JOURNALISTIC BRANDING ON TWITTER
A representative study of Australian journalists' activities and profile descriptions

Folker Hanusch, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, Australia
Axel Bruns, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

While journalism scholarship on Twitter has expanded significantly in recent years, journalists' use of the social networking platform for self-promotion and branding has only recently received attention. Yet, as Twitter is becoming important for journalists to build economic and social capital, journalistic branding is becoming increasingly relevant to study. This article reports the results from a study of 4189 Australian journalists' Twitter accounts to examine their level of activity and approaches to self-presentation in their profile information. Journalists are relatively active Twitter users who tweet on a regular basis, but they still present a predominantly professional persona that is closely tied to their employer. Less than half also provide personal information about themselves. Whereas only small differences could be found along gender lines, more significant differences existed in terms of whether journalists worked in metropolitan or regional areas and what their employers' main platform of distribution was.

KEYWORDS Twitter; social media; journalist; profile; branding; self-description, persona

Introduction

The digital transformation of the creative industries has had undoubted impact on journalism cultures around the globe. News production processes are changing rapidly and journalists increasingly face challenges posed by new media technologies, user-generated content, social media and other forces. While originally reluctant to accept any kind of audience participation, journalists are now beginning to embrace greater contact with audiences (Anderson 2011; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012).

One space where such contact takes place is the social network site Twitter, which has had an extraordinary impact on journalistic work since its emergence in 2006, becoming an important resource for gathering, reporting and recommending news (Hermida 2012). While reliable information on the number of journalists present on Twitter is relatively scarce, usage appears relatively high. A study in Germany, Finland, Sweden and the UK conducted in 2011, for example, showed that around 96 per cent of journalists used social media regularly, although considerable national variation existed in relation to Twitter use (Gulyas 2013). In the US, just over half (53.8 per cent) of journalists use microblogs regularly (Willnat & Weaver 2014), while data from Sweden suggest that 56 per cent of journalists there have a Twitter presence (Hedman 2015). A 2014 study in the UK found that 75.1 per cent of journalists now use Twitter regularly (Cision 2015).

Three broad areas of Twitter as it relates to journalists can be identified: a) accountability (the ability for journalists to be more transparent about their work); b) newsgathering (finding stories and building relationships with sources); and c) brand loyalty (the ability for journalists to attract new readers and sustain relationships) (Canter 2013). While the first two areas have received sustained attention for some considerable time, aspects of brand loyalty have received less scrutiny in the scholarship on Twitter and journalism, despite the fact this is an area of increasing concern for journalists (Molyneux & Holton 2015).

One key opportunity for journalists to engage in branding is through their published profile information on Twitter, which allows them to briefly describe themselves and their work, to provide professional and personal information, and to link to their institutional or personal websites. However, journalists' self-representations in this way have rarely been examined to any great depth, some notable exceptions notwithstanding (for example, Wiik & Hedman 2015). To add to our knowledge in this area and to contribute to the broader literature on journalistic branding on Twitter, this paper reports the results from an in-depth analysis of 4189 Australian journalists' Twitter profiles to examine the ways in which journalists may engage in branding. By studying journalists' self-descriptions, we aim to better understand journalists' behaviors on Twitter, providing a baseline for future research.

Background

Audience feedback mechanisms brought on by participatory technologies have had a profound impact on journalistic work. While new media technologies are typically normalized into existing routines and practices (Lasorsa et al. 2012; Singer 2005), we can also see evidence of journalistic practices being reshaped in a symbiotic relationship (Lasorsa et al. 2012; Hermida 2013). For example, it appears that, increasingly, journalists are beginning to reject traditional ideas of objectivity and neutrality, instead placing emphasis on the term "fairness". Journalists also develop new norms, emphasizing transparency, individualism and risk taking (Agarwal & Barthel 2015).

A key aspect in relation to journalists' interaction with audiences has been the impact of the social network site Twitter. Twitter has many uses beyond journalism, but its role in the coverage and discussion of the news has been especially highlighted. Hermida (2010) and Burns (2010) have both described it as an "ambient news" network: always on in the background, but activated *ad hoc* as news breaks. It enables those caught up in a news event to publicly share information directly from the scene; allows others to track and comment on developments as they happen; and offers an opportunity for a potentially global public to collaboratively "work the story" by sharing additional information and evaluating what is known (Bruns & Highfield 2012; Bruns 2015). A key feature of social media such as Twitter has thus been the extent of interaction, participation and connectivity they have offered, both for journalists in their work and for audiences in their ability to "talk back" to journalists. At the same time, Twitter also poses new challenges, such as the difficulty of verifying news, as well as the need to manage one's personal identity in an industry that traditionally has viewed objectivity as its holy grail.

One important criterion in achieving high status or visibility on Twitter appears to depend to a significant degree on the extent to which journalists successfully "brand" their own presence through their activities on the social media platform (Bruns 2012). This has important implications for the traditional separation of personal opinion and reporting in journalism. Twitter practices "have seen journalists begin to cross the historic line between the professional and the personal, the objective and the subjective" (Canter 2015, 889). Scholars argue that news organizations and journalists are still afraid to fully tap into the social aspects of such technologies (Hermida 2012; Hille & Bakker 2013), demonstrating the continuing conundrum social media present. One popular way for journalists to distinguish their personal from their professional identity on platforms such as Twitter is the use of disclaimers, such as "views are my own" or "retweets do not equal endorsement", leading even to the establishment of social media disclaimer websites, which provide a link to a detailed disclaimer that journalists can place on their profile (Sonderman 2012).

Evidence is emerging, however, that frequent users of Twitter are more likely to adapt to the new environment and are becoming better at using the "social" aspect of social media.

A study of journalists' use of humor on Twitter has shown that more frequent users are better at adapting to aspects of informality, conversation and humor on the platform, with journalists more freely expressing opinions, providing accountability and transparency about their work practices, and sharing user-generated content (Lasorsa et al. 2012). Among Chinese journalists, frequent users of the Chinese Twitter equivalent Weibo were more politically involved, showed greater concern for social issues and delivered unfiltered information (Fu & Lee 2014).

Branding on Twitter

While most of the focus has been on journalists' uses of Twitter for reporting and distribution, a small number of studies have in recent years begun to explore aspects of self-branding more deeply. Many of these studies are grounded in Goffman's (1959) work on self-presentation and identity, which he likened to actors managing on- and off-stage personae. On-stage personae were about performing certain identities, and this aspect in particular has found attention from media scholars interested in individuals' self-presentation online (for example, Papacharissi 2002; Marwick & boyd 2010). Such work has expanded into the notion of self-branding, which "combines the curation of an online branded persona with the strategic management of social relationships" (Gandini 2015, 2). These processes of self-branding, employed by ordinary people as much as by elites, allow users to achieve high levels of visibility and influence ("micro-celebrities"), which are then also transferred into the offline world (Page 2012).

Questions of self-presentation and self-branding have entered journalism scholarship comparatively more recently, which may be related to the fact that news organizations themselves have, perhaps because of a more precarious economic environment, only recently become more aware of expanding their own brands. The rise of Twitter has allowed not only news organizations to promote their brand and link to their news (Greer & Ferguson 2011), it has also increasingly allowed individual journalists to become an important presence on the social network. Yet, despite evidence that journalists are aware of the need to build brands and are increasingly doing so (Bruns 2012; Dickinson 2011), the phenomenon remains understudied (Molyneux & Holton 2015).

The potential benefits for journalists of building personal brands are manifold. First, at a time of economic crisis in journalism in many countries, and the increasing precarization of news work, journalists can build economic capital to position themselves in the marketplace by creating a community of followers. Doing so may allow them to more easily gain a raise or find a new job if necessary. Second, journalists can build social capital by becoming influential among their followers, which may translate to increased influence in the offline world as well (Molyneux & Holton 2015).

However, being active on Twitter and mixing personal with professional personae also includes considerable challenges, as journalists may damage their own or their employers' brand. While more and more news organizations are producing social media guidelines, journalists are also skeptical of and resistant to such guidelines, believing that they curtail their freedom (Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck 2014). A recent study in the US found that journalists are increasingly being pressured by their employers to adopt a much more professionally-focused persona on Twitter. Indeed, journalists on Twitter appear to be balancing between four dilemmas: merely providing information or actually interacting with other users; providing only factual information or offering opinions; sharing information about themselves personally or maintaining a professional persona; and implicitly or explicitly promoting themselves (Brems et al. 2015). Molyneux & Holton's (2015) interviews with health journalists found the strongest tension existed in the distinction between

individuals and organizations. Personal branding was becoming an integral part of these journalists' work, and they tended to place much more emphasis on their own autonomy and their audiences, rather than their organizations.

Apart from interviewing journalists or analyzing their tweets, another approach that may also be fruitful in exploring journalistic branding is to examine journalists' profile information. Twitter allows its users to provide, apart from a photograph or avatar image, a short 160-character "bio" to characterize their persona, as well as the opportunity to directly link to another website and to provide their location. This profile information presents an important opportunity for journalists to present information about themselves and their work, and therefore brand themselves. For example, a user may identify their job title and their employer and present themselves as primarily an employee of a particular news organization. As Holton and Molyneux (2015) have recently found, there is increasing pressure on journalists from news organizations in the US to focus on these professional attributes. Journalists may also use their profile to solicit information from audiences by asking for story ideas or tips and providing an email address or other contact details.

But as Twitter is a hybrid, multi-purpose space where the personal and professional interests of users intersect, not all profile content may be strictly professional. Anecdotal evidence shows that journalists also use their profile description to provide disclaimers in an attempt to navigate the tension between professional and personal personae, by noting that views presented on Twitter are their own or that retweets do not equal endorsement of the original message. In addition, users may provide some very personal information about themselves, such as which sports team they support, what their family status is, or which music they like. Finally, a journalist's number of followers and the number of Twitter lists on which their account is included is an indicator of the journalist's popularity on Twitter, and may be related to their branding activities on the platform. Similarly, the numbers of other users a journalist follows may indicate the extent to which they seek to engage with others and use Twitter as a newsgathering tool.

While profile descriptions undoubtedly offer a rich insight into journalistic branding, few studies have examined them so far. A 2013 study of a small sample of Flemish sports reporters' profiles found that Twitter was rarely used as a profiling tool, with only just over half including a biographical note, one-fifth providing hyperlinks, and none including their email addresses (Deprez et al. 2013). A significantly more comprehensive study of 2543 Swedish journalists' Twitter profiles in 2015 found substantial differences in their Twitter activity and display of personal and professional attributes along gender, geographic location and media type divisions (Wiik & Hedman 2015). In particular, areas of strong competition seemed to affect Twitter activity and branding.

This study takes these works as its starting point in order to examine a representative sample of journalists on Twitter, using Australia as a case study. Most of the literature on Twitter has tended to be US-centric, and there is a need, in line with other recent studies, to expand our understanding by taking into account different media systems. Australia is a useful example in this respect, as its media system exhibits similarities to both the US and European contexts, presenting an interesting mix (Jones & Pusey 2010). Twitter is also an immensely popular tool for journalists and audiences in the country, as past studies have demonstrated (Bruns, 2012, 2014). The following research questions were thus developed:

RQ1: What information do Australian journalists provide on their Twitter profiles?
RQ2: What are the similarities and differences among Australian journalists' branding practices in relation to their demographics?

Methodology

To answer the research questions, we first sought to identify Australian journalists' Twitter profiles, an undertaking made more difficult because there is no central directory of journalists in Australia (North 2012; Weaver et al. 2007). In the digital age, however, identifying journalists has become slightly easier, as organizations are more pro-active in providing information on their websites, while data scraping techniques enable researchers to more easily gather the names of journalists. Yet, reliable information about the number of Australian journalists who have an account on Twitter is hard to find. Anecdotal evidence suggests that today the vast majority of Australian journalists are on the platform, with all major media organizations strongly encouraging, if not requiring, their journalists to have an active Twitter account. In any event, Twitter uptake by journalists far outweighs adoption in the general population. A comprehensive survey of all Australian Twitter accounts in 2013 found 2.8 million accounts, a sign-up rate of 12 per cent of the general population (Bruns 2014).

For the purpose of this study, a journalist was someone who had editorial responsibility over news content, following Weaver and Wilhoit's (1986) established definition. Because there was little opportunity to verify the extent to which journalists earned their income predominantly with journalism, the study took a relatively conservative sampling approach, by including mostly journalists working for established news organizations. Only around 30 relatively well-known independent bloggers, freelance and entrepreneurial journalists were included, and the results presented here are therefore representative only for journalists employed by news organizations. Following exhaustive search strategies, we identified as many journalists working for mainstream news organizations as possible, including newspapers, news magazines, television stations, radio stations, online news sites and news agencies. Information about these organizations was extracted from an earlier study (Hanusch 2013). Journalists were drawn from all levels of the organizational hierarchy, ranging from editors-in-chief, managing editors, and news editors to reporters and producers.

The sampling strategy included three main steps: 1. searches on Twitter itself; 2. searches on news organizations' websites; 3. external information on journalists. Sampling was conducted between May and August 2015. First, we perused the Twitter search engine itself by searching for news organizations' names and Twitter handles. However, not all journalists included their news organization's name or Twitter handle. Individual searches also showed that Twitter's search function did not always return all actual matches with a news organization. Therefore, additional search strategies were employed. These included accessing news organizations' Twitter lists for information on staff where possible, as these often turned out to be quite comprehensive. Additional snowball sampling was carried out by accessing individuals' and organizations' lists of followers and followees to identify journalists.

Second, we searched news organizations' websites for published lists of journalists. Many organizations now publish their journalists' Twitter handles along with their names. This information was used to supplement the information already gathered. Where no organizational lists were available, we searched published news stories for journalists' names, and subsequently searched for them on Twitter. Third, we accessed external information, such as Margaret Gee's Media Guide and AAP MediaNet, which are databases mostly intended for public relations practitioners who want to target journalists with press releases. This process further identified significant numbers of journalists not already captured in the earlier steps. All identified accounts were individually verified to ensure no spam or satirical accounts were collected.

This exhaustive process resulted in a total of 4189 journalists. Considering that the overall population of journalists in the country is estimated to be only around 8-10,000 (Hanusch 2013), and that other studies found a Twitter sign-up rate of probably around 70-80 per cent in comparable countries (Cision 2013; Gulyas 2015; Hedman 2015), this can be considered a reasonably representative list of Australian journalists on Twitter. Certainly, in terms of sheer numbers, it represents one of the most comprehensive studies of journalists' Twitter profiles to date.

Once we had identified the 4189 Twitter accounts, we extracted all available profile information into a spreadsheet, using the public Twitter Application Programming Interface (API). Using the command-line tool *t* (Michaels-Ober 2014), we systematically queried all 4189 accounts for the standard user information provided by the users/lookup API request. The data thus obtained included the following information for each user: Twitter ID, date of joining Twitter, date when user last tweeted, number of tweets posted, number of posts favorited, number of user-curated lists in which the account is included, number of accounts the user follows, number of followers, screen name (Twitter handle), 'real' name provided by the user, whether the account is verified by Twitter, whether the account is protected (making its tweets visible only to approved followers), profile description provided by the journalist, content of last tweet, location of user as provided to Twitter, and any information provided in the URL link option. All data were captured on 10 September, 2015, and all information is only current as of that particular date. Thus, the analysis provided here can only infer actual behavior up to this date.

Following capture, the Twitter profiles were manually coded for additional variables, which were deemed important signifiers of branding. First, we coded for the presence or absence of various aspects of Twitter branding, using dichotomous variables for whether: a profile description existed; the profile identified the user as a journalist; the profile identified the journalist's employer; the journalist provided a URL or an email address; they asked for story ideas, such as expressly asking "got a story?"; they provided disclaimers (such as "views presented are my own" or "retweets don't equal endorsements"); or they provided personal information that was not job-related, such as on which sports team they followed, or on their family status.

Second, to analyze demographics and background characteristics, we followed Wiik and Hedman (2015) and coded for gender (male/female); geographic location and reach (metropolitan/regional); and the main platform of the journalists' news organizations. For gender-neutral names and where there was no information about journalists' news organization, we searched other sources of information, such as journalists' LinkedIn profiles or organizational pages. The platform analysis is complicated by the increasingly converged, multi-platform nature of journalistic work (Dailey et al. 2005). At Australia's public broadcaster ABC, for example, journalists are increasingly producing content for radio, television and digital platforms at the same time, while at newspapers, many journalists produce for both print and digital. For the purpose of the analysis, we used a news organization's main platform, distinguishing between digital-only outlets, newspapers, commercial broadcasters (combining radio and television), and public service broadcasters.

Sample Parameters
The overall sample of 4189 journalists compares reasonably well along major parameters of Australian journalists. Just over half (51.1 per cent) of Twitter IDs were operated by female journalists, which compares to around 55.5 per cent of all journalists being female (Hanusch 2013). It appears that public service broadcast journalists are more likely to take advantage of Twitter, with 21.5 per cent of our sample working for either the (ABC) or Special Broadcasting Services (SBS), as opposed to 11.2 per cent of journalists overall (see Hanusch,

2013). They are also more likely to be operated by journalists working in a metropolitan organization (70.5 per cent in our sample, compared with 62.5 per cent overall).

A broad analysis of journalists' basic Twitter activity shows that most have held an account on the social network for some time, with a mean of 1677 days, or around 4.5 years. Journalists' activities on Twitter vary significantly. Almost three-quarters (73.1 per cent) of journalists tweeted during the past week, while a further 7.1 per cent did so during the past two weeks. One-tenth (11.1 per cent) did not tweet over the past two months. More than half (56.3 per cent) tweeted only once or less frequently per day, while only 3.7 per cent of journalists were classed as high-end users, who tweeted at least 10 times per day.

Results and Discussion

The way journalists describe themselves in their profile information on Twitter is an important part of their personal and professional branding. The analysis shows that journalists overwhelmingly portray a professional persona, but there are also some important distinctions to be made (Table 1).

[Table 1 near here]

Overall, just over four in ten journalists have a verified account – a substantially larger percentage than the 1.8 per cent of all 2.8 million Australian Twitter accounts which were found to be verified by September 2013 (Bruns et al. 2014). Verification processes at Twitter are somewhat opaque, but as journalism is one of the key areas the platform focuses on for verification, this relatively high number is not surprising (Twitter, 2016). Journalists make heavy use of the opportunity to list information about themselves, with only 3.1 per cent not providing any information on their profile, compared with around 20 per cent in the general population (Semertzidis et al. 2013). Almost all (94.6 per cent) identify as journalists, and 94.7 per cent of those do so right at the start of their profile. Journalists are only slightly more circumspect when it comes to identifying their employer, with 90.7 per cent doing so. While other studies have found considerable tensions between the individual and the organization in respect of branding (Brems et al. 2015; Molyneux & Holton 2015), the vast majority of journalists examined here present a persona of being an employee of their organization. Just over half (55.6 per cent) provide a hyperlink to their employer, and one sixth (17.1 per cent) provide an email address, while 1.2 per cent even provide a phone number. Compared with Swedish journalists, of whom only 6 per cent provided an email address or phone number (Wiik & Hedman 2015), the accounts in our sample appear considerably more willing to provide contact information. Further research is required, however, to determine whether journalists provide this information of their own accord, or whether they are pressured to do so. In the US, at least, it appears there is increasing pressure by organizations for journalists to link to their employer (Holton & Molyneux, 2015).

Responding to the debate around the separation of professional from personal activities, almost one in three journalists (30.8 per cent) provide in their profile the common disclaimer "views my own", or a statement to that extent. Another statement – "retweets do not equal endorsement" – was listed by 4.8 per cent of journalists. Journalists are also heavily mixing professional and personal attributes in their online persona, with 40.5 per cent providing personal information about themselves. This contrasts with a study of Swedish journalists, which found that nearly 80 per cent disclosed some personal attributes (Wiik & Hedman 2015). As people create their personal identify through both their work and their personal lives, our findings suggest that journalists are to a great degree identifying online through their work, with a significant number mixing personal and professional characteristics in this effort.

The average length of profile descriptions was 94.5 characters (including spaces), although SD=42.7 indicates significant variation in the results. The longest descriptions were up to the maximum of 160 characters, while the shortest was the six-character word "journo". There were no significant differences in the length of male (*M*=94.98) and female journalists' (*M*=94.04) profile descriptions. Geographic location seemed to make a small difference, with regional journalists' (*M*=96.89) descriptions slightly longer than those of their metropolitan counterparts (*M*=93.54), *t*(4011)=2.218, *p*<.05, two-tailed, with *d*=.078 suggesting a very small effect. An Analysis of Variance showed journalists working at digital-only outlets had the longest descriptions (M=99.06), followed closely by newspaper journalists (M=98.17) and public service broadcast journalists (M=94.87). Commercial broadcast journalists tended to have significantly shorter profile descriptions (79.45), *F*(3, 3883)=38.207, *p*<.001, η^2=.029 – a small effect. A basic word frequency analysis revealed the 10 most frequent words used were: journalist, news, views, reporter, editor, ABC, Australian, producer, sports, and writer. The most popular words most likely related to personal attributes were: love or lover, fan, music, and tragic. Terms like mum or mother, dad or father or other family-related terms also appeared relatively frequently. This indicates that most of the personal information journalists revealed related to things they loved or where fans of, as well as their family status.

Journalists tend to have a greater number of followers than they follow themselves, with the most popular journalist having 352,005 followers, while the one who followed the largest number listed 40,851 other users. Unsurprisingly, how long a journalist has been on Twitter was positively correlated with both followers (τ=.275, *p*<.001) and numbers following (τ=.242, *p*<.001), while number of followers was also positively correlated with number following (τ=.472, *p*<.001). Just over half (56.7 per cent) had more followers than users they themselves followed. Similarly, the more journalists tweeted per day, the more followers they had, indicating that increased Twitter activity may attract more followers (τ=.521, *p*<.001). On average, journalists had 5.82 times the number of followers than they were following (Median: 1.15). This trend is also similar to Swedish journalists, who on average were followed by more than 2.5 times the number of users that they followed themselves (Wiik & Hedman 2015). In addition to the number of followers, appearing on a Twitter list may further indicate an individual journalist's value, and being on a list is strongly correlated to the number of followers one has (τ=.786, *p*<.001). The median of 25 (*M*=61.2) shows that journalists are relatively prominent on Twitter lists, with the highest-ranking journalist being listed 2931 times. Just over one-tenth (13.4 per cent) appeared on at least 100 lists. Journalists thus appear by and large to be popular brands, with most having more followers than users they themselves follow, which may play a role in their branding activities.

Differences in branding

Further analysis of the association between the various profile characteristics and journalists' backgrounds also revealed a number of differences (Table 2).

[Table 2 near here]

In terms of gender, significant differences existed in only four aspects of profile information. Men were significantly more likely to provide a URL, but women were more likely to provide an email address for contact. Women were also more likely to ask for story ideas in their profiles, such as asking: "Got a story? Email me at [email]" or "News tips: [email]". Further, women's profiles were more likely to contain a disclaimer to say their views

expressed on Twitter were their own. This suggests that women may see it as more important than men to more clearly articulate a distinction between their use of Twitter and their work as journalists. It is important to note, however, that all gender-based effect sizes, as measured by Cramer's *V*, were extremely small.

We were able to find larger effect sizes when it came to the distinction between regional and metropolitan journalists. The results provide strong support for the argument that there are considerable differences between these two groups' respective approaches to self-branding. Most importantly, metropolitan journalists are significantly more likely to hold a verified account, with more than half in this category, as opposed to only one-quarter of regional journalists. Cramer's *V* indicates a medium-size effect. Metropolitan journalists are also more likely to provide a description in their profile, to identify as a journalist, to identify their employer, to provide a hyperlink and to provide an email address. While most of these effects are small, the effect size for identifying their employer is small-to-medium. These overall findings are comparable to Wiik and Hedman's (2015) study, which found that journalists' geographic location had a strong effect on whether they provided professional attributes. On the other hand, regional journalists were significantly more likely to include a disclaimer that the views presented were their own, and they were more likely to provide personal information – again in line with Wiik and Hedman (2015). It appears, then, that metropolitan journalists are overall more likely to include professional characteristics as part of their Twitter persona, while regional journalists are slightly less likely to do so.

Compared to all other platforms, digital journalists were the most likely to have a verified account, provide a description in their profile, and provide a URL and email address. They were also more likely to ask for story ideas, and second-most likely to identify their employer. On the other hand, they were the least likely to provide disclaimers like "views are my own", but second-most likely to provide personal information. The latter result is in line with research suggesting that online journalism is enhancing journalists' levels of transparency as to their own personality (Hermida 2013). At the other end of the spectrum, public service broadcast journalists were least likely to hold a verified account, but most likely to identify as a journalist, as well as to identify their employer. At the same time, they were also significantly more likely than other journalists to include disclaimer such as "views my own" and "retweets do not equal endorsement". Both findings produced a medium-sized effect, as measured by Cramer's *V*. Public broadcast journalists were also least likely to include personal information in their profiles, especially compared to digital or newspaper-based journalists.

Newspaper journalists were only slightly more likely than their public service broadcast counterparts to hold a verified account, least likely to provide a description in their profile and to identify both their status as a journalist and their employer, as well as to ask for story ideas. Their use of disclaimers was similar to digital and commercial broadcast journalists, but they were also the most likely to provide personal information in their profile. This suggests that journalists working at organizations that are predominantly print-oriented are most similar to digital journalists in relation to what they reveal on their profiles – a finding that speaks to the fact that newspaper organizations were among the first to go digital, and that many digital journalists may have previously been print journalists. Still, the fact that newspaper journalists less frequently provided hyperlinks or email addresses or asked for story ideas may indicate a continuing skepticism towards the benefits of social media.

Commercial broadcast journalists are an interesting group, who diverge in important ways from journalists at other organizations. They are second-most likely to have a verified account and to identify as journalists, but are at the lower end in terms of providing hyperlinks or email addresses, arguably indicating that commercial broadcasters' web presences are not yet as prominent online as those of digital-only outlets, newspapers or

public service broadcasters. At the same time, they are second most likely to ask for story ideas, although the effect size is small. Commercial broadcast journalists are also less likely to include disclaimers in their profiles, or to provide personal information. The latter finding is similar to Wiik and Hedman's (2015) result that journalists working at commercial television were least likely to include personal attributes in their profile. However, their study also found that public service broadcast journalists were considerably more likely to include personal attributes, while our study found a similar level of personal information in both commercial and PSB journalists.

Further, we analyzed whether any relationships existed between the variables examined here. For example, Wiik and Hedman (2015) found that journalists who did not provide their professional affiliation were significantly more likely to provide personal information about themselves. Our study could not confirm this, with no statistically significant association between the two variables. However, we did find a significant difference in terms of whether account holders identified as journalists and the provision of personal information, although this difference was in the opposite direction to the one found by Wiik and Hedman. Those who identified as journalists were significantly more likely to provide personal information (41.1 per cent) than those who did not identify as journalists (28.9 per cent), χ^2=12.23, p<.001, V=.056. On the other hand, if journalists provided the disclaimer of "views my own", they were also more likely to provide personal information (45.6 per cent) than when they did not include the disclaimer (38.2 per cent), χ^2=20.59, p<.001, V=.070. This suggests that journalists are continuously mixing personal and professional identities on Twitter.

When we examined journalists' presence on lists, their followers and followees, we found that all the dependent variables were skewed and non-normally distributed. These problems persisted after transformation of variables, which meant it was only possible to use non-parametric tests such as Mann-Whitney U tests and Kruskell-Wallis ANOVA for valid results. It appears likely that, given the often heavily skewed nature of Twitter activity in general, this has implications for future analyses in this area. To enable some basic understanding of the kinds of differences found, Table 2 displays means, but the significance and effects testing was conducted using non-parametric testing. Thus, the means displayed here are only indicative and should not be used as the basis for testing or replication.

In terms of gender, we found significant results for all three variables. This means male journalists are present on more lists, and have more followers than female journalists. Women tend to follow more users than do men, and therefore have a lower follower to followee ratio (Table 2 indicates a higher mean for men, but this is misleading, as mean ranks were higher for women). Even correcting for the length of time journalists have been on Twitter, these differences hold. At first glance, these results appear in contrast to Lasorsa's (2012) study of the most popular journalists on Twitter, which found no significant differences in male and female reporters' followers, followees, or lists. At second glance, however, we can see that the effect sizes as measured by r are extremely small. Compared with journalists' geographic location or their main platform, this means that gender, while a small influence, does not appear to be a very important predictor for Twitter activity overall. This is therefore more supportive of Lasorsa's (2012) findings.

Geographic location (and as a result, overall reach), on the other hand, was a relatively important criterion. Metropolitan journalists were present on more lists, were following more users, and had more followers themselves. Of particular importance here are the popularity indicators such as presence on lists and number of followers. For both of these variables, we found large effects, demonstrating that metropolitan journalists have a significantly wider reach and are more important nodes in the Twitter network. This is not particularly surprising, given the characteristics of the Australian media system, the

dominance of metropolitan news media, the distribution of the Australian population, as well as the generally stronger take-up of Twitter in metropolitan areas in Australia. Metropolitan journalists tend to serve much larger audiences, who are more likely to be digitally connected, thus ensuring metropolitan media have a far wider reach than regional journalists. This dominance of metropolitan journalism also supports Wiik & Hedman's (2015) similar finding.

Further differences existed in terms of the main platform of the organizations that journalists worked for. The most striking finding here was that journalists working for digital-only outlets were present on the largest number of lists, were followed by and also followed the largest number of users. The least active, on the other hand, were journalists working at newspapers, who were present on the lowest number of lists, and had fewer followers and followees. Broadcast journalists were an interesting group, with public service broadcast journalists probably the closest to digital journalists in that they were present in a similar amount of lists and had relatively high numbers of followers. Commercial broadcast journalists were present on far fewer lists, even though they had comparable numbers of followers.

Conclusion
Since its inception in 2006, Twitter has fast become an important tool for journalists in many countries around the world. While originally used predominantly for sourcing and distributing news, and being normalized by journalists into existing practices, there is now evidence that social media like Twitter are also changing journalistic practices more fundamentally. In recent years, journalism scholarship has therefore been giving more attention to the branding opportunities that Twitter provides. Research has shown that journalists may engage in self-branding to gain economic as well as social capital, and some journalists are now important nodes in social networks (see, for example, the study of US journalist Andy Carvin by Hermida et al. 2014). Thus, branding is increasingly important for journalists to be visible, influential, and employable. At the same time, branding on Twitter brings with it a clash between journalists as individuals, and as employees of news organizations. There have been numerous high-profile cases where journalists' behavior on Twitter has led to them losing their jobs (Whitbourn 2015), and it appears that journalists and their employers are still trying to figure out best practices on the platform.

This study has focused on journalists' Twitter profile descriptions, as they present an ideal opportunity for users to engage in branding themselves. Our study of 4189 Australian journalists' profiles demonstrated the presence of a range of aspects which relate to branding. The fact that journalists tend to be followed by more users than they themselves follow, and their presence on many curated lists may be testament to their status on Twitter as trusted news sources. Our study shows that journalists brand themselves mostly through professional attributes, such as their job title or the name of their employer, but a significant number also mix these with personal attributes related to their private lives. It appears that gender is not an important determinant of differences in branding practices, but location and reach mattered significantly, with metropolitan journalists typically much more likely to focus on professional characteristics than their counterparts at regional media. As argued by Wiik and Hedman (2015), it is quite possible that the higher levels of competition in metropolitan areas may be driving journalists to aim for as much economic capital as possible through Twitter branding, but the comparatively slower popular uptake of Twitter in regional Australia should also be taken into account here. Important differences also existed along major platforms. Journalists at digital-only outlets linked heavily to their employer, were most likely to provide email addresses and also provided the highest level of personal information. It makes sense that digital journalists, who are working in a digital environment every day, would most

strongly adapt to the rules of Twitter, which revolves around active engagement with others. They do this by following many users, providing links, soliciting information and disclosing personal information. We can observe the strongest mixing of professional and personal attributes in their branding. Newspaper journalists, on the other hand, overall are less adept at tweeting or following others, and are less likely to identify as journalists or to provide links, even though they do disclose similar levels of personal information.

Broadcast journalists are similar to some extent, but public service broadcast journalists are more concerned with focusing on professional attributes, as they are the most likely to name their employer, identify as a journalist, and to display a disclaimer. This indicates a certain wariness around the mixing of personal and professional identities online, and may well be due to the fact that Australia's main public broadcaster's charter stipulates journalists' impartiality. That impartiality has often come under sustained attack by politicians and other media organizations in recent years (Knott 2015). Commercial broadcast journalists, on the other hand, are much less concerned with disclaimers, but similarly uninterested in providing personal information. They also follow fewer users, which may indicate that Twitter for them is still a one-way vehicle to get their persona and content out in a traditional way, but not to engage too heavily with other users.

Naturally, this study also has some limitations. Studies have demonstrated the importance of analyzing the performativity of actual tweeting behavior (Molyneux 2014), which indicates that it is important to also analyze the content of tweets. Such analysis was beyond the scope of this paper, but will be conducted in a follow-up study. This could provide a more comprehensive account of journalists' self-branding strategies on Twitter. Second, while the greatest care was taken in sampling Twitter profiles, it is possible that the results may be weighted slightly more in favor of journalists who identify as such. We cross-checked against staff lists wherever possible, but as these were not always available, some profiles may have been missed. Nevertheless, our sample size gives us confidence that the results are reasonably representative.

Certainly, the results of this study are only valid in respect of established news media organizations. Research has shown some important differences in freelance as opposed to employed journalists' branding, and this should be investigated more deeply in future studies. In this context there are also significant opportunities for longer-term studies that trace the careers of freelance as well as organizationally employed journalists over time. At least anecdotally, there are substantial indications both that news organizations are now paying considerable attention to the social media skills of journalists as they hire new staff, and that journalists who perform well in social media environments enjoy a more rapid career progression within and across news organizations. Further extensions of our present study, and similar research in other national contexts, should also explore, therefore, whether those journalists found to be particularly active and influential on Twitter now have maintained and extended their positioning several years from now.

REFERENCES

Agarwal, Sheetal D., and Michael L. Barthel. 2015. "The Friendly Barbarians: Professional Norms and Work Routines of Online Journalists in the United States." *Journalism* 16 (3): 376-391.
Anderson, CW. 2011. "Between Creative and Quantified Audiences: Web Metrics and Changing Patterns of Newswork in Local Us Newsrooms." *Journalism* 12 (5): 550-566.
Brems, Cara, Martina Temmermann, Todd Graham, and Marcel Broersma. 2015. "I Tweet, Therefore I Am: The Personal Branding of Employed and Freelance Journalists on

Twitter." Paper presented at the Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff, UK, September 10-11.

Bruns, Axel. 2012. "Journalists and Twitter: How Australian News Organisations Adapt to a New Medium." *Media International Australia* 144: 97-107.

Bruns, Axel. 2014. "First Survey Finds 2.8 Million Twitter Accounts in Australia." *The Conversation*, August 4, 2014. http://theconversation.com/first-survey-finds-2-8-million-twitter-accounts-in-australia-29829.

Bruns, Axel. 2015. "Working the Story: Social Media as a Second Wave of Citizen Journalism." In *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*, edited by Chris Atton, 379–388. London: Routledge.

Bruns, Axel, and Jean Burgess. 2014. "Crisis Communication in Natural Disasters: The Queensland Floods and Christchurch Earthquakes." In *Twitter and Society*, edited by Katrin Weller, Axel Bruns, Jean Burgess, Merja Mahrt and Cornelius Puschmann, 373-384. New York: Peter Lang.

Bruns, Axel, and Tim Highfield. 2012. "Blogs, Twitter, and Breaking News: The Produsage of Citizen Journalism." In *Produsing Theory in a Digital World: The Intersection of Audiences and Production*, edited by Rebecca Ann Lind, 15-32. New York: Peter Lang.

Bruns, Axel, Darryl Woodford, Troy Sadkowsky, and Tim Highfield. 2014. "Mapping a National Twittersphere: A 'Big Data' Analysis of Australian Twitter User Networks." Paper presented at the European Communication Conference, Lisbon, November 13.

Burns, Alex. 2010. "Oblique Strategies for Ambient Journalism." *M/C Journal*, 13 (2), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/230.

Canter, Lily. 2013. "The Interactive Spectrum: The Use of Social Media in UK Regional Newspapers." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 19 (4): 472-495.

Canter, Lily. 2015. "Personalised Tweeting." *Digital Journalism* 3 (6): 888-907.

Cision. 2015. *Social Journalism Study 2015 United Kingdom*. London: Cision & Canterbury Christ Church University.

Dailey, Larry, Lori Demo, and Lori Spillman. 2005. "The Convergence Continuum: A Model for Studying Collaboration between Media Newsrooms." *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 13 (3): 150-168.

Deprez, Annelore, Peter Mechant, and Tim Hoebeke. 2013. "Social Media and Flemish Sports Reporters: A Multimethod Analysis of Twitter Use as Journalistic Tool." *International Journal of Sport Communication* 6: 107-119.

Dickinson, Roger. 2011. The Use of Social Media in the Work of Local Newspaper Journalists. Paper presented at the Future of Journalism Conference. Cardiff, UK, September 8-9.

Fu, Jiawei Sophia, and Alice Y. L. Lee. 2014. "Chinese Journalists' Discursive Weibo Practices in an Extended Journalistic Sphere." *Journalism Studies*. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.962927.

Gandini, Alessandro. 2015. "Digital Work: Self-Branding and Social Capital in the Freelance Knowledge Economy." *Marketing Theory*. doi: 10.1177/1470593115607942.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Greer, Clark F., and Douglas A. Ferguson. 2011. "Using Twitter for Promotion and Branding: A Content Analysis of Local Television Twitter Sites." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 55 (2): 198-214.

Gulyas, Agnes. 2013. "The Influences of Professional Variables on Journalists' Uses and Views of Social Media: A Comparative Study of Finland, Germany, Sweden and the

United Kingdom." *Digital Journalism* 1 (2): 270-285.

Hanusch, Folker. 2013. "Journalists in Times of Change: Evidence from a New Survey of Australia's Journalistic Workforce." *Australian Journalism Review* 35 (1): 27-40.

Hedman, Ulrika. 2015. "J-Tweeters." *Digital Journalism* 3 (2): 279-297.

Hermida, Alfred. 2010. "From TV to Twitter: How Ambient News Became Ambient Journalism." *M/C Journal* 13 (2), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/220.

Hermida, Alfred. 2012. "Social Journalism: Exploring How Social Media Is Shaping Journalism." In *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism*, edited by Eugenia Siapera and Andreas Veglis, 309-328. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hermida, Alfred. 2013. "#Journalism." *Digital Journalism* 1 (3): 295-313.

Hermida, Alfred, Seth C. Lewis, and Rodrigo Zamith. 2014. "Sourcing the Arab Spring: A Case Study of Andy Carvin's Sources on Twitter During the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19 (3): 479-499.

Hille, Sanne, and Piet Bakker. 2013. "I Like News. Searching for the 'Holy Grail' of Social Media: The Use of Facebook by Dutch News Media and Their Audiences." *European Journal of Communication* 28 (6): 663-680.

Holton, Avery E., and Logan Molyneux. 2015. "Identity lost? The personal impact of brand journalism." *Journalism*. doi: 10.1177/1464884915608816

Jones, Paul K., and Michael Pusey. 2010. "Political Communication and 'Media System': The Australian Canary." *Media, Culture & Society* 32 (3): 451-471.

Knott, Matthew. 2015. "Everyone from Coalition Thinks ABC's Q&A Is Biased to the Left, Says LNP Senator James McGrath." *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 27, 2015. http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/everyone-from-coalition-thinks-abcs-qa-is-biased-to-the-left-says-lnp-senator-james-mcgrath-20150527-ghatyw.html.

Lasorsa, Dominic. 2012. "Transparency and Other Journalistic Norms on Twitter." *Journalism Studies* 13 (3): 402-417.

Lasorsa, Dominic L., Seth C. Lewis, and Avery E. Holton. 2012. "Normalizing Twitter: Journalism Practice in an Emerging Communication Space." *Journalism Studies* 13 (1): 19-36.

Marwick, Alice E., and danah boyd. 2011. "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience." *New Media & Society* 13 (1): 114-133.

Michaels-Ober, Erik. 2014. "t: A Command-Line Power Tool for Twitter." Github.io. Accessed October 30, 2015. http://sferik.github.io/t/.

Molyneux, Logan. 2014. "What Journalists Retweet: Opinion, Humor, and Brand Development on Twitter." *Journalism*. doi: 10.1177/1464884914550135.

Molyneux, Logan, and Avery Holton. 2015. "Branding (Health) Journalism." *Digital Journalism* 3 (2): 225-242.

North, Louise. 2012. "'Blokey' Newsrooms Still a Battleground for Female Journalists." *Australian Journalism Review* 34 (2): 57-70.

Opgenhaffen, Michaël, and Harald Scheerlinck. 2014. "Social Media Guidelines for Journalists." *Journalism Practice* 8 (6): 726-741.

Page, Ruth. 2012. "The Linguistics of Self-Branding and Micro-Celebrity in Twitter: The Role of Hashtags." *Discourse & Communication* 6 (2): 181-201.

Papacharissi, Zizi. 2002. "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life: Characteristics of Personal Home Pages." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 79 (3): 643-660.

Semertzidis, Konstantinos, Evaggelia Pitoura, and Panayiotis Tsaparas. 2013. "How People Describe Themselves on Twitter." In *Proceedings of the ACM SIGMOD Workshop on*

Databases and Social Networks. New York, NY: ACM.

Singer, Jane B. 2005. "The Political J-Blogger: 'Normalizing' a New Media Form to Fit Old Norms and Practices." *Journalism* 6 (2): 173-198.

Sonderman, Jeff. 2012. "New 'Disclaimify' Tool Allows You to Reclaim Your Twitter Bio." Poynter, June 11. http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/176760/new-disclaimify-tool-allows-you-to-reclaim-your-twitter-bio/.

Twitter. 2016. "FAQs about verified accounts." Accessed January 18, 2016. http://support.twitter.com/articles/119135?lang=en#

Weaver, David H., Randal A. Beam, Bonnie J. Brownlee, Paul S. Voakes, and G. Cleveland Wilhoit. 2007. *The American Journalist in the 21st Century: U.S. News People at the Dawn of a New Millennium*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Weaver, David H., and G. Cleveland Wilhoit. 1986. *The American Journalist*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Whitbourn, Michaela. 2015. "SBS Presenter Scott McIntyre Sacked over 'Inappropriate' Anzac Day Tweets." *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 26. http://www.smh.com.au/national/ww1/sbs-presenter-scott-mcintyre-sacked-over-inappropriate-anzac-day-tweets-20150426-1mtbx8.html

Wiik, Jenny, and Ulrika Hedman. 2015. "Journalistic Twitter Branding in the Neoliberal Labour Market." Paper presented at the Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff, UK, September 10-11.

Willnat, Lars, and David H. Weaver. 2014. *The American Journalist in the Digital Age: Key Findings*. Bloomington, IN: School of Journalism, Indiana University.

Table 1: Information on Twitter profiles

Verified account	43.3%
Protected account	0.5%
Provides a description in profile	96.9%
Average length of description (chars)	94.5 (SD 42.7)
Provides location	84.1%
Identifies as journalist	94.6%
Identifies employer	90.7%
Provides URL	57.1%
Provides email address	17.1%
Asking for story ideas	5.3%
Disclaimers	
"Views my own"	30.8%
"Retweets do not equal endorsement"	4.8%
Provides personal information	40.5%

Number of Lists (Median)	25
Number Following (Median)	636
Number Followers (Median)	756

Table 2: Information of Twitter profiles by characteristics[1]

	Gender			Geographic location			Main platform				
	Male	Female	*V/r*	Regional	Metropolitan	*V*	Digital	Newspaper	Commercial Broadcast	Public Service Broadcast	*V*
Verified account	44.5%	42.3%		24.8%	51.2%	.241***	49.1%	42.7%	47.2%	39.2%	.061**
Provides a description in profile	97.3%	96.6%		93.0%	98.5%	.144***	99.3%	96.1%	97.1%	98.3%	.062**
Identifies as journalist	94.8%	94.5%		88.4%	97.2%	.176***	94.8%	92.9%	96.3%	97.4%	.087***
Identifies employer	91.3%	90.2%		81.0%	94.9%	.219***	93.3%	88.4%	91.7%	95.6%	.103***
Provides URL	59.6%	54.7%	.049**	47.3%	61.1%	.125***	71.2%	58.2%	38.5%	64.1%	.193***
Provides email address	15.1%	18.9%	.050**	14.8%	18.1%	.039*	26.2%	18.0%	15.0%	13.8%	.081***
Asking for story ideas	4.3%	6.3%	.044*	6.2%	4.9%		8.6%	3.8%	6.9%	5.9%	.070***
"Views my own"	27.6%	33.9%	.069***	37.0%	28.5%	.083***	23.2%	28.4%	25.0%	43.3%	.151***
"Retweets do not equal endorsement"	4.5%	5.0%		4.0%	5.0%		2.2%	3.3%	2.0%	10.6%	.155***
Provides personal information	39.6%	41.3%		45.8%	38.5%	.068***	43.4%	45.8%	32.8%	32.0%	.133***
Number of Lists (mean)	67.4	55.3	0.06***	16.7	79.0	0.45***	106.4	46.4	63.4	86.2	0.048***
Number Following (mean)	894.7	871.0	0.04**	611.0	995.3	0.22***	1375.2	786.2	910.7	952.6	0.027***
Number Followers (mean)	3201.9	2505.4	0.06***	567.8	3781.8	0.41***	4227.8	1828.8	4434.3	3816.4	0.048***

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

[1] For easier interpretation, this table presents the actual means for each variable. Means are only indicative and can be misleading as SDs were substantial in some cases and skewed results may give a wrong impression. Due to non-normality of the variables, statistical significance and effects for "number of lists", "number following" and "number followers" were calculated using Mann-Whitney U tests for Gender and Geographic Location, and using Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs for Main Platform.