



**AN ANALYSIS OF HOW SOUTH AFRICAN PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
PERCEIVE THEIR IDENTITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

by

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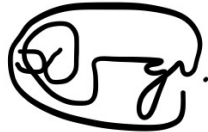
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ABSTRACT

Professional journalists in South Africa occupy a very tenuous space. The advent of digital media has fundamentally disrupted journalism and how professional journalists practice their work, and, more importantly, how they perceive themselves. While on one hand professional journalists are citizens with a wide range of views and opinions on a wide range of issues, on the other hand, they are employees of media institutions whose editorial policies set limits on the views and opinions they can articulate. This tension is often confusing not only to journalists but also to ordinary citizens when journalists express their opinions on social media. It is not usually clear whether they share views as citizens or as professional journalists. Premised on the liquid journalism theory and the social self-theory, this study sought to understand how South African journalists perceive their identities on social media and the mechanisms media institutions in the country have developed to assist journalists to negotiate their identities on social media. The data informing the qualitative study was collected using virtual ethnography, qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews with purposively selected journalists and editors. The findings of the study show that South African journalists perceive themselves differently on social media. While some journalists perceive themselves as citizens with rights to freely share their views on social media, other journalists view themselves as professional journalists whose identities are tied to their profession and media institutions. The findings reveal tensions and conflict amongst journalists in negotiating their identities on social media. While on one hand they strive to express their views as citizens on the other hand they are constrained by the press code and media company standards that view social media as an extension of their practice as journalists. The study further finds that media institutions in South Africa have not developed comprehensive, consistent and coherent mechanisms to assist professional journalists to negotiate their identities on social media.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The advent of digital media has fundamentally disrupted professional journalism and how professional journalists practice their work, and, more importantly, how they see themselves (Msimanga et al., 2022; Mpofu et al., 2023; Matsilele et al., 2022). While in the past, it was relatively easy for professional journalists to perform and negotiate their professional identities through the media institutions they work for, the onset of social media has blurred the line between professional journalism and citizens performing their civic duties (Lu & Zhou, 2016). This blurring of identities has raised questions among audiences on whether professional journalists post their views and opinions online as active citizens or as professional journalists aligned with specific media institutions (Lewis et al., 2012; Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016; Bossio & Sacco, 2016; Duffy & Knight 2019). This growing phenomenon is also evident in South Africa, where journalists' identities are becoming increasingly blurred. It has raised critical questions on how professional journalists negotiate and perceive their identities online.

Professional journalists in South Africa occupy a very tenuous space. On the one hand, Section 16 (1) of the Constitution allows all citizens, including journalists, to express their views and opinions freely and without prejudice. On the other hand, professional journalists are employees of media institutions whose editorial policies set limits on the views and opinions they can articulate. It often leads to a conflict of interest between journalists expressing their opinions on social media – mainly Facebook and Twitter, and their role and responsibilities as professional journalists working for media institutions with ossified ideological positions. Globally and in South Africa, media institutions have developed policies and press codes that journalists must adhere to as brand ambassadors and representatives (Holton, 2015).

New professional dynamics confront journalists due to blurring lines between their professional and private social media personas (Ardonato & Lysak, 2017). As stated by de Zúñiga et al. (2016), the boundaries of professional journalism have become harder to define as the nature of information distribution becomes more fluid. As a result, the standards of what constitutes good journalism are changing due to the

changing media landscape. “Put simply, expectations about the journalist’s role in society drive participation in digital news environments and, accordingly, influence future interactions” (de Zúñiga et al., 2016:4).

Several journalists have become social media influencers by having many followers and expressing certain opinions and views. Social media influencers are opinion leaders on social media platforms who have clout and influence in shaping people’s thoughts and ideas on a topic (Laor & Galily, 2020). Many may misconstrue views expressed on social media as being the views of the media outlet the journalist represents. Research conducted by Lee (2015) determined that some news outlets encourage journalists to be active on social media to expand readership and increase brand awareness to drive traffic to their news websites. Scholars seem to agree on the notion of transparency to blur the lines between professional journalists and journalists as citizens. For example, McBride in Podger (2009:34) contends that “on social networks, you should identify yourself as a journalist, tell recipients if you’re using social networks in a professional capacity and remain mindful that people will regard you as a representative of your newsroom”.

Podger (2009:32) supports the above and proffers that “for journalists, transparency is one of the most important values, that doesn’t mean you don’t act as an individual, but there should be a caution gate if there’s anything that might embarrass your newsroom”. Many South African journalists declare their affiliation with news organisations on social media networks. Some utilise spaces like Twitter profiles to put disclaimers regarding personal opinions provided and if they are the reporters’ views and not their employers’. Some South African journalists additionally include disclaimers about retweets and any public notion that retweeting material means endorsing that person’s point of view. A possible issue with retweeting third-party material is the potential for bias. The journalism fraternity is well known for setting a press code outlining their professional standards of being impartial, fair, objective, and accurate when covering ongoing events on behalf of media outlets (Bruns, 2019).

Social media can play an essential function as a journalistic tool - it is where important news can break. Numerous stories received international coverage and attention that broke via social media, such as the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, the US Airline crash in 2010 and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 (Lee, 2016). Previous studies have

examined social media's role in setting the newsroom agenda (Jordaan, 2012; Thomas, 2013; Daniels, 2014; Trengrove, 2018, Moyo, 2019). These studies have dealt with the role that Twitter plays at a broadcast media outlet, the effects of social media setting the agenda for traditional media, the impact of social media on the journalism fraternity, and the professional use of Facebook and Twitter by a newsroom. However, few studies look at the effectiveness of newsroom social media policies and how journalists perceive/negotiate/imagine their identities on social media.

Trengrove (2018) mentions how social media has become part of a journalistic norm concerning finding stories and sources and promoting reports and information while in the field and interacting with the audience. Bruns (2019) explains that journalists should be mindful of what they share on social media platforms and the role they could play in spreading misinformation. Rodney-Gumede (2016) in Bruns (2019) agrees with the idea that journalism practice needs to adapt to the new changes brought about by social media. Therefore, it would be prudent to see if social media procedures have adapted to the recent changes in journalism.

According to Hermida and Thurman (2008), Lewis, Holton, and Coddington (2014), and Robinson (2011), the use of social media has allowed journalists to interact directly with audiences, transforming journalism from a detached activity to one that is reciprocal and participatory. A recent study discovered that journalists who tweeted about their personal lives were perceived as more trustworthy by the public than those who just tweeted about news topics or their thoughts on them (Johnson,2020). However, how these effects connect to viewers' behavioural intentions, such as the desire to continue reading the self-revealing journalist's news reports or reports, is unclear.

More recently, journalistic neutrality has come under fire for being overvalued. According to one school of thinking (Muoz-Torres 2012; Rosen 1993; Ruigrok 2008), objectivity is an old-fashioned and misleading idea that is either unachievable or not as important to accomplish. Rosen, for instance, contends that rather than allowing personal prejudices to seep into their work and skew the facts subtly, journalists should be more transparent with readers about their ideas and beliefs. Rosen contends that middle-of-the-road reporting by journalists is becoming more difficult to believe and

that building credibility by saying what influences the journalist's news angle is a superior strategy (Sullivan, 2013). Some academics say conventional journalism is being replaced or at least extended by new principles like accountability, openness, and public participation (Hermida 2013; Lasorsa 2012; Revers 2014). The argument centres on the fact that objectivity is no longer upheld, at least on social media (Johnson 2020).

News organisations emphasise objective, fair reporting and issue warnings against journalists deceiving listeners with their ideas (Matsilele et al., 2021; Lee 2016). The conventional objectivity standard is for journalists to refrain from taking sides or offering their thoughts (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012). From this normative vantage point, professional journalists' social media self-disclosure may appear alarming as a transgression of professional journalistic standards. Conventional wisdom dictates that journalists keep their personalities apart from their news reporting because detachment and refraining from expressing personal beliefs are some of the characteristics that define objectivity (Mindich, 2000). Even if they do not directly state their policy preferences, journalists who share their opinions and experiences in public may be perceived as failing to uphold the neutrality expectation based on the conventional image of journalists. Because of this, news consumers are more likely to see journalists who disclose their identities as being less neutral than those who do not.

The interaction of journalists is becoming more commonplace in digital contexts that support reciprocal (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014) and participatory journalism (Hermida and Thurman 2008; Robinson 2011) (Molyneux and Mouro 2019). It implies that interactions between journalists and their social media audiences may deviate positively from what one may anticipate, given the standards of conventional journalism. Journalists root their legitimacy in guarding the public interest, holding powers to account, and turning public attention to matters of common interest. Journalists also incorporate a plurality of viewpoints (Norris and Odugbemi, 2010) to form a public capable of collective self-governance (George, 2013).

There is limited literature in South African that examines the professional identity of journalists on online platforms and their implementation. Furthermore, in a South African context, there is limited literature examining how media outlets have shaped

the performance of a mechanism to assist journalists with indenting and navigating their identities as networked journalists. Moyo (2015) argues that postmodern journalism discards traditional models used in mainstream journalism.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Unlike in the past, when professional journalists mainly used mass media to share their views and opinions on various topics, they can now share their thoughts and ideas using social media. As a result of their social capital as journalists, some have become key societal influencers with many followers on social media. Given that some of the views and opinions that professional journalists share online sometimes contradict their media institutions' ideologies and editorial policies, it has become increasingly confusing and challenging for audiences to understand the identities that professional journalists occupy on social media. There is a lack of research that engages with how professional journalists perceive themselves when they share their views and opinions on social media. More importantly, how journalists negotiate their identities between being ordinary citizens and as professional journalists who specific media institutions employ. Little is also understood about how media institutions in South Africa perceive professional journalists' identities online and whether they have developed mechanisms to assist them in negotiating these fluid identities.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's objectives are as follows:

- To examine how South African journalists perceive their identities on social media.
- To analyse how South African journalists negotiate their identities online.
- To understand how South African media institutions perceive journalists' identities on social media
- To understand the mechanisms that SA media institutions employ to assist professional journalists in negotiating their identities on social media

The specific research questions that the study intends to answer are as follows:

1.4 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

- How do professional journalists in South Africa perceive their identities on social media?

1.4.1 Secondary questions

- How do journalists in South Africa negotiate their identities online
- How do media institutions in South Africa perceive professional journalists' identities on social media?
- What mechanisms do media institutions in South Africa use to assist professional journalists in negotiating their identities online?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to bridge the gap in the knowledge available on social media, journalism norms and practices, specifically in the changes to the way journalists perceive and negotiate their identities on digital media platforms. The research will build on the literature available on South African social media and journalists' professional identities on social media platforms.- This study's findings will also help South African media outlets gain insight and understanding of the impact and influence of social media and whether their guidelines and standard operating procedures have been adapted to the current digital changes. Furthermore, this study may provide the press council with usable evidence-based knowledge and insights. The research will assist journalists in being better informed and in a position to negotiate their identities online. The study will also contribute towards media outlets considering implementing policies incorporating mechanisms journalists can use to negotiate their identities.

1.6 CHAPTERS OUTLINE

There are six chapters in this research.

Chapter 1

The first chapter introduces the study and offers background information on how professional journalists perform and negotiate online identities. Then, it discusses the research topic, aims, questions, and the study's importance in the media landscape, particularly for South African journalists.

Chapter 2

The second chapter delves into the relevant literature on social media in South Africa and the global context. The researcher has categorised the material to acquire insight into social media's influence on journalists' professional identities. This chapter also discusses the impact of social media journalism on how journalists negotiate their identities on social media. It also explores how to read between personal and professional postings that have caused changes in journalism and the field of journalism.

Chapter 3

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study. In conjunction with the Network Journalism theory and the Social Self Theory, the Liquid journalism theory informs this research. The social-self theory contends that individuals have as many distinct social selves as the social groups they interact with or, more broadly, the various social settings they encounter. The researcher used these theories as a lens to analyse the research topic.

Chapter 4

This chapter discusses the research methodology and methods employed in the study. It will justify the selection of the research methodology and the study's process. Sampling procedures, size and techniques, data collecting tools, data analysis, and ethical issues are all outlined and discussed in this chapter. Finally, it explores and explains the decision to use a qualitative method for the research.

Chapter 5

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the study's findings on journalists' perceptions of how they navigate and view themselves on social media. In addition, this chapter presents and discusses the results of semi-structured interviews with chosen journalists and editors. Finally, the findings are analysed and discussed concerning the study's conceptual framework, literature review, and research questions.

Chapter 6

This chapter concludes the data analysed. It also gives recommendations for further research based on the study's findings. First, the study's key findings regarding the study's goals and questions are presented and discussed before highlighting the insightful conclusions from the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses relevant literature that relates to the study. It discusses the literature on the concept of social media; the influence of microblogging in changing the role of journalism; the impact of social media on established journalistic practices, journalist self-branding, the effect of social media on journalists' professional identities and changes to the journalism profession and its boundaries. Finally, it reviews studies on social media internationally and in South Africa, its historical developments, and the impact of the current social media landscape on journalism.

2.2 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

Society's everyday reality is created and maintained by the stories of journalists (Carey, 1989). Because of this, news has the potential to play a crucial role in forming social bonds. By reading about big and small current events, we establish an imagined community (Anderson, 1983) of co-readers. We learn about ourselves as subjects in local, national, and increasingly global settings via the rituals of reading and debating journalistic materials. News stories depict the continuing drama of the conflicts between the prevailing ideology and its challengers since journalism is the primary tool for expressing and acting out both consensus (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978) and disputes (Cottle, 2006) in society.

Gatekeeper and advocate are two notions for journalistic roles that Janowitz (1975) highlighted. Later, Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) identified four different sets of professional tasks for journalists: disseminator, interpreter, adversary, and "populist mobiliser. With more individuals regularly having access to political communication tools than at any previous point in democratic history, technologies have fueled the growth of unprecedentedly participatory democracy (Wahl-Jorgensen & Thomas Hanitzsch, 2009). Democracy and journalism are inextricably linked. It plays a significant part in forming our identities as citizens by enabling the discussions and debates between and among citizens and their representatives, which are crucial for

effective self-governance and citizen empowerment (Adebayo et al., 2022; Wahl-Jorgensen & Thomas Hanitzsch, 2009). Critical scrutiny over the powerful, whether in government, business, or other significant realms of society, is considered an extension of the information function of political journalism in a democracy (Ibid).

From a Western viewpoint, in democracies, journalists are responsible for observing the use of power. On behalf of the populace, the media performs the watchdog role. In this sense, the journalist is a middleman between the voter and the politician, the latter's advocate before the government, who makes sure the public's voice is heard (Ibid). Journalism is another word for democracy. You cannot have journalism without democracy. Pintak (2014:494) discovered that under the Eastern model, Arab journalists saw their role as promoting political and social transformation and serving as change agents in the political sphere. Journalists from Indonesia and Pakistan are reportedly eager to uphold national unity, protect national sovereignty, and promote societal progress (Pintak & Nazir, 2013; Romano, 2003). These and other ideals prioritised in the global South align roughly with the concept of development journalism (Xiaoge, 2005).

According to Vos (2018), journalists are responsible for performing duties such as gathering information, generating opinions, establishing the agenda, serving as a watchdog, working as a messenger and public informant, and taking an active role in social life. Four fundamental media roles—monitoring, facilitating, collaborating, and radical—are distinguished in the author's taxonomy of normative approaches. However, these positions were defined from inside Western viewpoints and Western concepts of democracy, maybe except for the joint function.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, google applications, microblogs and social networking platforms enable interactive discourse, social engagement, and the development and exchange of user-generated content. Web 2.0 technologies would allow users to connect, engage, and cooperate in creating information rather than merely consume it. The ramifications for journalism are considerable and have contributed to significant changes in the industry and journalists' social media usage. The Web is mostly about interacting with information and other users rather than

passively consuming information, whether individuals are producing, sharing, or networking (Gulyas, 2013).

The effects of these tools on journalism as a profession are part of the Web 2.0 debate. According to Deuze and Paulissen (2002: 216), these technologies have impacted "newsroom culture and the professionals engaged", and they "challenge conceptions of the responsibilities and functions of journalism as a whole." In addition, web 2.0 technology shapes journalists' relationships with their audiences. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media can only be comprehended with a clear definition of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is a tool that allows the World Wide Web users to share and distribute information. To be deemed a social network website, however, the website must contain specific properties (Moyo, 2019).

Web 2.0 technologies create a participatory architecture that marks a shift from a one-way, asymmetric communication paradigm toward a more participatory and collective media ecosystem, where journalists and audiences share access to and control the news. For journalists who have long been accustomed to owning the news, determining how to share jurisdiction has become a key point of disagreement (Hermida, 2012).

According to Baruah (2012), social media is a platform that disseminates information swiftly and to a larger audience. Furthermore, she claims that social media are gadgets accessed from a laptop, phone, or tablet. According to Cohen and Rethman (2011), social media can be any online platform that allows users to create content. Put another way. Social media is any digital material people generate (Moyo, 2019). Two social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, have become the most widely utilised and popular news dissemination platforms (Moyo,2019). In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg and several Harvard classmates founded Facebook (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). This website was initially only available to Harvard students but was eventually made public (Ibid). According to Moyo (2019), Facebook users may interact with other users, create profiles, and post movies, images, and messages, with 800 million members in 2011

By 2009, Twitter, which launched two years after Facebook, had 41 million subscribers, and in January 2022, it had 2.11 billion subscribers; Wang and Kobsa (2009) ascribed the high user volumes for Twitter to its unique social tools and the fact that many celebrities had joined it. According to the World Wide Web's SA Social

Media Landscape (2015) research, Facebook was the most popular website in South Africa, followed by Twitter and YouTube. In 2015, 5.6 million males and 5.6 million females used Facebook in South Africa. According to reports, in 2021, Facebook had 27 million users (45.5% of the population) in South Africa, with 57.3% being female and 42.7% being male, World Wide Worx's SA Social Media Landscape (2021). Twitter use in South Africa was 9.3 million people in 2021, which World Wide Worx (2021) reported as stagnant growth compared to other platforms, at around 4%.

In comparison to the general population of South Africa, 60.6 million people (Stats SA 2022), there are 25 million active social media users, which means 41.9% of the population is active on social media. Mobile access is the leading way of social media in South Africa, with 24.63 million users (98.5%) (World Wide Worx, 2021). South African journalists utilise Twitter as a journalistic tool for crowd-sourcing news, breaking news events, live blogging, and balancing, checking, and cultivating sources. Social media has been part of the communication mix in recent years, with Twitter as a "newsy" tool, Facebook mainly used for social events, and LinkedIn for professional interactions. With these advancements, it is reasonable to argue that journalists can now efficiently use these technologies to write data-driven stories (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014). Furthermore, new media, in general (from online newspapers and blogs to social media), transforms the communication process by making it more open, pluralistic, and democratic by providing more opportunities for people to participate in public discussions (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014).

2.4 IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON JOURNALISM

Social media has influenced - and is influencing - the speed of breaking news and affecting the flow of information during critical events. Whether meeting a publishing deadline, a show's on-air time, being first with the news, or scooping a competitor, speed has always been a priority in news production (Hermida, 2012). Due to the demise of traditional news cycles, rapid news production has risen to prominence. According to commentators, a 1440-minute news cycle based on social media has replaced the 24-hour news cycle centred on television (Bruno, 2011). It signifies the importance of a more rapid and continuous flow of news. This tendency has raised concerns that journalists would face pressure to do numerous activities across many media channels and display multimedia abilities. As a result of the increased demands

placed on journalists, their ability to do their jobs might be jeopardised (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2009). For others, this also means that definitions of news are shifting as the social construction of news, news values, and news criteria evolve. Gulyas (2013) believes that opinion journalism thrives in the age of social media. In Gulyas (2013), journalists had more divided feelings about the influence of social media on their job, with many remaining ambiguous. One of the motivations for adopting social media is that it dramatically impacts how news breaks (Gulyas, 2013).

Social networking sites (SNSs) have become communication mainstays for millions of users as technical, economic, and infrastructure developments enhance Internet access internationally. Not only do social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook open up new channels for the broadcast of information and news, but they also allow people to build personal and professional ties through public and private messaging. It also enables users to undertake photo sharing and the inclusion of linkages to other online information sources and news organisations' websites in tweets and Facebook postings (Govender-Bateman, Steenkamp and Diederichs, 2018).

The SNSs help reporters and news outlets deliver news instantaneously and signal their trustworthiness by providing credible, accurate, and reliable news (Barnard, 2014). Although social media may enhance news agencies' online presence and reputation, the media sector continues to face challenges from false news and misinformation propagated through social media. To discern between credible news stories and incorrect news items, news consumers and providers need improved media literacy and understanding (Govender-Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs, 2018). Social media users may exchange material such as status updates, links, photographs, and videos. These social awareness streams provide a combination of current-events-related news, information, and commentary, adding to what Hermida (2012) calls ambient journalism. It has sparked an explosion of engagement in the news process. Because of its immediacy and accessibility, the internet has overtaken conventional media (newspapers and radio) as a source of news (Hermida, 2012).

Newsrooms have adopted Twitter as a vital mechanism for quickly and succinctly disseminating breaking news and a platform for soliciting story ideas, sources, and facts (Moyo, 2019). By July 2009, 121 official Twitter accounts for major UK newspapers had amassed over one million followers (Moyo, 2019). In addition, in

2009, UK-based news outlets went so far as to hire Twitter correspondents who would scour Twitter for stories and provide feedback on how to improve an organisation's Twitter presence (Moyo, 2019).

Bruns and Burgess (2012) claim that news researchers mainly utilise Twitter because it is simple and provides real-time information. It allows you to follow accounts on Twitter and easily track stories as they unfold (Bruns and Burgess, 2012). Journalists have always set the public's agenda - but now journalists are also using social media, such as blogs, to find topics of interest and then using those topics in traditional media (Lee and Ma, 2012). Twitter has evolved into a system for reporting, disseminating, and sharing news online in short, frequent messages. It produces an 'ambient media system' in which abstracted information appears in the user's area (Hermida, 2010). A user in this system receives information on the outskirts of their awareness. An individual tweet does not necessitate the same cognitive focus as an e-mail. The value lies in the mental portrait generated by many messages over time rather than in each fragment of news and information. Hermida (2010) refers to an ambient awareness system that provides a variety of ways to collect, transmit, share, and display news and information for various purposes.

Some studies claim that social media is more reflective of actual events than traditional media, which is impacted by various factors when deciding what to show in a narrative (Kumpel et al., 2015). As a result, traditional media's influence on public opinion has waned while social media's influence has increased. Transparency and independence have created a buzz in the twenty-first century, making objectivity obsolete. To maintain their position, journalists can only rely on producing reliable and objective content if they are transparent. Aside from the rhetoric, social media promotes a participatory media culture in which citizens do more than merely read the news (Hermida, 2012). "Rather than talking about media producers and consumers assuming discrete roles, we might now regard them as players who engage with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us completely understands" in a participatory media ecosystem (Jenkins, 2006: 3). Citizen journalism, user-generated content, and participatory journalism are some of the phrases used to describe audience involvement in news production.

Social media enhances the ability of news consumers to participate in the gathering, analysing, and transmitting of news and information. Audiences no longer rely entirely on media organisations to spread a message to a large audience (Hermida, 2012). In western liberal countries, the twentieth century saw the emergence and domination of mass media. Paid experts who decided what the public needed to know when it needed to know, and how it would learn created *The News*. Journalists' roles were "full-time professional observers and communicators who access, choose, filter, produce, and edit news, which they transmit via the media to network members" (Domingo et al., 2008: 329).

News organisations have used social media to expand and improve their reporting, particularly in the case of fast-moving, complicated events occurring over a long period and across a large geographic area. Hermida (2012) notes for the first time during the G20 meeting in London in April 2009, since then, mainstream media has used social media tools to cover a significant event cohesively. As a narrative evolves, journalists can use Twitter and Facebook to send out brief bursts of text, photographs, or videos to a large audience. The online story-telling method helps collect disaggregated social media reporting, giving a constantly updated stream of text, audio, and video from both journalists and amateurs. Several signs indicate that the editorial approach to real-time coverage may deviate from accepted practices. According to research done a decade ago, journalists were normalising social media rather than changing their work culture to what Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton refer to as "a new media format that directly challenges them" (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012: 1).

The personal nature of social media has also generated concerns regarding journalists' identity management. "Being social" implies "expressing one's personality," as Currie, Bruser, and Van Wageningen (2011: 6) put it. Users must divulge personal details about their life on social networking platforms. As a result, social networks have the potential to break down the professional distance that journalists have traditionally maintained with both readers and sources. On social media, news outlets and individual journalists negotiate the blurry boundary between personal and professional, figuring out what, how and when to say it (Hermida 2012).

Some news agencies, like Reuters, advise their employees to create distinct profiles for work and personal activities. In contrast, others, such as Bloomberg, recognise that

the pervasiveness of social media makes distinguishing between the professional and personal nearly impossible (Hohmann, 2011). In any event, the public may still regard a reporter as a representation of their news outlets, even if they try to maintain multiple online personas. Moreover, while some journalists and editors are passionate about using social media to report and share news, studies suggest that they are significantly less inclined to use Twitter or Facebook's conversational styles (Hermida, 2012).

Journalists are developing and changing norms acceptable and recognised as the professional practice of social media, much as social media is reshaping journalism (Hermida, 2012). "Guidelines undergo updates; social media editors and Twitter correspondents are being appointed; training and awareness initiatives are underway," according to (Newman, 2009:2). The traditional role of journalists as regulators and moderators of public debate may need to be reconsidered in the age of social media. "Rather than having some type of control over the flow of (meaningful, selected, fact-checked) information in the public arena," as Deuze points out, "journalists nowadays are merely some of the numerous voices in public communication" (Deuze, 2008:12). Journalists are dealing with changes in their daily habits, workplace culture, audience relationships, and perhaps even what it means being a journalist today.

Researchers Govender Bateman, Steenkamp and Diederichs (2018) also believe that news agencies may construct social media usage policies and update them as needed, allowing them to adapt to the new technology. Most social media research has been conducted with a Western audience in mind, with only a few studies conducted with a South African public in mind. To make the most of the SNS, McAdams (2014) suggests that South African newsrooms must cultivate digital skills. Individual journalists, as well as leaders from news outlets, must commit to this digital transformation. The ability of a particular journalist to communicate through Twitter shows the need for sufficient social media standards and policies in place in newsrooms (Wits University 2014). While Twitter is already a cornerstone of newsrooms, according to the 2014 State of the Newsroom South Africa study, there is no consensus in the country on how it should be utilised as a professional tool.

2.4.1. Microblogging as a method for social media journalism

Microblogging is a social media tool that permits and enhances the power to communicate, and it has some parallels to broadcast media. It enables users to send short bursts of information (often fewer than 300 characters) to friends and followers from various sources, including websites, third-party apps, and mobile devices (DeVoe, 2009). Several platforms and status updates integrated inside websites such as Twitter and Facebook provide comparable capabilities. Twitter is one of the most popular microblogging sites where mainstream news is disseminated (Hermida, 2010; World Wide Worx, 2021). Jansen et al.(2009) showed that consumers increasingly utilise microblogs as reliable sources of information, insights, and views in an examination of 150 000 postings.

Microblogging offers a diverse and fragmented news experience, signalling a departure from the traditional paradigm of journalism as a framework for providing reports and analyses of events through narratives, resulting in an accurate and objective representation of reality (Dahlgren, 1996). Individual expert systems and groupthink over teamwork and knowledge-sharing are challenged by services like Twitter in a news culture centred on personal expert systems and groupthink (Singer, 2004). The phrase "the Twitter effect" was used by Bruno (2011) to explain how online tools that promote the creation and distribution of user-generated, real-time material influence how and by whom news is covered. "By simply newsgathering user-generated content available online, the Twitter effect allows you to deliver live coverage without any reporters on the ground," he says (Bruno, 2011: 8). According to Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012), US journalists on Twitter deviated from standard objectivity norms by providing viewpoints in their tweets. The diversity of social media policies demonstrates how news outlets attempt to compromise the personal nature of social media and long-standing professional regulations established to protect journalistic repute. However, there is evidence that journalists are going beyond what may be deemed appropriate behaviour on social media, much as they have done with blogs (Hermida 2012).

2.4.2 Twitter as a social media journalism tool

Twitter is a free social networking service that allows users to send 280-character microblog messages known as tweets. Messages are sent to users' and followers' timelines or other users who have agreed to receive them. Users can send messages to other users, retweet or share statements made by others, and follow or participate in trending subjects. Twitter users may be added to lists of popular issues and participate in discussions using text, links, photos/graphics and videos (Deuze, 2008). Twitter and other social networking sites have aided the audience's participation in the news-creation process, where messages are sent back and forth, and users may engage with content (Deuze, 2008). Twitter is a critical instrument for news collecting and reporting. Another advantage mentioned by EWN survey respondents was that, rather than pitting radio against Twitter, both platforms could be used effectively because of the following characteristics: different audience profiles; and the ability to complement a story that breaks on one channel by using the other channel (Govender Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs, 2018).

During their everyday professional tasks, EWN reporters face difficulties, including the necessity to separate personal views on issues and preserve impartiality to present conclusions quickly. Because of Twitter's immediacy, users may engage in impulsive behaviour, such as tweeting personal information and viewpoints unrelated to current events Govender-Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs (2018). Factual errors coming from the speed with which a reporter was required to live tweet news articles or break important news stories were the most ethical problem they encountered, according to EWN interviewees, especially without previously obtaining consent from a senior or editor (Govender-Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs, 2018). Because there are no formal standards governing journalists' behaviour on Twitter in South Africa, Du Plessis (2014) asserts that journalists must still be ethical, reliable, and fair when working online. Like Pavlik (2013:183), who believes that news media innovations, such as the usage of Twitter, can only be sustained by solid research, "freedom of expression, accuracy, and ethical behaviour".

Jordaan (2013) found a gap in the processes of some media agencies. For example, social media and Twitter are rarely referenced in editorial planning sessions at two prominent South African newspapers, the Mail & Guardian and Rapport. While

journalists try to adapt their usage of SNSs to conventional news production methods, Hedman (2017:2) argues that it is necessary to differentiate between "social media logic" and "news media logic to maximise the use of Twitter as a journalism instrument." Eyewitness News (EWN) reporters were encouraged to tweet from both the official @ewnreporter account and their account, according to research by Govender Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs (2018) looking at how news outlets in South Africa utilise Twitter.

According to several respondents in a survey they conducted with EWN journalists. The broadcaster was viewed as a pioneer of live tweeting in South Africa when covering court cases and live news events. Reporters and editors highlighted the verification of information as a significant problem when utilising Twitter to report the news. However, the EWN editorial management team does not require reporters to tweet from their personal and work accounts. The distinction between private and official (the news agency's verified) Twitter accounts also guarantees that media viewers are aware that when a reporter tweets from a personal account, they are tweeting in their capacity. When a reporter's initials or Twitter handle appear in a tweet posted by the official (verified) EWN Twitter account, it means they are formally representing EWN and conveying accurate information, according to Govender Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs (2018).

More users depend on Twitter and other social media platforms to discover what is happening worldwide. More people have shifted away from traditional venues and news subscriptions (Bruns, 2012). It is challenging for news agencies to develop a niche on Twitter – much more so than on many other social media platforms. While various news outlets have now established their own branded pages on Facebook, such customisation options do not exist on Twitter; brands can, of course, create whole-of-organisation accounts, but these accounts compete for attention and followers on an equal footing with all other Twitter users (Bruns, 2012). Bruns (2012) suggests that Twitter accounts like @abcnews (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation page) have amassed a large number of followers but that higher visibility of such accounts on Twitter is dependent not only on the number of followers they have accumulated but also on the eagerness of those followers to disseminate further (retweet) the account's messages. Furthermore, news outlet accounts are frequently unable or unwilling to adequately reply to comments and queries received as private

or public replies from their followers, serving instead as one-way vehicles for sending links to newly published news items.

As social media platforms like Twitter become more essential places for news delivery and conversation in the larger media ecosystem, it becomes clear that professional journalistic practice must be redefined (Bruns, 2012). Tweeting stories and links to reports, as well as retweeting to promote the stories of other journalists, may help the reporter and media agencies develop their reputations. Sharing articles and links to news outlet websites, as well as endorsing other reporters' work via retweets and comments, demonstrate the significance of Twitter in "developing and sustaining prestige as a journalist," according to Barnard (2014: 10). Furthermore, if a reporter is listed as working for a specific news outlet on their Twitter profile, the success of that reporter on Twitter has an impact on that reporter's news agency. As a result, for news outlets, the amount of community participation and the effect of various social media interactions become increasingly vital (Govender-Bateman, Steenkamp, and Diederichs, 2018).

2.4.3 Changing role of journalism in the social media era

Twitter is a news source that is very different from the traditional method (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014). Furthermore, Twitter is both a source and a channel. The media use it to supplement their digital news-first approach by broadcasting the most recent news and headlines on Twitter. Finally, the medium's interaction opens new avenues for launching, engaging, and expanding public discourse (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014). Ferial Haffajee, a distinguished former Editor of the City Press and the Mail & Guardian, is quoted by Verweij and Van Noort (2014). "Twitter has expanded and extended my journalism in numerous ways," she said. She said that Twitter had made her "faster, sharper, and potentially more fascinating." Haffajee utilises Twitter as an editor to "break the news, float ideas, fine-tune editorial thinking, and gauge the pulse of a segment of our reading population," according to her. These changes indicated a shifting news routine and how news is put together, including the growth of ideas and the establishment of a schedule.

A study by Verweij and Van Noort (2014) determined that the journalistic skillset required to perform reporting duties has changed. Immediacy, direct contact with the audience, and the ability to express a storyline in 280 characters are just a few of these

developments. Stephen Grootes, a well-known South African broadcast journalist, sees Twitter as a medium that disseminates information so swiftly that it is difficult to govern. It implies that facts enter the public domain before any gatekeeper, whether an editor or not, can prevent them from doing so. This has certain drawbacks, but it is a generally healthy trend toward the free dissemination of information. Journalists must also be able to distinguish between their personal and professional opinions. Haffajee stated in (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014). That she has refrained or controlled herself from expressing her views on Twitter since what she writes can be interpreted as the opinion of the journal she represents. Although Twitter is an essential social media medium that fuels public arguments, it is not the same as the debate (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014).

The value of social networks like Twitter in promoting democracy and discussion is well known; for example, the fight over the Protection of State Information Bill in South Africa became widely publicised thanks to social media communication by activist groups like Right 2 Know, among others. However, traditional media may be prone to manipulation since they are centralised, and organisations may be simple to control. On the other hand, governments have significantly less influence over social media since it is decentralised (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014). The Guardian's editor, Alan Rusbridger, has long advocated for the mutualisation of the newspaper. It necessitates a radical degree of transparency and engagement between the newsroom and the public: Our readers have become a part of what we do, Rusbridger said in an op-ed for the American Journalism Review. "Without them, we couldn't have done anything." We provide them with a more diversified type of journalism in exchange, as well as the prominence that comes with a platform that reaches 30 million unique users every month, with two-thirds of them coming from outside the United Kingdom" (Bruno, 2011:29).

The traditional reporting strategy of relying solely on field reporters is no longer viable. With the ongoing merger of conventional reporting and real-time coverage given by social media, established news institutions are forced to adopt a networked journalism approach, particularly in the internet realm (Bruno, 2011). Bruno (2011) predicted that the two conflicting strategies (publish first, verify later vs verify first, publish later) would merge into a single plan. As social media becomes a more critical component of the newsgathering process, online publications will require a dedicated

curator to work with commenters and journalists. This new role will need reporters who can sift, verify, and edit the most relevant internet information. The reporter-curator will use cutting-edge verification technologies, becoming faster, more dependable, and more advanced. Thanks to new digital solutions and intelligent tool integration, it's also feasible to expect the introduction of new methods that swiftly assess the overall dependability of social media information.

2.5. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES OF JOURNALISTS

Traditional news outlets have grown increasingly dependent on social media and rely on digital material that is entirely consumed on social media networks, according to a survey by Alzyoud (2021) with journalists. Another viewpoint is that the conventional and social media relationships are complimentary, with traditional media providing news material to social networks of public interest and social media providing a platform for journalism to communicate its messages. However, according to some respondents, the association is unfavourable. They believed that while conventional media was once entrusted with this role, social media networks had taken over as the leader of public opinion. The greater the strength of social media networks in influencing public opinion, the less influential journalism becomes in influencing people's views. Because of the lack of oversight, social media has significantly influenced trustworthiness (Alzyoud, 2021). However, social networks give instant access to varied perspectives held by users, which promotes professional journalistic work. It has both positive and negative aspects. Some participants in an Alzyoud (2021) study believed that one's identity had no bearing on social media networks and that professional and personal identities could be enjoyed. Some journalists think that if journalists maintain a professional journalistic ethic that avoids bias, they may enjoy publishing unique ideas on their social media platforms. The journalist's reliance on social media networks and regular usage add to an unintentional blending of personal and professional identities. On the other hand, some research participants said that journalistic work and private might be distinguished, claiming they are journalists when they publish an article. However, they are merely citizens when they express their opinions on social media.

The findings show that respondents feel social media has benefited journalism by offering a larger platform for news distribution and a new tool for monitoring public feedback on their professional performance. These findings support Baruah's (2012) conclusion that social networks are an optimal environment for user involvement and feedback. Pathak (2018) also claims that social media has improved journalism by giving news organisations more opportunities for content marketing and branding. Social connection is a valuable source of information. Furthermore, journalists utilise social media to help them do their jobs more effectively and keep people informed about what's happening worldwide. Journalists primarily use social media to locate story ideas and disseminate the articles they generate, according to Pradhan and Kumari (2018).

According to Paroy (2012), social networks include characteristics that enable content production and sharing. As a result, these networks offer a valuable source of data. Simons (2016) also discovered that social networks make education more accessible to society. However, most journalists interviewed believe that their professional and personal identities interact badly on social media (Simons 2016). They admit that social networks do not allow journalists to integrate their personal and professional identities. On social media, journalists' identities clash with their professional identities and may have a detrimental impact on each other. Journalists may thus be hesitant to share personal information or ideas on social media platforms for fear of damaging their reputations.

When journalists use social media for personal reasons, they are susceptible to abuse and intrusion into their private lives by users. These findings are consistent with Lee (2015), who discovered that journalists' perceptions of their news items significantly impacted public impressions of them. When a journalist is perceived favourably or adversely, his news items are judged based on his perception, implying that the journalists' personal and professional identities are intertwined. The findings reveal that journalists who utilise social media in their professional journalism gain various rewards. Most participants agree that social networks have given them outlets to distribute the news they generate to the public. In the eyes of journalists, one of the advantages of social media is the speed element. The findings also show that these networks supply journalists with information about stories they want to write, events they want to follow, and audience feedback that supports their work. These findings

support Stöber's (2004) claim that society institutionalises inventions by discovering new communication possibilities; it formats and adapts new media; organisation adopts new media by constructing a new political framework and legal order for new media.

Bentivegna and Marchetti (2018) discovered that journalists changed their journalistic rules to comply with the social media co-creation culture in a study of 1202 Italian journalists' Twitter behaviours. This was done to grow their loyal following and expand the reach of their news material. Herrera and Requejo (2012) point out that businesses can employ to adapt and reflect the dynamic media landscape, newsroom policies should be changed, social media training should be offered, and nurture a knowledge of media ethics in the context of Twitter reporting (Boers et al. 2012; Scott 2014).

The concept of journalists being sense-makers fits well with the established professional norms crucial to journalists' work in the non-social media realm. On the other hand, journalists confront hurdles in terms of sticking to their standards in the era of Twitter. Journalists may find it challenging to navigate the platform while maintaining journalistic neutrality (Degen and Olgemöller, 2021). Journalists appear prepared to forsake impartiality to incorporate opinionated views in their daily tweets. Something is more reluctant to do in the traditional media (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012). Retweets, where political journalists communicate their thoughts even faster, are similar. Even news reporters instructed to keep from biased reporting in their non-social media work environment engaged in growing amounts of opinion-sharing when they retweeted information (Molyneux, 2015).

2.6. THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONVENTIONAL JOURNALISM NORMS

According to journalism scholars Perreault and Stanfield (2019), mobile devices have the potential to revolutionise participatory journalism since conventional media no longer has a monopoly on the news, and new media technologies are disrupting the news cycle flow. Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012) did a content analysis of over 22 000 tweets (postings) on Twitter in a study that suggests that journalists are more willing to voice their ideas, a frequent microblogging habit but one that challenges the journalistic standard of neutrality (impartiality and nonpartisanship). Journalists' blogs

were found to be normalised to meet traditional conventions and practices. Most journalists were perceived to be, wanting to be gatekeepers even in this extraordinarily dynamic and participatory environment.

A crucial concern about digitisation is how media has influenced journalistic standards and practices due to its potentially transformational technical assets. According to Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012), journalists standardise their blogs to match existing conventions and practices. Most journalists want to remain gatekeepers, even in this very engaging and participative style. Journalists increasingly use Twitter to interact with their audiences and sources, follow the latest news on their beats, and promote their work (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012). Journalists on social networking sites give insight into how stories are generated, personal perspectives on news events, and context for the evolution of news coverage, according to Hayes et al. (2007). Furthermore, a certain level of transparency is required on social networking platforms such as Twitter to maintain audiences' trust. Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012) elaborated on the issue of trust, noting that news media outlets have struggled to best present validity to the public and integrate social networking platforms such as Twitter into established journalism norms and values.

Journalists can add or remove material as they see appropriate, filtering news and information often without going via traditional procedures such as news editors, thanks to the ability to communicate information quickly with big audiences via Twitter (Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, 2012). Singer (2005) remarked that as nonpartisan gatekeepers of essential public information, journalists who blog and microblog face challenges to professional standards. Nevertheless, journalists may use microblogs to increase openness and accountability.

Much of what Singer (2005) noted about the potential effects of blogging and microblogging on professional norms and practices of journalists affiliated with mainstream news media is similar to what Singer (2005) pointed out about the potential impact of blogging and microblogging on the professional norms and practices of journalists affiliated with mainstream news media. Journalists in conventional news outlets have discovered that microblogging encourages them to break away from their established duties in various ways. Deviating from their role as nonpartisan information providers by expressing personal opinions, sharing their

gatekeeping role by including postings from others in their microblogs, and providing a semblance of accountability and transparency to their professional work by offering their audiences links to external websites that background the information they provide are all examples of these deviations from the norm, according to Singer.

Journalists are supposed to keep their politics and personal ideas to themselves, according to professional standards. Objectivity, or at least the pursuit of objectivity, is one of the most conspicuous elements of journalism's professional character, even though the nature of online media contradicts this normative and lasting notion (Robinson, 2007; Schudson and Anderson, 2008). Journalistic gatekeeping has long given the press power and prestige by determining whether material qualified as news. However, this job has altered in a digital context where selectivity is no longer a concern, and viewers may readily participate in the filtering process (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012). Referencing source material has not always been easy in traditional media formats. Still, the hyperlinks endemic to blogging and microblogging present an opportunity for journalists to be more transparent and, thus, more accountable in their work (Carlson, 2009). It's possible that tweeting about one's employment is a more direct measure of responsibility and openness. Other factors include tweeting about one's personal life and having public dialogues with other tweeters. Tweets concerning the journalist's personal life and conversations with other tweeters might give extra information on the journalist's work and the news creation process (Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, 2012).

Journalists have significantly more freedom to write about whatever strikes their fancy, including the mundane details of their day-to-day operations, in a communication environment like Twitter, used for everything from breaking news to dullness. Such life-sharing on Twitter is crucial because it is so public and considerably more accessible to the broader world than a social networking site like Facebook, where friends and relatives are tied to an individual journalist. In this way, Twitter provides a one-of-a-kind environment where journalists can transmit nearly anything to anybody, regardless of corporate conventions or social networking connection restrictions. As a result, it's critical to comprehend the substance of journalists' tweets: to what extent do they express themselves? (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012).

According to Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012), microblogging may influence journalists' professional standards and practices by giving other Twitter users a participatory voice by retweeting their tweets. Furthermore, norms and techniques have changed by giving responsibility and openness in their tweets. However, there were no significant variations in the most direct indication, sending tweets that primarily transmit information about one's profession. When journalism moves online, two critical elements of internet news - user interaction and a quick, continuous news cycle - are essential in changing journalistic practices. Journalists are expected to follow the profession's standards on the job. Still, when off the clock and in private, this behaviour can be completely different, for example, in terms of misleading, lying, or fabricating information. However, if this personal behaviour is blended into the journalistic job and revealed, the results could be problematic (Karlsson, 2011).

Editors differed slightly in their perceptions of whether activist journalism conflicts with ideal-type professional norms in a study conducted by Skjerdal (2011) in Ethiopia. Still, they justified the practice either because of the less-than-ideal conditions back home or because they believed the combination of activism and professionalism is a forward-looking journalism ideology. The Ethiopian diaspora's internet endeavours have been observed to prolong media battles in Ethiopia while also sustaining a professional journalism paradigm of the ideal kind.

Journalists on the internet struggle to maintain their credibility in a world rife with rumours, false identities, and (e-)commercial operations (Singer, 1996). How can we make excellent judgments in an environment that has neither a lengthy journalistic heritage nor a chance for reflection?" should journalists ask themselves, according to Lynch in Deuze and Yeshua (2001). It's characterised as gathering and disseminating news material solely over the internet. It's viewed as a fourth type of journalism, alongside print, radio, and television, with its journalistic traits (Deuze and Yeshua, 2001).

There have been studies conducted worldwide on how social media has changed and continues to change journalism, particularly in terms of its definition and primary norms (Bentivegna and Marchetti, 2018). Some research into how journalists have adapted to the use of social media. This area of research is divided into two subfields: everyday usage of social media and using social media to inspire activities. The theoretical

framework of normalisation has been used in many studies that have looked at the adaption of standards and journalistic practices in the setting of Twitter. This led her to the conclusion that 'most journalists are normalising blogs in at least one important way: they are preserving control over the content offered under their names, adhering to their traditional gatekeeper role even with a format that is explicitly about participatory communication (Singer, 2005: 192).

Sharing information and reporting news on social media may be considered relevant to journalism, while everyday talk and discourse about current events might also be included. On Twitter, users are regarded as both information suppliers and searchers; this norm also applies to journalism. When the mainstream media discusses Twitter, it does it in the context of established journalistic rules and ideals (Hermida, A., 2010). How journalists should use social media while adhering to existing ethical norms and values has been a source of particular concern, prompting news agencies like the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Bloomberg to implement Twitter policies (Hermida, 2010).

2.7. SELF-BRANDING AND NAVIGATING THROUGH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL POSTINGS/TWEETS

Traditionally, the media agencies and titles that journalists represented were associated with legitimacy. However, as seen by Twitter, journalists may quickly become "famous" as a brand, independent of their media outlet or label. As a result, individual journalists may play a more significant role in public discussions, and their trustworthiness may become a necessary prerequisite for an open and independent public discourse. On the other hand, individual journalists may have a weaker brand in public discussion than journalists working for well-known media institutions and newspaper publications (Verweij, and Van Noort, 2014).

Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012) used Muck Rack, one of the most popular sites for compiling journalistic tweets, to study the tweets of 500 journalists in the United States. They discovered that 19.1% of all the journalists' tweets were effectively promotional. Nearly 16% of the journalists' tweets were predominantly opinion-based, while another 27% of primarily information-based tweets had at least one aspect of opinion. By including postings from others in their microblogs, the journalists shared their

gatekeeping duty to some extent. Retweets made up more than 15% of the journalists' microblogs. Similarly, journalists embraced Twitter as a means of providing accountability.

Nearly 9% of the tweets were mainly about the journalist's employment, another 14.9 per cent were debated, and the other 20.2 per cent were solely about the journalist's personal life. In addition, 42 per cent of the tweets included an external link, which might be another sign of accountability and openness. While half of these tweets were sent to the journalist's own host news organisation and a quarter to other major news outlets, 7.2 per cent were sent to outside blogs, and 18% went to other external websites, implying that journalists' microblogging actions are subject to some level of accountability and openness (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012).

Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012) investigated the tweets of political journalists and discovered that over 43% of the tweets featured at least some element of opinion, with nearly 16% of the tweets consisting solely of views. Moreover, columnists supposed to share their viewpoints were among the political journalists who tweeted. For example, what has been classified as personal opinion here might as well be regarded as a sort of professional judgement.

Certain political journalists also discovered that retweeting and linking functionalities were used to open up interactions with non-professional players in the news creation process or provide information that may help them be more accountable or transparent. As Singer (2005) discovered, journalists who microblog appear to be normalising social media to fit into their current norms and practices while also modifying these professional standards and procedures to the growing norms and conventions of Twitter.

In December 2010, ABC appointed journalist Latika Bourke, one of the most prominent Australian Twitter users in the sphere of news and politics, as its first dedicated social media correspondent. As an emerging international trend, it was noted that such appointments might lead to the individual becoming the brand, perhaps even more so than the media outlet with which they are associated, and news is viewed from that perspective as well: news stories shared on Twitter by a specific journalist may no longer be understood by readers as bearing the imprint of a trusted media outlet, but rather the byline or personal endorsement of that journalist Bruns (2012). “A famous

person" is what most people think of when they hear "celebrity". The celebrated journalist might thus be a journalist with no significant (pre-existing) renown who uses social media to "steal" a celebrity's discursive qualities for self-promotional objectives Olausson (2017: 3).

Olausson (2017: 3) analyses the link between marketing a new brand and a journalist's fame or popularity in a study titled *celebrated journalist*. The continuous individualisation of journalism (Deuze 2008) is a prominent characteristic of these advances, and journalists appear to spend more time creating personal brands, such as on Twitter, than building those of the news agency they represent (Molyneux and Holton 2015). Among the most active journalists, there is a distinct tendency toward using social media to build personal brands and market themselves as individual professionals rather than (or maybe in addition to) their function as workers of a specific news organisation (Bruns 2012; Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Olausson 2017). Furthermore, journalists frequently retweet messages about themselves as part of developing a personal brand. It further destabilises traditional journalistic genres and discourses based on the professional ideal of objectivity and impartial language (Olausson, 2017).

There are a few reasons why journalists are attempting to profile themselves as individuals on social media. It includes the promotion of discourse, a general trend in new media culture. The shift towards self-promotion and branding is also fuelled by the internationally widespread and widely discussed crisis of journalism, where budget cuts have resulted in precarious job situations for journalists, which paves the way for journalists' self-commodification (Olausson, 2017). Bruns (2012) believes that when journalists utilise social media to spread information about themselves rather than their media outlet, the journalist becomes the brand.

Celebrity practitioners blur the boundaries between themselves and "fans" by providing glimpses of their private lives since the branded self-entails shape and presenting not just their public look but also, to a considerable part, their everyday life (Olausson, 2017). Furthermore, with the shift from old to new media, journalist's become more personalised, whereas traditionally, it was heavily influenced by the position of the media outlet for which they worked. As a result, individual journalists

are increasingly becoming brands in their own right, in addition to media corporations and publications (Verweij and Van Noort, 2014).

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter evaluated literature that is relevant to the study. It began by discussing the role of traditional and democratic settings. Next, it engaged with the concept of social media with three significant focus areas: the impact of social media on journalism, microblogging, and social media and the role of Twitter as a social media journalism tool. The chapter further examined the literature on the changing role of journalism in the social media era and the influence of social media on journalists' professional identities and norms. Finally, it engages with the literature on self-branding and navigating through personal and professional posts by journalists.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theories that inform the study. The theories provide a lens through which the study examines how journalists perceive their identities on social media. Although there are several approaches to understanding social media and journalism, three methods inform this study. These are the Liquid Journalism Theory (Deuze, 2007), as well Network Journalism theory (Heinrich, 2012) and the Social Self theory (James, 1950). The chapter argues that these theories offer an approach that examines the blurring of lines by journalists using social media, transition into a personalised or individualised journalism space because of network journalism and the concept of the social self as a collaborative manufacturing between a performer 'journalist' and their audience Goffman's (1959). Although there are similarities between the three theories, the theories focus on the journalist's behaviour as an individual and traditional norm transformed by journalists' social media identities.

3.2. LIQUID JOURNALISM THEORY

Lu and Zhou's (2016) liquid journalism theory provides a lens through which the study views contemporary journalism supports this study. Mark Deuze (2007) popularised the word "liquid" in journalism studies, referring to the dramatic changes in newsrooms: a flexible, multi-skilled workforce, uniform work habits; individual journalists' declining autonomy; rising job rotation and unstable careers. Kantola (2013) in Wall (2017:332) describes the modern moderns derived from Liquid journalism as journalists who reject impartiality and overreliance on permanent, professional sources. They perceive the "man on the street's" perspective as equally valid: "The liquid journalists resist journalistic routines and ready-made conventions for what constitutes essential news." Lu and Zhou (2016) recognise that the liquid identity of journalists results from liquid journalism. The modern liquid culture has transformed the journalist's role to play multiple roles as both journalists and featuring themselves as part of the narrative in

stories. Liquid journalists are continuously evolving, and journalists must exhibit adaptive efforts. Through digital media, anyone can know and disseminate information (Lu and Zhou, 2016).

The social media era has changed the role of media into a participatory journalism era moving from an age where reporters worked at the behest of news agencies to being authoritative news producers. Journalists engage with the public daily, and there is an expectation of instant participation through social media networks. It has transformed the professional relationship between a reader and a traditional journalist. Zelizar (2015) in Lu and Zhou (2016) argues that new media has taken journalism “off its track” by changing the basics of the journalism profession. Further, changes to the traditional news production model may have caused challenges to the news value judgments and news production practices in journalism (Lu & Zhou, 2016). The conventional news cycle has shifted from a formal organisational model of news production with bureaucratic structures to an individualised action of online content curation and the constant reshaping of news content.

Deuze (2004) in Lu and Zhou (2016) states that news agencies should adapt to new technologies and organisational structures caused by online media, including new storytelling methods and a new relationship model between news producers and audiences. Technology and online platforms have replaced the one-directional flow of information from professional journalists to audiences with a multi-directional non-linear flow of information.

Lu and Zhou (2016) raise a concern about former reputable journalists blurring the lines between professional and non-professional news production and undermining established newsroom approval processes and the assurance of factual accuracy. News agencies have lost their traditional role in interpreting news events. News now occurs in a participatory fashion with broad public participation. Moyo (2015) argues that postmodern journalism discards conventional models used in mainstream journalism. Moyo further argues that journalistic practices based on truth, objectivity, balance, and accuracy are no longer relevant in the new postmodern environment. Some scholars describe the liquid modernity theory as the end of ethics due to changes resulting from technological advancements. Moyo explains that journalism in the postmodern networked space is characterised by ‘fluidity, liquidity, temporality, and

uncertainty, which affects the profession's moral and ethical compass (Moyo, 2015: 132).

As a result of this shift in journalism practice, Moyo embraces the term "liquid journalism and liquid ethics". With the rise of participatory social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook), he further argues that liquid modernity has changed journalism to a social activity with a threat to ethical boundaries. As a result of liquid journalism or liquid modernity, traditional sources of moral authority, such as a code of ethics, are deemed irrelevant, and 'ethics' is based on 'personal impulse, subjectiveness and is individualised' (Moyo,2015). Many scholars raise similar points to the liquid journalism argument made by Moyo, including Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti and Hedman (2016). Similarly, Zeller and Hermida (2015) raise the point that social media influences journalism, which leads to bending norms and practices; they further argue that sociotechnical terms shape journalistic practices. Lee (2015) comments on the expansion of individual journalists creating their own social media pages to promote new products and build their brands. Lee also agrees that media houses use social media to increase readership, awareness, and traffic to a media house's page. Journalists are encouraged by organisations to subscribe to social media platforms to expand and solicit more traffic.

Lee (2015) describes the traditional role of journalists as the objective and undistorted conveying of information without being a participant or commentator in the process - Lee uses the words "without intervening in the news". Lee bases his argument on the normative theory; however, he further expands that objectivity is a continuously 'evolving' and fluid theory. Lee states that impartial journalists should not favour one grouping or ideology more than the other regarding work-related issues. In an analysis of 500 tweets by journalists, Lee (2015) found that journalists who use social media don't differ from other social media users who offer their opinion. Lee (2015) explains that active journalists on social media tend to deviate from traditional norms, which may lead audiences to question the journalists' professionalism.

3.2.1 Network Journalism Theory

The network journalism theory contends that losing control over a previously strictly regulated space for information transmission is an opportunity for journalism to review its practices. All forms of journalism are being tested by the convergence, interactivity, customizability, and hypertextuality of online journalism, as well as by the widespread usage and accessibility of new technical “tools of the trade.” (*Jo Bardoel and Deuze, 2001*). Personalisation or individualisation reflects current practices and ideas in online journalism. It suggests that it is preferable to use customisation of content as the defining feature here because personalisation also implies a trend associated with the debate on the modern-day blurring of the lines between the public and the private sphere - especially in the media (Heinrich, 2012).

The need to provide information has become a vital component of the journalist’s abilities and responsibilities due to the explosive growth of information on a global scale (Deuze, 1999). As a result, the journalist’s job snowballs from a watchdog to a guide dog. The user may choose between succinct and in-depth reporting. As a result, it further erases the conventional distinction between news formats and genres within the news (Heinrich, 2012). From the Internet standpoint, interactivity, content customisation, hypertextuality, and multimodality alter journalism, but their components also have ramifications for journalism generally. This impact is evident when one considers online journalism as the driving force behind change in the industry. In contrast to the old journalism, which depended on media organisations to provide full-time employment and thus job security, the new journalism is a job with multiple skills, formats, and employment patterns at the same time, an at once functionally differentiated and more holistic profession (Weischenberg and Scholl, 1998).

Contemporary technology has destroyed the exclusive monopoly of journalists over the function of gatekeepers for private homes and does not suggest that the end of mediated communication is approaching. Ironically, it was the outdated technology (newspapers) that gave journalists this privileged status, and it is the contemporary technology (internet) that may drive journalists out of it once more (Heinrich, 2012).

A desire from (members of the public) and a demand from the profession led to the development of network journalism, which combines critical and orientational storytelling. The need for orientation, guiding, and moderating information and public discourse is becoming increasingly apparent every day, even while we still need experts who research and maintain a critical eye on things like government, culture, and the economy. The functional role of journalists in bridging and actively battling a digital gap is stressed, particularly in many Western nations where social cohesion concerns like multiculturalism and media education are high on the agenda, such as the United States, Australia, and The Netherlands (Heinrich, 2012). United States, Australia, and The Netherlands

The future journalist will have more horizontal communications relations of network journalism instead of the vertical, paternalistic relationship of industrial journalism due to these changes in society and altering power dynamics in social communications. As a result, networks and conventional media will undergo such radical upheaval that professional training must adapt. Therefore, multimedia requires multiskilling (Bierhoff, 1999; Deuze, 2000).

3.3 SOCIAL SELF THEORY

The social self-theory assists the study by helping to conceptualise how journalists perceive their identities on social media. According to scholars, online identity develops via interactions with others; it might vary depending on who we're speaking to and the social setting (Bossio & Sacco, 2016). The term social self is a concept that William James first introduced in 1950. According to James, each person has a unique social self that varies depending on the social groups they interact with or, more broadly, the various social settings they experience. Goffman (1959) and Cooley (2017) define the self as a product of social interactions. According to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgic description of social life, the self is collaborative manufacturing between a performer and their audience. As a result, its continued existence is dependent upon public acceptance. In other words, the way people perceive us shapes who we are. Goffman (1959) and Morris (1934) highlighted the importance of how people develop and perform their identities for a specific audience. As a result, identity occurs in the context of sharing.

Professional identity is reliant on social context. According to Fredriksson and Johansson (2014) and Lewis (2012), professional identity is the understanding of one's self in a professional situation, including who one is and how one acts both privately and publicly within the parameters of their particular organisation, institution, or profession. According to Wiik (2010: 38), professional identity is a social construct that "results from norms, practices, and status associated with a professional philosophy, organisational affiliation, and the individual's social position. Every element affects how a professional presents oneself and adheres to specific professional habits and attitudes. Adherence to professional standards also grants a professional the "right" to their specific standing and power in society and others to recognise and regard their actions as "professional." Applying the social self-theory to the context of journalism demonstrates the discursive creation and presentation of the norms and values that define professional activity to preserve a certain professional character. For instance, two qualities usually associated with journalists are "a nose for news" and "curiosity about people and their surroundings" (Zelizer 2005: 68).

Open-mindedness, independence, detachment, and a desire to seek the truth are personal qualities that are crucial to journalists' professional jobs in higher education journalism degrees (De Burgh 2003). However, more recent media studies have shown that, even though many individuals decide to change, shape, experiment with, and modify their digital identities online, conflicts can develop when negotiating these identities in work-related circumstances. When different groups of individuals view your profile for various purposes, the necessity to portray a verified, unique identity as a professional, for instance, may make it hard to use alternative self-presentation tactics, leading to conflicts (Boyd 2008). In addition, determining a context and audience for communication can be challenging due to the complex web of online networks. For personal use, this may face quick mediation. Still, for those negotiating the representation of a professional identity online, this apparent "contextlessness" creates tensions and may be particularly challenging for journalists, for who maintaining a particular professional character is an essential aspect of professional practice. Furthermore, the portrayal of a journalist's professional identity online faces the challenge of conflicting demands of evolving organisational standards and professional, institutional norms in the newsroom (Bossio and Sacco, 2016).

3.4 CONCLUSION

The researcher discussed and explored the theoretical premise of the study in this chapter. The chapter also explored liquid journalism as part of a journalist's growing function in the age of social media. The concept of Network Journalism and the social self-theory influenced by social media has changed how journalists negotiate their workspace. Finally, the researcher discussed the transformation of journalism to the internet world in this chapter. It significantly impacts how journalists carry out their work—particularly in how they portray themselves to audiences and possible sources on social media platforms. This chapter's conceptual framework focuses on the many circumstances and factors that affect journalists and impact their professional activities online. After discussing the research's theoretical foundation, I'll discuss the research methods.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines and discusses the methodology and methods used to understand how journalists perceive their identities on social media. In this chapter, the researcher described the research technique, design, and methods utilised to guide the study. The chapter also discusses the qualitative method employed to gather the information needed to comprehend and answer how South African professional journalists see their identities on social media. The chapter also goes through the procedures and sampling techniques used in the study to find participants. Finally, the researcher discusses the ethical issues and data analysis process.

The study consists of three parts. The first part aimed to investigate how media houses implemented social media policies that regulate and ensure that journalistic principles are not compromised. The second part is an analysis of the interviews that the researcher conducted with the journalists and editors, and the third part is an analysis of social media content posted by three journalists active on Twitter. First, the researcher conducted a content analysis of social media posts in October 2022 to verify the views of journalists. The researcher employed virtual ethnography to see how and what journalists Tweet, retweet and like on the Twitter-sphere. The Twitter analysis of journalists' profiles/handles looked into whether the journalist stated their affiliation. The researcher also examined the actual Twitter 'handle' (whether it contained the news organisation or not), whether there was any form of disclaimer about personal opinions and whether reporters provided additional personal information beyond their beat. The disclaimer is particularly relevant in connection with retweets and any public perception that retweeting information implies endorsement of that person's views.

Other aspects the researcher analysed are tweets and retweets for branding—elements of individual branding (referring to or promoting the journalist's work), aspects of personal branding, and institutional branding (referring to or promoting the work of journalists at another news outlet or an issue about journalism) and general opinions

and comments on subjects that are in the news cycle. The following chapter will provide the findings and discuss whether the conclusions answered the study questions.

4.2. QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative methodology to gather data on journalists' perceptions of their professional and personal personas on social media. In Brynard & Hanekom's (2014) view, this research approach allows the researcher to interpret and describe people's actions. Some advantages of qualitative research are that it helps researchers understand the processes and the social and cultural contexts that underlie various behavioural patterns. Maree (2007) explained research methodology as exploring the "why" questions. Common approaches linked to qualitative research include grounded theory, ethnography, action research, phenomenological research, and narrative research (Bhandari, 2020; Makwambeni, 2013).

By adopting the qualitative research approach, the researcher interacted with the study respondents to gain more insight into the journalists' opinions. Qualitative research allows us to pull interpretive, theoretical data from a source about their experiences and actions (Brennen, 2012; Makwambeni & Sibiyi, 2022). The research goal is not to generalise but to identify various characteristics and attributes applicable as a representation of some in the professional group. This study chooses to use a qualitative research design to understand the views of journalists and editors through semi-structured interviews. Research design, data gathering techniques, and data analysis methods are the three components of this section.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Burns and Grove (2008) refer to the research design as an overarching plan, which the investigations use to answer the research questions. Its ultimate use is to guide data collection and data analysis. The researcher used qualitative methods to collect and analyse data in this study. The chosen research design of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information about the research problem and generate new ideas for further research. In addition, virtual ethnography and content analysis were also used as a technique to gather responses to the

research questions. The researcher chose this design because it is more concerned with exposing people's sentiments, knowledge, and experiences in a circumstance (Cole, 2006; Makwambeni & Adebayo, 2021). This approach is ideal for this study because it allows the researcher to collect data on the participants' experiences, feelings, and understanding of the phenomena under inquiry (Cole, 2006; Makwambeni & Salawu, 2018).

4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

4.4.1 Virtual ethnography

Several research methods, including observation, interviewing, diary-keeping, document analysis, photography, and videotaping, are used in ethnographic research, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011). In addition, the researcher employed virtual ethnography to see how and what journalists Tweet, retweet and like on the Twitter-sphere. The Twitter analysis of journalists' profiles/handles explored whether the journalist stated their affiliation, the actual Twitter 'handle' (whether it contained the news organisation or not), whether there was any form of disclaimer about personal opinion offered and whether the reporter provided additional personal information beyond their 'beat'. It is particularly relevant in connection with retweets and any public perception that retweeting information implies endorsement of that person's views. Other aspects the researcher analysed were tweets and retweets for branding-elements of individual branding (referring to or promoting the journalist's work) and institutional branding (referring to or promoting the work of journalists at another news outlet or an issue about journalism) and general opinions and comments on subjects that are in the news cycle.

4.4.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis, a method of information collecting and analysis, was also used. Content analysis, which is the focus of this inquiry into how journalists negotiate their social media identities, is defined by Du Plooy (2009:213) as a "methodology utilised to examine, characterise and infer aspects of communication." A general definition of content analysis given by Holsti (1969:14) is "any approach for concluding by

objectively and methodically identifying specified properties of communications." The examination of social media guidelines and interview transcripts both employed content analysis. According to Du Plooy (2009), qualitative content analysis focuses on various messages' values, themes, styles, and meanings. In addition, the researcher examined social media policies of the SABC, Media24, Independent Media, Tiso Black Star/Arena Holdings (Sunday Times/The Times/ Daily Dispatch) and the Press Council' s Social Media Policy Guide for Subscribers.

4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

This study used semi-structured interviews to allow the researcher to obtain enough background knowledge about the answers to questions while observing nonverbal responses to inquiries (Bruns, 2019). The most significant benefit of doing these kinds of interviews is the extensive data a researcher can acquire. The individual interview method is one in which the researcher poses questions through face-to-face interviews with participants. According to Bruns (2019), one benefit of semi-structured interviewing is flexibility; it allows one to rephrase questions to gather appropriate replies and the most thorough information feasible through contact and dialogue. The interviewees' nonverbal communication was visible to the researcher. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019); Makwambeni & Matsika (2022) state that semi-structured interviews typically consist of a conversation between a researcher and a participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments.

The interviewing process allowed the researcher to gain insights into others' perspectives about the study; it is beneficial for ascertaining respondents' thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and retrospective accounts of events (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). The researcher prepared an interview schedule detailing questions that address the research questions underpinning this study. The researcher utilised an interview guide for the open-ended one-on-one interviews. The researcher wrote the initial questions into the interview guide. They were wide and intended to guarantee that the interviews were all conducted similarly. It contributed to the findings' increased trustworthiness. Following the first questions, the researcher asked participants open-ended, in-depth questions on their use of Twitter. The researcher described the study's

goal at the start of each interview. On the condition of anonymity, all interviewees gave their consent for the researcher to record the interviews.

The first few questions focused on the person's professional background and function at their workplace. The researcher stated the goal of the discussion was to ease the participants' minds before switching on the recorder. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve journalists (news editors and political journalists) from the SABC, Eye Witness News, NewzroomAfrika Weekend Argus, Sunday Times, Daily Dispatch, News 24/Network 24 and Daily Maverick. This sample includes interviews with journalists from print, online and broadcast media and a Press Council representative. The researcher conducted these interviews to learn more about how South African professional journalists regard their online personas. The discussions covered all four of the particular study questions in section 1.4 and followed the interview outline.

A semi-structured interview is a tool to obtain considerable information about several subjects connected to the research problem. Wimmer and Dominick (2011:139) define semi-structured interviews in the following ways. Although, for example, the interviews gave detailed information on the respondents' ideas and experiences, the interviews were often rather lengthy and tailored to each respondent. Since the researcher performed every discussion, he was familiar with all the questions and could modify them as needed. This level of familiarity, in Babbie's words (2010:320), "allows the interview to move smoothly and naturally." A basic structure for the interviews was designed based on the research questions and literature review. The interviews were conducted on Zoom, transcribed by Otter.ai, and provisionally analysed to identify themes.

Boyatzis (1998), in the introduction, describes a theme in qualitative information as a pattern found in the report that, at the minimum, describes and organises possible observations or, at the maximum, *interprets* aspects of the phenomenon. The main categories or themes were identified by collating feedback journalists gave during the interviews. These categories correspond with the theoretical framework and literature of the study, as described in Chapter 2. Using these themes as a framework, the researcher read through the transcripts and highlighted passages that might be relevant to or representative of a particular theme. Quotes from respondents were

grouped from the various interview transcripts according to the themes identified. Based on the data extracted through interviews and document analysis, the researcher categorised findings into the following themes: social media appropriation, the potential conflict on journalistic use of social media, views of journalists' online personas and social media policies.

4.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY

In recruiting the participants for the study, the study made use of a non-probability purposive sampling technique. According to Tongco (2007), this sampling method is the most effective type when studying a specific cultural domain consisting of experts. Therefore, this research adopted a series of semi-structured individual interviews. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the researcher's assessment of which would be the most representative of the entire group (de Vos et al., 2011). This sampling method has an inherent bias, which aids in identifying competent specialists (Tongo, 2007). In addition, it assisted the researcher in getting insightful knowledge of the participants' views regarding the phenomena under investigation.

The researcher interviewed journalists from print, online and broadcast outlets, four editors' news editors and three editors from the respective outlets. In addition, the researcher interviewed a representative from the Press Council to assess the methods implemented by the press council to regulate social media. In total, the researcher interviewed thirteen (13) respondents. Seven journalists/respondents were political or broadcast reporters covering politically inclined stories with active social media accounts. Some of the identified respondents represent eight media outlets with a national footprint. The journalists and editors feature on the Media Hack, The Media Online and the Memeburn website as prominent journalists using Twitter. The participants are also on an international media database called Muck Rack. Muck Rack, founded in 2009, has grown to be one of the most popular sites for aggregating the tweets of professional journalists, primarily (but not only) in the United States. It contains a database of tens of thousands of journalists on Twitter, which it classifies by news company and beat expertise (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton: 2012).

Wimmer and Dominick (2011:94) explain that a purposive sample includes respondents “selected for specific characteristics and qualities” . The researcher chose news editors and editors using purposive sampling because their position in the newsroom necessitates the inclusion of their opinions on social media’ s influence on the freedom of expression of the journalist on social vis-a-vis the upholding of the press code. The rest of the respondents were chosen not only because they are representatives (and form part) of their newsrooms but also because they were available and willing to talk. The researcher also scheduled each interview a day or two before it occurred. However, some interviews were scheduled a few hours beforehand or rescheduled at short notice since some journalists were absent.

4.6. DATA ANALYSIS

The primary data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed utilising a thematic analysis technique. It is an approach for detecting and analysing patterns of meaning in a dataset called thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It shows which themes are central in describing an event under investigation. Part of the reason for developing the idea of 'thematic analysis' was to move beyond visual material to more implicit, tacit themes and thematic structures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach is ideal for this study since it entails sorting, categorising, organising, and reducing data into more digestible topics through coding (de Vos et al., 2011). It aided the researcher in identifying similar themes and interpreting them effectively.

The researcher transcribed the audio recordings. The researcher also analysed notes from the interviews. The researcher could organise the data into themes from the interviews through this process. This process is defined as coding and involves classifying the text data elements related to the study topic (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). The researcher intends to use thematic analysis, which emphasises identifying, analysing, and interpreting meaning. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) describe this type of analysis as a process to identify patterns in the data that are important or interesting and use these themes to address the research.

4.7. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

There are many different methods for measuring research variables and collecting data - each has several strengths and weaknesses. The researcher devised ways to assess the frequency of data collection instruments formally. Researchers must argue about the quality of tools to conclude the study findings. According to Pilot and Hungler (2010), researchers must consider the reliability and validity of the methods used in the research process. According to Parahoo (2006), reliability refers to the consistency of an approach measuring or observing the same phenomenon. In other words, it concerns how consistently the measuring technique measures the concept of interest. Reliability is concerned with such characteristics as dependability, consistency, accuracy, or dependability of the measuring tool (Pilot & Hungler, 2010). The reliability of measuring devices can be in several ways. The method chosen depends to a certain extent on the instrument's nature and the aspect of the reliability concept that is of the most significant interest.

4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher conducted the study following official ethical guidelines established by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Everyone who took part in this study did so willingly. In Silverman's (2016) view, research ethics premise on three issues: codes and consent, confidentiality, and trust. It means research participants have the right to know they are part of the study. The researcher must inform them about the nature of the research and their rights to withdraw at any time. The researcher received an ethics clearance from the university, which the researcher explained and shared with the participants when commencing the interviews. The researcher also sought permission from all the respective participants within the delineated area of the study.

The researcher explained the aim and objectives of the study to all participants in the study. The researcher also informed participants of their right to withdraw anytime during the research process if they did not feel like continuing (Silverman, 2016).

The researcher created a consent form to protect participants' identities and serve as an agreement whereby all information attained can be used in the study's findings. The researcher asked each participant to sign a consent form for all the interviews. In addition, the researcher ensured strict confidentiality regarding the information

obtained during the research process. Confidentiality means the researcher is obliged to protect the participants' identities and the location of the research. Payne and Payne (2013) coined the phrase "informed consent" to describe the researcher's approach. They imply that each participant had a project overview to enable them to decide whether to participate. To protect the identity of participants who selected not to reveal their identity the researcher used the name of the media institution they represent in place of their identity. There are a number of political journalists and editors at each institution therefore it would not be easy for one to trace the identity of the journalists when using the name of the media institution.

Furthermore, as Terre Blanche et al. (2006) noted in social science research, verbal authorization is not consent. As a result, those who decided to participate in the study needed to give their written permission. The researcher urged participants to engage in this study of their free will. According to a fundamental ethical precept, participation in social research should be voluntary (Babbie, 2010). The researcher obtained voluntary participation but made it explicit in a statement that individuals can withdraw their participation at any time without consequence because it is optional.

According to De Vos et al. (2011), every individual has the right to privacy in social research, and it is their right to select when, when, to whom, and to what degree their attitude, beliefs, and behaviour are exposed. The researcher preserved anonymity by agreeing that no one could match the participants' identities to the information supplied. In addition, the researcher gave participants pseudonyms and vital instructions not to disclose their true identities on the permission form unless they were comfortable, which helped to maximise this. The use of triangulation in this study helped to establish credibility. Triangulation is a practical approach for validating data using two or more sources to cross-verify it. It refers to using a mix of research methodologies to investigate a single phenomenon (de Vos et al., 2011). Similarly, Creswell (2009) argues that triangulation evolved from an ethical requirement to establish the legitimacy of procedures through case studies by combining data from numerous sources.

4.10. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher detailed the research methodology, design, and sampling procedures used in this study. The researcher also outlined why some

research methodologies were selected over others. The methodology's goals and principles were discussed, as well as an explanation of how data was collected and assessed. The researcher also discussed the sample techniques and processes used in the study. Finally, the researcher used an experimental method to examine the perceptions, opinions and interpretations of journalists, editors, and a representative of the press council on the influence of social media on individual journalists and their navigation of personal and professional space on social media platforms.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the significant findings of the study. The study examined how South African journalists negotiate their identities on social media. It also sought to understand the mechanisms that media institutions in South Africa have developed to help journalists to negotiate their identities on social media. The researcher substituted the name of the participants with that of the media institution each participant represents in order to preserve the privacy of those who chose not to divulge their identity. The study's findings show that Journalists in South Africa perceive their identities differently. At the same time, some journalists perceive themselves as professional brand representatives because of their societal positions.

In contrast, others perceive themselves as independent citizens who enjoy their privacy on social media. The study's findings also show that media institutions in South Africa have developed several mechanisms to assist journalists in negotiating their identities on social media. These mechanisms include the South African press code, the press council's social media policy guide for media outlets and social media policies at media outlets. The varying professional and personal identity representations on social media align with the institutional, organisational, and professional conflicts that have developed in this new environment. This research reveals that journalists present their personal and professional identities on social media differently. The study focused on how journalists display their personal and

professional selves on social media and how institutional, organisational, and professional forces affect these representations.

5.2 SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS UTILISED BY JOURNALISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The study's findings show that Journalists in South Africa are active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and LinkedIn are used for recreational/private purposes and the latter is used as a professional platform by both journalists and editors. Some journalists saw the division of accounts as a method to apply conventional journalistic standards of impartiality and neutrality to social media use.

The study interviewed journalists covering the political beat, the journalists represent seven news outlets, and all have social media accounts. Twitter is used by most as a primary account for news tracking, following trends, reaching out to potential leads and sharing their work. The findings by Vis (2013:43) align with interviewees' responses as they all see Twitter as a *“rich source for story leads and material”*. Twitter is used as a reporting tool mainly by broadcast journalists. Part of their daily routines is to live tweet from events and breaking news, whereas print journalists are not as obligated to live-tweet. However, the various media outlets have different approaches, some use the outlet's account as the primary news source giving the journalists access to the outlet account for posting, and others use their accounts to tweet the news.

Often live-tweeting is unchecked by the news editor and several respondents confirmed they have free reign to tweet without having their work checked or verified by the newsroom. Journalists are the most significant verified users (Gil de Zúñiga, Diehl & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2016). The use of Twitter by many respondents is, therefore, not contrary to what the 2016 research found. However, some media outlets have put systems in place to safeguard against errors on the pages of journalists when live-tweeting. In an interview, a respondent mentioned,

But I know that the social media team that checks whatever you are tweeting, and they do, question if you maybe made a mistake, or something you may have missed, or something that doesn't sound right. We have people like the editors or the social media team who will double-check with you (eNCA, October 2022).

The editors who participated in the study indicated that they are not active for work purposes on social media and choose to keep their pages more private. In addition, some editors said they are deliberately off social media platforms due to the potential conflicts that may arise because of their position and the possibility of their posts being misinterpreted, especially considering their work

The study's findings further revealed that some journalists use Twitter professionally, as opposed to Facebook, which they claimed was used for more private information and was only accessible to close friends and family. For example, in an interview with a respondent from Newsroom Afrika, it was observed that the journalist's personal Twitter page is used for work purposes.

Twitter is the main platform. So many people who follow me through my work at Newzroom Afrika follow all the developments and stories I do. That's how people keep track. That's the only social media platform I use for work (Newzroom Afrika, October 2022).

The study revealed that the press council encourages “*not to mix personal and professional content on social media accounts*” to avoid confusion between personal and organisational content (Press Council Social Media Policy 2020, page 3). The researcher also observed another approach where a respondent from Netwerk24 preferred being tagged on Twitter by the company's social media team instead of the journalist posting on their page. In line with Moon and Hadley's (2014:300) research findings, most respondents observed Twitter as a news source which gives the latest information.

Twitter is, is more of a source. I sometimes try to use it to see what's trending so that we can find out what people are talking about. And is it news related? Is it something that, especially now that I work in a talk radio environment, we are always looking for stories to cover or issues people are talking about? (EWN, October 2022). If something, for example, on Twitter isn't shared widely, or commented on widely, then you know, people aren't interested way as if it's engaging content, it helps you as an editor to produce more of that kind of content (Weekend Argus, October 2022).

The research found that journalists saw the social media environment as a chance to present elements of their identity to engage with sources and audience members. However, most journalists' opinions for this research expressed that professional and personal use of social media should be kept apart. Journalists who displayed their

personal and professional selves on social media had some worries about navigating the platform, which they described as a gap between the expectations of each type of online presence. The anxiety of making a mistake that may have adverse effects on the media outlets and one's career was an additional factor. One journalist, for instance, discussed how challenging it is to balance personal and professional content in this situation and how visible and permanent social media errors are.

You also have this kind of responsibility to be very circumspect with the kind of content and behaviour and things you put out there (Weekend Argus, October 2022).

The research highlights how difficult it is for journalists to balance personal and professional information on social media. Even though social media engagement with sources and audiences is a vital new tool for journalists, interviewees' comments indicate that many journalists are having trouble maintaining an online persona that is true to their self-conception as professional journalists while also displaying enough of their personality to be taken seriously as members of the public. In addition, journalists negotiate the conflicting claims to professional practice from ideological, press council, and institutional standpoints in this time of socio-technological transformation. They articulate these negotiations through the many online personas journalists adopt.

5.3 SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR IDENTITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The study's findings show that South African journalists perceive themselves differently on social media. While some journalists perceive themselves as ordinary citizens, others perceive themselves as professional journalists. Bassio and Sacco (2016:3) identify three different forms of social media identities represented by journalists online. These are "transitional", "branded", and "social" identity. The study's findings show that SA journalists negotiate their identities, and journalists who participated shared information on how they represent and manage their online professional and personal identities through social media. While the researcher mentioned audience involvement and the promotion of journalistic work as advantages of using social media, several difficulties surfaced when the researcher asked how they should promote themselves online.

5.3.1 Journalists as citizens on social media

The study's findings show that several journalists perceive themselves as ordinary citizens on social media. These journalists believe that social media is a platform for their personal use, free from their identities as journalists. Furthermore, these journalists think they can comment/share their opinions. Some journalists reported utilising social media to display elements of their personal and professional selves. Others said they restricted public access to their online personal expression because they felt much more conflicted about what they revealed to a social media audience. The semi-structured interviews indicated that several journalists found it very challenging to balance portraying a professional and personal identity online, despite social media's opportunities for involvement with sources and audiences. Two themes emerged from these responses: first, apprehension that social media may divert them from the fundamental or more essential tasks of journalism, and second, apprehension that popular or brand-driven social media content by individual journalists may undermine their credibility or the credibility of the organization they worked for (Holton and Molyneux 2015).

Journalists acknowledge the value of social media as a tool for audience outreach, branding, and self-promotion, as was covered in Chapter 5. It offers a rich area for additional study, particularly in a journalistic culture that Deuze (2007:171) describes as constantly growing "more varied, open, and dynamic". According to Deuze (ibid.), there is an ongoing fragmentation of titles, channels, outlets (and thus jobs), the emergence of new work practices in convergent journalism, and the proliferation of all types of citizen's, alternative, and community media both online and offline.

5.3.2 Social media as an extension of journalists' professional identities

The research findings show that a segment of journalists perceives their identities on social media as primarily professional journalists. They view their identity as an extension of the work they do. The participants even brought up the responsibility of being a brand ambassador, and the idea of avoiding bringing the organisation into disrepute is something that all journalists subscribed to. Most journalists felt that some colleagues, particularly younger journalists, are observed to be more vocal on social

media and are often the ones blurring the lines between being a reporter and a citizen. As journalists representing a brand, respondents felt colleagues should comment on issues outside their beat.

Therefore as political reporters, they could share their opinions on social media on subjects such as sports, the weather and other matters outside of the space they operate on a day-to-day basis. It brings a responsibility to the journalists to ensure that even when they tweet in their capacity, it does not directly impact the organisation and their work. Individual, institutional, and organisational brands are among the ones that journalists work to advance. Journalists engage in individual branding or self-promotion when discussing their professional accomplishments. Organisational branding refers to the marketing of the journalism industry, whereas institutional branding refers to the media employer (Van Hove, Asdourian and Bourgeois, 2018). It was interesting to gather from the respondent's feedback as part of the institutional and self-branding. The connection with the audience for a more symmetrical two-way dialogue occurs through social media engagements.

A typical response shared by the respondents is, as one respondent put it:

I tend to stray away from sharing my opinion, my personal opinion about current affairs, because that's the space that I operate within the news (NewzroomAfrika, October 2022).

The study's findings show that journalists who operate independently/freelance should abide by the same rules and responsibilities as those employed by outlets. An overwhelming response was that by being part of the field, the press code should equally apply to all, irrespective of being subscribers or not. For example, a respondent from eNCA said:

As a public figure and as someone representing a brand, you're clear of posting anything that could bring you into disrepute and the company to the city. And when it comes to editorial decisions, we believe in ethical and fair journalism that doesn't favour anyone. And isn't that where I try not to post anything that shows I'm politically inclined one way or because that will damage my credibility (eNCA, October 2022).

Tweeting in your capacity is not a protection from complying with the policies of your company, as seen in the Press Council's Social Media Policy 2020, page 2:

The statements that you make and content that you share on social media, whether publicly or privately, could impact your credibility as a journalist and, by extension, the company's credibility. Any content that damages the company's reputation regarding neutrality, fairness and credibility is unacceptable.

As brand representatives, the general sentiment was that the profession holds a higher moral status than any ordinary citizen, and therefore one's online character needs to match the offline personality. Online journalism practices have been the subject of research, and it has emerged that journalists actively market their "personal brands" to establish their authority as news experts (Holton and Molyneux 2017:199). Another view expressed by Bruns (2012:105) is that a journalist's personal social media presence may be more critical in terms of audience reach than institutional affiliation (Lee, 2020). Bruns (2012:105) concluded that "Twitter exposure seemed driven by individual personality, not institutional imprint". There are arguments for and against Brun's sentiment, and one of the respondents reinforced the idea of interdependency between being an individual brand and a brand ambassador by saying,

If you are a high-profile journalist, it's challenging to separate yourself from your publication (News24a, October 2022).

The research found that news outlets are eager to piggyback on the profiles of certain journalists. To achieve this, they relate their organisational strategy to the standards and ideology of journalism. It was evident in the interviews with the journalists who had developed an online brand identity. The researcher observed that a senior journalist at the SABC with over 183k followers and a verified account is an avid Tweeter who uses metavoicing by retweeting individual posts to express their opinion and possible support on issues subtly. Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane & Azad (2013:41) explain that metavoicing can occur through retweeting, liking, commenting on someone's post and voting. Some posts act as catalysts for conversations and debates on Twitter. The researcher observed that the engagement on this journalist's posts is high, and there is an interest in sharing news from selected political parties. Below is an example of such a post. The South African Communist Party and the EFF posted on the 20th Congress in China. The journalist retweeted one party's post and not the other. The Press Council's social media policy stipulates

Do not share content posted by another person or another publisher in a manner that creates the impression that you are endorsing the

content unless you are sure that by doing so, you are not breaching any aspect of this policy. (Press Council, Social Media Policy, 2020, page 7).



Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2: Retweeting political party posts by a reporter has the potential to be misconstrued to be taking sides

5.3.3 Social media use as a hybrid of journalist profession and service as a private citizen

The researcher found that most of the journalists interviewed suggested that professional and personal use of social media was often separate. Also, a small cohort of journalists saw the social media environment as an opportunity to present aspects of their identity as a way to engage with sources and audience members. Scholars like Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith (2014) have described how journalists use social media to search for information and explain their online identities. On the other side, other journalists claimed that sharing amusing material, pictures of their daily lives, interests, and activities gave their social media personas more humanity. Many people thought this benefited their professional practice. Instead of using the objective and detached tone of traditional journalistic content, other journalists simply used language and a more pleasant and intimate technique to represent their selves. A respondent said:

I've made particular distinctions to different platforms. I say that I'm a citizen when it comes to Facebook. I don't even want to be seen as a journalist because I would like to know that platform as a platform where I express and post pictures about my personal life (SABC, October 2022).

Lee (2015) determined that some news outlets encourage journalists to be active on social media to expand readership and increase brand awareness to increase traffic to their news websites. Scholars seem to agree on the notion of transparency to clear blurry lines between professional journalists and journalists as citizens. For example, McBride in Podger (2009:34) contends that “on social networks, you should identify yourself as a journalist, tell recipients if you're using social networks in a professional capacity and remain mindful that people will regard you as a representative of your newsroom” . At the same time, Daniels (2014) argues that journalists promote their brands on social media and that social media is decentralised and more challenging to control than traditional media. The growth of journalists’ brands has a direct and positive impact on their employers’ brands; however, reputational harm can also be a reality when a journalist is embroiled in a controversy on social media (Brems et al., 2017).

The research found tensions between journalists trying to express their opinions as citizens while being limited by media outlet policies and the press code. Liquid journalists are continuously evolving, and journalists must exhibit adaptive efforts. Through digital media, anyone can know and disseminate information (Lu and Zhou, 2016). It has transformed the professional relationship between a reader and a traditional journalist. Zelizar (2015) in Lu and Zhou (2016) argues that new media has taken journalism “off its track” by changing the basics of the journalism profession.

Further, changes to the traditional news production model may have caused challenges to the news value judgments and news production practices in journalism (Lu & Zhou, 2016). The conventional news cycle has shifted from a formal organizational model of news production with bureaucratic structures to an individualised action of online content curation and the constant reshaping of news content. Deuze (2004) in Lu and Zhou (2016) states that news agencies should adapt to new technologies and organisational structures caused by online media, including new storytelling methods and a new relationship model between news producers and audiences. Technology and online platforms have replaced the one-directional flow of information from professional journalists to audiences with a multi-directional non-linear flow of information.

When the researcher asked journalists if shared opinions via tweets may lead to biased reporting, an overwhelming majority agreed that it might impact journalists' credibility and the organisation they work for. Surprisingly one of the respondents was of the view that,

There isn't such a thing as objectivity in journalism. To be honest with you, our socio-economic challenges as human beings and as people influence our perception of certain things, you know, the way we grew up, the challenges that we experience, the challenges that our parents experienced and our grandparents experienced. (News24, October 2022)

5.4 SA MEDIA PRACTITIONERS' PERCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISTS' IDENTITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The study's findings show that SA media institutions perceive professional journalists as professionals on social media. Journalists are not exempt from following the guidance of the press code when using personal social media accounts. Some Editors expressed that professional journalists need to be consistent in their professional and personal capacities.

You can't rid yourself of your identity. I know that we have taken away that protection where you say I'm tweeting in my capacity. So tweeting your capacity is not a protection from your company's policies (News24a, October 2022).

People identify and associate your name with a certain media organisation. So the perception is that what you do, and even if you might say this is in your personal capacity, but it blurs the lines, journalists have to be impartial (EWN, October 2022).

In an Independent Panel Report by the South African Editors Form on Media Ethics and Credibility, Editors perceive some journalists as celebrities and social media stars. Nearly all of the respondents in the SANEF inquiry expressed worry about the false information accessible on social media. The participants considered it a danger to the public interest and the integrity of the press (SANEF 2021, 209 and 238).

The Tweets and other social media utterances of journalists who have become ‘personalities’ attract considerable public attention. The writers may regard their Twitter output as a personal activity unrelated to the media outlets with which they are associated. However, Johnny Copelyn told the Panel this was a “sensitive area” because such Tweets become associated with that media outlet. It may be particularly problematic because of the compressed format of Twitter. As in the cases of Donald Trump or Helen Zille, utterances demanding greater depth and nuance emerge in a crude shorthand form that, for a journalist, may adversely impact professional credibility.

Alide Dasnois suggested that: “If you want to retain public trust, report on facts. But give up being a star on Twitter because you can’t do both.

Tweets, said one informant, are about a “journalist’s sense of self and offer “too much commentary and opinion’ ’ . It can sometimes result in spats that are “not only undignified and unproductive” but also “dangerous, given the delicacy of public conversation” . Journalists who have assumed celebrity through such activities have ceased to be journalists. Their work loses credibility as the public loses trust in them as authoritative reporters of fact who are capable of furnishing truth and dealing fairly with opposing opinions.

5.4.1 Journalists traversing as professionals and citizens on social media

The editorial, organisational, and institutional demands journalists must manage and moderate to have an online presence fall in between these needs. Lewis (2012) proposes that the border work of retaining journalists’ specific jurisdiction over knowledge—a crucial component of sustaining professional identity as a journalist—explains the seeming “intractability” regarding sticking to established norms in the online arena. Journalists frequently transfer “professional and organisational standards to digital media rather than reassess why those established conventions exist in the first place” by normalising professional occupational beliefs (Lewis 2012: 846). Additionally, Hermida (2013: 300) contends that journalists have carried out established routines and standards on social media. His study demonstrates that reporters have utilised Twitter to discover and convey information, locate sources, and increase website traffic.

According to every journalist interviewed, their news outlets promote social media. In addition, some journalists claimed that their media companies mandated that they connect their social media profiles to the company's accounts. It was evident in interview replies from journalists who indicated that using social media purely for professional or branded purposes is required by their employer's social media policy.

According to one journalist, their social media personas changed depending on the media outlet they worked for. Even though the journalists' and editors' individual experiences with social media varied, they all worked for news outlets that welcomed and supported their journalists' use of social media. In terms of social media usage for professional use, they have received comparable socialising. The research findings show that media institutions view journalists as professionals first if they comment on topics related to their work or consciously represent the brand. All editors interviewed are unanimous about the fact that the use of social media is encouraged within their media outlets, reiterated in each media outlet's social media policy. The research found that even if journalists wrote in their capacity and indicated as such on their profiles if the subject contradicts the ethics code or social media policies for each outlet, their employer can hold them accountable.

Several respondents indicated they were encouraged to have a social media presence but were not compelled to be active.

The company also says that journalists are the original influences, in that people should be coming to you with stories. So the company does encourage journalists to post the stories on social media to get more reach for every story. You're not obligated to (Weekend Argus, October 2022)

I think we as journalists are first human beings before, we became storytellers. So, no matter what we do and how we write stories, our approach to stories is based on who we are. It stems from where we come from. It's based on our upbringing. It stems from our teaching. So, I must admit it is difficult to separate the two because some people blur the lines regarding using it for personal and professional use (Weekend Argus, October 2022).

Lewis, Lasorsa and Holton (2012) examined 22 000 tweets in the USA, UK and including non-English speaking journalists. 19.1% of all the journalists' tweets were effectively promotional tweets. Twitter may be a valuable tool for promoting one's work. However, such tweets do not improve accountability. Journalists are also expected to

balance editorial, organisational, and institutional pressures on how they present themselves online. Individual journalists were more visible than news organizations in talks about Australian politics (Bossio & Sacco, 2016), leading him to conclude that visibility on Twitter appears to be driven by individual personality rather than the institutional imprint. Although social media has led to evolving journalism practices that demand more transparent forms of audience engagement, journalists try to do so while satisfying their organisations.

5.5 VIEWS ON POTENTIAL CONFLICT WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A JOURNALIST IN SOUTH AFRICA

The study's findings show that most journalists interviewed identified themselves on their Twitter profiles following their profession. Words such as journalist, award-winning journalist, reporter, multimedia reporter and in pursuit of scoops. All Editors with Twitter handles have described themselves as storytellers and journalists, and one included the logo of his employer in their profile picture.

The research found that various responses came to the fore when journalists were asked if they viewed themselves as reporters or citizens on social media and whether they should be a differentiation between the two. In line with the professional titles on Twitter accounts, journalists and editors said that one can't divorce themselves from being a journalist on social media and only act as a citizen. The two roles of being a citizen and a journalist are interchangeable and need to work in harmony. Most journalists don't differentiate between private and professional use of their Twitter accounts. The benefit is exchangeable. Some journalists tag their media outlets' accounts or link their posts to their work; others share that there is no need to differentiate yourself. As a reporter, one is a brand ambassador, firstly of the journalism profession and secondly of the media outlet they represent. It was, therefore, clear to them that one will always be associated with a media brand because they have bylines in print or are in the public eye on TV and radio. Some believed that there should be a separation between a professional and personal profile.

So, I must admit, it is difficult to separate the two because some people blur the lines regarding using it for personal and professional use. I think a better way to do it is, like I know, with many DJs, for example, they have personal social media accounts, and then they

have professional pages. And maybe an example like Julian Jansen. I know him as a journalist. But he has a separate Facebook page, where he only shares news events. And then he has his normal Julian Jansen account. So perhaps that is how we should be operating. But in reality, journalists are not. And it's challenging to separate the two (Weekend Argus, October 2022).

As an illustration of the existential conflict regarding blurring the lines, one of the political journalists interviewed recently tweeted the following:

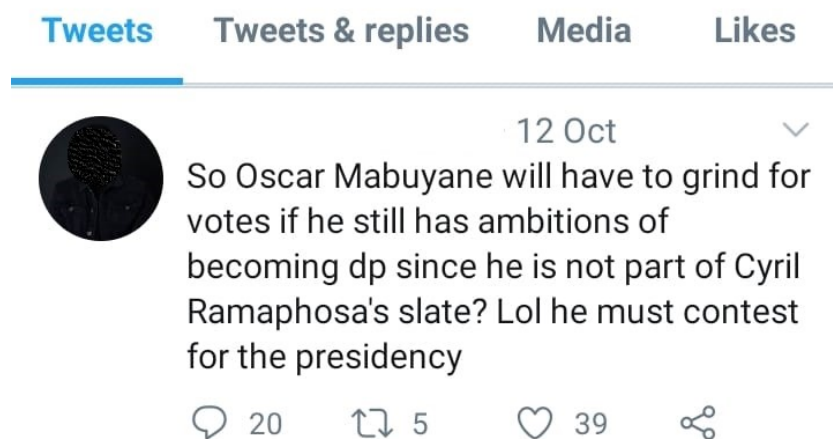


Figure 5.3: A journalist tweeting their opinion a story they could potentially end up covering in the 2022 ANC elections.

The above tweet demonstrates that the journalist is blurring the lines of being a reporter who should observe normative expectations as espoused in the Press Code and also intimated by McQuail (2010). Furthermore, by explicitly expressing personal views regarding political developments on Twitter, this journalist is inviting potential conflict as the tweet carries subtle bias regarding certain factions or leaders of the governing party. Several respondents suggested how to differentiate personal opinion and professional thought, referring to an approach used by respected journalist and editor Ferial Haffajee, whereby she distinguishes between her subjective opinion and professional posts.

Part of the challenge of navigating between personal and professional personas is the increased consumption of news via social media, which increases the chance of news readers following journalists as a source of news and information. A respondent said, *But I think that it's because people find the news these days on social media, and they associate journalists with trust* (News24, October 2022). Hermida and Mellado's (2021) study into the blurring of the conceptual boundaries within the journalism

profession. In the realm of public characters like influencers, comedians, actresses, and politicians, the roles of promoter, celebrity, and joker have primarily been considered. However, some journalists have ventured into this realm.

A respondent mentioned, “*journalists have become celebrities to some extent. Some have firm social media profiles endorsing things (Press Council, October 2022)*. The research found that some journalists use their profiles to break stories before they are official publishing by news outlets. Sometimes, this is done without explicit permission but as a click-baiting and interest-building exercise to make the reporter's profile relevant.

I realised that it's difficult for people to distinguish whether some content I put up is my personal views, especially concerning current affairs and political issues. So what I've done is that I've had to stop posting content that is anything near what I do, particularly issues of politics. So I don't comment on politics. I won't comment on parliament issues and anything that relates to government because it can create confusion that your point of view can be interpreted or be an opinion. The challenge with that is that one of the reasons I decided to stop commenting on these things is that some of them can come back to bite you. In a sense, you'll interview a certain newsmaker who you have criticised maybe in your personal space, but when you go to them, people who know about your post will perceive you as somewhere who's biased against that particular news (SABC, October 2022).

The study discovered that most respondents agreed that whether you are in a private setting or tweeting or speaking in a professional environment, people will still always associate the name of a journalist with the profession or the employer. For example, suppose the President of South Africa goes to his political party's rally. In that case, it's difficult for ordinary South Africans to distinguish him from being a state President and a President of a Political Party. Therefore, irrespective of whether you're running two accounts, one for personnel and one for professionals, they still interface. When employed, the journalist's name is identified under the person attached to an institution. The notion that I'm tweeting in my capacity or retweeting is not an endorsement was dismissed by several journalists in line with the previously mentioned idea that there is no independence when one is employed by an outlet or has a byline.

An exciting finding is shared concerning media freedom and the nexus of being a citizen first or a journalist on social media. It is not the responsibility of individual journalists to frame narratives and conversations on social media. These may compromise the neutral/objective, fair and independent position journalists or media outlets are perceived to be taking according to western journalism.

There's a lot of responsibility that comes with media freedom, but we need to exercise it with caution, especially given that a lot of people don't trust the media because they feel that there's an agenda (NewzroomAfrika, October 2022).

Another view that aligns with the one of freedom coming with responsibility is that “ *credibility is so vital as a journalist and social media plays a huge role in building that credibility and the ability to break your credibility in the eyes of the public*” (eNCA, October 2022).

These sentiments indicated above, especially around caution journalists should practice when using social media to avoid potential conflict, have also been raised in the press code. The Press Code recognises the difficulty faced by journalists in navigating social media as citizen journalists. The document reads, “*One of the difficult questions that arise in this regard is where to draw the line between a journalist ’ s private communications and their professional ones.*” (Press Council social media Policy, 2019, page 13) The policy acknowledges that the behaviour of journalists on social media may impact the credibility of the outlet they work for and their credibility as a journalist. Neutrality, fairness and credibility are the fundamental principles that journalists and outlets are advised to adhere to (McQuail, 2010:173). In addition, a clear guide is given,

When using your personal social media account in a work capacity or operating a company-owned social media account, you must ensure that all the content you post complies with the provisions of the Press Code (Press Council Social Media Policy, 2019, page 13).

For example, the principles of the provisions of the press code are not adhered to in the below tweet by a political reporter, demonstrating an apparent lack of neutrality and fairness. The reporter also wrote an article in their professional capacity on the allegations, and due to their personal views, it may have led to a predetermined framing of the story. The reporter also tagged the employer’ s Twitter handle in a previous Tweet on the stepping aside of a Mayoral Committee Member at the City of

Cape Town, which means he was acting professionally. The latest Tweet may be one in their capacity; however, for a reader, the lines may be blurred, and they may think it is the position of the media outlet. Ironically the journalist's employer makes the following bold statements in their social media policy document warning staff to refrain from:

Taking a one-sided public stance on issues or disputes affecting the public interest that which will cause harm to oneself using their positions at Independent Media to promote personal agendas or causes any other digital presence, if politically inclined. (Independent Media Social Media Policy, page 10).

In addition, it is a requirement for reporters to indicate on a personal page that the views expressed do not represent the views of the employer. It is because RTs belong to the reporter and not the employer. This was not expressed on the journalist's Twitter handle, which contradicts the employer's rules.



Figure 5.4: A journalist tweeting their opinion on a story their covering in mainstream media

5.6 MECHANISMS USED BY SOCIAL MEDIA INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO ASSIST PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS IN NEGOTIATING THEIR IDENTITIES ONLINE.

5.6.1 Introduction

The study findings show that Media institutions in South Africa have introduced several mechanisms to assist journalists in negotiating their identities online. These mechanisms include policy documents, the press code and privacy settings for accounts. Further findings show that while other media institutions have developed tools, others have not. Journalists' increased adherence to social media policy and rules has been used to discursively construct professionalism as meeting employer norms and aims (Lewis 2012). According to Newman, Dutton, and Blank (2012:15), news organisations created social media usage policies "to defend their established beliefs and brands. The study found that most media guidelines acknowledge the press council's press code to be binding, and the journalist's retweets contradict the Council's directive.

5.6.2 Press code

The press council has developed a social media policy for media organisations that subscribe to the press council. However, it is the responsibility of the media outlets to produce individual media policies and to monitor the accounts of journalists to determine whether the views expressed by staff members don't put the media outlet into disrepute and adhere to the press code. I have reviewed five social media policies, four from media outlets SABC, Independent Media, Tiso Blackstar, now known as Arena Holdings (Sunday Times/Daily Dispatch) and Media24. It must be noted that Independent Media operates independently of the Press Council and have its Ombudsman.

Most respondents were aware of the social media policies at their organisations, and some were compelled to sign a compliance agreement. However, a few respondents were unfamiliar with social media policies and needed to investigate further. Several respondents believed that there is no constant monitoring of journalists' social media pages, and editors react more often to complaints by external parties and do not proactively check whether their brand representatives are up keeping compliance. The impact on a journalist' s reputational brand directly impacts the media brand they represent. Because of this symbiotic relationship, it is, therefore, prudent to have a monitoring mechanism.

So we do have a social media policy, and we are guarded against issues of libel or defamation and criminal jury, we shouldn't be, you know, posting anything that's going to bring the company into disrepute because you will then face a sanction of dismissal (News24, October 2022).

An editor from the same media house as the previously quoted journalist confirms the sentiments of the journalist by saying,

Media 24 has clear guideline policy on how to deal with social media. And if you contravene those guidelines, you can be fired (News24a, October 2022).

The majority of respondents found it essential for practising journalists to adhere to the press code, and the principles of objectivity, fairness and neutrality (McQuail, 2010) were mutually respected and aspired as the guiding principles that should transcend traditional media and also be used for social media. Another editor supported universal adherence to the press code as a journalist.

An editor said,

As journalists report and we subscribe to the press code, what we say on social media, and if it's in contradiction with the press code, I feel it becomes dangerous. So you can't have it both ways, you can't say I subscribe to the code on the one platform, but I don't subscribe to it on the other platform (News24a, October 2022).

The Social Media Usage Policy for Subscribers is available on the Press Council' s Website and can be found on SANEF' s website. In an interview with a representative of the Press Council, it was verified that the policy was sent to all press council subscribers for their guidance and compliance. Each media outlet is expected to draw

up its own social media policy and manage its staff in line with the Press Code and the Press Council’s Social Media Policy.

It was interesting to observe that the press council encourages journalists to refrain from including the media outlet's name, publication name and logos to avoid confusion on whether the employer endorses personal content. However, the social media policy’s at media outlets contradict this suggestion. The Press Council is apparent on accountability and taking responsibility for errors, the policy states,

If any content you shared on your social media page later turns out to be incorrect, any publication correction or apology should also be shared on your social media page. This applies to content published by the company and the content published by third parties which you shared (Press Council Social Media Policy 2020, page 3).

The Press Council encourages avoiding personal biases on media outlets and journalists' social media pages. For example, no content should show whether one is for or against a political party, specific company, organisation, political office bearer or social movement.

It was interesting to observe that several journalists retweeted information from political pages without an explanation, clearly contradicting the press council’s policy. As observed with the below three tweets from timelines of two journalists working for the SABC.

Retweeted

Economic Freedom Fighters ... · 1d

The EFF has officially won Ward 11, Nkomazi in Mpumalanga.

The Results are as follows;

EFF - 1662

ANC - 993

Independent - 223

Congratulations Councillor Mafia Fane!

VOTE EFF

NKOMAZI MUNICIPALITY

WARD 11

19 OCTOBER 2022

263 778 2786

Retweeted

Matshe Mahlo @mahlo_matshe · 2d

Replying to @SpacesPresents

ANC is responsible for this mess..

3 3 5



Figure: 5.5, 5.6, 5.7 (left to right) Journalists retweeting political messages

Friending, “liking” or following political candidates or causes or joining groups relating to partisan causes on social media may create a perception of bias.

The research found that the policy encourages accounts of media outlets to post breaking news and not individual accounts of journalists except in acceptable circumstances.

5.6.3 Social media policies

The researcher reviewed the above-mentioned social policy documents and observed that the publication dates range from 2013-2019. A request was sent to eNCA, Daily Maverick and NewzroomAfrika for their policies. However, the guidelines weren't received. It was further observed that eNCA, NewzroomAfrika and the Daily Maverick are press council subscribers. Therefore, the policies were reviewed through the lens of responding to this research's primary and secondary questions.

The SABC has both Social Media Guidelines and Twitter Guidelines for SABC journalists. The guidelines allude to alignment with the principles of the press code. The Social Gathering Ethics Code was initially complied with in the US. The procedures apply to both permanent and contract staff members of the SABC. The policy is not opposed to opinions being shared by a journalist. Still, it stipulates, “*Opinions should be expressed without using personal attacks, gender and ethnic slurs, obscenity, social insensitivity, discrimination, or harassment*” (SABC social guidelines 2019, page 3). However, the Twitter guidelines are contradictory and

encourage journalists to stick to the facts when posting. It says, “*don ’ t be tempted into commentary if you tweet on behalf of the SABC*” (Twitter guidelines for SABC journalists 2019, page 2). Staff members are encouraged not to put the company in disgrace.

Meanwhile, Tiso Blackstar was purchased by Arena Holdings in 2019, and the media section operates under the name Lebashe Investment Group. The code of conduct refers to adhering to the values of the press code. Unfortunately, the editorial and code of conduct policies do not guide journalists on what is expected from them. As a subscriber of the Press Council, the researcher found a post by one of the Editors of this media group. The Editor is seen to be publicly criticising a leader of a political party, possibly in their private capacity and at the same time, they contribute to political editorial decisions. The post may be biased, and the concerned political party may observe a conflict of interest.



Figure 5.8: Direct interaction and criticism of a politician by an Arena Holdings journalist

Media 24 embraces and encourages journalists' use of social media, but the expectation is for journalists to stay within the confines of the law and press code of ethics. Media 24' s policy document makes a distinctive statement summarising how the media organisation expects journalists to negotiate their social media presence.

As a general rule: if it can' t be printed, it can' t be tweeted or Facebooked. As with the printed platforms, we can' t publish

anything on social media that may damage the reputation and integrity of our brands and that of Media24 (Media 24 Social Media Policy 2013, page 3).

A senior journalist (not interviewed) at News24 shared the below questions and opinions on Twitter, and an Editor retweeted them. As citizens, journalists have every right to question things happening around them. However, it's questionable if it's a current affairs story that a journalist may write about. The questions addressed in a tweet could have been addressed via email to the relevant political office. The neutral role of being a mirror of society seems questionable, as the journalist may be simultaneously overstepping the mark by being a referee and a player.

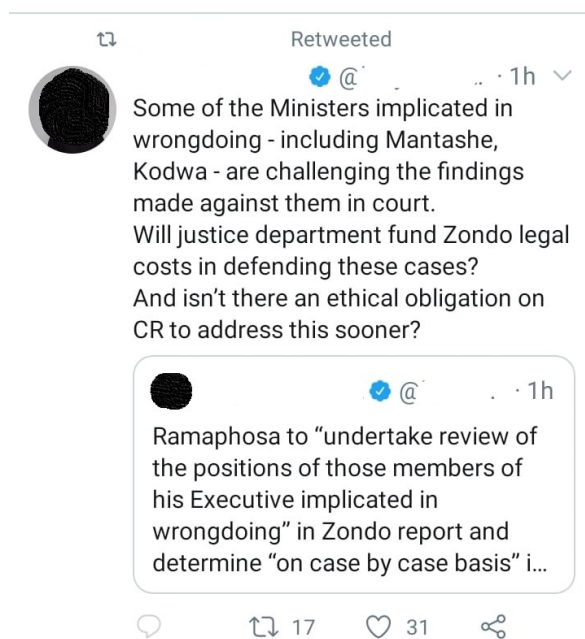


Figure 5.9: Personal commentary of the Zondo Commission Report by a journalist covering the story.

Primedia's policy is meant to protect the company's reputation and safeguard the company from legal disputes due to poor social media conduct. Protecting the media outlets' reputation is a common thread on all policies reviewed.

Primedia's policy applies to both permanent and fixed-term employees. The policy outlines Primedia's social media handles but doesn't include the accounts of other divisions and subsidiaries. The policy expectations are that employees are representatives of both the Primedia brand and their brand, and therefore it is expected of them to protect the reputation of both actively. A big junk of the policy outlines dos and don'ts for employees, and the protection of the company and its staff

members is prioritised. Primedia is the only media outlet reviewed that has included a section on the use of WhatsApp. Primedia also warns against metavoicing and also sharing information without verification.

Note that disclaimers are not an all-encompassing term for discharging liability even if you clearly do not share the view or opinion. Regardless of the intention, you may still be held accountable for the content shared on social media. Watch out for fake news - before you post content on social media to voice your opinion, practice fact-checking to verify or disprove assertions made in speech, print media or online content” (Primedia Social Media Policy, page 5).

As previously mentioned, Independent Media does not subscribe to the South African National Press Code but has put together its independent press code and social media policy. The policy is aligned with Independent Media’s Press Code, the October 2016 Group Digital Social Media Policy, the Independent Media Code of Conduct, the South African Constitution, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), and the American Press Institute. Similar to the Press Council, Independent Media also acknowledges the potential blurring of lines by journalists. Employees at Independent Media are expected to either publicly acknowledge being an active employees on social media. Employees are also at liberty not to disclose their employment. Specific provisions are in place should one publicly include the outlet's name, position, etc. The requirements are established to ensure a separation between personal and professional posts. However, a different set of rules applies to the two groupings. Independent media encourages staff to adhere to the principles of fairness and impartiality. In contrast to the advice of the press council, Independent Media advises staff to follow or like opposing parties to a debate to ensure that neutrality is maintained.

Some journalists described situations where they believed non-compliance might result in reputational harm or scorn from their audience. While some journalists expressed concern about organisational consequences such as disciplinary action or diminished trust in their skills by management or peers, others voiced similar concerns. These worries appeared to be related to "trolling" (online harassment). They had heard news reports of occurrences and examples of journalists losing their jobs due to poor judgment on social media content.

The South African media landscape differs from its US counterparts, journalists seem to have more leeway in what they can post on their social media pages, and it is scarce

that you hear of a journalist being reprimanded, suspended, or fired for views they express on social media. Ardonato and Lysak (2017) use the example of the New York Times placing certain restrictions on journalists regarding political opinions on their personal social media profiles. Similarly, the Washington Post introduced a policy regarding social media posts that could be interpreted to be biased or show favour towards any political standpoint or organisation.

In contrast, a study by Ardonato and Lysak (2017) picked up a gap in the US television sector. The authors' report found there hasn't been much scientific research on newsroom social media policy, which is surprising given how quickly social media is changing journalism. Their study sought to ascertain the existence and origin of social media policies, how they are applied, and the extent to which they address newly developing social media-related challenges. The authors have identified a need for more study. Lee (2016), in an examination of the most followed American journalists, found that most journalists expressed personal opinions on Twitter, and approximately 43% of tweets contained material that can be viewed as subjective opinions. Journalists, therefore, become social media personalities or influencers with large followings, and there is a lack of discernment between private and professional views expressed. There is greater autonomy for journalists on social media platforms to express themselves without editorial vetting or tweaking. Duffy and Knight (2018) examined the social media policies of media outlets in the USA and UK to get clarity on journalistic boundary settings. One of the views they picked is that journalists who write blogs should typically avoid themes they cover professionally; failing to do so might lead to a mix-up of duties that blurs the line between professional and personal views.

None of the South African journalists found the social media policies limiting. The idea of improving and continuously updating the press code and social media policies was raised by several journalists. Another respondent pointed out that social media policies are legalistically written, and not enough practical examples are provided.

“We are living in a time of social media and immediate news. And where you can be sued, for example, on what you're doing in your capacity, because of the image that you portray, and then, you know, as a journalist, you're also an ambassador for the company that you work at. So there's room for both codes to be redefined” (Weekend Argus, October 2022).

Compared to international media outlets, the USA and UK were more advanced in putting together social policies and holding journalists to account for misrepresentation. Still, at the same time, there has been resistance in some European countries. Opeghaffen and Scheerlinck (2014) interviewed twenty Flemish journalists and found that most of them believed that social media guides for journalists were unnecessary. Some of the journalists interviewed in this research view social media guidelines for the journalist as an impediment to their freedom of expression and, in turn, their freedom. Opeghaffen and Scheerlinck (2014) believe that some news outlets want journalists to use social media platforms and, at the same time, deem what is fit and not fit to share by imposing recommendations through the media guides and limitations on what can and not be done by the journalists. Most interviewees believe personal messages on Twitter should be permissible as long as it doesn't bring a media outlet into disrepute. Journalists must take extra precautions against criticism of competitors and political commentating. In contrast to countries such as the US, South African journalists must maintain political neutrality, fairness and objectiveness. It could be worthwhile to conduct additional research in this area as journalists' sharing of personal opinions has become the norm.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The study's results were presented in this chapter and discussed. In this chapter, participants expressed that practising as a journalist online can be incredibly difficult due to the collapse of the context in which journalistic communications occur. It can also be challenging because of the unique affordances of different social media platforms, the diversity of potential audiences, and the competing personal, professional, organisational, and institutional restrictions on social media etiquette and practice. This chapter argued that some journalists see social media as personal branding and their online presence as a promotional tool for themselves and their news outlets. The researcher discovered that others limited their interaction on social media to avoid conflicts. While some media outlets welcomed personal use of social media for branding, others maintained very stringent policies that forbade using individual social media pages for work purposes.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study and addresses the research questions introduced in Chapter 1 (section 1.4), limitations and recommendations. Before going into the valuable insights that the research reveals, it details its significant findings. The chapter concludes by outlining and discussing potential topics for further investigation by other scholars. This study explored how South African journalists perceive their identities on social media and sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1. How do professional journalists in South Africa perceive their identities on social media?

RQ2. How do journalists in South Africa negotiate their identities online

RQ3. How do media institutions in South Africa perceive professional journalists' identities on social media?

RQ4. What mechanisms do media institutions in South Africa use to assist professional journalists in negotiating their identities online?

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher used a qualitative research approach to achieve the aim and objectives. The researcher was able to use this study methodology through interaction and understanding of the processes, social circumstances, and cultural diversity that underpin distinct behaviours (Brynard, Hanekom, & Brynard, 2014:39). The researcher got the chance to communicate with the respondents, who are editors and journalists, by using a qualitative research technique to understand the subject better. The researcher addressed the guiding questions using semi-structured interviews, virtual ethnography, and content analysis as research designs. The applied methods for research design helped the researcher to learn more about the research topic in depth and to develop fresh suggestions for more study. For this case study, the

researcher contacted representatives from eight media outlets and the press council, although there are many media outlets in South Africa. Numerous journalists and editorial staff members from South African media organisations working on television, radio, print, and internet publications participated in qualitative interviews. The outlets have a national reach footprint. Twelve journalists and a representative of the press council made up the study's sample size. The researcher used a purposive sampling strategy to identify individuals. According to Tongco (2007:147), this method is a non-probability sample that works well when examining a particular cultural area with insiders. Additionally, it is a selection where the researcher chooses contexts, people, or events based on the essential data they can offer.

This approach was appropriate since it made it easier for the researcher to spot trends in the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. The researcher notified all study participants and gave them a pre-study briefing to address the study's ethical considerations. The researcher did not persuade or compel any participants in this study; everyone gave it their free will.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This section presents a summary of the research findings aligned with the study objectives as highlighted below:

- To examine how South African journalists perceive their identities on social media.
- To analyse how South African journalists negotiate their identities online.
- To understand how South African media institutions perceive journalists' identities on social media
- To understand the mechanisms that S.A. media institutions employ to assist professional journalists in negotiating their identities on social media

6.3.1 South African journalist's perception of their identities on social media

The study's conclusions demonstrate how South African journalists view themselves differently on social media. Some journalists view themselves as regular people, while others are professional journalists. According to the study, some journalists on social media think of themselves as everyday people. These journalists believe that social media offers a space to express themselves privately without being constrained by their professional identities. Journalists believe that it is their right to remark or express their opinions. Although some journalists claimed to use social media to display aspects of their personal and professional selves, others claimed they restricted public access to their online personal expression because it made them feel much more conflicted about what they revealed to a social media audience. As journalists who represent a brand, they must ensure that, even when they tweet in their capacity, their actions do not negatively affect their organisation or their work among the brands that journalists try to develop our individual, institutional, and organisational ones.

6.3.2 South African journalists negotiating their identities online

While most journalists indicated that their personal and professional use of social media was frequently kept separate, the study discovered that a small subset of journalists saw the social media environment as a chance to share aspects of their identities to connect with sources and audience members. In addition, the study discovered conflicts between journalists wanting to express their thoughts as citizens while being constrained by press code and media company standards. Although the development of journalists' brands has a direct and favourable effect on their employers' brands, reputational damage may also occur when a journalist becomes involved in a social media issue.

6.3.3 Media institutions' perception of professional journalist's identities on social media

The study's conclusions demonstrate how professional journalists are viewed as professionals on social media by S.A. news agencies. Journalists must follow the

press code's guidelines when utilising their social media accounts. The respondents asserted that their media firms required their social media profiles to be linked to the company's accounts to boost social media usage inside their news outlets.

6.3.4 Mechanisms used by media institutions in South Africa

The study's findings demonstrate that South African media organisations have implemented many procedures to help journalists navigate online identities. These controls include the press code, policy materials, and account privacy options. However, the research reveals that although some media institutions have created procedures, others have not. The majority of respondents said that it was crucial for practising journalists to abide by the press code and that the guiding principles of objectivity, fairness, and impartiality should extend beyond conventional media and be applied to social media. It suggests that all journalists should follow the press code without exception.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The suggestions derived from the literature review, empirical data, and the researcher's intuition are detailed below. In addition, the new media technologies bring on moral problems.

The data from the semi-structured interviews indicate the blurring of lines between personal and professional posts on social. Several respondents suggested that there should be clear when journalists post something as their subjective opinion vs a post shared in one's professional capacity. In line with the press code, all journalists should include a line on their social media platforms that stipulates views expressed are their own. They do not necessarily reflect the company's views (Press Council's Social Media Policy, page 3). As mentioned in Chapter 5, the Daily Maverick's Associate Editor, Ferial Haffejee, seems to have implemented this approach.



Ferial Haffajee  @ferialhaffaj... · 3d 

Comment: one of the vital Zondo Commission recommendations is that consideration be given to creating an offence of abuse of power for political office-bearers implicated in capture. [@CyrilRamaphosa](#) is applying his mind. (That's Gigaba, Brown, Magashule, Mahlobo, etc)

 9  21  70 

Figure 6.1: Twitter post by

Ferial Haffejee showing a distinction between professional and personal tweet

It emerged from the findings that the press code and the Press Council's Social Media Policy require that information shared on social media that turns out to be incorrect requires an apology and correction on personal platforms and that of the media outlet and third parties (Press Council's Social Media Policy, page 3). However, the assessed social media policies of media outlets do not stipulate that journalists should correct and apologise when they have erred in something. Therefore, it is recommended that all policies be updated to reflect this per the requirement of the press code, and the media outlets should do a monitoring process. It also emerged during the interviews that there are consequences when outlets put out material viewed as biased, misleading or unfair however individual journalists seldom undergo the same scrutiny, which outlets should review.

The research found a lack of monitoring of journalists' accounts by media outlets. Outlets predominantly react to complaints by the public. Therefore, the social media accounts of outlets are constantly under the spotlight. However, the same scrutiny is not observed in the personal accounts of journalists who, in the research, acted as brand ambassadors. It would therefore be prudent for social media monitoring teams of media outlets to be tasked with randomly checking the accounts of journalists, perhaps by creating a dashboard for each journalist to be alert to what the journalist posts and report any concerns to the news editor for corrective measures. Journalists have the constitutional right to post on their social media platforms freely. However, as representatives of the journalism profession and their media agencies, they, therefore, have a responsibility to abide by the press code and policies set out by their

employees. Reporter's social media presence is an extension of your organisation's media brand; therefore, the freedom they enjoy has some limitations and boundaries.

During the content analysis of the media policies, it was established that the procedures reviewed in this research range from 2011-2013. The respondent was of the view that social media is an ever-evolving technology with new developments and discoveries that take place continually. It is, therefore, advisable that social media policies at media outlets are reviewed annually or bi-annually. Training should take place with all staff and be part of the onboarding process for new staff members to alert recruits to the rules and pitfalls of misusing platforms. The policy documents should include a simplified how-to guide/ dummies manual for social at present. As pointed out by some interviewees, policy documents tend to be legalistic and lack the soft training skills needed to guide professional users.

6.5 DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Most of the political journalists interviewed in this research were clear on upholding the normative values of fairness and objectivity. When asked if expressing a personal opinion on social media on a story one is covering may lead to some bias in reporting, journalists were unanimous in agreeing that this may lead to a preference. In South Africa, there is a gap in researching factional journalism. As we've seen reports of Fox being pro-Republican in the U.S., similarly, in South Africa, through scrolling through the social media platforms of journalists, one tends to pick up a bias towards specific political groupings and politicians. Research could potentially be done in this area to pick up patterns in the social media profiles of journalists and whether South African journalism should stick to the normative media theory or evolve to emulate what's happening in the U.S. and U.K. Further research that examines how and why journalists self-promote on social media and how their audiences react to it might offer insightful data. Finally, it is suggested that standards and policies should be studied concerning the ethics of using social media for business purposes.

As was noted in Chapter five, the journalists who participated said that social media was helpful for broadcasting to their audiences or for self-promotion. This research finding was not further examined since it is not the main focus of the research.

However, it offers a chance for more study. Far more work needs to be done researching how freelancers navigate social media platforms, especially when the Press Council's Policy is not binding.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter summarised the research's results and offered the study's suggestions and findings. The study found that some journalists represented parts of both their personal and professional identities online through social media. In contrast, others said they restricted public access to their expression online because they felt much more conflicted about what they displayed to a social media audience. In addition, while some media outlets supported personal use of social media as a means of branding, others maintained rigid social media rules that restricted its usage. The significance of this study was to move beyond the dichotomous opposition between normative and aspirational journalistic practice online to illustrate several issues that impact how journalists seek to present themselves online. Finally, these issues include understanding personal identity, reliance on a traditional ideology of professional practice, and editorial and institutional pressures, which impact how journalists use social media and interact with their audiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Consent to take part in research



Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

FID/REC/ICv0.1

FACULTY OF INFORMATICS AND DESIGN

Individual Consent for Research Participation

Title of the study: Citizens or journalists? An analysis of how South African professional journalists perceive their identities on social media

Name of researcher: Xolo Luthando Tyhalibongo

Contact details: email: luthandotyhalibongo@gmail.com phone: 0824726961

Name of supervisor: Dr Blessing Makwanbeni

Contact details: email: MAKWAMBENIB@cput.ac.za phone: 0814336475

Purpose of the Study:

- To examine how South African journalists perceive their identities on social media.
- To analyse how South African journalists negotiate their identities online.
- To understand how South African media institutions perceive journalists identities on social media
- To understand the mechanisms that SA media employ to assist professional journalists to negotiate their identities on social media

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of interviews, virtual ethnography and analysing social media policies/guides.

Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential unless noted below. I understand that the contents will be used only for the MTech thesis and that my confidentiality will be protected by keeping interviewees anonymous should they request anonymity.

Anonymity will be protected in the following manner (unless noted below) Using pseudo names and blocking out mentions of names.

1

Conservation of data: The data collected will be kept in a secure manner on google drive and a hardrive as back-up. My supervisor will have access to the data. The data will be protected and will require permission to access the data.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Additional consent: I make the following stipulations (please tick as appropriate):

	In thesis	In research publications	Both	Neither
My image may be used:				x
My name may be used:	x			

My exact words may be used:	x			
Any other (stipulate):				

Acceptance: I, (print name) GN Claassen
agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Xolo Luthando Tyhalibongo of the Faculty of Informatics and Design Journalism and Media Studies Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, which research is under the supervision of Dr Blessing Makwambeni.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or the supervisor. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the secretary of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at 021 469 1012, or email naidoove@cput.ac.za.

Participant's signature:  _____ Date: 6/10/2022 _____


Researcher's signature: _____ Date: 6/10/2022 _____



Chester House,
Chester Road,
Rondebosch, 7700
Cape Town, South Africa.
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om

APPENDIX B: LETTER FROM PROOFREADER



Triedstone Consulting

RC: 2020/429060/07

* Copyediting * Data Analysis * Market/Social Research * Digital Marketing

03 December 2022.

Mr Xolo Luthando Tyhalibongo
Journalism and Media Studies Department
The Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Cape Town.

Editing Certificate

We certify that the thesis titled: *An Analysis of How South African Professional Journalists Perceive their Identities on social media* was proofread and edited for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and overall academic writing integrity. The editors ensured no alterations to the author's original intended meanings during the review. Furthermore, the editors tracked all recommendations and amendments with the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" feature. Therefore, the author had the option to accept or reject each change.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,



Joseph Olusegun Adebayo, PhD.



APPENDIX C: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Office of the Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Informatics and Design
Room 2.09
80 Roeland Street
Cape Town
Tel: 021-469 1012
Email: ndedem@cput.ac.za
Secretary: Mziyanda Ndede

28 September 2022

Mr Xolo Tyhalibongo
c/o Department of Media
CPUT

Reference no: 210082429/2022/24

Project title: Citizens or journalists? An analysis of how South African professional journalists perceive their identities on social media

Approval period: 28 September 2022 – 31 December 2023

This is to certify that the Faculty of Informatics and Design Research Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology approved the methodology and ethics of Mr Xolo Tyhalibongo (210082429) for Master of Public Relations Management.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



A/Prof L.J. (Nic) Theo
Research Ethics Committee Rep
Faculty of Informatics and Design
Cape Peninsula University of Technology



APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWS

Interview questions for the research study on how journalists perceive their identities on social media.

1. Which social media account do you hold?
2. What do you use the social media accounts for?
3. Do you differentiate between public use and personal use of social media?
4. Do you view yourself as a journalist or a citizen when you participate on social media. Do you differentiate in your participation as a citizen or journalist?
5. What are your opinions regarding potential conflict when you use social media as a journalist?
6. To what extent does the editorial stance/line of your media institution influence your social media engagement?
7. What is the position of your media institution regarding social media use by journalists?
8. Do you think the social media terrain is well defined and guided for journalists to navigate between the press code guidelines and practice? Does your news outlet have a guide for social media use? If yes, do you find the guide limiting?
9. Do you think publicly expressing opinions may lead to bias on social media? If yes, why; if not, why not?
10. What in your opinion makes a comment or opinion on news unprofessional and what steps are taken at your news outlet if a post is deemed unprofessional?