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TRICKY TWO-SOME: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN RADIO PERSONALITIES' PERSONAL ONLINE IDENTITIES AND ONLINE PERSONAL BRANDS

ABSTRACT

Radio stations encourage their presenters to utilise social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to create awareness of the station's brand, promote their shows, interact with listeners, and build their professional brands. The question is: how does this affect their engagement with social media when they are not on air? This study explored the interplay of radio personalities' personal online identity and online personal brand. A qualitative strategy was chosen to help navigate the investigatory efforts to explore the ways in which radio presenters exist online. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten radio presenters at a South African commercial radio station. A number of challenges were identified that radio presenters encounter when they attempt to manage their online personas. A lack of training in social media communication and a lack of knowledge about the basic principles of personal branding are some of the challenges. Recommendations are made to radio presenters as well as their employers to simplify this complex issue of managing the interplay between personal identity and personal branding in creating a branded identity (as opposed to a brand identity).

Keywords: branded identity; personal branding; personal identity; social media marketing; radio personalities; qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a sharp increase in the use and popularity of social media. The number of social media users globally is ranked at an estimated 3.6 billion, and is projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025 (Tankovska, in Statista 2021). Social networking sites have also become a popular tool for self-branding (Van Dijck 2016) and personal presentation (Horky *et al.* 2021). However, as the world turns into a social networking village,

there are rising concerns about identity theft, fraud, misleading information, fake news, as well as crimen injuria, hate speech and racism (Marx 2021) – all impacting on professional and personal identities in the social media domain. From a marketing perspective, this could have far-reaching implications. Kapoor *et al*. (2018) studied the findings of 132 articles on social media and social networking published between 1997 and 2017, and found that organisations either prohibit employees from posting controversial content online, or employees themselves refrain from doing so, fearing negative repercussions. However, one should not disregard the opportunities that social media poses in the marketplace.

Social media enables individuals to share their personal identities online, but also allows them to create an online personal brand. Ordway (2017: 1) states that in many instances, media workers have a "love-hate relationship with social media – they appreciate its value, but also know misuse and mistakes can sideline a career". Media workers are storytellers by profession, and are regarded as trustworthy sources of information (Li 2021). They should therefore take great care of the way they present themselves or their organisations online. A few scholars have studied the role of company branding and personal branding in media contexts, with specific reference to journalism (Bossio & Sacco 2016; Brems *et al*. 2017; Molyneux & Holton 2014). However, some questions about the use of social media by radio personalities to support their on-air presence are left unanswered. Radio personalities face twin pressures: building their personal online brand, while simultaneously posting content on social networking sites to share their personal identities.

The aim of this study is to provide guidelines for managing a personal online identity and online personal brand in respect of the shortage of such guidelines, as highlighted in previous research (Bossio & Sacco 2017; Brems *et al*. 2017; Holton & Molyneux 2017; Horky *et al*. 2021). These authors suggest that more research is needed on how media experts manage their own social media profiles.

This study explores radio presenters' experiences when engaging with social media, to assist them to navigate the management of personal identities and personal brands on social media. An exploration of existing literature on personal identity and personal branding served as a point of departure. Semi-structured interviews with ten radio presenters at a commercial radio station in South Africa provided data to suggest a number of guidelines to radio presenters and their employers for the integration of personal online identities and online personal brands on social media.

BACKGROUND

Identity, according to social scholars Erikson (1968), Goffman (1959) and Cooley (1902), is created within a context of sharing and is therefore a product of social interactions. Radio broadcasting has always been a social practice. It requires personal and social interaction, both on air and online. Whereas previously radio personalities were seen as social performers, social media has brought a virtual and interaction dimension to the act; thus, increasing their "market value" by offering a

platform to promote themselves (as well as their organisations) in an online space through personal and professional branding.

Scholars have different views regarding the separation and blending of online identities. DeCamp *et al*. (2013: 581) postulate that the separation of identities online is "operationally impossible […] with minimal information, searching the web can quickly connect professional and personal content". Baer is also of the view that there is no dichotomy between professional and personal lives (in Douglas 2017). There seems to be a constant and complex interplay of internal factors (personal values) and external factors (social contexts, roles and expectations) on professional identity (DeCamp *et al*. 2013). Added to this is Zuckerberg's (in Kirkpatrick 2010: 199) notion: "You have one identity. The days of you having a different image for your work, friends or co-workers and for the other people you know are probably coming to an end pretty quickly." In contrast is Van Dijck's (2016) notion that, since public communication moved to an online space, the need for a multiple, composite self has increased. According to Van Dijck (2016), people put on staged performances during their everyday behaviour where they purposefully employ the differentiation between public and private discursive acts to shape their identity. Some authors believe that the secret to blending professional and personal identities in an online space is to share information that reveals a dimension of one's character, belief system and life, and in so doing, an individual connects with other human beings and make them count (Baer, in Douglas 2017).

There is a host of literature on social media as a source of identity formation (Allen 2015; Baldauf *et al*. 2017; Code 2013; Ganda 2014; Gündüz 2017; Li 2021; Ogidi 2015; Orsatti & Riemer 2015). However, only a few studies report on the role of organisational and personal branding in media contexts (Bossio & Sacco 2017; Brems *et al*. 2017; Holton & Molyneux 2017). In a study involving 41 reporters and editors from US newspapers on the impact of branding practices on journalists' personal identities, Holton and Molyneux (2017) reported a potential loss of personal identity in light of branding. The majority of the respondents in this study expressed concerns about balancing their personal and professional identities, especially through social media, and that media outlets fail in providing clear guidelines in managing a professional and personal brand. This study further indicated that, while reporters do promote themselves as well as their organisations on social media, both types of promotion are professionally, rather than personally, focused (Holton & Molyneux 2017). The journalists and editors expressed uncertainty about what is considered acceptable practice when branding oneself or one's organisation. It is therefore important for media organisations and their employees to re-evaluate how social media is used to integrate personal identities and professional brands.

In another study, Bossio and Sacco (2017) explored ways journalists represent and negotiate their personal and professional identities in social media environments, and how these representations are impacted by professional, organisational and institutional influences. They conducted 25 in-depth interviews with journalists from major Australian media companies. Three different forms of "social media identity" that journalists represent online, namely the "transitional" identity (creating separate

personal and professional social media accounts), the "branded" identity (having a public account that is only associated with a particular media organisation and displays only professional activities), and the "social" identity (blending professional and personal online identities) were identified (Bossio & Sacco 2017: 529). This study revealed that representing a personal and professional identity online might be especially difficult for journalists, where representation of a particular character is an important part of professional practice (Bossio & Sacco 2017).

Brems *et al*. (2017) investigated the Twitter activities of 20 employed and 20 freelance journalists in the Netherlands and Flanders, and conducted in-depth interviews with 12 of these journalists to explore the manner in which they use social media to present themselves, and to determine the types of dilemmas they face. The results created a clear image of the three different elements that mark a personal brand: the stage (Twitter); the audience (other Twitter users); and the performer (journalists). The findings indicated that journalists struggled with being factual or opinionated; being personal or professional; how to balance broadcasting their message with engagement; and how to promote themselves strategically.

From the literature reviewed it became clear that most of the articles published on social media in media-related contexts are aimed at addressing issues pertaining to Twitter as a social media platform. Although these studies have documented journalists' use of and coping mechanisms with Twitter, only a few have explored the usage of other social media platforms. Furthermore, the studies were focused on journalists as media professionals. The current study (i) explores the challenges, issues and concerns radio presenters encounter when integrating their personal online identities and online personal brands on social media; and (ii) proposes guidelines for managing a branded identity. In the context of this study, "branded" identity refers to the integration of personal identity in a personal brand. The research was informed by two factors: the risks accompanying self-presentation acts online; and, the shortage of literature proposing guidelines for media professionals in managing online personas.

TRICKY TWO-SOME: PERSONAL IDENTITY AND ONLINE PERSONAL BRAND

As this study is focused on the interplay of an individual's different online personas, it is important to first clarify two concepts. Personal identity, in social media contexts, is regarded as the activities, events, opinions and relationships that might represent an individual's life outside their professional activities (Bossio & Sacco 2017).

Personal branding, on the other hand, is viewed according to the collective description provided by Montoya and Vandehey (2002) and Klopper and North (2011: 411, in Schawbel 2010): "Personal branding is a personal identity that stimulates precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that a person stands for; it reveals your strengths and goals, and tells people why you are unique". A core aspect of personal branding is thus an individual's unique promise of value.

According to Klopper and North (2011), a personal brand is an individual's unique mental mark, the sum of all his/her characteristics or core associations accompanying

the brand. A personal brand should be a recognisable and trustworthy badge of origin, and a promise of performance. Personal branding is a strategic process (Gorbatov *et al*. 2018) that entails the purposive construction of positive impressions (Hillgren & O'Connor 2011). An individual's personal brand encapsulates skills, abilities, values (Montoya & Vandehey 2002), promise and passion (Klopper & North 2011). These are expressed through verbal and non-verbal cues in order to differentiate the individual and emphasise his/her uniqueness in an authentic manner (Arruda & Dixson 2010). A personal brand is always linked to the individual's professional goal (Klopper & North 2011).

A study conducted by Gorbatov *et al*. (2018) identified two reasons why an individual actively engages in personal branding. They are driven either by individual reasons or by industry or professional-related reasons. Zinko and Rubin (2015) link aspects such as the need for self-esteem, the need to belong, and the desire for rewards to individual reasons. Personal branding is linked with the requirements and expectations of specific roles and industries (Gorbatov *et al.* 2018).

Several industries require employees to promote themselves (and inter alia the company) through personal branding (Harris & Rae 2011). Shaker and Hafiz (2014) also describe personal branding on two levels, namely as a combination of core and extended identity. The core identity of a brand features the brand's vision, values and attributes, while the extended identity provides the brand with a sense of completeness, and supplements the brand's core by linking it to the organisation's strategy whilst differentiating the brand.

From this discussion, one can conclude that personal branding is a strategic process. Antonios (2010) links this process to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and states that within the social media paradigm one also has to complete "basic needs" before moving up to "social needs" and ultimately reaching social optimisation. The levels that an individual moves through are first an individual's need to exist and have a voice in the online environment. The second level entails the need to establish structure or a digital footprint by choosing social media platforms where the individual feels comfortable in sharing a voice. The third level comprises constructing and positioning the desired self. According to Antonios (2010), this step involves connecting, sharing and engaging with people through social media platforms. The fourth level represents an individual's desire to build a solid image and engage in conversation by voicing expertise and sharing competencies; thus, linking to personal branding. The highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs relates to personal fulfilment. To reach this level, the individual needs to make sense of their circumstances and the circumstances in which they finds themselves. It is at this stage that an effective online personal brand is optimised and sustained, and where the individual finds themselves in the position to reap monetary rewards.

The outcomes of personal branding is multifaceted and non-linear (Gorbatov *et al*. 2018). Rangarajan *et al*. (in Gorbatov *et al*. 2018) suggest a list of tangible and intangible measures of the effectiveness of a personal brand in a professional setting. These measures are categorised as individual intrinsic, individual extrinsic,

and organisational outcomes. One of the most important outcomes of the personal branding process is a higher level of self-awareness (individual intrinsic), created through reflexivity (Khedher 2015). The most common outcomes linked to personal branding are individual extrinsic outcomes, and they usually relate to the furthering of a professional career or creating social capital. In order to reach these outcomes, enhanced visibility of the personal brand should first be realised. Another outcome that is considered an individual extrinsic outcome is the fact that the personal brand should be portrayed as authentic, and, at the same time, it should differentiate itself from other personal brands in the same industry. Authenticity is an aspect that runs like a golden thread through an effective personal brand. Personal branding is often considered within the context of organisational performance and the benefits that employees with strong personal brands can bring to the table. Personal branding is thus not only considered to be of value to an individual, but also has an impact on the way in which an organisation is perceived. Kucharska and D'abrowski (2016) found that employees with strong personal brands who share tacit knowledge of a company contribute to providing a company with a competitive edge. A key outcome of personal branding is thus reaching professional goals and promoting the ideology of the organisation (Sturdy & Wright 2008, in Gorbatov *et al*. 2018). This feeds into the monetary outcomes of the brand.

Against the background of the previous discussion, the primary difference between these two concepts is that personal online identity is linked with self-expression, while online personal branding has professional outcomes. Furthermore, a personal identity develops spontaneously, while a personal brand is a strategic, planned and managed process. However, a personal brand cannot exclude personal identity, as identity is the nucleus from which a personal brand develops. The challenge is therefore to manage the interplay between a personal and professional online profile on social media in an effective manner.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study was embedded within an interpretivist (Patton 2002) and constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba 1985) to create meaning of the interplay between radio personalities' personal online identities and online personal brands. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with radio presenters at a South African commercial radio station. During the interviews, the presenters had to reflect on their interaction on social media in their personal and professional capacity. In line with Groenewald's (2004) guidelines, the questions to the participants focused on their experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions regarding the topic. Each participant was allowed the opportunity to speak freely according to his or her own knowledge structures and perceptions. The interviews, which lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each, were conducted individually with each presenter in the boardroom of the radio station during October 2020. In keeping with COVID-19 regulations, all safety protocols were observed.

A purposeful-criterion sampling strategy was employed to access information-rich sources. The inclusion criteria entailed that the radio presenters had to be active on

social media platforms, and they had to post at least once a week on one or more of these profiles. Participation was voluntary. The sample group consisted of ten radio presenters, five male and five female (n = 10). The sample size was determined by theoretical saturation.

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the management team of the radio station, and informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Ethical clearance was provided by the Humanities Research Ethics and Innovation Committee [HREIC 15/10/20]. The participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. All the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and transcriptions were analysed by means of inductive content analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Type of SM presence

The first step in the process to establish an online personal identity is to recognise the need to exist in the online environment. Antonios (2010) opines that an individual establishing self-awareness focuses on this need; thus, creating an online presence and finding a voice. The participants approached the communication about their identity in different manners.

Seven of the participants have a personal profile, as well as a professional (public figure) page on Facebook. As mentioned previously, Bossio and Sacco (2017) describe this as a "transitional" identity. One participant described the process as follows, "I try not to mix my personal and professional identities".

Only one of the participants followed what was previously described by Bossio and Sacco (2017) as a "social" identity, blending a professional and personal online identity. Still, this participant said, "I mostly post professional stuff on my personal profiles". This notion mirrors the findings of Holton and Molyneux (2017) where journalists indicated that their posts are more professionally than personally staged.

Two participants have only one account where professional communication is shared to enhance their brands. Their choice was motivated as follows, "You are a brand therefore your corporate identity is important". The other stated, "As a media personality, I don't think you can separate your personal and professional identities. If you really want to use social media in the correct way, you must be able to integrate your brands." This approach is coined the "branded" identity by these authors.

It became clear from the data that the participants found it challenging to separate their individual and professional presence online completely. According to Brems *et al*. (2016) and Holton and Molyneux (2017), industries with a higher degree of transparency are more conducive to personal branding. Green (2016) describes these as typically industries, such as sport or journalism (including radio presenting). This supports the notion that radio presenters cannot operate without a social media presence nowadays.

Theme 2: Purpose of the SM presence

Although all the participants have an online presence, not all of them use it to create a personal brand. Six of the participants indicated that they like to connect with their audiences, engage in conversations, and share their passions and beliefs through their social media presence; thus, claiming a more personal inclination. Supporting this notion, one of these participants wants people to relate to her posts and likes to share hope. Another participant mentioned that his goal is to let his positive energy rub off on others. "My goal is to reach out and motivate people. I want to make someone's life better." These participants do not intentionally focus on their personal brands, but more on their personal identities.

Given the industry within which the participants are employed it was interesting that less than half of them mentioned personal brands. One of these participants is a storyteller by nature. She stated that she wants to push her writing on social media platforms. This demonstrates that she wanted to display a personal skill (related to the industry) on her social media platforms.

Another participant clearly stated that his goal with social media is to boost his profile, increase his followers, and generate an extra income. Three other participants, who also want to gain monetary benefit from their social media platforms echoed this sentiment; thus, edging towards professional communication and personal branding. One of these four participants explained that he uses Facebook to share what they are doing on air. "The show doesn't stop at 09:00. I use social media as a platform to get what we do on air out there." This notion mirrors that of Bonini (2012), that when the radio show ends the programme continues on the web. Another of these participants mentioned that it is important to share knowledge and the value of his services. His goal is to interact with the audience, whilst he would also like to get more followers "to get his brand out there. I regard myself more of an influencer than a celebrity." Another participant who also engages in professional communication mentioned that her goal is to entertain her followers and connect with people. "I am not a chaser of followers. I want to build a strong brand. I regard it as a business tool." One of the participants who follow the professional communication route mentioned that her goal is to attract the attention of other radio stations through her posts. This clearly indicates the career advancement this participant sees by means of personal branding. Only one participant mentioned posts that focused on the employer radio station's brand.

According to Gorbatov *et al*. (2018), there are two broad groups of drivers pertaining to a social media presence, namely individual drivers and industry or professional drivers. These authors found that these drivers explain why, how and for what reason individuals engage in personal branding activities. A positive personal reputation is identified as the key driver of an individual (Zinko & Rubin 2015). These authors link aspects, such as the need for self-esteem and the need to belong to the individual drivers, while industry drivers are linked to the desire for rewards.

Theme 3: SM structure

On social media, people connect with people through destinations. Individuals join groups, engage in conversation, and find people who share their passions and beliefs. According to Antonios (2010), it is important to establish structure for social media use. This entails establishing a digital footprint by choosing social media platforms where one feels comfortable sharing your voice. The participants all reported that they use different social media platforms. One participant explains that Facebook is used to portray a part of her life. "I don't engage with my online audience. They must go to my public figure page and like it." The majority of participants use Twitter for information gathering purposes, and Facebook and Instagram to connect with their audiences, while one individual uses Twitter, Instagram and Facebook mainly for information gathering purposes. According to two participants, Instagram is their main social media platform, whilst another two participants' post on their Instagram feed to Facebook. One participant used both Facebook and LinkedIn as main social media platforms, but would also post on Instagram every now and again. "I try not to mix my personal and professional identities. I am afraid that people will not take me seriously. I have two Facebook pages – one being my personal profile and the other my professional page." Only one of the participants indicated the use of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and TikTok. It is clear that the participants use the social media platforms for different reasons, varying from information gathering, to promoting their online shows, and engaging with followers.

The fact that there are numerous social media platforms available contribute to the challenge being addressed in this study. Not only do radio presenters find it difficult to manage a personal and professional identity, but they also do not know how to do this across different platforms. It is evident from the data that the combination of different platforms in a transitional manner was most popular amongst the participants. One of the main concerns raised by the participants was the fact that they find it difficult to separate their personal profile from their professional profile. This confirms the findings of Holton and Molyneux's (2017) study among journalists.

Theme 4: Current status of SM presence

From the data, it became clear that the participants desire to build a solid image and engage in conversation by voicing expertise and sharing competencies. However, not all participants were satisfied with their current social media presence. One participant indicated that she needs to update her personal brand. "It's not reflecting me, who I am." This sentiment was supported by another participant who felt that he also still needs to figure out his brand. "As a media personality, I don't think you can separate your personal and professional identities. If you really want to use social media in the correct way, you must be able to integrate your brands."

Another participant felt confident in his personal brand, and described it as inspirational and genuine. A participant who considered her brand as being more business-oriented at this stage mentioned, "I want to get to a point where I have a strategy. Branding with other companies is my end goal." As mentioned in the literature review, strategy is a

key element in informing self-expression and self-branding in online spaces (Brems *et al*. 2017).

Theme 5: Outcomes of SM presence

Social media presence is created through personal and/or professional communication. Personal communication is seen as information regarding the personal life of the individual, for example, family, hobbies and emotions. This type of communication is considered non-professional and provides the recipients with a glimpse of the individual's private activities. According to Brems *et al*. (2017), personal content can make online content attractive to read for the recipients, as is also the case with adding visuals to posts. Most of the participants made use of personal communication to make their presence more attractive. "My messages are uplifting and motivating and I want people to relate with me." This participant mentioned that the posts on her personal profile on Facebook reflect the fact that she is married, a Christian, and loves her family and dogs. She posts work-related information on her public figure page. Another participant said, "Instagram is more the real me; it includes the human factor. You would find me, just me." Another participant stated that he steers away from posting content that is related to politics, racism or sport, but rather posts content about his own mood. One participant, who believes that a personal and professional brand cannot be merged, stated that his posts focus on family matters and his love for jogging. "I am the family guy – a dad with a child. I want that to identify with my audience." This notion underscores the elements of compassion, connectivity and care that make radio such as intimate medium (Zunckel 2021).

Professional communication entails sharing content that is based on the professional knowledge on which the personal brand is built. A participant who does not merge his personal and professional identities mentioned that he is afraid that people will not take him seriously. His posts are mostly professional, "I share my services and what I can offer people". A participant who makes use of an integrated approach stated, "I post personal stuff such as exercise and meal plans. It is directly linked to my radio programme and I believe that the audience can relate with it." One of the participants describes being online as "a popularity contest, always looking who has the most followers", but another participant felt that "a strong brand is not about the number of followers a person has, but about engagement". The element of engagement underscores the interactive mode of identity construction (Goffman 1959).

Although three of the participants post professional work-related items, only one of them mentioned the use of the employer's corporate brand to the advantage of his personal brand. This was surprising, as one should think that a mutually beneficial relationship between the employer's brand and the individual brands would be possible. Most of the participants tried to make use of what they called a "balanced approach" in combining personal and professional communication.

Theme 6: Managing the SM presence process

Personal branding is all about the strategic constructing and positioning of the desired self. Given the responses of the participants, it became clear that not all

of them are familiar with what a personal brand entails. As discussed previously, a personal brand should be focused on one specific attribute or unique feature, and is a strategic process. One participant commented, "I however believe that my brands can complement one another". Another describes his personal brand as "charismatic, influencer, real, relatable, inspirational, educational and genuine". These comments illustrate the lack of knowledge regarding personal branding, as the literature focuses on the fact that an effective brand should have one differentiating factor that sets it apart from other brands. With an effective personal brand, one should not ascribe more than one proposition to the brand. All dimensions of an individual's life should also resonate under one brand, not multiple brands. It became clear that there was a lack of knowledge among some of the participants regarding what personal branding entails. A participant who demonstrated knowledge of the core of branding stated the following, "My brand is one person. Even though I am a professional, I still have a fun-side. I love people. It's all about having a good time." This notion is consistent with the findings of Bullingham and Casconcelos (2013), who suggest that people re-create their offline selves online, rather than adopting a different persona or constructing a different identity. They still have one identity reflecting different versions of the self.

Others demonstrated knowledge of important aspects of personal branding, such as the fact that it is a strategic process. One participant mentioned that she schedules her posts on Facebook and Instagram; thereby, acknowledging the strategic nature of the process. Another participant mentioned that he posts a minimum of eight times per week, mainly between 16:00 and 18:00. "My posts are carefully planned." This insight also reflects on the strategic process that one needs to follow in personal branding.

Another stated that she always thinks about her brand. "I like to create a certain theme. I like to keep it relevant to what's happening in the world." Yet another participant, who demonstrated knowledge of the personal branding process, stated that she knows most of her followers personally. This demonstrated that she knows how important it is to know your recipients in order to formulate effective communication.

Theme 7: Practical guidelines for SM presence success

The participants mentioned a number of aspects that they use in an attempt to make their social media presence more effective. One participant mentioned that it is important to her to have a corporate identity and professional image for her personal brand. Another felt that consistency is key. She is relatively successful with her online activities and has brand endorsements from a number of well-known brands. "With brand awareness I am always looking for new ways to develop my brand. I am authentic, genuine, the girl next door, approachable, real, aspiring. I try my best to follow people who are positive. I engage by asking questions. I always try to be real. It's about influence, authenticity." This underscores the previous notion that a personal brand should be portrayed as being authentic. A participant who also supports consistency in posts makes use of certain themes when she posts. A third participant, who emphasised the importance of consistency, stated that all his photos have "a certain look and feel". He also makes use of filters to edit his photos. "You are a brand; therefore your corporate identity is important."

The strategic timing of posts was also mentioned. One participant felt she gains most interaction when posting between 18:00 and 21:00. Another important aspect mentioned by the participants was to stay on top of what is happening in the social media environment. Information on current topics should be gathered, but information that is more personal was also mentioned. As stated, "I constantly compare myself with other women in the industry."

For another participant success lies in perseverance. He indicated that, in order to build a successful brand online, "you must invest time and money in it". He also felt that work experience and exposure to different positions contribute to an individual's ability to create a more effective social media presence. This participant believes that one should use everything to your advantage. "I believe that my brands can complement one another. More people discover you through radio."

Theme 8: Challenges

Almost all the participants mentioned time constraints as a major challenge. Time constraints seem to be a problem experienced by many radio professionals across the African continent (Radio Days Africa 2021).

Another aspect that makes the managing of social media presence difficult is the lack of specific guidelines. Several participants felt that practical guidelines, such as the right time to post, would be useful. Five participants mentioned the creation of content as a challenge. "Content is important; it should add value to my follower's day," one participant elaborated. Two participants opined that the right type of content is important, but difficult to create. As one stated, "You owe your followers content". For another participant it is a challenge to use the correct hashtags and to use insights to post at the right time. Another participant mentioned that it is a challenge to post real-time content without compromising on quality. Several participants echoed this opinion, with one mentioning that it would be helpful if a professional person could assist them. The need for good quality posts was mentioned by almost all the participants. "I need a graphic designer to create my brand/identity." This participant also felt it would be of great value if such a professional person could edit posts. An aspect that goes hand in hand with content creation is knowing the recipient of the message. One of the participants recognised the importance of knowing whom the interactive audience is in order to create effective content. Thus, identity is seen as being dependent on an audience and the recognition it receives from an audience, as mentioned by Goffman (1959). A participant mentioned that he wants his posts to get traction. "I want reaction." It seems as if engagement with followers was regarded as a general challenge. Another participant mentioned that she is of the opinion that people do not interact sufficiently. "People should collaborate more with other brands or influencers." As mentioned before, engagement and interaction with the audience is a key construct in identity formation (Goffman 1959). Several participants felt that a short course in social media or photography could be helpful. The general consent was that "social media training could be helpful".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although there is no such thing as "the perfect online profile" (Green 2016: 275), radio presenters, as most other professions nowadays, cannot operate without a presence on social media. However, the way in which radio presenters should manage this presence is still uncertain. Although some of the participants felt that separate profiles are more viable, expert knowledge indicates that it is not the most effective route to follow. Since the more authentic personal brands are seen as more believable and therefore also more effective, personal identity should be engrained in the branded identity and not separated from it. The research data reflected that most of the participants in the study focused on building a positive personal reputation, but few explored the rewards that a radio presenter could reap from a branded identity on social media. The participants also did not take full advantage of the total spectrum of options that the social media structure provides. One of the reasons for this could be that the participants found it difficult to manage their personal and professional profiles, and therefore did not want to complicate the process further by adding more social media sites. Most of the participants combined personal and professional communication in their social media interactions, but none of them had a social media strategy in place. A branded identity requires a strategic process with a clearly defined brand and purpose to the social media presence at the core of the process.

An important starting point for radio presenters is to know the differences and similarities of personal identity and personal branding (illustrated in Table 1 below).

TABLE 1:   CORE ELEMENTS OF PERSONAL IDENTITY AND
                 PERSONAL BRANDING

Core elements	Personal identity	Personal branding
Process	Spontaneous	Strategic
Expression	Verbal and non-verbal	Verbal and non-verbal
Promise/Outcome	Authenticity	Authentic uniqueness
Impressions	Positive/negative	Positive
Qualities	Skills, abilities, values, experience, knowledge	Skills, abilities, values, experience, knowledge
Purpose	Personal	Professional

The difference between these two concepts is that personal online identity is linked to self-expression, while online personal branding always has professional outcomes. Furthermore, a personal identity develops spontaneously, while a personal brand is a strategic, planned and managed process. The challenge for radio presenters is to interplay these two concepts effectively on social media platforms to create the branded identity. When looking at the definition of personal branding, it is clear that personal

identity forms the core of the personal brand and therefore also the branded identity. It is therefore not possible to develop an effective personal brand separate from the essence of the personal identity. When different versions of an individual's identity are displayed on different platforms, it leads to perceptions of unauthenticity. The following guidelines are suggested to direct the process of creating a branded identity.

Suggestions for radio presenters:

♦   Explore your personal identity and build a personal brand around this core.

♦   Follow a branded identity presence on social media, and integrate this identity across many platforms.

♦   The visual branded identity should be developed professionally and should be consistent across all platforms.

♦   Explore practical guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of your online interactions (for example, the timing of posts, content, etc.).

♦   Make sure that content always links to the core of your branded identity and is relevant to your audience.

♦   Develop a long-term strategy for your branded identity with room for short-term adjustments to incorporate environmental changes and relevant information.

♦   Align the purpose of your branded identity with potential rewards.

♦   Create engaging activities on your social media profiles.

♦   Establish a mutually beneficial relationship between your branded identity and the brand of your employer.

♦   Stay within the social media policy framework of the employer.

Suggestions to radio stations:

♦   Provide employees with precise guidelines and policies with regard to their social media presence.

♦   Make branded identity development part of the company's induction protocol.

♦   Make social media marketing training available to employees.

A limitation of this study was that it was focused on radio personalities of only one commercial radio station in South Africa. Future research could focus on a comparative analysis of the online personas of radio presenters working at community stations, commercial stations, and the public broadcaster. In addition, more research is needed regarding the interplay between radio presenters' on-air personalities and online identities. Identity is seen as being dependent on an audience – in this regard, research could be conducted into the role audience members play in identity formation.

Social media has extended radio's mandate beyond its original role and functions by offering radio personalities a platform to promote themselves and their stations online.

The findings of this study confirm existing scholarship that media professionals are not always certain how to balance their personal online identities and online personal brands, and guidelines are needed in this regard. The study makes a theoretical contribution by proposing guidelines to radio presenters and their employers in simplifying this complex issue of managing the interplay between personal identity and personal branding in creating a branded identity.

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