



Digital Self-Marketing Strategies of Australian-Based Academics

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Abstract.....	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	4
1.1 Research Background	5
1.1.1 Existing Definitions Related to Marketing Oneself.....	6
1.1.2 Different Applications of Social Media	7
<i>1.1.2.1 Continuum of Self-marketing Strategies Online</i>	<i>9</i>
1.1.3 Statement of the Research Problem	14
1.2 Academic Career Development	15
1.2.1 Australian-based Academics' Higher Education Challenges	16
<i>1.2.1.1 Unique Pressures Stemming from University Governance in Australia</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>1.2.1.2 Contraction of the Australian Academic Labour Market during the COVID-19 Pandemic</i>	<i>19</i>
1.2.2 Social Networking Sites and Academic Career Development	21
1.3 Research Aim and Questions	23
1.4 Justification for This Research.....	24
1.4.1 Contributions to Theory	25
1.4.2 Contributions to Practice.....	27
1.5 Potential Impact of This Research	28
1.6 Limitations of Scope	30
1.7 Definitions.....	30
1.8 Thesis Structure	32
1.9 Conclusion	33
Chapter 2: Literature Review	34
2.1 Parent Theory 1: Impression Management	35
2.1.1 Perspectives in Impression Management.....	37
<i>2.1.1.1 Self-presentation Theory.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>2.1.1.2 Identity Theory.....</i>	<i>39</i>
2.1.2 Definitions of Impression Management.....	40
2.1.3 Criticisms of Impression Management	42
2.1.4 Conclusion regarding Impression Management	42
2.2 Parent Theory 2: Self-marketing	43
2.2.1 Perspectives in Self-marketing	43
<i>2.2.1.1 Personal Branding</i>	<i>46</i>
2.2.2 Definitions of Self-marketing	47

2.2.3 Criticisms of Self-marketing	50
2.2.4 Summary of Self-marketing	51
2.3 Digital Self-marketing Framework	51
2.3.1 Perspectives on Digital Self-marketing	52
2.3.1.1 <i>Digital Self-marketing in the Workplace</i>	56
2.3.2 Developing a Digital Self-marketing Framework.....	57
2.3.3 Academics and Digital Self-marketing	58
2.3.4 University Policies about Social Media Use by Academics	64
2.3.4.1 <i>Review of Select Australian University Social Media Policies</i>	67
2.3.5 Summary of Digital Self-marketing.....	71
2.4 Conceptual Framework	72
2.5 Conclusion	76
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	77
3.1 Research Paradigm.....	78
3.2 Research Design.....	81
3.3 Interviews.....	83
3.4 Sampling and Recruitment.....	85
3.4.1 Participant Demographics	87
3.5 Data Analysis	89
3.5.1 Social Media Audit	91
3.6 Trustworthiness.....	94
3.7 Ethics.....	95
Chapter 4: Results.....	97
4.1 Thematic Analysis	98
4.2 Theme 1: Authenticity	102
4.2.1 Personal versus Professional Self	102
4.2.2 Self-serving	103
4.2.3 Human Element	104
4.2.4 Branding Reputation	105
4.2.5 Balance/Consistency	106
4.2.6 Tall Poppy Syndrome	107
4.3 Theme 2: Connections	108
4.3.1 Digital Self-marketing and Collaborations	110
4.3.2 Digital Self-marketing, and Relationships and Community	111
4.4 Theme 3: Impact	112
4.4.1 Digital Self-marketing and Career Prospects.....	113
4.4.2 Organisational Reputation	114
4.4.3 Measuring Success.....	115
4.4.4 Time Constraints	116
4.5 Theme 4: Public Engagement	117
4.5.1 Citizenship	119
4.5.2 Voice Crafting.....	120
4.5.3 Debating versus Trolling.....	121
4.5.4 Caution with Digital Self-marketing.....	123
4.6 Theme 5: Shifting Sands	125
4.6.1 Digital Self-marketing and External Pressure and Support	126

4.6.2 Digital Self-marketing and Digital Platforms	128
4.6.3 Digital Self-marketing and COVID-19.....	129
4.7 Overview of the Findings.....	130
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	133
5.1 Restating the Research Purpose and Design	134
5.2 Implications for Theory	135
5.2.1 A Digital Self-marketing Framework: New Considerations for Self-marketing in the Digital Age	137
5.2.1.1 Authenticity and Privacy.....	138
5.2.1.2 Branding and the Self.....	140
5.2.1.3 Safety and Harassment	141
5.2.1.4 External Factors: Impact & Institutional Context.....	142
5.2.1.5 Visualizing the Research Outcomes.....	146
5.3 Implications for Practice	151
5.3.1 Digital Self-marketing Guide for Australian Academics.....	151
5.3.1.1 Appropriate Ways to Use Digital Self-marketing for Professional Purposes	152
5.3.1.2 Checklist for Building an Authentic Academic Brand via Digital Self- marketing.....	152
5.3.1.3 Best Practices for Setting Limitations, Boundaries and Safety around Digital Self-marketing	154
5.3.2 Digital Self-marketing Guide for Australian Universities	155
5.3.2.1 Best Practices to Support Academic Staff's Digital Self-marketing Efforts	156
5.4 Limitations	157
5.5 Future Research	158
5.6 Conclusion	163
References	166
Appendices.....	199
Appendix A: Related Publications.....	199
Appendix B: Comparison of Academic Titles in Australia with the US and UK Titles	200
Appendix C: Interview Guide	201
Appendix D: Ethics Approval Letter	204
Appendix E: <i>Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Academics</i>	205
Appendix F: <i>Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Universities</i>	209

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Types of Digital and Social Media Used for Academic Self-marketing	11
Table 2.1: Selected Definitions of Impression Management.....	40
Table 2.2: Selected Definitions of Self-marketing	48
Table 2.3: Selected Definitions of Personal Branding	48
Table 2.4: Selected Definitions of Online Self-marketing.....	57
Table 2.5: Summary of Select Australian University Social Media Policy Content	67
Table 3.1: Participant Demographics.....	88
Table 3.2: Results of Social Media Audit.....	93
Table 4.1: Comments on Digital Self-marketing that Reflect Professional versus Personal Self	103
Table 4.2: Comments on Digital Self-marketing that Reflect Issues about Being Self-serving.	104
Table 4.3: Comments that Reflect the Human Element of Digital Self-marketing	105
Table 4.4: Comments that Reflect the Branding Element of Digital Self-marketing	106
Table 4.5: Comments that Reflect Balance and Consistency with Digital Self-marketing	107
Table 4.6: Comments that Reflect the Tall Poppy Syndrome with Digital Self-marketing	108
Table 4.7: Comments that Reflect the Advantages of Digital Self-marketing for Professional Connections.....	109
Table 4.8: Comments that Reflect the Importance of Collaborations via Digital Self- marketing	110
Table 4.9: Comments that Reflect the Importance of Relationships and Community via Digital Self-marketing	111
Table 4.10: Comments that Reflect Career Prospects via Digital Self-marketing	113
Table 4.11: Comments that Reflect Organisational Reputation via Digital Self-marketing	115
Table 4.12: Comments that Reflect the Importance of Outputs over Digital Self-marketing	116
Table 4.13: Comments that Reflect Time Constraints with Digital Self-marketing.....	117
Table 4.14: Comments that Reflect the Role of Digital Self-marketing in Public Engagement	118
Table 4.15: Comments that Reflect the Role of Digital Self-marketing in Citizenship Behaviour	119

Table 4.16: Comments that Reflect the Role of Voice Crafting in Digital Self-marketing to Engage the Public	121
Table 4.17: Comments that Reflect Debating versus Trolling via Public Engagement in Digital Self-marketing	122
Table 4.18: Comments that Reflect Exercising Caution in Digital Self-marketing	124
Table 4.19: Comments that Reflect External Support to Engage with Digital Self-marketing..	126
Table 2: Comments that Reflect the Use of Twitter and Digital Self-marketing	129
Table 4.21: Comments that Reflect the Impact of COVID-19 on Digital Self-marketing	130
Table 5.1: Proposed Future Research Directions.....	160

List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Chapter 1 Outline	4
Figure 2.1: Outline of Chapter 2	35
Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework Developed from Literature	74
Figure 3.1: Outline of Chapter 3	78
Figure 4.1: Outline of Chapter 4	98
Figure 4.2: Themes Derived from Analysis of Academics' Perceptions of DSM.....	101
Figure 5.1: Outline of Chapter 5	134
Figure 5.1. Updated Conceptual Framework	147
Figure 5.2. Digital Self-Marketing Model	150

List of Abbreviations

ANU	Australian National University
ASNS	Academic social networking sites
CV	Curriculum vitae
DSM	Digital self-marketing
Go8	Group of Eight universities
JCU	James Cook University
SNS	Social networking sites
TEQSA	The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency in Australia
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Abstract

Academics in Australia, as a population, face many challenges in the higher education labour market. Although some of these challenges are also experienced by academics in other countries, the pressures for Australian-based academics are compounded by (1) the smaller size of the Australian higher education system, which consists of a total of 43 universities (Universities Australia 2020); its unique governance nature, which has led to extremely high competition for full-time equivalent positions (Welch 2022); and (2) the contraction of the Australian academic job market during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic due to the system's significant dependence on international student enrolment, with the international education sector shrinking by AU\$13.5 billion from the start of 2020 to the end of 2021 and thousands of academic jobs cut (Hurley 2021). These circumstances have created an extremely competitive, pressurised professional environment for Australian-based academics, making efforts to market and brand themselves critical to their professional success (D'Alessandro et al. 2020; Jayasuriya 2021; Welch 2022). Thus, the central aim of this thesis is to develop knowledge on the ways in which these academics use digital and social media to support their career development.

The need to market oneself and establish a personal brand is increasingly central to professional success for academics, given the volatility of the higher education sector (Welch 2022), and doing so online has become even more imperative during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic because, initially, nearly all interactions occurred in a virtual environment and, currently, many universities have adopted a hybrid model of offline and online classes (Hurley, Hildebrandt & Brisbane 2021). Self-marketing is defined as 'the process of creating professional projections of an ideal self' (Shuker 2014, p. 228) and comprises a recognised set of processes, such as those for product development and promotion. Similarly to other concepts established prior to the advent of the internet, including impression management (Goffman 1959; Leary & Kowalski 1990) and self-presentation (Jones 1964), self-marketing in its original conception (Kotler & Levy 1969) did not account for digital practices around shaping one's brand. Currently, researchers employ different terms across disciplines to represent similar phenomena around the acts of marketing oneself, and the resulting lack of consistency or universality and the significant overlap foster confusion. To clarify these issues, this thesis engages with current scholarship on the use of the internet and social

networking sites (SNSs) for professional branding and marketing in order to develop a framework of *digital self-marketing* (DSM). This aim was achieved through integrating the self-marketing literature with the literature in the fields of sociology, psychology and communication to rethink and evolve the concept of self-marketing and advance existing theories in order to account for the social media era and the new, digital ways in which individuals create and curate their identity and promote their professional achievements.

Using a review of the relevant literature, this thesis investigates how Australian-based academics, defined as individuals employed in an academic role by an Australian university, use digital avenues for self-marketing, and it documents their experiences around the benefits and challenges of using DSM for professional purposes. A grounded theory qualitative research design was adopted to address several research questions for providing a conceptual clarification of DSM among academics. Interviews were conducted with 21 Australian-based academics to determine their perceptions of DSM, wherein five main themes were derived from the systematic coding of their interviews: Authenticity, Connections, Impact, Public Engagement and Shifting Sands. Importantly, these themes and findings provide new and updated knowledge about academics' perceptions of DSM in their work and generate relevant answers to the research questions of this thesis, which thus advances existing theories and contributes practical applications.

The findings indicate that Australian-based academics acknowledge the benefits of DSM, such as how relationship-building with other academics provides potential for research collaboration. It was important to participants that they remained authentic with a somewhat casual persona. They also shared a number of concerns, hesitations and opinions on how DSM should be practiced. A common view was that authenticity is undermined when people use it merely as a forum for self-promotion. In addition, DSM is time-consuming, which is not accounted for in university workload allocation. Difficulty in learning new technology, keeping the personal and professional selves separate and being subjected to online abuse were also concerns raised by participants. They also identified several exogenous factors beyond their individual control that affect their use of DSM. These factors include the COVID-19 pandemic and how it led to the increased use of SNSs to stay connected with others, and the avoidance of self-promotion to be sensitive in the current climate.

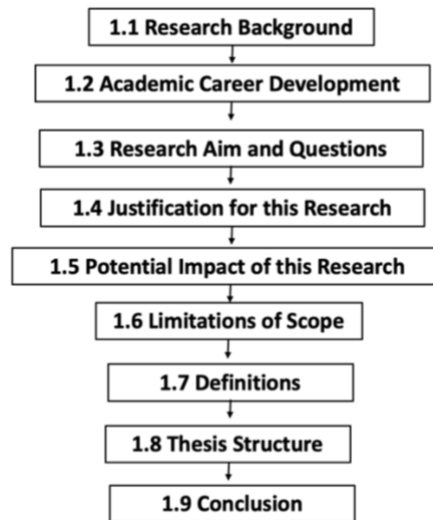
In conclusion, these findings advance knowledge on the benefits and challenges of DSM in the academic career context and specifically related to the Australian academia and they are a valuable addition to the broader field of self-marketing. Last, the research presented in this thesis contributes to the literature by providing an in-depth DSM framework to enumerate new considerations and behaviours around self-marketing in the digital era as well as two practical DSM guides, one for Australian academics and the other for Australian universities, which provide a checklist of considerations for each audience around professional academic social media use, as practical resources that can be used in the higher education sector and in industry.

Keywords: digital self-marketing, self-marketing, academia, impression management, personal branding

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the background of, and the justification for, this research on the digitally based self-marketing efforts of Australian-based academics for the purposes of career enhancement. Section 1.1 addresses the research background and problem: related theoretical definitions are presented in 1.1.1, followed by a brief overview of the different, broad applications of social media in 1.1.2 and a statement of the research problem in 1.1.3. Section 1.2 outlines academic career development in the digital age, comprising a discussion of higher education challenges faced by Australian-based academics in 1.2.1 and an overview of extant research on social networking sites (SNSs) and academic career development in 1.2.2. Section 1.3 then introduces the research aim and questions. Section 1.4 presents the justification for this research, including its contributions to theory and practice. Section 1.5 explains the potential usefulness of the research, Section 1.6 addresses the limitations of scope and Section 1.7 lists the definitions used in this thesis. Section 1.8 presents the thesis structure, and Section 1.9 presents the chapter summary.

Figure 1.1. Chapter 1 Outline



Source. Developed from this research.

1.1 Research Background

The way individuals present themselves professionally and personally inevitably influences how others perceive them (Goffman 1959; Jones 1964). Historically, individuals could navigate the way they were perceived by others only through in-person encounters. People used a range of tools to influence others' perceptions in such face-to-face interactions, from nonverbal cues to the way they dressed, their language choice, and the intonation of their voice (Jones 1964; Jones & Pittman 1982; Leary 1995). The behaviours and strategies that people employ to influence how others view them have been studied and theorised for decades, and entire fields of study have been dedicated to exploring this phenomenon, ranging from 'impression management' (Goffman 1959) to 'self-marketing' (Kotler & Levy 1969).

Individuals—from athletes and actors to politicians—in certain public-facing sectors have been marketing themselves for a long period, but professional publicists have usually handled many of these efforts (Ioan, Luca & Sasu 2014; Kotler et al. 2005). However, individuals' interest in self-marketing has grown notably over the past 30 years because business leaders, consultants and career development practitioners have increasingly emphasised the idea of branding oneself specifically to aid in career advancement (Brown 2014; Manai & Holmlund 2015). In the current labour market, professionals are increasingly expected to market themselves and to establish a personal brand as part of their efforts to advance their career (Duffy & Pooley 2017), and the notion of 'personal branding' has grown in popularity as professionals dedicate concerted efforts to market themselves with the specific goal of career growth (Brooks & Anumudu 2016).

Self-marketing and personal branding practices present an important set of challenges and tensions (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017), including a lack of a theoretical foundation for either concept, the lack of a consistent definition for both concepts, ethical concerns regarding people's ability to alter or embellish the truth via self-marketing (Manai & Holmlund 2015) and a lack of consistency in one's personal brand due to the multifaceted nature of human beings (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017).

Thus, there are many challenges surrounding the pursuit of self-marketing practices in the traditional, non-digital world, and similarly, the move into a digital world presents an entirely new set of issues. As the internet slowly evolved from its initial 'read-only' iteration (Web 1.0) in the

late twentieth century into the current dynamic virtual ecosystem (Web 2.0) for connection and engagement (Cormode & Krishnamurthy 2008), and now into the emerging metaverse (Web 3.0) featuring ‘a three-dimensional virtual world inhabited by avatars of real people’ (Kim 2021) have grappled individually and collectively as a society with making sense of this new online world—and, indeed, with presenting themselves in it (Belk 2013; Cunningham 2012). Following the emergence of SNSs such as *Facebook*, *LinkedIn* and *Twitter*, people discovered that they suddenly needed to pay attention to how they present themselves not just in person, but also online (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013; Ellison, Heino & Gibbs 2006; Sheth & Solomon 2014). The far-reaching influence of the internet and SNSs has significant implications for modern culture and society and has contributed to the so-called attention economy (Brody 2001) in which large masses of people compete online for others’ attention, fuelling a significant rise in ‘ordinary’ people’s self-branding activities on SNS platforms, which ‘pivot on attention and narrative, yet significantly extend the potential for fame and celebrity’, and leading to a rise in ‘micro-celebrities’ who use social media strategically to gain fame (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017, p. 6).

The collective understanding of the elements that constitute self-marketing, personal branding and impression management—among other related efforts—has been complicated by the complexities of digital technology and the proliferation of ways that individuals manipulate their identities online (Belk 2013; Cunningham 2012). The longstanding theories of impression management (Goffman 1959) and self-marketing (Kotler & Levy 1969) have not evolved or adapted adequately to address the altered dynamics of these efforts within the digital age, and additional research is needed to facilitate this evolution in conceptual understanding.

1.1.1 Existing Definitions Related to Marketing Oneself

For the purposes of this thesis, the original definitions of the parent theories (Perry 2002) addressed in this thesis have been adopted in an effort to understand the theoretical foundation before seeking to evolve beyond it. The concepts of self-marketing, impression management and personal branding are well-established in the career management literature, but personal branding is not considered a parent theory for this research since it focuses more on the personal than the professional aspect of presenting oneself.

‘Self-marketing’ is a concept that Kotler and Levy originally introduced in 1969. They defined it as ‘the process of creating professional projections of an ideal self’ (Watkin Tench (cited in Smith 1985), which involves a recognised set of processes similar to those used in product development and promotion. ‘Impression management’, the second parent theory, was developed by Goffman in 1959. It is defined as ‘the process through which individuals try to control the impressions other people form of them’ (Klenke 2017, p. 104). ‘Personal branding’, a much newer concept, encompasses ‘a strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself’ (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018, p. 6). An in-depth review of these concepts as currently presented in the literature is provided in Chapter 2.

1.1.2 Different Applications of Social Media

An analysis of modern practices around social media reveals that it has a wide range of applications (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017), many of which fall outside the scope of this thesis. Social media use first began at the personal level, with individuals seeking to engage with people in their broader network socially (Cormode & Krishnamurthy 2008)—as observed with early SNSs, such as *MySpace* and *Facebook* (Van Dijck 2013). Furthermore, with the aforementioned rise in micro-celebrities (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017), many individuals dedicate a significant amount of time and effort to marketing, branding and promoting their personal selves online (Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011; Rosen, Stefanone & Lackaff 2010; Van Dijck 2013). These efforts are not related to career objectives or professional development, but rather, to people’s desire to achieve fame in and of itself (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017). Via SNSs, individuals are able to create carefully crafted online personas using different types of media, including photo galleries and videos, which they can manipulate to project a certain image (Bugeja 2006; Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018; Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008). People also have the ability to create different online personas for different audiences or objectives, and it has thus become increasingly common for individuals to establish separate profiles for professional and personal purposes (Van Dijck 2013).

On the professional front, the widespread adoption of digital technology has further contributed to the growth of self-marketing efforts around career advancement (Greenhaus & Kossek 2014; Shuker 2014). Prior research in a range of non-academic contexts, including business and psychology, has highlighted the professional benefits of personal digital branding (Allison, Boutin

& Cumiskey 2018; Cederberg 2017; Kleppinger & Cain 2015) and that workers devote effort to promoting themselves online for achieving the specific objective of career progression (Greenhaus & Kossek 2014). Moreover, the digital management of oneself has been identified as a key element of successful communication with co-workers and colleagues (McKenna, N & Thomson 2015). In particular, in the fields of health science and education science, it is relatively common practice to use social media to share professional practices and resources and build sustainable professional networks (Bruguera, Guitert & Romeu 2019).

For academics, applying similar self-marketing tactics online can help bolster the social impact and broad reach of their research (Jordan 2019; Kozinets 2016; Lupton 2014), which is closely associated with the influence of their professional brand (Roberts, Kayande & Stremersch 2014). Academics at universities must increasingly conform to market values to demonstrate the impact of their work and make professional progress (Carpenter, Cone & Sarli 2014) because of growing pressure to ensure their research has an impact, both academically and socially (Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018; Welch 2022). As a result, many academics are turning to digital media platforms and SNSs to expand their visibility and that of their work (Barbour & Marshall 2012; Brown 2014; Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; Chugh, Grose & Macht 2021; Granitz & Forman 2015; Kozinets 2016; Lupton 2014; Trefzger & Dünfelder 2016). However, academics, as a broad population, still hold many reservations about social media use, viewing it as a source of stress and a waste of time, as well as feeling an aversion to self-promotion as an academic or viewing it as diminishing their research impact by sharing their work in a public, unregulated forum (Greifeneder et al. 2018; Jordan & Weller 2018; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Van Noorden 2014).

In the specific context of Australia, there is a notable dearth of research on Australian-based academics' social media use, partially due to the extremely small size of the country's higher education market, which consists of a total of 43 universities (Universities Australia 2020), which employ less than 200,000 full-time equivalent academic staff. Lupton (2014) and Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2018) contributed valuable knowledge regarding Australian-based academics' use of social media and its benefits and drawbacks. In Lupton's 2014 online survey of international academics, 25% of the responses were from Australian academics and the study reported mixed perspectives regarding social media use, such as the benefits of establishing networks and publicising research, and concerns about privacy issues and the blurred boundaries

between the personal and professional selves. Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson's (2018) compilation of research by international scholars on the 'digital academic' primarily presents studies conducted by Australian researchers with an Australian or international participant base, which document the following aspects: the use of blogging by international doctoral researchers to support their academic writing and development as scholars (Mewburn & Thomson 2018); the act of constructing an online identity for modern Australian academics as messy and blurred between categories of 'static; networked; comprehensive; and teaching persona' (Marshall, Barbour & Moore 2018, p. 60); and the challenges of Asian Australian scholars' reliance on digital networks and collaborations, which negatively affects recognised research output, and in turn, academic career progression (Khoo 2018).

Notably, extant research with an Australian participant base regarding academics' use of digital technology and social media does not address Australian-based academics as a unique population for study, nor does it consider or investigate the differentiated experiences of Australian-based academics as against those of academics from other countries. Considering that academics in Australia are facing extremely high competition for full-time equivalent positions owing to the smaller size and the unique governance nature of the Australian higher education system (Welch 2022) and the significant contraction of the country's academic job market during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (Hurley 2021), research on the ways in which this specific population is navigating career development through digital based self-marketing is particularly timely and warranted.

1.1.2.1 Continuum of Self-marketing Strategies Online

There are a variety of ways for academics to engage in online self-marketing using digital and social media (Enli 2017; Gandini 2016; Lupton 2014; Paquette 2013). For the purposes of this thesis, Aichner and Jacob's (2015) definition of social media as encompassing the following 13 subtypes (p. 259) is adopted and expanded to apply to academic usage with three additions:

- blogs;
- business networks;
- collaborative projects;
- enterprise social networks;

- forums;
- microblogs;
- *online research databases (*this subtype has been added*);
- *personal websites (*this subtype has been added*);
- photo sharing;
- product/services reviews;
- social bookmarking;
- social gaming;
- SNSs;
- *academic social networking sites (*this subcategory has been added*);
- video sharing;
- virtual worlds.

Two additional social media subtypes—*online research databases* and *personal websites*—and *academic social networking sites* (ASNSs) as a subcategory of social networks, have been added because these are commonly used by academics (Bhardwaj 2017; Chugh, Grose & Macht 2021; Duffy & Pooley 2017; Jordan 2019; Martín-Martín et al. 2019; Megwalu 2015; Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017; Ortega 2015; Yang & Meho 2007). Of the full continuum of digital and social media types in this list, those that apply specifically to academics’ self-marketing online include (a) blogs, (b) forums, (c) microblogs, (d) online research databases, (e) personal websites, (f) social bookmarking, (g) SNSs and (h) video sharing.

When evaluating a digital and social media type for use by academics, two main considerations are (1) whether it offers them the ability to display their research publications, and (2) the level of individual control they have over the content displayed. Although the answers to these questions are not always straightforward, a comparison of these different types of digital and social media reveals that not all of these serve the same purposes and they therefore likely support different types of self-marketing endeavours by academics. Table 1.1 provides brief definitions and characteristics of each type for the purposes of comparison.

Table 1.1: Types of Digital and Social Media Used for Academic Self-marketing

Social Media Type	Definition	Ability to Display Publications?	Level of Individual Control	Examples (if Public Website)
Blogs	Short for ‘web log’, it is ‘a chronological list of postings, which can be read and commented upon by visitors’ (Aichner & Jacob 2015, p. 259).	Yes, if there is an About page	Individual fully in control	N/A
Forums	‘A virtual discussion platform where users can ask and/or answer other users’ questions and exchange thoughts, opinions or experiences’ asynchronously (Aichner & Jacob 2015, p. 260).	No	Partial; individual controls own responses but has no control over others’ responses or the platforms’ rankings, filters or algorithms	Quora.com; Reddit.com
Microblogs	Blogs that ‘restrict the length of postings to approximately 200 characters, which ... may include pictures or weblinks’ (Aichner & Jacob 2015, p. 260).	Yes, if there is an About page	Individual fully in control	Tumblr.com; Twitter.com can be used as a microblog
Online research databases	Online, academic ‘multidisciplinary databases’ that provide ‘coverage of the scientific and scholarly literature’, which may offer paid or free access (Martín-Martín et al. 2019, p. 2).	Yes	No individual control	Google Scholar; Web of Science; Scopus
Personal websites	Webpages that ‘provide personal information about people, whereby the content is self-selected’ (Weibel, Wissmath & Groner 2010, p. 2).	Yes	Individual fully in control	N/A

Social Media Type	Definition	Ability to Display Publications?	Level of Individual Control	Examples (if Public Website)
Social bookmarking	‘Saving and organising internet bookmarks at a centralised platform in order to share them with friends and other users’ (Aichner & Jacob 2015, p. 260).	No	Partial; individual controls own postings but has no control over others’ responses or the platforms’ rankings, filters or algorithms	Delicious.com; Pinterest.com
Social networking sites	‘Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system’ (Boyd & Ellison 2007, p. 211).	Potentially; platform-specific	Partial; individual controls the content on own profile and the content they publish publicly but has no control over others’ responses and engagement or the platforms’ rankings, filters or algorithms	Facebook; Instagram; LinkedIn; Twitter
Academic social networking sites	Online social networking platforms that ‘have sought to bring the benefits of online networking to a specifically academic audience’ (Jordan 2019, p. 2).	Yes	Partial to minimal control, depending on platform	Academia.edu; Mendeley; ResearchGate
Video sharing	‘Video-sharing platforms allow users to upload and share personal, business or royalty-free videos and to watch them legally’ (Aichner & Jacob 2015, p. 260).	No	Individual fully in control over content published and whether to allow comments	

Despite the growing body of literature on academics' use of social and digital media, the full context of that use remains unclear (Chugh, Grose & Macht 2021) because extant studies cover disparate topics and their findings about the efficacy of social media are wide-ranging and often contradictory (Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018). Given this context, there is no clearly defined continuum or hierarchy that ranks the effectiveness or impact of digital and social media types for academics. Instead, much of the literature has investigated academics' use of individual types of social media (e.g. Jordan 2019; Muscanell & Utz 2017; Stewart, B 2018).

Further, ASNSs, such as *ResearchGate*, *Academia.edu* and *Mendeley*, are specifically designed for academics to display their publications (Duffy & Pooley 2017) but offer minimal opportunity to customise their profiles. In contrast, broader SNSs, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, are not designed for publication display, although LinkedIn does have a section for it. It is important to note, though, that in practice (based on the researchers' observation), academics may publish links to publications on any platform, including Facebook, Twitter, or even Instagram. Academic usage of SNS has been documented across several social media platforms, including Twitter, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, and Academia.edu (Burrell & Noel 2020; Quan-Haase & Fairbairn 2019; Witteman et al. 2019).

However, these SNSs do allow academics full control over their profile and the content they post (Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka 2016; Van Dijck 2013), although they cannot control these platforms' algorithms that determine the number and type of users who views their posts nor the ways in which other users engage with them. Conversely, personal websites typically afford academics absolute control over every single aspect of what is published; however, the viewership of personal websites is usually minimal unless the individual deliberately drives traffic to it through other publicity or marketing efforts (Bossio & Sacco 2017).

On the other end of the spectrum, online research databases, including *Google Scholar*, *Web of Science (ISI)* and *Scopus*, display the publications and the citation data of academics, and their algorithms enable complex search and locate features (Martín-Martín et al. 2019). These platforms record citation scores, which nearly always fall outside the control of individual academics (Yang & Meho 2007), but the aforementioned SNSs and ASNSs do not record these scores. However, unlike in the case of online research databases, profile creation on SNSs and ASNSs is a deliberate

act—although the level of detail allowed in these profiles differs widely between platforms (Duffy & Pooley 2017).

Finally, it is important to note that new SNS platforms will inevitably emerge, and current platforms wax and wane in terms of popularity over time. Given the findings from the related literature in this section, exploring academics' perceptions of the entire range of digital and social media types available to this population for digitally based self-marketing is warranted. Next, the full research problem is elaborated.

1.1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Although certain scholars have begun to apply the concept of self-marketing to online activities (e.g. Shepherd 2005; Shuker 2014), in its original conception (Kotler & Levy 1969), self-marketing did not encompass digitally based activities for marketing oneself professionally. Moreover, researchers currently use different terms across disciplines to refer to similar activities associated with marketing oneself, and there is a notable lack of consistency or universality, as well as significant overlap between terms, which fosters confusion. In addition, much of the literature has focused on academics' use of a specific social media type (e.g. Elsayed 2016; Jordan 2019; Muscanell & Utz 2017; Stewart, B 2018), failing to explore their digital and social media usage on a broader continuum, and there is extremely limited research specifically on the online self-marketing practices of Australian-based academics despite the unique challenges they currently face (D'Alessandro et al. 2020; Jayasuriya 2021; Welch 2022), as discussed previously.

To clarify these issues, this research aims to evolve the self-marketing concept for the digital and social media era to create a new framework of *digital self-marketing* (DSM) that enumerates the considerations and behaviours around self-marketing in the digital era across digital and social media types. To this end, this thesis explores Australian-based academics' experiences and perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using self-marketing online for professional purposes. Better understanding of these topics will provide important information to academics seeking to advance their career in highly competitive university settings as well as to universities seeking to provide more formal guidance on social media use to faculty.

1.2 Academic Career Development

Academic career development is the process by which ‘employers as well as scholars working in research, teaching, and/or administrative roles in academic and higher education contexts manage various tasks, behaviours, and experiences within and across jobs and organisations over time, with implications for scholars’ work-related identity’ (Zacher et al. 2018, p. 357). Career development is critical for academics across disciplines and at all stages of seniority, although the development needs vary by stage (Zacher et al. 2018). For example, whereas early-career academics, who are within five years of their first academic appointment, need growth and mentorship (Farley et al. 2008; Ranieri et al. 2016), later career academics are more interested in ‘promoting generativity and fostering a sense of legacy’ (Zacher et al. 2018, p. 10). Despite the importance of career development for older academics, the majority of research on academic career development focuses on early-career academics (e.g. Farley et al. 2008; Ranieri et al. 2016; Sutherland & Taylor 2011), and the factors that support their career exploration and establishment (Zacher et al. 2018).

Although academic career development tactics have demonstrated some success (Zacher et al. 2018), certain research suggests that academic success is largely based on coincidence or on being in the right place at the right time (Balen et al. 2012), thus challenging the belief that deliberate efforts by individual academics to improve their career prospects will have a notable impact. Moreover, numerous barriers to academics’ success have been documented as being inherent to the higher education sector, which can therefore act as roadblocks to the efficacy of individuals’ academic career development efforts (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks 2020). These barriers include role overload, injustice in workplace practices and review processes, the gendered nature of networking and mentoring in the academy and challenges with isolation, exclusion, and discrimination (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks 2020; Kraimer et al. 2015).

Compounding these challenges is the growing competition within academic environments as higher education has become increasingly commoditised (Barcan 2016; Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks 2020), particularly in Australia where the higher education system is smaller (Universities Australia 2020) and has a unique governance structure. This structure places mounting pressure on academics’ research impact as the entire sector shrinks in the aftermath of

the COVID-19 pandemic following the significant revenue loss due to low international student enrolment and cuts to academic jobs (Hurley 2021; Welch 2022). Academics may therefore benefit from strategic self-marketing efforts to help enhance their professional reputation via digital and social media (Lupton 2014; Shepherd 2005; Shuker 2014; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019). The specific challenges facing Australian-based academics are enumerated in the following section.

1.2.1 Australian-based Academics' Higher Education Challenges

Australian-based academics, defined as individuals employed as academics in Australian universities, face many challenges as professionals in the higher education labour market in 2022. Although many of these challenges are also experienced by academics in other countries, the pressures for Australian-based academics are compounded by (1) the smaller size of the Australian higher education system, which consists of a total of 43 universities (Universities Australia 2020), and its unique governance nature, which has led to extremely high competition for full-time equivalent positions, and (2) the contraction of the Australian academic job market during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the system's significant dependence on international student enrolment, which has resulted in the international education sector shrinking by AU\$13.5 billion from the start of 2020 to the end of 2021 and thousands of academic jobs cut (Hurley 2021).

1.2.1.1 Unique Pressures Stemming from University Governance in Australia

The COVID crisis notably worsened the job climate in the Australian higher education system, but conditions present before the pandemic contributed to the system's precarious position leading up to the crisis. Many of the modern pressures on Australian-based academics can be traced to the government's move in the late 1980s to a performance-based funding model for Australian universities (Guthrie & Neumann 2007; Steenkamp & Roberts 2020). The shift away from an academic-driven to a market-driven university model was prompted by New Public Management reforms in the Australian public sector, which was accompanied by a gradual withdrawal of government funding (Guthrie & Neumann 2007).

In this regard, competition in the global higher education sector has increased owing to its commoditisation following the emergence of more private, for-profit educational institutions in

recent decades (Barcan 2016; Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks 2020; The Institute for College Access & Success 2019). However, the unique nature of Australia's university governance system has further exacerbated competition for academics in the country (Steenkamp & Roberts 2020). The primary differentiating factor is that education is a federal responsibility in Australia, meaning all universities, both public and private, are overseen by the federal government (Guthrie & Neumann 2007). Specifically, Australian higher education institutions are regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) which upholds rigorous research standards (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018; Welch 2022).

The federal government assumed full financial responsibility for universities in 1973, but the introduction of New Public Management reforms in the mid-1980s prompted a move away from full university funding to partial support or subsidisation by the mid- to late 1990s (Guthrie & Neumann 2007). This transformation has led to a hyper-competitive research funding environment in which grants are awarded according to performance and many institutions are vying for limited funds (Guthrie & Neumann 2007; Steenkamp & Roberts 2020). Research funds are granted using a specific calculation of performance, which is determined using set formulas involving a combination of inputs (including grants awarded and number of higher degree research student places) and outputs (including the number of publications and student degree completions; Guthrie & Neumann 2007). New government funding cuts in recent years have further curtailed the funds available for research, including the limit of the Commonwealth Grant Scheme for 2018 and 2019 to the 2017 levels (Jayasuriya 2021).

Australia's higher education system differs from other leading systems in terms of size and government control and support, including those in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). The US higher education system is large and diverse, and it has 3,982 universities (defined as the total number of degree-granting postsecondary institutions) of which only 1,625 are public (National Center for Education Statistics 2020). The educational standards of private and public universities vary widely throughout the country, and it does not have nationally enforced standards for postsecondary education, although the United States Department of Education's (2022) accreditation process helps 'ensure that institutions of higher education meet acceptable levels of quality' (para 1)—which determines the universities whose students are eligible for federal financial aid.

Conversely, the UK has 165 higher education institutions (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2021), of which the vast majority receive public funding and only five fully private universities receive no public funding (Unipage 2022). However, in contrast to the Australian higher education system, UK public universities operate independently—each individual institution sets governance, and the government has not mandated any educational standards (United Kingdom Committee of University Chairs 2018), beyond the degree awarding powers and university titles that are granted by the Privy Council in England (United Kingdom Department for Education 2017).

Thus, the significant role that the Australian Government plays in regulating educational and research standards among higher education institutions differentiates it from other leading nations. The governmental pressure regarding research quality can at least partially be attributed to the objective of maintaining or increasing the global rankings of the country's universities to ensure a significant number of institutions remain among the top 100 in the world (Welch 2022). The 2020 Academic Ranking of World Universities listed seven Australian institutions among that number, whereas the Times rankings listed six and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings listed seven (Welch 2022).

Given the aforementioned performance-based funding awards offered by the federal government and additional cuts to funding in 2018 and 2019, academics in Australian universities face extreme pressure to publish in the top-ranked journals for the sole purpose of research output despite mounting responsibilities in other areas (Bosanquet et al. 2017; Gaita 2012; Steenkamp & Roberts 2020).¹ Many academics feel the pressure to contribute to their department at an equal level as colleagues because of the departmental performance metrics imposed by the federal government,

¹ For the top-ranked journals, Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) categorises the A* to be the top 5% and A-grade journals as the next top 15% journals, whereas the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) ranks the top 5.5% as A* journals, followed by the next 19.5% to be A-grade journals (Haddow 2022). Likewise, another ranking used in Australia is Q1 journals, which are the top 25% or first quartile of journals as ranked by SCImago (Mañana-Rodríguez 2015). The journal rankings are used for assessing the research quality and in promotions for academic ranks, and certain studies have criticised the bucket classification of journals for the determination of research quality and have highlighted the disparities in the ranking systems, such as subjectivity in opinion (Jong & Veld 2020; Mañana-Rodríguez 2015; Moosa 2016). The drive to publish in prominent journals in itself is not negative, but these demands need to be met at the expense of other types of academic engagement that provide opportunities for valuable scholarly discourse and production, such as writing books (instead of journal articles), conducting interdisciplinary research, contributing essays to an anthology or book in another discipline and hosting an interdisciplinary conference (Gaita 2012).

and employment opportunities for early-career academics increasingly emphasise research capability and potential (Pitt & Mewburn 2016). Although the approach to measures of research quality is somewhat similar in the UK and Australia, the Australian formulas appear to emphasise quantity over quality owing to their heavy reliance on citation metrics (Reigersberg 2018). This aspect has created an environment in which academics are incentivised to publish merely for the sake of publication, leading to some institutions providing monetary rewards to researchers to motivate them to publish in highly ranked journals, and universities offering tools and strategies to faculty to plan their publications to be the most advantageous to the institution (Reigersberg 2018). Publication pressures only compound an already competitive environment and raise the bar for entry to new academics entering the field and casual academic staff seeking a full-time equivalent position.²

The mounting pressure and high competition among Australian-based academics, coupled with the dwindling government funding for Australian institutions—for the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, the proportion of government funding in university budgets decreased from nearly 80% in 1986 to less than 40% by 2018 (Welch 2022)—led to aggressive international student recruitment and growing dependence on international student fees (Welch 2022). These circumstances, in turn, made Australia highly vulnerable to changes in international student enrolment, which resulted in the current crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hurley 2021; Welch 2022).

1.2.1.2 Contraction of the Australian Academic Labour Market during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Because of the travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting drastic declines in international student enrolment, the estimated losses in the Australian higher education sector are AUD 13.5 billion (Hurley 2021), causing university job cuts of approximately 27,000 jobs between March 2020 and 2021—including approximately 6,700 full-time equivalent roles (Hare 2022). A report from the University of Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education found that the numbers of casual staff were cut by 30% in 2019–2021 (Larkins 2021). Taken

² Notably, Australians use slightly different classifications of academic titles than the rest of the world, although attempts have been made to align them with North American and British systems (Cavana 1999; University of Western Australia 2015). The five-level Australian academic ranks are Professors (Level E), Associate Professors (Level D), Senior Lecturers (Level C), Lecturers (Level B) and Associate Lecturers (Level A; Bornholt, Poole & Hattie 2015). A comparison of these levels with the academic ranks in the UK and US is provided in Table A, Appendix B.

together, these losses have significantly contracted the academic labour market across the country, leading to an even more oversaturated, competitive landscape for Australian-based academics (Welch 2022).

The cost cutting and the elimination of academic jobs has affected the roles and responsibilities of those positions that were not cut. The mounting responsibilities for a single academic are tied to the market-driven model that expects universities and departments to do more with less and adds new administrative responsibilities onto positions that were previously solely focused on teaching (Steenkamp & Roberts 2020). Nearly 90% of Australian academics reported having worked at least 10–12 hours per week in excess of their contracted workload in the past six months, which correlates to the fact that the psychological wellbeing of Australian academics is significantly below population standards, and that of male Australian academics is particularly concerning (Fetherston et al. 2021). However, given the fewer full-time equivalent positions available and the oversaturated labour market for those positions, some academics may hesitate to leave their roles despite the challenging circumstances. These data not only call for action at the organisational and the governmental levels (Fetherston et al. 2021), but also reflect the precarious position in which Australian-based academics find themselves at present and the critical importance of establishing a strong professional reputation to be able to secure the most advantageous academic opportunities possible.

Higher education is undergoing a transformation globally, and thus, this transformation is not unique to Australia. However, a confluence of factors has put domestic Australian-based academics in a unique and especially challenging position as they strive to achieve professional advancement and success in a higher education market, which, by many standards, is in severe crisis. As indicated in the previous section, this crisis has been caused by the federal oversight of all Australian universities, the federal control over funding according to performance metrics and the contraction of the job market during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the heavy reliance on international student tuition (Hurley 2021; Larkins 2021; Welch 2022). Therefore, this research, which explores how Australian-based academics are navigating their self-marketing amid the pandemic and the ongoing crisis in higher education, is timely.

1.2.2 Social Networking Sites and Academic Career Development

Academics at institutions with a higher status are often ‘in the right place at the right time’, and have more access to institutional advantages, such as widespread support, resources and professional connections. These advantages aid them to consistently produce high-quality academic research (Valle & Schultz 2011). Conversely, academics who lack access to such benefits by virtue of their institution are at a significant disadvantage. Networking and self-marketing online, however, can help them overcome such disadvantages by supporting their professional development and increasing their career opportunities through professional, emotional, social and psychological support (Ismail & Rasdi 2007).

A prime example of using self-marketing online as part of one’s career development efforts is in the publishing realm. A major pressure that academics face is the pressure to publish, which has been further heightened for Australian-based academics, as discussed in the previous section. Professional reputations, income, collaborations, grants and career opportunities are often contingent upon publishing research papers (Miller, Taylor & Bedeian 2011). This pressure can increase academics’ stress levels and decrease creativity, innovation and relevance in their research (Miller, Taylor & Bedeian 2011). Co-authoring publications with influential professionals may also increase their chances of receiving larger grants (Ismail & Rasdi 2007), which is necessary for academics to continue producing high-quality research, boost their social and professional reputations for recognition and open up new career opportunities (Bloch, Graversen & Pedersen 2014). Despite the importance of publishing to academic careers, publishing in academic journals can be a challenging endeavour for academics who face resource disadvantages.

Academic publishing is costly and growing more expensive. Many libraries can no longer afford access to all relevant journals their academics may use for research. The rise of e-publishing has become a viable solution, since it reduces production time, eliminates length limits and facilitates faster peer-reviewing processes. Swifter communication, broader access and the ability to enrich content with digital media has made web publishing much more feasible for many academics and increased the networking opportunities for researchers in need of encouragement and support (Kling & Callahan 2001). Although some equitability and cost issues remain in web publishing, the increased accessibility has enabled many more academics to achieve widespread recognition

for their research (Kling & Callahan 2001). Web publishing combined with the use of a digital form of self-marketing and SNSs has enabled academics to achieve greater visibility for their work, reach a wider audience to expand their professional networks and create more career opportunities for themselves, regardless of institutional limitations (Ismail & Rasdi 2007).

Web publishing and the rise of SNSs have paved the way for the development of altmetrics. The term altmetrics refers to the ‘study and use of scholarly impact measures based on activity in online tools and environments’ (Priem, Growth & Taraborelli 2012, para 6). These metrics go beyond the traditional publication metrics of citations and downloads to include the full digital footprint of an article, including online mentions and posts about the publication on multiple SNS platforms. Many journals now include an altmetrics summary statistic on the webpages of individual research articles, which provides more detailed information about specific online coverage in the full altmetrics assessment. Although altmetrics assessment is a relatively new method of quantifying the broad social impact and the reach of scholarly articles online (Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018), they are gaining traction among academics and universities rapidly, particularly for hiring and tenure considerations (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; Konkiel, Sugimoto & Williams 2016). Many Australian universities now use altmetric tools, such as [Altmetric Explorer](#), to inform decisions about promotions and tenure or permanent positions, including University of Adelaide, University of South Australia and Australian National University (ANU), based on information obtained from their respective websites. As researchers attempt to stand out in a crowded academic market, the rise of altmetrics underscores the potential benefits to academics who use DSM as part of their career development efforts.

In summary, to stand out in the competitive academic world, academics are expected to actively promote themselves and their work. Currently, modern academics intentionally engage in online self-marketing and personal branding tactics to set themselves apart from others in a crowded market (Chugh, Grose & Macht 2021; Kozinets 2016; Lupton 2014; Mutum 2011). Nevertheless, to date, the literature on how academics use social media and DSM tools is limited (Bik & Goldstein 2013; Goodier & Czerniewicz 2014; Minocha & Petres 2013; Veletsianos & Kimmons 2012), and some academics themselves remain sceptical of the benefits of sharing their research online with broad audiences. In the next section, the overall research aim and the subsequent research questions are explained.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

This research focusses on the DSM strategy of Australian-based academics in the higher education field. To guide the review of literature and this research, to provide an overall understanding of the types of DSM strategies employed by academics and in accordance with the parent disciplines of impression management and self-marketing, four preliminary research questions (RQs) were developed.

RQ1: How are academics creating and curating their digital identities?

That is, given that the management of one's professional identity online is now widely considered to be part of a successful academic career, but the research on how academics use and perceive DSM is limited:

RQ2a: How do academics perceive digital self-marketing?

RQ2b: What are the hesitancies for adoption?

Namely, as the use of DSM and social networking systems increases among academics, so too do the perceptions (of those that utilise this form of self-marketing) and concerns (i.e. the barriers to adoption) regarding the use of such self-marketing tactics online.

RQ3: How are academics using digital self-marketing to self-promote?

That is, this thesis focuses on the ways in which academics are actually utilising DSM, including the specific online tools, the platforms and the websites they use. Specific DSM strategies put in place by academics will also be considered.

RQ4: What impact do academics perceive that DSM has had on their career?

The final research question seeks to understand the perceptions of academics about how DSM has helped their careers. Thus, this research seeks to develop a theory that facilitates a deeper understanding of academics' experiences with, and perceptions of, DSM strategies and tactics and the ways that they may successfully use these. An initial conceptual framework was developed, presented in Chapter 2, showing where the proposed concept of DSM sits in relation to the parent

theories of impression management (Goffman 1959) and self-marketing (Kotler & Levy 1969), and other related literature, highlighting the different disciplines it intersects in relation to the timeline of pre-web and post-web scholarship.

From the literature review, a foundational understanding of DSM, as both concept and practice, was developed. Self-marketing is still an emerging area of scholarship, and there is a notable lack of consistency or universality in its conceptualisation in the modern era, which fosters confusion. The literature review thus highlighted the need to rethink and evolve the concept of *self-marketing* to account for the social media era and the new, digital ways that individuals create and curate their identity and promote their professional achievements. This practice has been termed *digital self-marketing* (DSM) for this research.

Furthermore, the literature review indicated that there is still a dearth of research on academics' social media use (Sutherland et al. 2020) and that a significant portion of the existing research has focused on their use of a single type of social media (e.g. Elsayed 2016; Jordan 2019; Muscanell & Utz 2017; Stewart, B 2018). Consequently, current research has not explored the digital and social media use of academics on a broader continuum, nor captured their lived experiences of the practice of self-marketing online. The key issue identified for further research was how academics are using digital avenues for self-marketing and their experiences related to the benefits and challenges of using DSM for professional purposes, leading to the development of the four research questions for this study. The population of Australian-based academics was chosen owing to the unique challenges they face in the labour market (D'Alessandro et al. 2020; Jayasuriya 2021; Welch 2022) and to provide richer, more focused insights on a delimited population. Their personal life was excluded from the study because it does not apply to self-marketing efforts specifically related to the professional career of academics.

1.4 Justification for This Research

This research can be justified on two main grounds, first, the potential contributions to theory, and second, the relevance of DSM to industry and practice.

1.4.1 Contributions to Theory

Self-marketing (Kotler & Levy 1969; Kotler et al. 2005; Shepherd 2005; Shuker 2014), impression management (Goffman 1959; Peck & Hogue 2018; Tedeschi 1981) and personal branding (Gandini 2016; Manai & Holmlund 2015; Shepherd 2005) are established concepts that have been applied in the career management literature. However, the term self-marketing was developed in the pre-internet era (e.g. Kotler & Levy 1969), and hence, the original concept does not account for the shifting behaviours and practices around marketing oneself using digital media. Although select studies have applied the self-marketing concept in the digital era (e.g. Shepherd 2005; Shuker 2014), they have not focused on defining the ways digital tools are used for self-marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the understanding and conceptualisation of self-marketing to evolve it for the new digital era.

The practice of marketing oneself in the digital era has been specifically attracted limited research attention in the academic setting (Lupton 2014; Sutherland et al. 2020). Despite a growing body of research on academics' use of social media (e.g. Chugh, Grose & Macht 2021; Lupton 2014; Seaman & Tinti-Kane 2013; Van Noorden 2014; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019), few studies have explored academics' social media experiences or behaviours for the purpose of career advancement (Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019).

Yet, academic researchers are increasingly under pressure to stand out in a highly competitive environment and to prove that their work has both academic and social effects (Barcan 2016; Carpenter, Cone & Sarli 2014; Duffy & Pooley 2017; Jordan & Weller 2018; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018). Many are turning to marketing themselves online as a way to create a personal brand, expand their professional network and increase the visibility of their research (Villamar 2017). Nevertheless, a large percentage of academics remain sceptical of the authenticity of such tactics and the effectiveness of SNSs for disseminating their research (Jordan & Weller 2018; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Van Noorden 2014), whereas other academics are reluctant to use social media for professional purposes owing to privacy and safety concerns (Cassidy, W, Faucher & Jackson 2017, 2019; Lupton 2014; Veletsianos et al. 2018). This fact has raised questions, such as why and how academics use self-marketing strategies in the digital era, and the perceived effect of such tactics on their career trajectories. Furthermore, while research on

academic career development shows that it has some impact (Zacher et al. 2018), other research suggests that academics' career success is attributable more to coincidence than to any deliberate efforts on their part (Balen et al. 2012). Given the lack of consensus in the current literature in this area, the theoretical contributions of this thesis are as follows:

Contribution 1. This thesis advances existing research regarding the effectiveness of incorporating digital and social media efforts into academic career development endeavours by documenting the lived experiences of a group of academics and performing thematic analysis to identify salient themes in their experiences.

Contribution 2. This thesis synthesised and categorised the disparate definitions and constructions of the parent theories (Perry 2002) of *impression management* and *self-marketing*, and the related sub-theories of *personal branding* and *self-presentation*. This process culminated in the mapping of the relationship between the extant literature on this important topic, as shown in the conceptual framework in Figure 2.2, which thus deepens the knowledge in this area.

Contribution 3. By integrating literature from different disciplines on self-marketing, this thesis elaborated and advanced the self-marketing concept to account for digital media behaviours and practices and the construction of the digital self. This approach resulted in the conceptualisation and the definition of the term *digital self-marketing* put forward in this thesis.

Contribution 4. This thesis advances research on the likely effects of external factors beyond individual academics' control on their career development and on their digital and social media activities, particularly in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the ensuing higher education crisis in Australia.

Contribution 5. This research contributes a new theoretical model, as shown in Figure 4.2, the *digital self-marketing framework*, which was developed from the findings of this research and which advances self-marketing theory to account for the complex, layered endeavour of academics' digitally based self-marketing efforts.

The literature review in Chapter 2 presents this literary integration and expounds on the preliminary conceptual framework, which provides the foundation upon which the DSM concept was further developed based on the findings from this research.

1.4.2 Contributions to Practice

The pressure on academic researchers to stand out in a crowded, competitive market is only growing. These pressures are particularly apparent in the Australian university system, in which market-driven universities are run like large commercial corporations (Schalit 2020) and the tremendous loss of revenue from international students due to the COVID-19 pandemic has plunged the higher education market into a state of crisis (Jayasuriya 2021; Welch 2022). These circumstances have led to an academic environment in which stable, long-term positions are increasingly scarce and the reliance on casual staff is growing, which has created an environment of ‘gig’ jobs that offer academics limited career prospects for the future (Richardson, P & Heffernan 2019; Steenkamp & Roberts 2020). Moreover, the rise of altmetrics as a tool to assess the social impact and the reach of scholarly articles online (Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018), which some Australian universities already use to quantify the social impact and the online visibility of research to inform promotion and hiring decisions (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; Konkiel, Sugimoto & Williams 2016), signals the growing importance of academics’ online presence. As academics attempt to stand out in a crowded and volatile academic market, the rise of altmetrics underscores the potential benefits of self-marketing online related to their academic career, which may help them to expand professional networks and increase their career opportunities. In light of these trends, it makes sense that more academics are turning to self-marketing through digital avenues for staying competitive in the job market.

However, the limited literature on academics and self-marketing in the digital era indicates that many are sceptical of using SNSs and other platforms to share their research. As self-marketing online becomes a more common practice for academics, it is important to understand the ways in which they use various platforms, their experiences engaging in DSM and their perceptions of the effects of such tactics on their career trajectory. This information is valuable for understanding how academics approach their own career and informing how universities can adjust their practices and the guidance they provide staff about social media use.

Specifically, this study attempts to provide knowledge about how academics are using the full continuum of social media types outlined in Table 1.1 to market themselves, including scholar-specific channels and databases, such as *Academia.edu*, *ResearchGate* and *Google Scholar*, as

well as general SNSs, including *LinkedIn*, *Facebook* and *Twitter*. The findings may assist academics in understanding how DSM and specific online platforms can be used as part of their career development efforts. Providing busy academics with information about the experiences of fellow academics who use DSM could help them make informed decisions about the strategies that may work for them as well. Moreover, these insights can help universities advance their institutional guidelines and policy around academic staff's digital and social media use.

The practical contributions of this thesis are as follows:

Contribution 1. This research developed a practical *Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Academics* (Appendix E) that offers concrete steps to guide the online efforts of academics related to career enhancement. The guide is formatted as a checklist that they can easily follow to help them get started with DSM individually.

Contribution 2. This thesis developed a *Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Universities* (Appendix F) that offers clear recommendations for steps Australian Universities can take to support the DSM efforts of academic staff more effectively while protecting the institutional brand and reputation. This guide is formatted as a checklist that university leadership can follow to help them begin developing more in-depth guidance for their academic employees.

This study also contributes to the digital and social media marketing industries and practitioners dedicated to implementing these strategies on behalf of individuals and institutions. Digital influencers and agencies that specialise in digital and social media may be able to utilise the aforementioned guides with their own clients.

1.5 Potential Impact of This Research

This research will be of interest to academics at all career stages, universities and educational governing bodies (e.g. Australia's TEQSA), career development professionals, and researchers of digital technology practices. Past research has highlighted academics' growing usage of digital and social media to support their career advancement (Lupton 2014; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Sutherland et al. 2020; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019). However, the practice is complex and multifaceted (Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Pomerantz, Hank &

Sugimoto 2015), and many academics are still reluctant to use digital technologies (Jordan & Weller 2018; Van Noorden 2014), whereas universities offer academic staff limited and inconsistent professional support for digital and social media use (Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Pomerantz, Hank & Sugimoto 2015; Willems et al. 2018). Therefore, increased understanding of academics' actual use of digital and social media and their experiences of the benefits and challenges associated with self-marketing online will provide richer context and valuable knowledge to this research area. Further, this significant contribution to this expanding area of scholarship will influence individual and university practices regarding digital and social media usage.

This research is justified on the grounds of its contribution to theory by expanding the concept of self-marketing (Kotler & Levy 1969) for the digital age; its focus on the online self-marketing efforts of academics in the higher education sector, which plays a key role in the Australian economy (Jayasuriya 2021; Welch 2022); the grounded theory methodology of the research to provide rich qualitative insights that contribute an addition to the extant self-marketing literature; and its potential impact on the DSM practices of individual academics, universities, higher education accrediting and governing institutions and career development practitioners.

This thesis fits within RMIT University's (2022) long tradition of facilitating 'relevant, industry-focused learning and teaching' and upholding a 'commitment to education and research that responds to industry and community needs' (para 4). The research presented here furthers applied knowledge in the space of digital media and self-marketing, moving beyond knowledge creation to embark upon knowledge translation by bringing practical tools to knowledge users, including digital and social media practitioners, in the form of two *Digital Self-Marketing Guides*, one for academics and the other for universities. The researcher entered this research process as a practitioner in the digital image management space and was aware of the lack of research and evidence-based practical resources available, and in particular, the sparsity of knowledge and skills in the academic arena on this topic. Thus, the knowledge translation steps pursued as part of this thesis offer a valuable contribution to the digital marketing and communications industry.

1.6 Limitations of Scope

The generalisability of the findings of this thesis is limited in two ways: first, the study focused solely on an Australian population, and second, it focused only on the higher education sector. Therefore, these findings may not be applicable to other professional sectors or to different cultures and countries (Yin 1994). The notable characteristics of the higher education sector that were addressed in this study include:

- the higher competition in the labour market owing to the commoditisation of higher education and the casualisation of the academic workforce;
- the increased pressure to demonstrate social and research impact;
- the use of digital-based metrics by some universities in their performance review processes;
- support, resources and guidance from universities for academic staff's use of digital and social media is limited and inconsistent.

To address the limitations in the transferability of the current findings fully, future research may need to be conducted.

1.7 Definitions

This section presents definitions for the main terms used for this research, which served as a foundation for data collection and for establishing boundaries around the study findings (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaugh 2001). Given that definitions used by researchers are not necessarily universal, it is important to clearly define the central terms used for the purpose of this research (Hunt 1997). Furthermore, given the confusion and the lack of consistency in term usage in the current literature, developing concise definitions was critical for the identified DSM framework built through this research. The definitions are presented in alphabetical order.

Academic is 'anyone working in a higher education institution in a teaching and/or research-based role' (Chugh, Grose & Macht 2021, p. 985).

Academic social networking sites (ASNSs) are online social networking platforms that ‘have sought to bring the benefits of online networking to a specifically academic audience’ (Jordan 2019, p. 2). The most popular ASNSs are *Academia.edu*, *ResearchGate* and *Mendeley*.

Blog is a term that is short for ‘web log’ and encompasses ‘a chronological list of postings, which can be read and commented upon by visitors’ online (Aichner & Jacob 2015, p. 259).

Digital self-marketing is the practice of online self-marketing for the purpose of career management and is an evolution of the original concept of self-marketing (Kotler & Levy 1969).

Impression management describes the process individuals follow to control the impressions other people form of them (Klenke 2017, p. 104) and is a theory originally developed by Goffman (1959).

Online research databases are online, academic ‘multidisciplinary databases’ providing ‘coverage of the scientific and scholarly literature’ and may offer paid or free access (Martín-Martín et al. 2019, p. 2). Examples include *Google Scholar*, *Web of Science* and *Scopus*.

Personal branding is a strategic process an individual follows for creating, positioning and maintaining others’ positive impression of them (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018, p. 6).

Personal websites are webpages that ‘provide personal information about people, whereby the content is self-selected’ (Weibel, Wissmath & Groner 2010, p. 2).

Self-marketing is the act of promoting oneself, generally as a way to improve one’s employment status (Shepherd 2005).

Social media are ‘web-based applications and interactive platforms that facilitate the creation, discussion, modification, and exchange of user-generated content’ (Aichner & Jacob, p. 248). These are not limited to SNSs but also encompass other forms of digital technologies, such as blogs, discussion forums and video-sharing platforms. See Table 1.1 for an exhaustive list of the academic social media types that were identified.

Social networking sites (SNSs) are ‘web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with

whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system' (Boyd & Ellison 2007, p. 211).

1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis adopts a five-chapter structure based on the thesis by monograph option at RMIT University, in line with Perry's (2002) structured approach to theses. **Chapter 1** provides an overarching introduction to the research, summarising the research background and introducing the research problem surrounding gaps in the literature regarding academics' use of digitally based self-marketing efforts. It provides an overview of academic career development as context for this thesis before introducing the research aim and questions. The chapter also provides a justification for this research and explores its potential usefulness, before presenting the limitations of scope and definitions.

Chapter 2 reviews and integrates the self-marketing literature with the literature in the fields of sociology, psychology, communication and business to evolve the concept of self-marketing for the digital and social media era. Beginning with impression management and self-marketing as the two parent theories of this study, and engaging with more recent scholarship addressing self-marketing practices online, the chapter culminates in a preliminary conceptual framework of DSM, which provides the foundation upon which the DSM concept was built from the findings from this research.

Chapter 3 describes and justifies the research paradigm and design chosen for this study. The grounded theory approach and semi-structured interview method used in this research are explained. The sampling and recruitment and the data analysis procedures are presented, followed by considerations about trustworthiness and ethics.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research that emerged from the thematic analysis of the qualitative interview data and answered the four research questions of this thesis. The five main themes that emerged are discussed, along with corresponding subthemes, with relevant participant quotations, and the thesis findings are placed into dialogue with prior research findings.

Chapter 5 presents the theoretical and practical implications of this research and begins the process of transferring knowledge into practice through the presentation of two practical *Digital Self-Marketing Guides*, one for individual academics and the other for universities. The limitations of the research are addressed, future research ideas are discussed, and the final conclusion of this research in answer to the research questions is presented.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the background for this research on academics' use of self-marketing online for professional purposes, as well as the research problem, followed by a discussion of academic career development in relation to SNSs and the digital employment of self-marketing, as well as the unique challenges faced by Australian-based academics. The research aims and the four research questions guiding this study were presented and justified because of the need to gain further insight into academics' use of DSM for professional development and career opportunities. The integration of the literature across different disciplines on the parent theories of impression management and self-marketing, and the related concept of personal branding, was introduced, including the concept of DSM that was developed for this research with the aim of rethinking and evolving the understanding of self-marketing for the digital era. The justification for this research was presented based on theoretical and practical contributions, and its potential usefulness was discussed. Last, the limitations of scope and the main definitions used in this research were presented, followed by the thesis structure and conclusions. Chapter 2 will begin by presenting a review of the literature on the parent theories of impression management and self-marketing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a literature review of the two identified parent theories (Perry 2002), namely, impression management and self-marketing. The chapter then focuses on the research problem related to the concept of DSM, and the development of a conceptual framework and research questions to address the research problem.

This chapter is organised into five sections, as shown in Figure 2.1. Following this introduction, the two parent theories (Perry 2002) of impression management (Goffman 1959) and self-marketing (Kotler & Levy 1969) are defined and reviewed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, respectively, as foundational theories that have shaped subsequent research regarding the ways in which humans work to deliberately influence others' perceptions of them.

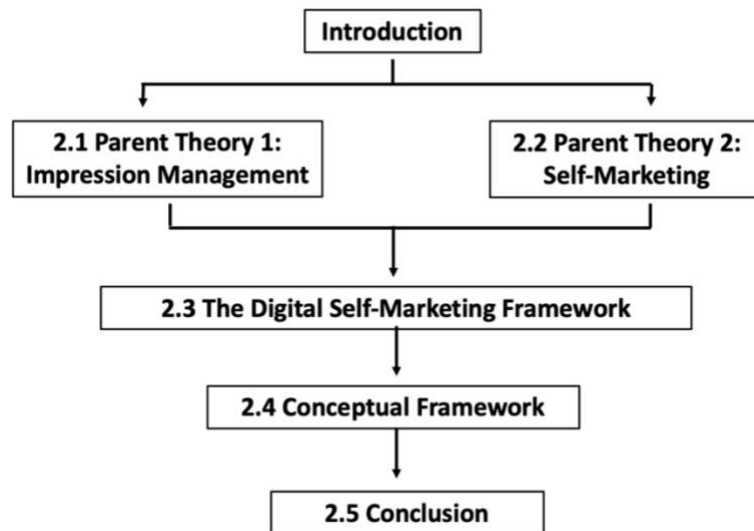
The discussion on the first parent discipline theory of impression management begins by considering certain perspectives of this construct (2.1.1). Then, the definitions presented in prior research are explored and justification provided for the definition used in this research (Section 2.1.2), followed by criticisms of impression management (Section 2.1.3) and a summary concluding the section on impression management (Section 2.1.4).

Next, the perspectives on the second parent discipline theory of self-marketing are explored (2.2.1), including the related concept of personal branding (2.2.1.2), which leads to an overview of prior self-marketing definitions used in the literature and the justification of the definition used in this research (Section 2.2.2). Criticisms of self-marketing follow (Section 2.2.3), and last, a summary of the section is presented (2.2.4).

Further, literature related to the practice of self-marketing online is explored in Section 2.3 as earlier research that informs the development in this research of the new DSM framework to rethink and evolve the original pre-Internet concept of self-marketing. The section begins by exploring perspectives of DSM (Section 2.3.2) and then discusses considerations for developing the DSM framework (2.3.2), which leads to a synthesis of the literature on academics and DSM and the justification of the research questions chosen for this thesis (2.3.4). Then, university policies regarding academics' social media use are evaluated (2.3.4), and last, a summary of the section is presented (2.3.5).

Section 2.4 presents the conceptual framework developed from the literature review to situate the concept of DSM in relation to its parent theories and other earlier literature, in addition to current literature on related topics. Last, Section 2.5 concludes the chapter.

Figure 2.1: Outline of Chapter 2



Source. Developed from this research.

2.1 Parent Theory 1: Impression Management

Typically, people make inferences about an individual's personality within milliseconds of seeing their face (Cogsdill et al. 2014; Todorov & Porter 2014; Willis & Todorov 2006). These rapid judgements about a person's attributes, including their attractiveness, likability, trustworthiness and competence (Willis & Todorov 2006; Zebrowitz 1997; Zebrowitz & Montepare 2008), typically become ingrained once they are formed (Todorov & Porter 2014). Such impressions can have significant social consequences (Todorov, Mende-Siedlecki & Dotsch 2013) and implications for how an individual is perceived, evaluated and treated. Appearance can affect decisions in court cases and criminal sentencing (Eberhardt et al. 2006; Stewart, JE 1980; Zebrowitz & McDonald 1991), influence electoral outcomes (Olivola & Todorov 2010; Todorov et al. 2005), and even influence memory (Cassidy, BS, Zebrowitz & Gutchess 2012). Of most

relevance to this study, one's appearance and impression on others has been demonstrated to affect career opportunities and outcomes (Collins & Zebrowitz 1995; Rule & Ambady 2011; Zebrowitz, Tenenbaum & Goldstein 1991) and affect people's opinions of themselves and their behaviour (Leary & Kowalski 1990). Because of the clear importance of one's outward appearance in personal as well as professional settings, managing impressions is an inherent part of everyday life (Meyrowitz 1990).

Impression management encompasses both conscious and unconscious behaviours that individuals use to present themselves in an ideal way for a given situation (Baumeister 1982; Peck & Hogue 2018). Although born from sociology, impression management is a multidisciplinary concept that has been applied in various fields, including social psychology (e.g. Schlenker 1980), marketing and communication (e.g. Mehrabian 2007; Meyrowitz 1990) and organisational studies (e.g. Merkl-Davies & Brennan 2011; Thompson-Whiteside, Turbull & Howe-Walsh 2018), each making distinct contributions to the theoretical development of impression management theory, which is the first parent theory for this research.

A challenge in integrating the literature on impression management is that despite decades of research that has used the term, the definition and application of this concept differ across disciplines and studies (Kuznekoff 2014; Leary & Kowalski 1990). Specifically, there is notable variance in the ways that impression management is distinguished from, or related to, self-marketing, self-presentation and personal branding (Kuznekoff 2014). The term impression management is often used interchangeably with 'self-presentation', in which a person tries to influence perceptions regarding their image (Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011; Leary & Kowalski 1990); with 'self-marketing' (Manai & Holmlund 2015; Shepherd 2005); and with 'personal branding' (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney 2005).

An integration of the impression management literature in the predominant fields of sociology and psychology is undertaken in the following sections. Section 2.1.1 presents the relevant theoretical material and the multidisciplinary origins of impression management. Section 2.1.2 analyses its various definitions, including the definition adopted for this research. Section 2.1.3 examines the criticisms of the impression management theory, and Section 2.1.4 summarises the relevant literature.

2.1.1 Perspectives in Impression Management

Impression management as a theory was first developed by sociologist Irving Goffman (1959), whose research adopted an approach to understanding mundane human interaction that was useful for analysing social interaction and impression management (Prakasam 2014). Using a symbolic interactionist perspective, which emphasised ‘that individuals learn to play roles and take on identities related to the roles they play’ (Tedeschi 1981, p. 4), Goffman (1959) interpreted interactions between individuals as a ‘performance’. In the course of his research, he developed the concept of the ‘front’ or ‘that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance’ (Goffman 1959, p. 22). This front, or the impression that an individual creates, is a major part of an individual’s identity; therefore, managing one’s identity can influence how situations are defined. Through this mechanism, expected norms, roles and behaviours can all be set in order to achieve a goal. Impression management, in this sense, is goal-directed behaviour (Leary & Kowalski 1990).

Impression management applied from a dramaturgical perspective suggests that individuals may have several different motives or goals for trying to manage their impression on others in various situations (Leary & Kowalski 1990). They may want to gain employment, fit into a situation or become closer to someone. In this sense, impression management can be described as having both ‘backstage’ and ‘front stage’ performative concepts. The ‘backstage’ is ‘where individuals can drop their guard and be more authentic’ (Cunningham 2012, p. 4). It involves activities such as sense-making, reflection and meaning development. The ‘front stage’ is where impression management occurs, and its purpose is to influence others’ perceptions. Goffman (1959, p. 35) described the ‘front stage’ as the place where ‘the individual presents himself before others, and his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the official accredited values’.

Leary and Kowalski (1990) expanded Goffman’s work, focusing on the perception and the evaluation of the self, from cosmetic efforts to make an individual appear more attractive to others to politicians’ television advertisements that mirror product advertisements. By clarifying the difference between the terms impression management and self-presentation and building upon existing theories, a two-component model emerged (Leary & Kowalski 1990). This model defined

impression management as involving two discrete processes, ‘impression motivation’ and ‘impression construction’, each of which operated according to different principles and was affected by different situational and dispositional antecedents (Leary & Kowalski 1990). Impression motivation refers to the specific reasons an individual wants to manage others’ perceptions of them, usually related to achieving a certain goal, whereas impression construction refers to the specific conscious and unconscious behaviours an individual uses to create the desired perception about themselves (Leary & Kowalski 1990).

Impression management has been applied outside of sociology, expanding upon and refining Goffman’s (1959) work (e.g. Leary & Kowalski 1990; Meyrowitz 1990; Schlenker 1980), including research on social change identifying parallels between in-person interactions and technologically mediated interactions. For instance, Meyrowitz (1990), whose study represents an early exploration of mediated communication, suggested that impression management may function similarly in a digital context.

In psychological research, impression management has been applied to explore how psychological needs underpin the reasons that individuals, especially those in a workplace, would be motivated to manage their impressions on others. Drawing heavily on cultural anthropological understandings of psychological need, studies including Maslow’s (1943, 1954) *Hierarchy of Needs* and Mead’s (1934) theory of identity formation (later elaborated on by Arnett Jensen [2003]), suggested how managing and promoting the external self contributes to the formation of personal identity and addresses psychological demands (Gioia, Hamilton & Patvardhan 2014; Holton & Molyneux 2017; Molyneux 2015; Shepherd 2005; Schlosser, McPhee & Forsyth 2017). The specific psychological needs that impression management addresses can be individual, such as self-esteem needs (Gioia, Hamilton & Patvardhan 2014; Shepherd 2005; Zinko & Rubin 2015), or collective, such as social needs (Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011). Thus, impression management tactics are not solely about controlling other people’s perceptions of oneself or putting on a ‘front’, as Goffman (1959) stated, but can also contribute significantly to one’s own sense of self and psychological needs—an understanding absent in Goffman’s sociological theory.

Impression management, as a concept, underpins and informs subsequent scholarly discussions that have emerged to address the new and different ways that individuals attempt to manage the

impressions they convey to others. Although the sociological and psychological concepts of impression management both address the attempt to control and manage other individuals' impressions of oneself, they focus on the individual as a whole and their entire life experience and do not specifically address career management, which is the focus of this research. Moreover, these theories emerged prior to the Web 2.0 and 3.0 eras (e.g. Goffman 1959; Leary & Kowalski 1990) and therefore warrant rethinking to evolve these conceptualisations for the reality of the current digital world. It was thus concluded that impression management is not within the scope of this research because it does not specifically address managing one's image or reputation for career development purposes.

2.1.1.1 Self-presentation Theory

As discussed above, the concept of self-presentation is closely related to impression management, and the two terms have often been used interchangeably (Jones 1964), as shown in Table 2.1 that lists definitions of impression management. Psychology researchers (e.g. Jones 1964) explored this concept further and extended it to include people's attempts to control others' impressions of their personal characteristics, which sparked widespread interest within the psychology discipline in impression management (Jones 1964; Jones et al. 1965; Jones, Gergen & Jones 1963). Self-presentation research can thus be understood as exploring the tactics and actions behind individuals' efforts at impression management. Substantial psychological research on self-presentation has focused on its role in interpersonal interactions within businesses and organisations (Leary 1995), including the use of ingratiation, self-promotion, modesty and other self-presentation tactics in job interviews and evaluations (Blickle, Below & Johannsen 2011; Swider, Boswell & Zimmerman 2011; Wayne & Liden 1995). Given that self-presentation is so closely related to impression management and is often used in reference to Goffman's formal theory, it does not stand alone as a separate theory.

2.1.1.2 Identity Theory

As understood in identity theory, an identity is the 'set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person' (Burke and Stets 2009, p. 3). There are several branches of identity theory, but as an overarching field of inquiry, identity theory

explores the meanings that individuals associate with each of the different identities with which they identify, and how these identities connect them to larger society. These identities can be based on a role, membership in a group, or a set of values or personality traits.

Identity theory posits that ‘the individual exists within the context of the social structure,’ where the actions of an individual are produced within the context and influenced by the context of the social structure (Burke and Stets 2009, pp. 3-4). This theory is rooted in structural symbolic interactionism and is especially interested in how identities are formed based on the influence of the social structure they develop within.

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), in turn, has been extensively studied in the field of psychology (similar to impression management) to explore why people act and behave the way that they do, particularly in relation to other members of a group (i.e., intergroup relations). At a basic level, we can understand that individuals strive to perform identities in certain situations in order to elicit ‘identity-confirming feedback,’ which leads to positive affect, whereas when they receive ‘identity-disconfirming feedback’ it leads to negative affect (Davis, 2016, p. 140).

The focus on the internal motivations and psychological underpinnings of identity is only tangentially relevant to the current research, which focuses on the practical applications and outcomes of certain behaviours and actions taken by academics online for career enhancement purposes. Therefore, identity theory was not considered a parent theory for this thesis.

2.1.2 Definitions of Impression Management

A representative selection of the varied definitions of impression management and the related concept of self-presentation in the sociological and psychological literature is provided in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Selected Definitions of Impression Management

Impression Management Is ...	Author and Year
Self-presentation in a specific light, depending on the outcome sought and the expectations of the intended audience	Goffman 1959
‘An attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions’	Schlenker 1980, p. 39

The process of controlling the way in which one is viewed by others	Leary 1995
‘The process individuals use to ‘control the impressions other people form of them’	Klenke 2017, p. 104

Despite the wide-ranging research fields and definitions, a common element in the definitions of impression management is the notion of control. Control is especially important to consider when investigating the conscious and deliberate management of impressions in professional contexts, which is part of this research.

Goffman (1959) defined impression management as the attempt to meet the expectations of a specific audience. Schlenker (1980, p. 39) defined it as the ‘attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions’, whereas Tedeschi (1981, p. 3) defined it as any activity ‘that has the purpose of controlling or manipulating the attributions and impressions formed of that person by others’. According to Leary (1995, p. 2), impression management is simply ‘the process of controlling how one is perceived by other people’. Although these researchers, and many others, have used slightly different wording to define impression management, the definitions coincide in their description of how individuals attempt to *control* others’ perceptions of them.

This emphasis on control is particularly relevant to professional settings in which individuals put effort into creating a specific impression on others for goal attainment, as discussed in the reviewed literature (Blickle, Below & Johannsen 2011; Bolino, Long & Turnley 2016; Swider, Boswell & Zimmerman 2011; Wayne & Liden 1995). Because the present research specifically investigates impression management tactics by academics, Klenke’s (2017) description of impression management as the behaviours that individuals use in an attempt to manage other people’s impressions is most appropriate to the current discussion. Rather than relying on a vague concept of control, Klenke’s definition emphasises *behaviours*; in other words, the specific steps an individual takes to manage the impression they convey. Thus, Klenke’s (2017) definition of impression management will be adopted in this research.

2.1.3 Criticisms of Impression Management

Despite its foundational role in the study of impression management, there are two key theoretical criticisms of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach:

- The theatrical language of impression management is incapable of explaining all human behaviour (Brissett & Edgley 2006).
- Deception is implied, given that impression management is not an 'authentic' performance (Prakasam 2014).

In addition to the theoretical criticisms, there are three main practical criticisms of impression management:

- It requires high self-monitoring levels despite the fact that individuals have varying abilities to self-monitor (Turnley & Bolino 2001), which can influence the ability to excel at impression management of those who are not adept at reading situational cues (Fuller et al. 2007).
- Manipulative impression management behaviour is used online, which has started to be monitored as part of the cancel culture society (Pearce & Vitak 2015), which involves the public boycotting of a brand or person due to perceived ethical misconduct.
- Impression management practices may create the reverse effect by fostering negative impressions among others of the individual engaging in such practices (Crant 1996; Vohs, Baumeister & Ciarocco 2005).

2.1.4 Conclusion regarding Impression Management

A variety of impression management theories have developed in a wide range of disciplines, which are integrated in this discussion. The leading fields studying impression management, and those most relevant to this research, are sociology and psychology. The sociological perspective emphasises the internal goals of the individual that drive them to manage their impression; these goals are often tied to the desire to be accepted in society (Leary & Kowalski 1990; Meyrowitz 1990; Schlenker 1980). The psychological approaches to impression management also explore the impetus behind this desire to control how other people perceive oneself, focusing on the concept

as a fundamental interpersonal process. From a psychological perspective, the need to engage in impression management is due to internal, psychologically driven stimuli and an attempt to fulfil one's self-esteem needs (Gardner & Avolio 1998; Jones & Pittman 1982). The concern that impression management leads to a lack of authenticity or credibility is also an important consideration in this research and will be addressed in the research design described in Chapter 3.

Taken together, the literature has indicated that individuals use impression management to control the impression they have on others (Klenke 2017), both in personal (Tedeschi 1981) and professional settings (Leary & Kowlaski 1990; Pollach & Kerbler 2011). Impression management can be used to influence all aspects of a person's life, from interactions with marital partners and friends to professional advancement (Shuker 2014) and includes conscious as well as unconscious behaviours (Baumeister 1982; Peck & Hogue 2018). These points are unique to impression management and distinguish it from self-marketing, personal branding and self-branding, which all refer specifically to the field of employment (Shuker 2014).

Because of the research focus on how academics use digital media for presenting themselves professionally online, the personal aspects of impression management were not addressed in this discussion. This research employed Klenke's (2017) definition of impression management, which is most appropriate for describing impression management in a professional setting: the behaviours that individuals use to attempt to manage the impression they have on others.

2.2 Parent Theory 2: Self-marketing

This section presents the literature on personal branding and self-branding, which are terms that have been combined under the term self-marketing. Section 2.3.1 describes the theories and research on self-marketing. Section 2.3.2 discusses the different definitions of self-marketing and personal branding. Section 2.3.3 explores the criticisms of self-marketing tactics and Section 2.3.4 summarises the self-marketing discussion.

2.2.1 Perspectives in Self-marketing

The term self-marketing originated in Kotler and Levy's (1969) study on person-centred marketing, in which they noted that commodities other than goods were marketed, including

causes, persons and ideas. Kotler and Levy (1969, p. 12) described this behaviour as ‘an endemic human activity’. Because selfhood can be projected outward, these projections can be managed to create impressions that benefit an individual’s career or life path (Shuker 2014). Thus, unlike the first parent theory of impression management, self-marketing is mainly used to gain employment by treating the self as a product to sell (Shuker 2014).

Shepherd (2005) further developed Kotler and Levy’s (1969) self-marketing concept by blending it with the identity theory, Mead’s (1934) anthropological approach and Goffman’s (1959) self-presentation theory, to examine self-marketing through the lens of academic marketing principles. Mead (1934) asserted that the individual’s mind and sense of self were inherently linked with social processes, such that their sense of self was formed and intelligible only through an understanding of social processes. As discussed previously, Goffman’s (1959) similarly founded his dramaturgical approach upon social processes because attempts to manage one’s impression on others inherently requires social interactions. Combining these concepts with Kotler and Levy’s (1969) original self-marketing theory, Shepherd (2005, p. 589) further defined self-marketing as the process of promoting a person rather than a product, which consists of ‘those varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace, usually, for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment’. Although Shepherd (2005) expanded the concept of self-marketing at a time when digital media was already being used, he did not focus on the specific behaviours and practices of self-marketing associated with using these online tools.

In the years following Shepherd’s (2005) publication, several researchers have heeded his call for more theoretically grounded research on self-marketing (e.g. Lehman 2009), and have explored the effectiveness of self-marketing in a range of sectors, including lifestyle and wellness (Grénman, Hakala & Mueller 2019), therapeutic psychology (Cederberg 2017) and business (Allison, Boutin & Cumiskey 2018).

Self-marketing concepts are continuously applied outside of academic scholarship. Self-marketing tactics have been practiced for decades by movie, sport and pop stars, and are consciously being utilised by an increasing number of leaders in modern business and politics (Manai & Holmlund 2015). Self-marketing in itself is a fast-growing business, which requires the application of established principles of brand simplicity, clarity and consistency to the self (Brown 2014). Indeed,

some self-improvement materials have proclaimed that self-marketing is a non-negotiable skill to acquire and apply in the workplace (Kleppinger & Cain 2015; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney 2005). Further, university applicants employ self-marketing tactics during the university application process (Shuker 2014).

However ensuing coherence in self-marketing can be more complex than ensuring it in product branding because it is not uncommon for individuals to ‘develop multiple roles, personas, and self-images in their personal, social, and working lives’ (Shepherd 2005, p. 595). The dilemma of multiple personas has only been amplified by the digital age since the digital world has granted individuals the ability to assume any persona they desire (Belk 2013). When an individual chooses an avatar in an online game, for example, they are able to represent their true selves, authentic selves, possible selves and aspirational selves. In a virtual world, people can more easily engage in self-experimentation with minimal risk, which enables them to explore and discover the identity or persona that fits who they are (Belk 2013). As individuals explore different identities via self-marketing practices online, they project them to the world and may indeed assume multiple personas simultaneously (Shepherd 2005).

Although the ways that individuals represent themselves on social media and blogs or forums involve ‘real-life issues and real-life representations of self’, these still offer them more freedom to experiment with their identity than in-person interactions do (Belk 2013, p. 482), and can carry over to the real world to influence people’s in-person interactions in some cases. The majority of digital interactions—such as in-person interactions—are social in nature, and individuals’ interactions with others help create their sense of self—that is, the co-construction of self. Comments, likes and shares all help individuals to create their extended selves, provide the affirmation of self and facilitate the building of the aggregate self through friends or romantic partners (Belk 2013). The extended self is particularly observed in individuals’ attachment and relationship with other people, places and possessions along with their individual bodies, processes and ideas. In a digital world, the extended self is distinct in terms of the ways it involves dematerialisation, re-embodiment, sharing, the co-construction of self and distributed memory (Belk 2013).

The first, dematerialisation, reflects the idea that possessions representing the self are virtual in the digital world and raises a question over whether we can gain status and an enhanced sense of self from virtual possessions (Belk 2013). Further, the self can be re-embodied in virtual spaces such that people have the opportunity to present a multitude of selves or a different self; this raises the issues of authenticity and the line between the real and the online individual (Belk 2013). Next, the level and type of sharing of the self for self-marketing have also changed in the digital world such that there is greater chance of connecting in a larger space but less control of shared information relating to the self and the risk that the disinhibition effects of social media can lead people to share inappropriate content or for others to take advantage of such information (Ridely 2012). In addition, the medium of the internet entails a co-constructed self that is relevant for DSM (Belk 2013). People use the digital medium to affirm and transcend the self, such that the medium provides an opportunity to construct a digital self-image. Moreover, the extended self in a digital medium has implications for distributed memory in the sense that our self-narratives and information are stored online and are widely available (Belk 2013). However, such a distributed sense of self entails significant clutter and noise, which requires the adoption of a systematic approach to manage DSM. These phenomena associated with social and digital media can be extended to people's professional selves and the ways in which they construct their selves in professional contexts online.

It is also important to consider generational differences, for younger generations that were never exposed to a world without the internet do not distinguish between their online and offline selves (Sheth & Solomon 2014), which blurs the lines between Belk's (2013) three states of having, doing and being. The merging of these boundaries has serious implications for consumer privacy as the understanding of identity continues to evolve (Sheth & Solomon 2014). The next section explores the concept of personal branding as a subtype of self-marketing.

2.2.1.1 Personal Branding

Personal branding is a highly individualistic type of self-marketing tactic (Gandini 2016; Manai & Holmlund 2015). Thus, it is a subcategory of self-marketing. Personal branding is often planned and strategic (Khedher 2014) and involves self-marketing to influence one's career progression (Brooks & Anumudu 2016). The term personal branding was first used by Tom Peters (1997, p.

83) in the late 1990s, when he called for people in business to be the ‘head marketer for the brand called You’. Since Peters coined the term, personal branding has been applied in multiple disciplines, including marketing, psychology, organisational behaviour and sociology (Vitberg 2010).

Personal branding claims to help individuals realise career success within the confines of modern employment structures (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018). To ensure that one crafts a valuable brand, personal brands often contain elements of brand equity, including brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand association (Nyaanga & Betts 2018). Personal branding, as a concept, is focused on the way that an individual’s ‘sets of skills, motivation and interests are arranged, crystallised, and labelled—that is, branded—and offers a programmatic set of strategies for individuals to improve their chances of business success’ (Manai & Holmlund 2015, pp. 749–50). Similarly to self-marketing, personal branding focuses on the management of a professional image. Rather than applying a wholly product-based lens to the self, however, it is important to consider one’s identity and career objectives when creating a personal brand (Zarkada 2012).

Marketing concepts have driven the growth of the personal branding theory, and a 2018 systematic review on the topic identified more than 100 empirical papers rooted in a wide array of disciplines (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018). Further, that review noted the lack of a theory-based definition of personal branding and developed a model of personal branding from the existing body of literature. Although there is much definitional heterogeneity in the personal branding literature, commonalities include the need to be strategic, positive, truthful, person-centric and artefactual. These features differentiate self-marketing and personal branding from the impression management theory, in that impression management theory can be unconscious (Bolino, Long & Turnley 2016) or can lack a strategy and does not require the same cohesive story or artefacts as successful personal branding (Khedher 2015).

2.2.2 Definitions of Self-marketing

Various definitions of self-marketing and personal branding have been proposed, and representative selections are shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3, respectively.

Table 2.2: Selected Definitions of Self-marketing

Self-marketing Is ...	Author and Year
About complying with or influencing others	Bagozzi 1975
The act of promoting oneself, generally as a way to improve one's employment status	Shepherd 2005
About the ability to create or recreate yourself so as to be the master of your own destiny	Lair, Sullivan and Cheney 2005
The crafting and sharing of an ideal self in order to further one's career	Shuker 2014
The transmission of one's professional assets to a broad audience as an avenue for furthering one's career	Manai and Holmlund 2015

Table 2.3: Selected Definitions of Personal Branding

Personal Branding Is ...	Author and Year
'Being the head marketer for a brand called You'	Peters 1997, p. 83
Ownership and careful crafting of the brand that is portrayed to the public. You must 'define your brand or your brand will define you. Personal branding has always existed, but the key to success lies in taking control of this natural, inevitable process'.	Montoya and Vandehey 2008, p. 13
Successfully setting oneself apart from the crowd with monetary rewards for the notoriety	Rein et al. 2006
A strategic process individuals follow to create, position and maintain a positive impression of themselves	Gorbatov, Khapova and Lysova 2018
The sharing of one's skills as a way to gain employment and favour	Alonso-Gonzalez, Peris-Ortiz and Cao-Alvira 2019
The selling of self in a way that likely contradicts one's true image; it is financially motivated	Khaldeeva 2018

In the literature on these topics, the terms are often used interchangeably. Bagozzi (1975, p. 35) proclaimed that 'all societies engage in self-marketing in order to satisfy human needs' and that self-marketing behaviours are intended to comply with or influence others. Shepherd (2005) described self-marketing as the act of promoting oneself, generally to improve one's employment

status. Shuker (2014) refined this definition, calling self-marketing the crafting and sharing of an ideal self in order to further one's career, whereas Manai and Holmlund (2015) described it as the transmission of one's professional assets to a broad audience as an avenue for furthering one's career.

Similarly, the definition of personal branding has evolved quickly since it was first used by Tom Peters (1997, p. 83), who told people to act as the 'head marketer for the brand called You'. Montoya and Vandehey (2008) put forth that individuals must take ownership of their personal brand and carefully craft how they portray themselves to the public. Some researchers defined personal branding in terms of advancing one's career, saying it is the sharing of one's skills to gain employment and favour (Alonso-Gonzalez, Peris-Ortiz & Cao-Alvira 2019). Other researchers defined personal branding as the strategic actions required to develop and maintain a positive impression, gain notoriety, set oneself apart from the crowd and attain name recognition (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018; Mobray 2009; Rein et al. 2006). Still others defined personal branding in a more negative light, describing it as selling oneself in a way that likely contradicts one's true image in order to achieve financial gain (Khaldeeva 2018).

Significantly, another term, self-branding, is sometimes used interchangeably with personal branding in the literature (Gershon 2016; Khedher 2014; Lee & Cavanaugh 2016; Vallas & Christin 2018). A careful review of both the personal branding and self-branding literature revealed significant overlap in definitions and core concepts. As with personal branding, self-branding draws from the same principles as product branding (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017) and is described as the marketing of oneself to further one's career (Gershon 2016). Unlike the literature on personal branding and self-marketing, however, that on self-branding is largely grounded in marketing and sociological theories (Duffy & Pooley 2019). For the purpose of this research, it was considered to be synonymous with personal branding.

Despite the varied usage of the terms self-marketing and personal branding in the literature, the most prominent definitions share two features: (a) the application of direct marketing concepts for products to the self and (b) the use of these tactics for one's professional benefit. Self-marketing is the process of marketing oneself rather than a product and specifically refers to the transmission of one's professional assets to a broad audience in order to further one's career (Manai & Holmlund

2015). Personal branding is derived from self-marketing (Brooks & Anumudu 2016; Gandini 2016; Manai & Holmlund 2015) and is also focused on the management of a professional image, specifically how an individual's 'sets of skills, motivation, and interests are arranged, labelled, and branded, offering a set of strategies for individuals to improve their chances at business success' (Manai & Holmlund 2015, pp. 749–750). Given the strong similarities across prevailing definitions, the definition chosen to best represent the parent theory of self-marketing for the purpose of this research was Shepherd's (2005) straightforward articulation of the concept related to influencing one's career: the act of promoting oneself to improve one's employment status.

Although researchers have explored the applications of these theories in the digital age, there is a gap in literature that directly addresses how the act of self-marketing has evolved to incorporate digital tools. This fact supports the need to develop an updated definition of self-marketing. Technological growth has facilitated personal branding via SNS platforms and, as a result, 'careers have become personal brands that need to be managed in a virtual age' (Gioia, Hamilton & Patvardhan 2014, p. 131). The role of digital methods for self-marketing will be discussed further in Section 2.4.

2.2.3 Criticisms of Self-marketing

The five main criticisms of self-marketing are as follows:

- The self-marketing literature lacks a theoretical foundation (King 2004; Manai & Holmlund 2015; Shepherd 2005; Stahl et al. 2012).
- Consistent terminology to discuss self-marketing is unavailable (Manai & Holmlund 2015), and it is confused with the terms 'person marketing' and 'personal marketing' (Kotler et al. 2005, pp. 395–397; Ioan, Luca & Sasu 2014).
- People may be untruthful when they present themselves using self-marketing, and professionals are likely to embellish the truth when presenting their personal brand (Manai & Holmlund 2015).
- There is an inevitable lack of consistency in an individual's self-marketing efforts, given humans' multifaceted and varied personality (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017).

- There are risks involved in making statements to which individuals cannot hold themselves (Ross & Deck 2012).

2.2.4 Summary of Self-marketing

As demonstrated above, the literature on self-marketing and personal branding covers a wide array of scholarly disciplines and, although more recent than impression management, these concepts have origins in a pre-internet era that does not account for digital methods of marketing oneself. Moreover, self-marketing does not have an established theoretical base (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova 2018; Shepherd 2005). The following definition of self-marketing is used in this research: the act of promoting oneself, generally as a way to improve one's employment status (Shepherd 2005). New approaches leveraging digital and online tools have significantly transformed self-marketing practices, and a rethinking of the original concept is therefore warranted. The development of digital and Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies, and the evolution of self-marketing into the digital age, is addressed in Section 2.4, including the conceptual framework showing the relationships between the different theories and literature reviewed in this chapter.

2.3 Digital Self-marketing Framework

Much of the literature presented in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 about the parent theories of impression management and self-marketing was published prior to the development of digital technologies and refers to physical, or offline, impression management. The advent of the digital world and the wide adoption of social networking systems have presented new opportunities as well as challenges in managing one's projected identity (Cormode & Krishnamurthy 2008). Although the concept of self-marketing encompasses the act of promoting oneself, typically as a way to improve one's employment status, it does not account for the considerations and behaviours involved in pursuing this practice through digital channels. Therefore, this research introduces a DSM framework with the aim of rethinking and evolving the concept of self-marketing in the digital age. The preliminary conceptual framework is presented as a culmination of the integration of literature in this chapter, which provides the foundation upon which the DSM concept will be built using the findings from this research.

Section 2.3.1 reviews the literature about online self-marketing. Section 2.3.2 presents the preliminary conceptual framework for this research. Section 2.3.3 examines the specific role of DSM in influencing individuals' academic career and explores the wide range of perceptions among academics about DSM. Section 2.3.4 covers university policies about social media use of academics. Last, Section 2.3.5 concludes the review of the DSM literature.

2.3.1 Perspectives on Digital Self-marketing

Currently, digital technologies have been widely adopted worldwide; consequently, self-marketing has also moved online. The number of internet users in April 2020 exceeded 4.5 billion (Statista 2020), and just three years after the introduction of Facebook, it had 50 million users (Boyd 2019). As of April 2020, there were approximately 2.6 billion monthly active users worldwide on Facebook (Clement 2020). In the US, Brazil, Europe and India in 2010, more than 70% of the population were members of at least one social media network. In India, individuals were, on average, members of 3.9 networks. In Brazil, this number was above three, and in the US and Europe the number was approximately two (van Belleghem, Eenhuizen & Veris 2011). In 2011, more than 50% of social media users followed brands on social media. Customers demand online content, which brands use as a convenient and engaging way to gain a deeper understanding of customers' behaviour and their preferred method of interaction with the company. Brands must now deliver personalised online experiences that their customers will find useful and engaging (Leeflang et al. 2014). In addition to online product branding, online self-marketing and personal branding have grown alongside social media platforms.

The original term used to refer to the digital world in which DSM is conducted is 'Web 2.0'. This term was first coined at a media conference in 1999 (DiNucci 1999; Strickland 2008) to highlight connections between users and the ability to post content in multiple forms, including photos, comments and ratings (Cormode & Krishnamurthy 2008). It represents the era in which people began managing and filtering the information they present about themselves online, particularly on social media (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs 2006). The arrival of new digital platforms transitioned the internet from a domain for software programmers and coders to a space for all (Dimitrova et al. 2014; Norris 2001), with the internet becoming easier to use and access as SNSs evolved and self-marketing moved online (Sheth & Solomon 2014).

The increased attention paid to online self-marketing is a consequence of the growing number of channels through which individuals can present themselves. Digital media provides channels of communication through which individuals can convey messages to multiple intended and non-intended audiences (Cunningham 2012). In turn, online media channels can shape the way individuals present themselves (Sheth & Solomon 2014). Certain characteristics of SNSs, such as their ‘reduced cues’, make them fertile ground for managing the impressions people wish to convey (Wang 2013, p. 441). The lack of verbal and nonverbal social context cues on digital platforms, according to Sproull and Kiesler (1986), can lead to more uninhibited behaviours and interactions. Belk (2013) affirmed this view in his discussion of digital avatars presenting low-risk opportunities for self-experimentation and ‘trying on’ different identities. Furthermore, online social spaces enable individuals to disguise their identity—both internal and external—displayed through markers such as gender, sexual orientation and age (Nosko, Wood & Molema 2010). Sociologists have argued that the removal of these physical and social cues enables individuals to mould and change impressions of themselves in ways that are commensurate with their preferred identity and external persona (Christopherson 2007).

Lupton (2017) explored the notion of ‘lively’ technology and data, arguing that contemporary personal devices inhabit and accompany people in their physical spaces, and the data generated from such devices form individuals’ own personal data assemblages that may inform the conceptualisations of selfhood and social relationships. Lupton (2017) noted that with digital devices either moving with or on the body, or remaining stationary, and trained at capturing human movement, bodies, places and spaces are ‘simultaneously digital-material’, which blurs the lines between the physical and online worlds. This understanding echoes Sheth and Solomon’s (2014) exploration of the digital extended self and the increasingly blurred boundaries between producer and consumer; offline and online—and especially, body and technology. Lupton (2017) asserted that humans ‘co-evolve’ with their personal data assemblages, and that ‘humans may change their modes of being and concepts of selfhood in response to their data assemblages’ (p. 1603). This conceptualisation of an individual’s personal data and selfhood has important implications for academics who engage with their own altmetrics about publications and research (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017), suggesting that academics might change their behaviours in response to these data.

SNSs provide a platform for users to frame an online representation of themselves and build relationships through ongoing communication. As shown in the review of impression management and physical interactions, individuals selectively edit the personal cues they make available to others (Goffman 1959; Schlenker & Pontari 2000). In the digital world and in online impression management, ‘this process is on steroids’ (Sheth & Solomon 2014, p. 124). Self-presentation tactics on social media can be partially explained by Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical notion of impression management (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013; Enli 2017; Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka 2016; Wu & Shang 2012). Viewed in this dramaturgical framework, the elements of front stage and backstage are clearly present in how people use SNSs. For example, Facebook postings are the front stage on which people project themselves to a wide audience, whereas private Facebook messages constitute backstage activity (Kuznekoff 2012).

Drawing on Belk’s (1988) seminal work on consumerism and extended self, Sheth and Solomon (2014) further explained how one’s existence as an individual and as part of collectives can play out in cyberspace. SNSs such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter provide a ready means to ‘engineer’ extended identities. For instance, Schmidt (2011, p. 137) argued:

The manner in which something is done and how the players go through the form of their interactions in relation to given situations, how people set the stage with reference to the anticipated structures of expectation, indicates how the players want others to see them and the situation. With regards to the negotiation of self-image, it can thus be stated that it is not people and their physical manner of expression that are meeting, rather constructs in media that act as personal representatives. It is in this sense that we are talking about well-composed, deliberate and excessive expressions of self.

Thus, social media platforms act as spaces that enable individuals to present themselves in stylised, performed ways (Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka 2016), which van Zoonen (2013, p. 45) has described as ‘constructions of duplicity’. These digital selves may relate to one another or correspond to real-life identities (Wynn & Katz 1997). Strategic online self-presentation therefore often involves managing multiple, sometimes conflicting, goals and striving to please different audiences in the same environment. Social media users must choose between an ‘unfiltered, authentic presentation’ or an approach that is ‘more selective or contrived’ (Rosenbaum et al. 2013, p. 53), or perhaps a mix of these two approaches.

SNSs such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter provide a convenient and accessible platform upon which extended identities may be constructed (Sheth & Solomon 2014). A key aspect of the management of the self on SNSs is that the self-disclosure places private and unknown information into the public realm as shared knowledge (Joinson et al. 2010). This public disclosure of private details, in turn, may lead to increased intimacy among interactants (McKenna, KY, Green & Gleason 2002) as well as motivate users to manage their own public SNS impression (Belk 1988; Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka 2016; Sheth & Solomon 2014).

The wide availability of SNSs has led to increased self-branding behaviours (Khamis, Ang & Welling 2017), for laypeople are now easily able to reach broad audiences with their brand (Liu & Suh 2017). Modern self-marketing online is part of the ever-changing social media ecology across multiple platforms (Duffy, Pruchniewska & Scolere 2017). Individuals self-brand online to craft their own unique, real and friendly identity (Pagis & Ailon 2017). Hashtags are the main avenue for self-branding on Twitter (Page 2012), whereas Instagram stars use self-presentation techniques to self-brand and gain social media notoriety (Marwick 2015). A 2019 analysis of Instagram and Twitter accounts revealed that about half featured self-branding and promotion (Duffy & Pooley 2019). These self-displays are stylised and perfected, yet individuals often downplay the amount of time and effort expended to create such displays (Duffy & Hund 2015). The ideal brand, which is consistent, perfect and authentic, is incredibly difficult to achieve and takes significant time (Whitmer 2019). Moreover, personal and self-branding success is largely subjective (Bandinelli & Arvidsson 2013).

When social rewards are gained via pleasing an online audience, people are more likely to project a positive or embellished image of themselves. Alternatively, self-presentation to one's friends tends to be more modest. Overly contrived efforts at managing one's online impression risk 'context collapse', which exposes inconsistencies and undermines authenticity (Rosenbaum et al. 2013, p. 51). Thus, online impression management shares some of the risks associated with in-person impression management.

Now with the emergence of Web 3.0, further questions and challenges are raised surrounding identity when encountering virtual avatars of individuals in the entirely virtual world of the metaverse (Kim 2021). While the metaverse has not yet entered into the digital media activities of

most professionals, it must be considered given that there will surely be future implications as Web 3.0 continues to evolve. Questions that will inevitably need further exploration include, Do the same university standards and policies apply to the virtual avatars of faculty members? Are experiences of bullying or trolling in the metaverse subject to disciplinary action in the same way as such real-life behaviour? What will social media usage look like within the metaverse, and how will that be monitored and regulated? The implications of this new virtual world are still emerging, and they warrant in-depth research in a separate study.

2.3.1.1 Digital Self-marketing in the Workplace

Social media platforms have penetrated so deeply into the mechanics of everyday life that they now affect institutional structures and professional routines (van Dijck 2013). Despite this, professionals have sometimes viewed the term ‘personal brand’ with scepticism because of the informal social media environment of blogs, Facebook and Twitter (Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011). After Web 2.0, employees started taking more responsibility for their career progression by promoting themselves online (Greenhaus & Kossek 2014). Consequently, ‘careers have become personal brands that need to be managed in a virtual age’ (Gioia, Hamilton & Patvardhan 2014, p. 131). The term ‘personal digital brand’ was coined by a group of medical practitioners who defined it as a ‘strategic self-marketing effort, crafted via social media platforms which seeks to exhibit an individual’s professional persona’ (Kleppinger & Cain 2015, para 5).

Digital personal branding transcends career levels and can be effective for professionals at any level, from students to executives. Modern business students mainly self-market via social media (Manai & Holmlund 2015), while they are beginning to master marketing concepts (McCorkle et al. 2003). Management students feel their schooling prepares them to successfully brand themselves and that personal branding has significant benefits that help them land the right job and distinguish themselves from their peers (Gujarathi & Kulkarni 2018). Further, one study showed that in 2014 more than 80% of executives in the case study engaged with Twitter using values-based branding and messaging (Nolan 2015). In addition, chief executive officers share themes of competence, morality and humanity when discussing their personal branding tendencies (Kondor, Takács & Takács 2018).

Hence, performance and the digital management of oneself is an important consideration in the modern-day workplace and is a key element of successful communication with co-workers and colleagues (McKenna, N & Thomson 2015). Prior to the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, resumés or curriculum vitae (CVs) were, and still remain, a conventional form of self-presentation in which people created an initial impression of themselves in terms of their work experience, educational background and other employable attributes (Knouse 1994). Employees' job-focused impression management, whether online or offline, is therefore typically aimed at seeking to appear more competent through a cluster of skills, knowledge and behaviours (Bolino et al. 2006).

2.3.2 Developing a Digital Self-marketing Framework

Because 'online self-marketing' approaches have emerged only recently, limited research was available on this topic at the time of writing this thesis (Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011; Manai & Holmlund 2015). Hence, scant extant literature has addressed the new considerations and behaviours involved in self-marketing online compared with in-person marketing. Moreover, online self-marketing definitions vary widely and lack a theoretical foundation, as shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Selected Definitions of Online Self-marketing

Online Self-marketing Is ...	Author and Year
The creation of a marketable online identity that transcends social media, blogs and personal webpages	Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011
The sharing of one's identity	Chen 2013
Continued attention to one's online identity	Tarnovskaya and Bertilsson 2017
Self-promotion via multiple channels	Weil 2018

Much of the current literature on online self-marketing (Table 2.4) explores how individuals can create an online identity (Chen 2013; Labrecque, Markos & Milne 2011; Tarnovskaya & Bertilsson 2017; Weil 2018). Yet, extant research varies in specificity and theoretical basis. Chen (2013) put forth a very broad definition of online self-marketing as simply the sharing of one's identity. This definition is too general to be of use in the present research because it cannot even

differentiate between the parent theories of impression management and self-management discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2. Similarly, Weil's (2018) definition of online self-marketing as self-promotion via multiple digital channels and Tarnovskaya and Bertilsson's (2017) definition as the continued attention to one's online identity, are also too broad to be of use in defining DSM employed specifically for professional benefit. Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011) set forth the clearest definition of online self-marketing as the creation of a marketable identity that transcends social media, blogs and personal webpages. This definition directly links the parent theory of self-marketing to the new digital platforms available with Web 2.0 and beyond; however, it does not explicitly link DSM with professional promotion and career advancement efforts, which would be consistent with the original concept of self-marketing.

Given the significant variation in definitions of online self-marketing and their divergence from the original conceptualisation of self-marketing that focused on promoting oneself with the aim of career advancement (Kotler & Levy 1969; Shepherd 2005), this research introduces a new *digital self-marketing* framework to update the self-marketing concept for the digital age. Using data gathered in this research, this framework will address the new considerations and phenomena involved in DSM to provide a theoretical basis for future discussions on the management of online impressions in professional and employment contexts. The full framework will be presented in Chapter 5.

2.3.3 Academics and Digital Self-marketing

The academic world is extremely competitive, and hence, high-quality research alone may no longer be sufficient for an academic to stand out from other academics in the field and gain tenure (Gibney 2013). Modern academics are now expected to self-market their achievements as well as network in order to succeed (Eikhof 2012). This new reality means that they must engage in tactics such as DSM and personal branding to make their mark (Duffy & Pooley 2017; Trefzger & Dünfelder 2016). However, DSM in academia presents a unique set of challenges that requires a nuanced skillset. Academics must present themselves and their brand in a way that stands apart, but seemingly without effort, given the oversaturated market (Beals 2008). In order to ensure successful careers, they must now blend traditional self-marketing strategies (Shuker 2010) with their digital personal brand (Kozinets 2016).

Literature on how academics use social media is still in its infancy (Bik & Goldstein 2013; Goodier & Czerniewicz 2014; Lupton 2014; Minocha & Petres 2013; Veletsianos & Kimmons 2012). Some traditional academic self-marketing tools included in the literature are the CV, or reference list, as well as more novel tools, such as the self-assessment, the narrative resume, the personal commercial, the educator in residence proposal, the self-marketing plan and the self-marketing portfolio (Batra, Klein & Byramjee 2009). These tools have expanded following the advent of Web 2.0 and again through the rise of social media to include uniquely digital options, such as videos and blogs, and beyond into the metaverse with Web 3.0.

In order to successfully self-market, academics need to devote time and effort to building a digital personal brand that aligns with their values (Kozinets 2016). Academic DSM requires the academic to know themselves and their personality, and to remain true to both while expressing personal thoughts and emotions (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017). Each academic brand consists of a different grouping of ideas, places and institutions and depends on other brands to gain further traction and wider influence, considering that no academic digital brand exists in isolation (Kozinets 2016). Although some academics are sceptical about the utility of sharing their research on the internet and with broader audiences, if done correctly, these actions appear to reap benefits for academics (Liang et al. 2014). To facilitate this process, Alhquist (2013) identified the 10 best social media practices for those working in higher education, thus highlighting the importance of implementing an accurate, high-quality, strategic, authentic brand. Similarly, Trefzger and Dünfelder (2016) developed a guiding framework for academics to follow that included recommendations for how to target specific audiences and different social media platforms, and detailed daily activities and workflows to incorporate social media activities into a standard academic workday.

Academic visibility has expanded from traditional print media, such as peer-reviewed publications and traditional bibliometrics, to electronic and online sources that establish the academic as an authority in their field and increase their visibility (Camilleri 2015). Cabrera Mendez et al. (2016, p. 3) stated that ‘academics must leave a trace, they and their work must have a good reputation’. Achieving this goal in the modern digital world requires strategically positioning oneself in a professional context online and intentionally seeking attention (Kozinets 2016). Successful DSM is not guaranteed, however, with scholars utilising social media platforms, such as Twitter, to

promote their research although these platforms do not represent ‘traditional research impact’ and may therefore not be a viable avenue for increasing visibility (Haustein et al. 2014).

Regardless of the individual impact of specific social networks, it is clear that efforts to promote one’s academic reputation online are growing steadily (Camilleri 2015; Haustein et al. 2014; Kozinets 2016; Mutum 2011). Managing one’s professional reputation and identity digitally is now considered a critical part of a successful academic career. However, there has been little research to date on the ways that academics are engaging in DSM and the methods they are using. This scenario leads to the following research question:

RQ1: How are academics creating and curating their digital identities?

Web 2.0 presents some challenges to the use of DSM, particularly for academics. Given social media’s ‘collective self-presentation’ or ‘collaborative identity construction’ (Trottier 2012, p. 102), users are not in complete control of their online identity (Litt & Hargittai 2014). For example, information posted by others, such as wall posts, comments and tagged photos, contribute significantly to others’ impression of a social media user (Rui & Stefanone 2013; Walther, Van Der Heide & Kim 2008), even to a greater extent than the information the user may share about themselves (Pearce & Vitak 2016). To meet this challenge, social media impression management often requires reactive ‘curation’ strategies (Hogan 2010) to manage the risks of using these media in a high-surveillance environment (Trottier 2012). Examples of these strategies include changing privacy settings after a negative posting, untagging online image posts and removing content (Quan-Haase & Young 2013).

Lupton (2014) conducted an international online survey of 711 academics about their use of social media to identify the tools they used, the tools that they found most useful, and the benefits and drawbacks of using social media as a university faculty member or postgraduate student. The academics reported mixed perceptions. Lupton (2014) found that the benefits included connecting and establishing networks, not only with other academics but also people or groups outside universities; promoting openness and sharing of information; publicising and developing research; and giving and receiving support. However, they also expressed a range of concerns. These included issues of privacy and the blurring of boundaries between personal and professional use, a lack of credibility, concerns about the quality of the content they posted, the role of time

pressures, issues with social media use becoming an obligation, concerns about becoming a target of attack and having to endure too much self-promotion by others. The issue of intellectual property and copyright was also a concern, as was the commercial aspect of digital platforms, especially when fees were involved (Lupton 2014).

Veletsianos, Johnson and Belikov (2019) identified seven broad factors related to academics' social media use over time, which spanned both professional and personal spheres. One factor encompassed professional transitions, tensions and responsibilities. Academics acknowledged changing or increasing their social media use during transitional moments in their career, such as when seeking new employment, finishing graduate school and being unemployed. However, concerns over online privacy and self-protection were other important factors that influenced their social media use, including hesitation associated with data ownership, harassment and privacy. Study participants expressed being more mindful of what they posted and posting less often out of concern that their posts would be seen by their employer and affect them negatively, as well as the feeling that they lacked control over their data (Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019).

The effectiveness of the existing tools available for academic DSM in promoting academic reputation has also been questioned. The results of a survey published in 2014 by Van Noorden, which included more than 3,500 responses from academics in 95 different countries, revealed that Facebook was described as having little authority. When asked directly whether online academic networking had more benefits or drawbacks, 72% of the respondents described it as problematic in some way (Jordan & Weller 2018; Van Noorden 2014). Specifically, health policy researchers considered social media to be the poorest method for disseminating findings (Grande et al. 2014). A later survey of Canadian researchers in the computer science discipline found that ResearchGate facilitated collaboration, but research visibility was only weakly correlated to interactions and followers (Hammook, Misic & Misic 2015). In another study on the platform, most users of ResearchGate in the US and Europe were unable to identify major benefits to active engagement (Muscanell & Utz 2017). Moreover, using the site was correlated with both increased productivity and stress (Muscanell & Utz 2017). While increased productivity may assist with crafting a successful academic image, increased stress may negate those gains.

Given these mixed perceptions of DSM and the mixed research findings regarding its effectiveness, it is not surprising that some researchers appear to resist personal branding and research dissemination via SNSs, making a conscious decision to opt out of using SNSs. Academics may decide not to engage in DSM for many reasons, including concerns over data privacy and harassment, as well as the belief that using these sites is a waste of time and does not align well with their work style, or that such forms of academic content are meaningless owing to the lack of peer review (Harley et al. 2010). The digital landscape is ever-shifting, however, and perspectives identified in early academic research regarding self-marketing online may not hold true at present; hence, further research is required. The range in perceptions about DSM for academics leads to the following research questions:

RQ2a: How do academics perceive digital self-marketing?

RQ2b: What are their hesitations for adoption?

Academics now have many Web 2.0 tools to choose from to engage in DSM, as outlined in Table 1.1, from blogs and personal websites to SNSs. Certain academic-specific platforms, including online research databases and ASNSs, such as Academia.edu or ResearchGate, allow academics to self-market to their peers and to use built-in analytics tools to assess their marketing success (Duffy & Pooley 2017). Research points to increased adoption of SNSs for multiple academic DSM purposes, including research dissemination (Rousidis et al. 2013; Viney 2013), networking and job searches (Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019). In 2014, only a few highly cited European scientists had an academic SNS presence (Mas-Bleda et al. 2014); but by 2017, three-quarters of surveyed academics had an account with either ResearchGate or Academia.edu (Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017). Given how quickly academic behaviours online are evolving, additional research is needed to investigate these changing patterns. This leads to the following research question:

RQ3: How are academics using digital self-marketing to self-promote?

The specific influence of DSM on the careers of academics remains another unexplored issue. As of 2019, two academic SNSs, Academia.edu and ResearchGate, were created to expand academics' social connections, replicating the networking that occurs at professional conferences

in an online format (Kelly 2013). These academic SNSs were created with the intention of spanning three interconnected domains: networking, knowledge sharing and reputation building (Manca 2017). Each of these domains relates directly to DSM activities. Ijad Madisch founded ResearchGate in 2008 to create a platform that would help academic researchers share their own publications, interact with other researchers and share project-related updates (Yu et al. 2016). ResearchGate offers users 10 different metrics through which to track their online academic reputation (Nicholas, Clark & Herman 2016). A study that compared the features and the services of four popular academic SNSs, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Mendeley and Zotero, ranked ResearchGate the highest in terms of ease of use (Bhardwaj 2017). However, user engagement with the interface has been argued to be sporadic at best, with most individuals reporting only weekly ResearchGate use (Manca & Ranieri 2017).

An increasing number of academics use blogs and personal websites to highlight their research and to engage in a community of practice. Commentators have noted that such sites ‘have the potential of revolutionising the patterns of information publication and sharing in the academic world’ (Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017, para 10). Nonetheless, how exactly these sites affect the professional experiences of academics has been minimally explored until date.

The use of self-marketing online to help influence the direction of one’s academic career is an area that is slowly gaining more attention. Martin Weller (2011), an academic specialising in educational technology, introduced the concept of the ‘digital scholar’ in his book bearing the same title, addressing the digital positioning of scholars and their research. Further, a handbook entitled *Social Media for Academics: A Practical Guide* has been published on the subject (Neal 2012). Further research is warranted, however, to ascertain the link between self-marketing through digital avenues and efforts to promote one’s academic identity online for the aim of career progression. At the time of writing this thesis, the direct connections between academic SNSs and self-marketing were unclear in the literature. Academics use SNSs to strengthen their public image, but not necessarily for self-promotion (Dermentzi et al. 2016). Among Israeli academics, self-promotion and ego bolstering were the most prominent reasons they engaged with academic SNSs, followed by gaining professional knowledge, belonging to a professional community, interacting with other academics and indulging in escapism (Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017). Different motivations for academic social networking have also been identified at different career stages,

and recent PhD graduates and early career academics are more likely to engage with SNSs as a way to share their CV and advance their career (Nandez & Borrego 2013; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019).

Researchers have alluded to the importance of building a strong academic brand to achieve success at the institutional level, with universities likely to notice the value an individual brand brings to the institution and some universities exploring the use of altmetrics in staff performance reviews (Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018). No research to date, however, has directly explored academics' engagement in self-marketing online with the aim of career advancement. Thus, exploring academics' experiences on using academic DSM for the aim of furthering their career to achieve such milestones as tenure and promotion merits further exploration. This points to the fourth research question:

RQ4: What impact do academics perceive that DSM has had on their career?

2.3.4 University Policies about Social Media Use by Academics

Although social media has existed for more than two decades as of the time of writing, regulation of social media use and online behaviour is still in its infancy across all spheres (McVey 2022, from the government to higher education. As a new policy arena, the landscape for regulating social media is constantly shifting and there is little precedent for higher education institutions to reference when developing their own policies (Pomerantz, Hank & Sugimoto 2015). This section will review the limited research available on university social media policies, with a specific focus on the Australian higher education system. Given the notable dearth of studies in this area, this section will also examine a small selection of existing Australian university social media policies that are published online.

Although the Australian higher education system is unique in many ways, as discussed earlier in this thesis, it is useful to consider practices surrounding social media policies in other countries to help provide additional context, given that the research on this topic is extremely limited. In a 2015 review of all US higher education institutions listed in the Carnegie Classification Data File (4,635 institutions total), Pomerantz, Hank and Sugimoto found that less than one-quarter of those

universities had an accessible social media policy. Although that number has likely increased in the years since, there is extremely limited research that reviews university social media policies from subsequent years, making it especially difficult to determine more up-to-date numbers. The top three categories of content included in institution-wide social media policies that Pomerantz, Hank and Sugimoto (2015) analysed were the ‘appropriate’ nature of posts; the representation of the institution, including the use of the institution’s name; and the compliance of posts with the law (p. 11).

Notably, the policies analysed in the study had no correlation with the institutions’ respective accrediting agency, suggesting that the accrediting agencies themselves had yet to develop their own guidelines for the institutions under their jurisdiction (Pomerantz, Hank & Sugimoto 2015). As the researchers acknowledged, ‘the development of social media policies is, at present, idiosyncratic and institution-specific, and has not yet been integrated into the culture of higher education broadly’ (p. 14).

Thus, the social media policy landscape among Australian higher education institutions appears to be uneven and inconsistent, similarly to that of US universities. The Australian universities with published social media policies are limited, and the policies themselves vary greatly in degree of detail and specificity. Indeed, Willems et al. (2018) stated that ‘there remain low levels of commitment to social media in most Australasian educational institutions with relevant policies at various stages of development’ (p. 135) partly because digital technology continues to be a contested space and the appropriate level of institutional oversight is still unclear. The researchers stressed the importance of formulating a clear policy to help set institutional boundaries for protecting and managing safety risks and privacy concerns around social media usage.

An appropriate starting point for introducing some consistency and system-wide standards for Australian university social media policy would be guidance from a governing organisation, similar to [the social media toolkit](#) that the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association has provided in the UK (2015). However, the most obvious regulatory organisation in Australian higher education, the TEQSA, does not appear to provide any such resources, and indeed, the phrases ‘social media’ and ‘digital technology’ are not mentioned even once in the most recent version of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) issued

in 2021. The most relevant resource the TEQSA appears to have developed is the '[Online learning good practice' hub](#) which was launched at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to 'support providers with the transition to online learning' (para 1). However, the focus is solely on online learning and does not specifically address teaching staff's own digital technology or social media usage. Moreover, it is simply a collection of links to different resources and does not offer a comprehensive or cohesive guide for online learning or social media activities.

The most up-to-date research on social media policy that encompasses Australian higher education is Pasquini and Evangelopoulos (2017) systematic review of a dataset containing 250 publicly available social media policy documents from universities in 10 countries, which included policies from eight Australian universities:

- ANU;
- Deakin University;
- Griffith University;
- Monash University;
- Queensland University of Technology;
- RMIT University;
- University of Melbourne;
- University of Sydney.

Four of these universities belong to the Go8, and two belong to the Australian Technology Network. The two others, Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology, are both younger universities that were founded in the 1980s.

Pasquini and Evangelopoulos (2017) used latent semantic analysis to analyse the text in the dataset and extracted 36 topics that appeared with high frequency across the policy documents. The categories are relatively broad, and it is challenging to draw specific conclusions without additional context, but two relevant insights are worth mentioning. First, they did not identify online safety or cyberbullying among the top 36 topics, although academics have consistently expressed serious concerns about these issues (Belk 2013; Lupton 2014; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019). The topics Pasquini and Evangelopoulos

identified that most closely relate to these concerns are Privacy and Respect, neither of which directly address the issues of feeling unsafe, bullied or threatened.

Second, ‘Institutional Users’, which was among the 36 topics Pasquini and Evangelopoulos (2017) identified, was emphasised by Australian universities much more heavily than by institutions from other countries. One likely interpretation is that this inclusion is related to policy documents providing guidelines for different types of institutional users or defining what they mean by institutional users. In the social media context, the term is generally understood as social media users who are official representatives of the institution (Pasquini & Evangelopoulos 2017). The emphasis on who is and is not an institutional social media user is in line with the review presented in this thesis of select Australian university social media policies—those of James Cook University (JCU), ANU, Bond University and Monash University—that are discussed in Sections 2.3.4.1.1–2.3.4.1.4. These universities were chosen based on the results displayed on the first Google search engine results page on using the phrase ‘Australian university social media policies’ to conduct a search.

2.3.4.1 Review of Select Australian University Social Media Policies

The social media policies of the four universities that were reviewed differed significantly as regards policy structure, detail and content, as well as whether the documents were up to date. Three of four universities had not updated their policy for at least four years, which is an extremely long period in the fast-paced, ever-evolving digital space. The only exception was Monash University, whose policy went into effect in July 2021. In this brief review, a comparison is presented of the universities’ respective policies in terms of content surrounding their (a) approach to professional versus personal use and assigning responsibility for social media behaviour, (b) the way that they address online safety concerns and (c) whether they address academic staff’s workload allocation or the use of social media metrics for performance and funding reviews. Table 2.5 provides a summary of the findings, following which each university policy is discussed.

Table 2.5: Summary of Select Australian University Social Media Policy Content

University	Date Last Updated	Directly Addresses Online Safety?	Clearly Assigns Responsibility for Social	Addresses Staff Workload or Performance?
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			Media Behaviour?	
James Cook University	September 2018	Yes	No	No
Australian National University	October 2015	No	Yes	No
Bond University	March 2017	Yes	Yes	No
Monash University	July 2021	No	Yes	No

Source. Developed from this research. The universities' social media policy documents were obtained from their respective official websites.

2.3.4.1.1 James Cook University

A Queensland public university, JCU has a [Social Media Policy](#) published on its website that was last updated in September 2018. The policy is relatively short and begins by acknowledging the important role of social media, stating that the university 'encourages and supports the ideal of the "engaged academic", "engaged Student" or "engaged Affiliate" who, via Social Media and public commentary, are participating in the sharing of information, opinions and ideas.' It outlines appropriate use and the limitations about posting in an official capacity on behalf of the university. The final section addresses reporting and complaints regarding social media and refers readers to report 'serious cyber-bullying or stalking behaviour to the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN)'. Given that safety is not among the 36 topics in Pasquini and Evangelopoulos's (2017) systematic review, it is especially notable that JCU directly addresses this issue.

The policy does not offer any information about staff workload allocation and the use of social media metrics for academic staff performance or research funding evaluations. JCU's policy also links to a [Social Media Guidelines](#) page that provides detailed definitions of all activities that they recognise as encompassing social media use and provides more in-depth guidance regarding do's and don'ts, including strategies and example scenarios for moderating official JCU social media accounts.

2.3.4.1.2 Australian National University

ANU, located in the capital city of Canberra, is one of the elite Go8 universities. In contrast to JCU whose social media policy applies to all university affiliates, ANU has separate policies for staff and students. The [social media policy for staff](#) is quite short, approximately one-and-a-half pages, and was last updated in October 2015. Of interest is their approach to university affiliation; the policy explicitly instructs staff to always identify themselves as ANU affiliates and does not differentiate between personal and professional use: ‘Be transparent and state that you work at The Australian National University. Your honesty will be noted in the social media environment.’ In contrast, JCU differentiates between posting in an official university capacity and posting for personal use.

Notably, ANU’s policy does not directly address the issue of safety or cyberbullying. Their approach appears to be to give individual staff members full responsibility over how they protect themselves: ‘Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy and the University’s confidential and proprietary information.’ Similarly to the JCU policy, the ANU policy does not address workload allocation and the use of social media metrics for evaluating staff performance or determining research funding. Significantly, ANU has not updated its policy in the past seven years and the policy still mentions the SNS MySpace, which is relatively obsolete and has been out of popularity for several years.

2.3.4.1.3 Bond University

Bond University, Australia’s first private, not-for-profit university, has a published [Social Media Policy](#) that applies to all university students and staff and was last amended in March 2017. The policy is organised by ‘Online Social Media Principles’, which include:

- Personal responsibility;
- Be transparent;
- Protect privacy and copyright;
- Be respectful;
- Adhere to Bond University values and corporate policies;
- Mixing business and personal lives;

- Let official online spokespeople respond to negative posts.

The policy explicitly states that ‘staff and students are personally responsible for anything they publish online’, and it instructs these affiliates to always include a clear disclaimer that conveys they are sharing their personal opinion, and not that of the university, when they are not posting in an official university capacity.

In relation to privacy, the policy warns individuals not to divulge personal facts or information that could compromise their privacy. Similarly to the JCU policy, Bond University’s policy explicitly mentions bullying and harassment: ‘Proven instances of bullying and harassment will be deemed as misconduct and disciplinary action may include dismissal or exclusion.’ Further, it provides an exhaustive list of types of content that affiliates must refrain from posting, which generally encompasses any type of lewd, offensive and illegal content. The policy also clearly instructs affiliates not to respond to negative or disparaging posts about the university or students, in another apparent attempt at safeguarding student and staff safety and privacy. The policy does not mention staff workload allocation and the use of social media metrics in performance reviews.

2.3.4.1.4 Monash University

Monash University, another Go8 university, is located in Melbourne and is Australia’s largest university. This university has the most extensive and up-to-date policy of those reviewed in this thesis. It has a [Media and Social Media Policy](#) and a [Media and Social Media Procedure](#) published online, both of which went into effect in July 2021. Similarly to the Bond University policy and the ANU policy, Monash University’s policy clearly places responsibility on staff and students to post content that adheres to university policy: ‘Staff and students are responsible for ensuring content shared on media or social media channels aligns with this policy.’ Its approach is slightly different than those of the other universities reviewed, in that it combined policy for traditional media and social media into a single document. Owing to this approach, the policy places more emphasis on public-relations-type media engagement than on the use of popular SNSs. Notably, the policy does not mention online safety or cyberbullying, and the only mention of privacy is in relation to protecting confidential data. Neither does it mention staff workload allocation for social media and the use of social media metrics in performance reviews.

Monash University's policy refers any staff or student acting on behalf of the university or engaging with the media in an official capacity to the aforementioned Media and Social Media Procedure. The procedure takes an illustrative approach to showing the type of posting acceptable under different categories and provides multiple examples for each category, including official university statements and posts related to research or educational activities. Last, the procedure provides a list of acceptable and unacceptable use of media and social media. Regarding concerns about the 'behaviour of staff and students on social media', the document lists three contacts, including a Safer Community Unit, which may be responsible for addressing concerns with student or staff safety.

2.3.5 Summary of Digital Self-marketing

This review integrated the literature that builds on the theories of impression management, self-marketing and personal branding specifically in relation to managing individual academic reputation and identity in the digital age. The second parent theory of self-marketing, which relates directly to pursuing career progression and specifically employment, is most relevant to this research (Shuker 2014). Although there is a growing body of literature on social media use by academics (e.g. Lupton 2014; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019), most such studies address social media usage broadly and do not focus on individuals' specific behaviours or strategies for promoting themselves online for professional purposes. Indeed, academics engage with multiple platforms to strengthen their online visibility and they employ DSM (Dermentzi et al. 2016; Lupton 2014; Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017; Muscanell & Utz 2017); however, the existing body of literature lacks a solid theoretical underpinning to help frame the considerations and behaviours involved in self-marketing online. To date, no study has endeavoured to update the pre-internet concept of self-marketing for this new digital age.

The introduction of the DSM framework in this research is intended as a culmination of the research findings and the integration of the self-marketing literature with the literature in the fields of sociology, psychology, and marketing and communication regarding impression management, self-presentation and personal branding. By adopting this approach, this research aims to rethink and evolve the term *self-marketing* to account for the social media era and the new, digital ways that individuals create and curate their identity and promote their professional achievements. The

full framework that details new considerations and behaviours associated with DSM will be presented in Chapter 5 as an outcome of the findings of this research.

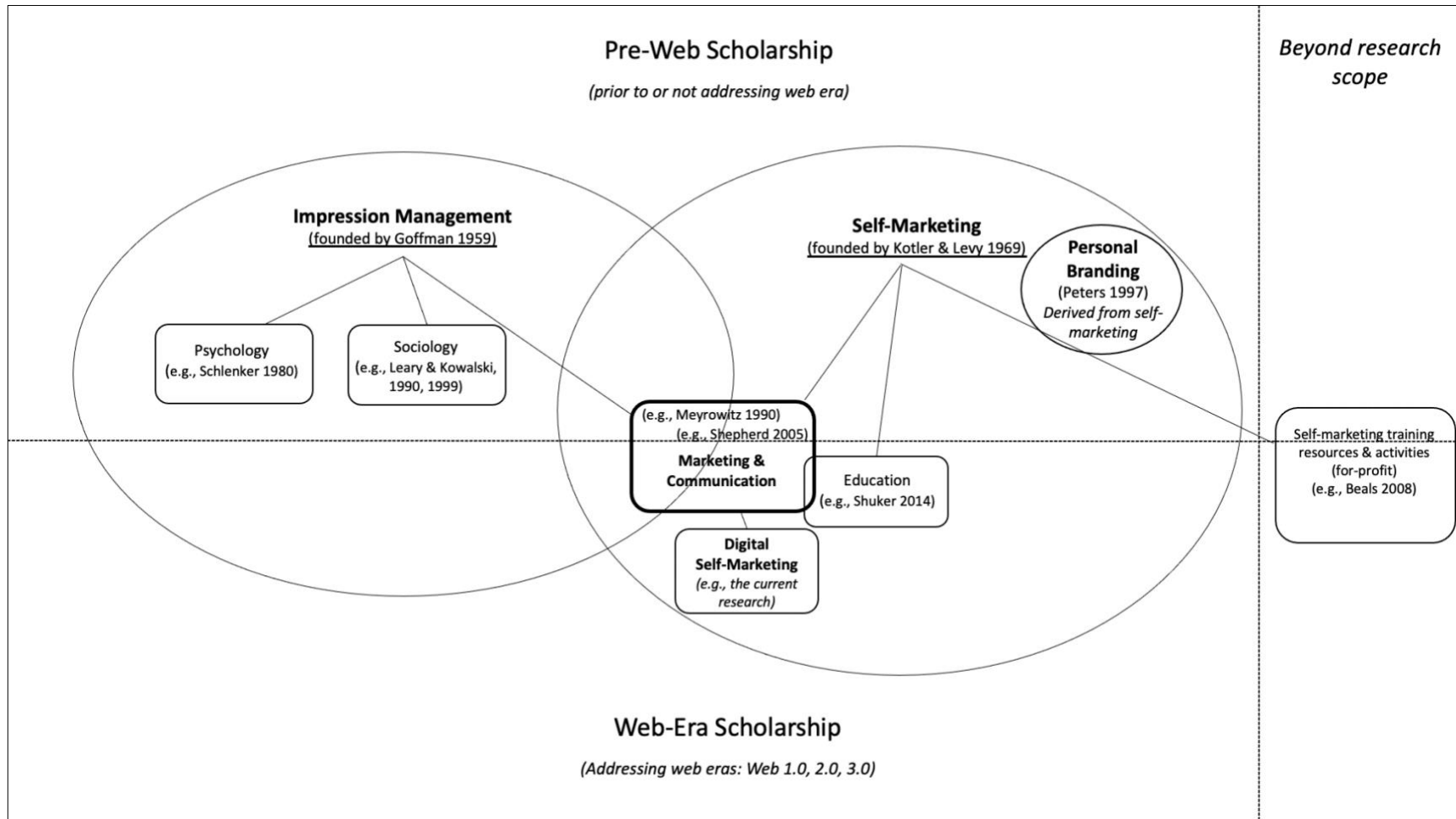
As Web 2.0 continues to evolve and Web 3.0 emerges (Kim 2021), it is likely that academic DSM will become increasingly relevant. Greater emphasis will be placed on nonverbal forms of communication, and users will need to capitalise on this communication in digital spaces, particularly in the post-COVID era. Moreover, with the rise of digital media in both learning and teaching spaces, academics must be comfortable and efficient in engaging with this technology. As is apparent throughout this discussion, the existing literature identified motives for using or abstaining from academic social media (Greifeneder et al. 2018; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019), as well as how academic social media usage may influence efforts at advancing the academic's career in the future, potentially factoring into tenure and promotion decisions (Megwalu 2015). The existing literature, however, has not yet examined how academics use DSM and their experiences regarding how it may have influenced their career development. Academics in Australia, faced with a growing higher education crisis (Jayasuriya 2021; Welch 2022), are already experiencing more pressure to build their digital brand and cultivate robust altmetrics to increase their research prominence and impact. Therefore, understanding how academics interact with DSM, and how this engagement may influence career development will only increase in importance.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research emerged as a culmination of the integration of the self-marketing literature with the literature in the fields of sociology, psychology and marketing and communication around impression management, self-presentation and personal branding, with the aim of updating the term *self-marketing* to account for the social media era and the new, digital ways that individuals create and curate their identity and promote their professional achievements. The parent theories of impression management and self-marketing form the basis of the preliminary conceptual framework, which provides the foundation upon which the DSM concept will be built by using the findings from this research. From the integration of the literature on the two parent theories and a review of the existing research on online self-marketing, the conceptual framework shown in Figure 2.2 was developed.

The conceptual framework is divided into two sections horizontally, which represent two different eras: the pre-web era at the top, and the web era (including Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0) at the bottom. The framework is also vertically divided into two sections—the large left-hand section encompasses academic scholarship, and the small right-hand section encompasses non-academic literature that falls beyond the scope of this research. The framework shows the overlap between the theories of impression management and self-marketing, placed in separate ellipses that overlap in the centre. Although both theories straddle the pre-web and web eras, there is more web-era scholarship within the self-marketing sphere, as shown by the presence of scholarship below the dividing line between the two eras. In self-marketing's sphere of influence fall the disciplines of Marketing and Communication (including research by Shepherd 2005) and Education (e.g. Shuker 2014), which both address the concept of self-marketing. The new concept of *digital self-marketing* is shown as a subdiscipline of Marketing and Communication. Personal branding (Peters 1997) is represented as a subdomain of self-marketing, which is fully encompassed by the self-marketing ellipsis. Beyond the research scope, yet still associated with self-marketing, are the for-profit self-marketing training resources and exercises that practitioners such as Beals (2008) have developed. Under the impression management sphere of influence sit the disciplines of Psychology (e.g. Schlenker 1980) and Sociology (e.g. Leary & Kowalski 1990), as well as Marketing and Communication (e.g. Meyrowitz 1990), which sits at the intersection of the two theories for it is encompassed by both.

Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework Developed from Literature



Source. Developed from the literature; references cited: Beals, J 2008, *Self-marketing power: branding yourself as a business of one*, Keynote Publishing, Omaha, NE; Goffman, E 1959, *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Doubleday Anchor, Garden City, NY; Kotler, P & Levy, SJ 1969, 'Broadening the concept of marketing', *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 10-5; Leary, MR &

Kowalski, RM 1990, 'Impression management: a literature review and two-component model', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 107, no. 1, pp. 34–47; Meyrowitz, J 1990, 'Redefining the situation: extending dramaturgy into a theory of social change and media effects', in SH Riggins (ed.), *Beyond Goffman: studies on communication, institution and social interaction*, De Gruyter, Berlin, Germany, pp. 65–98; Peters, T 1997, 'The brand called you,' *Fast Company*, vol. 10, no. 10, pp. 83–90; Schlenker, BR 1980, *Impression management: the self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*, Brooks/Cole, Monterey, CA; Shepherd, IDH 2005, 'From cattle and Coke to Charlie: meeting the challenge of self-marketing and personal branding', *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 21, no. 5–6, pp. 589–606; Shuker, L 2014, "'It'll look good on your personal statement": self-marketing amongst university applicants in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 224–43.

The new DSM framework that is an outcome of this research, and will be presented in Chapter 5, takes this conceptual framework as a foundation to guide the investigation of how Australian-based academics use DSM to manage their professional identity with the aim of career advancement.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter defined the two parent disciplines of impression management and self-marketing, integrated the literature around these and related theories from the fields of psychology, sociology, and marketing and communication, and provided a chronology of the pre- and post-Web 2.0 literature. The literature on online self-marketing was reviewed relating to the careers of academics and other disciplines. It is through this integration of literature and discussion that knowledge gaps were identified and areas for further research were defined. A discussion and justification of the research paradigm and design used for this thesis are presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous chapter presented an integration of the literature on the parent theories of impression management and self-marketing from the fields of psychology, sociology, and communication and marketing, and defined the focus of this research as digitally based academic career development. From a review of the literature, several research questions and a preliminary conceptual framework were developed to investigate and understand the perceptions and the experiences of academics associated with the act of DSM, which was introduced as an update to the original pre-internet conceptualisation of self-marketing. The following research questions were addressed by developing a suitable, valid research method, which is outlined in this chapter:

RQ1: How are academics creating and curating their digital identities?

RQ2a: How do academics perceive digital self-marketing?

RQ2b: What are their hesitations for adoption?

RQ3: How are academics using digital self-marketing to self-promote?

RQ4: What impact do academics perceive that digital self-marketing has had on their career?

This chapter explains the methodology and the design that underpins the research direction that was taken to address the research questions. The chapter is organised into seven sections, as shown in Figure 3.1. Following the introduction, the first section provides the rationale that guided the interpretivist qualitative research paradigm adopted in this study. Section 3.2 outlines the grounded theory research design that formed the basis of this study to highlight the benefits of building a theory about DSM with respect to academics that is based on their own lived experiences. Then, in Section 3.3, the use and the format of the semi-structured interviews conducted to collect data are described, and the recruitment and the sampling of participants for the study are outlined in Section 3.4. In Section 3.5, the steps and procedures taken to analyse and thematically code data with respect to grounded theory research are delineated. Sections 3.6 and 3.7 review the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the data and to account for ethical issues in the research, respectively.

Figure 3.1: Outline of Chapter 3



Source. Developed from this research.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The methodologies employed in this study were developed by considering the most appropriate research paradigm and assumptions for expanding the knowledge on academics' perceptions of DSM in order to address the research questions of this thesis. A research paradigm is a distinct system of language, theories, assumptions and methods shared by the members of a research community to define, explain and predict behaviour (Kuhn 1962). The central and most common research paradigms include the logical-positivist, the interpretivist and the critical theory research paradigms (Patton 2002; Treagust, Won & Duit 2014). These paradigms reflect a set of relatively distinct and well-defined assumptions about the methods that can be used to derive knowledge from research endeavours in order to describe, qualify, quantify and understand the basis of human behaviour.

The positivist paradigm rests on the assumption that observations of the physical world are the most valid approach to generating knowledge (Campbell 1957). Positivism is reflected in the

scientific method whereby knowledge is developed via the derivation of empirical questions and hypotheses, the operationalisation of concepts, the engagement in systematic and controlled observation through validated methodologies, the collection of data and the interpretation of data via inferential statistics and quantitative analysis and, then, the integration of the findings to form an interpretation in order to address the research questions and hypotheses (Bryman 2012). The scientific method is shown in research designs that test the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable via controlled experiments or through the use of surveys to establish and isolate cause–effect relationships between variables, while at the same time controlling for extraneous variables.

A contrasting approach, the interpretivist paradigm, entails phenomenological inquiry (Hassard 1993) and employs qualitative and naturalist approaches to understand human experience in context-specific settings inductively and holistically. Interpretive approaches develop knowledge by understanding how people experience an event and/or state, with the assumption that people's individual perspectives on the same topic may differ such that each provides a source of potentially valuable and rich data (Scotland 2012; Treagust, Won & Duit 2014). Simultaneously, the interpretivist paradigm considers background factors that may interact with the phenomenon under investigation, such as the social context and cultural factors. Research and data collection methods under the interpretivist paradigm range from observational approaches, qualitative interviews, focus groups, case studies and ethnographies. The data generated from these methods are usually subjected to reflective and content analysis to derive themes and general impressions of the findings that address the specific research phenomenon under investigation (Howitt 2010).

A third general research paradigm, critical theory research, shares similarities with the interpretivist paradigm because it focuses on understanding people's thoughts and beliefs as a function of their social and cultural context (Treagust, Won & Duit 2014). However, the critical research paradigm emphasises the nature of power relations and inequality to understand group-based phenomena. Researchers from this perspective are interested in understanding what historical and political factors have led to outcomes such as gender and ethnic inequalities in an area of inquiry (Comstock 1994). In addition, research from the critical theory paradigm focuses on changing power relations to ensure greater access to resources. Comstock (1994) outlined that the several steps in critical theory research include the following: developing an interpretive

understanding of the meanings and perspectives held by a group, identifying historical conditions that constrain and shape group actions, and generating programs of actions to change social conditions.

These three different research paradigms provide distinctive approaches to generating knowledge about the DSM activities of academics, and each paradigm presents advantages and disadvantages. Research from the positivist paradigm provides significant objective control and rigour to frame and quantify observations of the world. However, this approach would take little account of the clear social context factors that frame DSM activities such that the research findings may lack generalisability to the real-world challenges faced by academics. In contrast, the critical theory paradigm provides a wide range of contextual information to a research question but encourages researchers to take a political stance in their investigation by focusing on phenomena in terms of societal power relations. However, the nature of societal power relations in an academic environment falls outside the scope of generating knowledge about the unique DSM activities of individual academics. The interpretivist paradigm is thus the most suitable approach owing to its focus on the rigorous collection of qualitative data that are rich in contextual information.

The interpretivist paradigm has several advantages (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Howitt 2010), which made it a valid approach to investigating and understanding the digitally based self-marketing activities of academics. Interpretivism assumes an open-ended approach to data collection for providing a set of findings that are detailed in their focus, rich in content and not limited by the constraints of hypothesis testing under the positivist paradigm. In this way, interpretive qualitative methodologies give voice to the individual perspective and to academics' unique understanding of their DSM activities. Moreover, interpretivism considers the cultural and the social factors that would frame academics' self-marketing activities, in contrast to the quantitative approach of positivism that generally provides a limited and specific viewpoint about complex phenomena. Interpretivist qualitative methodologies thus allowed this thesis to focus on events, thoughts and behaviours associated with the DSM activities of academics as they occurred in real situations and social contexts. Last, interpretive qualitative methods facilitate engagement with respondents so that the line of inquiry can be attuned to the emergence of a group or an individual viewpoint.

Given its distinct advantages, the interpretive paradigm was adopted in this research to frame the investigation of digitally based self-marketing activities of academics by assuming that knowledge about DSM could be accurately derived from the lived experiences of academics. Indeed, the research questions of this thesis focus on academics' perceptions of DSM in terms of their experience of creating digital self-identities (RQ1), their hesitations for adoption of DSM (RQ2b), and the ways in which they use DSM to promote their careers (RQ4). The interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to explore these questions fully by engaging academics with their thoughts and feelings surrounding DSM. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm is appropriate for a broad investigation of the relatively new phenomenon of DSM among academics.

3.2 Research Design

Based on the interpretivist paradigm, the research approach adopted for this study entailed a qualitative research design. Qualitative methodologies apply inductive, interpretive methods to describe and explain events in the everyday world (Taylor & Trujillo 2001). A qualitative research design enabled the interpretation of meanings and perspectives associated with the DSM activities of academics where both their subjective realities and knowledge provided an avenue to understand convergent and divergent perceptions about DSM (Hallebone & Priest 2009). Studies have shown that some academics perceive DSM as a useful tool for highlighting their work (Kelly 2013; Manca 2017; Manca & Ranieri 2017; Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017; Ovadia 2014), whereas others claim it is unnecessary and not worth the effort (Grande et al. 2014; Jordan & Weller 2018; Lupton 2014; Van Noorden 2014). Consistent with Blaikie (1993), a qualitative research design provided an avenue to discover the social reality of academics engaged with DSM for exploring their different beliefs and convictions about its efficacy and benefits and the associated challenges.

The range of common qualitative research designs include phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, action research and archival research (Patton 2002; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009; Zikmund et al. 2010). Ethnographic research would entail the active participation of the researcher in the DSM environment of participants, whereas a case study approach would focus on the experiences of a representative case of an academic DSM user. Given their limited scope, both ethnographic and case study research would provide lower precision in addressing the research questions of this thesis. In contrast, other qualitative designs, such as

archival research and action research, assume a body of existing knowledge about a phenomenon under investigation and are thus less relevant to developing knowledge on a relatively new field of investigation with respect to the experience of DSM among academics. Hence, a grounded theory research design was employed in this study to investigate the experience of academics as regards DSM, given the need for theoretical development in the self-marketing research (Shepherd 2005).

Grounded theory is a term that refers to both a research methodology and the end theoretical product of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Weed 2009) where ‘a theory is induced or emerged after data collection starts’ (Glaser 1978, p. 37). Grounded theory was considered revolutionary in the 1960s, for the social sciences were dominated by quantitative approaches to research at that time and qualitative research was generally viewed as insufficiently rigorous and scientific (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss 1967). In contrast to other qualitative approaches, grounded theory focuses on people’s perceptions and interpretations of their situations as the basis of understanding their actions with the assumption that perceptions can be redefined by social interaction (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Intrinsically, grounded theory is an appropriate method for investigating DSM, given that the research questions of this thesis focus on the social context of self-promotion among academics.

The basis of grounded theory is the use of multiple techniques to develop a fit between the data and theory, which is achieved by sorting data using empirical and thematic codes. The central tasks of qualitative research involve extracting and abstracting, locating significant themes in complex data, and providing rich descriptions, categories and theories (Richards 1999). From the viewpoint of grounded theory, the term ‘category’ refers to theoretical concepts that classify patterns within data, enabling researchers to explain behaviour. Each category has properties that define or elaborate the meaning of the category (Glaser & Strauss 1967). In this research, the data were sorted and coded to extract themes and generate categories that reflected theoretical concepts for explaining the experience of academics as regards DSM.

Despite the appeal of a grounded theory research design for this study, it is important to acknowledge and account for its limitations. First, there is a risk in grounded theory research that accepting the participants’ assumptions and beliefs could intrude on the researcher’s analysis

(Strauss & Corbin 1998), considering that the research is also theoretically sensitive to the researcher's personal training and education (Glaser 1978). In this case, it is important to ensure the research meets acceptable levels of trustworthiness. A further limitation of grounded theory is that the researcher may emphasise the *process* of developing codes at the expense of theoretical coding whereby the relationship between codes is developed and explained., Goulding (1998) recommended that to overcome this possibility, constant comparison should be a central feature of the grounded theory research method where emerging themes are sorted based on similarities and differences to develop categories. For this study, the qualitative research tool NVivo 12 was employed to facilitate the ongoing sorting and comparisons across emerging categories, themes and subthemes. Moreover, Goulding (1998) recommended that the endpoint of theory development should only occur when all core categories are saturated. Data saturation will be discussed further in Section 3.4.

In summary, the grounded theory approach was the most appropriate for this study because the intent was to generate and develop a theory from the analysis of narrative or text data in relation to the opinions and experiences of academics associated with DSM (Creswell 1998; Leedy & Ormrod 2005; Trochim & Donnelly 2001), and to refine a framework that provides an update to the concept of self-marketing for the digital era by detailing new considerations and behaviours associated with DSM. Grounded theory provides a theoretical account of a topic along with the simultaneous grounding of the account in empirical observations or data (Martin & Turner 1986). In this way, data collection, analysis and theory stand in close relationship to one another in a grounded theory study because they occur simultaneously (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Consistent with Richards and Morse (2002), the methods of a grounded theory approach to research are appropriate for the current study, which aims to learn from participants and gain an understanding of DSM processes and contexts. One such method, the semi-structured qualitative interview approach, was employed to gather data, develop knowledge and theory relating to the experiences of academics about DSM and address the research questions of this thesis.

3.3 Interviews

Approximately 90% of all social science investigations rely on interviews (Briggs 1986), which enable participants to describe their opinions, motivations and experiences (Lindlof & Taylor

2011). Hence, in-depth interviews were selected as the most appropriate qualitative research method for this research, for the research questions sought to discover the opinions and the experiences of academics concerning DSM. In-depth interviewing can be structured or unstructured (Aaker, Kumar & Day 1990; Malhotra et al. 2003); however, Richards and Morse (2002) suggested that the unstructured interview, when conducted well, offers a respondent the opportunity to tell their story with minimal interruption, in revealing aspects that are important to their lived experience of a phenomenon.

The unstructured method of interviewing is preferred by some researchers to the structured interview, since the latter may elicit rational responses but could lead to subjective or emotional dimensions being overlooked or inadequately assessed (Fontana & Frey 1994). Thus, a semi-structured interview approach was used in this research to allow academics to speak freely about DSM, but to still retain some structure. These interviews were primarily conducted online, given the constraints of data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face interviews could not proceed. Nevertheless, this study focused on the DSM activities of academics, such that online interviewing was a corresponding situational context. Interviews began with opening questions described by Richards and Morse (2002) as a ‘grand tour’ question designed to establish rapport and gain general insight into the opinions, experiences, values and worldview of participants. These questions included ‘Tell me about yourself and your career’ and ‘How long have you been in your current position and University?’

Interview questions were focused on the research questions of this study. In the first section, academics were asked how they create and curate their digital identities (RQ1), through questions such as ‘Have you deliberately created a professional image for yourself as an academic?’ Then, they were asked questions about their perceptions of DSM and their hesitations, if any, for adopting it (RQ2) through questions such as ‘What are the challenges of DSM?’ To address RQ3 about how academics use DSM to promote their professional achievements, they were asked questions such as ‘Has a particular platform been useful for raising your research and/or professional profile?’ To address RQ4 about the impact they perceive that DSM has had on their career development, participants were asked questions such as ‘What role has digital self-marketing played in your career so far?’

Overall, a total of 18 interview questions were employed to provide insight into academics' use of DSM and their perceptions about the effects of DSM on their career. The full set of questions is included in Appendix C. In addition, participants were asked to show examples of their own online spaces, avatars or constructions of self as a way to open up the discussion of their impression management, social media and DSM strategies, approaches, tactics and actual use. They were also asked to provide examples of their academic DSM activities in spaces such as ResearchGate, academia, personal and organisational websites, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

Participant interviews were conducted with each participant individually for up to one hour per interview, and participants were asked to schedule for this allocated time. A sample of 21 interview participants was recruited from across Australia. Approval was first obtained from the RMIT Business College Human Ethics Advisory Network to conduct face to face interviews. However, after the emergence of the COVID-19 public health crisis, a second approval was obtained from this Network to conduct interviews virtually. Of the 21 total interviews, one interview was conducted in person between lockdowns. The remaining 20 interviews were conducted via the online conferencing software of the participant's preference, either MS Teams or Zoom (with 2-step security protocols enabled). Permission to record the audio of the interviews was sought and granted by all the interviewees, which allowed the interviews to be transcribed for accurate data analysis.

3.4 Sampling and Recruitment

The recruitment of interview participants for this study involved a non-probability convenience sample of 21 academic staff based in Australia. Convenience or purposeful sampling entails a researcher selecting participants who are exclusively positioned to best understand the issues that are central to the research focus of a study (Patton 2002). Using this approach assisted with recruitment and ensured that interviews were conducted within the originally proposed timeline of 6 to 8 months for this project.

It is important to consider, however, a key issue in voluntary participation through convenience sampling is that it likely entails a self-selection bias, whereby participants who are more open to

participating in the study and more interested in the topic, compared with the general sample population, choose to participate.

Academics were recruited for the study from universities around Australia, including those in the Australian Technology Network and the Go8, to explore whether the perceptions about DSM differed within the separate university categories. The academic participants all held full-time ongoing academic positions ranging from Level A to Level D positions (see Appendix B for comparison of academic faculty levels across different countries). Considering that the research was investigating the use of DSM in relation to career development, this sample was selected with the aim to potentially highlight differences between institution type, career level, age, gender and motivations in using DSM.

Participants were recruited through announcements via email and university newsletters as well as tweets by the researcher on Twitter and retweets from colleagues. Those who were recruited for an interview were first sent a Statement of Informed Consent to read and sign. The participant information sheet/consent form explained to them the purpose of the research, what their participation involved, the voluntary nature of participation and the benefits and risks of participation. The consent form also explained the data collection process and that the collected data would be stored securely, according to the University's data storage policies, in order to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity.

The participants were also informed that the interviews would be recorded and that they could withdraw their participation at any point.

Significantly, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic immediately before the data collection that was scheduled to commence in March 2020 made it challenging to conduct this research. Initial attempts were made to recruit participants in March, but most academics were unwilling to participate, given the stress of the pandemic and their being occupied with the rapid transition to online instruction. Consequently, data collection did not begin until July and spanned through December 2020.

Participants for this study were sampled until the data derived from interviews was deemed to have reached the saturation point at which the collection of more data did not provide any new

information or had minimal impact on the quality and quantity of data already collected (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006). Although strict rules about how many interviews should be conducted for a qualitative study have not been specified, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that saturation point occurred after 12 interviews when including a non-probabilistic sample whereas Warren (2002) advised that a publishable study should include 20–30 interviews. Ultimately, the principles for identifying data saturation proposed by Francis et al. (2010) were followed for this research because they provide a concrete approach for determining data saturation in interview studies such as the current research project. This process involves identifying the minimum number of interviews that will be conducted, that is, the initial analysis sample, and the number of additional interviews that will be conducted to determine that no new themes will arise, that is, the stopping criterion. Francis et al. (2010) recommended concluding that data saturation has been reached if no new themes arise after this number of interviews (with appropriate diversity sampling). In their study, they set an initial analysis sample of 10 with a stopping criterion of 3, and they reached data saturation at 13 interviews when no new themes emerged.

For this research project, the initial analysis sample was set at 18 interviews with a stopping criterion of 3. After data from the initial sample of 18 interviews were analysed and themes were identified, three additional interviews were conducted and analysed. Because no new themes emerged from these three representatively diverse participant interviews, data saturation was deemed to have been reached for the total sample of 21 participants in this research. This sample size is also in line with those of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) and Warren (2002).

3.4.1 Participant Demographics

The demographic details of participants who completed this interview study are shown in Table 3.1. In all, 21 academics participated—14 females and seven males. Although the gender imbalance was an unintended outcome of the recruitment process, it is unlikely to have significantly affected the findings, given that the participants were well-represented across other demographic factors. Most participants were early- to mid-career academics at Levels B and C (18/21) and a majority were in the 35–44 age group (13/21).

Table 3.1: Participant Demographics

Participant	Job Title	Level	Age	Sex
P1	Senior Research Fellow	D	35–44	M
P2	Lecturer	B	35–44	F
P3	Senior Lecturer	C	35–44	F
P4	Senior Lecturer	C	26–35	F
P5	Senior Lecturer	C	35–44	M
P6	Research Fellow/Lecturer	B	35–44	F
P7	Lecturer	B	35–44	M
P8	Lecturer	B	45–54	F
P9	Lecturer	B	45–54	F
P10	Senior Research Fellow	C	35–44	M
P11	Lecturer	B	35–44	F
P12	Associate Professor	D	35–44	F
P13	Research Fellow/Lecturer	A	35–44	F
P14	Lecturer	B	35–44	M
P15	Senior Lecturer	C	45–54	F
P16	Senior Research Fellow	C	26–35	F
P17	Senior Lecturer	C	45–54	F
P18	Senior Lecturer	C	35–44	F
P19	Senior Lecturer	C	35–44	F
P20	Lecturer	B	45–54	M
P21	Senior Lecturer	C	45–54	M

Source. Developed from this literature.

The academics' university affiliations have not been included as part of the demographics in order to preserve confidentiality; in general, the participants were from universities across Australia, both ranked and unranked. Three participants were from RMIT University, 10 from La Trobe University, two from Monash University and one each from the University of Western Sydney, ANU, Deakin University, University of Southern Queensland, University of Adelaide and

University of New England. This sample represents a diverse cross-section of research-intensive, technical and other university types across Australia ([learn more about Australian university types here](#)). Data on participants' social and digital media use, including the platforms they used, are presented in the next section.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis of interview data was completed in two phases, as recommended by Francis et al. (2010), to determine data saturation. In the first phase, 18 interviews were analysed. Three subsequent interviews were then conducted and analysed to ascertain whether any new themes emerged. Since no new themes emerged from the three new interviews, these data were merged and coded together with the original dataset of 18 interviews. The duration of interviews was 58 minutes, on average, and the verbatim transcription was, on average, 14 pages in length.

Data analysis in both phases followed a 3-stage process of Immersion, Transformation, and Connection as described by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012). This approach to coding was deemed effective since the researcher conducted all participant interviews and played an active role in the data collection process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012), and was therefore able to draw on their additional observations during the immersive 3-stage process, allowing for more freedom in the coding process than Corbin and Strauss's (1990) open coding, axial coding, and selective coding approach which requires identification of a single core category that encompasses all of the findings. The researcher chose a more reflexive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clark 2006), as it enabled richer, open interpretation in line with the chosen grounded theory approach. Quantifying the findings with numbers like intercoder reliability scores was thought to be too reductive in nature and would not have allowed for the open-ended interpretation that the researcher was seeking in this research.

The process of immersion entailed verbatim transcription of recorded interviews and listening to the recording of each interview after its conclusion to review the content and record any observations in field notes (Smith & Osborn 2008). Each completed transcript was then reviewed together with the recording to determine transcription accuracy and to enable deeper immersion in the data. Moreover, the participants' responses to questions were read together with the recording to facilitate immersion and an understanding of the experiences being shared (Bailey 2008).

During the immersion process, observations and field notes were referenced alongside each transcript to gain further depth of insights (Pietkiewicz & Smith 2012).

After the immersion process, the transformation process commenced. The interview transcripts and the field notes were transferred into the qualitative data analysis package NVivo 12 to assist and manage the process of data transformation and coding. The interview data were analysed, and patterns and inconsistencies were identified (Malhotra et al. 2003), including common themes. During the data coding process, preliminary results were constantly compared with each other and with those in the literature (Goulding 1998) in order to identify patterns in the data and relationships between categories, which were later further refined, subdivided or integrated within different hierarchies (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). According to Hatch (2002), patterns may emerge that reflect similarities, differences and frequencies in meaning. Patterns may also emerge because of the occurrence of meanings in a sequence or of associations between meanings, or because the meanings correspond with each other. Following this approach, nodes were created in NVivo to represent and categorise the central patterns of meanings derived from the interviews (Bazeley & Jackson 2013).

After completing the data transformation and the focused coding of all interview data, the connection stage was commenced. The meaning of each code was analysed for consistency or overlap with other codes (Braun & Clarke 2006). In this way, the codes were defined and connected into groups or categories to produce a list of main themes and subthemes of meaning associated with DSM among academics. In combination with and to supplement the NVivo coding process and in line with Charmaz's (2006) approach of open coding, the researcher consolidated and validated the identified nodes together with the research supervisors through discussion at research meetings until the central themes were agreed upon as a group. The presence of the additional coders helped balance perspectives and control for the researcher's prior personal and professional background and potential biases.

This process generated a complete system of shared meanings or references derived from participant responses (Saldana 2013). Last, the categories and themes were organised into a hierarchy of abstraction from specific meanings to more general meanings by using metaphors or short phrases to describe each cluster of thematic meaning and their relationships, in order to aid

theory development about the experiences and perceptions of academics with respect to DSM (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014). The findings from the thematic coding and the data analysis were then represented via summary tables to illustrate the range of themes and subthemes, and illustrative quotations from participants were included to reflect a specific theme or meaning (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014; Willig 2008). Representative quotations were selected to both showcase unique insights and capture general themes.

3.5.1 Social Media Audit

Prior to completing the thematic analysis, a social media audit was conducted on the participants and a table was developed to show the audit results (Table 3.2). This audit helped triangulate the results and enabled the exploration of whether the participants' self-identification as 'active' or 'passive' social media users was linked to the definitions of such users in the current literature.

Although a vast amount of literature is not available in this area, certain patterns of social media engagement have emerged over time and several studies have differentiated between an *active user* and a *passive user*. Verduyn et al. (2017) defined active social media use as direct exchanges between individuals, such as engagement with other users through the act of liking, or commenting on, a post, or exchanging messages with others on social media. In contrast, a passive user does not engage with others on social media and views or monitors their profiles without interacting with them, otherwise referred to as lurking (Edelmann 2013; Osatuyi 2015).

In this regard, Gerson, Plagnol and Corr (2017) developed the PAUM (Passive Active Use Measure), a measurement they used to define data regarding active and passive usage on Facebook. This tool categorises social media users into three cohorts based on their level of interaction. Direct communication between users is defined as active social behaviour, and the term active non-social use is reserved for those who acknowledge others' social media posts (e.g. through a like) but do not communicate directly on social media. The passive usage definition is similar to that of other studies, which pertains to individuals who view or consume but do not engage with others on Facebook. This scale was not appropriate for this study because most of the participants did not use Facebook or had a personal and private Facebook account not related to their professional or academic life.

Other than providing these broad definitions, the available literature has not further defined the behaviours of an active social media user. Furthermore, the literature review revealed that studies tended to focus on social media usage and its correlation with mental health, rather than on exploring this usage from a branding perspective as is the focus of this study. There is clearly a need for a universal measurement pertaining to social media usage across the wide variety of platforms (Trifiro & Gerson 2019).

In relation to these broad definitions, all of the participants in this study can be defined as active users. The number of posts on various social media accounts varied among participants, but each individual actively engaged with the others and created content for personal social media accounts. Next, the observations regarding the findings from the social media audit are provided.

In regard to activity level, this researcher developed the term ‘laggard user’ to refer to non-active users. This usage is based on the common vernacular that refers to ‘a person who lags behind’ (from the British Dictionary). This type of user differs from a ‘passive user’ who consumes social media but does not contribute. While all participants in the study can be said to contribute, some lag behind in their level of engagement. This researcher identified three participants who seem to lag a little behind the others because they do not post daily or even weekly.

Further, ‘active v. laggard users’ were separated from ‘how active’ in order to quantify the frequency with which participants were posting. The main platforms audited to determine frequency of posting were Twitter and Facebook. Participants also addressed challenges with using social media. The audit revealed that although all participants used social media, they did view it as challenging, particularly in relation to ‘putting themselves out there’, the potential of being trolled and abused and the difficulty of managing the time commitment social media use requires. Moreover, several participants spoke not only of challenges for themselves but also of aspects that they perceived to be challenges for others (i.e. trolling and death threats).

Most participants reported daily activity (12/21), but some reported only weekly or monthly activity. They also reported on the platforms they used for DSM, and, on average, used 5.2 out of the eight platforms considered. The majority of participants indicated that they utilised Twitter and LinkedIn, but only five participants reported that they used Facebook for professional activity and four reported that they used podcasts.

Table 3.2: Results of Social Media Audit

Participant	Title	Level	Age 18-35 / 36-44 / 45-54	Gender	Twitter	LinkedIn	Facebook	ResearchGate	Academia.edu	Google Scholar	Podcast	Personal Website	Platforms	How active are they on SM?	Cumulated?	Legend or Active User?	Self proclaimed persona	Reasons for not using SM or challenges of using SM
1	Senior Research Fellow	D	35-44	M	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8/8	Daily; multiple times	Yes	Active	Professional	Trolling; goes against the traditional notion of academia persona
2	Lecturer	B	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Less than weekly	Yes	Active	Professional yet personal	Financial cost of hosting; time consuming; constant curation is challenging
3	Senior Lecturer	C	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	2/8	Daily; multiple times	Yes	Active	Professional/Casual	Trolling; lack of recognition in workplan
4	Senior Lecturer	C	26-35	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Weekly; multiple times	Yes	Active	Professional	Time consuming
5	Senior Lecturer	C	35-44	M	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Daily; multiple times	No	Active	Casual	Time consuming; online conflict; decoupling self from the institution (IP issues)
6	Research Fellow/Lecturer	B	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6/8	Daily; multiple times	Yes	Active	Professional	Coding HTML; SM scheduling; time consuming; financial cost
7	Lecturer	B	35-44	M	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	4/8	Once a month	No	Active	Passive	Time consuming
8	Lecturer	B	45-54	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	4/8	Once a month	No	Laggard	NA	Time consuming
9	Lecturer	B	45-54	F	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	3/8	Weekly; multiple times	Yes	Active	Professional	Vulnerability
10	Senior Research Fellow	C	35-44	M	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	6/8	Daily	No	Active	Professional	Conflict
11	Lecturer	B	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	5/8	Daily; multiple times	Yes	Active	Professional/Casual	Trolling
12	Associate Professor	D	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Weekly; multiple times	Yes	Active	Casual	Trolling
13	Research Fellow/Lecturer	A	26-35	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	5/8	Daily; multiple times	Yes	Active	Casual	Vulnerability
14	Lecturer	B	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Daily; multiple times	No	Active	Casual	Conflict
15	Senior Lecturer	C	45-54	F	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	5/8	Daily; multiple times	No	Active	Informal	Lack of privacy; time consuming; lack of recognition in workplan
16	Senior Research Fellow	C	26-35	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	5/8	Daily; multiple times	Yes	Active	Helpful	Online abuse
17	Senior Lecturer	C	45-54	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	5/8	Daily	No	Active	Informal	Trolling; time consuming
18	Senior Lecturer	C	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Weekly; multiple times	Yes	Active	Informal	Trolling; too much promotion by others
19	Senior Lecturer	C	35-44	F	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	7/8	Less than weekly	Yes	Active	Casual	Time consuming; Navigating boundaries of professional and personal
20	Lecturer	B	45-54	M	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	3/8	Daily	No	Active	Unclear	Unclear
21	Senior Lecturer	C	45-54	M	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8	Weekly	Yes	Active	Humble/embarassed	Time management, distraction/procrastination.

3.6 Trustworthiness

A main disadvantage of qualitative research is the possibility of subjective views influencing the process of interviewing and the interpretation of the findings. Whereas immersion within the data is essential to the interpretive research paradigm, it is important that researchers avoid imposing pre-existing theories or expectations that do not match the data patterns (Patton 2002; Urquhart 1997). Moreover, they must ensure they acknowledge their own background, belief, past experiences and opinions. Tracy (2012) referred to this process as self-reflexivity, which directs researchers to reflect on their potential biases that may influence interactions with, and interpretations of, the research. Hence, this researcher acknowledges their prior career as a Principal of a communications agency, specialising in impression management and digital and social media. Several other steps were taken to establish the trustworthiness of the findings, which fall under the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtler 2010).

The credibility of the research design and execution is reflected in the steps taken to ensure the research methods have accurately captured the characteristics of the phenomenon under consideration (Morrow 2011; Shenton 2004). In this study, descriptive field notes were taken during interviews to document observations and add context to the audio data, for establishing the credibility of the findings. The field notes aimed to include information such as observable affect, gestures, body language and vocalisation changes (Mack et al. 2011). Further, the confirmability of findings encompasses the measures taken to ensure the findings are an objective representation of reality and do not reflect the researcher's subjective views (Anney 2014; Shenton 2004). The researcher was aware of their own presence and role in the formation of knowledge and ensured they self-monitored the impact of their biases, beliefs and experiences on their research in order to 'maintain the balance between the personal and the universal' (Berger 2015, p. 220).

Next, the transferability of research findings is akin to the criterion of external validity in quantitative research and is the degree to which findings are generalisable to other contexts, settings and people (Shenton 2004). To address the transferability of findings, purposeful sampling of participants was employed to establish their relevance to the research focus and questions regarding the perceptions of DSM among academics. Research that identifies the basis for

participant selection has greater generalisability because the same selection criteria can be employed in investigations of other situations, contexts and people.

The final criterion, that of ensuring the dependability of the findings, was addressed by discussing the data collection, analysis and interpretation of the themes and the categories derived from participant interviews with the researcher's supervisors and mentors. The dependability and the accuracy of the data were confirmed to ensure the findings and interpretations reflected the nature of the data collected.

3.7 Ethics

According to Sales and Folkman (2000), conducting ethical research with human participants requires compliance with the principles of justice, such as equal treatment of all participants, respect for their autonomy and independent decisions, nonmaleficence or the principle of not harming and beneficence or the principle of doing good/producing good from research efforts. The main method employed to address these principles was the provision of a participant information sheet/consent form prior to the commencement of interviews to inform participants about the research purpose and objectives and to provide a complete explanation of the specific procedures associated with their participation. The information sheet also explained their rights to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research after it started, any expected consequences of their participation and the expected duration of their participation. Participants were also advised about any risks or disadvantages related to taking part in the study, although none were anticipated, given the harmless nature of the research procedures. In addition, participants were advised about any possible benefits of taking part, the way that the findings would be presented, and the steps taken to ensure the confidentiality of their responses and data.

To ensure confidentiality of their interviews and interview data, participants were informed that no personal information would be collected during the interviews and that their responses would be non-identifiable. Specifically, they were informed that the email address they provided would not be matched to their interview responses. In this regard, all the participant data remain protected and secure, and confidentiality and anonymity have been maintained. In terms of data protection and security, all data are stored on a password-protected computer. Moreover, access to the research files have only been given to the researchers involved in the project. Confidentiality has

been maintained since it has been ensured that the participants cannot be identified using the raw data. Each participant was given a numerical identifier and any link to the original details of each participant will be permanently deleted after 5 years.

The research methods and procedures adopted in this study have been designed to ensure that important ethical principles were upheld. Respect for the autonomy of participants has been ensured by ensuring that they exercised their free will to undertake the study and that their responses were confidential, de-identified and only used for the purposes of the research. In addition, the proposed research has been approved by the Business College Human Ethics Advisory Network. A first approval was initially obtained to conduct in-person interviews. However, following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, a second approval was obtained to conduct interviews virtually by using online conferencing software (Appendix D). The consent form was sent to all participants prior to the interviews, and it outlined information about the project and included a guide outlining the types of questions that would be asked. Participants who agreed to the terms were then asked to sign the form and return it prior to undertaking the study. All collected qualitative data were only used for the purposes of this research and were kept safe on a password-protected computer within a locked office.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter provides a thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with the academic participants on their perceptions about DSM. The line of interview questions and the subsequent analysis of the participant responses were designed to address the following research questions of this thesis:

RQ1: How are academics creating and curating their digital identities?

RQ2a: How do academics perceive digital self-marketing?

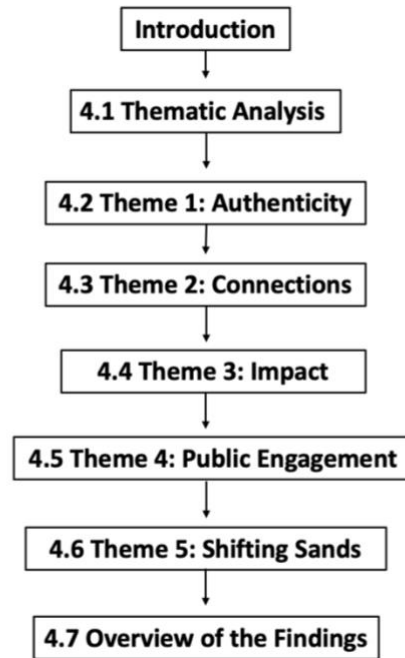
RQ2b: What are the hesitations for adoption?

RQ3: How are academics using digital self-marketing to self-promote?

RQ4: What impact do academics perceive that digital self-marketing has had on their career?

This chapter is divided into seven sections, as shown in Figure 4.1. Following this introduction, the first section of this chapter provides an overview of the steps taken in the data analysis to identify themes and subthemes that emerged from participants' thoughts and perceptions regarding DSM. Then, in the next five sections (Sections 4.2–4.6), the five main themes and several connected subthemes identified through the analysis are discussed: Section 4.2 – Authenticity; Section 4.3 – Connections; Section 4.4 – Impact; Section 4.5 – Public Engagement; and Section 4.6 – Shifting Sands. In these sections, each theme and its related subthemes are analysed with respect to the words and the thoughts of participants, and initial connections are drawn to the related literature. The last section of the chapter, Section 4.7, provides an overview of the findings in relation to the research questions of this thesis and the broader context of academics' DSM activities.

Figure 4.1: Outline of Chapter 4



Source. Developed from this research.

4.1 Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis of the interview data was consistent with the 3-stage process of Immersion, Transformation and Connection described by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) and was aligned with the grounded theory research design. Immersion entailed the transcription and the detailed review of the recorded interviews to facilitate an understanding of the perceptions about DSM being shared by academics. Interview transcripts were transferred into NVivo 12 to assist and manage the process of data transformation and coding. The interview data were carefully analysed, and patterns and inconsistencies were identified, including common themes. The process of constant comparison was employed to reveal patterns and identify relationships between themes by revising, subdividing or integrating them in different hierarchies. Thematic patterns were derived due to the occurrence of meanings in a sequence, the associations between meanings or the correspondence reflected between meanings. In line with this approach, nodes were created in NVivo to represent, organise and categorise the central patterns or themes of meanings derived from the interviews. In the last stage of analysis, the meaning of each theme was analysed for

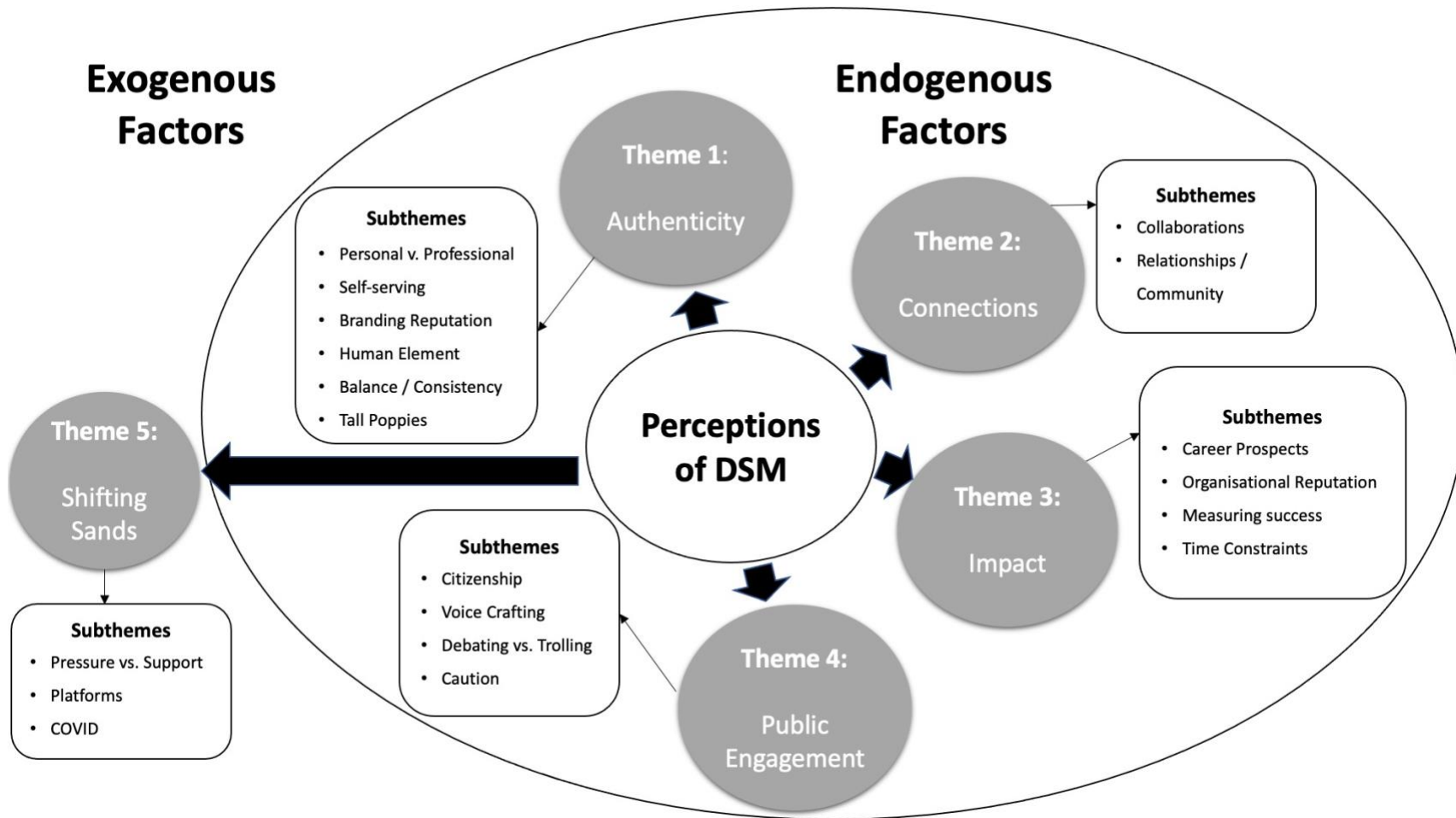
consistency or overlap with other themes. In this way, the codes were refined, defined and connected into groups or categories to produce a list of main themes and subthemes of meaning associated with the perceptions of DSM among academics. In the following list, the main themes identified are presented, without any particular hierarchy or level of dominance, and are mapped to the research questions of this thesis:

- Theme 1: Authenticity;
 - RQ1: Creation and curation of digital identities;
- Theme 2: Connections;
 - RQ2a: Perception about DSM;
 - RQ3: Use of DSM to self-promote;
- Theme 3: Impact;
 - RQ4: Impact of DSM on career enhancement;
 - RQ2b: Hesitancies for adoption;
- Theme 4: Public Engagement;
 - RQ2a: Perception about DSM;
 - RQ2b: Hesitancies for adoption;
 - RQ3: Use of DSM to self-promote;
- Theme 5: Shifting Sands;
 - RQ2a: Perception about DSM.

The overall findings from the thematic coding and the data analysis were then organised and are represented in Figure 4.2, which shows the five main themes and subthemes that emerged from this analysis. The figure is divided into two spheres; the large ellipsis encompasses the endogenous sphere to which all endogenous factors belong, and the area outside it represents the exogenous sphere to which all exogenous factors belong. The first four themes, which are within the endogenous sphere, reflect distinct perceptions about endogenous factors related to DSM on which academics, as individuals, have direct control. These factors include academics' Authenticity when engaging with DSM (Theme 1), the professional Connections they derive from DSM (Theme 2), the Impact they can make by engaging with DSM (Theme 3) and the Public Engagement they are afforded by DSM (Theme 4). These themes were determined by their distinct focus on DSM. Whereas Authenticity reflects perceptions about how the self or the individual academic

approaches DSM, Public Engagement and developing professional Connections are distinct functions of DSM as perceived by academics. In contrast, the Impact of DSM is about their perceptions regarding the tangible benefits and drawbacks of DSM. The fifth theme derived from this analysis, Shifting Sands (Theme 5), is situated to the left, within the outer, exogenous sphere, and it reflects exogenous factors beyond the direct control of individual academics where their DSM activity is dependent on changes in the social environment and the DSM environment. In the following sections of this chapter, the themes and subthemes are described in detail through summary tables and illustrative quotations from participants to reflect academics' perceptions of DSM.

Figure 4.2: Themes Derived from Analysis of Academics' Perceptions of DSM



Source. Developed from this research. Endogenous factors are defined as factors within the individual academic's control, and exogenous factors are defined as factors beyond their individual control.

4.2 Theme 1: Authenticity

The theme of Authenticity is a distinct endogenous factor that emerged from participants' perceptions of DSM in terms of the belief that engaging with people through social media requires an academic to be a genuine person. One participant shared, 'This is my message always—it's just trying to be real. Whether in my voice, and even in my appearance and my laughter' (P2). Another remarked, 'I think authenticity is just really about trying to be yourself. I mean, I don't try to pretend online that I have more expertise than what I [actually] do' (P3). In addition, participants were clear about what authenticity 'looks like'—'I think that it is important not to try to force yourself to be something that you're not like' (P9)—and how it may be achieved through DSM—'If you share a little bit more, then you look a little bit more authentic' (P16). The theme of Authenticity was reflected in six subthemes: Personal v. Professional Self, Self-serving, Branding Reputation, Human Element, Balance and Consistency, and the issue of the Tall Poppy Syndrome. Participants further clarified their perception of this main theme of authenticity when they spoke about the tension between the professional and the personal self.

4.2.1 Personal versus Professional Self

Participants expanded the theme of Authenticity in terms of the divide between presenting a Personal or a Professional Self on DSM. As two participants shared, 'One of the challenges is knowing, maybe sometimes, where to draw the line with privacy contributions like the personal/professional thing' (P15) and 'Sometimes, there's a bit of uncertainty around the boundaries of your social media' (P19). As shown by other comments in Table 4.1, academics appeared to consider that there is a blurry line between a personal and a professional self. Some participants perceived it as important to keep the personal and professional selves distinct in DSM. However, others saw a need to inject the personal self into professional DSM efforts while simultaneously finding a balance to ensure that they are taken seriously as professionals. Thus, determining the balance between the personal self and the professional self, or in this sense, the work–life balance, relates to the need to be an authentic person on DSM. This tension was revealed by participants' perceptions about how an overly self-promoting style on DSM can undermine an academic's authenticity, as reflected in the next subtheme of Self-serving.

Table 4.1: Comments on Digital Self-marketing that Reflect Professional versus Personal Self

Participant	Comments
P6	I have always had a sense of my professional visible life being very distinct from my personal life.
P9	You can be completely impersonal with that, but still have a little bit of a style.
P10	I tend to keep my profiles on social media primarily professional, and not bring in much of my personal life on, on any of those platforms. But you realise more and more how, how blurry those lines are between social and professional networks.
P12	One really interesting tension with all of this stuff is around where the professional, and particularly the employee, persona ends, and where the public persona emerges. And the extent to which those personas are really blended ... because it's such a blurry line.
P15	You're actually trying to be, doing a good social thing with people, but you're also there in a professional capacity presenting your work, wanting people to take you seriously and wanting good engagement with the work that you're actually pursuing at that point.
P21	I think distinguishing between the two is kind of difficult to do in practice.

4.2.2 Self-serving

A common view among participants was that authenticity on DSM is undermined when people use it merely as a forum for being overly self-serving: 'I know people in academia who are very inauthentic, a little crafted; they present a particular persona to different crowds' (P21). As the specific comments in Table 4.2 show, being overly self-serving via DSM is an annoyance and can be distasteful and awful, despite the consensus that academics need to advertise their achievements. Meanwhile, one participant highlighted that too much self-serving behaviour can negatively affect others: 'But what does it do for other people? It just makes them not feel great' (P3). Participants suggested that, as an alternative, it is important to engage with others about events that occur behind the scenes to generate outputs and achievements: 'Like, if that's all you're doing is saying this is the final product, you're not really opening up the, the window for what happens behind that' (P3). Further: 'I don't want my social media to just be like a self-serving platform. I do want to engage and do other things' (P4). In this sense, the participants conveyed a

belief that DSM by academics should engage the human element of their work and achievements, as is represented in the subtheme of the Human Element of DSM.

Table 4.2: Comments on Digital Self-marketing that Reflect Issues about Being Self-serving

Participant	Comments
P3	A lot of self-promoters are out there on Twitter. We all have to do it to some extent, but sometimes, it can be awful.
P7	The only reason they use it is for promotion. And I think that really annoys people.
P10	I find people's self-promotion really distasteful when, when they use it as a way to avoid engaging in actual conversation with people.
P12	There's one or two people on Twitter whose just every tweet is like a self-promotion. And those people annoy me, to be honest, even though I understand why people do it.
P13	Why does anyone want to keep hearing about this again and again? So, that's an example of what you shouldn't do.
P14	You can't fake publications, but you can overly self-promote.
P16	It is a challenge like promoting oneself and not looking too promote-y.
P19	So, I find that's the more awkward stuff to do because it is like kind of self-congratulation.
P21	There are a lot of people whose accounts are purely professional, mostly just tooting their horns or promoting various events. That seems really dull to me.

4.2.3 Human Element

Participants reported that an important way to resolve the blurry line between the personal self and the professional self and to ensure they are not overly self-promoting is to adopt a human side or a casual style in their approach to DSM: 'It's humanising to see that mix of the two' (P19). In a practical sense, some participants believed, 'I guess there's a casual element to it, but for the most part, you have to be able to have some fun' (P1). The sample of comments in Table 4.3 shows that participants also felt it is important to be a real person on DSM for building trust among one's followers. By taking this approach:

I get more excited for academics for their professional successes when I feel I'm friendlier with who they are as people, and so, I'm more likely to support them, participate in their research or do all that extra stuff that you often get asked to do, if I feel like there are human beings on the other end of the account. (P11)

Participants also expressed the experience of being a brand as an academic in one sense but being a human at the same time: 'Branding and marketing stuff is much more palatable when you are a real person' (P18). The subtheme of Branding and Reputation was also derived from participants' comments to reflect an important implication of DSM to academics.

Table 4.3: Comments that Reflect the Human Element of Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P2	I try to give a little bit about myself. You know, I release something to show that I'm human. And to humanise the person.
P3	We communicate in such a dry way when we write journal articles that it's nice to just be able to communicate in different ways. Post a nice picture or something just to remind people that we're human and that we have lives.
P15	Like, as a researcher, you're still a human being.
P16	It definitely develops trust. You get a sense of the whole person.
P18	I just think we have to be whole people; it's really important to be whole people.

4.2.4 Branding Reputation

While the academics in this study all recognised the existence and the utility of DSM, they reported varying perceptions on the role that branding should play in their self-marketing activities online. Indeed, they reported equivocal views about the notion of being a brand as an academic, as shown in the sample of comments in Table 4.4. Whereas one participant asserted, 'It makes my skin crawl to think about it [DSM] like that, because there's such branding associated with it' (P11), others had not given branding much consideration—I don't think that I've really crafted a brand for myself necessarily' (P10)—or they equated branding with their role as academics—I have a very functional view of it. I'm not trying to build a brand; it's just what I do' (P5). Nevertheless, some participants were clear that 'I also am very aware of that branding aspect. You are a brand yourself'

(P2) and equated branding with reputation and stated, ‘I tend to make it about reputation, in expanding what you would already do in terms of networking, collaboration and stuff as a scholar; you’re basically doing it in another space’ (P15). Despite some negative views about branding undermining authenticity, one participant stated that ‘marketing, when you divorce it from package holidays and bad running leggings, is actually not a bad skill set’ (P6). There was a clear divergence among participants regarding whether they considered branding a necessary element of DSM or not. Participants also expressed the importance of Balance and Consistency in their DSM efforts.

Table 4.4: Comments that Reflect the Branding Element of Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P2	But all this creates this bubble of who you are as a brand. So, even thinking to the smallest thing, like an email signature, is as important as the big stuff that you’re actually doing.
P4	I think in terms of how I kind of see myself branding or work within myself.
P5	I figure if I offer something that’s of value to the people I engage with, that’s the best marketing, rather than trying to cultivate a brand as such.
P13	The goal is to standardise your brand.
P18	I have taught courses that have included personal branding, how to position yourself online and how to have a professional identity online, and I think it’s really, really important.

4.2.5 Balance/Consistency

A further subtheme of Authenticity is the notion that engaging in DSM requires balance and consistency. One participant alternatively noted, ‘I feel like our online identities are kind of fragmented anyway’ (P4), and another shared, ‘There is a fine line between doing it [DSM] enough and doing it too much and just boring everyone’ (P13). Authenticity is balanced with the need to promote new contributions among the participants in different ways: ‘I feel like it’s sort of just keeping a balance of keeping enough up online that I’m still relevant’ (P4), and ‘To actually be able to engage on Twitter, it’s basically on my terms; I can respond and say whatever, but then, I can actively walk away from it and leave it alone’ (P15). Simultaneously, participants emphasised the importance of being a consistent presence in varied DSM mediums, saying ‘I’m consistent across platforms’ (P11), and that when ‘they’re going to be engaging with issues, you need to

figure out your stance on things. Try to develop approaches that are consistent in terms of the politics and the ethics that you're putting across' (P10). These views and those shown in Table 4.5 revealed that academics find authenticity by striking the right balance and ensuring consistency between their personal and professional life.

Table 4.5: Comments that Reflect Balance and Consistency with Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P12	With Twitter, you want to have a feed that's quite balanced, that has a balance. It's fine to send out a tweet and promote your own stuff, but your Twitter [feed] can't be that all the time.
P17	That's something I struggle with, that sort of balance on an authenticity level.
P19	And a balance, I guess too, between posts that are more serious and just some light-hearted stuff.

4.2.6 Tall Poppy Syndrome

The last subtheme of developing an authentic approach to DSM is the quite distinct Australian cultural trait of the Tall Poppy Syndrome. A sample of comments is provided in Table 4.6. The Tall Poppy Syndrome reflects the attitude that a person should not put themselves above others, which is prevalent in Australian culture and is consistent with the value of egalitarianism (Peeters 2004). As shared by some participants, 'The tall poppy syndrome, I think, is a big cultural issue in Australia. So, people tend to hate high achievers' (P8); 'It is very Australian; it was very refreshing when I worked in the UK for people to just be delighted for you if you were on the radio or you did something public' (P6); and 'There's this kind of anti-tooting your own horn kind of thing' (P21). Similarly:

It was instilled in us when growing up that you shouldn't be too big for your boots or be bragging about your achievements—you should be modest and humble. This shift to self-promotion on social media is almost completely contrary to that. (P17)

Table 4.6: Comments that Reflect the Tall Poppy Syndrome with Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P6	A lot of what people think is tall poppy syndrome is just themselves reading too much into it, and I don't have a lot of that imposter syndrome feeling.
P8	I would have loved to be able to openly share my output. I have achievements, but I have recently become more careful. I was reminded that I have to leave my workspace (i.e. not work through my lunch break) because I was making others look bad.
P16	We still have this idea that we're not good enough.
P21	The most important thing in Australia is you don't put on airs.

The outcome from this view is a 'hesitance to promote yourself online a bit more, [which] is part of that sort of general feeling—the imposter syndrome' (P16) and the belief that self-promotion can be tied to bragging, which is undesirable for 'a lot of us in Australia just don't like that kind of bragging approach' (P3). Indeed, the same participant mentioned the risk of 'humblebragging' (P3), or false humility, to indicate that there is a fine line between promoting one's work and achievements through DSM, and doing so while pretending to be humble about it. In addition, the participants contrasted the negative implications of the Tall Poppy Syndrome for DSM and the challenges of being an authentic person online with the important benefits that online engagement provides them in terms of professional connections that may otherwise be unavailable. This theme of professional connections is expanded upon and analysed in the next section.

4.3 Theme 2: Connections

The virtues and benefits of DSM were clearly indicated by a second theme that emerged from participant interviews, namely, connections with people and knowledge. As two participants asserted, 'I found social media really good for developing partnerships and communities and for expanding my knowledge base' (P10), and 'It can be a really good way of both kind of getting into various conversations [in] those places and getting to know people that you wouldn't otherwise get to know' (P21). Some comments of participants about the relationship between DSM and

making connections are shown in Table 4.7 and indicate a range of benefits to forging connections and networking through DSM, such as media exposure, the potential to obtain other jobs, the sense of an ongoing community and opportunities to ease face-to-face interactions. The strongest perceptions regarding the potential for academics to connect through DSM were as follows: ‘To some extent, you’re putting yourself behind the eight ball if you don’t do any of it’ (P15) and ‘Networking is primarily driven off social media platforms now’ (P20). The value and the benefits of the connections that may be afforded to academic participants were particularly reflected in two subthemes: Collaborations, and Relationships and Community.

Table 4.7: Comments that Reflect the Advantages of Digital Self-marketing for Professional Connections

Participant	Comments
P2	I’ve been targeting media with this page and just trying to make industry connections as well.
P7	I get contacted from <i>The Conversation</i> regularly, and that’s because of Twitter.
P9	I do kind of see it as a, potentially a, networking thing, or just so someone might see, you know, professionally, because a lot of jobs do come from people knowing other people.
P12	It helps us to feel connected like as a community throughout the year.
P13	Twitter has helped connect me to a lot of people I never realised knew me.
P15	Hopefully, you’re open to collaboration, you’re wanting to engage and you’re wanting to build collegial networks as well as share your work.
P16	I think having that online presence and being able to communicate with others online has really strengthened those connections over time and space. People seem more approachable because I’ve interacted with them a little bit online.
P19	I think people are going to miss out on connections and opportunities if they don’t have at least some sort of online profile.
P20	I’m just quite happy to use it to help promote other people and to connect them to other people.

4.3.1 Digital Self-marketing and Collaborations

Participants were clear that connections through DSM afforded them the benefits of professional collaborations; that is, ‘just exploring a little bit more opportunities for collaboration is the main reason’ (P8). As shown by the comments in Table 4.8, they were quite explicit about the benefits of Twitter. For example, one participant stated that they ‘can develop more effective relationships with potential research partners, which might lead to another grant opportunity’ (P12). Moreover, participants reported that collaborations through DSM led to real opportunities: ‘So, I get invited to speak, I get invited to facilitate workshops ... [and social media has] helped me to retain the ability to attract students who want to work with me’ (P18). Similarly, other participants shared, ‘I have made some connections on social media that then turn into research collaborations’ (P4), and ‘I’ve actually found opportunities that I wouldn’t have otherwise if I wasn’t on some of these platforms, like some of the different initiatives and programs that I’ve been involved in’ (P19). A related subtheme that emerged in this thesis is the development of Relationships and Community through DSM.

Table 4.8: Comments that Reflect the Importance of Collaborations via Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P10	That collaboration started when I first got on Twitter.
P11	A lot of collaborations have come out of people I’ve met on Twitter. It affords you certain things that don’t or might [not] necessarily come off if you don’t have that kind of a presence.
P12	Partnerships, networks and collaborations that I have with non-government service providers and think tanks—a lot of that’s mediated through Twitter.
P13	It’s got me professional opportunities, academic service opportunities and CV building opportunities.
P18	Maintaining a presence in Information Studies through social media has helped me to retain the ability to attract students who want to work with me.

4.3.2 Digital Self-marketing, and Relationships and Community

The second subtheme of Connections was the opportunity for relationship and community building that DSM affords academics, as shown by the comments in Table 4.9. For one participant, DSM allowed her to ‘focus on building the community around your work and bringing people with you’ (P15). For another participant, DSM was significant for community development:

I have a general interest in social media; I’m interested in community building, and I’m interested in how communities form and engage with each other. For me, the most important part of being on social media is contributing to a community. (P18)

One particularly active participant went so far as to say, ‘Sometimes, I think of myself as best, you know, a permanent employee of Twitter University, because I feel that that’s where my academic community is [because] most of my scholarly communications are happening in those places’ (P10). Although the attraction of relationship and community building via DSM was a clear theme in the interview data, one participant was more circumspect when she acknowledged that ‘being able to engage across communities, synthesise those relationships in the space and manage it in an ongoing way. It’s actually a huge and high level of skill’ (P15).

Whereas DSM was reported to provide the potential of forming Connections for developing collaborations and building community, the more tangible benefits of DSM to academics emerged as the third theme in the interview data, namely, the Impact of DSM on measures of success.

Table 4.9: Comments that Reflect the Importance of Relationships and Community via Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P3	Definitely Twitter, that is the one that has allowed me to interact with people and to meet people.
P11	Those introductions were much easier because we had spent a year on Twitter talking about shared interests.
P15	Focus on building the community around your work and bringing people with you.
P18	I see that community relationship perspective as being just as important as the branding marketing perspective.

P20	I'm just quite happy to use it to help promote other people and to connect them to other people.
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4.4 Theme 3: Impact

Participants reported equivocal views on the theme of Impact with respect to DSM as a medium for tangible success. Several questioned the real value of DSM, and one academic reported, 'I don't know that it's had a lot of impact at this point' (P9). A similar, but more detailed, perception about DSM was reported as, 'I heard at many seminars and, you know, big gatherings that social impact plays a very important role. I think we don't see much, I don't see much [sic], outcomes' (P8). Many participants did not consider the impact of DSM to be equal to other achievements. One participant said, 'It's not the same as, oh, "You need to work out your track record because you don't have enough publications"; like, people aren't going to be saying, "Hey, you don't have a Twitter account what's happening?"' and concluded, 'It would have made it easier, but I don't think it would have had a huge weighting' (P15).

In contrast, another participant thought that 'it's probably very difficult to be very influential, or academic or to have a lot of impact these days, especially for people who are coming up now without having a social media profile' and concluded that 'so, if you're not actively engaging in that, you're probably not being as effective' (P13). Likewise, other participants reported that 'impact is becoming more and more important' (P14) and that 'you have to have engagement and impact outside of just publishing papers' (P19). A pragmatic and considered view of Impact was expressed by a comparatively senior Level D participant: 'The federal government has the view that we should be focused on impact, and universities have interpreted that to mean we should be focused on engagement, just as much as we are focused on research' (P1). Yet, as one participant stated, 'Engagement doesn't equal impact' (P15). Instead, participants reported different views about the relationship between DSM and Impact, which emerged as four subthemes: Career Prospects, Organisational Reputation, Measuring Success, and Time Constraints.

The theme of Impact derived from the thesis findings addresses a limitation in the literature that has focused on the self-promotion strategies of DSM (e.g. Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017) rather

than on how it may directly enhance academics' career prospects. Thus, these findings addressed RQ4 about how DSM may affect academics' career prospects. The study participants were equivocal regarding the lack of a direct perceived effect of DSM on enhancing their career prospects. Nevertheless, early career academics (e.g. P11 and P18) did see DSM as an important aspect of career development, unlike a senior academic (P12) who did not think DSM was essential for their career.

Notwithstanding the different perspectives regarding the benefits of DSM for career advancement, academics were clear about some of the barriers to the impact of DSM in their work. With respect to the research question of this thesis regarding the hesitations of academics about adopting DSM (RQ2b), participants reported the issues of time constraints and the difficulty measuring the impact of DSM in their careers.

4.4.1 Digital Self-marketing and Career Prospects

In terms of tangible impact outcomes, some participants reported that DSM had been helpful in their career prospects, as shown by the sample of comments in Table 4.10. For example, one early-career participant attributed securing their job to DSM: 'I think that's what helped me find the job at [University]. You know, just trying, wanting, to have more media presence was really important' (P2). Other participants were more restrained in their comments about the association between DSM and enhancing their career prospects: 'I might get more invitations to apply for jobs in particular areas, if I'm known for particular things' (P16) and 'Not sure that it's made that much difference, but I think it has certainly helped people to know who I am' (P19). Nevertheless, one senior Level D academic saw little association between DSM and career enhancement: 'I think there are probably lots of people that get promoted to Professor who have never, don't even know, [how] Twitter works. I don't think it's essential' (P12). A further cited impact of DSM was reflected in the subtheme of enhancing the Organisational Reputation, or in this case, the reputation of the academics' universities.

Table 4.10: Comments that Reflect Career Prospects via Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P1	Anybody who's gone through a promotional process in a university environment knows that marketing yourself [via DSM] is key.

P9	If people sort of know how to use the online space, it will be a benefit to them for getting jobs.
P11	I actually think I probably got my job because I knew people from Twitter who knew my work because I had tweeted it.
P14	If you're planning to stay at the same institution or you're looking for a promotion, sharing things with your colleagues or being known for sharing things externally [helps].
P18	You've got to be on there to establish a real career trajectory. So, I've always been embedded in social media since before I was an academic.

4.4.2 Organisational Reputation

According to some participants, their university associates DSM with its potential for enhancing its organisational reputation, as shown by the sample of comments in Table 4.11. This is observed to be driven from the highest organisational levels. According to one participant:

I think VCs like it when there is some positive media engagement around the University. At my university, I guess they're much more interested in the really huge kind of big picture impactful stuff, which is more around the university as a whole. (P12)

Another participant shared that 'putting a little more out there will be helping [the] University's brand'. Meanwhile, the line between self- and university reputation was highlighted: 'There is really a great divide, like you're meant to, you're seen as kind of handmaidens of the institution as a professional staff member, whereas academics are very much encouraged to go forth and create their own reputations online' (P15). In a similar vein, it was made clear that 'they are very pleased when it enhances the university's reputation as long as it doesn't get in the way of you continuing to churn out research articles to their satisfaction' (P6).

Even though DSM involves developing the profile of individual academics, it was clear from participants' comments that efforts to self-promote spill over into the benefits garnered by their universities. This phenomenon is reflected in a further subtheme, that of Measuring Success, which emerged from analysis.

Table 4.11: Comments that Reflect Organisational Reputation via Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P3	It's very focused on public engagement and on increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of issues in our region, and also on enhancing the University's reputation in the region.
P4	Putting a little more out there will be helping the University's brand.
P15	The social media engagement, and the profile reputation that I have, probably informed the potential for me to be performing well at University.
P19	I do some social media for our organisation, or at least for my school, and that's where sometimes I feel the pressure, like, we should be, as a professional account, keeping up the content.

4.4.3 Measuring Success

Participants reported differing views about measuring the success of impact in terms of how organisations track DSM engagement. In one view, the impact of DSM is measurable: 'We know that the research that's tweeted about is much more highly cited in the research' (P1). According to other academic participants, 'They very much encourage it, up to the point where our faculty actually ranks us by our followers on Twitter' (P11) and '[University] tracks it really hard and they take note of how many followers everyone has' (P7). In contrast, some academics perceived the measurement of successful impact via DSM as a vague exercise. For example: 'They use quite a crude measurement really, like they just, they have an intern who goes through and just counts up all of the numbers, and that's all they really look at on Twitter' (P11); 'It's something that I think universities haven't quite figured out what to do' (P16); and 'Most institutions' attitude has been basically benign neglect or, "It's nice that you're doing that sort of thing"' (P21). Nevertheless, there was the perception that the future will require more clarity about measuring successful impact via DSM with respect to academic work: 'It's not a very strongly recognised aspect of workload, or anything like that, in the current models and KPIs that we have in academia, though I think that's slightly changing' (P15), and 'There's a lot of new implicit knowledge that we'll have to figure out' (P1).

Reflecting the perceived low tangible impact of DSM, several participants viewed traditional outputs such as publications and grants as a priority and a gateway to DSM activity, as indicated in the sample of comments in Table 4.12. As one participant expressed, ‘It’s the presentation that’s going to give you credibility, not the stuff on Twitter’ (P3). Nevertheless, a senior Level D academic and quite active DSM user questioned this view, stating, ‘There’s a lot of people who really think the scholarly work should be speaking for itself, that if you truly are like a grand intellect in the field, then you shouldn’t have to tweet anything to get attention’ (P12). In her view, DSM cannot be ignored in the current push for successful impact through an online presence.

This leads to the next subtheme of Time Constraints, that is, how investment in DSM requires time that is not necessarily factored into the workload, even though some organisations have been encouraging DSM engagement.

Table 4.12: Comments that Reflect the Importance of Outputs over Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P2	Of course, having the research outputs is important.
P3	Credibility comes from doing high-quality research, which will generate its own audience.
P4	But at the end of the day, it doesn’t enable me to focus on that core business.
P6	What was central is just that I was already publishing a lot of research as well.
P8	I would prefer to work on my data collection and paper writing, rather than on the promotion online.
P10	So, produce a lot of content first.
P18	When I’ve got the time, I’ve just got to prioritise actually doing the work.

4.4.4 Time Constraints

Even though the metrics for the impact of successful DSM engagement appear to be vague and poorly defined at this point according to participants, they were nonetheless clear about its impact on their available time, as shown by the comments in Table 4.13. Most participants (14/21) reported that engaging in DSM has a real impact on their time allocation. As one participant expressed:

It's the time, the remembering to do it and the maintaining of the engagement over time. I think it's very easy to sort of have a flurry of activity when something happens, but if it's not, I guess, part of your habit, then I think it's quite difficult. (P16)

Because of time constraints, some participants disengage from DSM or put in minimal effort, and stated, 'It takes a lot of time and effort. So, that challenge, lately, I haven't done it' (P14) and 'Because of the lack of time or the time it actually takes if you want to do that kind of [thing] properly, I guess I haven't really invested time in building a specific profile' (P19). Similarly, one senior Level D academic shared, 'A lot of people talk about the time that has to go into it. And I definitely haven't got around to updating my website' (P12). The time required to be vigilant about managing DSM in some cases is 'too stressful to be in that space, because it's something that they feel they have to perpetually manage' (P15). Certain additional impediments to DSM engagement were revealed under the theme of Public Engagement, which is analysed in the next section.

Table 4.13: Comments that Reflect Time Constraints with Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P4	How much time is it going to take, and how much time is it going to take away from research?
P5	Well, in the beginning I tried to write something every week, just for the blog, and it is time-consuming.
P7	It really did take an hour a day, every single day; it was a task.
P9	It's just more the time thing because it can take up a lot of time.
P15	The amount of work of putting it together, curating and all that kind of stuff, I thought, hmm, maybe there are better ways to do this.
P17	To use each of those platforms in the optimal way, and some of my colleagues do this, takes a lot of time.
P21	The main challenges are just really time management challenges; it's so much, and not being on all the time, that can be a challenge.

4.5 Theme 4: Public Engagement

A clear theme that emerged from participants' interview responses is the important avenue that DSM provides for public engagement. As shown by a sample of comments in Table 4.14,

participants reported that DSM enables them to reach out and inform the public about their activities, research and findings. There was the perception that to do so, public engagement requires a certain communication approach. For example, one participant shared, ‘I’ll speak in layman’s terms. I’m not going to be using complicated academic words and jargon’ (P2), and another stated, ‘You probably have to use the right kind of language, the right kind of words’ (P13). Participants also reported that a lack of public engagement is problematic because there is a moral obligation to employ DSM as a way to share more broadly:

I think far worse is the people who just don’t engage in the public sphere at all. People who are not there in the conversations, people who are not there debating, people who are not there trying to make their research relevant to someone. (P10)

In the view of a senior Level D academic:

We do have a moral responsibility as well, where we feel supported by taxpayer funds; the taxpayer should be getting the benefits of our research. And so, we should be sharing our views as widely as we can as well. (P1)

The findings of the current study with respect to RQ2a show that academics perceive the access that DSM gives them to engage with the wider public beyond the institutional channels of engagement as quite positive. This theme of public engagement was further qualified by four subthemes derived from the data: Citizenship, Voice Crafting, Debating v. Trolling and the exercise of Caution.

Table 4.14: Comments that Reflect the Role of Digital Self-marketing in Public Engagement

Participant	Comments
P1	It is also our job to publicly engage with our research and to share with the communities that we have; we no longer live in these closed communities.
P3	It’s very focused on public engagement and on increasing the public’s knowledge and understanding of issues in our region.
P6	I think is important for academics to explain to wider audiences why they do what they do and why they should have the privilege to keep doing it.

P10	Making it available through those different platforms is really important to me to be able to know that my work is reaching the people who need it outside of academic contexts.
P15	They are very keen to actually see their researchers be very engaged with the public sphere kind of debates and discussions and be seen to be the experts on various topics.
P19	I think it has engaged a lot with the community outside of the scientific community. So, it's more of a community engagement type thing.

4.5.1 Citizenship

Under the theme of Public Engagement, participants reported on the relationship between DSM and citizenship behaviour. A sample of comments is displayed in Table 4.15. For example, one participant shared, ‘What I’ve become really conscious of is being a very positive citizen on Twitter’ (P3). There was also a perception that DSM can contribute to collegiality: ‘I try to really use Twitter effectively ... to signal boost other people’s research as well’ (P12) and ‘I try to amplify other people’s stuff’ (P18). Similarly, collegial citizenship was perceived as engaging positively to support others: ‘I tend to surround myself and advocate and want to support people who do what I see as good collegial citizenship in the space’ (P15). In addition, participants shared that public engagement requires crafting the right voice and thinking strategically about connecting with an audience—the subtheme of Engagement, which is analysed in the next section.

Table 4.15: Comments that Reflect the Role of Digital Self-marketing in Citizenship Behaviour

Participant	Comments
P10	I guess what’s important to me in terms of how I behave online and how I do my research is the question of whether I’m acting with integrity. Am I being ethical, essentially, am I doing the right thing?
P11	Because of my research that I do anyway, I was being an advocate for the teaching profession.
P12	You’re open to the voices of people who are actually living that reality and making sure you’re really well connected to activists, advocates and community representatives.

P15	So, are you actually bringing information to people, are you providing insight, are you supporting and commenting on other people's stuff, like, are you actually a good citizen in that space?
P18	It's about giving value back to the community.

4.5.2 Voice Crafting

An important aspect of Public Engagement was reflected in the subtheme of Voice Crafting, or the ways academics develop strategies to connect the broader public with their knowledge and research. As shown by the sample of comments in Table 4.16, participants were conscious of the need to think about how to craft their voice to facilitate public engagement. They reported that engagement may require different voices:

I think there are just different ways that you can actually share similar things or different angles on a piece, whether it's a research project, publication or a new grant you've got, something like that, like, there are different ways of talking about it. (P15)

Moreover, participants perceived voice crafting to require consideration of their professional identity based on the available opportunities: 'I have been thinking a lot about what my professional identity looks like. I'm pretty conscious of crafting what I look like for the kind of opportunities I might be looking for' (P18). Similarly, one participant emphasised how voice crafting requires careful consideration of their role in public engagement, and said, 'Taking the time to just think about, "Is this the role that I want to play as somebody who's contributing to these discussions?"' (P3).

In this sense, there is a strategic element to the relationship between DSM and voice crafting for public engagement, as participants revealed: 'You don't set up a channel if you don't have a strategy for why you have that' (P14), 'Every platform has its niche audiences and you [need to] think about it strategically' (P5) and 'It is strategic; you have to sort of work out exactly what you're going to do and how you're going to do it' (P9).

Thinking strategically about voice crafting via DSM for public engagement also appeared to relate to the challenge of how to manage Debating v. Trolling in online spaces, which is a subtheme of public engagement derived from the data that is analysed in the following section.

Table 4.16: Comments that Reflect the Role of Voice Crafting in Digital Self-marketing to Engage the Public

Participant	Comments
P1	Managing those sorts of personas is, really, you can't be successful online without doing something like that.
P3	Taking the time to, to just think, you know, about, 'Is this the role that I want to play as somebody who's contributing to these discussions?'
P5	Every platform has its niche audiences and, and, you know, if you think about it strategically.
P6	We have a very clear idea of who the audiences are on different platforms and how they funnel into listenership.
P9	It is strategic; you have to sort of work out exactly what you're going to do and how you're going to do it.
P11	I'm really strategic about the way I present myself. I find that to be a weird space, and I've kind of ended up doing a lot of really careful filtering.
P14	I think it's important to think about what you want people to see about you on the internet.
P15	As a contemporary researcher, especially if you're doing applied work or anything that has an applied edge, to actually know how it will travel beyond academia is extremely important.
P19	Different bits of content go out for different audiences.

4.5.3 Debating versus Trolling

Of the different challenges with public engagement via DSM, participants were consistent in the view that a large impediment is the risk of trolling in lieu of healthy debate. Most participants reported significant concerns over the potential for trolling when they engage with the public, as shown by the sample of their comments in Table 4.17. As can be surmised from these comments,

the trolling of academics for engaging the public in their work via DSM can be harmful and lead to safety concerns such that some participants will withhold from legitimate debate and sharing of ideas. Notably, the decision of other individuals to troll an academic is an exogenous factor that is beyond the academic's control, although the decision of engaging in a debate, as well as the decision to respond to a troller, is endogenous for it is within that individual's control.

At its worst, trolling was reported as abusive, especially with respect to issues of gender and race. A female participant reported, 'I get messages that say that I'm going to be raped and beheaded, which is not the same as, like, having a difference of opinion' (P12). This led her to question her role in DSM: 'I've had a lot of, probably very difficult and frustrating, internal conversations around the inequalities of doing media, like being a woman, like being a woman of colour' (P12). Similarly, another female academic reported, 'I straightaway got trolled by this anti-feminist, anti-racist [sic] that they believed that there was no such thing ... right wing, middle-aged white men' (P17).

Table 4.17: Comments that Reflect Debating versus Trolling via Public Engagement in Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P1	Some of it is a very justified concern about what happens when you get in front of the public, and when people attack you on the internet and when people are critical of you as academics. Sometimes, the public can be incredibly cruel, and it can be incredibly harmful.
P3	But when we invite people to come and talk to us about these sensitive issues, and you know, people are on Twitter just tearing them down. It's awful.
P9	Twitter can be a very political space and also quite an offensive space as well. Twitter isn't always a safe space for everyone.
P12	Just over the weekend, my inbox just exploded with lots of aggression, like, lots of threats of violence. So, I immediately just shut my Twitter down, and I was quite a bit burnt out when reading all these awful messages.
P16	The abuse of academics online is something that I haven't really been personally involved in, but definitely, for others, it can be quite damaging, especially if you're not prepared for it.
P17	I'm really concerned about the trolling and what might happen in response there. Some colleagues who get really badly trolled because they are much more active on social media.

P20	They'll put something out, and there will be a counter—abuse, trolling and really unpleasant responses.
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Some participants reported on the value of public debate through DSM despite the risks of trolling. A senior lecturer shared:

When you see people really digging around a point, that tells you something extremely important ... And so, it's really valuable to have that experience, even though it's no fun. I've been in touch with people who have said to me, 'You know, I never would have thought about this this way ... but I've watched this argument unfold and, like, this has really helped me make up my mind.'

(P10)

Such debate was also perceived as giving voice to different social groups: 'The performative nature of online debate, it's also really important, particularly when you're advocating for, and working with, (dis)empowered groups' (P10). Nevertheless, debating through DSM can sometimes run the risk of criticism, rather than robust engagement, and participants stated, 'It might be a part of robust debate, but it might also be part of, like, trying to disprove or criticise another person rather than engaging with the ideas' (P16) where 'that nuance will never come out in that clinical space, because it's just polarised' (P20). For this reason, several participants called for exercising Caution when employing DSM for public engagement, as discussed next.

4.5.4 Caution with Digital Self-marketing

When discussing public engagement through DSM, participants indicated that they have to adopt a cautious approach to avoid undue arguments and trolling, which is reflected in the comments in Table 4.18. One participant shared, 'I'm a lot more careful about what I post. I don't get into arguments' (P1). Another participant stated:

There's the fear that you might put something that ends up coming back to bite you, which is why I'm always really careful, very wary about putting my own personal opinion about things or even commenting in a critical way. (P9)

In the view of one participant, it is important to remain professional to try to avoid the potential for online abuse: ‘I’m very careful what I say and do. So, I think, yeah, I do definitely take a professional approach where I’m very careful’ (P4). Such professionalism is perceived to require a circumscribed approach to public engagement through DSM, and another participant revealed, ‘So, I go out of my way to not be controversial really in anything I write. Which also sometimes means not taking the bait when other people are sort of half trying to troll you about things’ (P7).

These findings are consistent with those of prior studies on the extended self in the digital world with respect to safety and harassment issues when people engage in sharing via online media (Belk 2013). Participants also commented on the broader and related issue of how DSM relates to the wider social context in which the centrality of DSM to academic activity, engagement and impact appears to be in a state of flux, which is the final theme—Shifting Sands—that emerged during analysis.

Table 4.18: Comments that Reflect Exercising Caution in Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P2	You’re worried about, you know, your presence and what you’re going to say, but you’re [also] worried about how you look and how you’re... if you’re presentable or not.
P5	Twitter gets the best of everyone; sometimes, you fire off something. It’s a platform that lends itself to heated opinion. So, you have to temper that sometimes.
P8	I would have loved to be able to openly share my output I have, or achievements I have, but I have recently become more careful.
P11	I’m very conscious of what I post; like, I wouldn’t post anything that will get me into a fight with people.
P12	You have to be careful that just because you’re a researcher, you don’t see yourself as a mouthpiece for that particular community or that particular experience.
P15	They need to be as careful about that as they would in real life, but it doesn’t mean that they need to be super shut down or super wary of a bunch of things.

4.6 Theme 5: Shifting Sands

The final theme to emerge from the data is the notion that DSM is situated in a broader social context that is subject to change and uncertainty, reflecting an exogenous theme to DSM engagement that is beyond the control of individual academics. Participants' thoughts about how DSM is affected by changing contextual factors was labelled Shifting Sands and encompassed three subthemes that emerged concerning perceptions about the relationship of DSM to online Platforms, External Pressure and Support, and the repercussions of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants generally reported that they are subject to regular changes in their DSM usage: 'It's just getting your head around a new system every time' (P1) and 'It seems to be, you know, again, endless, ever-changing regulations' (P14). Some participants expressed uncertainty about the role of DSM in the future. For instance, an experienced academic shared, 'We don't know what our profession is going to look like next year, let alone in five- or six-years' time' and further speculated that DSM may lead academics to consider 'decoupling their work from the institution, [we] are really presupposing, a movement away from the institution or university. As the vehicle for that work to something else' (P5). Another participant perceived a future in which 'there's only really going to be social media generations in the workforce. And so, in that case social media will be the communication between people and the networking and the recruitment as well' (P9). Reflecting the nature of shifting sands with respect to DSM, one academic expressed: 'Universities have been very slow to understand that [it] hasn't just changed the communication—it has changed the paradigm' (P20).

The findings also highlighted the shifting sands that were experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the time of data collection for this thesis. As mentioned previously, the recent restrictions on movement and travel during the pandemic have perhaps hastened an upward trend in the use of DSM by academics, wherein DSM has emerged as a way to develop networks and share information beyond face-to-face domains. Moreover, some academics in this study reported experiencing greater access to others via DSM to account for the effects of the COVID-19 restrictions. How academics and universities manage this process was an important factor in the thoughts of participants and coalesced around the theme of Measuring Success (considered in

Section 4.4.3) to determine the impact of DSM as well as the Shifting Sands subtheme of External Pressure and Support.

4.6.1 Digital Self-marketing and External Pressure and Support

The participants' comments regarding their institutional environment clearly indicated their perception of external organisational pressure on academics to engage with DSM: 'I guess we do feel the pressure at times that this is something that we should have attended more to' (P16) and 'I feel like that's another added pressure that the universities want these days' (P4). Further, two participants speculated about external pressure, saying, 'Even though it's not officially tracked, it's become very clear to me that it is secretly tracked' (P7) and 'I think in coded ways you could actually see it coming through in some of the job descriptions that we have, and especially with the research impact agenda' (P15). A comparatively active DSM participant shared clearer evidence of external pressure to engage with DSM:

I think there's a definite expectation. I noticed that my peers, my colleagues, who do a lot of promotion of their work tend to get more recognition in terms of the feedback that's sent around. We currently get a dean's daily update and that often mentions the people who are really active on social media. It's expected that we do it, but it's not built into our workload, and we're not given time in our work allocation to do it. (P17)

The final point made by P17 was consistent with remarks from other participants that their employers (universities) were providing inconsistent support and guidance regarding academic engagement with DSM. This inconsistency has led to a perception of uncertainty in the work environment, where, in a sense 'the goal posts' of university approaches to DSM were regularly shifting and provided academics with limited, ad-hoc support. As shown by the selected comments in Table 4.19, participants reported that external support is lacking, ad-hoc, inconsistent and shallow and that the university organisational guidelines and policies for academic DSM are either insufficient or unclear.

Table 4.19: Comments that Reflect External Support to Engage with Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
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P1	I don't know that academia has fully understood what we're really asking everyone to do. Universities in our environment need to think about how they support people if they are targeted, rather than the ad hoc system that we have.
P4	It's difficult when there's no one kind of consistent approach or set of guidelines even. It would be useful if universities had some more guidelines around what they expect of academics.
P5	There's not the institutional support there to do it.
P6	University infrastructure should be better set up to support researchers who don't have it as a primary skill set.
P8	[University] is not doing a good job of training either.
P10	Universities that I've worked at have been pretty bad at thinking about social media. They've either been indifferent or fairly idiotic about it. They would have workshops for social media, but it was more essentially this very shallow idea that it would boost the visibility of your research.
P11	There's not a lot of guidelines and policy for us around what happens when things go wrong. There's a bit of a disconnect between what universities tell people to do and what the reality is.
P15	There are just occasionally bureaucratic kind of scenarios that [make] people feel curtailed, because they want to do certain things with social media.

The importance of the subtheme of external support was further developed by two participants with respect to the risks of academics being a target of trolling and harassment due to engaging in DSM. These views were expressed by a senior Level D academic, who shared:

I'm a bit concerned at my university at the moment; they now are aware of this stuff, like, they are aware of the fact that online harassment, bullying and threats of violence are something that happens to staff when they do media comment. But I get really worried now, that they're going to go into that kind of typical protectionist bureaucratic line and have us, like, fill in some risk assessment matrix or whatever, like, before we [use social media], or, like, force us all to, like, do curated tweets from a university-branded Twitter account. (P12)

The participant's concern was that instead of developing an effective strategy, universities may add layers of bureaucracy to the use of DSM by academics. One highly active DSM participant reported the concern that universities may become risk averse, having heard 'anecdotally from other institutions that there are some pretty archaic kinds of approaches, like, having to pass tweets

through various people before it's kind of okay to tweet stuff if it's actually about your school or your centre' (P15). This participant believed that instead, universities need to develop risk management approaches and strategies if a researcher is likely to 'get pushback or flames' (P15) from a controversial topic. In their view, organisational support is important in the context of public engagement via DSM. It is fully shown by universities that adopt the attitude that 'they've got their back as an institution. We have your back, because you're our researcher and you're actually talking about your research, which is what we want you to do' (P15). This attitude would thereby resolve the shifting tension between the external pressure on academics to adopt DSM and effective, clear and timely institutional support to do so.

A further shifting element to DSM reported by participants was the changing nature of Digital Platforms for online communication.

4.6.2 Digital Self-marketing and Digital Platforms

An important subtheme to the Shifting Sands theme was how participants regarded the static nature of digital platforms, of which there are 'too many of them, might I say. Way too many' (P2). Similarly, two participants identified the challenge of regularly learning to use new platforms for minimal benefit: 'It's just getting your head around a new system every time. It's tiresome how many of these damn systems there are' (P1) and 'the never-ending list of things to learn. It's a lot, and it doesn't translate to a lot of academic benefit' (P6). Nevertheless, several participants had resolved these issues by tailoring their activities on DSM platforms. For example, one participant shared, 'In terms of speaking across various communities, I kind of have multiple accounts where I do that in certain ways and entails asking questions like "What is this platform good for? How does it work for me?"' (P15). Similarly, another participant remarked, 'You just pick the platforms that you want to focus on, and don't focus on all of them' (P12).

In this respect, the findings indicate that participants consistently prefer Twitter for DSM at this point in time rather than the other DSM platforms available, as shown by their comments in Table 4.20. Most participants maintained a Twitter account albeit with varying activity. They also noted the limitations of alternative platforms to Twitter, and stated, 'LinkedIn still feels like Twitter but wearing a suit and a tie. It's not responsive' (P3) and 'ResearchGate's a suit, and Google Scholar's a suit, because they're just purely professional modes of media and public advertising of yourself'

(P7). For this reason, academics' engagement across the range of seemingly important DSM platforms is notably varied and inconsistent. The participants in this study maintained an average of more than five DSM platforms. They indicated, 'ResearchGate and Academia.edu sit there passively, but I completely neglect them' (P12) and 'LinkedIn is sitting somewhere down the back of the cupboard in the dark. I haven't found it a successful way to engage with people' (P10). Hence, the variable nature of the available DSM platforms is an ongoing, shifting environment for academics to traverse, as has been the challenge of working as an academic with DSM during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is the theme addressed in the next section.

Table 2: Comments that Reflect the Use of Twitter and Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P5	Twitter is more of a pipeline [than other platforms] to professional audiences and media audiences.
P6	On my personal Twitter, it is, I'm deliberately talking to my academic colleagues. I probably even should be on it more because as academics [sic], I think, Twitter's quite useful.
P10	Twitter is a great place to find not just like-minded people, but [also] people who challenge you in good ways and complement your skills; so, it's been fantastic.
P15	I just find that Twitter is, it allows that a bit more, whereas Facebook, LinkedIn and stuff I find a bit more static just because of the way, just because of the format.
P18	Twitter is probably the place.
P21	Whereas Twitter is much wider; it's anybody who's interested in listening.

4.6.3 Digital Self-marketing and COVID-19

Under the theme of Shifting Sands, participants also reported on the subtheme of the ways in which the global COVID-19 pandemic has changed their DSM engagement, as shown by the range of their comments in Table 4.21. Some participants felt, 'My life hasn't changed that much. What I do, my job, hasn't changed that much; my window into the world is through the same screen' (P1). For others, there has been some benefit to DSM during COVID-19, for 'I think the access to other people has increased perhaps a little bit, and I was invited to do, like, a webinar last week, and that

kind of thing’ (P16). Meanwhile, some were concerned that DSM activity during COVID-19 may affect others negatively. As one participant shared, ‘I have opted for less because I know that a lot of people out there are in terrible working situations at home’ (P7). In contrast, concern for the wellbeing of others led another participant to increase their DSM engagement:

We were super aware that there are people who haven’t yet established the networks that may be their supporting networks, which would ably get them through this time. So, we try to fill that gap a little bit, like, have more activity online, have different things we tried to establish and have hashtags that people could share, you know, life at home and things like that. (P15)

Thus, whereas participants’ DSM activity in the context of COVID-19 fluctuated for different reasons, the findings highlight the impact of changing and uncertain social contexts (shifting sands) that inform academic activities.

Table 4.21: Comments that Reflect the Impact of COVID-19 on Digital Self-marketing

Participant	Comments
P3	[Hearing] ‘It’s so difficult doing research work in [the] COVID-19 [pandemic]; I’ve only managed to write three books this year’—that kind of BS is just like, I mean, that’s just about coming back to those issues of authenticity.
P10	Things were just pretty intense for a while, and I just took a break for a month or two. Because when there was just enough going on in the real world, I didn’t need to be online, giving myself more anxiety and more stress over that.
P12	I’ve had a few papers out in the last month, which I haven’t tweeted, because I think in this current climate, it, it feels like a bit wrong to kind of do that self-promotion when there’s so much other stuff going on.
P13	I have been trying to promote a bit more during [the] COVID-19 [pandemic] to learn how to search through a couple of other accounts that I run.
P20	People often isolated at home, using social media as a, as a way of prompting connection with people they knew. And I think that’s, you know, that’s very human.

4.7 Overview of the Findings

This chapter provided thematic analysis of the perceptions of DSM by 21 Australian-based academics at different levels of seniority and DSM activity. From this thematic analysis, five main

themes emerged from the interviews: Authenticity, Connections, Impact, Public Engagement and Shifting Sands. The first four were deemed endogenous themes, for these were largely within the academics' control, whereas the fifth theme of Shifting Sands was deemed exogenous for the associated factors were all beyond the individual's control.

The first theme of Authenticity reflects perceptions about how the self or the individual academic approaches DSM; under this theme, participants raised the importance of being a real person and acting human on DSM. In this way, the findings address RQ1 by suggesting that academics apply an attitude of authenticity to creating and curating their digital identities.

The second theme of Connections addressed RQ2a to show that academics perceived DSM provided a functional advantage whereby they reported that online engagement fosters collaborations, academic relationships and a sense of collegiality and community. As reported by some participants in this study, connection via DSM allows the sharing of knowledge and the opportunity to share research results with other academics and researchers to enhance their collaborations and profile.

Despite a positive view about the advantages of developing connections via DSM, academics held equivocal perceptions about the impact of DSM in terms of enhancing their careers and the organisational reputation of their universities. These findings answer RQ4. Under the third theme—Impact—participants spoke about the challenges involved in actually measuring the successful impact of DSM and the time constraints of engaging fully with DSM in a context in which their research and grant outputs are the primary means of evaluating their impact, rather than DSM.

In addition, participants reported on the fourth theme of Public Engagement as a central perception of DSM with respect to RQ2a, and an obligation of their roles as academics. The analysis showed that academics also view DSM as a way to be a good academic citizen, but effective public engagement requires strategic development and crafting of their online voice and persona. They also reported that public engagement has its risks owing to the presence of trolling, one factor that is beyond their control, such that academics need to exercise due caution to avoid receiving negative and potentially dangerous behaviour and responses from some members of the public. These findings speak to RQ2b by addressing the hesitancies academics have about DSM adoption.

The fifth theme to emerge from the data was labelled Shifting Sands to reflect the idea that DSM is situated in a broader social context external to academics themselves, which is subject to change and uncertainty. With respect to RQ2a, academics perceived the varied nature of external pressure and support to adopt DSM, the affordances and value associated with different academic platforms and the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on DSM activity. In the view of participants, universities need to better quantify the value DSM brings to the institution in the current competitive, market-driven higher education system.

Taken together, the findings of this thesis and the themes derived from analysis provide the basis for developing and refining a DSM framework to update the concept of self-marketing and to identify considerations and behaviours unique to the act of self-marketing in the digital era. Moreover, the findings help improve the understanding of academics' perceptions about DSM and the ways that DSM may be engaged effectively. These themes provide insights that speak to the research questions of this thesis and the two parent theories of impression management and self-marketing that explain academic engagement with DSM. The next chapter will further integrate the findings to address the research questions and discuss their theoretical and practical implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion

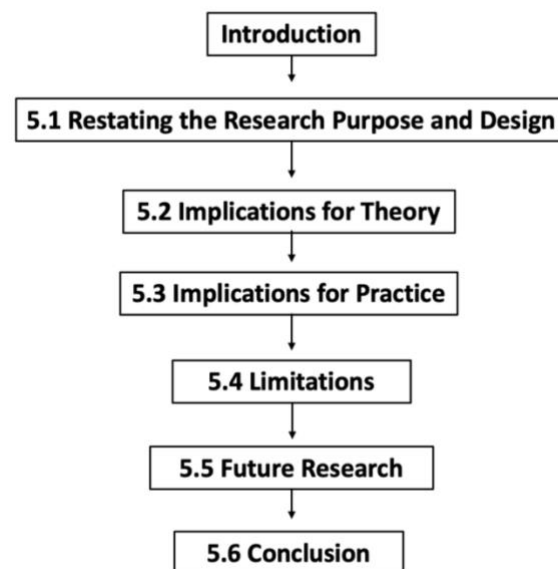
The findings of this thesis reported in Chapter 4 show that the perceptions of 21 Australian-based academics of DSM centred on five main themes derived from a systematic coding of their interviews: Authenticity, Connections, Impact, Public Engagement and Shifting Sands.

- *Authenticity* reflected the importance of being a real person and acting human on SNSs by resolving several issues, including the line between the personal self and the professional self and the risks of over self-promotion, addressing RQ1 regarding how academics are creating and curating digital identities.
- *Connections* highlighted the advantages DSM affords Australian-based academics through fostering collaborations, academic relationships and a sense of collegiality and community, addressing RQ2a (perceptions of DSM) and RQ3 (use of DSM to self-promote).
- *Impact*, addressing RQ2b (hesitancies for DSM adoption) and RQ4 (career impact of DSM), showed that participants were equivocal about the relative lack of value DSM offers to enhancing their careers and the organisational reputation because of the challenges in measuring the impact of DSM and the time constraints that affect their ability to fully engage with DSM.
- *Public Engagement*, addressing RQ2a, RQ2b and RQ3, encompassed a central function of DSM to enhance the obligation of their roles as academics.
- *Shifting Sands* demonstrated that DSM is situated in a broader social context external to academics themselves, which is subject to change and uncertainty, addressing RQ2a about perceptions of DSM.

Following this introduction, this chapter includes six sections, as shown in Figure 5.1. It provides a discussion of the research findings by commencing with an overview of the research purpose and design (Section 5.1). Section 5.2 discusses the theoretical implications of the findings and the relationship of the concept and the nature of DSM with the theories of impression management and self-marketing as well as professional marketing theories in the literature. The DSM framework is presented as an outcome of this research. The practical implications of the findings are then evaluated in Section 5.3, and it is shown that the findings raise certain directions to improve the efficacy of DSM for the reputations, careers and work of academics and the higher

education and research sector. A guide for academics and a separate guide for universities are presented in this section as a preliminary outcome of the research in an effort to translate knowledge into practice. The subsequent sections assess the promising future research directions that the findings of this thesis suggest (Section 5.4) and consider the limitations of the research design and findings (Section 5.5). The last section of the chapter (Section 5.6) provides a concluding statement about these findings and their contribution to knowledge on the ways in which academics and other professionals can navigate DSM to enhance their work and careers.

Figure 5.1: Outline of Chapter 5



Source. Developed from this research.

5.1 Restating the Research Purpose and Design

The aim of this thesis was to address a gap in knowledge about the experiences of Australian-based academics concerning the benefits and the challenges of using DSM for professional purposes. The research reported in this thesis identified that DSM is an important tool in the professional lives of academics, providing the potential to build reputation (personal and institutional), enhance presence and contribute to knowledge dissemination, public engagement and career advancement. Nevertheless, minimal research has identified how academics engage

with DSM and manage their digital identities in a professional forum. Moreover, little is known about the factors that may facilitate or impede DSM engagement. The purpose of the research conducted in this thesis was to address these gaps in the literature by investigating academics' perceptions of DSM and their curation of their digital profiles. The research also investigated the hesitations of academics about using DSM, and their application of DSM in self-promoting and in attempting to enhance their careers. Conducting such research is significant in an era when most academics feel compelled to engage with DSM as a way to develop their research and careers, considering that little is known about how this population is navigating the use of digital platforms on a professional level. The research is also significant for its contribution to theories about impression management and self-presentation and to the understanding about their relationship with the expanded concept of self-marketing in a digital world.

To investigate the perceptions and experiences of academics, this research employed a grounded theory qualitative research design, given the need for theoretical development in self-marketing research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually with 21 academics to seek their perceptions and lived experience with DSM. These interviews were subjected to thematic analysis according to the 3-stage process of Immersion, Transformation and Connection (Pietkiewicz & Smith 2012), which aligns with a grounded theory research design. Using this approach, the interview data were sorted and coded to extract themes and generate categories that reflect theoretical concepts for explaining the experience of academics with DSM. The findings from this analysis raise several implications about how DSM is managed and practiced by academics and universities.

5.2 Implications for Theory

The themes derived from the responses of participants address the research questions of this thesis in several ways. With respect to RQ1 and RQ3, academics are creating and curating their digital identities to self-promote through different mediums (e.g. Twitter, Research Gate and LinkedIn) in a strategic manner that emphasises authenticity and genuineness rather than being overly self-serving. Their perceptions of DSM (RQ2a) centred on the themes of connections and public engagement, and they reported the benefits of DSM in terms of obtaining opportunities for developing collaborations and communicating their work to the broader community. The themes

derived from this study also addressed RQ2b on the hesitancies of academics in adopting DSM. The theme of public engagement indicated that participants are cautious about using DSM, given the risk of negative community reaction to their work as well as safety and security concerns, and, in particular, the commonality of trolling. Moreover, the theme of impact also showed that academics are hesitant to engage with DSM because they (and their universities) appear to be unclear about how to measure success, there are shifting expectations and universities have not established an official workload allocation for DSM despite its significant time requirement. Last, with respect to RQ4 and the theme of impact, academics were equivocal about the relatively minimal benefits that DSM offered for career enhancement.

Overall, the findings of this thesis raise implications for developing the concept of DSM and impression management among academics, and among professionals more generally. The term self-marketing was developed in the pre-internet era (e.g. Kotler & Levy 1969) and denotes the act of promoting oneself, generally as a way to improve one's employment status. Nevertheless, the original concept does not account for the shifting behaviours and practices related to marketing oneself using digital media. Although select studies have applied the self-marketing concept in the digital era (e.g. Shepherd 2005; Shuker 2014), they have not focused on defining the ways digital tools are used for self-marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the understanding and the conceptualisation of self-marketing to update it for the new digital era. Russell Belk (2013), Deborah Lupton (2014), Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2017) and Robert Kozinets (2016), among others, have provided some direction in this respect.

In particular, Belk (2013) provided a comparable general framework to advance thinking on how self-marketing and impression management may inform the DSM concept as it relates to the experience of academics. Belk proposed that engagement with the digital world entails an extended self that is evidenced in individuals' relationships to other people and materials, with the extended self in the digital world manifesting distinctly to account for the virtual self and encompassing dematerialisation, re-embodiment, sharing, co-construction of self and distributed memory.

Belk's (2013) framework provides a means to conceptualise how people negotiate professional self-marketing and impression management in digital media as an outcome of the extended self. With respect to academic engagement with DSM, however, Lupton (2014) and Lupton, Mewburn

and Thomson (2017) similarly conceived that academics are engaged with a strategic performance of professional selfhood in the digital world and that engagement with DSM by academics entails positive and negative affective components associated with expectations, demands and feedback that reflect on self-evaluation and the performance of the self. Moreover, Kozinets (2016) highlighted how DSM requires academics to position themselves as a personal brand that aligns with their values. From this viewpoint, each academic brand consists of a different grouping of ideas, places and institutions and depends on other brands to gain further traction and wider influence, and no academic digital brand exists in isolation. Taken together, Belk (2013), Lupton (2014), Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2017) and Robert Kozinets (2016) have provided preliminary scholarship around self-marketing as it relates to academics in the digital world. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974) may also warrant further investigation in future research to explore how membership in an academic professional network may influence academics' DSM activities, though identity formation fell outside the scope of this research.

The following section advances earlier theoretical contributions by drawing on the findings of this thesis to develop a framework for conceptualising DSM in the academic world.

5.2.1 A Digital Self-marketing Framework: New Considerations for Self-marketing in the Digital Age

Following the grounded theory methodology, the findings of this thesis raise valuable extensions and calibrations of the concept put forth herein as DSM and highlight new considerations for self-marketing in the digital age. In the themes derived from the perceptions of Australian-based academics reported here, it is possible to see how the issues of authenticity, connections, impact, public engagement and fluctuating broader contexts clarify the conditions under which they employ the digital world for self-marketing and negotiate it for career development. Moreover, there are broader considerations regarding academic usage of DSM for the good of the institution and the value to community and broader society. The findings advance existing theories through the conceptualisation of DSM as a complex endeavour that entails a balance between the issues of authenticity and privacy, branding of the self, safety and harassment, and external factors, including collaborations, public engagement and the institutional context. This thesis's theoretical implications in these different areas are presented in the following subsections.

5.2.1.1 Authenticity and Privacy

The responses of academics reported in the research findings highlighted the centrality of authenticity and privacy to their DSM endeavour. While I acknowledge that authenticity is an overused term that can be problematic (Natarajan & Green 2019) and may have conflicting definitions, this term was chosen because it aligns with the language that participants used to describe their experience. The finding that authenticity in DSM was a central theme and consideration in the perceptions of participants is consistent with the core values of academia, particularly trust. The International Center for Academic Integrity (2021) endorses six values that reflect academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage. This Center stipulates that the value of trust is demonstrated by academics adopting genuineness in their work. Participants were clear in their remarks on authenticity that this means the engagement with DSM should be consistent with being a genuine person. The Center further describes that the value of trust is displayed via the transparency of academic processes, which is also consistent with the importance of the theme of authenticity among participants in this study.

Prior empirical research has further demonstrated the importance of authenticity to academics in a DSM environment (e.g. Jordan & Weller 2018; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018). For example, Jordan and Weller (2018) found that academics viewed self-promotion as a central problem with DSM because it undermines the authenticity and integrity of academic activities. Whereas other earlier research (e.g. Manai & Holmlund 2015) revealed the importance of self-branding and of adopting an alternate self in other professional contexts, such as business and the arts, the academics in the present study endorsed the alternative view that they should be authentic individuals in the DSM environment.

As Belk (2013) implied, DSM entails a re-embodiment of the self in a virtual space such that people have the opportunity to present a multitude of selves or a different self online. Nevertheless, academics in this study were concerned with presenting their real person, the human, in online forums. Whereas other professional contexts, such as business or healthcare, may provide the opportunity for people to present an alternate self (Cederberg 2017; Manai & Holmlund 2015), academics appeared to regard DSM as requiring the presentation of authenticity, which is consistent with previous scholarship (e.g. Jordan & Weller 2018; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson

2018; van Noorden 2014). The findings also reveal two related moderators of authenticity specifically for Australian-based academics: self-serving bias and the tall poppy syndrome. Academics felt authenticity was undermined by people overemploying the self-promotion opportunities of DSM and reported being wary of the tall poppy syndrome as a social corrective (Jetten et al. 2019; Peeters 2004). Similar negative sentiment among academics regarding the self-promotional nature of social media has been documented internationally (e.g. Jordan & Weller 2018; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018), however the participants' responses in this thesis suggest that Australian-based academics may be hyper-sensitive to being regarded as a 'tall poppy' and thus take more care to refrain from overly promoting their professional accomplishments. Hence, the tall poppy syndrome appears to facilitate the importance among Australian-based academics of presenting an authentic person in DSM.

The findings relating to authenticity in DSM were further reflected in academics' perceptions of privacy issues. Participants reported concerns about the boundary between personal and professional life or selves, which mirrors the debate between postsecondary teaching roles as vocation or profession (Buijs 2005). They were particularly concerned with issues of privacy in a public forum, which is in line with the findings of Lupton (2014) and Veletsianos, Johnson and Belikov (2019). Both studies documented that academics' concerns with online privacy and self-protection influence their social media use and extend to hesitations associated with data ownership and harassment. Whereas some participants in the current study perceived it as important to keep their personal and professional selves distinct in DSM, others saw a need to inject the personal self into DSM while also finding a balance such that they are taken seriously as professionals. Thus, resolving the balance between the personal self and the professional self relates to the importance of authenticity for DSM. In this way, DSM reflects the balance between authenticity and how the self is 'branded' in the online contributions of academics, a finding that advances the studies in this area by Kozinets (2016) and others. Yet, because of the public forums they need to use, academics may not always have control over their brand. These concerns lead us to the next element of DSM.

5.2.1.2 Branding and the Self

Kozinets (2016) highlighted how DSM relates to the positioning of academics as a personal brand themselves. Indeed, advocates of the effectiveness of personal branding in marketing oneself online (Kotler et al. 2005) have attempted to transfer the principles and practices of product branding to individuals in a more coherent fashion than have the proponents of the self-marketing theory. Nevertheless, some participants in this study reported discomfort with the notion of branding themselves and described the difficulty they faced with separating themselves from their brand, in line with the conclusions of Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2018) and Marshall, Barbour and Moore (2018). Simultaneously, there was a more developed view that branding via DSM simply entails the normal development of one's reputation via networking and collaboration, just pursued in another space.

The complexities of DSM as voiced by participants in their various concerns surrounding personal branding align with Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson's (2018) portrait of digital academic practice as 'complex [and] even contradictory' (p. 15). Moreover, Marshall, Barbour and Moore (2018) documented the multifaceted nature of presenting oneself professionally online in their exploration of the academic persona online, which they described as a 'strategically developed public identity' that is developed through combining a range of 'digital identity-shaping and defining metrics and content' that are inevitably complex (p. 13).

The notion of branding the self may not sit well for some academics. The participants' responses regarding concerns around being self-serving aligned with the findings of prior research in which academics found colleagues' self-promotional behaviour online to be off-putting (Jordan & Weller 2018) and in which academics themselves expressed discomfort with using digital tools because doing so appeared to violate the unspoken norm of not overtly promoting oneself (Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018).

However, Belk (2013) highlighted that developing a brand is part and parcel of the extended self in the digital world. In this view, the extended self can be re-embodied in a virtual space such that people have the opportunity to present a multitude of selves or a different self. In a similar way, Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2018) argued that academics are engaged with the strategic performance of professional selfhood in the digital world. Therefore, the concept of DSM implies

that academics present themselves as a brand that is distinct from the core self. In other words, the re-embodied self is what the concept of DSM implies in order to successfully negotiate the opportunities for the promotion of academic work and to manage the drawbacks of self-marketing arising from safety and harassment issues, which is an addition to the research of Belk (2013) and others in this area.

Altmetrics, as a tool to measure academics' social and research impact, is a key factor related to their branding. These evolving analytics and endeavours to measure the reach and the influence of a scholars' research (Konkiel, Sugimoto & Williams 2016; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018) apply a valutive aspect to the branding of an academic's professional self, especially when they know they will be evaluated on such metrics. In certain ways, this approach challenges the privileging of authenticity if an academic, compelled by university standards, must view their online presence from a purely performance-oriented perspective (D'Alessandro et al. 2020).

5.2.1.3 Safety and Harassment

The findings of this thesis highlight some of the drawbacks of engaging in DSM to promote one's work and achievements. Most participants reported significant concern over the potential for trolling when they engage in DSM. The trolling of academics because they engage the public in their work via digital platforms can be harmful and can lead to safety concerns such that some participants will avoid participating in legitimate debate and in the sharing of ideas. At its worst, trolling was reported as abusive, especially with respect to issues of gender and race. As Veletsianos, Johnson and Belikov (2019) found, scholars report altering or limiting their social media use stemming from concerns with online privacy and protecting themselves. As found in this study, academics' engagement with social media is moderated and even impeded by their hesitations over the potential for negative and even dangerous public reactions to their research.

Concerns over safety and harassment issues when people engage in sharing via online media have also been raised in Belk's (2013) discussion of the extended self in the digital world. Sharing information online may offer a greater chance of connecting in a larger space, but this entails less control of shared information relating to the self and the risk of being the victim of the disinhibition effects of social media (Ridely 2012). The greater level and type of sharing of oneself in the digital world without the repercussions of in-person interactions can lead people to share inappropriate

content or to others taking advantage by harassing or posting abusive or hostile content. Moreover, cyberbullying can lead to in-person harassment (Cassidy, W, Faucher & Jackson 2017, 2019), which can be a dangerous threat when public figures, such as professors, can easily be found on a university campus. Gosse et al. (2021) found that online harassment was heavily intertwined with the requirements of being a scholar and was often made worse by other factors, including physical appearance and gender. They argued that universities must ‘widen their scope of what constitutes workplace harassment and workplace safety to include online spaces’ in order to better protect faculty (p. 1).

Thus, the concept of DSM as it applies to academics entails a risk factor when they share knowledge, information and scholarly opinions—especially when the content relates to disempowered groups. As Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2018) argued, sharing material online for the purposes of marketing oneself professionally requires a level of caution and balance because academics’ engagement with DSM entails positive and negative affective components associated with expectations, demands and feedback that reflect on self-evaluation and the performance of the self. The psychological and the physical effects of cyberbullying or online harassment on academics, particularly women (Hodson et al. 2018; Veletsianos et al. 2018) and individuals from underrepresented groups, must be accounted for as an inevitable aspect of the DSM experience. How these phenomena impact the digital behaviours of academics, particularly women and individuals from underrepresented backgrounds, and ultimately influence the crafting of their digital selves, warrants further theoretical consideration, although this thesis advances theory by indicating that hesitation and a tendency towards conservative online interactions are two important aspects of academics’ emerging digital identities.

5.2.1.4 External Factors: Impact & Institutional Context

Whereas DSM entails issues of authenticity, branding and safety concerns that reflect academics’ positioning in a digital space, DSM does not occur in a vacuum and is necessarily influenced by external or exogenous factors beyond the control of individual academics, such as collaboration, public engagement and the institutional context. Lupton (2014) found that the benefits of DSM included connecting and establishing networks, not only with other academics but also with people or groups outside universities, promoting openness and the sharing of information, developing and

publicising research and giving and receiving support. In the findings of the current research, academics likewise reported how connections through DSM afforded them the benefits of professional collaboration and the opportunity to build a community through citizenship behaviours. Marshall, Barbour and Moore (2018) documented similar experiences through which academics discovered speaking engagements and other professional opportunities as a result of their online academic presence. Moreover, Lemon and McPherson's (2018) in-depth case study of several academics' Twitter activity supported this notion of DSM and digital spaces as facilitating 'embodied and social processes' by generating relationships among academics online (p. 86).

Consequently, the concept of DSM enables academics to expand their reach into a broader community consisting of other scholars and the public more generally, in order to enhance their professional connections, profile, career prospects, and research and writing skills (Hynninen 2018; Mewburn & Thomson 2018).

Despite the clear benefits of engaging externally, participants reported that their activities nonetheless occur in an institutional university context where the leadership is concerned with the institution's own brand and reputation and thus exercises oversight of academics' self-promotion activities. As Duffy and Pooley (2017) reported, academics experience increased pressure to engage in self-promotional practices by market-driven universities and competitive academic environments. Indeed, some Australian universities are active in quantifying the social impact and the online visibility of research to inform promotion and hiring decisions (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; D'Alessandro et al. 2020; Konkiel, Sugimoto & Williams 2016; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018). Nevertheless, participants in this study raised the concern that the world external to DSM is unstable and unclear, especially in the context of COVID-19 (Ziemba & Eisenhardt 2021), the volatile Australian academic job market and the nature of Australian university oversight (Hurley 2021; Welch 2022).

Shifting sands is a clear theme that emerged from the findings of this thesis to reflect exogenous factors that are beyond the direct control of academics owing to which their DSM activity is dependent on changes in the social and digital environment. In addition, they reported that their universities were providing inconsistent support and guidance regarding academic engagement with DSM. This inconsistency led to a perception of uncertainty and volatility in the work

environment where in a sense ‘the goal posts’ were regularly shifting as university approaches to DSM policy were modified, contributing to ad-hoc support that was deemed inconsistent and insufficient. Participants shared that their university’s organisational guidelines and policies for academic DSM were either limited or unclear. Thus, the concept of DSM reflects the balance between the pressure and demand for academics to promote their research for enhancing their individual and university brands, and the seemingly uncertain criteria that external agents, such as universities, provide to support academics’ DSM efforts. In this regard, Cabrera, Roy and Chisolm (2017) found that many academic institutions in the healthcare discipline across different countries had ‘dedicated departments for the development and implementation of SM media policies and campaigns’, but it appears that clear policies are still lacking in many higher education institutions, particularly within Australia (Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018).

The perception that universities are behind the mark regarding how DSM relates to their academic staff is another concern raised by the findings that is consistent with that of prior studies (e.g. Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; Konkiel, Sugimoto & Williams 2016; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018). In the view of participants, universities need to notice the value an individual brand via DSM brings to the institution in the competitive academic and external world. This need is especially relevant to academics’ relationship with universities, since DSM becomes more transactional between a university and an individual academic when it is factored into decisions such as research grant funding, with institutions such as the Australian Research Council recognising social media impact as a quantifiable metric to help inform funding decisions (D’Alessandro et al. 2020). Many studies have suggested that certain DSM and SNS metrics may be used in formulating policies about academic tenure and promotion in the future (e.g. Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; Konkiel, Sugimoto & Williams 2016; Megwalu 2015; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018), but no formal policies were available to the knowledge of the researcher as of the time of writing. For a comprehensive discussion of existing university policies around social media usage, see Section 2.3.4, University Policies About Social Media Use by Academics, in this thesis.

Given a lack of clarity around how DSM efforts are measured or impact one’s performance, as well as the added time commitment they require, the findings of this research evidence a tension felt by participants in the pursuit of DSM, both regarding the presentation of their personal versus professional self (Kozinets 2016; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018), and in terms of workload

allocation between traditional research and teaching responsibilities, and building an academic presence online (Daniels 2018; Kieslinger 2015). With documented ‘loss of power of academics within their institutions and intensification of their work’ specifically in the Australian higher education system (Kenny & Fluck 2022, p. 1372), leading to extremely high workloads and mounting research pressures, participants’ concerns over time constraints are well founded. In fact, Vesty et al. documented burnout in 2018 among Australian and New Zealand academics stemming from ‘workload pressures’ and the loss of autonomy over their academic work (p. 255).

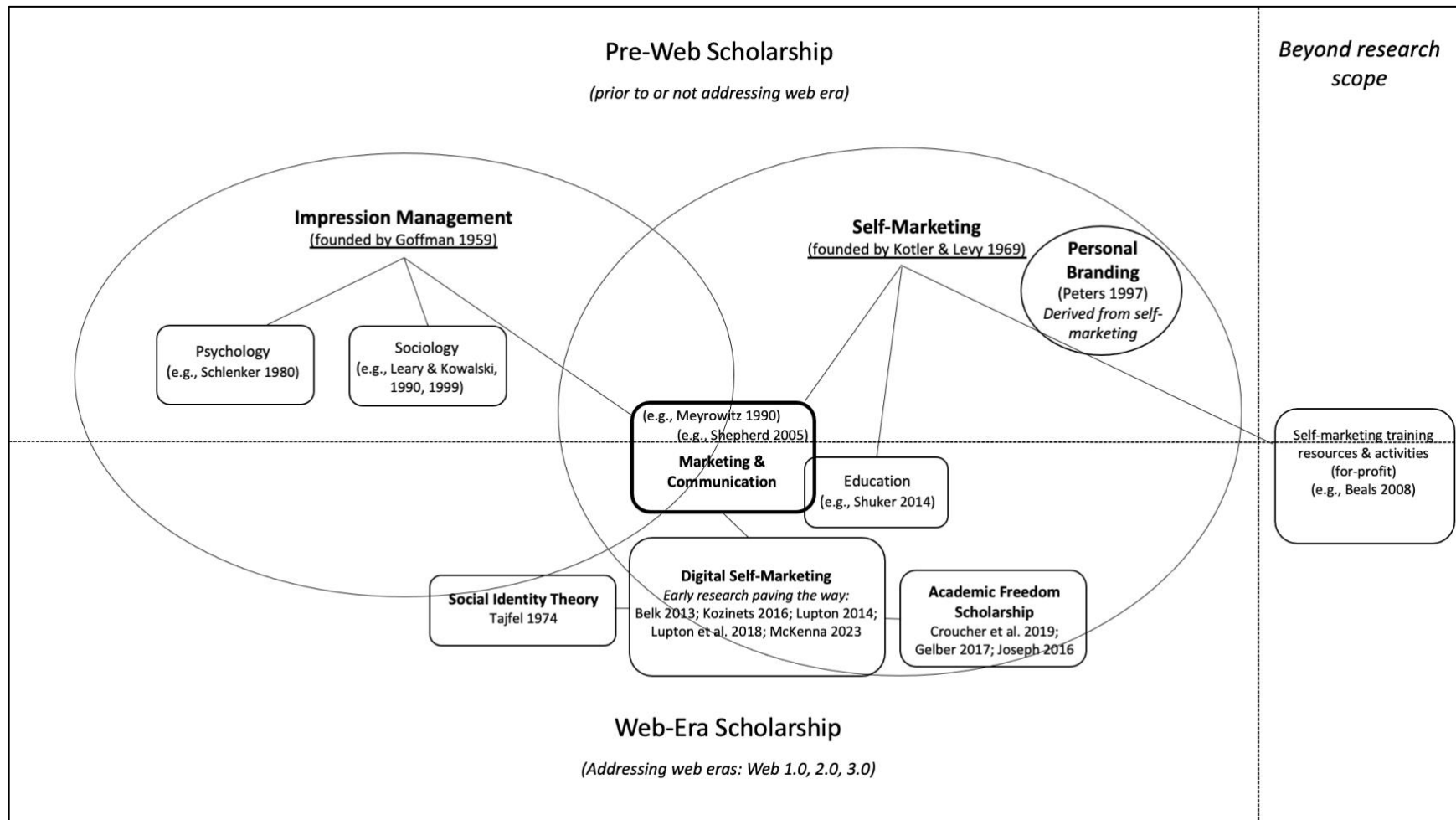
The inherent tensions that arise between the role of the individual academic and the institution when exploring academic DSM cannot go unnoticed. This researcher conducted this research and developed the current implications and conclusions based on the assumption that academic freedom does exist and will be protected in Australian higher education (Croucher et al. 2019; Gelber 2017). As we continue to discuss and explore regulation of academics’ online activities for professional purposes, this question of academic freedom will inevitably arise (Croucher et al. 2019; Joseph 2016), and it deserves further exploration in a separate study around the ethics of such regulations. For the purposes of the present thesis, it is worth considering whether the process of DSM as determined by each individual academic should be able to be controlled or sanctioned by a university that employs them. The answer is not straightforward, and the discussion must continue.

The issue of external impact on academic engagement with DSM and the findings of this thesis that DSM entails issues of authenticity, privacy, self-branding and safety raise implications for how the use of digital marketing may be effectively managed by academics and universities alike, both in Australia and in other higher education markets internationally. Although Australian higher education is unique in many ways, as discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.2.1, it is similar enough to other western universities to potentially generalise the research to those populations, due to a shared philosophy of neoliberalism, emphasis of the importance of market competition and consumer choice, and a similar market structure and shift towards performance-based funding (Brown & Carasso 2020; Jung & Weerts 2018).

5.2.1.5 Visualizing the Research Outcomes

The researcher has updated the original conceptual framework of this research in Figure 2.2 to create a new framework, Figure 5.1, encompassing the additional theoretical considerations and contributions that have been elaborated in relation to the research findings and interpretations. As shown in Figure 5.1, early research contributing to digital self-marketing theory are listed (Belk 2013; Kozinets 2016; Lupton 2014; Lupton et al. 2018; McKenna 2023), in addition to two additional related disciplines of social identity theory (Tajfel 1974) and academic freedom scholarship (Croucher et al. 2019; Gelber 2017; Joseph 2016).

Figure 5.1. Updated Conceptual Framework



Source. Developed from the literature. New references added from Figure 2.2: Belk, RW 2013, 'Extended self in a digital world', *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 477–500; Croucher, G., McGowan, U., Harwood, V., Robertson, S., Dow, G., Kelder,

J., & Harwood, A. (2019). *The State of Academic Freedom in Australia: A National Report*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne. https://cshe.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/3036703/Academic-Freedom-in-Australia.pdf;

Gelber, K. (2017). Academic Freedom in Australia: A Review of the Literature. *Australian Universities' Review*, 59(1), 27-36. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/INFORMIT.133406802614031>;

Joseph, S. (2016). Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech: Two Sides of the Same Coin? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 22(2), 169-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2016.1253878>;

Kozinets, R. V 2016, 'Applied netnography: an appropriate appropriation?', in R Denny & P Sunderland (eds), *Handbook of anthropology in business*, Routledge, New York, pp. 775–86;

Lupton, D 2014, 'Feeling better connected': *Academics' use of social media*, News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra;

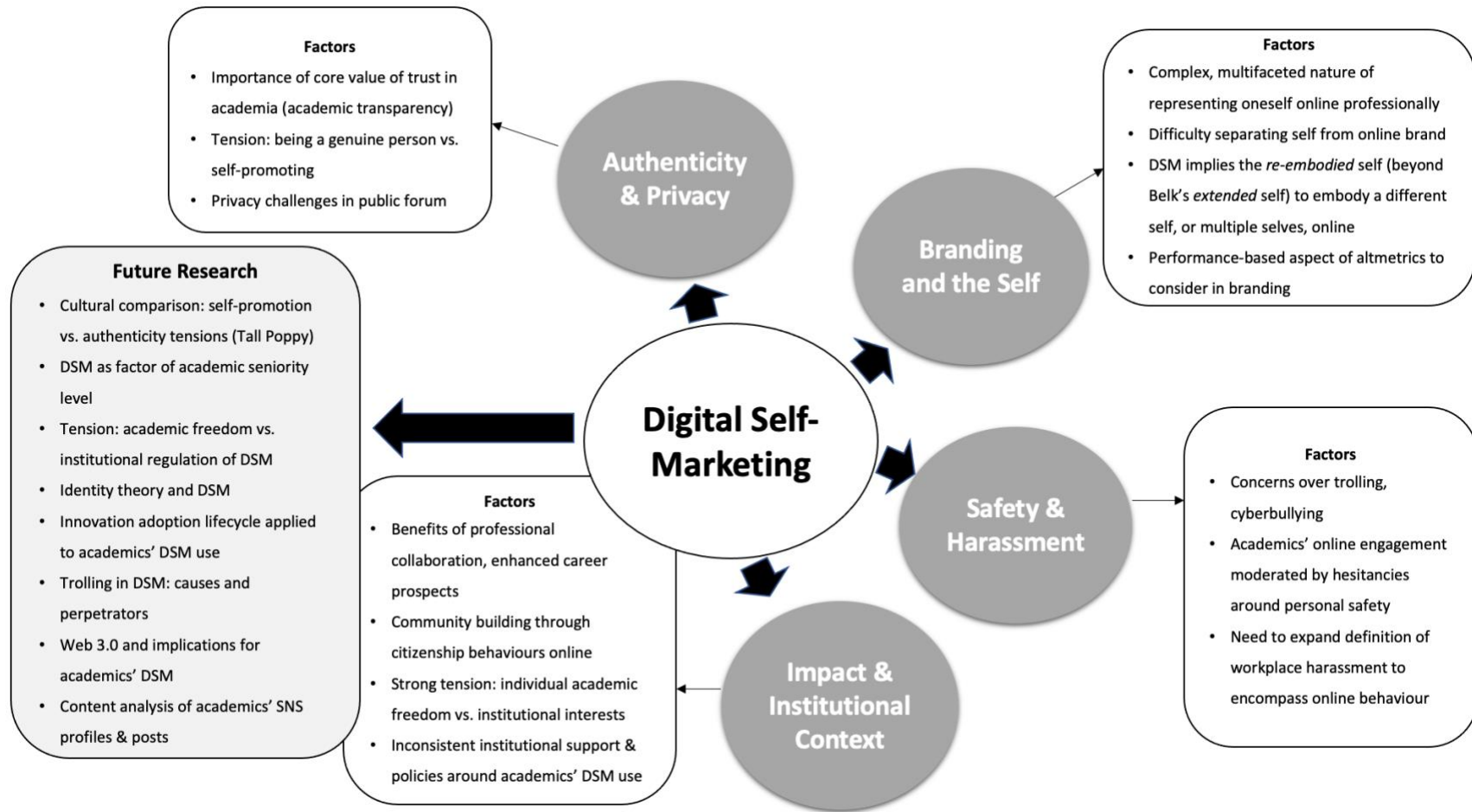
Lupton, D, Mewburn, I, Thomson, P (eds) 2018, 'The digital academic: identities, contexts and politics', *The digital academic: critical perspectives on digital technologies in higher education*, Routledge, London, pp. 1–19;

McKenna 2023, *Digital self-marketing strategies of Australian-based academics*, Unpublished thesis, RMIT University;

Tajfel, H 1974, 'Social identity and intergroup behavior,' *Social Sciences Information*, vol. 13, pp. 65–93.

Based on the conclusions drawn regarding the implications for theory of this research and the four focal areas discussed above, the researcher developed a new Digital Self-Marketing Model (Figure 5.2) to visualize the framework that was developed based on the findings of this research. This model evolves the theme-based conceptualization presented in Figure 4.2 into a fully developed theoretical model that crystallizes the outcomes of this research. The four focal areas within the DSM framework include: Authenticity & Privacy, Branding and the Self, Safety & Harassment and Impact & Institutional Context. Factors related to each focal area are detailed based on the interpretation of this research's findings, and finally, future research directions are listed to indicate how this theory might evolve in the future.

Figure 5.2. Digital Self-Marketing Model



Source. Developed from this research.

5.3 Implications for Practice

With respect to RQ2a on how academics perceive DSM, the findings of this thesis suggest that the concept of DSM as it applies to academic activity entails a balance between the issues of authenticity and privacy, branding of the self, safety/harassment, and the external factors of collaboration, public engagement and the institutional context. Although academic participants in this study shared the perceived benefits of DSM for promoting their career and work, they also reported hesitations (RQ2b) surrounding how to manage authenticity and create a professional brand in the light of external factors, such as the risks of public engagement via DSM and the role of universities in supporting their DSM activities. Hence, the findings raise implications for how to guide the best outcomes for academics and universities in a world where online presence and DSM is a ubiquitous and unavoidable phenomenon.

5.3.1 Digital Self-marketing Guide for Australian Academics

Modern academics at Australian universities must increasingly conform to market values in order to demonstrate the impact of their work and make professional progress (Carpenter, Cone & Sarli 2014; Kenny & Fluck 2022). They face growing pressure to ensure their research makes an impact both academically and socially (D'Alessandro et al. 2020; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018; Welch 2022), and consequently, many are turning to digital media platforms and SNSs to expand the visibility of themselves and their work (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; Lupton 2014; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018). Considering the growing emphasis on DSM in the highly competitive world of Australian academic research, this research advances practical knowledge on how academics may use DSM for professional purposes based on the academics' experiences reported in this thesis regarding the benefits and challenges of using DSM to influence one's career.

An important practical implication for individual academics pertains to online safety and security. From the concerns expressed by academics in this thesis as well as in prior studies (e.g. Gosse et al. 2021; Hodson et al. 2018; Veletsianos et al. 2018; Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov 2019), it is clear that academics must always prioritise their personal safety and privacy over any professional obligations or responsibilities, when intending to engage in DSM. This process starts with protecting one's personal information by taking care not to disclose personal contact or identifying

information in a digital forum where it could be used against oneself and reporting any instances of cyberbullying or online threats in a timely matter. Related recommendations are included in the guide presented in Appendix E. Additional practical implications that pertain to universities are presented in Section 5.3.2.

In an attempt to help translate knowledge into practice, the following guidelines have been developed based on the findings of this research and in line with existing scholarship, including that of Lupton (2014), Lupton, Mewburn and Thomson (2018) and Alhquist (2013). A printable copy is available in Appendix E.

5.3.1.1 Appropriate Ways to Use Digital Self-marketing for Professional Purposes

- To build relationships with other academics;
- To pursue research collaboration opportunities or recruit research collaborators;
- To disseminate research findings into the public arena;
- To showcase expertise or contributions to the field with the goal of positioning oneself favourably for career advancement in one's discipline;
- To give or receive (appropriate) professional support to others within one's network.

5.3.1.2 Checklist for Building an Authentic Academic Brand via Digital Self-marketing

- My digital presence is strategic:
 - I have defined clear objectives for my use of digital platforms and social media.
 - My online activity (social posts, blog or LinkedIn articles, and comments) is all conducted to further my defined objectives.
 - I always think before posting anything and take care not to be reactive or impulsive in my social media comments or posts.
 - I engage online in ways that maximise impact, especially when sharing my research or professional milestones, being strategic about timing, tagging and commenting.
 - I am intentional about mentioning my university affiliations and always follow university guidelines/standards for social media use (if they are provided).

- I am informed about my institution's protocols for reviewing performance related to my online platform, social impact and any alternative metrics that they evaluate, and I continually monitor them to stay informed about my performance.
- I maintain a social media portfolio, similar to that developed by Cabrera, Roy and Chisolm (2017), to track my professional efforts and activities in the digital world.
- My digital presence is accurate:
 - The information on each platform profile is consistent and does not contradict information published elsewhere online.
 - The contact information that is publicly available is current.
 - My listed professional affiliations are up to date.
 - My current position is current.
 - My listed publications (within the last 2 months) are up to date.
 - My profile photo is current and reflects my present-day appearance (e.g. hair colour, glasses, weight and age).
- My digital presence is professional:
 - I use appropriate, respectful language in any text published on my profiles.
 - Any photos or images shared on my profiles are professional, inoffensive and appropriate for the work environment.
 - Any information that I share is relevant to my work as an academic and my professional involvements. I share personal information sparingly, if at all, and in a way that is appropriate for a work environment.
- My digital presence is authentic:
 - My online activity is representative of my true professional identity that colleagues and students interact with in person.
 - I do not fabricate information or create an altered identity for my online platforms.
 - I do not avoid self-promotion, but I share my achievements and accomplishments in a way that is designed to spread knowledge and will not be interpreted as bragging just for the sake of bragging.
 - I believe that anyone who I know in person (offline) will recognise me as the same person in my online profiles.

5.3.1.3 Best Practices for Setting Limitations, Boundaries and Safety around Digital Self-marketing

- I have created a clear map of the digital platforms on which I plan to be actively involved for professional purposes. For any platforms where there may be an overlap between personal and professional lives/identities—especially Facebook and Twitter—I have created separate profiles for my personal and professional engagement. I do not cross the line between sharing personal things on my professional profiles, or vice versa—unless it is for very specific reasons.
- I have a clear understanding of what cyberbullying and online harassment are, and I have strategies and resources to turn to if I am subject to such harassment, including the Digital Learning and Social Media Research (DSLMR) Group and their website *Public Scholarship & Online Abuse* (<https://harassment.thedlrgroup.com/>). I am informed about my university/institution's policies around this type of harassment and know where to go for help and support.
- I set time limits for the time I spend on DSM on a daily and weekly basis, and I track the time to ensure that I do not exceed the limits each day and week. I use available resources to plan my DSM activities and workflows as needed, such as Trefzger and Dünfelder's (2016) framework of detailed daily activities and workflows to incorporate social media activities into a standard academic workday, to be efficient with my time and resources.
- If I do exceed time limits during a certain period, I make that decision consciously and intentionally with the understanding of certain extenuating circumstances (e.g. a book or article launch, or a new promotion).
- I have had a conversation with my supervisor regarding my employer's expectations as regards DSM and social media use, and we have set clear boundaries, including time investment.

Given that DSM engagement by academics occurs in the wider context of their representation of their universities, the findings of this thesis provide implications for guiding universities to support the DSM activities of their academic staff, which is discussed next.

5.3.2 Digital Self-marketing Guide for Australian Universities

Researchers have alluded to the importance of building a strong academic brand to achieve success at the institutional level, with universities likely to notice the value an individual brand brings to the institution (Cabrera, Roy & Chisolm 2017; D'Alessandro et al. 2020; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018). Megwalu (2015) postulated that ResearchGate's metrics are likely to be used in formulating academic tenure and promotion policies in the future. Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis show that academics were concerned about the level of support provided by universities in an environment in which there is an expectation of academic engagement with the broader community (Welch 2022). Moreover, the findings from this researcher's literature review around existing international social media policies, and in particular this researcher's evaluation of select university social media policies, advance the knowledge on the state of social media policy in higher education and indicate that existing institutional guidelines and support for academics as regards DSM are woefully inadequate and warrant further development and consideration (Pasquini & Evangelopoulos 2017; Pomerantz et al. 2015; Willems et al. 2018).

Of particular note are the practical implications surrounding academics' concerns regarding online safety and privacy identified in this thesis. Beyond the steps that individual academics can take, outlined previously, it is imperative that universities are proactive in their efforts to ensure the safety, security and privacy of academic staff when they act on behalf of the university online or conduct DSM efforts in a formal university capacity. Beyond providing resources and incorporating safety recommendations or guidelines into social media policy, university leadership should consider implementing mandatory online safety and/or cyberbullying prevention training to ensure that all staff have a common foundation of knowledge regarding online threats and dangers.

In an effort to help translate knowledge into practice, the following guidelines have been developed for universities, from the findings of this research and relevant scholarship, including that of Sutton, Miles and Konkiel (2018), Gosse et al. (2021) and Hodson et al. (2018). A printable copy is available in Appendix F.

5.3.2.1 Best Practices to Support Academic Staff's Digital Self-marketing Efforts

- Develop clear, in-depth risk management policies on online abuse and the cyberbullying, for all staff employed by the university:
 - Develop a detailed protocol to investigate online harassment accusations and to ensure the safety of the individual being harassed. It should include policies for escalation, outline the chain of command for such scenarios and identify the point at which authorities must be involved. Use of university security should be considered to protect staff members while on site.
- Consider endorsing the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) statement against harassment (https://www.aaup.org/article/taking-stand-against-harassment#.YZQW_NbMLOS) and developing your own institutional statement.
- If online harassment becomes a notable problem for your institution, commit to seeking the assistance of an outside entity or expert to help guide efforts to protect your staff more effectively.
- Implement cyberbullying training for all university employees, contractors/vendors and students using resources such as those provided by the DLR Group on their website, *Public Scholarship & Online Abuse* (<https://harassment.thedlrgroup.com/>).
- If your university plans to utilise, or is already utilising, any alternative metrics based on online platforms, such as ResearchGate or similar publication sites, to inform performance or tenure reviews for academic staff, develop a clear handbook that outlines exactly how those metrics are to be used and defines specific metric thresholds for aspects such as promotions.
- As part of new hire onboarding and training, provide a comprehensive guide or policy handbook that details the university's standards and expectations for the social media use of academic staff. This should include:
 - whether and how they can use the institution name in their individual posts;
 - how much time they are expected to spend on DSM as part of their paid position and how that time will be allocated in their salaried hours;
 - expectations about the professional use of social media as a representative of the university;

- any type of online activities or posts that are prohibited as employees of the institution (e.g. political posts and hate speech);
- an overview of the university's online harassment policy and the protocols in place to protect academic staff from cyberbullying, including contact information and steps for reporting harassment.
- Incorporate DSM as an ongoing topic of focus in the professional development and training opportunities offered by the university to academic staff. Provide the needed forums and resources for faculty to stay informed and up to date with best practices regarding DSM and social media use.

If academic engagement with DSM is to be measured and evaluated, the findings of this thesis suggest the need to clarify the real extrinsic and intrinsic value and impact of employing digital media for academics to promote their work and universities to enhance their brand. The aforementioned two guides are intended to aid in translating knowledge gathered in this thesis into practice to support the DSM efforts of Australian-based academics and universities. The more guidance and support that institutions can offer their academic staff, the more successful can be the individuals and the universities at achieving their collective objectives.

5.4 Limitations

Despite the theoretical and practical implications of the research reported in this thesis, it has several methodological limitations in its design and execution that relate to the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the findings with respect to the criteria specified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for evaluating qualitative research. One general limit to the findings from qualitative research is the potential for researcher subjectivity to influence data collection (interviews), analysis (thematic coding) and interpretations, which undermines the credibility of the findings. Appropriate methodological steps were taken in this study to enhance credibility by employing a standard set of questions for participant interviews, prolonged engagement with participants, employing fieldnotes, and checking the data coding and analysis with other expert interpretations via peer debriefing (Nowell et al. 2017).

The findings were limited by the inability to conduct face-to-face interviews because of the social distancing restrictions imposed following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently,

interviews were conducted via videoconferencing software, which limited the capacity for building rapport and observing the nonverbal behaviour of participants, factors that are desirable methods in research based on personal experience (Creswell 2007). These limitations were addressed by conducting a social media audit to measure the participants' DSM usage and validate the findings via data triangulation to enhance their dependability (Nowell et al. 2017).

The findings were also limited in terms of their transferability to other contexts, in that the findings relate to Australian-based academics and university contexts and are not necessarily generalisable to other contexts, such as other professional sectors or to different cultures and countries. Nonetheless, a reasonable purposeful sample size was recruited for an interview-based qualitative study such that data saturation was achieved (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006). Participants represented different universities and work contexts, but there was insufficient range in academic seniority levels, with the majority of participants identifying as early- to mid-career academics and two senior academics who agreed to participate due to recruitment challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, no conclusions were drawn in relation to seniority of participants. Moreover, the thick description of the research methods enhance the transferability of the findings by enabling the research to be replicated in other contexts (Nowell et al. 2017). The limitations in the transferability of the current findings, however, may be further addressed by future research along with other future investigations to understand academics' use of, and experiences with, DSM suggested by the current set of findings.

5.5 Future Research

The findings raise several directions for future research, as summarized in Table 5.1. At one level, an investigation of the applicability of the findings in other contexts would be worthwhile to develop knowledge on the use of DSM among academics and other professionals. Notably, the importance of the issue of authenticity is likely to differ in varying cultural and professional contexts. In this thesis, academics reported that the need to negotiate authenticity in DSM was a particular concern in Australia, given the strong cultural emphasis on the 'tall poppy syndrome'. Although there may be similar concerns in collectivistic cultures, such as that of Japan or China, where standing out from the group is minimised, strong individualistic cultures, such as that of the US, may be more inclined to facilitate self-marketing in a different, more direct manner. Future

research could conduct a cultural comparison study of how people balance self-promotion and an authentic self in DSM to develop their careers as a function of cultural beliefs and values.

Other professional contexts may also reveal crucial differences in how self-marketing via DSM may be employed to enhance career development. An investigation of professions that require a high public profile, such as in the arts and entertainment industries or politics, is likely to reveal differences in how people negotiate issues such as authenticity, the public versus personal self, developing connections, finding the right impact, and balancing the downsides of DSM, including trolling. A comparative study of those whose perceptions vary about the importance and centrality of DSM to their careers is likely to reveal important knowledge about how people manage to differentially self-promote and negotiate impression and brand management strategies to benefit their careers. In a similar vein, future research could compare DSM activity between academics and industry professionals at different levels of seniority to reveal differences in self-presentation and how this may correspond to success in generating followers, interest in their work, and what is effective or ineffective practice. A comparison of DSM as a function of age or seniority among academics is especially warranted given the limited range of seniority levels in the current research.

The findings show that academics were concerned about external organisational pressure on academics to engage with DSM from their institutions, in particular. However, academics generally thought their employers (universities) were providing inconsistent support and guidance on academic engagement with DSM. This led to a perception of uncertainty in the work environment where in a sense ‘the goal posts’ were regularly shifting via university approaches to DSM that were considered ad-hoc support. Thus, a worthwhile direction for future research on the perceptions of academics about DSM would be to audit and critically analyse the policies and support provided by universities and employers to address DSM issues, such as privacy, branding, career management and trolling. Such research could compare university policies on DSM use by academic staff with their actual use of DSM to determine any shortfalls in the support that universities provide to their staff.

A further direction for future research would be to investigate the profiles of Australian-based academics on SNSs and rate them on the DSM dimensions derived from the findings of this

research. For example, research might quantify the extent to which authenticity or public engagement in DSM affects the academics' research impact and popularity. To extend the findings of this thesis, it may be useful to assess these factors empirically either by using a survey or by collating a larger set of self-presentational descriptors of academics via platforms such as LinkedIn. A related research could also analyse the content of academics' SNS posts to identify themes and patterns following a content analysis approach.

Additionally, one strong point of tension that arose throughout the research is the potential conflict between the interests and actions of individual academics and their academic freedom versus in the interests of the universities in controlling or sanctioning their academic employees to protect the university brand reputation. This tension arose again and again, from P15 describing academics as 'handmaidens of the institutions', to P12's concern that universities will 'force us all to, like, do curated tweets from a university-branded Twitter account' and P5's discussion of 'decoupling' the individual academic from the university. Based on this fraught relationship between the desire to protect academic freedom and the desire to preserve the university reputation, further research is needed to explore how academics and university leaders are experiencing and dealing with the tension. A qualitative research using semi-structured interviews would help glean deeper insights into the nuances of this phenomenon.

These and additional research directions are detailed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Proposed Future Research Directions

Research Topic	Research Population	Research Method
Cultural comparison study: how people balance self-promotion and an authentic self in DSM to develop their careers as a function of cultural beliefs and values. The study could also	Academics in the US, Japan/China, Australia, and/or the United Kingdom	Qualitative, grounded theory or similar

specifically address the Tall Poppy syndrome to see if it resonates with specific participants more than others.		
DSM usage to enhance career development in other professions	Professionals in the Arts & Entertainment industry; Politicians	Qualitative, grounded theory or similar
DSM usage as a function of seniority level in one's profession	Academics; professionals in other industries	Quantitative
Audit and analysis of university social media policies	Australian universities, or include US and UK as well	Mixed method: Systematic review and surveys of current faculty to gauge workload
Content analysis of academics' social media profiles and posts exploring content themes and patterns	Australian-based academics	Meta-analysis or survey
Explore academics' DSM usage through the lens of identity theory to gauge the construction of one's professional identity via SNS	Australia and/or US/UK	Qualitative grounded theory or similar

Evaluating self-promotional behaviour in DSM	Australia or other market	Quantitative; 2 participant groups that rank each other's SNS behaviour (anonymously)
Explore tension between academic freedom and institutional regulation of DSM	International	Qualitative, directly address academics' and university leaders' perceptions of and thoughts regarding this issue
Explore the innovation adoption lifecycle in a research question and quantify academics' level of social media adoption by placing participants in different places along the lifecycle.	International	Quantitative, research survey
Focussed study on the problem of trolling and potential reasons why it occurs, or causes of trolling, including who are the main perpetrators against academics (other members of the public or other academics).	International	Mixed-method research

Explore the emergence of Web 3.0 and its potential impact on academics' DSM activities.	Australia and/or US/UK	Quantitative or qualitative
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5.6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to develop knowledge on the use of DSM among academics by investigating their perceptions and experiences regarding the benefits and the challenges of using DSM for professional purposes. To this end, interviews were conducted virtually with 21 Australian-based academics to determine their perceptions of DSM, and five main themes addressing the research questions for this thesis were derived from a systematic coding of their interviews: Authenticity, Connections, Impact, Public Engagement and Shifting Sands. These themes and findings provide new knowledge that expands the understanding of academics' perceptions of digitally based self-marketing for career enhancement and the benefits and challenges of this endeavour in the current higher education system.

The findings addressed RQ1 and RQ3 by indicating that Australian-based academics apply an attitude of authenticity to creating and curating their digital identities. This finding is consistent with earlier findings about the importance of authenticity to academics in a DSM environment (e.g. Jordan & Weller 2018; Manai & Holmlund 2015) and a strong belief among that population that self-promotion is a central challenge with DSM since it undermines the authenticity and the integrity of academic activities (Lupton 2014; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018). The second theme of Connections addressed RQ2a to show that that Australian-based academics perceived that DSM provides a functional advantage whereby online engagement can foster meaningful collaborations, academic relationships and a sense of collegiality and community, lending further support to extant research (e.g. Lupton 2014; Marshall, Barbour and Moore 2018; Meishar-Tal & Pieterse 2017).

The themes derived from this study, furthermore, addressed RQ2b regarding Australian-based academics' hesitations with adopting DSM. The theme of Community Engagement indicated that participants are cautious in engaging in DSM activities because of the risk of negative public reactions to their work. In addition, the theme of Impact indicated participants' hesitation to engage with DSM since they (and their universities) appear to lack clarity regarding how to measure success (Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018; Sutton, Miles & Konkiel 2018), there are shifting expectations, and the time commitment that DSM requires is not accounted for in university workload allocation and takes away from other responsibilities, as demonstrated in existing research (e.g. Muscanell & Utz 2017; Steenkamp & Roberts 2020). Last, this thesis addressed RQ4 regarding the perceived impact of DSM on their career as academics expressed strong opinions regarding the relatively minimal benefits of DSM for their career enhancement.

The findings of this study have provided several theoretical and practical implications for advancing knowledge regarding Australian-based academics' perceptions of DSM and for guiding Australian-based academics and universities towards an effective, strategic and feasible deployment of DSM, which culminated in a *digital self-marketing framework* and two DSM guides, one for academics and the other for universities, to assist with transferring knowledge from this thesis into practice. The grounded theory methodology adopted in this study facilitated an elaboration of the parent theories of impression management, and most critically, self-marketing, towards developing the DSM concept in dialogue with existing literature that addressed academics' digital self-presentation for professional purposes (e.g. Belk 2013; Kozinets 2016; Lupton 2014; Lupton, Mewburn & Thomson 2018). From the findings of this thesis, it was concluded that DSM entails a balance between the issues of authenticity and privacy, branding of the self, safety and harassment, and the external factors of collaboration, public engagement, and the institutional context.

Using this framework, this researcher has provided practical recommendations for how engagement with DSM can be effectively managed by Australian-based academics and institutions in the future. Importantly, these recommendations must be addressed by two populations: the individual academics and the institutions themselves. First, it is important for Australian-based academics to develop an authentic brand and a professional self in DSM contexts while establishing concrete strategies for managing safety concerns in a digital environment. Second, it

is critical for Australian academic institutions and universities to clarify how DSM is used to measure academic staff performance and to develop strategies to protect the safety of academic employees engaged in a DSM environment. Taken together, the findings of this thesis provide important empirical and theoretical contributions that further knowledge about digitally based self-marketing efforts by academics in Australia in an age when academics are seeking new ways to engage potential collaborators and the public with their research and to enhance their careers amid a downturn in the academic job market.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Related Publications

Peer-reviewed Conference Papers

McKenna, N, Dobele AR & Farrell, L 2021, 'Self-marketing strategies of Australian based Academics', *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC)*, Melbourne, Australia.

McKenna, N, Dobele AR, Gurrieri L & Farrell, L 2018, 'Self-marketing strategies of female academics', *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC)*, Adelaide, Australia.

McKenna, N 2017, 'Understanding the self-marketing strategies of female academics', *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC)*, Melbourne, Australia.

Appendix B: Comparison of Academic Titles in Australia with the US and UK Titles

Table A: Comparison of Academic Titles/Levels in Australia with the US and UK Titles

Titles in Australia	Academic Level	Equivalent titles in the US	Equivalent titles in the UK
Professor, or Professorial or Senior Principal Research Fellow	E	Distinguished/Endowed Professor	Professor
Associate Professor, or Principal Research Fellow	D	Professor	Reader/Associate Professor
Senior Lecturer, or Senior Research Fellow	C	Associate Professor*	Senior/Principal Lecturer
Lecturer, Research Fellow, or Post-doc/ entry point for academic career	B	Assistant Professor*	Post-doc/entry point for academic career
Associate Lecturer, Associate Fellow, Tutor, or Post-doc/ entry point for academic career	A	Post-doc/entry point for academic career	Post-doc/entry point for academic career

Note. *Australian equivalent may not have any tenure system attached, although comparable situations (i.e. continuing positions, or permanent contracts) may exist. Table developed from information provided in the following sources: Åkerlind 2005, 'Postdoctoral researchers: roles, functions and career prospects', *Higher Education Research & Development*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 21–40; Wikipedia webpage, viewed 29 April 2022 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_ranks_\(Australia_and_New_Zealand\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_ranks_(Australia_and_New_Zealand)); University of Western Australia 2015, *Academic titles at UWA*, viewed 29 April 2022, <<https://www.news.uwa.edu.au/archive/201502127345/academic/academic-titles-uwa/>>.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Digital curation and identity (RQ 1)

1. Tell me about yourself and your career.
2. How long have you been in your current position and University?
3. Does the University encourage you to be on Twitter? Or LinkedIn? Does your University have media training?
4. Have you deliberately created a professional image for yourself as an academic? What does that look like?
5. Is it important to present yourself a certain way online, such as through a staged photograph?
6. Do you deliberately target a specific audience online?
7. Do you have an online communication style that you use? Why?

Digital self-marketing and career management (RQ 3 & 4)

1. What are your career ambitions? Do you have a plan mapped out?
2. Is marketing yourself part of your job as an academic?
3. What role has digital self-marketing played in your career so far? Has it helped in your career development? Or promotion?
4. How do you promote your professional achievements online?
5. Has a particular platform been useful for raising your research and/or professional profile?
6. Do you have your own website?

Hesitancies and challenges in using DSM (RQ 2)

1. What are the challenges of DSM?
2. Have you ever felt under pressure to create or maintain an online presence?
3. How can you ensure that the DSM is seen as credible and authentic? Are there things you would or would not do online?

4. Have you attempted to market yourself online more (or less) than usual during COVID-19?
5. Is there anything you would have expected me to ask, that I haven't? Do you have anything else you would like to say?

Demographics

1. What is the participant's gender? (Please tick (✓) one box only.)

☐ 1. Male

☐ 2. Female

2. Which category most accurately describes the participant's current age? (Please tick (✓) one box only.)

☐ 1. 18–25 years

☐ 2. 26–35 years

☐ 3. 35–44

☐ 4. 45–54

☐ 5. 55– 64

☐ 6. 65 years and above

3. What is the position and/or ranking in University?

☐ Level

☐ Title/Position

☐ HOD

- ☐ HOS
- ☐ Other (Please state)

4. Which digital and social media platforms are used professionally?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Personal website
- ☐ Research Gate
- ☐ Academia.edu
- ☐ Mendeley
- ☐ Orchid
- ☐ Google Scholar
- ☐ Other

Appendix D: Ethics Approval Letter



Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Research & Innovation)
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Notice of Approval

Date: 26 April 2020
Project number: 22689
Project title: *Digital Self-Marketing of Australian Academics for Career Management*
Risk classification: Low Risk
Chief Investigator: A/Prof Angela Dobeles (RMIT)
Student Investigator: Natalie McKenna (RMIT)
Other Investigators: Prof Lisa Farrell (RMIT)
Project Approved: From: 6 March 2020 To: 6 March 2023

Terms of approval:

Responsibilities of the principal investigator

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by BCHEAN. Approval is only valid while the investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

1. Amendments

Approval must be sought from BCHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment submit a request for amendment form to the BCHEAN secretary. This form is available on the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from BCHEAN.

2. Adverse events

You should notify BCHEAN immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

3. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)

The PICF must be distributed to all research participants, where relevant, and the consent form is to be retained and stored by the investigator. The PICF must contain the RMIT University logo and a complaints clause including the above project number.

4. Annual reports

Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report.

5. Final report

A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. BCHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

6. Monitoring

Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by BCHEAN at any time.

7. Retention and storage of data

The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Regards,

Dr Christopher Cheong
Chairperson
RMIT BCHEAN

Appendix E: *Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Academics*



Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Academics

www.nataliemckenna.com

Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Academics

Use this guide as a starting point to establish appropriate and effective social media practices as a professional academic in the Australian higher education system. This guide follows the Digital Self-Marketing (DSM) framework set out by McKenna (2022).

Step 1 Familiarise Yourself with the Reasons to Use DSM

- To build relationships with other academics
- To pursue research collaboration opportunities or recruit research collaborators
- To disseminate research findings into the public arena
- To showcase expertise or contributions to the field with the goal of positioning oneself favourably for career advancement in your discipline
- To give or receive (appropriate) professional support to others within your network

Step 2 Checklist for Building an Authentic Academic Brand Using DSM

- *My digital presence is strategic:*
 - I have defined clear objectives for my use of digital platforms and social media.
 - My online activity (social posts, blog or LinkedIn articles, comments) is all conducted to further my defined objectives.
 - I always think before posting anything and take care not to be reactive or impulsive in my social media comments or posts.
 - I engage online in ways that maximise impact, especially when sharing my research or professional milestones, being strategic about timing, tagging, and commenting.
 - I am intentional about mentioning my university affiliations and always follow university guidelines/standards for social media use (where they are provided).
 - I am informed about my institution's protocols for reviewing performance related to my online platform, social impact, and any alternative metrics that are evaluated. I continually monitor the protocols and metrics to stay informed about my performance.

- I maintain a social media portfolio like that developed by Cabrera et al. (2017) to track my professional efforts and activities in the digital world.
- *My digital presence is accurate:*
 - The profile information on each platform profile is consistent and does not contradict information published elsewhere online.
 - The contact information that is publicly available is current.
 - My listed professional affiliations are up to date.
 - My current position is correct.
 - My listed publications are up to date (within the last 2 months).
 - My profile photo is current and reflects my present-day appearance (hair colour, glasses, weight, age, etc.).
- *My digital presence is professional:*
 - I use appropriate, respectful language in any text published on my profiles and public online communication.
 - Any photos or images shared on my platforms are professional, inoffensive, and appropriate for the work environment.
 - Any information that I share is relevant to my work as an academic and my professional involvements. I share personal information sparingly, if at all, and in a way that is appropriate for a work environment.
- *My digital presence is authentic:*
 - My online activity is representative of my true professional identity that colleagues and students interact with in person.
 - I do not fabricate information or create an altered identity for my online platforms.
 - I do not avoid self-promotion, but I share my achievements and accomplishments in a way that is designed to spread knowledge and will not be interpreted as bragging just for the sake of bragging (even humble bragging).
 - I believe that anyone who I know in person (offline) will recognise me as the same person in my online profiles and communications.

Step 3 Checklist for Setting Limitations, Boundaries, and Safety Around DSM

- I have created a clear map of the digital platforms on which I plan to be actively involved for professional purposes. For any platforms where there may be an overlap between personal and professional lives/identities — especially

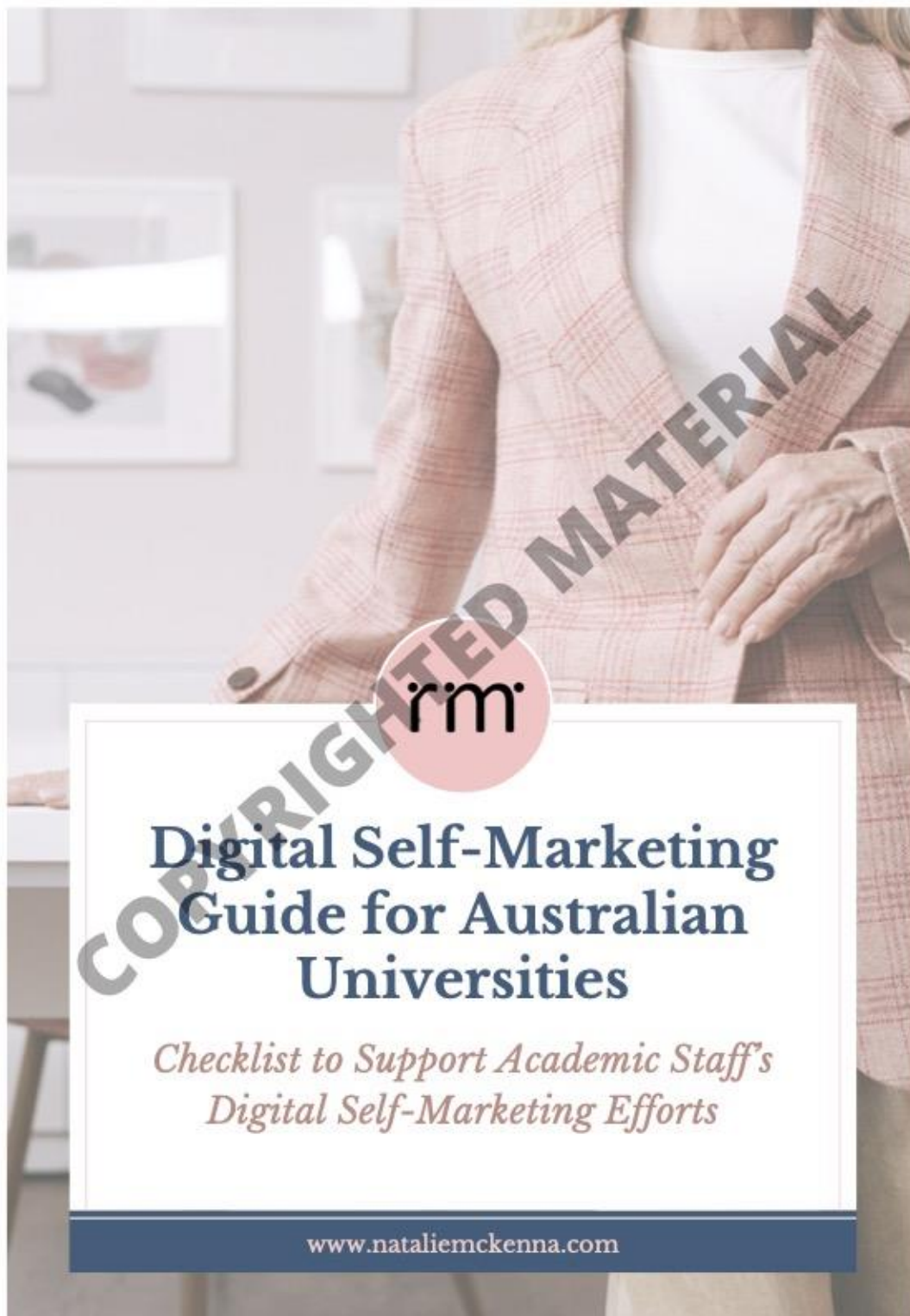
Facebook and Twitter — I create separate profiles for my personal and professional engagement. I do not cross the line between sharing personal things on my professional profiles, or vice versa — unless it is for very specific reasons.

- I have a clear understanding of what cyberbullying and online harassment look like and I have strategies and resources to turn to if I am subject to such harassment, including The Digital Learning and Social Media Research (DLSMR) Group and their website Public Scholarship & Online Abuse (<https://harassment.thedlrgroup.com/>). I am informed about my university/institution's policies around this type of harassment and know where to go for help and support.
- I set time limits for how much time I spend on DSM on a daily and weekly basis and I track the time to ensure that I do not exceed the limits each day and week. I use available resources to plan my DSM activities and workflows as needed, such as Trefzger and Dünfelder's (2016) framework of detailed daily activities and workflows to incorporate social media activities into a standard academic workday, to be efficient with my time and resources.
- If I do exceed time limits during a certain period, I make that decision consciously and intentionally with the understanding of certain extenuating circumstances (i.e., a book or article launch, new promotion, etc.).
- I have had a conversation with my supervisor regarding my employer's expectations around DSM and social media use and we have set clear boundaries, including time investment.

References:

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Appendix F: *Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Universities*



Digital Self-Marketing Guide for Australian Universities

Use this guide as a starting point to establish appropriate and effective social media policies for full-time equivalent and casual academic staff employed by your university, following the Digital Self-Marketing (DSM) framework set out by McKenna (2022).

Checklist

- 1 ■ Develop clear, in-depth risk management policies surrounding online abuse and cyberbullying of all staff employed by the university.

Develop a detailed protocol for investigating online harassment accusations and for ensuring the safety of the individual being harassed. This should include policies for escalation, outline the chain of command for such scenarios, and identify the point at which authorities must be involved. Use of university security should be considered to protect staff members while on site.

- 2 ■ Consider endorsing the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) statement against harassment (https://www.aaup.org/article/taking-stand-against-harassment#.YZQW_NbMLOS) and developing your own institutional statement.

- 3 ■ If online harassment becomes a notable problem for your institution, commit to seeking the assistance of an outside entity or expert to help guide efforts to better protect your staff.

- 4 ■ Implement cyberbullying training for all university employees, contractors/vendors, and students using resources such as those provided by the DLR Group on their website, Public Scholarship & Online Abuse (<https://harassment.thedlrgroup.com/>).

- 5 ■ If your university plans to or is already utilising any alternative metrics based on online platforms such as ResearchGate or similar publication sites to inform performance reviews for academic staff, develop a clear handbook that outlines exactly how those metrics are to be used and defines specific metric thresholds for promotions, etc.

- 6 ■ As part of new hire onboarding and training, provide a comprehensive guide or policy handbook that details the university's standards and expectations for the social media use of academic staff. This should include:

- Whether and how they can use the institution name in their individual posts.
- How much time they are expected to spend on DSM as part of their paid position and how that time will be allocated in their salaried hours.
- Expectations around professional use of social media as a representative of the university.
- Any type of online activities or posts that are prohibited as employees of the institution (e.g., political, hate speech, etc.).
- An overview of the university's online harassment policy and the protocols in place to protect academic staff from cyberbullying, including contact information and steps for reporting harassment.
- Incorporate DSM as an ongoing topic of focus for professional development and training opportunities offered by the university for academic staff. Provide the needed forums and resources for faculty to stay informed and up to date with best practices around DSM and social media use.

References:

McKenna, N., 2022, 'Digital self-marketing strategies of Australian academics,' PhD thesis, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.