

Exploring Jackie Chan's Resilience through Grotberg's Framework: A Study of his 'I Am, I Have, I Can'

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Abstract

This article examines Jackie Chan's resilience through Grotberg's "I Am, I Have, I Can" framework, highlighting how these three elements underpin his success and global appeal. Using secondary sources, including autobiographies, interviews, and media reports, a thematic analysis explores how Grotberg's model aligns with Jackie Chan's journey from his humble beginnings in Hong Kong to his rise as a global action star and brand icon. The analysis reveals that Chan's resilience is rooted in his identity (I Am – self-worth, ruggedness, tenacity, competitiveness, cultural pride), relationships (I Have – family, mentorship, community, global connections), and skills (I Can – physical abilities, adaptability, problem-solving, endurance). The fourteen traits are crucial to his personal and professional growth. The findings suggest that Grotberg's framework provides valuable insights into resilience as a core element of celebrity branding, illustrating how figures like Chan maintain relevance in both celebrity and personal branding. Furthermore, two resilience traits—competence and ruggedness—from the 'I Am' component align with Aaker's Brand Personality Theory, contributing to the creation of durable and inspiring public personas. While this article focuses solely on Grotberg's framework, integrating Aaker's Brand Personality Theory in future research could deepen our understanding of how resilience shapes both celebrity and personal branding.

Keywords: Jackie Chan, Grotberg's Resilience Framework, Brand Personality Theory, Celebrity Branding, Personal Branding, I am I have I can, Thematic Analysis

Introduction

Jackie Chan's rise to international fame is a testament to the power of resilience. From humble beginnings in Hong Kong to becoming a global icon, Jackie Chan has faced numerous challenges both in his personal life and career. His success story is not just one of skill, but also of overcoming adversity. This article seeks to analyze Jackie Chan's resilience using Grotberg's 'I Am, I Have, I Can' framework, exploring how these three components of

resilience have played a crucial role in his celebrity branding journey that has helped him overcome personal struggles and professional setbacks. Personal branding is the innovative strategy a celebrity can utilize to gain global recognition (Abdul Wahid et al., 2023). By examining Jackie Chan's identity (I Am), relationships (I Have), and abilities (I Can), this paper aims to deepen the understanding of how resilience contributes to Jackie Chan's long-term success, both personally and professionally. This article also offers valuable insights into how other celebrities can leverage their own celebrity and personal brands to cultivate resilience, adapt to challenges, and sustain their success in a competitive marketplace.

Literature Review

A review of the literature has established the connection between celebrity branding and resilience with the foundational work in both areas indicate the importance of resilience in shaping the public perception and personal brand of celebrities. Previous studies on resilience, including those by Grotberg (1995), for instance have shown that resilience is a key factor in overcoming adversity.

Celebrity Branding and Resilience

Celebrity branding is a strategic effort aimed at crafting a consistent, relatable public image that resonates with audiences by emphasizing personality traits like authenticity, perseverance, and reliability. Scholars have explored how celebrities' personal challenges and stories of resilience help solidify their brands as relatable and accessible, even amidst fame. For instance, Jackie Chan's brand exemplifies resilience, showcasing a tenacious and sincere personality that strengthens his cross-cultural appeal. A recent study by Ritz and Lechner (2023) demonstrates how contemporary celebrity brands benefit from transcending traditional endorsements to create narratives that highlight personal resilience, lifestyle, and life challenges. This alignment of personal experiences with celebrity branding appeals to fans' desire for authenticity and relatability, positioning celebrities as both aspirational and approachable.

In this context, personal branding plays a complementary role, enriching the broader narrative of celebrity branding. While celebrity branding focuses on crafting a public persona that resonates across various audiences, personal branding delves deeper into the individual aspects of a celebrity's life, such as their values, personal stories, and experiences. For Jackie Chan, his personal experiences—such as his dedication to charity work, perseverance in the face of adversity, and commitment to his craft—enhance the authenticity of his celebrity brand, reinforcing the emotional connection he shares with his global audience.

Abdul Wahid et al. (2023), discuss how personal branding allows celebrities like Jackie Chan to align their personal values and life experiences with their public persona, creating a genuine connection with audiences. By aligning his personal experiences with his celebrity brand, Jackie Chan exemplifies how resilience is a powerful force in maintaining a public image that feels genuine, relatable, and sustainable. By aligning his personal experiences with his celebrity brand, Jackie Chan exemplifies how resilience is a powerful force in maintaining a public image that feels genuine, relatable, and sustainable.

Together, celebrity branding and personal branding work in tandem to construct a resilient public identity that resonates with audiences across cultural and geographical

boundaries. Strategic PR also plays a pivotal role in maintaining this narrative. As highlighted by AMW Group (n.d.), effective celebrity branding relies on consistently communicated resilience-based stories that humanize celebrities, fostering a deeper emotional connection with their audience.

Grotberg's Resilience Framework

Edith Grotberg's resilience framework, which categorizes resilience through "I Am, I Have, I Can" elements, offers a way to understand resilience as a structured, impactful attribute in personal development and public life. Grotberg's resilience framework has gained credibility and been widely cited in resilience research, particularly for its accessibility and applicability across developmental stages. This model, detailed in Grotberg's influential work, "A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit," is structured around three core resilience-building components: "I Have" (support networks and resources), "I Am" (inner strengths and self-concept), and "I Can" (skills and competencies). The first component - 'I Am' refers to a person's self-awareness and values, while the second component - 'I Have' is focused on a person's supportive relationships and resources, and the last component – 'I Can' is about problem-solving and coping abilities of that person.

Originally created to assess resilience in children, Grotberg's framework has since been widely adopted in fields such as education, social work, and psychology, reflecting its adaptability across age groups and settings. Tillot et al. (2021), for example, explored resilience in primary school children using a storytelling intervention designed to instill resilience skills. Over a four-week program, children engaged with a resilience-themed storybook, and their responses were later analyzed and coded according to the Grotberg Resilience Framework. The study concluded that storytelling not only engaged children but also provided a structured approach to resilience-building, as it enabled them to articulate and internalize key resilience concepts—such as "I Am," "I Have," and "I Can"—within a supportive learning environment. This research demonstrates the framework's effectiveness in delivering resilience-based interventions and suggests a promising avenue for applications beyond childhood, including with adults and in cross-cultural studies.

In another study by Parinyaphol and Chongruksa (2021), Grotberg's "I Am, I Have, I Can" resilience framework was applied to assess resilience in 1,148 Thai and Muslim college students living amidst insurgent terrorism in Pattani, Thailand. Researchers used the model to examine resilience in relation to ethnic identity, academic achievement (GPA), field of study, and birth order. Findings highlighted the model's adaptability across cultural and academic contexts, showing that inner qualities ("I Am"), support systems ("I Have"), and problem-solving skills ("I Can") each play a critical role in shaping resilience. This study's findings illustrate that resilience is influenced not only by personal traits but also by academic and familial factors, emphasising the relevance of Grotberg's model in diverse contexts.

Grotberg's framework provides a foundational approach for assessing resilience traits, making it useful for examining how public figures, like Jackie Chan, leverage resilience traits in their personal and professional lives. By using "I Have, I Am, and I Can," researchers can systematically explore the resources, self-identity, and skills that Chan has developed over his career to adapt and thrive in a challenging industry. In celebrity branding's case, these categories help analyze how a celebrity's resilience may be perceived by audiences. For

instance, Jackie Chan's "I Am" aligns with his self-identity as a martial artist and entertainer. His "I Have" highlights his support networks, such as mentorships and partnerships, while "I Can" showcases his adaptability and skill evolution in response to industry challenges.

Integrating Grotberg's Resilience Framework with Celebrity Branding

The concept of resilience is central to the public image and brand of celebrities. Applying Grotberg's resilience framework—comprising "I Am" (identity), "I Have" (support system), and "I Can" (skills and abilities)—can offer a useful lens for understanding how a celebrity's personal and professional life challenges contribute to their enduring appeal. While Jackie Chan's resilience has been a key part of his public persona, this article proposes to explore how these three components of resilience might align with Chan's career, and how they influence the way his brand has been built and sustained over the years.

Rather than presupposing Chan's resilience characteristics, this section will focus on how Grotberg's framework provides an analytical foundation for investigating the intersection between resilience and celebrity branding. This approach aims to deepen our understanding of how resilience not only shapes personal success but also contributes to brand loyalty, making it a crucial element of Chan's image.

Theoretical Framework

Rather than presupposing Jackie Chan's resilience characteristics, this section focuses on how Grotberg's resilience framework provides an analytical foundation for examining the intersection between resilience and celebrity branding. This approach aims to enhance our understanding of how resilience shapes not only personal success but also contributes to brand loyalty, making it a crucial element of a celebrity's image, such as that of Jackie Chan. His life offers an ideal case for applying this model, given the physical, financial, and social challenges he has faced throughout his career.

Incorporating Grotberg's framework into the literature on celebrity branding reinforces resilience as more than a personal trait; it becomes a cornerstone for audience perception. This framework influences how celebrities build and sustain their brands through both challenges and triumphs. The findings in subsequent sections will explore how these components manifest in Jackie Chan's life, contributing to the development of his enduring brand.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing content analysis to explore Jackie Chan's life and career through the lens of Grotberg's resilience framework ("I Am, I Have, I Can"). This framework serves as the primary analytical tool for assessing both personal and public aspects of Jackie Chan's persona. Secondary sources—including biographical texts, interviews, public statements, and media portrayals—will be analyzed to identify how elements of Grotberg's framework manifest in Jackie Chan's life and career.

Data Collection

Primary data sources for this study include Jackie Chan's autobiographies, interviews, documentaries, and other authoritative biographical resources. Supplementary articles from industry publications and analyses of Chan's public persona were also reviewed to provide a

more comprehensive understanding of his branding and public image. The “I Am, I Have, I Can” framework will be applied to interpret significant events in Chan’s life. Data will be categorized as:

- a) ‘I Am’ component to address Jackie Chan's self-identity, focusing on qualities such as his dedication, confidence, and cultural pride,
- b) ‘I Have’ component to examine Jackie Chan’s support systems and relationships, including mentorships, collaborations, and his strong connection with fans, and
- c) ‘I Can’ component to highlight Jackie Chan’s skills and strategies, such as his stunt work, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities, which allowed him to overcome numerous challenges throughout his career.

Thematic Analysis

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), in Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns (themes) within data. It is flexible and allows researchers to systematically examine textual content to uncover key themes and insights, making it particularly valuable when exploring subjective experiences, narratives, and representations in texts such as autobiographies.

A thematic analysis approach will be employed to identify recurring themes within each of Grotberg’s resilience components. The analysis will systematically link these themes to key life events, personal characteristics, and career milestones of Jackie Chan. By identifying and organizing these themes, this study aims to uncover how Jackie Chan’s resilience is integral to his personal and professional brand. This method offers a structured yet flexible framework for understanding the depth of Chan’s resilience and its influence on his enduring celebrity brand.

Validation and Limitation

The findings will be cross-checked for consistency with Jackie Chan’s personal narrative and the public’s reception of his image, using publicly available materials. It is important to note the limitations of this approach, particularly the reliance on publicly available resources that may sometimes idealize certain traits or events. Recommendations for future research include exploring resilience in the context of other celebrities and its broader impact on the branding process.

Study Findings

The findings of Grotberg’s Analysis on Jackie Chan’s case are presented in three sub-sections, corresponding to each component of Grotberg’s resilience framework: ‘I Am,’ ‘I Have,’ and ‘I Can.’ These themes reflect how Chan’s resilience traits manifest and contribute to his personal and professional success.

‘I Am’ – Identity

The analysis of Jackie Chan’s resilience through the “I Am” theme reveals a multi-faceted identity shaped by several core traits: self-worth, ruggedness, tenacity, competitiveness, and cultural pride. Jackie Chan’s sense of self-worth and identity has been a key driver of his resilience. His identity, rooted in his early experiences and personal values, has shaped his ability to overcome numerous challenges and setbacks throughout his career.

Jackie Chan's sense of self-worth was found to be built early in life, largely because of his challenging childhood. Growing up in poverty, he faced hardship but developed a strong sense of who he was, which became integral to his resilience. His belief in his abilities and his unwavering self-confidence provided him with the foundation to rise above the adversity he encountered, whether it was financial instability, cultural barriers, or early career setbacks (Lee, 2017). This solid internal sense of worth not only helped him navigate difficult situations but also motivated him to push forward in an often-competitive industry.

Jackie Chan's ruggedness is found to be a defining part of his public persona, casting him as a tough, resilient individual capable of enduring both physical and emotional hardships. His persona as a hard-working, enduring figure has made him an icon in the action genre. This trait has allowed him to take on intense physical roles and perform complex stunts, even when faced with injuries and exhaustion. The ruggedness aspect is deeply connected to his ability to persevere in a demanding and often unforgiving industry, reinforcing the image of Jackie Chan as an indomitable force in the world of entertainment (Dixon, 2017).

The study found tenacity to be a central aspect of Jackie Chan's identity, reflected in his career trajectory and his ability to overcome numerous obstacles. Whether it was fighting through physical injuries or working tirelessly to establish himself as a household name, his drive to succeed has remained steadfast. This trait speaks to his unwavering persistence in the face of setbacks, pushing him to constantly improve and succeed where others might have given up (Chan, 2015).

Jackie Chan's competitiveness trait is evident in his constant drive to outdo himself and continually push the boundaries of his craft. His desire to excel and surpass his own achievements is central to his identity. Throughout his career, he has strived to top his previous work, constantly seeking new ways to innovate and raise the bar for action filmmaking. This competitive spirit, deeply ingrained in his persona, has propelled him forward, ensuring that he remains at the forefront of his field (Hodgson, 2008).

Similarly, Jackie Chan's cultural pride is found to be playing a crucial role in shaping his identity. As a martial artist, his heritage and connection to Chinese culture have been integral to his sense of self. His pride in his cultural background is reflected in his roles and the way he incorporates traditional martial arts into his work. This cultural pride not only fuels his identity but also serves as a means of representing his heritage on the global stage, further solidifying his place as a cultural ambassador (Chan, 2015).

Together, these five 'I Am' traits coalesce to form a resilient identity that has enabled Chan to overcome adversity and establish a lasting, influential brand. The five "I Am" traits align with Abdul Wahid et al.'s (2023) attributes of uniqueness (Chan's differentiation from Bruce Lee) and toughness (developed through rigorous early training and career challenges), further enhancing his identity.

'I have' - Support System

Throughout his career, Jackie Chan's resilience has been greatly supported by his relationships with family, mentors, and colleagues. These connections have not only provided

emotional support but also contributed significantly to his professional growth and personal development. Apart from family, mentorship, several other traits, namely, community responsibility, and a global connection to humanitarian causes have been found to build Jackie Chan's resilience personality in the 'I Have' theme.

The backing from Jackie Chan's family has been a pillar of his emotional stability throughout his life and career. Their support provided a stable foundation during periods of financial instability and cultural challenges early in his journey, offering both emotional grounding and encouragement. Jackie has often spoken about the sacrifices his family made, especially during his early years in Hong Kong, enabling him to pursue his dreams. Their unwavering support gave him the confidence to take risks and face the numerous challenges in the entertainment industry. This foundation of love and trust has been essential support in his ability to navigate and persevere through difficult times (Lee, 2017).

As for mentorship, Jackie Chan's early career was heavily influenced by his mentorship from figures such as director Yuen Woo-ping. Their collaboration in the formative years of Jackie Chan's career helped him navigate the industry's complexities and set him on the path to stardom. Yuen Woo-ping's guidance, both creatively and professionally, enabled Jackie Chan to refine his martial arts skills and expand his understanding of film production. This mentorship has been key to his professional development and identity, giving him the tools to succeed in an ever-changing film industry (Hodgson, 2008).

Jackie Chan's sense of responsibility extends far beyond his personal and professional relationships to include community responsibility. As a UNICEF ambassador since 2004, he has used his platform to advocate for children's rights and promote humanitarian efforts globally. His role with UNICEF reflects his deep commitment to social causes and his desire to use his fame to make a positive impact on the world. This sense of responsibility strengthens his resilience, as it gives him a broader purpose and drives him to contribute to the greater good, both in his personal life and through his public image (Chan, 2015).

In addition to his family and mentors, Jackie Chan's global connection has played an important role in reinforcing his resilience. His international fame and megastar status has allowed him to form relationships with fans and industry professionals across the world, providing him with a sense of global support. These relationships, built on admiration and respect, further solidify his resilience, as they create a network of people who believe in his work and support his endeavors. This global support system has been crucial in maintaining his relevance and public image as a beloved cultural icon (Lee, 2017).

In sum, the four identified traits are manifestations of Jackie Chan's 'I Have' resilience that have shaped him both personally and professionally. Abdul Wahid et al. (2023), further highlight the significance of external support systems in Jackie Chan's resilience, noting how his strategic collaborations have contributed to managing his international brand. This aligns with Grotberg's "I Have" component, emphasizing the importance of support networks in overcoming challenges and building his long-term resilience.

'I Can' - Skills and Abilities

Jackie Chan's resilience is clearly reflected in his physical skills, adaptability, and commitment to overcoming obstacles which he mastered through excellent problem-solving skills and his extraordinary endurance and pain tolerance. His journey to success was not only shaped by his natural abilities but also by his continuous efforts to improve and adapt to an ever-changing industry.

According to Abdul Wahid et al. (2023), Jackie Chan's resilience is reflected in his ability to take decisive action to overcome obstacles. For instance, despite his limitations with the English language, he proactively sought to improve by learning the language himself and collaborating with proficient co-authors for his autobiography. This highlights his problem-solving skills and determination to stay aligned with his career goals, key attributes of the "I Can" component.

Jackie Chan's martial arts expertise is a cornerstone of his career, with his rigorous training and mastery of various fighting styles allowing him to create unique and dynamic stunt sequences. His innovative approach to choreography, blending martial arts with humor and acrobatics, helped redefine the action genre. Chan's physical feats go beyond traditional martial arts; his ability to incorporate creative elements, such as using everyday objects in fight scenes, showcases his versatility and ingenuity. His hands-on approach to stunt coordination, often performing his own stunts despite the risks, demonstrates his unwavering commitment to his craft (Dixon, 2017).

Beyond his physical skills, Chan's ability to adapt to different cultural and professional environments has played a significant role in his resilience. Starting his career in Hong Kong cinema, Chan transitioned to Hollywood and faced several cultural and industry-specific barriers. His success in breaking into Western markets required him to navigate complex cultural dynamics while maintaining his distinct identity as a martial artist and actor. This adaptability is further highlighted by his transition from traditional action roles to incorporating humor and drama, appealing to a broader, international audience. His ability to evolve while staying true to his roots is a testament to his personal resilience and flexibility in a rapidly changing entertainment landscape (Chan, 2015).

Jackie Chan's problem-solving skills have been key in overcoming the numerous challenges he faced throughout his career. His ability to think on his feet and create innovative solutions, both on and off-screen, has allowed him to maintain a successful career despite setbacks. For example, Chan's pioneering stunt choreography often involved creating new techniques to work around physical limitations, such as injuries or challenging environments. This problem-solving mindset not only kept him ahead of industry trends but also helped him stay relevant across decades of changing cinematic tastes (Hodgson, 2008). His willingness to experiment with new ideas—whether it was blending martial arts with comedy or using unconventional locations—showcases his resourcefulness.

One of the defining traits of Jackie Chan's 'I Can' mindset is his remarkable endurance and ability to continue performing despite constant physical pain. Throughout his career, Chan has sustained a wide range of injuries, including broken bones, sprained joints, and head injuries, yet he persevered to complete the stunts and performances that became his

signature. His dedication to physical fitness and preparation allowed him to push through pain and continue delivering at a high level. This resilience is particularly evident in his early years, when he performed complex stunts without the modern technology or safety protocols available today, relying instead on his grit and determination to see each scene through to completion (Jones, 2019). His ability to endure such physical hardship highlights his mental toughness and unwavering commitment to his craft, solidifying his legacy as one of the most resilient and dedicated action stars in cinema history.

In sum, each of the four 'I Can' traits found in this study conveys how Jackie Chan's resilience has shaped both his personal and professional success. By emphasizing his continuous development and innovative thinking, the findings reflect the depth of Jackie Chan's 'I Can' mindset in a way that is closely tied to his enduring influence in both the martial arts and film industries. As Abdul Wahid et al. (2023) point out, Jackie Chan's perseverance and ability to take decisive action in the face of obstacles is central to his personal branding strategy. His determination to perform dangerous stunts and his willingness to be vulnerable with his audience reflect his resilience and align with the 'I Can' element of resilience, which emphasizes action, persistence, and overcoming adversity.

Discussion, Conclusion, Future Direction

This study has explored Jackie Chan's resilience through Grotberg's "I Am, I Have, I Can" framework, revealing how his personal identity ('I Am' - self-worth, ruggedness, tenacity, competitiveness, and cultural pride), support system ('I Have' - family, mentorship, community responsibility, and global connection), and skills ('I Can' - physical abilities, adaptability, problem solving, and endurance to physical pain) have played a central role in his success in both the film industry and the global community. By analyzing these three elements, fourteen traits have been identified we gain a deeper understanding of how resilience has enabled Jackie Chan to adapt, persevere, and build a lasting global brand. His identity, relationships, and competencies not only contributed to his career achievements but also enhanced his appeal as a global icon.

The study also demonstrates that Grotberg's resilience framework is a valuable theoretical tool for analyzing celebrity and personal branding, particularly in the case of Jackie Chan. Drawing on secondary sources such as autobiographies, interviews, and media reports, this research highlights how Jackie Chan's life—from his humble beginnings to his rise as an international action star—embodies the resilience traits captured in Grotberg's model. Future research could use the method that employs secondary sources either individually (e.g., Jackie Chan's autobiographies) or combined (e.g., autobiographies, interviews, and media reports together) for in-depth analysis of emerging themes of other celebrities or individuals.

Future research could extend these findings by incorporating Aaker's Brand Personality Theory (BPT) to explore how resilience intersects with key brand traits like competence, sincerity, and excitement. In this study, two of Aaker's BPT dimensions—competitiveness and ruggedness—emerged as relevant to Jackie Chan's personality, aligning with the "I Am" theme in Grotberg's framework. This suggests that celebrity and personal branding could also be analyzed through the lens of Aaker's BPT, offering additional insights into the role of resilience in shaping a public persona.

Furthermore, future research could integrate both Grotberg's resilience framework and Aaker's BPT to deepen our understanding of how personal resilience contributes not only to individual growth but also to the development of a strong and enduring celebrity brand. This integrated approach could provide valuable insights into how resilience impacts the longevity and success of public figures across diverse fields. The findings from Jackie Chan's case highlight the potential benefits of combining these two frameworks.

Ultimately, this study suggests that resilience is not just a personal trait, but a key element in building a successful public image. Future research could further explore how resilience influences the branding and career trajectories of other public figures, offering new perspectives on its impact on long-term career success and influence.

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