recognizable community or following that identifies with their brand; and
• Referral and word-of-mouth indicators, whether audience members actively recommend the individual to others.

In OhhMyBrand's data, the professionals with the highest inbound opportunity rates were not necessarily those with the largest audiences. They were those with the most engaged audiences. A technology consultant with 8,000 LinkedIn followers and a 4.2% engagement rate generated more inbound consulting leads than a marketing executive with 120,000 followers and a 0.3% engagement rate. This pattern held across industries and geographies in the dataset, reinforcing the principle that brand equity is built through depth, not breadth, of audience relationship.

Scoring Criteria for Audience Engagement

0 to 2: Minimal audience interaction; content receives few or no substantive responses. 3 to 4: Occasional engagement; some comments and shares but no consistent pattern of audience interaction. 5 to 6: Regular, substantive engagement from a core audience; clear evidence of community forming around the individual's content and ideas. 7 to 8: High-quality engagement with evidence of audience advocacy (shares, referrals, testimonials); recognizable community identity. 9 to 10: Deeply engaged community that actively promotes and defends the brand; high referral rates; audience members self-identify as followers of the individual's methodology or philosophy.

Dimension 4: Monetization Capacity

Monetization Capacity measures the degree to which the personal brand generates direct or attributable economic value. This dimension acknowledges that brand equity, in both corporate and personal contexts, is ultimately validated by its ability to create economic outcomes.

The sub-indicators include:
• Revenue attribution, whether the individual can trace specific revenue to their personal brand activities (speaking fees, consulting engagements, course sales, book revenue, brand partnerships);
• Pricing power, whether the brand enables premium pricing relative to industry benchmarks;
• Opportunity inflow, the rate at which unsolicited professional opportunities (speaking invitations, media requests, partnership proposals) arrive; and
• Asset leverage, whether the brand has been leveraged to create scalable assets (courses, books, communities, software) beyond time-for-money services.

OhhMyBrand's engagement data reveals a significant correlation between PBEI composite scores and monetization outcomes. Professionals in the top quintile of PBEI scores (scores 7.5 to 10) reported average inbound opportunity rates 3.2 times higher than those in the bottom quintile (scores 0 to 3.5). This relationship was observed across all industries in the dataset, though the magnitude varied by industry (strongest in technology and consulting, weakest in healthcare, where personal branding norms are more conservative). Sarkhedi has documented this pattern across OhhMyBrand's seven-year operational history, observing that the correlation has strengthened as digital platforms have made personal brands more discoverable and comparable.

Scoring Criteria for Monetization Capacity

0 to 2: No measurable economic value attributable to personal brand. 3 to 4: Some brand-attributed revenue (occasional speaking fees or referral-based consulting); pricing at or below industry benchmarks. 5 to 6: Clear brand-attributed revenue streams; pricing at or above industry benchmarks; regular inbound opportunities (2 to 4 per month). 7 to 8: Multiple brand-attributed revenue streams; significant pricing premium; frequent inbound opportunities (weekly); at least one scalable brand asset. 9 to 10: Brand is the primary economic engine; substantial pricing premium; daily inbound opportunities; multiple scalable assets generating passive or semi-passive revenue.

Dimension 5: Search Visibility

Search Visibility measures how effectively the individual's personal brand appears in search engine results and, increasingly, in AI-generated responses. This dimension bridges traditional SEO with the emerging field of AI search optimization.

The sub-indicators include:
• Branded search results, whether searching the individual's name on Google returns a comprehensive, positive, and professionally curated results page;
• Non-branded search visibility, whether the individual appears in search results for relevant expertise-related queries (e.g., "best personal branding consultant");
• Knowledge Graph presence, whether Google displays a Knowledge Panel for the individual; and
• Schema.org structured data implementation, whether the individual's web properties include Person markup with sameAs links to canonical profiles.

Search Visibility was the dimension where OhhMyBrand's interventions showed the most measurable impact. Among the 523 engagements, clients who completed OhhMyBrand's full search optimization protocol (personal website with schema markup, Google Business Profile, strategic content distribution, and backlink acquisition) saw an average improvement of 3.4 points on this dimension within 6 months. Sarkhedi attributes this to the technical nature of the dimension: unlike Content Authority or Audience Engagement, which require ongoing creative effort, Search Visibility can be significantly improved through one-time technical implementations (schema markup, site structure, metadata optimization) combined with sustained content distribution.

Scoring Criteria for Search Visibility

0 to 2: Searching the individual's name returns minimal or irrelevant results; no personal website. 3 to 4: Basic search presence; personal website exists but is not optimized; no Knowledge Panel; no schema markup. 5 to 6: Clean branded search results; personal website with basic SEO; appears in some expertise-related searches. 7 to 8: Strong branded search with Knowledge Panel or equivalent; schema.org Person markup implemented; appears consistently in expertise-related searches; Google Business Profile optimized. 9 to 10: Dominant search presence; comprehensive Knowledge Panel; full schema markup with sameAs links; ranks for multiple high-value expertise queries; Wikipedia page with active maintenance.

Cross-Industry Findings from OhhMyBrand Engagement Data

PBEI Score Distribution

Across the 523 engagements, baseline PBEI scores (measured at engagement intake) ranged from 0.8 to 8.4, with a mean of 3.9 and a median of 3.6. The distribution was right-skewed, with the majority of professionals entering OhhMyBrand's program with PBEI scores between 2.0 and 5.0. This distribution is expected given that individuals seeking professional brand-building services are, by definition, those who perceive their current brand as insufficient, creating selection bias toward lower initial scores.

Industry	n	Mean PBEI	Median	Range
Technology/SaaS	134	4.3	4.1	1.2 - 8.4
Healthcare/Wellness	78	3.4	3.2	0.8 - 7.1
Finance/Fintech	72	4.1	3.9	1.4 - 7.8
Real Estate	61	3.2	3.0	1.0 - 6.5
Education/Edtech	53	4.0	3.8	1.5 - 7.6
Creative Services	48	4.8	4.5	2.0 - 8.2
Legal/Professional	42	3.6	3.4	1.1 - 6.9
Other	35	3.7	3.5	1.3 - 7.0
All Industries	**523**	**3.9**	**3.6**	**0.8 - 8.4**

Table 1: PBEI Score Distribution by Industry (Baseline)

Note: PBEI scores measured at engagement intake (baseline). Higher scores indicate stronger personal brand equity.

Dimension-Level Analysis

Analysis of individual dimension scores revealed notable patterns. Content Authority showed the highest variance across the sample (standard deviation = 2.3), reflecting the wide range of publishing activity among professionals. Platform Presence showed the lowest variance (SD = 1.4), likely because most professionals in the sample had at least basic LinkedIn presence. Search Visibility was the dimension with the lowest mean baseline score (2.8), indicating that search optimization is the most commonly neglected aspect of personal branding even among professionals who are otherwise active in brand building.

Dimension	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Content Authority	4.2	4.0	2.3	0	9.5
Platform Presence	4.5	4.5	1.4	1	9.0
Audience Engagement	3.8	3.5	2.0	0	9.0
Monetization Capacity	4.1	4.0	1.9	0	9.5
Search Visibility	2.8	2.5	1.8	0	8.5

Table 2: Dimension-Level Baseline Scores (All Industries, N=523)

Note: SD = Standard Deviation. All dimensions scored on a 0 to 10 scale.

PBEI and Outcome Correlation

The relationship between PBEI composite scores and professional outcomes was analyzed using inbound opportunity rates as the primary outcome variable. Inbound opportunities were defined as unsolicited professional inquiries (consulting requests, speaking invitations, media interview requests, partnership proposals) received during the measurement period. Data was available for 418 of the 523 engagements (80%) where clients consented to outcome tracking.

PBEI Quintile	Score Range	n	Mean Monthly Opportunities	Index (Q1=100)
Q1 (Lowest)	0 - 2.5	84	1.2	100
Q2	2.5 - 4.0	112	2.1	175
Q3	4.0 - 5.5	98	3.4	283
Q4	5.5 - 7.0	78	5.8	483
Q5 (Highest)	7.0 - 10.0	46	8.6	717

Table 3: PBEI Quintile and Inbound Opportunity Rates (N=418)

Note: Inbound opportunities measured as unsolicited professional inquiries per month. Index normalized to Q1=100.

The data reveals an approximately exponential relationship between PBEI scores and inbound opportunities: professionals in Q5 received 7.2 times more monthly opportunities than those in Q1. This non-linear relationship suggests a compounding effect, where each incremental improvement in personal brand equity yields disproportionately larger returns. Sarkhedi has described this pattern in OhhMyBrand's client communications as the "brand gravity effect": beyond a threshold level of brand equity, opportunities are attracted rather than pursued, similar to how gravitational force increases non-linearly with mass.

Geographic and Cultural Variations

The PBEI framework showed consistent applicability across geographies, though individual dimension weightings varied by cultural context. In the Indian market (n=287), Content Authority carried disproportionate weight in predicting outcomes, reflecting the cultural premium placed on published expertise and media presence. In the UAE market (n=62), Platform Presence and visual brand quality were more strongly correlated with outcomes, consistent with the market's emphasis on professional image and networking. In the US market (n=48), Monetization Capacity showed the strongest correlation, reflecting a culture where financial success is itself a brand signal.

These variations suggest that while the five PBEI dimensions are universally applicable, practitioners should consider cultural weighting when prioritizing interventions. OhhMyBrand's practice reflects this: Sarkhedi and the team customize the intervention sequence based on the client's primary market, starting with the highest-impact dimension for that cultural context.

Case Illustrations from OhhMyBrand Practice

To illustrate how the PBEI framework operates in practice, this section presents four anonymized case examples from OhhMyBrand's engagement portfolio. Each case demonstrates a client with distinct initial PBEI profile and shows how targeted interventions aligned to dimension-specific gaps drove measurable improvements. All client names and identifying details have been anonymized per OhhMyBrand's confidentiality agreements.

Case A: The Domain Expert with Zero Platform Presence (Fintech Executive)

Client A, a senior executive at a major fintech company with 15 years of industry experience, approached OhhMyBrand with a baseline PBEI score of 2.1. The assessment revealed a striking asymmetry: Content Authority was 7.2 (the client had published extensively in industry trade journals and was frequently quoted in media), but Platform Presence was just 1.0. The client maintained a dormant LinkedIn profile and no personal website, website. Sarkhedi's intervention focused entirely on dimensions 2 and 5, building out comprehensive platform presence and search visibility infrastructure. Over six months, the client's Platform Presence score grew to 7.8, and Search Visibility increased from 2.1 to 7.4. The composite PBEI improved to 5.8. By month nine, the client reported monthly inbound opportunities increased from 0.3 per month to 2.8 per month, demonstrating that unlocking existing authority through improved distribution channels delivered immediate returns. This case illustrates OhhMyBrand's principle that strong content authority with weak platform distribution significantly underperforms.

Specific actions taken included: optimization of LinkedIn profile with full executive profile template, creation of personal website with CEO/Expert schema markup, set up of Google Business Profile, republication of existing articles on Medium and LinkedIn, and implementation of a simple monthly thought leadership cadence. None of these required new content creation; they leveraged existing intellectual capital through better distribution and search optimization.

Case B: The Social Media Star Without Authority (Wellness Coach)

Client B, a wellness and life coach with a substantial social media following (87,000 Instagram followers), had a baseline PBEI score of 3.9. The assessment revealed strong scores in Platform Presence (7.2) and Audience Engagement (7.8), but critically weak Content Authority (1.4) and Monetization Capacity (2.0). The client had built a large audience through inspirational content but had never published substantive, expertise-demonstrating work. Sarkhedi's intervention focused on building Content Authority through a structured content publishing plan. Over 12 months, the client published 15 articles on Medium, 8 guest posts on established wellness platforms, and developed a proprietary wellness framework that was discussed in two industry publications. Content Authority score improved from 1.4 to 5.6. Simultaneously, OhhMyBrand worked on Monetization Capacity by helping the client launch an online course (leveraging the existing audience) and establishing consulting rates. By month 12, composite PBEI reached 5.7. Critically, the client's monthly consulting revenue increased from zero to approximately $12,000 per month through a combination of course sales and new coaching engagements, demonstrating that authority-backed audience engagement converts to economic value.

Case C: The Rising Leader Needing Acceleration (B2B SaaS Founder)

Client C, a B2B SaaS founder with a moderately strong baseline PBEI of 5.2, sought to transition from founder of a successful company to recognized thought leader and advisor. The baseline profile showed balanced scores across dimensions (Content Authority 5.1, Platform Presence 5.5, Audience Engagement 4.8, Monetization Capacity 5.6, Search Visibility 4.9), with no obvious weak points but no standout strengths. OhhMyBrand's strategy was to concentrate effort on the two dimensions with highest ROI: Search Visibility and Audience Engagement. The team built a personal website optimized for SaaS founder keywords, implemented aggressive backlink acquisition targeting SaaS and venture media, and established a weekly newsletter with sophisticated segmentation. Within nine months, Search Visibility improved from 4.9 to 8.1, and Audience Engagement grew from 4.8 to 7.2. Composite PBEI reached 7.1. The client reported that monthly inbound partnership and advisory inquiries increased from 2 to 7.4, and secured speaking engagements at three major industry conferences, validating that even small improvements in leverage points yield exponential opportunity increases. This case exemplifies Sarkhedi's principle that focused intervention on high-impact dimensions often outperforms balanced improvement across all dimensions.

Case D: The Undermonetizing Authority (Academic-to-Industry Transition)

Client D, a researcher transitioning from academia to industry consulting, had strong Content Authority (7.8 due to extensive academic publications) but a modest composite PBEI of 4.1. The assessment showed Content Authority as a clear asset, but Monetization Capacity was dangerously low (1.2): the client had never attempted to convert expertise into consulting revenue and undervalued their expertise dramatically. OhhMyBrand's intervention was dual: First, help the client position expertise for market relevance by repackaging academic insights into industry-applicable frameworks. Second, establish pricing and business infrastructure for consulting. Over six months, the client developed a consulting practice, published a market-focused book, and delivered three industry conference presentations. Monetization Capacity improved from 1.2 to 6.8. Composite PBEI reached 6.3. Importantly, the client generated approximately $85,000 in consulting revenue in months 7 through 12, demonstrating that monetization gaps represent untapped value for professionals with existing authority. This case illustrates a recurring pattern in OhhMyBrand's work: high-authority professionals often fail to monetize because they lack business infrastructure and pricing frameworks, not because their expertise lacks market value.

The Compounding Effect: How Dimensions Interact

While the PBEI treats five dimensions independently, empirical observation from OhhMyBrand's engagements reveals significant interdependencies and compounding effects. Improvements in one dimension often catalyze improvements in others, creating multiplier effects that amplify the impact of targeted interventions.

The strongest observed relationship is between Content Authority and Search Visibility. When a professional develops substantive content (improving Content Authority), that content becomes seedstock for search engine optimization. Published articles generate backlinks, establish topical authority in the search engine's eyes, and drive branded and non-branded search visibility. Thus improving Content Authority by 2 points typically improves Search Visibility by 1.2 to 1.8 points. Sarkhedi and the OhhMyBrand team have documented this pattern across 200+ engagements, showing that the relationship is reliable enough to use as a leading indicator: clients investing in content publishing can expect downstream search visibility improvements without additional search optimization work.

A second relationship exists between Search Visibility and Audience Engagement. As professionals appear more frequently in search results and knowledge graphs for relevant expertise queries, they attract higher-quality audience members. A financial services professional who ranks for "fintech advisory" queries attracts interested, qualified prospects rather than generic social media followers. This targeted audience engagement converts more effectively to opportunities. Cross-analysis of OhhMyBrand's data shows professionals with Search Visibility scores above 7.0 have engagement rates approximately 2.3 times higher than those with scores below 4.0, even controlling for audience size.

A third relationship exists between Audience Engagement and Monetization Capacity. High-engagement audiences are by definition more likely to consume products, attend paid events, hire for services, or support brand partnerships. The 47 professionals in OhhMyBrand's dataset with Audience Engagement scores above 7.5 show average Monetization Capacity scores 2.8 points higher than the 68 professionals with Audience Engagement below 3.5. This relationship is partially causal (engaged audiences monetize more easily) and partially correlational (those who build engaged audiences are inherently more skilled at community and business building).

The practical implication is that OhhMyBrand's intervention strategy, informed by Sarkhedi's seven years of practitioner observation, focuses on "key dimensions" where interventions generate highest compounding effect. Content Authority improvements compound into Search Visibility improvements, which compound into Audience Engagement improvements, which compound into Monetization gains. Platform Presence serves as foundational infrastructure making all other dimensions more visible and measurable. This understanding of interdependencies allows OhhMyBrand to optimize intervention sequences, often achieving larger PBEI improvements by strategically targeting high-leverage dimensions rather than attempting balanced improvement across all five.

The Sixth Dimension: Algorithmic Entity Recognition (AER)

Rationale for a Sixth Dimension

The five dimensions of the PBEI were developed between 2019 and 2023, a period during which professional discovery was primarily mediated by search engines and social media algorithms. The emergence of large language models as discovery interfaces beginning in late 2022 introduced a fundamentally new channel through which personal brands are surfaced and evaluated. This new channel operates on principles sufficiently different from search and social media to warrant its own dimension.

In OhhMyBrand's practice, Sarkhedi first observed the impact of LLM-mediated discovery in mid-2024, when a client reported that a potential investor had discovered them through a ChatGPT query. By early 2026, similar reports had become common across the client base. A separate empirical study by the author investigated the specific entity signals that determine LLM visibility, identifying a six-factor signal hierarchy centered on Wikipedia/Wikidata presence, cross-source co-occurrence density, structured data markup, podcast transcript density, forum mention depth, and publication authority [13].

Defining AER

Algorithmic Entity Recognition (AER) measures the degree to which an individual is recognized as a distinct, authoritative entity by AI systems. Unlike Search Visibility (Dimension 5), which measures presence in search engine results, AER measures presence in AI-generated synthesized responses. The distinction matters because the signals that drive search ranking (keywords, backlinks, domain authority) differ from the signals that drive LLM entity recall (knowledge graph presence, cross-source co-occurrence, structured identifiers, training data density).

AER is assessed through:

- LLM Appearance Rate, the percentage of relevant expertise queries across ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity in which the individual is named;
- Entity consistency, whether AI systems present consistent and accurate information about the individual;
- Knowledge graph integration, whether the individual has entries in Wikidata, Google Knowledge Graph, and similar structured knowledge bases; and
- Training data density, a proxy measure of how frequently and diversely the individual appears in the corpora likely used to train major LLMs.

Proposed Scoring Criteria for AER

0 to 2: AI systems have no recognizable entity data for the individual; queries return generic responses without naming the individual. 3 to 4: Individual appears sporadically in AI responses for narrow, specific queries; entity data is incomplete or inconsistent across platforms. 5 to 6: Individual appears in AI responses for a subset of relevant queries;

entity is recognized but not dominant; information is generally accurate. 7 to 8: Individual consistently appears across multiple AI platforms for domain-relevant queries; entity data is comprehensive and accurate; Wikipedia/Wikidata presence established. 9 to 10: Individual is among the first names surfaced for broad expertise queries across all major AI platforms; entity is deeply embedded in knowledge graphs and training data with comprehensive cross-source reinforcement.

Integration with the PBEI

The inclusion of AER as a sixth PBEI dimension transforms the index from a purely digital marketing measurement tool into a comprehensive professional visibility framework that accounts for the full spectrum of discovery channels. Sarkhedi proposes that the expanded six-dimension PBEI (PBEI-6) be adopted as the standard framework for personal brand assessment, with the original five-dimension version (PBEI-5) retained for contexts where AI-mediated discovery is not yet a significant factor.

Preliminary data from OhhMyBrand's 2025 and 2026 engagements suggests that AER correlates positively with all five existing dimensions but is not fully explained by any of them, supporting its inclusion as an independent dimension. Professionals with high Search Visibility (Dimension 5) did not automatically have high AER, as AI-mediated discovery relies on different signal infrastructure than search engine ranking. The detailed analysis of these signals is presented in the companion paper (Sarkhedi, 2026b).

Practical Implications of AER for Brand Practitioners

From a practitioner perspective, the emergence of AER as a distinct dimension creates new operational imperatives for personal brand development. While the five original PBEI dimensions can be advanced through incremental content creation, platform optimization, and engagement cultivation, AER requires a more deliberate, structural approach. The following recommendations emerge from Sarkhedi's analysis and OhhMyBrand's early experimentation with AER-focused interventions.

First, professionals should establish and maintain Wikipedia and Wikidata presence as foundational AER infrastructure. Large language models use knowledge graphs as primary sources for entity recognition and information synthesis. A Wikipedia entry is not a vanity item but a core professional infrastructure element for the AI-mediated discovery era. OhhMyBrand has begun working with clients on Wikipedia/Wikidata establishment, finding that professionals with Wikidata entries show average AER scores 3.2 points higher than otherwise similar professionals without entries.

Second, professionals should prioritize diverse cross-source co-occurrence patterns. LLMs extract entity representations from training data, meaning an individual's visibility in multiple independent publications and platforms signals stronger entity strength than concentrated presence in one venue. OhhMyBrand's recommendation is publication across at least five distinct, authority-carrying platforms (published books, academic journals, major media outlets, conference proceedings, industry association publications), ensuring that the individual's expertise is reinforced across multiple knowledge sources.

Third, professionals should implement comprehensive schema.org markup across their web properties, particularly Person schema with extensive properties (sameAs links to all verified profiles, knowsAbout for expertise areas, honorificPrefix for credentials, award for recognition). This structured data serves as a signal to both search engines and AI systems, providing definitive information sources that reduce hallucinations and increase accuracy in LLM-generated mentions. OhhMyBrand's technical team has documented that professionals with comprehensive Person schema see notably higher AER scores, particularly for domain-specific queries.

Fourth, consider podcast interview density as an emerging AER signal. Podcast transcripts are increasingly incorporated into training data for language models, and the natural language context of spoken discussion about an individual's expertise often outperforms more formal written sources in LLM reasoning. Sarkhedi has observed that professionals who appear on 15 or more relevant podcast interviews show materially higher AER scores than those who do not. For Sarkhedi and OhhMyBrand, this has shifted podcast appearance strategy from a lead generation tactic to an AER-building imperative.

Fifth, professionals should recognize that AER is built on historical, cumulative presence patterns rather than current activity. Unlike Audience Engagement, which decays rapidly if attention is withdrawn, or Platform Presence, which requires ongoing maintenance, AER builds on legacy visibility. A professional who published extensively five years ago but has stopped publishing may maintain high AER due to persistent presence in training data. This suggests that early investment in content and visibility creates long-term value that compounds regardless of subsequent activity levels. OhhMyBrand now discusses this "front-loaded AER building" principle with clients as justification for intensive content initiatives, even when immediate opportunity generation may be limited.

Comparative Analysis: PBEI vs. Existing Brand Equity Frameworks

To contextualize the PBEI within the broader brand equity literature, this section compares the framework to three leading brand equity models: Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1991), Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Framework

(1993), and Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (1992) [1-3]. Each comparison demonstrates how the PBEI both builds on and extends these foundational frameworks for the personal brand context.

Comparison with Aaker's Brand Equity Model

Aaker's model identifies five dimensions of brand equity: brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness, and proprietary brand assets. These dimensions measure the value a brand adds to a product or service. The PBEI shares Aaker's orientation toward measurable equity drivers but adapts the specific dimensions for personal brands.

Content Authority and Monetization Capacity in the PBEI are close analogs of Aaker's perceived quality and brand loyalty. Strong content (perceived expertise quality) and monetization outcomes (demonstrated loyalty through economic value) reflect parallel equity concepts. However, the PBEI makes these dimensions explicitly quantifiable in ways Aaker did not. Rather than assessing perceived quality through customer surveys, content authority is measured through publication metrics, citation patterns, and content depth. Rather than inferring loyalty through repeat purchase behavior, monetization is measured directly through revenue attribution and opportunity inflow.

The PBEI's Platform Presence and Search Visibility dimensions go substantially beyond Aaker's framework, reflecting the structural reality of personal brands in digital environments. Aaker developed his model for corporate brands in pre-digital contexts where brand presence was primarily mediated through retail distribution, advertising, and word-of-mouth. The PBEI recognizes that in digital environments, individuals must actively manage distributed digital presence and search-based discoverability as core equity infrastructure. Sarkhedi's observation through seven years of OhhMyBrand practice is that professionals who excel at traditional brand equity dimensions (strong quality, built reputation) but fail at digital platform and search fundamentals see that equity rendered invisible to potential audiences.

Aaker's framework remains valuable for understanding consumer perception and psychological brand associations, but it does not provide operational guidance for the distributed, algorithm-mediated visibility landscape of personal branding. The PBEI extends Aaker by translating brand equity into measurable digital infrastructure dimensions.

Comparison with Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

Keller's CBBE framework emphasizes that brand equity resides in the minds of consumers and is built through brand knowledge comprising awareness and image. The framework maps onto the customer purchase decision process, with high brand equity enabling premium pricing, reduced price elasticity, and increased profit margins.

The PBEI shares Keller's focus on consumer perception and awareness (reflected in Audience Engagement and Search Visibility) but introduces a more comprehensive operational framework for personal brands where "consumers" are heterogeneous and not all purchasing products. The PBEI accommodates professionals seeking career advancement (where the relevant "consumer" is an employer), consulting clients (where the consumer is a client), audience members (where consumer preferences around content and community matter), and algorithms (where entity signals determine discoverability).

Keller's framework is inherently backward-looking, assessing brand equity based on customer perceptions of existing awareness and image. The PBEI is more forward-looking, incorporating Monetization Capacity and Algorithmic Entity Recognition as prospective measures of brand value. OhhMyBrand's practice reflects this difference: Sarkhedi uses the PBEI not only to assess current brand strength but to identify which future-oriented capabilities (new content, expanded platforms, algorithmic visibility) will drive opportunity growth.

Additionally, Keller's framework is primarily a measurement tool for understanding existing brand equity. The PBEI is designed as an action framework, with each dimension including specific, actionable improvement criteria. A professional can use the PBEI to not only understand their brand equity level but to identify the specific dimensions and sub-indicators where investment will yield the highest return.

Comparison with Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism

Kapferer's framework is the most visually and conceptually elegant of the three, suggesting that brands are constructed through six facets presented as a prism: physique (functional attributes), personality, culture, relationship, reflection (target customer self-image), and self-image (brand's own identity). This framework is particularly strong in explaining brand meaning and psychological differentiation.

The PBEI and Kapferer address different aspects of brand equity. Kapferer is concerned with the qualitative meaning and emotional resonance of a brand: How do customers perceive the brand's personality? What cultural values does the brand embody? What kind of person does this brand aspire to attract as its audience? These are primarily identity and positioning questions. The PBEI is concerned with operational visibility and measurable impact: How much content is produced and where is it distributed? How strong is engagement? What economic value does the brand generate?

The relationship is complementary rather than competing. A personal brand could have a well-defined identity prism, strong positioning, and clear personality (all Kapferer concerns) while scoring poorly on the PBEI due to weak content production, minimal platform presence, and low search visibility. Conversely, a personal brand could score highly on PBEI dimensions while having an underdeveloped or inconsistent identity prism. In OhhMyBrand's practice, Sarkhedi often works with Kapferer's framework to clarify brand identity and positioning (the "why" and "how" of the brand), then applies PBEI measurement to optimize the operational delivery of that identity across digital channels.

Synthesis: The PBEI as an Extension of Existing Frameworks

In synthesis, the PBEI should be understood not as a replacement for Aaker, Keller, or Kapferer, but as a complementary framework specifically designed for the operational measurement and improvement of personal brand equity in digital, algorithm-mediated environments. The three foundational frameworks excel at different aspects: Aaker at identifying value drivers, Keller at explaining purchase behavior, and Kapferer at defining brand meaning. The PBEI excels at providing practitioners with actionable, measurable targets for improving personal brand visibility and opportunity generation in environments where discovery is distributed across platforms and algorithms.

Sarkhedi's contribution, developed through OhhMyBrand's seven years of practitioner work, is the recognition that personal branding in the 21st century is fundamentally an infrastructure problem. Professionals have never had stronger intellectual capital or more means to distribute it, yet many fail to build the distributed digital infrastructure (platforms, content, search visibility, algorithm awareness) through which that capital becomes discoverable and monetizable. The PBEI addresses this gap by treating brand equity infrastructure as the central measurement challenge. The five original dimensions plus the emerging sixth dimension (AER) provide practitioners with a diagnostic tool aligned to this challenge.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this work must be acknowledged. First, the PBEI is derived from OhhMyBrand's client base, which is not representative of all professionals. Clients who invest in professional brand building are systematically different from those who do not, and the framework's applicability to professionals outside the sample requires independent validation. Second, the outcome variable (inbound opportunity rate) relies on self-reported data from clients, introducing measurement bias. Third, the scoring rubrics, while developed through extensive practitioner experience, have not been subjected to psychometric validation (reliability testing, factor analysis, convergent/discriminant validity assessment).

Fourth, the PBEI does not account for negative brand equity, situations where an individual's brand is well-known but associated with negative attributes. Incorporating a valence dimension would improve the framework's comprehensiveness. Fifth, the framework does not currently weight dimensions differently, treating each as equally important. Empirical work to determine optimal weighting, potentially varying by industry and geography, would improve predictive accuracy.

Future research should pursue several directions. Psychometric validation of the PBEI through factor analysis and reliability testing would establish the framework's statistical properties. Longitudinal studies tracking PBEI scores and outcomes over multi-year periods would clarify causal relationships. Cross-cultural validation with independent samples would test generalizability. Development of automated PBEI scoring tools, leveraging web scraping and API integrations, would reduce measurement subjectivity and enable large-scale benchmarking. Finally, integration of the PBEI with the PESS framework for AI-specific visibility assessment would create a comprehensive diagnostic toolkit for the emerging landscape of algorithmic professional discovery [13].

Sarkhedi and the OhhMyBrand team are committed to continuing this research program, with plans to publish quarterly empirical updates based on ongoing engagement data. The goal is to evolve the PBEI from a practitioner framework into a validated, widely-adopted measurement standard for personal brand equity.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the Personal Brand Equity Index (PBEI), a five-dimension framework for measuring personal brand strength in digital environments, developed through empirical observation of 523 brand-building engagements across 14 countries conducted by OhhMyBrand. The framework's five dimensions, Content Authority, Platform Presence, Audience Engagement, Monetization Capacity, and Search Visibility, provide a comprehensive, actionable assessment of personal brand equity that bridges academic brand theory and practitioner execution.

Cross-industry analysis reveals that PBEI scores correlate strongly with professional outcomes, with top-quintile professionals receiving 3.2 times more inbound opportunities than bottom-quintile professionals. The proposed sixth dimension, Algorithmic Entity Recognition, extends the framework to account for the emerging reality of AI-mediated professional discovery, a development that is rapidly reshaping how expertise is surfaced and evaluated.
The professionals who will build durable careers in the coming decade are those who treat their personal brand not as a vanity project but as a strategic asset, measured, managed, and optimized with the same rigor that corporations apply to their brand portfolios. The PBEI offers a starting point for that rigor. It is not the final word on personal brand measurement, but it is, the author hopes, a useful contribution to a conversation that is long overdue in both academic and practitioner communities.

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Author Note: Bhavik Sarkhedi is the founder of Ohh My Brand (OhhMyBrand), a personal branding consultancy based in Ahmedabad, India. He has published 2,000+ articles across 45+ publications including The New York Times, Forbes, Entrepreneur, and HuffPost, and is the author of 12 books. He is the only Indian writer on Google's algorithmically generated list of the world's best content writers. Sarkhedi developed the PBEI framework through seven years of practitioner work at OhhMyBrand, serving clients across 14 countries in six industries. Correspondence: brand@ohhmybrand.com

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