

Personal Brand Research

A Review of Jake Paul's Personal Branding Strategy

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Abstract

Jake Paul, a 24-year-old Internet personality, has established a strong personal brand and voice that is consistent across his various social media platforms. His brash and immature personality are displayed via over-the-top content, which is seen by a large audience. Paul's content focuses on reactions — whether positive or negative — and his primary goal on social media seems to be quantity over quality in terms of engagement and followers. Paul's personal brand strategy fits the boomerang typology.

Keywords: Jake Paul, personal branding, social media, digital persona, boomerang personal brand type

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Self-proclaimed actor Jake Paul invites audiences to “keep up with the madness” by subscribing to his social media channels ([Jake Paul, n.d.](#)). Paul's content includes plenty of madness, but it can be viewed objectively as curated chaos, strategically crafted to support his personal brand. Paul, who rose to prominence in 2013 after a large social media following helped him secure a short-lived acting role with the Disney Channel ([Paul, 2016](#)), now has 20 million subscribers on [YouTube](#), 13.1 million followers on [Instagram](#), 9.9 million followers on [TikTok](#), 5.2 million followers on [Facebook](#), and 3.8 million followers on [Twitter](#). Paul capitalized on this success by launching the talent agency Team 10 (Shieber, 2017), and The Financial Freedom Movement, a controversial program that promises to help children develop their own lucrative digital presence ([The Financial Freedom Movement, 2020](#); Yap, 2020). Paul furthered his

irreverent personal brand in his January 2020 professional boxing debut, where he was billed with the fitting moniker “The Problem Child” (Sands, 2020).

Paul, now 24, has developed a personal brand that most closely aligns with Kramer's (2016) boomerang typology. Paul's content, which is branded as comedic and usually in video form, is rooted in shock value and designed to spark reactions ([Jake Paul, n.d.](#)). Paul's content includes pranks, such as putting a friend's car in a pool ([Paul, 2019f](#)); personal drama, including his brief marriage and subsequent divorce ([Paul, 2019d](#); [Paul 2019e](#)), and arguments with his brother Logan ([Paul, 2017b](#); [Paul, 2017c](#)); displays of physical dominance ([Paul, 2020a](#); [Paul 2020h](#)); his flashy cars ([Paul, 2020g](#); [Paul 2017a](#)) and vacations ([Paul, 2019c](#)); sexually suggestive content ([Paul, 2020c](#)); and nudity ([Paul, 2020d](#); [Jake Paul, 2020f](#)). Paul's over-the-top content is reinforced by a brash, sarcastic, and occasionally combative brand voice, exemplified by the braggadocios lyrics to his song “It's Everyday Bro,” in which he warns that “ya'll can't handle this,” before describing his rapid social media growth and lavish lifestyle ([Paul, 2017d](#)).

In keeping with Freberg's (2019) description of personal brand components, Paul's unfiltered and unapologetic personality has helped build an audience. On social media, Paul's behavior and actions are extreme and generally immature in nature, and they are often quantified by bragging about something's monetary value ([Paul, 2020g](#); [Paul, 2019c](#); [Paul 2017a](#)), or an assertion of physical dominance (([Paul, 2020a](#); [Paul 2020h](#)). To further his brand, Paul has curated a colorful cast of influencers who serve as personal brand associations (Freberg, 2019). These peers appear in soap opera-like interactions with Paul on his channels, including ongoing conflicts between Paul and his brother ([Paul, 2017b](#); [Paul, 2017c](#)), an array of romantic interests ([Paul, 2020d](#); [Paul, 2019d](#); [Paul 2019e](#)), and an exploration of Paul's psychology and personal history ([Dawson, 2018](#)). These interactions, which feel manufactured and exaggerated, are an

example of Paul's creativity and his awareness of audience metrics, which are both key skills described by Smith (2018) and Freberg (2019) as necessary to be successful in social media. In communicating with his audience, Paul's direct interactions are limited, but he addresses his followers using the nickname "Jake Paulers" ([Jake Paul, n.d.](#)). This nickname creates loyalty, and contributes to the development of parasocial relationships between Paul and his followers, in which they view him as a close personal friend (Yuksel & Labrecque, 2016). Paul primarily addresses his audience via Twitter, and ranges from telling fans "I see you, I read ur shit, and I love you" ([Paul, 2020b](#)) to telling his critics to "...try having a belly laugh or getting laid..." ([Paul, 2020e](#)). In occasionally addressing both fans and critics, Paul maintains the appearance of exclusivity, while selectively creating a two-way dialogue (Freberg, 2019). Paul remains over-the-top in these interactions, suggesting that they are also created with an emphasis on attention, reactions, and other "vanity metrics" (Freberg, 2019, p. 62), which signifies a boomerang personal brand type (Kramer, 2016).

If "actions speak louder than words," (Freberg, 2019, p. 51) Paul's personal brand is screamed consistently across all of his platforms. Paul knows his audience, and more importantly, he knows the kind of content they expect. Paul's social media audience skews young, averaging in age from 8 to 18 (Lorenz, 2017), and while this has caused concern about the nature of his content (Ohlheiser, 2018), it has also enabled Paul's immature persona to thrive. Right or wrong, Paul knows what his audience wants, and he delivers "the madness" consistently across all of his channels ([Jake Paul, n.d.](#)). Paul is selective in sharing different types of content to each platform by considering where his audience is already most active (Freberg, 2019). For example, Paul is primarily active on YouTube, but, in boomerang style (Kramer, 2016), he has followed the "likes" and branched out to gain followings on Instagram and TikTok as well,

which are especially popular among younger audiences (Freberg, 2019). While not everyone is a fan of Paul's behavior, his repeated antics and outlandish personality align with Freberg's (2019) assertion that strong personal brands are consistent, unique, and memorable.

Paul's strongest source of expertise as a personal brand is his own social media experience. He has had a digital presence for nearly a decade, and has amassed more than 50 million followers across five platforms and 6 billion video views (Social Blade, n.d.). Paul's tenure and statistics have helped bring credibility to his personal brand. Paul's expertise has also created lucrative sponsorship and merchandising opportunities, supporting Rubin's (2015) argument that return on relationship is critical for social media professionals because it drives engagement, which builds loyalty and correlates directly with profit. To further that profit and growth — and support his recent entry into the world of professional boxing — Paul has recently shared content designed to establish his expertise as an athlete, including photos of training sessions ([Paul, 2019b](#)) and videos related to the sport ([Paul, 2020a](#); [Paul, 2020h](#)). Elements of a successful brand personality grow and evolve over time (Freberg, 2019), and Paul's expertise is no exception.

Everything Paul does, he does for the views. Paul's content and engagement are driven by reactions, with a focus on quantity over quality, which is indicative of his boomerang personal brand type (Kramer, 2016, Freberg, 2019). Through his strong and consistent personal brand and brand voice, and curated interactions among his communities, Paul has established himself as a go-to source of entertainment content and “unpredictable” antics among his young followers. While Paul's personality and expertise are frequently criticized and questioned, he has established a strong, evolving personal brand and he continues to capitalize on it to stay relevant.

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