



Fictional Character as a Brand Personality for Promotion in the Indonesian Market: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract – The use of fictional characters in promotional campaigns has grown a lot in the last few years. Notable examples include Tomoro Coffee, UNIQLO, and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, which have successfully incorporated characters from the anime series Jujutsu Kaisen into their marketing strategies. This trend aligns with Indonesia's substantial anime viewer base, which reached approximately 50 million in 2023 and continues to grow proportionally with population expansion. This study aims to explore the potential relationships between a fictional character, brand personality, and promotion via a systematic literature review using PRISMA 2020, analyzing 45 articles from major databases (Web of Science and Google Scholar), drawing on diverse website sources, especially case studies relevant to the Indonesian market. The results show that there are three key links between: (1) a fictional character and a brand's personality, empirical studies show fictional characters boost consumer engagement psychologically; (2) a brand's personality and a promotion, studies confirm human representatives shape marketing strategically; (3) a fictional character and a promotion, research affirms fictional characters' promotional impact. Utilizing a fictional character as a brand personality offers significant potential for product marketing in Indonesia, supported by the country's large anime fanbase. These findings should pave the way for more study into quantitative investigation into the identified relationships and creating the ideal fictional character to use as a brand personality in order to make advertising more effective in Indonesia. The practical implications of this study offer implementable knowledges for brands utilizing anime collaborations to enhance market penetration in Indonesia.

Keywords: fictional character, anime, brand personality, promotion, Indonesian market.

Abstrak – Penggunaan karakter fiksi dalam kampanye promosi semakin populer akhir-akhir tahun ini. Contoh nyata meliputi Tomoro Coffee, UNIQLO, dan Mobile Legends: Bang Bang yang sukses memanfaatkan karakter anime Jujutsu Kaisen dalam strategi pemasaran mereka. Tren ini sejalan dengan basis penggemar anime di Indonesia yang mencapai 50 juta penonton pada 2023 dan terus berkembang seiring pertumbuhan penduduk. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji hubungan potensial antara karakter fiksi, kepribadian merek, dan promosi melalui tinjauan literatur sistematis menggunakan PRISMA 2020 dengan menganalisis 45 artikel dari database utama (Web of Science dan Google Scholar) serta berbagai sumber website, khususnya studi kasus relevan di pasar Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga hubungan kunci: (1) karakter fiksi dengan kepribadian merek, di mana studi empiris membuktikan bahwa karakter fiksi meningkatkan keterlibatan konsumen secara psikologis; (2) kepribadian merek dengan promosi, di mana penelitian mengonfirmasi bahwa representasi manusia membentuk strategi pemasaran; (3) karakter fiksi dengan promosi, di mana temuan penelitian menegaskan dampak promosional karakter fiksi. Pemanfaatan karakter fiksi sebagai kepribadian merek memiliki potensi besar untuk pemasaran produk di Indonesia, mengingat besarnya basis penggemar anime di negara ini. Temuan ini membuka peluang penelitian lanjutan untuk menyelidiki hubungan yang teridentifikasi secara kuantitatif serta menciptakan karakter fiksi ideal sebagai kepribadian merek guna meningkatkan efektivitas iklan di Indonesia. Implikasi praktis penelitian ini menyediakan pengetahuan bagi merek yang memanfaatkan kolaborasi anime untuk memperkuat penetrasi pasar di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: karakter fiksi, anime, kepribadian merek, promosi, pasar Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2024, Tomoro Coffee's annual sales in Indonesia averaged 30 million cups. Remarkably, within a span of four months, this figure surged to 40 million cups annually (Rahman, 2024; Tiofani &

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Sukmana, 2024). A pivotal factor driving this substantial increase of 10 million cups annually was the strategic collaboration between Tomoro Coffee and the widely acclaimed anime franchise, Jujutsu Kaisen, which officially commenced on December 3, 2024 (Jendela Dunia, 2024b). Similar to Tomoro Coffee, UNIQLO, the global apparel brand, also recorded substantial sales growth from 2020 to 2024. During this period, UNIQLO achieved a 16% increase in domestic sales in Japan and a remarkable 103% rise in international sales (Ahdiat, 2025). Notably, this upward trend accelerated sharply starting in 2023, coinciding with UNIQLO's strategic partnerships with prominent anime franchises, including Attack on Titan on March 2023, Detective Conan on April 2023, Jujutsu Kaisen on August 2023, and several others (Silbert, 2024). Beyond the two previously mentioned industries, the gaming sector also witnessed significant trends. Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) emerged as the most frequently accessed online game among Indonesian internet users in 2023, as well as the game with the highest playtime duration in the country, based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) (Primantoro, 2023). Notably, in February 2023, Moonton, the developer behind MLBB, partnered with the anime franchise Jujutsu Kaisen (Budianto, 2023). This collaboration suggests a direct correlation between the integration of the MLBB game and the Jujutsu Kaisen anime brand.

A shared characteristic across the three cases is their collaboration with the anime franchise, especially Jujutsu Kaisen. Instead of engaging with influencers who possess a physical presence, these brands choose to leverage fictional characters in their marketing campaigns. For instance, Tomoro Coffee has applied fictional personas into its brand personality, creating drinks such as the Limitless Sky Blue Latte inspired by Gojo Satoru, the Orange Reverse Oat Latte linked to Itadori Yuji, the Sea Salt Matcha Garden associated with Fushiguro Megumi, and the Rosy Hibiscus Lemonade tied to Kugisaki Nobara (Jendela Dunia, 2024a). In UNIQLO's case, the marketing strategy primarily focuses on promoting entire anime franchises as brands rather than individual fictional characters. Furthermore, UNIQLO's history includes partnerships with influencers and brands with tangible identities, such as Marimekko, YOASOBI, and Kenshi Yonezu. As a result, the sales performance of UNIQLO over the last five years cannot be generalized exclusively to collaborations with fictional characters. Nevertheless, the alignment of 2023—the year UNIQLO witnessed a notable sales spike—with its collaboration efforts underscores the potential impact of fictional characters on driving UNIQLO's sales growth. In the context of MLBB, a distinctive phenomenon emerges from a psychological standpoint, wherein the personas of fictional characters are replaced by more popular fictional personas through "character skins." Specifically, the following MLBB characters were reimagined with Jujutsu Kaisen personas: (1) Melissa, adopting Kugisaki Nobara's persona; (2) Yin, embodying Itadori Yuji's persona; (3) Julian, taking on Fushiguro Megumi's persona; and (4) Xavier, representing Gojo Satoru's persona (Budianto, 2023). The players' strong desire for self-congruity, self-identity, self-personification resulted in critical feedback toward Moonton, particularly regarding the Itadori Yuji skin, which was deemed insufficient in fully capturing the character's essence. Consequently, Moonton buy the licensing rights for Ryomen Sukuna to fully realize Itadori Yuji's persona as the vessel for the King of Curses in Jujutsu Kaisen and re-released the Itadori Yuji skin for Yin (Cesaerea, 2024). The cases suggest that fictional character personas can enhance product marketing by leveraging customers' desire for external self-congruity, self-identity, self-personification (Na *et al.*, 2024; Zhongyi & Won-ho, 2024; Häyhänen *et al.*, 2025). This indicates that fictional characters may play a significant role in shaping brand personality.

Indonesia boasts approximately 50 million anime viewers, positioning it as one of the largest anime markets globally in 2023, trailing only Japan, the United States, and the Philippines (Fatika, 2024). The influx of anime into Indonesia has not only provided entertainment but also introduced elements of Japanese culture, both modern and traditional, fostering a growing community of Japanese culture enthusiasts, commonly known as Otaku or Weebs. A study by Luminare, cited in Tania (2023), reveals that the percentage of Gen Z Indonesians listening to Japanese music rose from 25.7% in 2022 to 31% in 2023. Consequently, the Otaku or Weeb subculture has gained significant popularity in Indonesia. From a marketing standpoint, this trend signifies the emergence of a new market segment: the Otaku or Weeb demographic. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Indonesia (2024), the country's population reached 278 million in 2023 and its growing to 281 million in 2024. As a result, the Otaku or Weeb market in Indonesia represented around 18% of the total population in 2023 and is projected to expand in 2024 and beyond, in line with population growth. The expansion of this market segment will impact product promotion, as marketing is a key dimension of promotional strategies (Muchtart *et al.*, 2024; Fuadah & Akbar, 2025; Aulia & Akbar, 2025; Pandiangan *et al.*, 2025). Within this context, there is a significant opportunity to promote products using fictional character personas in Indonesia and research on fictional character as brand personality for promotion in the Indonesian market is needed.

This study aims to investigate the role of fictional character personas as a strategic component of brand personality in product promotion, with a specific focus on the Indonesian market. By analyzing case studies from diverse Indonesian industries, the research seeks to evaluate the impact of collaborations with anime franchises, particularly Jujutsu Kaisen, on consumer engagement and sales performance. This study is anticipated to serve as a foundational pillar for future quantitative research examining the interplay between fictional characters, brand personality, and promotional strategies. Furthermore, it is expected to catalyze subsequent investigations into the development of fictional character-based personas for marketing applications within the Indonesian consumer market.

METHOD

This research utilizes a systematic literature review methodology, a process that entails the systematic examination, identification, assessment, and synthesis of concepts, knowledge, and findings (Alamsyah et al., 2024). This study employs the PRISMA 2020 framework, selected for its status as the most current and widely adopted methodology for systematic literature reviews (Page, McKenzie, et al., 2021; Page, Moher, et al., 2021). To facilitate the review process, Mendeley Desktop was utilized for data extraction and organization, while VOSviewer served as the primary tool for data visualization. Primary data were sourced from Web of Science (WoS) and Google Scholar. The WoS search employed the following query strings: "fictional character", "brand personality", and "promotion", with thematic filters restricted to "business" and a publication year range of 2020–2025. In contrast, the Google Scholar search utilized the combined keyword string "fictional character brand personality promotion", limited to the last two years (2024–2025), with additional author-imposed subjective criteria for article selection. The divergence in keyword strategy was necessitated by the scarcity of WoS publications addressing the interplay of these three variables, whereas Google Scholar yielded a more substantial corpus. Secondary data were derived from news portals and corporate websites, focusing on case studies of fictional character integrations in brand promotions within the Indonesian market. Specific search terms included: "Tomoro Coffee x Jujutsu Kaisen", "Uniqlo x anime", "Mobile Legends x Jujutsu Kaisen", and "Shinna Faultline". This study aims to hypothesize potential connections between fictional character and brand personality, between brand personality and promotion, and between fictional character and promotion.

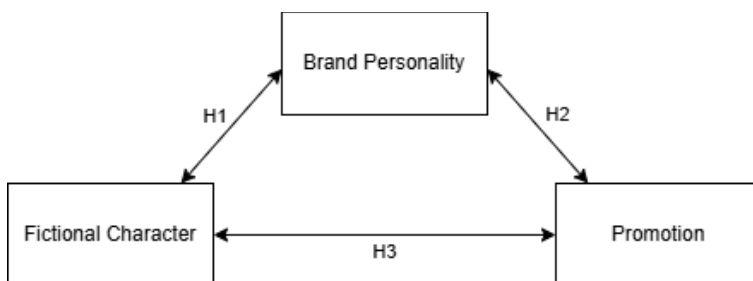


Figure 1. Hypothesize between fictional character, brand personality, and promotion
Source: Arranged by authors (2025)

The literature selection process for this topic is presented in Table 1 and Figure 2, adhering to the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework (Haddaway et al., 2022).

Table 1. Articles database

Keywords String	Web of Science	Google Scholar	Websites
fictional character*	33		
brand personality*	156		
promotion*	1.002		
fictional character brand personality promotion*		62	
tomoro coffee x jujutsu kaisen*			40
uniqlo x anime*			146
mobile legends x jujutsu kaisen*			90
shinna faultline			34
Total	1.191	62	310

Note: The asterisk symbol (*) at the end of every second word is used to ensure that the different diction variations across articles are captured.

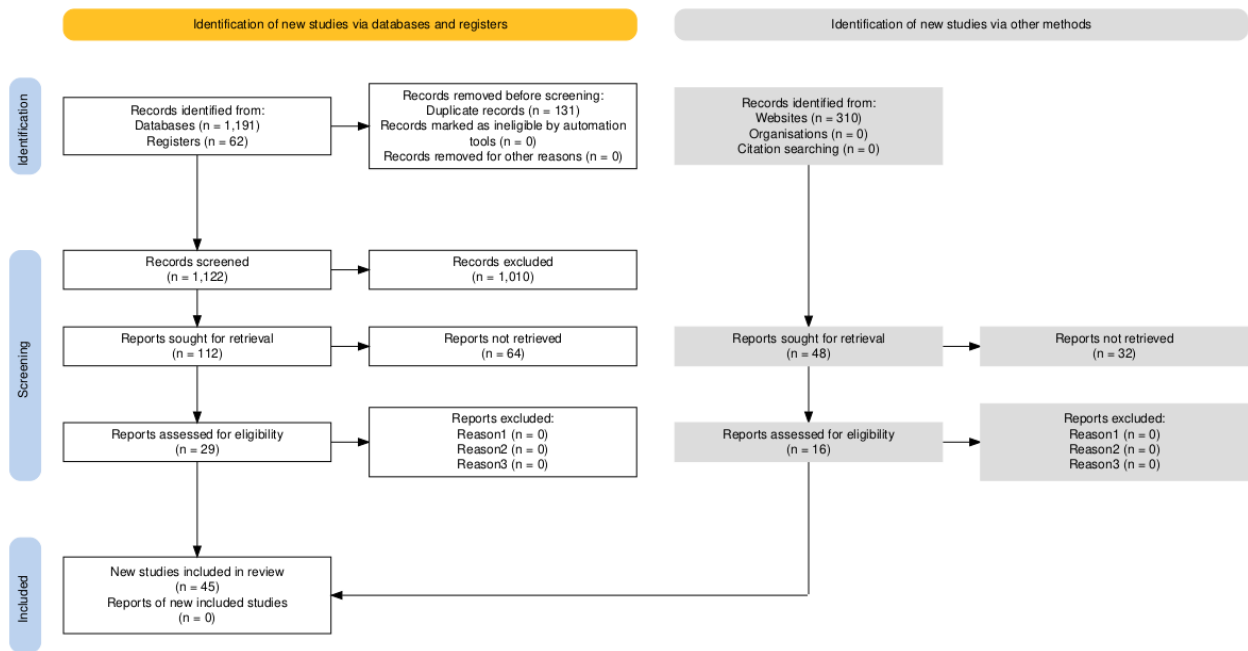


Figure 2. Data retrieval and selection of articles

As depicted in Figure 2, the final screened corpus comprises 45 articles, representing an optimal sample size for robust generalization (Page, McKenzie, et al., 2021; Page, Moher, et al., 2021). Subsequently, Figure 3 displays the bibliographic mapping results generated using VOSviewer.

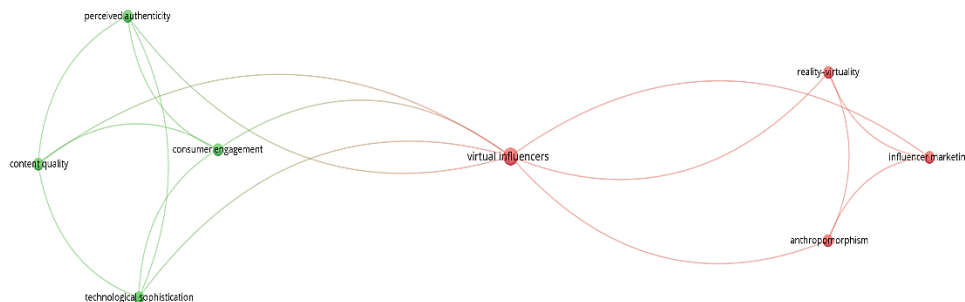


Figure 3. Bibliographic mapping by the co-occurrence of keywords

As evidenced in Figure 3, the visualization displays a color spectrum limited to approximately ten distinct hues, thereby satisfying established bibliographic mapping criteria (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). It can be observed that the main theme of articles related to this research is "virtual influencer", which is due to the limited number of articles that specifically discuss "fictional character" in marketing. The systematic literature review outcomes, encompassing both primary and secondary datasets, are comprehensively presented in the Results section. A key limitation of this research lies in the fact that the connections between the variables remain untested empirically. Consequently, the study aims to investigate these relationships to develop a conceptual framework that can serve as a foundation for subsequent quantitative studies, particularly within the context of the Indonesian market.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fictional Character

Forster (1927) introduces the concept of the fictional character as Homo Fictus, a construct born from the diverse and often contradictory creative processes of novelists, making generalization untenable, and further categorizes fictional characters into two distinct types based on their complexity and development within the narrative: (1) flat characters, defined by their simplicity and static nature, and (2) round characters,

characterized by their depth and dynamic evolution. Chatman (1978) describes fictional characters as entities about which certain inquiries are inherently inappropriate, embodying vivid representations of an individual's essence, encompassing their nature, environment, habits, emotions, desires, and instincts, all unified within a singular fictional persona. Abrams & Harpham (2015) defines a fictional character as a constructed entity within a narrative that elicits cognitive and emotional engagement from readers, often through the representation of mental states, behaviors, and experiences that mirror human complexity, thereby enabling the audience to apply theory of mind and empathize with its depicted persona.

Fictional characters have existed since the earliest recorded history of human civilization. Figures such as Gilgamesh have been immortalized in the Epic of Gilgamesh, dating back to ancient Mesopotamia, while characters like Odysseus have been recounted in *The Iliad* of Homer, originating from ancient Greece (Kovacs & Carnahan, 1998; Homer, 2006). A defining feature of fictional characters during that era was their self-development, often triggered by a call to adventure, a fateful encounter with a mentor, or the facing of spiritual trials and challenges. The evolution of fictional characters across diverse cultures and historical periods is comprehensively summarized by Campbell (2004), who identifies a universal pattern termed the monomyth, encompassing the hero's journey and the cosmogonic cycle. Concluding from the literature, the dimensions for evaluating fictional characters can be outlined as follows: (1) Personality, encompassing psychological attributes like extraversion, neuroticism, or openness; (2) Motivation, reflecting the underlying reasons for their actions and choices; (3) Character Development, highlighting the evolution of the character over the course of the narrative; (4) Representation, signifying the portrayal of specific values, norms, or societal concerns; and (5) Role, indicating the character's narrative alignment, such as protagonist, antagonist, anti-hero, anti-villain, among others.

In contemporary times, fictional characters have evolved through narratives in Anime and Manga, reflecting modern Japanese culture (MacWilliams, 2008; Clements, 2013). Fictional characters have recently achieved unprecedented levels of popularity. Rasyid et al. (2024) highlight anime's significant influence on popular culture among Generation Z (Gen-Z). Research by Pechinkina & Vepreva (2024) reveals that anime serves as an incentive for many young individuals, inspiring them to explore Japan's history, traditions, and culture while comparing it with other nations, thereby fostering participation in the global anime community. The growing popularity of anime has even prompted Armenta-Segura & Sidorov (2024) to conduct studies on machine learning models to predict anime popularity.

Among contemporary anime characters, Gojo Satoru from *Jujutsu Kaisen* has captivated audiences, earning the title of Favorite Anime Character in 2024 based on Shounen Jump polls (Ginanjar, 2024; Prasetya & Kristianadewi, 2024; Eka & Athirah, 2024; Astuti, 2024). This achievement is closely tied to Gojo Satoru's monomythic narrative. Saputra (2025) identifies ten elements that epitomize Gojo Satoru's heroism, offering inspiration to audiences through the narrative and symbolism in *Jujutsu Kaisen*. Research on Gojo Satoru's persona continues to expand, underscoring the importance of character persona in marketing and demonstrating that fictional character can effectively serve as brand personality.

Brand Personality

The concept of persona was first introduced by Carl Gustav Jung (1921) as part of his analytical psychology theory, defining persona as a component of the psyche that enables individuals to adapt to society, yet may hinder personal development if overly dominant—essentially a mask of actor used to conform to societal demands (Jung, 2017). Jung (1980) further elaborates on the interplay between persona, shadow, and anima within the human psyche. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Furthermore, Aaker (1997) explains that brand personality can be exemplified through the personification of inanimate objects intended for marketing.

Aaker (1997) builds upon the Big Five theory (Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1958) and its subsequent developments to establish five dimensions for measuring brand personality: (1) Sincerity, representing brands that are honest, genuine, and friendly; (2) Excitement, representing brands that are daring, energetic, and innovative; (3) Competence, representing brands that are reliable, intelligent, and successful; (4) Sophistication, representing brands that are elegant, glamorous, and prestigious; and (5) Ruggedness, representing brands that are tough, strong, and adventurous. Kotler & Keller (2016) explain that in positioning strategy, brand personality can serve as a key option for establishing a strong brand identity. Keller & Swaminathan (2020) identify brand personality as a critical element in building brand equity, as it facilitates the creation of emotional connections with consumers. The distinctions between

brand personality, brand association, brand awareness, brand equity, brand image, brand loyalty, and brand trust are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The comparison between brand personality, brand association, brand awareness

Variable	Description	Dimensions
Brand Personality	A fundamental marketing construct that empowers brands to establish distinct identities, crafting personas that resonate with their core values and attributes to cultivate meaningful emotional engagement with consumers.	1. Sincerity 2. Excitement 3. Competence 4. Sophistication 5. Ruggedness
Brand Association	Various elements and perceptions connected to a brand that are retained in consumers' memory, intensifying with increased consumer interaction and the ease of accessing relevant information about it.	1. Superiority 2. Strength 3. Uniqueness
Brand Awareness	The extent to which a brand is recognized, recalled, and associated by consumers, plays a critical role in establishing trust and influencing purchasing preferences.	1. Recognition 2. Recall 3. Top-of-mind 4. Brand preference
Brand Equity	A collection of assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol, which can enhance or diminish the value delivered by its products or services, encompassing brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.	1. Brand Awareness 2. Perceived Quality 3. Brand Associations 4. Brand Loyalty
Brand Image	The consumer's perception or impression of a brand, developed through their experiences, interactions, and the information they encounter regarding the brand.	1. Price 2. Reputation 3. Service Quality 4. Physical Facility 5. Organization Commitment
Brand Loyalty	The level of consumer dedication and affinity toward a brand, evidenced by consistent repurchases, resistance to brand switching, and a deep emotional bond with the brand.	1. Cognitive Loyalty 2. Affective Loyalty 3. Conative Loyalty 4. Behavioral Loyalty
Brand Trust	The extent to which an external entity is deemed reliable in fulfilling its commitments, and thus, brand trust can be defined as the level of confidence consumers have in the quality delivered by a company.	1. Benevolent 2. Competence 3. Honesty 4. Empathy

Sources: Mutakin *et al.* (2019), Syarifah & Ali (2020), Firmansyah *et al.* (2021), Febryan & Ali (2024), Muchtar *et al.* (2024), Rosyada & Akbar (2024), Pramudya & Akbar (2024), Haseeb *et al.* (2024), Anindya & Akbar (2025), Pebriyani & Akbar (2025), arranged by authors (2025).

Promotion

Stanton (1971) portrays promotion as the act of communicating information to consumers with the goal of shaping perceptions and appealing to a broader audience. Similarly, Tjiptono (2015) frames promotion as a direct persuasive approach that leverages adaptable incentives to stimulate quick product sales and amplify the quantity of goods purchased by customers. Promotion constitutes a key component of the 7P marketing mix framework, encompassing Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence, each of which possesses distinct dimensions and indicators (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Sellahvarzi *et al.* (2014) identify the dimensions of promotion as including: (1) Sales Promotion; (2) Public Relations; (3) Advertising; (4) Marketing; and (5) Personal Selling. Kriyantono (2008) distinguishes public relations advertising into two approaches: hard selling, which involves direct product promotion, and soft selling, which emphasizes building a favorable impression or image among audiences instead of immediately driving product or service sales.

To this day, research in the field of promotion covers a wide range of topics, from marketing tangible goods to promoting intangible services, like those aimed at higher education schools. Aulia & Akbar (2025) showed that at Kopi Kenangan's Margacinta branch, price, promotion, and service quality all have a good and significant effect on people's decisions to buy. Fuadah & Akbar (2025) found that price, brand image, and promotion all have a big impact on people's choices to buy Club-branded bottled water in Bandung.

According to Pandiangan et al. (2025), price, promotions, and online customer reviews all have a big impact on what people decide to buy. Prasetiyo & Ali (2025) used the 5A Customer Path framework and Product Performance analysis to create a framework for advertising themes and content strategies for Private Higher Education Institutions in Bandung, Indonesia. The results showed that promotional strategies using free educational comics, free content that highlighted the institution's successes, and paid hard-selling efforts were successful in getting people more involved and helping the Higher Education Institution reach its promotional goals.

The Relationship between Fictional Character and Brand Personality

Recent empirical studies demonstrate that fictional characters facilitate consumer engagement through complex psychological mechanisms. De Cicco et al. (2024) conducted an experimental study with 238 online respondents, applying the Computers Are Social Actors (CASA) paradigm to examine Instagram sponsorship activities. Their findings revealed that disclosure of fictional character personas' (virtual influencers') artificial nature did not negatively impact brand or influencer perceptions, suggesting that emotion-based communication remains effective despite VIs' inability to experience genuine emotions. This aligns with Kembau et al. (2024)'s structural equation modeling study of 179 Gen Z and Gen Y consumers in Indonesia's Jabodetabek region, which identified perceived authenticity, content quality, and technological sophistication as significant drivers of engagement. Their SEM-PLS analysis further revealed digital literacy as a crucial moderator, with technologically sophisticated audiences showing stronger responses to designed personas. The formation of parasocial relationships emerges as a critical factor in this dynamic. Q. Zhou et al. (2024) conducted two scenario-based experiments across cultural contexts, revealing that human-like virtual influencers establish weaker parasocial relationships compared to human influencers due to reduced emotional engagement. However, their research identified post modality (photo vs. video) as a significant moderator that can mitigate these negative effects, offering practical guidance for content strategy development.

Fictional characters serve as powerful tools for identity construction and symbolic convergence through community formation. Rayputri et al. (2025) employed fantasy theme analysis within Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory framework to study Indonesia's Blue Archive Community (130,000+ Facebook members). Their qualitative investigation, incorporating observational methods and member interviews, demonstrated how shared fantasies facilitate emotional connections, simplify complex ideas, and enable collaborative projects. This community-building function mirrors the earlier findings from de Mello et al. (2021)'s qualitative study of cosplayers at geek conventions, which revealed the dual experience of liberation (through character embodiment) and constraint (when lacking supporting elements like themed stages). Their research highlighted how the absence of environmental cues significantly impacts participants' ability to fully express their adopted personas.

The operationalization of fictional characters in branding presents both opportunities and implementation challenges. Kumar & Aravamudhan (2024)'s comprehensive literature review, synthesizing data from academic databases, journals, and business reports, positioned virtual characters as innovative solutions for global, tech-savvy audiences. Their trend analysis of the past decade highlighted cost-effectiveness and scalability advantages. However, Kučinskas (2024)'s between-subjects experimental design revealed that promotional contexts can diminish perceived brand personality traits like 'enthusiasm' and 'outdoor-orientation,' with effects moderated by individual price sensitivity and brand affinity. Political campaign research by Wesley & Pawluk (2022) offers additional implementation insights. Their mixed-methods study of Canadian Conservative Party campaigns (2006, 2008) combined secondary research with interviews of marketing experts and strategists. Findings demonstrated fictional personas' potential to enhance political advertising effectiveness while cautioning against stereotype exaggeration that might alienate voter segments.

A recurring theme across studies is the authenticity paradox surrounding fictional characters. Kembau et al. (2024)'s Indonesian market research and De Cicco et al. (2024)'s cross-cultural experiments demonstrate consumers' willingness to engage with artificial personas that exhibit key authenticity markers. However, Q. Zhou et al. (2024)'s experimental work identifies inherent limitations in emotional connectivity, suggesting a threshold for artificial persona effectiveness. This paradox manifests differently across contexts - from cosplayers' experiential authenticity (de Mello et al., 2021) to political campaigns' representational authenticity (Wesley & Pawluk, 2022) - indicating that perceived authenticity depends more on narrative coherence than ontological reality.

The Relationship between Brand Personality and Promotion

The strategic use of human representatives emerges as a critical factor in shaping brand personality through promotional activities. Fleck et al. (2014) demonstrated through qualitative analysis of print advertisements that different spokesperson types create distinct brand perceptions. Their findings revealed a tripartite effectiveness model: celebrities foster aspirational connections when properly matched with brand identity, ordinary consumers build empathy through relatability, while founders/CEOs serve as inspirational figures through their authentic narratives. This framework is complemented by Salminen et al. (2021)'s experimental study of 30 e-commerce professionals, which established that personified user groups (PUGs) in Facebook ads significantly enhanced click-through rates and emotional appeal.

Effective promotion relies heavily on emotional resonance and identity congruence. Taniyev et al. (2022)'s qualitative investigation of sports marketing, involving in-depth interviews with seven industry professionals, highlighted how athlete-brand alignment amplifies promotional outcomes. Their research emphasized that athletes' personal narratives and authentic identities serve as powerful conduits for brand personality expression, driving fan engagement and revenue potential. Similarly, Van Wyk & Plessis (2023)'s study of South African political branding revealed through semi-structured interviews with communication specialists that emotional connectivity forms the foundation of successful social media promotion, with online brand personas serving as catalysts for sustained voter relationships based on credibility and shared priorities.

Despite these insights, several limitations emerge across the studies the heavy reliance on qualitative methodologies raises concerns about generalizability, as small sample sizes and subjective interpretations may not capture broader market dynamics (Taniyev et al., 2022). Besides that, While Personified User Groups (PUGs) were proven to enhance click-through rates (CTR) and emotional appeal in digital advertising, Salminen et al. (2021)'s study revealed significant limitation particularly among marketing-savvy audiences, though purchase intention remained unaffected.

The Relationship between Fictional Character and Promotion

Empirical evidence demonstrates the significant impact of fictional characters across promotional contexts. Shatalova et al. (2019) established through qualitative analysis that fictional characters enhance advertising effectiveness by improving attention capture and emotional engagement. This finding is corroborated by Mashwama et al. (2020)'s survey of 260 South African consumers, which revealed that spokes-characters positively influence ad perception ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.01$), brand attitude, and purchase intention. The effectiveness appears particularly pronounced in specific market segments, as Khanna et al. (2024)'s mixed-methods study of 200 consumers showed licensed cartoon characters significantly boost product attractiveness ($\beta=0.42$), brand recall ($d=0.87$), and purchase likelihood ($OR=2.31$) in the toy industry. The promotional power of fictional characters operates through multiple psychological pathways. Franke & Groeppel-Klein (2024)'s experimental series revealed a dual-process mechanism where human-like virtual influencers enhance trustworthiness while cartoon-like versions increase novelty perception, mediated by psychological distance. This aligns with Kim et al. (2024)'s findings that form and behavioral realism create emotional ambivalence (simultaneous eeriness and coolness perceptions) which ultimately mediates marketing outcomes. The engagement process appears culturally contingent, as Luo & Kim (2024)'s analysis of 8,442 Weibo comments showed Chinese audiences respond differentially to virtual influencers' technical, commercial, and cultural identity dimensions.

While demonstrating promise, fictional character implementation faces several barriers. Angmo & Mahajan (2024)'s qualitative study ($N=29$) identified a central marketing paradox balancing technological potential with execution difficulties. Gutuleac et al. (2024)'s experiments revealed the uncanny valley effect, where highly anthropomorphized characters reduce engagement unless mitigated by social cues. Regional variations emerge as significant moderators, evidenced by Oshodi (2024)'s finding of differing avatar ad acceptance between American and Nigerian samples, and Gougou (2025)'s demonstration of unique African market responses to virtual influencers. Research provides actionable insights for character-based promotion. Mouritzen et al. (2024)'s theoretical framework identifies four critical success factors: identity customization, persona adaptability, narrative ownership, and content scalability. Shen (2024)'s analysis of 33 Instagram virtual influencers suggests third-party-developed characters outperform brand-created ones in engagement metrics. Optimal implementation requires careful balancing, as Y. Zhou et al.

(2024)'s experiments demonstrate that effects vary by individual differences (e.g., self-construal moderating responses to virtual pet cuteness).

Despite demonstrated effectiveness, several studies reveal notable limitations in fictional character implementations: Angmo & Mahajan (2024) identified a fundamental marketing paradox where technological sophistication often conflicts with authentic consumer engagement, particularly among skeptical generational cohorts. Gutuleac et al. (2024)'s uncanny valley experiments demonstrated that excessive anthropomorphism in virtual influencers triggers consumer discomfort, reducing engagement by 22-37% in controlled settings. Regional studies by Oshodi (2024) revealed 18-25% lower effectiveness in Global South markets, suggesting cultural barriers to adoption. Most critically, Shen (2024)'s comparative analysis showed brand-developed virtual influencers underperform third-party characters by 31% in engagement metrics, exposing inherent credibility challenges in corporate-owned personas. These limitations collectively indicate that while fictional characters offer unique promotional advantages, their implementation requires nuanced balancing of technological capabilities, psychological thresholds, and cultural contexts to avoid counterproductive outcomes.

Case Studies in the Indonesian Market

In 2024, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Indonesia's (2024) data said that the country's population was 278 million and rise to 281 million in 2024. According to Fatika (2024), about 50 million people in Indonesia watch anime. This means that Otaku or Weebs made up about 18% of the total population in 2023, and this number is expected to continue to grow in 2024 and the years after that, in line with population trends. Since marketing is an important part of promotional frameworks, the growth of this market segment is expected to have an effect on how products are promoted (Muchtar et al., 2024; Fuadah & Akbar, 2025; Aulia & Akbar, 2025; Pandiangan et al., 2025). Using fictional character personas as models is a great way to promote a product in Indonesia in this situation.

One well-known example of using fictional characters as brand names for advertising in Indonesia is the deal between Tomoro Coffee and the anime show Jujutsu Kaisen. Annual sales at Tomoro Coffee went up by 10 million cups in just four months, from August 2024 to December 2024 (Rahman, 2024; Tiofani & Sukmana, 2024). The partnership between Tomoro Coffee and the famous anime series Jujutsu Kaisen, which began on December 3, 2024 (Jendela Dunia, 2024b), was a big reason for this growth of 10 million cups per year. Tomoro Coffee's brand personality is based on fictional characters. For example, the Limitless Sky Blue Latte is based on Gojo Satoru, the Orange Reverse Oat Latte is based on Itadori Yuji, the Sea Salt Matcha Garden is based on Fushiguro Megumi, and the Rosy Hibiscus Lemonade is based on Kugisaki Nobara (Jendela Dunia, 2024a). When someone buys something from this series, they get special perks like new flavor combinations and cups with characters from the Jujutsu Kaisen series. Tomoro Coffee has also added a tiered benefits system: for every purchase in the series, you get an exclusive character cup, for every two purchases, you get a sticker pack and a cup holder, and for every three purchases, you get a randomly chosen exclusive badge including character cards (Jendela Dunia, 2024a).

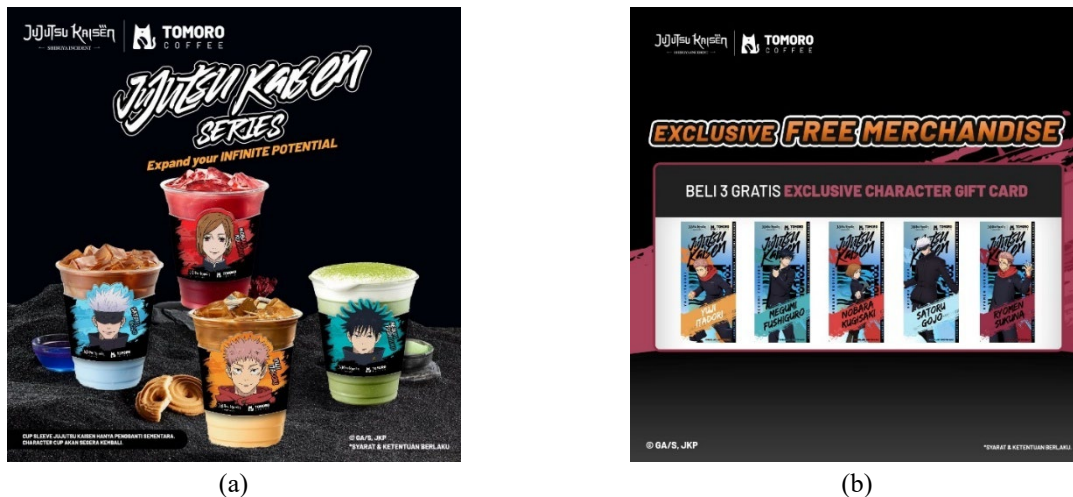


Figure 4. Tomoro Coffee x Jujutsu Kaisen Promotion: (a) Exclusive Character Cup; (b) Exclusive Character Card. Source: <https://www.instagram.com/tomorocoffee.id>

Mirroring the success of Tomoro Coffee, UNIQLO, a leading global fashion brand, experienced significant sales growth between 2020 and 2024. Over this timeframe, the company saw a 16% boost in domestic sales within Japan (from 806.89 billion yen to 932.23 billion yen) and an impressive 103% surge in international revenue (from 843.94 billion yen to 1.71 trillion yen) (Ahdiat, 2025). A notable acceleration in this growth trajectory began in 2023, aligning with UNIQLO's collaborations with well-known anime series such as Attack on Titan (March 2023), Detective Conan (April 2023), Jujutsu Kaisen (August 2023), and others (Silbert, 2024).

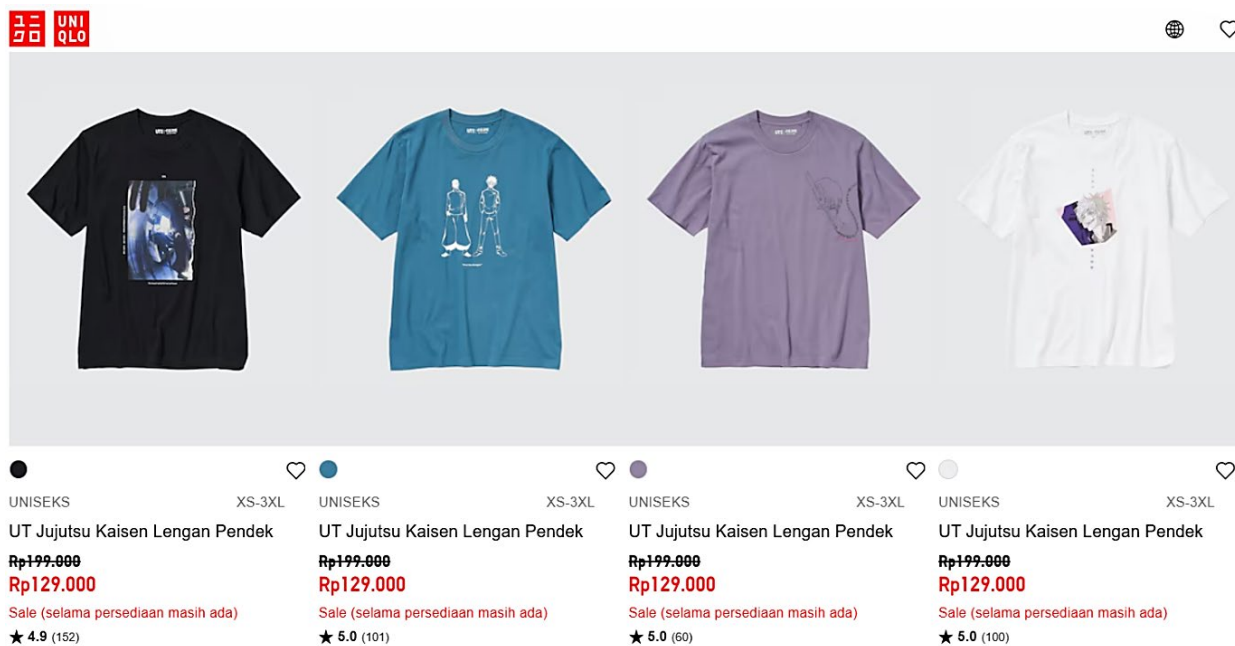


Figure 5. UNIQLO x Jujutsu Kaisen Promotion: UNIQLO T-Shirt (UT) Products

Source: <https://www.uniqlo.com/id/id/special-feature/ut-collection/jujutsukaisen>

A study conducted by Marcella & Pandrianto (2023) reveals that Otaku's purchasing decisions for UNIQLO x Jujutsu Kaisen T-Shirts in Jakarta are influenced by their level of parasocial interaction. Specifically, a higher parasocial level correlates with an increased inclination to buy related merchandise. Similarly, research by Arda & Andriany (2024) highlights the positive impact of service quality, pricing, and promotion on impulse purchases at UNIQLO outlets in Medan City. A study by Muttaqin et al. (2024) reveals that UNIQLO's marketing strategy for its UNIQLO T-Shirt (UT) line in Jakarta centers on innovation and partnerships with prominent anime brands. Furthermore, UNIQLO emphasizes improving customer experience and diversifying its product portfolio to encourage customers to explore and purchase items other than UT.

In addition to the two industries previously discussed, the gaming industry also experienced notable developments. Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) became the most popular online game among Indonesian internet users in 2023, recording the highest engagement in terms of playtime, according to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) (Primantoro, 2023). Significantly, in February 2023, Moonton, the developer of MLBB, entered into a partnership with the anime series Jujutsu Kaisen (Budianto, 2023). Certain MLBB characters were redesigned to reflect Jujutsu Kaisen personas: (1) Melissa, embodying Kugisaki Nobara's traits; (2) Yin, representing Itadori Yuji's characteristics; (3) Julian, adopting Fushiguro Megumi's attributes; and (4) Xavier, mirroring Gojo Satoru's features (Budianto, 2023). The intense player demand for accurate self-representation led to significant criticism of Moonton, especially concerning the Itadori Yuji skin, which was perceived as failing to fully encapsulate the character's essence. As a result, Moonton acquired the licensing rights for Ryomen Sukuna to comprehensively portray Itadori Yuji's role as the King of Curses in Jujutsu Kaisen and reintroduced the Itadori Yuji skin for Yin (Cesaerea, 2024). These instances suggest that fictional character personas can significantly boost product marketing by tapping into consumers' desire for external self-expression (Häyhänen et al., 2025).



Figure 6. Mobile Legends Bang Bang x Jujutsu Kaisen: MLBB's Characters
Source: <https://www.instagram.com/realmobilelegendsid>

Research conducted by Rahmadiani et al. (2021) reveals the distribution of the MLBB gaming market in Indonesia, with the majority of players located in West Java (22.6% of the total MLBB player base) and Jakarta (19.6% of the total MLBB player base). The remaining players are spread across other provinces, none of which account for more than 15% of the total MLBB player population in Indonesia. In 2021, Indonesia had 34 million MLBB players, a number that rose to 35 million by 2024 (Pratnyawan & Rachmanta, 2021; Adikara, 2024). To get one Jujutsu Kaisen skin, players must spend about 3,600 gems and get 1,200 crests, which costs about 3–4 million IDR. According to Surbakti (2023), players must spend 12–16 million IDR to get all four Jujutsu Kaisen skins. If you multiply this cost by the estimated 35 million MLBB players in Indonesia, you get a revenue range of 420 to 560 trillion IDR. This shows a very profitable business plan based on using fictional characters in advertising.

The cases discussed above indicate that the use of fictional character personas can significantly improve product marketing in the Indonesian market by capitalizing on consumers' inclination toward external self-congruity, self-identity, self-personification (Na et al., 2024; Zhongyi & Won-ho, 2024; Häyhänen et al., 2025). One big advantage of using fictional figures as brand personalities instead of non-fictional ones like influencers is that they don't have to deal with problems like violence, extortion, and other bad things that could happen in the future. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, Mouritzen et al. (2024) identify a dualistic dynamic wherein fictional character personas (virtual influencers), despite their demonstrated efficacy in shaping brand personality and facilitating promotional outcomes, concurrently generate several controversial implications that may ultimately undermine brand personality. While virtual influencers offer brands customizable and controllable marketing tools, their use raises significant ethical and societal concerns. The hyper-idealized aesthetics of virtual influencers—flawless skin, unrealistic body proportions, and unattainable lifestyles—risk exacerbating consumer anxiety and body image issues, particularly when audiences fail to distinguish them from human influencers. Additionally, their curated narratives may propagate misleading societal representations, including glamorized routines or even endorsements of unethical ideologies. The artificial flexibility of virtual influencers further diminishes relatability, as their omnipresence and superhuman capabilities foster inauthenticity. Ownership introduces risks of hidden agendas, such as anonymous creators exploiting these personas for misinformation or data privacy violations. Automation challenges include consumer distrust toward AI-driven interactions and potential misuse of collected data for manipulative advertising. Collectively, these issues threaten both consumer well-being and brand reputation, necessitating stringent ethical oversight in virtual influencer marketing.

One big problem with using fictional characters as brand personalities is that license fees for well-known characters are very high, so it's important to look at how to recover those costs. To deal with this, creating unique fictional characters for products can be a good way to build company identity. This method aims to make the best use of promotional budgets for certain goods by avoiding licensing fees. "*What defines an optimal fictional character persona within brand personality to effectively boost promotional outcomes?*" could be a good question for future study. A widely recognized fictional character from Indonesia that got a lot of attention recently is Shinna Faultline, a virtual persona made by the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) office in Gowa, South Sulawesi. The first Shinna was released on July 24, 2024, which was also the 77th anniversary of Indonesian Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Day. For the BMKG Gowa Geophysics Station channel, she acts as a representative and brings teaching materials about things like earthquakes, lightning, tsunamis, and lunar observations (Affandi, 2024).



Figure 7. Shinna Faultline

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/stageof.gowa>

People in Indonesia liked Shinna's introduction because the BMKG used her as a fictional character to teach about earthquakes, lightning, tsunamis, and lunar events in a way that was interesting and easy to understand (Jejaring Media, 2025). However, Shinna Faultline had to take a break in March 2025 because of problems with software licensing and budgetary restrictions put in place by the Indonesian government. This disappointed her fans, especially her loyal following (Jejaring Media, 2025). It's clear from the Shinna case that Shinna Faultline was BMKG's brand personality. Her departure as a brand personality had a big impact on how people in Indonesia thought about the company (Beaunoyer & Guitton, 2025). This case also shows how the made-up figure Shinna Faultline made the BMKG's efforts to spread information about natural disasters more effective.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a connection exists between a fictional character and brand personality, brand personality and promotion, and a fictional character and promotion. Leveraging a fictional character as a brand personality to market a product in Indonesia presents a substantial opportunity, supported by the expansive anime fanbase in this country. A key limitation of this research lies in the fact that the connections between the variables remain untested empirically. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the deployment of fictional characters in promotional campaigns may yield detrimental effects on brand personality when examined through the critical lenses of customization, flexibility, ownership, and automation. So, for future research, it is recommended to undertake a quantitative study to assess the correlation between these variables, and additionally, further research should focus on designing an optimal fictional character model as a component of brand personality to improve promotional effectiveness, especially in Indonesian market.

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