Influence Of Personal Branding on Entrepreneurial Success of Fitness Coaches in the UK.

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Abstract
Personal branding allows entrepreneurs to develop strong relationships with their customers and drive emotional affinity, trust, and loyalty. Nonetheless, the specific strategies that lead to entrepreneurial success in the fitness industry remain less clear. The present study evaluates the influence of three personal branding strategies (authenticity, attractiveness, and credibility) on the tribalist entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. Drawing on data from 169 surveys, the study reveals that when examining each dimension separately, authenticity has a significant influence ($\beta = 0.612$, $p < .001$) on entrepreneurial success, while credibility has a suggestive influence although below the significance threshold ($\beta = 0.186$, $p = .068$), and attractiveness has no significant influence on entrepreneurial success ($\beta = 0.006$, $p = .944$). Moreover, the composite variable of personal branding strategies indicated a significant influence on entrepreneurial success ($\beta = 0.796$, $p < .001$). These findings allow practical recommendations to be provided to fitness coaches to develop an integrated personal branding strategy that encompasses the three dimensions evaluated in this research to maximise their entrepreneurial outcomes. Additional research utilising qualitative or mixed methodology and focusing on both customers' and fitness coaches' perspectives would be valuable to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of personal branding strategies on the tribalist entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK.

Keywords: Personal branding, Entrepreneurial success, Fitness coaches, Authenticity, Credibility, Attractiveness.
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1.0 Introduction

The rise of solo service entrepreneurship has fundamentally changed how individuals build and sustain businesses. Across the UK, there has been an increase in the number of people who now work for themselves, offering services from fitness coaching to consulting and therapy (ONS, 2024). Unlike traditional businesses that can differentiate through product features or brand reputation, expertise, and ability to connect with customers directly determine whether they succeed or fail (Resnick et al., 2016). This challenge intensifies in commoditised service markets where services appear functionally similar, and customers struggle to assess quality before purchase. Personal branding then becomes the strategic presentation of one's identity, expertise, and values to differentiate from competitors (Shepherd, 2005). Entrepreneurs can remove uncertainty by deliberately crafting and communicating their personal brand to build trust (Gorbatov et al., 2019). However, three critical gaps limit our understanding. First, existing studies examine branding strategies in isolation rather than comparing their relative effects. In addition, most research reviewed focuses on entrepreneurs' perspectives rather than customers' perceptions, despite brand success ultimately depending on customer evaluation. Third, evidence conflicts on whether strategies operate independently or must be combined for effectiveness.

The fitness coaching industry provides a suitable context for addressing these gaps. The UK fitness market reached £5.9billion in 2023, with approximately 183,300 people working in sports and fitness occupations (Mintel, 2024; Statista, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic forced coaches to develop online offerings, yet many struggle to build client relationships remotely and differentiate themselves in saturated digital spaces (Kulkarni, 2024; North et al., 2020). Beyond its practical relevance, this context suits our theoretical inquiry for three reasons. (i) High commoditisation and information asymmetry create conditions where signalling becomes crucial for customer decision-making (Connelly et al., 2011). Customers cannot easily assess coaching quality before purchase, making them reliant on observable brand signals. (ii) Severe capacity constraints mean coaches cannot scale through volumes, so success must derive from relationship quality

rather than quantity. (iii) The visibility of coaches' physical bodies provides natural variation in personal presentation strategies, enabling empirical comparison of authenticity, credibility, and attractiveness effects.

Research identifies authenticity, credibility, and attractiveness as foundational personal branding strategies (Scheidt & Henseler, 2018; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018; Hutson, 2013), yet evidence on their respective importance remains mixed. Some studies emphasise authenticity as foundational (Kristiansen & Williams, 2015; Vitelar, 2019), others highlight credibility (Wei et al., 2022), whilst still others focus on attractiveness (Hutson, 2013). Moreover, most research examines athletes or corporate professionals rather than solo entrepreneurs operating capacity-constrained ventures. Critically, studies typically adopt the entrepreneur's perspective, leaving customers' views largely unexplored despite customers ultimately determining brand success through their perception and choice. This study addresses these gaps by examining how authenticity, credibility, and attractiveness strategies influence entrepreneurial success from customers' perspectives in the context of UK fitness coaches.

2.0. Literature Review

Solo service entrepreneurs operate in markets characterised by pronounced information asymmetry, where customers cannot directly observe service quality, expertise or commitment before purchase (Mauri et al., 2018). This uncertainty proves particularly acute in fitness coaching, where clients must commit substantial time and financial resources based on limited information about whether a coach will deliver promised results. Personal branding emerges as entrepreneurs' strategic response to this challenge, representing deliberate efforts to construct and communicate a distinctive professional identity that signals quality whilst fostering emotional connections with potential customers. Two complementary theoretical perspectives explain how these strategies translate into entrepreneurial outcomes, addressing cognitive and affective pathways that operate simultaneously to shape customer perceptions and behaviours.

Signalling theory, which originates from an analysis of labour market dynamics, provides the foundation for understanding how personal branding reduces customer uncertainty (Spence, 1973). The theory proposes that informed parties communicate unobservable qualities through observable signals, with signal credibility depending on cost, which makes imitation by low-quality actors unprofitable (Connelly et al., 2011). This cost structure creates separating equilibria wherein high-quality actors find signalling worthwhile while low-quality actors do not, enabling customers to distinguish between providers based on observable behaviours rather than unverifiable claims. Mauri et al. (2018) analysed 3,847 Airbnb listings and found that host reputation signal reduced booking uncertainty by 34% in contexts where quality becomes apparent only through sustained interaction.

Personal branding strategies function as quality signals through distinct mechanisms that differ in cost and the specific qualities they communicate. Authenticity signals trustworthiness through costly vulnerability, as entrepreneurs who consistently share genuine experiences, including struggles and flaws, engage in behaviour that untrustworthy actors would rationally avoid given the reputational risk of exposure (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). The mechanism operates through what the signalling theory terms as a separating equilibrium. Entrepreneurs who share personal failures and setbacks demonstrate confidence in their character, effectively communicating that they have nothing to hide. Dishonest entrepreneurs would avoid such disclosure because the exposure of inconsistency between their projected image and actual character would damage their reputation and undermine their business. The willingness to be vulnerable credibly communicates honesty, not because the content itself proves trustworthiness, but because sharing carries asymmetric risk depending on the sender's actual character. Campagna et al.'s (2022) meta-analysis of 47 studies involving 12,483 participants found perceived authenticity strongly predicted trust (r=.68, p<.001) and customer loyalty (r=.61, p<.001), whilst Thompson-Whiteside et al., (2018) interview revealed that 92% of female entrepreneurs reported authentic posts outperformed success-only narratives despite 67% expressing vulnerability concerns. This paradox, where authenticity works precisely because it feels risky, validates signalling theory's core logic that costliness creates credibility.

Credibility signals competence through demonstrated expertise and verifiable qualifications, operating through investment cost rather than vulnerability risk. Educational credentials, professional certifications, and demonstrated knowledge represent costly-to-acquire indicators that are difficult to fake, making them reliable proxies for actual competence. A study of 412 social media influencers found credibility indicators increased follower trust by 41% and purchase intentions by 28%, confirming that credentials function as a reliable signal in contexts where technical expertise is salient to customer decisions (Wei et al., 2022).

However, evidence on credibility's influence is less consistent than authenticity findings, particularly in relationship-intensive service contexts. Qualitative research found that entrepreneurs who led with credentials were sometimes perceived as less relatable, creating professional distance rather than personal connection with potential customers (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). This suggests a potential trade-off between competence signalling and relationship building. In services such as fitness coaching, where customers seek both expertise and personal connection, credentials may establish baseline legitimacy but contribute less to the emotional bonds that characterise loyalty. Customers may discount expertise signals when they prioritise shared values and personal rapport over technical knowledge, particularly given that baseline competence is often assumed once minimum qualifications are met. This pattern suggests credibility operates primarily through cognitive pathways, effectively addressing whether someone can deliver results but offering limited capacity for the emotional bonding that characterises tribalist entrepreneurial success.

Attractiveness signals professionalism through visual presentation and, in fitness contexts, physical fitness demonstrates commitment and expertise. Achieving and maintaining an athletic physique requires sustained effort, discipline and knowledge that uncommitted actors would find prohibitively costly to fake. Customers, therefore, interpret physical attractiveness as evidence that the coach practices what they preach and possess the discipline necessary to guide others toward similar outcomes. An ethnographic study involving 26 trainers and 25 clients found that 89% of clients initially selected trainers based on physical appearance, viewing athletic physiques as tangible proof of competence (Hutson, 2013). The economic implications were substantial, with trainers in the top appearance quartile charging 47% higher rates than bottom quartile trainers, even with strong signalling in experience and credentials. Experimental research with 324 participants further demonstrated that strong visual brand signals enable 23% price premiums, suggesting attractiveness carries real market value (Thai & Wang, 2020).

The relationship between visual presentation and underlying service quality is less direct than other signals. Attractiveness presents both theoretical and empirical ambiguity that distinguishes it from authenticity and credibility maps onto competence. Attractiveness may signal general professionalism without conveying specific information about coaching ability or interpersonal skills. This is supported by a survey carried out on 389 sports fans, the research findings showed no significant direct effect of perceived attractiveness on brand connection (β=.08, p=.23) or brand love (β=.11, p=.14), despite significant bivariate correlations (Zhou et al., 2020). Regression analysis revealed attractiveness operated primarily through perceived authenticity (indirect effect: β=.28, p<.001) rather than exerting independent influence. This suggests attractiveness may function differently than signalling theory initially predicts.

Furthermore, three competing explanations emerge (i) attractiveness may operate as a hygiene factor, meeting baseline expectations necessary for consideration but insufficient for differentiation once thresholds are met. (ii) Attractiveness may function as an amplifier of other strategies rather than an independent signal, enhancing authentic messages without generating connection on its own. (iii) Attractiveness effects may be stage-dependent, which would matter more for initial attention but less for relationship development, which would explain why ethnographic research found selection effects (Hutson, 2013) while survey research found no relationship effects (Zhou et al., 2020). These explanations require empirical testing.

Self-expansion theory posits that individuals possess intrinsic motivation to enhance their sense of self by incorporating new resources, experiences and identities from close relationships, which fosters loyalty and complements signalling theory by reducing uncertainty (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron et al., 2013). Extended to brand contexts, consumers establish relationships with brands that encourage personal growth, incorporating brand attributes into their own identities (Kerviler & Rodriguez, 2019). When fitness coaches' personal brands embody aspirational attributes, customers experience self-growth through association, seeing themselves reflected in authentic narratives or aspiring to embody demonstrated qualities. A survey of 487 fitness consumers found perceived authenticity predicted parasocial relationships (β=.71, p<.001), which in turn predicted loyalty (β=.68, p<.001), confirming the mechanism operates in fitness contexts where customers actively pursue identity transformation (Li et al., 2023). Authentic brands provide clear, consistent identities for customer incorporation into self-concept, transforming clients into community members whose brand relationships enhance their sense of who they are becoming rather than simply providing a service transaction. Whilst evidence links each strategy to positive outcomes, no study has examined all three simultaneously from customers' perspectives to determine their relative contributions.

This theoretical framework suggests strategies should differ in their effects given distinct pathway activations, yet this remains untested. And while the dual-pathway model implies collective deployment may enhance influence beyond individual contributions, this proposition lacks empirical support in solo entrepreneurship contexts. Hence, the research questions below;

RQ1: What relationships exist between personal branding strategies and tribalist entrepreneurial success?
RQ2: To what extent do personal branding strategies differ in their individual effects on tribalist entrepreneurial success?
RQ3: Do combined personal branding strategies influence tribalist entrepreneurial success beyond individual strategy effects?

The three strategies function as signals that reduce customer uncertainty, suggesting each should positively influence tribalist entrepreneurial success. However, their effects should differ in magnitude. Authenticity activates both cognitive and affective pathways, reducing uncertainty while simultaneously providing identity resources for self-expansion. Credibility operates primarily through cognitive pathways, establishing competence but offering weaker material for emotional connection. Attractiveness may function as a hygiene factor or amplifier rather than an independent driver of relationship-based success. Furthermore, deploying multiple strategies should activate complementary pathways, generating collective influence beyond what individual strategies contribute separately.

H1a: Authenticity positively influences tribalist entrepreneurial success.
H1b: Credibility positively influences tribalist entrepreneurial success.
H1c: Attractiveness positively influences tribalist entrepreneurial success.
H2: Personal branding dimensions differ in their relative influence on tribalist entrepreneurial success.
H3: Combined personal branding strategies positively influence tribalist entrepreneurial success.
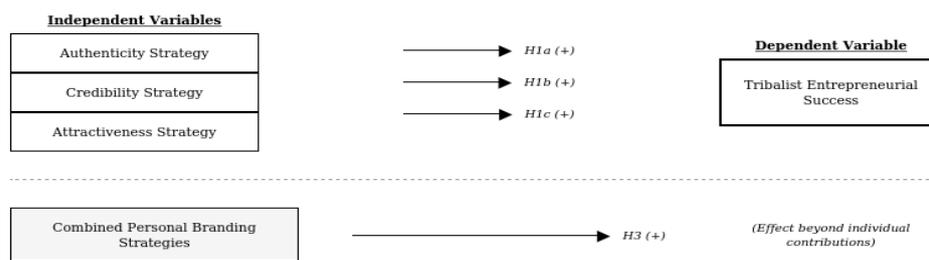

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3.0. Method
3.1. Research Design and Sample
The research utilised a correlational design, as the primary focus was to assess the influence of the independent variables (personal branding strategies-Authenticity, Attractiveness, and Credibility) on the dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Success) without altering any of the variables involved. The target population comprised UK residents who actively engage with fitness coaching brands on social media and online platforms. Because these individuals are dispersed across platforms with no centralised register, snowball sampling was employed, consistent with similar social media brand research (Li et al., 2023; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). The survey was distributed through fitness-focused social media groups on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Participants were encouraged to share the link with others who met the eligibility criteria. To be included, participants had to be aged 18 or above, reside in the UK, and actively follow or engage with at least one fitness coach on social media. The final sample comprised 169 respondents, exceeding the 107 minimum recommended for multiple regression with three predictors at 80% power and medium effect size (Cohen, 1992).

3.2. Instruments
Structured questionnaire was employed to collect data for the study. The Questionnaire measured the study variables using 7-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The Fitness Coaches Personal Branding Scale (FC-PBS α = 0.78) comprised 13 items measuring three dimensions. Original scale items were reworded to reflect fitness coaching contexts while retaining the underlying construct definitions and response format. The attractiveness subscale (3 items) drew on McCroskey and McCain (1974, as cited in Sakib et al., 2020) and Ohanian (1990, as cited in Zhou et al., 2020), measuring visual brand appeal (e.g.,

"I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it is designed well"). The authenticity subscale (5 items), adapted from Lee and Eastin (2021), assessed perceived genuineness (e.g., "I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it comes off as very genuine"). The credibility subscale (5 items) combined source credibility dimensions from McCroskey and Teven (1999, as cited in Sakib et al., 2020) and Ohanian (1990, as cited in Zhou et al., 2020) with information quality indicators from Kim (2022) (e.g., "I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it provides reliable fitness information").

Five items adapted from Pontinha and Coelho do Vale (2020) measured tribalist entrepreneurial success, defined as the degree to which customers perceive emotional affinity and community connection with a fitness coach's brand (Angel et al., 2018). Items were reworded to reference fitness coaches specifically (e.g., "I feel an emotional connection to the fitness coach").

3.3. Data Collection and Analyses

The questionnaires were distributed online, hosted on Google Forms. The survey link was distributed through fitness-focused social media groups on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and participants were encouraged to share the link with others who met the eligibility criteria. The survey opened with an introduction explaining the research purpose, followed by demographic questions and scale items organised by construct. Prior to participation, respondents received a debrief sheet outlining the study's purpose and data handling practices. Informed consent was obtained, with participants acknowledging the voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw without consequence. In accordance with GDPR requirements, no personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were stored securely with access restricted to the research team. No incentives were offered.

The analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics at $\alpha = 0.05$. Pearson product-moment correlations tested bivariate relationships between each personal branding strategy and entrepreneurial success (H1). Multiple linear regression assessed each strategy's unique contribution while controlling for the other two (H2). Simple linear regression using a composite personal branding variable tested collective influence (H3).

4.0. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

H1a, H1b, and H1c predicted that authenticity, credibility, and attractiveness would each positively influence tribalist entrepreneurial success.

The results in Table 1 suggested strong relationships between personal branding strategies (attractiveness, authenticity, and credibility) and the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. H1a was supported: authenticity positively correlated with entrepreneurial success ($r = .645$, $p < .001$), representing a large effect. H1b was supported: credibility positively correlated with entrepreneurial success ($r = .547$, $p < .001$), representing a large effect. H1c was supported: attractiveness positively correlated with entrepreneurial success ($r = .416$, $p < .001$), representing a medium effect (Cohen, 1988).

Table 1. Correlation Matrix on Personal Branding Strategies and Entrepreneurial Success of Fitness

	Attractiveness Strategy	Authenticity Strategy	Credibility Strategy	Entrepreneurial Success
Attractiveness Strategy	1			
Authenticity Strategy	.631**	1		
Credibility Strategy	.496**	.734**	1	
Entrepreneurial Success	.416**	.645**	.547**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H2 predicted that personal branding dimensions differ in their relative influence on entrepreneurial success.

Table 2 showed a strong positive relationship between the independent variables (attractiveness, authenticity, and credibility) and the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK ($R = .654$; $R^2 = .427$; Adj $R^2 = .417$; $F(3, 165) = 41.067$; $p < .001$). This showed that 42.7% of the variance in entrepreneurial success can be attributed to these personal branding strategies, representing a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). In addition, Table 2 denoted that the model is statistically significant and therefore at least one of the personal branding strategies is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. Moreover, the results indicated that authenticity is the most significant predictor of entrepreneurial success ($\beta = 0.612$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that an authentic brand will most likely lead to entrepreneurial success. The credibility strategy ($\beta = 0.186$, $p = .068$) is slightly above the threshold for significance.

Therefore, the credibility of the brand could modestly impact the entrepreneurial success of the fitness coach; however, this requires further research to confirm the influence. Lastly, the attractiveness strategy ($\beta = 0.006$, $p = .944$), as defined in this research, does not have a significant influence on the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. H2 is supported. The dimensions differ substantially in their relative influence on entrepreneurial success. Authenticity demonstrated a strong and significant influence, credibility showed a modest but non-significant influence, and attractiveness showed no significant influence. These findings indicate that authenticity is a pivotal element when building a personal brand to enhance the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches.

Table 2. Model Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the Individual Contribution of Personal Branding Strategies to the Entrepreneurial Success of Fitness Coaches in the UK.

Predictor	β	p
Authenticity	0.612	<.001
Credibility	0.186	.068
Attractiveness	0.006	.944

Note. R = .654, R² = .427, Adjusted R² = .417, F(3, 165) = 41.067, p < .001. Dependent variable:

Entrepreneurial success

H3 predicted that combined personal branding strategies positively influence tribalist entrepreneurial success.

The results in Table 3 illustrated that the composite variable of the three personal branding strategies (attractiveness, authenticity, and credibility) is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK (R=.615; R2=.378; Adj R2=.375; F(1, 167) =101.593; $\beta = 0.796$; p <.05). This suggested that 37.8% of the variance of entrepreneurial success can be explained by personal branding strategies collectively, representing a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). H3 is supported; the strategies attractiveness, authenticity, and credibility are collectively of significant importance when building a personal brand to drive entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK.

Table 3. Model Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the Combined Contribution of Personal Branding Strategies to the Entrepreneurial Success of Fitness Coaches in the UK.

Predictor	β	p
Personal branding	0.796	<.001

Note. R = .615, R² = .378, Adjusted R² = .375, F(1, 167) = 101.593, p < .001. Dependent variable is Entrepreneurial success.

4.2. Discussion

Examining each dimension, authenticity was found to have a positive and significant influence on entrepreneurial success. This aligns with the assertion of Scheidt and Henseler (2018), that authenticity is key when building a personal brand, as it influences customers' perceptions and judgements. Moreover, Lunardo et al. (2015) explain that authentic brands that prioritise sincerity and trustworthiness are more likely to establish emotional affinity with their customers. Similarly, Kowalczyk and Pounders' (2016) findings suggest that customers seek personal brands that share authentic posts and insights into their lives rather than brands that focus mainly on their careers and promotional content. This was evidenced in the study through representative items such as *"I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it not only posts the good in their life but also about hardships"* and *"I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it talks about their flaws and is not ashamed for showing them to the public"*.

On the other hand, Scheidt et al. (2020) and Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2018) affirm that it can be challenging to express one's authenticity as society puts pressure to adhere to the norm and satisfy the market. Moreover, Gehl (2011) expresses that individuals aiming to build their personal brands are forced to expose their personal lives in an effort to demonstrate authenticity. In the study conducted by Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2018), respondents expressed their fear of rejection when trying to be authentic, as their audiences may not like them and judge them. Nevertheless, Thompson-Whiteside et al., (2018) highlighted the importance of developing resilience and networking skills as coping strategies, and emphasised that perfection and being liked by everyone is not realistic. Authenticity is necessary for developing connection as it reflects all of the individual traits in one dimension, resulting in perceived emotional affinity and customer loyalty (Kucharska et al., 2020; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). This suggests that fitness coaches in the UK will be more likely to experience greater levels of tribalist entrepreneurial success by integrating authenticity into their personal brands (Kucharska et al., 2020).

The results, however, revealed a suggestive yet non-significant relationship between credibility and entrepreneurial success. Lunardo et al. (2015) emphasise that customers tend to develop a stronger connection with brands which are perceived as credible and capable of meeting their needs and goals. Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2018) also identified the need for maintaining professionalism in the personal brand to be seen as credible. This was evidenced through key representative items including *"I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it looks knowledgeable", "I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it provides useful information on fitness", and "I am more likely to engage with a fitness coach's brand if it provides reliable information on fitness".* The respondents in the study indicated a high level of agreement with the mentioned constructs, with mean scores of 6.20, 6.17, and 6.25, respectively, on a 7-point Likert scale, suggesting that customers also consider the credibility of a personal brand; however, it may not be of relative importance for establishing a connection with the coach. The report of Mauri et al. (2018) underpins these findings that the credibility of a brand is important in bridging the trust gap in the transaction. Likewise, personal brands with a great reputation will always have higher popularity (Mauri et al., 2018). This study denoted that credibility by itself may not have a significant influence on entrepreneurial success; however, credibility of a personal brand can help enhance the trustworthiness of the fitness coach (Campagna et al., 2022), which is considered a main dimension of authenticity, contributing then to higher degrees of entrepreneurial success. Moreover, trustworthiness also influences how credible a personal brand is perceived (Phung & Qin, 2018), indicating that credibility and authenticity are closely intertwined.

The results of the research also showed that attractiveness does not influence the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches. Comparably, Zhou et al. (2020) found no significant effect of attractiveness on the consumers' connection and trust for the brand. Zhou et al. (2020) explain that it may be challenging to judge the attractiveness of a brand as it is mostly unlikely for an athlete to choose an unattractive personal brand design as they will try to meet their customers' demands in terms of symbolic and visual appeal. Furthermore, Hutson (2013) manifests that the physical appearance of fitness coaches is what gives them credibility in their work and allows them to be successful. The participants of his study agreed that the appearance, attractiveness or physical ability of the coach is perceived as a commodity that represents their commitment to being physically fit and healthy (Hutson, 2013) and therefore trustworthy trainers for their clients. Sakib et al. (2020) observed that consumers are more engaged with a brand when perceived as more credible and attractive and that their credibility may be naturally caused by their attractiveness. This suggests that although consumers may seek to engage with attractive brands, it is not of most importance for tribalist entrepreneurial success on its own.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that, relatively, authenticity is the only strategy that significantly and positively influences entrepreneurial success, while credibility and attractiveness on their own are not enough to influence the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. Nonetheless, collectively, attractiveness, authenticity, and credibility positively and significantly influence tribalist entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. Gorbatov et al. (2019) emphasise that there is ample proof to suggest that personal branding leads to increased visibility, credibility, and reputation, among other benefits. Carlson and Donavan (2013) identified that in the field of sports, the personal brand of an athlete positively influences the degree to which a customer develops an emotional connection with the athlete. In addition, Reimann et al. (2012) explain that strong brand relationships can be accounted for by self-expansion, where individuals seek to grow and expand by associating with a brand that reflects their values and aspirations. Fitness coaches portraying authentic, credible and appealing content through their personal brands can offer an opportunity to enhance their customers' sense of self (Zhou et al., 2020). Consequently, as the brand resonates with its audience and customers, it will encourage emotional connection with the brand and brand loyalty (Zhou et al., 2020). As a result, fitness coaches in the UK must leverage an integrated personal branding strategy, including authenticity, credibility and attractiveness, on social media to strengthen their relationship with their customers (Chen, 2013) and achieve greater tribalist entrepreneurial success.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendation
This research addressed the relative and collective influence of three personal branding strategies: authenticity, attractiveness, and credibility, on the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. Prior research has suggested that personal branding is essential in building strong relationships with customers, customer retention and loyalty (Dašić et al., 2021; Kristiansen & Williams, 2015; Mousavi-Jad et al., 2021; Staškevičiūtė-Butienė et al., 2014; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). The results of this study

revealed that, relatively, only authenticity showed a positive and significant influence, while credibility had a suggestive influence, and attractiveness had no significant influence on entrepreneurial success. On the other hand, authenticity, attractiveness, and credibility collectively have a positive and significant influence on the tribalist entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK. Hence, the importance of strategically building an integrated personal brand to stand out in a competitive market and enhance the entrepreneurial success of fitness coaches in the UK.

Based on these findings, these recommendations are made, fitness coaches in the UK should focus on authenticity, making sure they present themselves as a transparent and genuine brand, sharing original content which represents not only the good in their lives but also the hardships, and not being ashamed of sharing their flaws with the public. This will help fitness coaches to be perceived as trustworthy and authentic, therefore, strengthening the relationship with their customers. In addition, fitness coaches can enhance their perceived trustworthiness by being knowledgeable and providing useful and reliable information on fitness. As well as making their customers feel comfortable and utilising a visually appealing brand design. Credibility and attractiveness are positively correlated with authenticity; therefore, they can further enhance the connection and trust customers have towards the brand. By adopting all three strategies collectively, fitness coaches in the UK can position themselves as industry leaders, reach wider audiences on social media, and maximise their entrepreneurial success.

The researchers encourage complementing this study with qualitative research through interviews or focus groups, as this could provide further insights on specific traits, behaviours, and content that customers judge to be effective in establishing authenticity, credibility, and attractiveness in personal branding. In addition, qualitative research can help identify other variables of interest that customers might value for strengthening their connection, trust, and loyalty to the brand. Conducting a mixed-method approach could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Even more so, by evaluating the perspectives of both the fitness coaches and the customers. Future studies could also conduct a comparative analysis between personal brands on social media to encourage participants to assess the brands on the study's variables: authenticity, attractiveness, and credibility, which will offer further insights into the interplay among these variables.

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