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SELF-PRESENTATION AND AUTHENTICITY ON LINKEDIN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SINGAPORE AND INDIA-BASED ENTREPRENEURS

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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

2022

Statement of Originality

I certify that all work submitted for this thesis is my original work. I declare that no other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement. Except where it is clearly stated that I have used some of this material elsewhere, this work has not been presented by me for assessment in any other institution or University. I certify that the data collected for this project are authentic and the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs' self-presentations on LinkedIn offer a glimpse into their contrived performances of professionalism. They tell us who they think they are, what they do, and what they aim for. Through a mixed methods research of content analysis of LinkedIn profiles and semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs in India and Singapore, I found that entrepreneurs claim that their self-presentation on LinkedIn is authentic and reflective of their true selves. Entrepreneurs in Singapore perform authenticity and practice personal branding while entrepreneurs in India think that personal branding and authenticity cannot co-exist. Subsequently, dilemmas emerge from performances of authenticity in self-presentation and personal branding which are intensified by social contexts and online-offline continuum. This study builds on prior scholarship on social networking sites, self, self-presentation, identity, entrepreneurs, and authenticity as a social process and interactional performance.

Preface

In 2010, I started working professionally in the communications industry and spent 8 years understanding audiences, writing and delivering messages, and subsequently measuring their effectiveness. During this time, I sometimes ruminated over the changes that I saw around me. As a student, I read case studies and worked on assignments that focused on brands and consumers. Brands were almost always associated with products, services, or organizations, and I understood them as intangible yet wildly appreciated and beneficial attachments around products or services. As such, I have always imagined brands as conscious externalities around products that make way into production, marketing, design and distribution among other processes.

Within the next few years as a young communications professional, I witnessed and actively participated in turning individuals into brands. To be precise, I was working on ways to carve a brand-like position and manage reputation for my clients. What this meant, at first, was that we were working on bringing out their X-factor so that they would become attractive to media, internal employees, and a host of other stakeholders. This X-factor meant that we were branding them, highlighting their unique traits that could be looked upon by others as the reason for their success, and then creating narratives that indicated how this could translate into better results for the organization and everyone attached to it.

During this time, Facebook was wildly popular among marketing folks. Soon, Twitter became a rant box and source of gossip for most of my peers, and Instagram had most of us swooning over actors, cricketers, and other popular personalities. As other social media platforms became points of interaction between friends and personal groups, LinkedIn – a social networking site for professionals was slowly expanding from being a job portal and a point of professional connections to a platform for demonstrating expertise and establishing thought leadership. This meant that most communications professionals like me were using LinkedIn to figure out how it could work for clients and organizations. In the process, we were trying to present our clients as thought leaders and make their expertise stand out not only at conferences and media events but also online for a larger, general public.

When I was accepted to the postgraduate research programme at Nanyang Technological University, I didn't have a precise plan in mind but I knew it had to do

something with social media and the way people were using it. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim's theories from early class work began to weave together pictures of bourgeoisie and proletarians from the late 1800s, the charismatic individual with a strong work ethic and social facts. It made me reflect on the times that we live in and how I could use these theories as a lens to study the environments around me. It was during one such class discussion that I realized how I could bring my experience as a communicator into the fold. After rounds of discussion with my supervisor Prof. Ian McGonigle, I was closer to sketching out what my postgraduate research was going to look like. As I worked through different phases of planning and executing this thesis – from reviewing the literature to recruiting and interviewing participants, analyzing what I had found, and finally writing it, the idea appeared vague, only to simplify soon enough before plunging into obscurity and bouncing back with clarity.

This research project takes a leaf out of my work as a communicator and my experience of trying to position corporate leaders as thought leaders, displaying their expertise on social media. With this thesis, I have attempted to understand how self-presentations can tell us nuanced stories about social life. Crucially, I studied how culture and technology shape each other in two distinct locations. Using a geographical comparative approach between India (Mumbai) and Singapore, this research presents a study of what entrepreneurs say about themselves, what authenticity means to them, and how it is performed on LinkedIn. It has also helped me unravel how a technological platform - when viewed within the larger socio-cultural - context can help understand the offline online continuum.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Harman is a Mumbai-based entrepreneur who runs a marketing and communications firm. Through this firm, he advises clients, majority of whom are corporations based out of India, on how they can communicate with two diverse but critical business stakeholders - journalists and investors. While his primary location is Mumbai, he has offices in four other parts of the country. When I asked him what he thinks of LinkedIn, Harman quipped:

> "(a) professional soundboard. That's all where you people come and advertise about what they're doing and all about talking about their thoughts."

In response to my question on what this meant, he elaborated that different people use LinkedIn differently. He views himself as a spectator, adding that he uses the platform to track what others were doing on a weekly basis and shares his thoughts or updates intermittently. I asked Harman about his position as a spectator, and what holds him back from engaging regularly online. Harman told me that he joined LinkedIn because "everybody thought that this is where you have to be if you're a professional." He further emphasized that LinkedIn's promise of a professional community was its biggest appeal; however over the years, his motive to use the platform has changed from building an online professional community that would support offline professional growth to presenting himself professionally. When Harman joined the platform, he initially expected that LinkedIn would become a catalyst to build a strong online and offline professional network. These connections, he anticipated, may have direct or indirect benefits for his business. These benefits could be imagined in the form of informal feedback loops, casual informational channels, mentor or peer support, third party connections that enable a business action and so on.

Over the years, LinkedIn itself has transformed from being an informational database to a platform that allows users to build their personal brands though narratives and storytelling (Van Djick 2013). Anyone who has used LinkedIn in the last few years may have witnessed long detailed posts by several users on their achievements, management lessons, hiring practices and so on. Harman told me that he barely used LinkedIn when he initially joined it. However, some years ago he noticed users actively building their network by sharing personal stories and professional achievements. Taking a cue from others, he decided that his approach would be two-pronged: he would attempt to engage with everyone who added him as a connection or

followed him and he would share engaging posts on a regular basis. He received minimal response from users who added him as a connection or followed him on LinkedIn. His posts, he told me, received a better response but did not facilitate the creation of strong professional relationships on either the platform or outside it. He also observed that other users often share posts which are not necessarily a reflection of their true self but only help them get attention. For instance, he told me how other users write about trending topics and connect it to their personal story. This connection, in Harman's view, is forced, fickle or imagined. Subsequently, these actions are viewed as a means to get more likes and comments rather than efforts towards fostering an active professional network. Harman finds the idea of posting content on LinkedIn to gain followers problematic. I found this pattern recur with most Mumbai-based entrepreneurs who participated in this study. Harman and other Mumbai-based entrepreneurs find the act of building personal brands driven by likes and comments incongruous to the real self. It stems from the belief that it is not necessarily a reflection of one's self arising out of desire or impulse but rather a strategic presentation of the self to chase institutional values (Turner 1976). It is also deeply connected with how people build relationship with each other in India and larger social context. I elaborate on this in detail in Chapter 4.

Since Harman's efforts to create a professional network have not yielded results, he thinks that LinkedIn has not delivered on its promise of an online community. For him, LinkedIn is not as useful as is claimed or anticipated, and lower engagement and responses on his networking efforts are proportionate with how he values his own actions on the social networking site and the site itself. The usefulness of and value placed on LinkedIn are thereby in a dialectic relationship with personal brand building actions. This relationship is influenced by Harman's view of the self which values authenticity and honesty in self-presentation and determines it based on the direct correlation between posts and a user's profession or work. Authentic self-presentation on LinkedIn for users like Harman are deeply connected to what one does professionally, their inner thoughts and real experiences.

In case of Singapore-based entrepreneurs, the understanding and practice of who they are and how they perform on LinkedIn vary greatly from their Mumbai counterparts. Let me tell you about one of the entrepreneurs who I interviewed at length. Singapore-based Kiran runs a FinTech startup, and has previously worked in the financial industry for more than two decades. He told me that his company can be termed as midsized and offers specialized services to other midsized and large corporations. His

story and reason for joining LinkedIn are similar to Harman's. When he first joined the platform, he used it primarily to recruit potential employees. He thinks that LinkedIn is a good platform to find people and learn about them, particularly when hiring someone. It allows him to evaluate a person's skills and experience based on the profile and prepares him to have a conversation during an interview or a meeting. In the last few years, Kiran has been using LinkedIn to build his personal brand. Kiran told me that although his is a midsized firm, the industry that he works in is small. Further, the services that the company offers are niche and such contracts are awarded based on the ability to execute deals skillfully. In such an environment and even in the larger startup ecosystem, he asserted, the entrepreneur is synonymous with the firm. He believed that an entrepreneur's skills and experiences are critical to the organization's success and consequently, Kiran's personal brand has an important role to play in the growth and development of his business. He also told me that clients work with his firm because of his skills, qualifications, experience and ability. This means that when clients work with the firm, they place their trust in Kiran and not the firm's track record or other clientele.

For Kiran, building his personal brand is therefore an important task. He understands that it can be leveraged for the benefit of his startup and is a good way to send messages to potential and existing clients, employees and other stakeholders. Towards this end, Kiran thinks that LinkedIn serves as an ideal platform to build one's personal brand. His conclusion is based on his experiences on the platform that have enabled him to make relevant connections which over a period have resulted in online and offline interactions. Among all the interviewed participants, Kiran had the best success rate of having met LinkedIn connections in an offline setting. With the exception of the pandemic period from early 2019 to the time of the interview in late 2020, Kiran told me that he had met about 5-6 LinkedIn connections in a physical setting on an annual basis, as well as built strong relationships on the platform through online exchanges. These connections are people whom he acquainted on LinkedIn and possibly could not have met if not for the social networking site. For him, LinkedIn is a digital extension of his professional network. Engaging with others on the platform has helped him build relationships that have translated into professional associations, employment solutions, business deals and camaraderie with a few other like-minded professionals.

Kiran told me he connects with people relevant to his work, and interacts through comments and direct messages. Unlike Harman, he has found that LinkedIn users respond promptly and it is a good platform to make connections and build them into

relationships over a period of time. He cited the case of a connection based out of Dubai with whom he exchanged messages intermittently over the years. A couple of years ago, he was looking for a collaborator in Dubai and reached out to this connection. They ended up working together on an assignment as collaborators and were in touch thereafter through a few exchanges. At the start of the pandemic the connection reached out to him and the two set up a zoom meeting. While the intention of the call was a brainstorming session, it ended with Kiran hiring the said connection as a fulltime employee to manage his business assignments in Dubai. Experiences like this have shaped Kiran's opinion on LinkedIn and personal branding. For Kiran, LinkedIn and personal branding are useful and can generate value for him and his organisation.

When I asked him specifically about what he shares on LinkedIn, Kiran told me that he regularly writes about his work, personal thoughts, and travel on LinkedIn. Most of his posts are related to his work and some touch upon his travels and personal opinions. He also told me that he only shares what is authentic and honest. However, he told me that he avoids writing on certain topics which could lead to negative consequences for him and his firm. Kiran uses personal branding as a way to build his credibility and reputation, and his posts and activities on LinkedIn are directed towards driving business results. His posts serve as a way to present himself, his skills, expertise and knowledge and help him get noticed by others which can lead to connection requests and online interactions. The self that he presents online through his profile and posts is rooted in institutional values (Turner 1976) and ambitions that inform others of his ability, capability and goals. Since his personal branding efforts have resulted into positive outcomes like connections, interactions and business opportunities in line with his view of the self, he values LinkedIn and personal branding highly.

Harman and Kiran's experiences on LinkedIn are varied and distinctive. So are their attitudes toward the platform and how they use it. Harman and Kiran are of Indian origin but live in two different Asian geographies – Mumbai (India) and Singapore, respectively. Kiran is a Singaporean Indian who spent the first few years of his life in India, completed his schooling in Singapore and post-graduation in the USA. Harman was born and raised in India and has primarily worked there most of his adult life. They work in different sectors with varying degrees of technological influence. Harman works in the marketing and communication industry that uses technology as an external medium rather than an inherent part; for instance, sending out messages to reporters and investors using emails, instant messaging, etc. Kiran works in the

FinTech industry that has emerged as a result of technology disrupting and carving out a distinct space within the financial sector. He uses technology extensively as it is an important engine to deliver his services, and also works on offering tech-based solutions. On LinkedIn – a professional social networking platform, Harman and Kiran present themselves as competent professionals but there are differences in what they emphasize and why. Their view of the self, experiences, and interactions on the platform, and what they consider important professionally, shape and influence their perception of authenticity on LinkedIn.

This study is an attempt to identify, analyze and theorize self-presentations of Mumbai (India) and Singapore-based entrepreneurs on LinkedIn. It also analyzes how entrepreneurs practice personal branding and the importance of authenticity in self-presentations on LinkedIn. Data from 1,000 profiles of LinkedIn users who identify as entrepreneurs, founders, co-founders, and owners of organizations, and semi-structured interviews with 14 entrepreneurs and 3 social media executives in the two geographies are used for analysis. What I found is that entrepreneurs across geographies follow a broadly similar pattern to tell us who they are and what they do. These presentations appear similar because of LinkedIn's template and social norms on the platform. However, a detailed analysis of the profiles combined with interview data highlights that there exists a fundamental difference in the way entrepreneurs present themselves. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs view themselves as self anchored in impulse (Turner 1976) that does not conform to societal demands and pressures. Entrepreneurs in Singapore exhibit a self anchored in institutions (Turner 1976) and use their profiles to mark themselves as part of the business ecosystem in which they exist. It must be noted that entrepreneurs across both geographies chase institutional goals of growth and profits. Nonetheless, the way they present the self and the values that they emphasize determines how they view themselves and others on LinkedIn. Perceptions of the self and authenticity, and entrepreneurs' experiences on LinkedIn offer cues into the practice of personal branding - a performance of the self where the individual uses a set of techniques to prove themselves as worthy alliances (Gershon 2016).

On platforms like LinkedIn, users present what Gershon (2018) calls the entrepreneurial self where one sees and presents themselves "as a bundle of skills, assets, qualities, experiences, and relationships" (Gershon 2018:175). This bundle, she argues, must be "consciously managed and continuously enhanced" (Gershon 2018:175). Analysis of entrepreneur profiles as part of this study highlights that people often combine accolades, achievements, and even failures from the past with particular

skills, current or ongoing work, knowledge, and approaches from the present along with future goals or potential paths. Such presentations directed toward proving oneself worthy of alliances have been termed as personal branding in Gershon's (2016) analysis of the contradictions that arise when the neoliberal self is put into practice. Personal branding is a performance that LinkedIn encourages and enables through its interface, design, and features. However, not everyone is convinced with the idea of branding themselves. I found that users' experiences and interactions on LinkedIn shape how they view personal branding. In Chapter 3, I analyse entrepreneurs' self-presentations on LinkedIn and their views on personal branding. I discuss the strategies used by entrepreneurs in creating their profiles and sharing content. The distinctive strategies they use are guided by different experiences, expectations and cognition. The response that they receive to these strategies futher shape their experience on the platform and in turn helps them determine the value of LinkedIn.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the dilemmas that emerge from self-presentation, personal branding and performances of authenticity. Authenticity for entrepreneur participants of the study appears to broadly mean true and real. However, entrepreneurs practice authenticity with flexibility when dealing with dilemmas of sharing personal / professional information and filtered or unfiltered views. This chapter also highlights how entrepreneurs' existing social contexts influence their use and success at building networks or communities on LinkedIn.

While entrepreneurs may be broadly perceived or understood as passionate (Irani 2019), opportunistic (Shane and Venkataraman 2000) and disruptive (Chua 2019), this research highlights idiomatic styles of self-presentations of entrepreneurs in India and Singapore. I have built this research on significant bodies of literature in social psychology, sociology, and science and technology studies, and current scholarship on LinkedIn, social networking sites, personal branding, entrepreneurs, and Mumbai and Singapore have informed my analysis. This study (IRB-2021-128) has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Nanyang Technological University.

1.1 Academic Studies on LinkedIn

Over the last few years, social networking sites (SNS) like LinkedIn[1] and Facebook have changed from "being databases of information" to platforms "for (personal) storytelling and narrative self-presentation" (Van Djick 2013: 200). This enables users to express themselves in many ways. Van Djick (2013) argues that platforms like LinkedIn conflate individuals' need for self-expression with self-promotion. This argument can be further extended to assert that self-promotional content on LinkedIn is a mechanism to validate one's professional life. LinkedIn has also been categorized as a nonymous platform (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin 2008) where the information shared by users can be used to identify them offline. Like on other SNS, users on LinkedIn often include those whom they know offline in their online networks (Van Djick 2013). As a result, LinkedIn becomes a network of familiar and new connections for its users. Since most users on the platform work in white-collared jobs situated in urban geographies, the stories and narratives that they share online can be viewed as an assemblage of cultures at the intersection of professional and urban life. This online presentation of culture plays a role to shape attitudes, behaviour, and beliefs of the workforce. As users have become familiar with these features of the platform, they have learnt to harness the system to their advantage (Van Djick 2013). Consequently, the platform is often used to reflect and share values and practices that are associated with being a good worker in corporations and are appreciated by recruiters, hiring managers, investors, collaborators, and others. By this extension, LinkedIn captures a glimpse of urban working ethos, attitudes and behaviours not only online but also offline.

1.1.1. LinkedIn as networked publics

In our everyday usage, SNS may simply come across as platforms that help people to connect and interact with others. LinkedIn's existence as a corporation legally owned by Microsoft may seem unimportant when one uses it to find a job or build their personal brand. It is nonetheless important to understand LinkedIn as a mediated platform that plays a role in the social life of urban professionals. For this study, LinkedIn is looked upon as part of a corporation, a technological platform, a space for

[1] In this study, I use social networking site, SNS, professional networking site and platform to address LinkedIn in various chapters. It is done to reduce the constant repetition of any single word but also highlights the different ways in which LinkedIn can be approached as technology, a medium to connect with others, a channel to find jobs and build a professional network, etc.

corporate functions like hiring and networking, and a virtual platform for self-expression, self-promotion and interaction. Within current scholarship, it can also be viewed as networked publics which danah boyd (2008) defines as both a space and an imagined community. As a space, it is "constructed through networked technologies" and the imagined community is a result of "the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (boyd 2008:1-2). It thereby works along four properties of "persistence, searchability, replicability and scalability" and "three dynamics of invisible audiences, collapsed contexts and the blurring of public and private" (boyd 2008:2). boyd (2008:34) describes "invisible audiences" as members of the network who are not visible or co-present when someone posts or shares online. She describes collapsed contexts as the "lack of spatial, social and temporal boundaries" which "makes it difficult to maintain distinct social contexts" (boyd 2008:34). She further argues that without control over context, lines between public and private are distorted on these platforms.

Figure 1 Snapshot of LinkedIn's About Section

I contend, however, that collapsed contexts and the blurring of public and private do not entirely hold for LinkedIn. Unlike bulletin boards and Multi-User Dungeons of the early Internet era, LinkedIn encourages people to share their actual information including photos, short biographies, work experience, education qualifications, etc. in addition to name, age, and display picture. This facilitates a new mode of identity production (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin 2008) as users articulate specific life experiences within the platform's template. The presentation of the self on nonymous platforms (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin 2008) like LinkedIn encapsulated as a profile is expected to be and often perceived as real and genuine when compared to Twitter, Reddit, or other networking sites that do not necessarily emphasize disclosure of actual information. The profile template and accompanying brief guiding statements with

each section on LinkedIn are designed to emphasize relevant professional information that users are expected to share. For instance, the description (see Figure 1) provided by LinkedIn in the "about" or summary section reads, "You can write about your years of experience, industry, or skills. People also talk about their achievements or previous job experiences" ("LinkedIn" 2022).

This not only makes those elements of one's identity visible that people want to highlight but also the associated social, demographic, economic, and geographic details. The name and display picture of a person can indicate a user's gender identity. If they use specific pronouns, it can highlight their sexual orientation and thereby indicate conformity or non-conformity with their cisgender. In the Indian context, last names can reveal a lot about a person such as their caste which continues to play an important role in social life there. Similarly, the ethnic identities of Singapore-based users are readily available from their LinkedIn profiles and can be used to categorize them as Chinese, Malay, Indian, or Others as the case may be. Education details can be used to determine a person's abilities. When intersected with information like ethnicity and current employment, it can become a source offer for in-depth analysis of a user's background. As a result, contexts may appear collapsed but the offline-online continuum against the backdrop of visible real identities reproduces social, economic, and political distinctions online.

Similarly, the lines between public and private may seem blurred but it is not necessarily so. The distinction between public and private is fractal (Gal 2002). It is subjective to persons, places, and situations, and what may appear as public space and knowledge to one person may be a private matter to another (Gal 2002). LinkedIn, despite being a professional network, is a public platform. Like any other SNS, it is co-created by users every time they use it (boyd 2008). To be able to use its features and build a profile, one needs to create an account with the SNS. However, individuals not logged into the platform can access profiles depending on individual users' privacy settings. These contradictions in LinkedIn's position as a closed social networking site fully accessible only to its members and as a public internet platform with partial access to non-members make it difficult to determine a fixed place for it.

LinkedIn, as a social networking site, enables users to watch other users. This form of watching has been documented akin to surveillance defined as purposeful and systematic watching (Lyon 2011 quoted in Carah 2011). It can be understood as peer surveillance when users watch others. This watching influences not only how users

view others but also themselves resulting in self-surveillance. Further, online platforms are often under surveillance from governments in India and Singapore including several other countries (Singh 2021; Wong 2019). Users are conscious that their actions are watched and could have potential consequences for them. The public-private distinctions continue to exist but are blurred from time to time on the platform as I found in my interactions with entrepreneurs. Users are conscious of what they say or do not say publicly online, and the public-private distinction and offline-online continuum play a significant role in influencing their decisions.

1.1.2. LinkedIn as a platform for hiring and self-presentations

Since its inception, LinkedIn has become an important node in the hiring process. Coverdill and Finlay (2017) have examined the effects of the transition in the process of job applications from physical and offline sources like newspapers, recommendations, etc. to online platforms with a focus on the role of headhunters. Their study highlights that the role of headhunters has not become obsolete as a result of the emergence of platforms like LinkedIn (Coverdill and Finaly 2017). Rather, the rise of LinkedIn has made a large pool of candidates available to an organization (Coverdill and Finaly 2017). In the process, LinkedIn has become a crucial means for those seeking employment and other professional opportunities to establish their professional worth through self-attestations of experience, education, and skills towards profitable ends.

Gershon's (2017) study further describes the changes in the employment process led by the rise of LinkedIn and other similar platforms. She shows that individuals applying for jobs through social networking platforms like LinkedIn need to portray and act like brands and market themselves to potential recruiters and others. Consequently, individuals are no longer entering into a traditional employee-employer relationship but into a business-to-business contract where they need to keep up with the promise of their brands. This could translate into an ongoing investment in presenting and performing an authentic self. Gershon also critiques LinkedIn as a platform whose use is not particularly well-defined for users, even as it has changed processes of hiring and employment. Gershon's (2017) and Coverdill and Finlay's (2017) studies have been undertaken in the context of the United States of America, and focus particularly on recruitment and hiring. The study undertaken as part of this thesis uses ideas from these works to understand how entrepreneurs, who are often

looked upon as creators of employment opportunities, use LinkedIn, and what their usage tells us about the social environments in which they exist. Gershon's (2014, 2016, 2017, 2018) works on personal branding, networking, and LinkedIn are critical to my own and inform my analysis in multiple ways.

1.2. Self-Presentations and Identity Constructions Online

There have been multiple studies on self-presentation and identity. In The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life, Goffman's (1959) theorization sheds light on how individuals knowingly assert, manipulate, take control or reconfigure the presentation of their selves. The ensuing presentation can thereby be construed to offer a glimpse into how individuals understand, perceive, and respond to the settings in which they find themselves. It also highlights the role of reciprocity from others in establishing the presentation. Stone (1962:93) argues that "identity is the coincidence of announcements and placements". Identity can be understood as a social construction (Stone 1962; Vryan, Adler and Adler 2003; Burke and Stets 2009; Brekhus 2020), which offers possibilities to understand not only an individual or collective but also how they are embedded into a larger social context.

The advent of the internet and social media has allowed people to transcend physical barriers and connect with people around the world. This also means that there are more opportunities to make an introduction and present oneself to multiple audiences. SNSs like Facebook and LinkedIn have nonymous[2] (non-anonymous) environments (Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008) that connect the offline with the online. Images and text replace the corporeal body in online mediated environments which when combined with nonymity allows for a new mode of identity production (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin 2008). Users on these platforms often include people whom they know offline in their online networks. The self-presented online is therefore supposedly congruent with the offline presentation of the self. However, this does not mean that the presentation of the online self on these platforms is the exact reflection of the offline

[2] The authors Shanyang Zhao, Sherri Grasmuck, and Jason Martin (2008) use the terms nonymous and nonymity in their research paper "Identity Construction on Facebook: Digital Empowerment in Anchored Relationships" as antonyms of anonymous and anonymity respectively. In using these terms, they seek to highlight how participants shape their identities depending on the online environments. Anonymous environments can offer more flexibility and the ability to "bypass the usual obstacles that prevent them from constructing desired identities in face-to-face settings". Nonymous environments enable the transfer of offline relationships and therefore place "constraints on the freedom of identity claims."

self. Identity production in such environments is a negotiation of the true or now self and hoped for possible self (Yurchisin, Watchravesringkan, and Mccabe 2005; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008).

However, users alone do not determine how they present themselves. The interface, design, and features of the online platform and interactions online inform and shape these presentations. The functionalities and features of SNS allow users to express themselves through visual and textual narratives (Boje and Smith 2010). Users' presentations on these platforms have been transformed into a "standardized tradable product" (Van Djick 2013) that furthers the SNSs' agenda to become more profitable. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the SNS-user relationship is a one-way street (Van Djick 2013). Over the years, users "have learned to exploit these algorithmic mechanisms for their own advantage" (Van Djick 2013). Such "conscious acts of self-staging" by users benefit them in accumulating social capital (Bourdieu 1986) through online connections (Van Djick 2013). Self-presentation on the SNS can therefore be understood as a co-production (Jasanoff 2004) of several elements wherein the ecology of the user, online network and connections, and the SNS influence, dynamically shape, and reshape each other.

1.3. Personal Branding

The idea of personal branding has gained currency over the last two decades. The term personal branding is credited to Tom Peters who in his 1997 article in Fast Magazine – "The Brand Called You" discussed how it was time to take inspiration from big corporations and brands and become the CEO of Me Inc. This he asserted was important for anyone who wants to "stand out and prosper in the new world of work" (Peters 1997). Peters' argument for having a personal brand draws a parallel with the historical conception of brands as a trademark which would act like a surrogate for an absentee producer (Nakassis 2013). Over a period of time, the trademark itself became an asset (Schechter 1927) that would not only guarantee quality but also "performatively grounding its economic and social value by virtue of being recognized in the market and by the law as a mark" (Nakasssis 2013: 115)

The brand, when used in the context of a product, service or organization, is a "conjunction of the sensuous and the intelligible" that brings together commodification and intangible qualities in a way that it can be shared and actualized (Nakassis 2013: 112). The multiple elements attached to a brand such as images, personality, emotions and core proposition or value (Aaker 1991; Manning 2010; Mazzarella 2003) are

emphasized and eventually brought together through the realization of the object-sign relationship (Nakassis 2013; Manning and Uplisashvili 2007). In the past few years, brands have become closely associated with authenticity and purpose. A brands' authenticity is channeled in two ways: One, in the process of development and marketing with specific values, images, essence and personality; and two, by IP laws that grant legitimacy and authority to the brand (Nakassis 2013). All of this together contributes towards the creation of brand identity. While the brand and product, service or organization are often understood interchangeably, for instance Xerox and copying machines or Dairy Milk and chocolates, brands can be detached from a commodity both figuratively and literally (Nakasssis 2013). The Xerox brand is no longer manufacturing only copying machines but offers a range of IT services around the world. High fashion brands like Gucci and Prada offer multiple products from apparels to shoes, perfumes and bags, all of which are supposed to embody the same brand identity while delivering equivalent levels of sophistication and exclusivity.

The brand's value as an asset makes it possible to extend it beyond a singular product or service. It can also be replicated as surfeits (Nakassis 2013), and can be changed or evolved over a period of time. Personal branding borrows from this marketing practice to highlight specific qualities, skills and qualifications of an individual through multiple narratives and presentations. Gershon (2016: 223) defines personal branding as "a performance genre that includes a set of semiotic techniques designed to solve a problem that emerges when workers seek to present themselves as worthy of alliances under contemporary neoliberal conceptions of the ideal working self." The entrepreneurial self (Gershon 2018), a style of self-presentation used by entrepreneurs and others on LinkedIn, is one of the ways in which one can develop and manifest their personal brand. In this study, I found that entrepreneurs in Mumbai and Singapore present themselves on LinkedIn through skills, education, work experience, qualities and values weaved neatly in stories of success and failures, highlighting their passion, philosophies and mission. In doing so, individuals seek to present their complex selves intertwined in social, economic and demographic variables into "a regimented semiotically constructed subject" (Gershon 2016). In their critique of personal branding, Lair, Sullivan and Cheney (2005) refer to the practice as objectification of the self that encourages self-packaging through effective arrangement, crystallization and labeling of skills, motivations and interests for success and achievement. This self is further emphasized, shaped and reshaped through regular content sharing and interactions on the platform that strengthen the personal brand. Entrepreneur's profiles on LinkedIn are ways to create and contribute to their personal brands. Although the

decision to brand one's personhood is assumed to be an individual decision, it is influenced and at time subtly promoted by the SNS itself.

1.4. Entrepreneurs

Over the years, the traditional image of a heroic entrepreneur (Ahl 2002; Berglund and Wigren 2011) has evolved into a dynamic, evolving, and multidimensional self (Foss 2004). Scholars have described entrepreneurs as the "central actor" of new ventures (Mueller, Volery and Siemens 2012), "innovators" (Schumpeter 2017), and even as "elites with influencing power over cultural and social structures" (Eisenstadt 1980; DiMaggio 1988). Within the market economy, entrepreneurs are considered important as they bring novelty to the economic system and change its behaviour (Schumpeter 1934; Knight [1921] 1940). An entrepreneur is expected to be able to identify and exploit opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman 2000) by creating value, taking an innovative approach, and tackling uncertainties for potential profit (Schumpeter 1934; Knight 2017). The entrepreneurial function is therefore critical to economic progress (Knight 2017), and an entrepreneur's subjectivity plays an important role in informing his or her actions (Schumpeter 1934; Knight 2017). These descriptions of entrepreneurs are also used in popular discourses and possibly have an impact on how people choose to present themselves.

In her analysis of entrepreneurship in India, Lilly Irani (2019) points out the transition of an entrepreneur from a manager to an innovator and how this change also means that the entrepreneur is expected to produce an economic and social surplus. Drawing parallels of inspiration from "passionate dreamers" like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, she argues that entrepreneurs today gather resources from "their community ties, their capacity to labor, even their political hope" (Irani 2019:1). In the process, an entrepreneur is no longer an individual but becomes an entrepreneurial citizen who is driven by the passion to deliver value through an enterprise while contributing to nation building (Irani 2019). Words like passion, value, innovation, markets, nation building, uplifting the poor, development, etc. emerge from the analysis and appear to frame the broad definition of who is an entrepreneur in India and the expectations from such a figure. In the Singaporean context, Chua (2019) describes how technopreneurs, entrepreneurs who work in fields related to technology, are "characterized by constantly 'disruptive' industrial, commercial and financial innovation". In her analysis, the government in the City-state is shifting the responsibility of nation building and growth to its citizens and thereby making them entrepreneurial citizens who are

expected to create innovative and high-technology enterprises. While Chua (2019) argues that the government in Singapore wants to encourage entrepreneurship, public commentators have discussed how the design of the education system is a hurdle in cultivating risk-taking attitudes (Ho 2022). Which of these arguments are true can be debated but it is important to consider Chua's work as it shows ways in which entrepreneurship is encouraged by the State in Singapore. Importantly, her work showcases how entrepreneurship in Singapore is associated with terms like innovation and disruption, and how that frames the meaning of an entrepreneur in the City-state.

Taking into account these studies on entrepreneurs in India and Singapore, it appears that the entrepreneur cannot be distinctly categorized as either a member of the bourgeoisie whose profits emerge from the oppression of the proletariat (Marx and Engels 1974) or a man dominated "by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life" (Weber 1932 (2005):xi). Today's entrepreneur may perhaps exhibit shades of both Marx and Weber's versions but is defined with values rooted in more connected, globalized societies and backed by the State. Such interpretation associates the figure of the entrepreneur not only with private economic outcomes but also with social responsibilities of growth and development which have previously been exclusive domains of the State. However, the works discussed above do not analyze how entrepreneurs view themselves and use perceptions associated with entrepreneurship in their self-presentations online.

LinkedIn allows professionals to create a profile to network with others and find opportunities (LinkedIn 2022). As pointed out in the earlier section, it is a popular medium for recruitment and professionals use it to find relevant jobs and connect with potential employers. Unlike job seekers who update and enhance their LinkedIn profiles to impress employers, entrepreneurs use the platform for a variety of reasons, and the way they choose to represent themselves can reflect how popular perceptions and social norms on and outside the platform influence their self-presentation. At the same time, it is indicative of how these self-presentations reinforce and reshape the idea of an entrepreneur. This study attempts to understand entrepreneurs through the narratives, images, and statements that they share on LinkedIn. My analysis focuses on self-presentation and the strategy of personal branding in a comparative study across the geographies of India and Singapore. In the process, it explores how the meaning of authenticity is culturally conditioned and differs among entrepreneurs across the sites of research.

1.5. Mumbai (India) and Singapore as Sites of Research

For this study, entrepreneurs and social media executives were recruited from Singapore and the Indian city of Mumbai. Singapore as a City-state and Mumbai as one of the biggest Indian cities share some similarities. Singapore is often referred to as the financial hub of South East Asia, and Mumbai is India's financial center with the largest concentration of banks and other financial institutions. Singapore has a multi-racial composition that is primarily categorized based on ethnicities - Chinese, Malay, Indians, and Others. Mumbai has a cosmopolitan mix and has managed to maintain relative peaceful co-existence among citizens across social, economic, political, religious, and caste groups, blurring but not eliminating the divisive lines that prominently feature in other parts of the country[3].

India's political, economic, and social landscape has changed drastically over the years. The Indian National Congress (INC) became the dominant political party of the country since her independence. Leadership within the party changed over the years but it has been largely concentrated in the hands of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty (Bose and Jalal 2018). The power center, however, moved away from the INC in the early 1970s as regional parties began gathering steam, but the tussle continued in the favour of the INC until the rise of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 1990s (Bose and Jalal 2018). The BJP formed a coalition government in 1998 and during its rule over the next four years, the party strengthened its ideology of Hindu majoritarianism and its economic approach rooted in the 'new Swadeshi' movement (Mazzarella 2003). The INC came back to power in the early 2000s and subsequently lost it to the BJP in 2016. Since her independence, the Indian political landscape has been drawn along religious lines as the INC took a pro-minority position to counter BJP's ultra Hindutva commitments (Bose and Jalal 2018). During this period, the Indian economy also changed significantly with changes in the country's economic, social and political situations.

After its independence in 1947, India adopted a socialist democratic model of development. It followed an industrial licensing system to keep tabs on private enterprises, and any form of expansion by private players was subject to approvals.

[3] India has a diverse population. People's identities in the country are drawn from religious, regional, caste, economic and political divisions. Religion, in particular, is a sensitive issue. There have been several religious riots, one of the biggest having taken place in Mumbai in 1992-93. However, compared to other parts of the country, Mumbai has seen fewer conflicts across various division lines.

India went into an economic crisis towards the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s which resulted in the abolishment of the "license Raj" (Adhia 2015) and the economy was opened for global investments. In the subsequent years, several multinational and local private companies have been established in the country. Marketing and management have been influenced by the 'new Swadeshi' (Mazzarella 2003) approach rooted in the original philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, and promoted as a "challenge of capitalizing upon a world in which globalization was… heightening rather than effacing the importance of locality and local identity" (Mazzarella 2003).

It is within this background that several private enterprises have emerged in the country. Most of these enterprises are based out of metro cities including Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru. Mumbai, the commercial capital of India, is also its financial hub with the largest concentration of financial firms and banks. Campaigns like 'Make in India' ("Make in India | Prime Minister of India" n.d.) and 'Startup India' ("PM Modi Announces 'Start-up India Seed Fund' to Support New Entrepreneurs" 2021) aim to accelerate manufacturing investment and encourage entrepreneurship in the country. These campaigns can be viewed within this broader framework of the 'new Swadeshi' movement. Subsequently, the number of startups[4] originating in India has gradually increased over the last few years. India claims to be the third largest ecosystem in the world ("Indian Startup Ecosystem," n.d.), and had reported 50,000 startups in 2018 ("Indian Startup Ecosystem," n.d.). However, the Economic Survey 2021-22 report released in January 2022 stated that there are 14,000 recognized startups in the country, including 44 unicorn startups in 2021 ("Economic_survey_2021-2022" 2022).

Like independent India's initial years under the single-party rule of the INC, Singapore has been under the one-party rule of the People's Action Party (PAP) since its independence in 1965. However, unlike the INC, the PAP embraced a free market model of development within which the role of the state was not only restricted to being a governing and policy-making authority but also an active economic participant (Chua 2018). Governments in both countries embraced social democracy to support

[4] The term startup refers to a company in the first stages of operations. Startups are founded by one or more entrepreneurs who want to develop a product or service for which they believe there is demand. These companies generally start with high costs and limited revenue, which is why they look for capital from a variety of sources such as venture capitalists. (Grant 2019)

their citizens with interventions in social, cultural, and economic areas. However, the similarities cease to exist in the implementation and the results derived from these practices and policies.

The state-capitalism and social democracy espoused by the PAP yielded significantly different results for Singapore. Further, unlike India's religious divisions seeded for political gains, Singapore's policies have actively focused on consolidating the collective and establishing racial harmony (Chua 2018). Policies on multiracialism embedded through the CMIO model of the Housing Development Board (HDB) and equitable social redistribution among Singaporeans irrespective of demographic and economic factors have contributed to the rise of a diverse and multiracial middle-class population (Chua 2018). Additionally, Singapore's developed infrastructure and economic policies in conjunction with its small size have contributed to its rapid development and stability.

Singapore within a single generation has been transformed into a first-world economy from a trading economy (Chua 2018). Her open market economic policies encourage private and foreign investments. Further, Singapore is home to 55,000 startups and private businesses and aims to attract more startups in the future ("Innovation in Singapore" 2020). Further, it claims to be "an innovative city" that offers "a thriving ecosystem" for startups ("Innovation in Singapore" 2020).

Singapore and India share historical similarities that can be traced to their colonial past and journey as independent nation-states. They are homes to socially and culturally diverse groups. Where India's diversity can be categorized along religious, caste, tribal, and regional lines, Singapore has a dominant Chinese population along with sizeable populations of Malay and Indian ethnicities. Singapore also has a significant migratory working population that is employed at different tiers of her economy.

While India often uses her demographic dividend as a potentially profitable market, Singapore is concerned about its ageing population and low fertility rate (Nasir and Turner 2014). As India grapples with issues of wide economic disparity, religious politics, and infrastructural issues (Bose and Jalal 2018), Singapore stands as a model example of internal stability, economic policies, and developed infrastructure in Asia (Nasir and Turner 2014). Both countries are also framed within the authoritarianism and anti-political liberalism of the current political parties in power (Bose and Jalal 2018; Chua 2018).

Over the last decade, both India and Singapore have undertaken initiatives to create digital ecosystem by deploying technology to digitalise analog systems across industries ("Digital India Technology to Transform a Connected Nation Executive Summary" 2019; "Singapore Digital Government Journey," n.d.). At the same time citizens in these States have been pushed towards embracing digital technology in various forms in areas including finance and healthcare ("Digital India Technology to Transform a Connected Nation Executive Summary" 2019). The Indian government has enrolled over 1.2 billion of its citizens under Aadhaar – its biometric identity programme and facilitated the transition of more than 10 million businesses onto a common digital platform with a new good and services tax structure and system ("Digital India Technology to Transform a Connected Nation Executive Summary" 2019). India also happens to be one of the fastest and largest growing markets for digital customers with over half a billion internet subscribers ("Digital India Technology to Transform a Connected Nation Executive Summary" 2019). It is also the second largest and fastest growing markets for LinkedIn ("India Is LinkedIn's Fastest Growing Market: CEO Roslansky" 2022; Bhargava 2022). Similarly, digitalisation has been an important agenda for public services in Singapore ("Digital Government Blueprint," n.d.). The State envisions Singapore as a Smart Nation where technology is used to solve issue and improve lives ("Singapore Digital Government Journey," n.d.). In 2017, the government launched strategic projects – GoBusiness, CODEX, e-Payments, LifeSG, National Digital Identity, The Punggol Smart Town, Smart Nation Sensor Platform and Smart Urban Mobility – with the aim to promote adoption of digital and smart technologies ("Singapore Digital Government Journey," n.d.). Thus, Singapore and India have been working towards creating digital infrastructures and encouraging adoption of digital solutions by its citizens (Irani 2019; Chua 2019).

In 2019, Singapore passed the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill aimed at curbing fake news and controlling spread of false information (Wong 2019). This law gives the government the power to not only police online platforms and chat groups but also remove content it deems false and fake ("Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill - Singapore Statutes Online," n.d.). It allows bestows the government with the power to punish those found guilty of spreading falsehoods ("Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill - Singapore Statutes Online," n.d.). It prohibits people both in and outside Singapore to publish a false statement as a fact or sharing any communication prejudicial to the country's

security ("Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill - Singapore Statutes Online," n.d.). The law has been criticized for threatening civil liberties (Wong 2019); however, the government has insisted that the bill is only aimed at false statement and does not bestow the government with power to take action against people for their opinions (Lim 2019). It is important to note this as it impacts the local contexts in which people operate and could impact how they behave online. In the Indian context, there is no equivalent bill to curb falsehoods; however, there have been instances where citizens have been jailed for online statements perceived to hurt the country's image internationally (BBC News 2021). Further, social networking site Twitter has accused the Indian State for intimidating it for user data (Singh 2021).

While the political environment in both the countries discourage anti-government opinions, their push for local entrepreneurship and investment in digital infrastructures make them competitors in the race to attract foreign investment. The social, cultural, and political factors also influence the emergence and growth of entrepreneurship. How entrepreneurs in India and Singapore present themselves on LinkedIn must be taken into consideration against the backdrop of their geographical, political, social, and economic realities. Studies of racial and sexual identities (Butler 1993; Hill 1990) have often underlined how modernity is experienced differently across geographies and demographics. In his study of biobanks in Israel and Qatar, McGonigle (2020) shows how technology embeds and reinforces national identities in these Gulf countries differentially. The geographically comparative method used in his work highlights how technology use is indigenized at individual and collective levels through social, cultural, and political differences. This study is an attempt to uncover any differences in usage of LinkedIn across these sites of research and how that impacts self-presentation of entrepreneurs.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

For this study, two primary methodologies were used for data collection and analysis – content analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The use of combining these methods could be referred to as mixed methods research (MMR). It combines quantitative and qualitative approaches "for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007). MMR has been used in this study as using only one metric like content analysis can leave much to the interpretation of the researcher. Semi-structured interviews alone can offer insights into what people say they do but do not necessarily enable researchers to verify their words with action. Using two different methods helps overcome the weaknesses of each mode by combining their strengths to minimize errors within the constraint of time and limited resources (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian 2014).

2.1. Content Analysis

Luker (2008:189) describes content analysis as "a way of systematically surveying how often and in what categories things occur within texts." It is a method of both data collection and analysis, and focuses on language as a way to translate human cognition (Sapir 1944; Whorf 1956). Huff (1990) points out that content analysis can be used to study words to uncover underlying themes and identify larger patterns. It allows for analysis of qualitative and quantitative forms which may be rooted in different epistemologies and can thereby be assembled and interpreted differently. Luker (2008) states that the patterns which emerge through data extraction and analysis of such nature can support researchers to make points that may be difficult to do otherwise. For instance, these patterns can be helpful to identify an individual or collective structures such as values, norms, attitudes, etc. (Carley 1997; Huff 1990 quoted in Duriau, Reger and Pfarrer 2007). Over the years, the use of content analysis has expanded from the study of texts to other forms of data including visuals (Carneiro and Johnson 2014).

For the purpose of this study, 1000 publicly available LinkedIn Profiles (500 from each location) were downloaded. A list of entrepreneurs was compiled using LinkedIn search. At the time of compiling the list, I was logged into a test account that I created for this study. Keywords such as founder, co-founder, entrepreneur, CEO, business owner, and head were used with filters of Singapore and Mumbai. Each name was then searched on Google with the keyword – LinkedIn; For instance, "Jane Doe + LinkedIn". The profiles were then saved as a PDF file. This data collection process -

compiling a list and then downloading the profiles - spanned almost two months from September 2021 to the end of October 2021.

The compiled list had over 1200 profiles, of which 1000 were downloaded. The decision to download the profile was made based on access to the profile. LinkedIn prevents and discourages downloading profiles from the site. In February 2022, when I had been working on this study for over 8 months, they updated the terms of use, including downloading others' profiles in the "do not" section ("User Agreement | LinkedIn" 2022). According to the new terms, scraping of profiles is a violation of the user agreement. At this point, I was more than halfway into the study and therefore have used limited data from the profiles to maintain as much anonymity as possible. Since the profiles downloaded were publicly available, no consent was taken from these entrepreneurs. It is important to note though that publicly available profiles do not necessarily include all the information that a person may have posted on LinkedIn. Privacy settings (see Figure 2) may prevent some, most, or even all information from being available to those who are not logged into LinkedIn or those who are not part of a user's network. Currently, the social networking platform allows users to manage their settings and hide all or specific parts of their public profiles. The profiles, therefore, may not include all the details that an individual may have posted on their account. Likewise, some of the profiles from the initial list of over 1200 were completely hidden or unavailable for access or download for users not logged into LinkedIn. While downloading profiles, I was conscious of this and therefore downloaded profiles that had at least three visible sections of the basic data analysis set which included banner picture, display picture, headline, about, education and experience. As such, 1000 profiles that could be accessed were used.

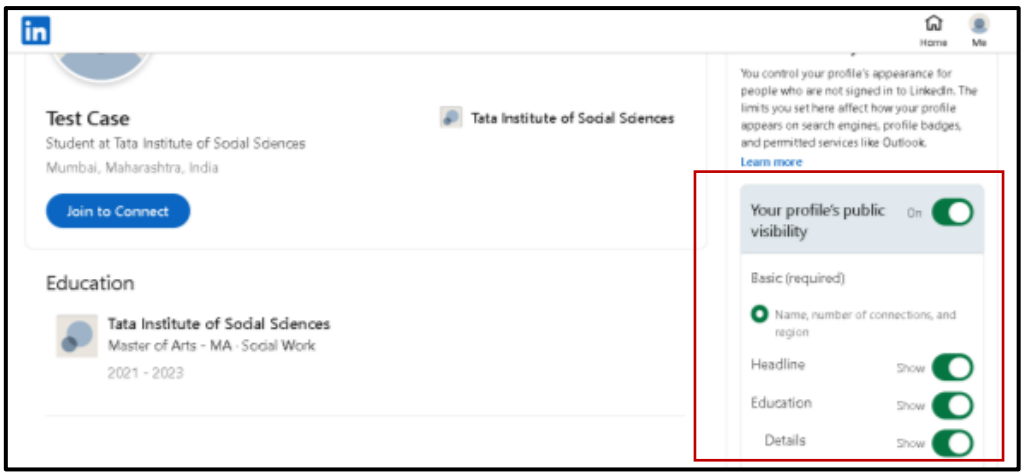

Figure 2 Snapshot of Privacy and visibility settings on LinkedIn

The profiles were analyzed in two parts. An excel sheet was used to quantify various sections of the profiles. For example, columns were made to capture different parts of the profile including Display Picture / LinkedIn Portrait, Banner Picture, Headline, About, Articles, Experience, Education, Volunteer Experience, Projects, Patents, Licenses and Certificates, Publications, Honors & Awards, Courses, Test, Organization, Activity, and Recommendations. Some or all the information that a user shares on their LinkedIn profile may not be available publicly. Thereby the columns, for which information did not exist in any given profile, were not marked negatively. Lastly, data on gender and industry were recorded against each profile. The profiles were also analyzed using the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo (Release1.5.1 (940)). Open-ended coding was undertaken to classify images and text on the profiles. Based on this data, various themes were developed that reflected specific patterns which showed primary contents in a profile and helped identify those that appeared multiple times. This data became the foundation for the analysis of entrepreneurs' profiles in Chapter 3. It highlighted that Mumbai-based entrepreneurs included personal, professional and non-professional information on their profiles whereas Singapore-based entrepreneurs present purely professional information covering education, experience and achievements in their profile.

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

The other data collection method used was the qualitative semi-structured in-depth interview. Semi-structured interviews help gather narratives (Luker 2008; Galletta 2013) and stories from a person's life while also allowing the interviewer to get a glimpse of the contextual influences (Galletta 2013). It also enables a researcher to access lived experiences that may contribute to theory building (Galetta 2013). When similar patterns in life histories, thoughts, ideas, values, etc. emerge across interviews with different participants, it can help address a social context and any issues therein (Luker 2008). A semi-structured interview as a qualitative method offers an inductive approach that enables an iterative process of uncovering meanings and building theory (Galetta 2013).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs and social media executives from Mumbai and Singapore. The objective of these interviews with entrepreneurs was to get qualitative information on their self-presentations on LinkedIn profiles, details on their journey, the words and descriptions they use online, and their experience using LinkedIn (both the platform and social interaction with others on it).

Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes to an hour. I also had a brief chat with the entrepreneurs before and after the interview and often found that they shared some interesting nuggets after the recording was switched off. If I found that part of the conversation interesting, I checked with the participant if I could use it for the study. All participants agreed that any part of the conversation could be used as they didn't believe it was controversial or untrue.

Social media executives were also interviewed for the study. They were asked about the services they offer to entrepreneurs for building and maintaining LinkedIn profiles. This discussion offered insights on the general perception of how and why LinkedIn is used, and how it can be leveraged for users' benefits - reputation management and personal branding. Interviews with both entrepreneurs and social media executives were recorded except for one social media executive. Details for this are given in the next section. Two separate consent forms were created for both sets of participants. They were informed about the consent form and its contents at the time of setting up the interview and at its start. All participants signed the form either before or after the interview.

2.3. Participants

Two sets of participants were recruited for the study – Entrepreneurs and social media executives. Entrepreneurs (see Tables 1 and 2) are defined as founders or promoters of for-profit startups, owners of small and medium-sized businesses, sole proprietorship[5], or partnership firms[6]. Participants of this study are based out of Singapore and Mumbai and have LinkedIn accounts. They are above 21 years of age, and own or run businesses across different sectors. Given below are the details of the participants of this study. Names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

Seven entrepreneurs were recruited in Mumbai, of which only one was a female entrepreneur. Four out of the seven entrepreneurs interviewed worked in the media / marketing / communication / advertising industry, one entrepreneur worked in manufacturing and one each in MediaTech and Wellbeing industries. Four out of the

[5] According to Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority in Singapore, a sole proprietorship "is a business that can be owned and controlled by an individual, a company or a limited liability partnership. There are no partners in the business." ("What Is a Sole Proprietorship," n.d.)

[6] According to Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority in Singapore, "A partnership is a business owned by at least 2 partners. The partner can be an individual, a company or a limited liability partnership. The maximum number of partners in a general partnership is 20." ("What Is a Partnership" n.d.)

seven entrepreneurs were in their mid-thirties while the rest were either in late forties or early fifties. Among these Rahul, a Mumbai-based entrepreneur, could have been selected an entrepreneur participant or social media executive. Rahul responded to my post on LinkedIn which I used to recruit entrepreneurs. In his response, he did not state his profession and I learnt about it when I contacted him to set up a meeting. It is important to note that his work is different from that of the social media executive recruited for this interview. While he prepares content for his clients, it is part of his work and not his entire job. Further, his work focuses more on managing organisations' communications needs rather than that of individuals. Furthermore, interviewing him as an entrepreneur allowed me to understand how an individual who juggles the hats of an entrepreneur and social media executive views the idea of self-presentation.

Name	**Location**	**Gender**	**Industry**
Yamini	Mumbai	F	MediaTech
Kapil	Mumbai	M	Wellness, Well-being and Fitness
Jeemit	Mumbai	M	Manufacturing
Kadar	Mumbai	M	Media, Communications, Advertising, Marketing, Entertainment & Events
Om	Mumbai	M	Media, Communications, Advertising, Marketing, Entertainment & Events
Rahul	Mumbai	M	Media, Communications, Advertising, Marketing, Entertainment & Events
Harman	Mumbai	M	Media, Communications, Advertising, Marketing, Entertainment & Events

Table 1 Details of entrepreneur participants from Mumbai

Seven entrepreneurs were recruited in Singapore as well (Table 2). Like in Mumbai, only one entrepreneur interviewed was female. This was not by design but I received fewer responses from female entrepreneurs in general. I reached out to about 79 entrepreneurs for interviews, of which 28 were female and the rest were male. Four of the seven entrepreneurs interviewed in Singapore worked in tech or tech hybrid industries like FinTech and EduTech whereas two worked in manufacturing and one in the media / marketing / communication / advertising industry. Three entrepreneurs were in their early to mid-thirties and the rest were in their fifties. Despite repeated attempts, I found it exceedingly difficult to recruit participants in both locations. This can be attributed to Covid-19 where most people were working remotely and may not have been interested in participating in an online study. Having said this, I believe that I have been able to draw valuable insights from the interviews.

Name	**Location**	**Gender**	**Industry**
Vishaka	Singapore	F	EduTech
Ashmeet	Singapore	M	FinTech
Jason	Singapore	M	AgriTech
Kailash	Singapore	M	FinTech
Daniel	Singapore	M	Manufacturing
Yash	Singapore	M	Manufacturing
Chiang	Singapore	M	Media, Communications, Advertising, Marketing, Entertainment & Events

Table 2 Details of entrepreneur participants from Singapore

Entrepreneurs were reached through direct emails, as well as posts and messages via LinkedIn. Those interested to participate in the study responded through emails or direct messages on LinkedIn, and interviews were organized subsequently. Except for Chiang, all interviews with entrepreneurs were conducted over Zoom. Chiang and I met at a local café in Singapore. Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes to an hour. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The recording was done using

an app on iPad and Otter.ai was used for transcription. The first draft of every interview transcription was then cleaned up and compared with the recording manually.

The interview process began with brief introductions, and quickly moved onto questions focused on LinkedIn profiles, what entrepreneurs say on it, their motivations to use the platform and how they use it and their overall experience. I focused on LinkedIn profile and account activity such as sharing content and interacting with other separately in most conversations unless the entrepreneurs spoke about these together. The idea was to understand different ways in which users structure their profile, their motivations in doing so and the outcome they expected and derived. I hoped these might offer cues into the emphasis on profile creation and maintenance and its usability vis-à-vis that of content sharing. My questions on content sharing and entrepreneurs' experiences online allowed me to learn about the relationship between self-presentations online and authenticity within the online social space. Most of these questions were open-ended and I found that entrepreneurs often ended up telling me not only about their online self-presentations but also offline, personal stories involving LinkedIn. This helped me understand the offline-online continuum that impacts people's actions and behaviour.

Another set of participants interviewed for the study were social media executives. Social media executives (see Table 3) are defined as professionals who advise, strategize and help people execute thought leadership and branding campaigns on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc. These executives have worked with entrepreneurs on their LinkedIn profiles. They are based out of Mumbai or Singapore and are above 21 years of age. Three such executives were interviewed for the study; two of them were based out of Mumbai and one was from Singapore. They were recruited through direct emails, direct messages on LinkedIn, and professional WhatsApp groups. Interviews with Rajani and Shaili (names have been changed for anonymity) were conducted over Zoom, and I met Callum (name changed) for the interview at a bar in Singapore. My conversations with Callum and Rajani were recorded and transcribed. At Shaili's request, the interview with her was not recorded and I made notes during and after the interview.

Name	Location	Gender
Callum	Singapore	M
Rajani	Mumbai	F
Shaili	Mumbai	F

Table 3 Details of social media executive participants from Mumbai and Singapore

The original focus was to show how social media executives and entrepreneurs work together on building online self-presentations. However, I encountered three issues in doing this; one, only three executives agreed to participate in the study; two, all of them hold identical views on personal branding and self-presentation; and three, with the exception 2 Singapore-based entrepreneurs, no one had worked or considered working with a professional for their LinkedIn profile. As I have noted later in the study, the approach of India-based entrepreneurs toward self-presentations and personal branding is different from their counterparts in Singapore. However, all the three executives, irrespective of their locations appreciated LinkedIn and underlined the value of personal branding online. Subsequently, I have used their quotes to present popular advice given to entrepreneurs from professionals working in the domain.

The data collected from the interviews with entrepreneurs and social media executives have been anonymized. Their names and that of their agencies or companies have been changed in the transcripts and in this study. Attempts were made to recruit more participants. However, getting people to respond through online channels was particularly tough. There were limited opportunities to persuade them and most often, reaching out through email, direct messages, and posts felt like an echo. Most emails and direct messages on LinkedIn were ignored. Few participants responded. Both entrepreneurs and social media executives were also reached out through LinkedIn and Facebook groups, small and medium business associations, entrepreneur-focused WhatsApp and Telegram groups, Nanyang Technological University and National University of Singapore entrepreneurship cells, etc. However, no response could be yielded through these channels. It was tougher to recruit social media executives than

entrepreneurs. The former told me that they were bound by what they called "iron-clad agreements"[7] with their clients and cited it as a reason to not participate in the study.

2.4. Coding and Analysis

Saldaña (2021) describes the term code as a "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data". For the interviews, I coded transcripts in Nvivo and developed codes in an iterative manner using in vivo coding initially. In vivo coding refers to coding using the words and phrases used by participants during the interview. The codes which emerged subsequently focused on entrepreneurs' use of LinkedIn and their experiences online. Based on the literature and further analysis, I developed thematic codes on self-presentation, personal branding and authenticity.

The data for content analysis was gathered from entrepreneurs' LinkedIn profiles. As such it was assembled and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. As a useful descriptive research method, quantitative content analysis makes it possible to identity patterns and meaning "visible at the surface level or literally present in the text" (Kondracki, Wellman and Amundson 2002). The purpose of undertaking quantitative content analysis was to assess how the LinkedIn template of the profile is used by entrepreneurs to present their selves. Profile sections were classified under Banner Picture, Display Picture, Headline, About, Awards & Recognitions, Volunteering Activity, and Patents. Information about the entrepreneurs' organization shared on the profile was captured under a separate code – About Company. Thematic codes were developed based on data from the first 200 profiles and the codes were tweaked as and when needed. An excel sheet was used to capture data in a quantifiable manner by recording data points available on the profile. As mentioned earlier every item on the profiles including experience, about, education, etc. was documented in an excel sheet. Where data did not exist, it was classified as unavailable. This is primarily because publicly available LinkedIn profiles were used for analysis and the privacy setting may prevent all available information from being visible to users not logged into LinkedIn.

[7] A few potential social media executives including the professionals interviewed for this study mentioned the term "iron-clad agreements". They explained that due to the nature of their agreements, they could not share any details of specific clients. Most declined to participate citing the agreement with their clients.

This categorization of data helped to underline how profiles differed in the two sites of research through the type of information shared. For instance, over 38 percent profiles in Singapore and 53 percent profiles in India included information on education and experience. Each of these was labeled as a separate category, reviewed, codified and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to identify geographical patterns. For example, the tendency to share personal attributes was higher among India-based entrepreneurs' profiles with 12 percent profiles sharing a personal story or anecdote or quality in the at least one of the sections whereas only 3 percent profiles in Singapore included personal attributes. Simiarly, banner pictures were categorized in an iterative manner. The top four categories of banner pictures consisted: (1) company logos; (2) mission/vision / philosophy; (3) achievements, recognition and awards earned by the entrepreneurs or their business; and (4) pictures of entrepreneurs with/out others. These categories were then reorganized under types of self-presentations and personal branding. Upon the suggestion of one of the examiners, I have used Tifferet and Yavetz's (2018) approach to analyse the display pictures. However, given the amount of time I only analysed display pictures of entrepreneurs interviewed for this study. Given the small number of interviewed participants, I did not conduct regression tests. The data from this analysis is used to show how entrepreneurs use different features of the LinkedIn template. My analysis indicates that most entrepreneurs, irrespective of their location, adhere to popular advice on display picture, and this is in line with Van Djick's (2013) analysis on the conflation of self-expression and self-promotion.

A codebook was created at the start of the study for content analysis, and it was updated through an iterative process during the course of the study. Separate codes were created to classify and categorize data gathered from the LinkedIn profiles by way of content analysis, and interviews. For LinkedIn profiles, separate codes linked to the different sections of the profiles were created along with codes to capture thematic data. As mentioned above, it helped identify patterns in what entrepreneurs shared in different sections, and allowed a comparison between what entrepreneurs told me during the interviews. For instance, I found that most India-based entrepreneurs share personal and non-professional information alongside professional information in their profile as opposed to mostly professional information shared by Singapore-based counterparts.

Chapter 3: Self-presentation and Personal Branding on LinkedIn

I met Callum, a social media expert, at a bar in Singapore's southwest region for an interview. Callum is a self-professed LinkedIn expert who advises his clients on how to create and use profiles effectively. He believes that every person has a brand, and it's best to define our brands rather than let others do it for us. Callum is also a proponent of LinkedIn and thinks of it as an effective tool to build one's personal brand. Why wouldn't he, I thought? After all, LinkedIn itself claims that a profile on the SNS "is a professional landing page for you to manage your own, personal brand" ("Your LinkedIn Profile," n.d.). According to LinkedIn, one's profile on the SNS is a way "to tell people who you are and what you do" ("Your LinkedIn Profile," n.d.). The structure and template of a LinkedIn profile is designed for users to share information through which they can present their professional self. Besides LinkedIn, a resume or curriculum vitae are used to present one's professional education and experience. The LinkedIn profile builds on the curriculum vitae while providing space for users to express and narrate personal stories. Some of the information, for instance name and date of birth are to be shared mandatorily at the time of creating a profile, but most of the other information like education, experience and summary are not. When entrepreneurs decide to share information on LinkedIn, they often decide to share information depending on what they think is important to build their profile on the site. For instance, a user can share information under education by simply listing the degrees they have been awarded or with additional details such as their grade, experience at the institution, achievements and so on. Silfverberg, Liikkanen and Lampinen (2011) use the term profile work to highlight how people construct their public profiles on social networking sites by using their profiles as products, sharing or updating content and information through interpretations, balancing conflicting goals of aligning with contextual social norms and personal desires and regulating their profiles based on technology and other factors.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of how entrepreneurs in Mumbai and Singapore present themselves in their profiles and the content strategies they adopt. The distinctive strategies they use for the different formats are guided by different expectations and cognition (Kreling, Meier and Reinecke 2022). The response that they receive to these strategies impact their experience on the platform and in turn helps them derive value from it. I also present their views and approaches toward personal branding to theorize self-presentation and personal branding as a performance. I use

Turner's (1976) analysis of the self anchored in institutions and the self anchored in impulse with existing scholarship on personal branding, self-presentation and social media to theorize how entrepreneurs perform on LinkedIn and interpret others' actions. Experiences and interactions on the platform are important to understand how entrepreneurs derive the value of LinkedIn as a platform. How entrepreneurs value LinkedIn and what they do on the platform because it often reflects the importance assigned to one's actions (Graeber 2001). It influences how they determine and place value on their own actions on LinkedIn such as building a personal brand and a professional network.

3.1. Personal Branding

The term personal branding gained currency following Tom Peters' article on the subject in Fast Magazine in 1997[8]. Scholarly work on personal branding describes it as a process to present an individual's distinguishing factors or qualities to a given audience (Kaputa 2012; Shepherd 2005). For the purpose of this study, I use Gershon's (2016:223) definition of personal branding which she describes as "a performance genre that includes a set of semiotic techniques designed to solve a problem that emerges when workers seek to present themselves as worthy of alliances under contemporary neoliberal conceptions of the ideal working self." One of the ways to perform personal branding lies in what Gershon (2018) calls the entrepreneurial self. It is a style of self-presentation wherein one combines their skills, qualities, relationships, etc. to demonstrate a coherent and credible self. It has been argued that personal branding in not merely sharing this personal information but rather how it is organized and presented to others (Lair, Sullivan and Cheney 2005). This presentation needs to be "consciously managed and continuously enhanced" (Gershon 2018:175). Callum and Rajani, the social media executives that I spoke with, told me that users can build, emphasize and strengthen their personal brands on LinkedIn by using its various features.

> "The picture is the best thing. The banner is really, really important. Your professional photograph next one. Then your headline and your headline should have keywords in it, say, who you work for, what you do in four lines. And then the base is about the featured section and content, then it's about your

[8] Tom Peters, "The Brand Called You," Fast Company (Fast Company, August 31, 1997), https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you.

activities which is more content, then it's experience and recommendations."- Callum (Social Media Executive, Singapore)

Rajani told me thought leadership content was particularly important for entrepreneurs and senior leaders at large organizations to stand out on LinkedIn. She emphasized that sharing regular content was an important way to engage with followers and fortify one's brand on LinkedIn. When Rajani and Callum discussed their strategies to position their clients on LinkedIn, they implied that the decision to brand one's personhood is an individual, conscious undertaking. However, it is apparent from their work with entrepreneurs and CEOs that the personal branding exercise is not necessarily an individual endeavor. In some cases, it may be a joint effort of the individual and marketing teams or external social media executives like Rajani and Callum. Even when entrepreneurs decide to manage their profiles, it is a social process influenced by the ecosystem, perception of the self, and multiple other factors.

One of the influencing factors is the SNS itself – LinkedIn. Scholars like Van Djick (2013) have pointed out the change in LinkedIn's position from "being databases of information" to platforms "for (personal) storytelling and narrative self-presentation" (Van Djick 2013:200). She also argues that platforms like LinkedIn conflate individuals' need for self-expression with self-promotion. LinkedIn can thereby be understood as a space where people build their narratives (Van Djick 2013). Its template is designed to encourage users to share more information about themselves. The SNS makes it possible for users to strengthen their performances of personal branding in three broad ways – self-presentation in the profile, sharing regular content[9], and interacting with others through comments, likes, shares, and direct messages. When entrepreneurs create their accounts, they have to mandatorily update basic information such as name, education, location, and so on. LinkedIn prompts them through brief guidelines that accompany the different sections of the SNS, and assigns a star-based rating to every profile, visible only to the individual user, based on the information shared in each section. If users share updated information in every section including but not limited to education, about, experience, and so on, an all-star rating is assigned to the profile. When a user has not shared recent information like their current role in the experience section, the SNS prompts them to update the profile at various

[9] During our conversations, Singapore-based entrepreneurs admitted to engaging in personal branding, and told me that share content regularly on LinkedIn. The frequency of sharing content ranges from once a day to at least 2-3 times a week.

points. Based on prompts like these and social norms on the platform (Hanusch and Bruns 2017), users share information based on what they deem fit. By creating their profiles and sharing information in its various sections, entrepreneurs seek to present their complex selves intertwined in social, economic, and demographic information into "a regimented semiotically constructed subject" (Gershon 2016) enclosed within LinkedIn's template. The personal brand is built using the template and emphasized, shaped, and reshaped through regular content shared by entrepreneurs and interactions on the platform. Content sharing is understood as a critical action in not only creating one's profile but also, as noted in Uski and Lampinen's (2014) study on Facebook and Last.fm, to maintain it and enable users to determine and present an authentic self. In the following sections, I present my findings on how entrepreneurs build their profiles and the information they share. This is followed by an analysis of their content sharing strategies based on the interview data.

Figure 3 Snapshot of LinkedIn's internal rating of a profile visible only to the user

3.2.Profile Analysis

Entrepreneurs construct their profiles and narratives (Roundy 2016) to simulate the production of social networks that circulate and modulate social connections, ideas and feelings (Carah 2011). In their LinkedIn profiles, entrepreneurs can create a visual presentation through the display and banner pictures, and textual descriptions using the other sections. They use these sections to share specific details that build and strengthen their professional narratives. Sharing consistent information helps entrepreneurs to create a coherent and credible presentation (Gershon 2016). It also helps them with what Goffman (1959) refers to as impression management when reaching out to others on the SNS. A significant proportion of Mumbai-based entrepreneurs shared information (See Figure 3) through the education (85%), experience (94%), about (72%), display picture (76%) and headline sections (94%).

Banner pictures (44%) were the least used features of the template, and most often were used to convey personal philosophy, their other works not necessarily directly related to their professional endeavours such as a painting made by them or a book they authored as well as pictures of themselves with their teams. Most Mumbai-based entrepreneurs simply listed their education and experience. However, entrepreneurs who have had graduated from a prestigious institution like Indian Institute of Technology or had worked with a globally well-known corporation mentioned them multiple times in different sections of the profile. Headlines often were used to describe a personal attribute or quality along with a brief description of what they did professionally instead of a designation and organization name. In contrast, entrepreneurs in Singapore while sharing information (see figure 4) across sections - education (74%), experience (88%), headline (89%), banner picture (62%), display picture (75%) and about (67%) appeared to follow popular advice found on the Internet (Ryan 2021; Reilly 2019). Details on education and experience are listed out in respective sections and the headline section is used to convey individual's designation and organization. Singapore-based entrepreneurs use banner pictures more than their Mumbai counterparts, and most of the banners include company logo and awards won either by the individual or the organization. Sharing information on awards helps them to establish credibility for themselves and legitimacy for their business.

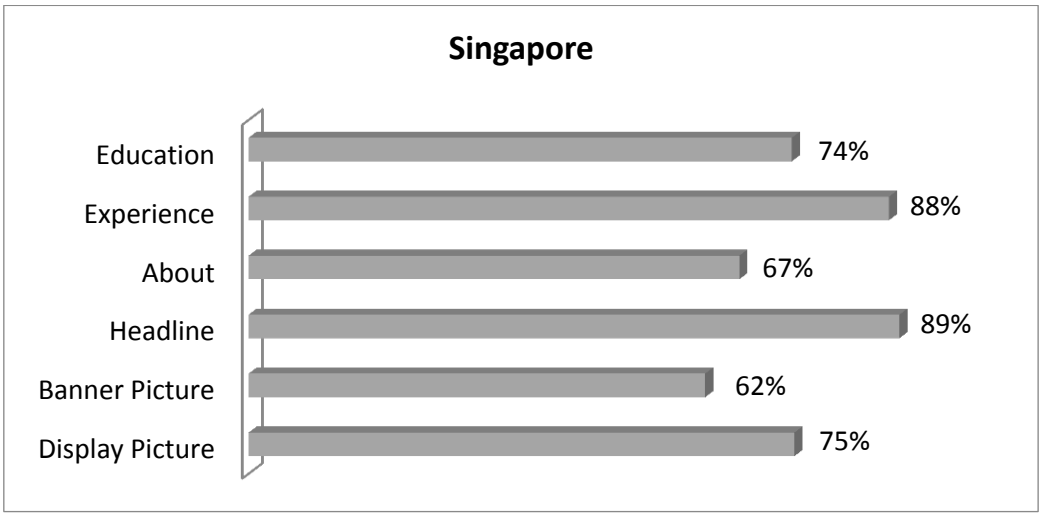

Figure 4 A section-wise break up of contents in the profiles of Singapore-based entrepreneurs

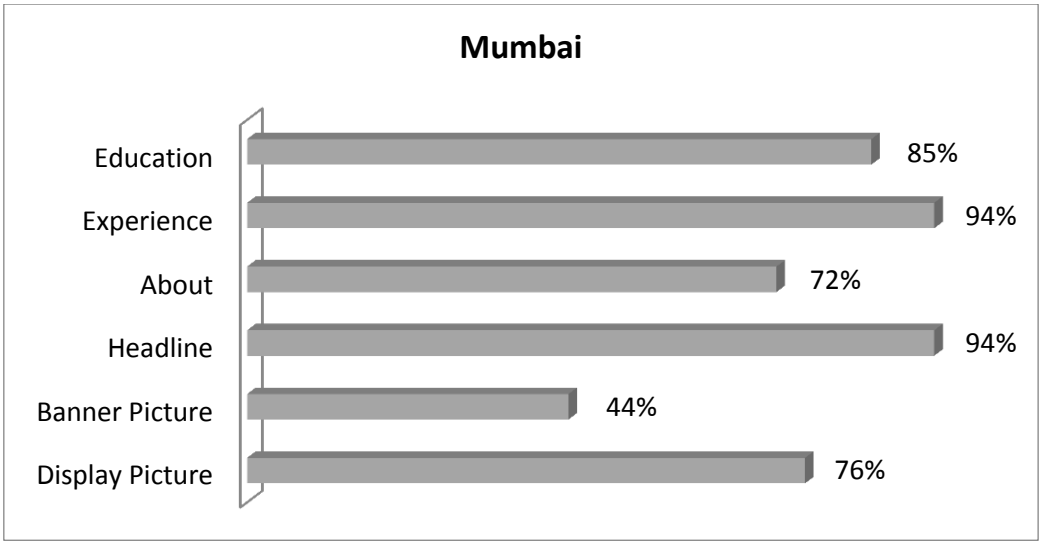

Figure 5 A section-wise break up of contents in the profiles of Singapore-based entrepreneurs

The "about" section provides the most flexibility in descriptions with a higher character count limit of 2,600[10]. I found that entrepreneurs' self-presentations in this section across both geographies follow a formulaic style that encompasses 3-4 sentences, each of which elaborates on the individual's work experience, skills, and education. Even when entrepreneurs do not follow this formulaic style, their presentations differ in structure but resemble in content. Most descriptions in the about section combine information from an entrepreneur's past - educational qualifications, work experience, achievements, awards and recognition, and present - current work or role, skills, capabilities, beliefs, and philosophies with future goals, objectives, and plans. By weaving together these different nuggets of information, entrepreneurs seek to establish credibility and trustworthiness and present themselves as wealth-in-people as defined by Guyer (1993; Ghosh 2020). A detailed analysis of the profiles of participants of the study presented trends specific to each geographic location.

Geography	**Profile Sections**					
	Display Picture	**Banner Picture**	**About**	**Headline**	**Education**	**Experience**
Mumbai (India)	7/7	5/7	4/7	7/7	7/7	7/7
Singapore	6/7	6/7	4/7	5/7	5/7	5/7

Table 4 Analysis based on publicly available profiles of entrepreneur participants interviewed

[10] LinkedIn counts a 'character' to include letters, numbers, spaces, and punctuation. This character limit is applicable for every section including first name (20 characters), last name (40 characters), headline (120 characters), recommendations (3,000 characters), and so on.

I found that Mumbai-based entrepreneurs interviewed for the study use the headline, banner picture, and about sections to communicate about their work and experience as do entrepreneurs in Singapore. In fact, among the entrepreneurs interviewed Mumbai-based participants shared more information in their publicly available profiles than their Singapore counterparts (See Table 4). What distinguishes the content of Mumbai-based entrepreneurs from Singapore-based participants is the emphasis on their personal qualities, characteristics, and philosophies. For instance, Mumbai-based entrepreneurs highlight their expertise in the headline rather than their designation and organization's name which were common among Singapore-based entrepreneurs' profiles. I also found that five out of the seven Mumbai entrepreneurs interviewed used their banner pictures to signal their expertise or philosophy. In my conversation with Rahul, he told me that his profile was not a well-planned strategy but an actual account of his real self. His claims of authenticity are rooted in presenting a self anchored in impulse (Turner 1976). This sentiment was echoed by Yamini, Kadar and Om who underlined their presentation is driven intrinsically and was not drafted to align with any external pressures.

The data from Singapore-based entrepreneurs' profiles indicates that the information they share is focused on building wealth-in-people (Guyer 1993; Guyer and Belinga 1995) through quantitative and qualitative achievements in their professional and academic life. This information is communicated in numerous ways like adding the name of the accelerator or investor in the headline and about section, listing out the awards that they or their organizations have won, etc. The headline highlights their designation, names of investors, and awards won to help visitors of their profile gauge their success as entrepreneurs, and thereby increase their symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986). Their performances on the platform align with Turner's (1976) self anchored in institutions. I found that 4 out of 7 Singapore-based entrepreneurs interviewed for this study continuously strengthen their personal brands on LinkedIn and the rest use their brands passively. Since reproducing this data directly from the profile would violate the promised anonymity, I use the table below (see table 5) to present the comparative patterns of self-presentation of Mumbai and Singapore-based entrepreneurs.

LinkedIn Profile Sections	Patterns Identified	
	Mumbai	**Singapore**
Banner Picture	A quote, philosophical statement, or some work done personally but related to their work like the cover of their published book or painting, etc.	Company logos, information on hiring, or fundraising.
Headline	Expertise	Designation and Company name
About	Personal qualities, characteristics, approach, etc.	More focused on business goals, professional and personal achievements, etc.

Table 5 Qualitative analysis from profiles of entrepreneur participants interviewed

The profile of Mumbai-based entrepreneurs differs from that of their Singapore counterparts in multiple ways. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs focus on their personal qualities or attributes while sharing their education and experience. In contrast, Singapore-based entrepreneurs focus on their achievements and business goals. It appears as an attempt to materialize their abilities rather than state it. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, profiles are often looked upon a "calling cards" or ways to offer a snapshot of an individual to their visitors. Conversations with Mumbai-based entrepreneurs like Rahul and Harman reveal that their profiles are written to present who they really are. Singapore-based entrepreneurs told me that their profiles are written to present their professional selves. Their profiles exist in the neoliberal complexes where being on "LinkedIn is essential" (interviews with Harman, Rahul, Jason, Ashmeet and Vishakha). How they present themselves is a combination of the social norms on LinkedIn and in their daily life, how they perceive themselves, their experiences online and view on personal branding. Entrepreneurs share content to strengthen their profiles through which they seek to simulate interaction, and cultural practices (Carah and Louw 2015) to contribute to their work in everyday life and strengthen their online presentation.

I analysed display pictures of participants interviewed for the study using Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2018) approach of analyzing LinkedIn portraits. Of the 7 participants from Mumbai, only 1 was female while the rest were male. With the exception of one entrepreneur who used an outdated full length picture where the individual did not face the camera, the other Mumbai-based entrepreneurs adhered to popular advice found on

the internet and on LinkedIn blogs (Abbot 2019). 6 out of the 7 participants used colour photographs with only their face or upper body visible in the picture; 6 entrepreneurs used either a solid background or work setting, and smiled widely; and 4 of the 6 men were clean shaven. Adherence to popular advice shows that entrepreneurs want to be taken seriously and enhance their perceived likeability (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz 2018). Although Mumbai-based participants express themselves differently and want to portray themselves as selves anchored in impulse (Turner 1976), their display pictures are compliant with the norms of LinkedIn. In my discussion with entrepreneurs in Mumbai they appeared to care less about what their portraits look like and seemed to have shared it as out of necessity to complete their profiles rather than a personal choice.

Of the 7 Singapore-based entrepreneurs, only 6 had display pictures on their publicly available profiles. All of them were male. All of them adhered to popular advice on most criteria. However, the pictures of Singapore-based entrepreneurs appeared more professional than their Mumbai counterparts with appropriate lighting composition and 4 of the 6 appeared to have been taken in a studio setting; 4out 6 had colour photographs and the remaining used black and white portraits; and the setting for most was either work or none. I found that most participants in Singapore were conscious of their display pictures. They told me that they used pictures which were professional and presented them in a better light. As noted by Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz (2018) this level of uniformity strengthens the use of LinkedIn for self-promotion rather than self-expression.

3.3. Content Strategies and Personal Branding

I found that entrepreneurs use different approaches to construct their profiles and share content on LinkedIn. While Mumbai-based entrepreneurs present an account of the self through personal qualities and philosophies, professional expertise and non-professional work, their content strategy focuses on sharing purely professional content. Singapore-based entrepreneurs adopt an exact opposite approach with their profiles tailored to focus on professional information and their content sharing strategy based on a mix of personal and professional opinions. In this section, I highlight my findings based on the content strategies used by both set of participants to underline their online performances and underline their views and attitudes towards personal branding.

3.3.1. For Mumbai-based entrepreneurs

> "On a day-to-day basis, I just find it quite noise creating and honestly don't feel to say the shit out of it. I don't think (a) I am a mass mobilizer. I don't think I have the discipline to be so consistent to comment, keep following up on my opinions and beliefs and keep putting it out there. And you can't randomly show up on something and log out and then have the world fight in the comments and not reply to them and… it takes a ridiculous amount of diligence and just consistently putting out the (inaudible)… I don't have that. I am too involved in building things in my head, theories in my head, and studying. And you know, coming up with a big idea." – Yamini (Technology, Mumbai)

> "Social media per se in the case of LinkedIn because they wanted to build a community and the community was supposed to be of professionals. It is still a single lane broadcast platform and not… not an engagement platform" – Rahul (Communications and Marketing, Mumbai)

I found that most Mumbai-based entrepreneurs including Rahul and Yamini understand personal branding similar to how Gershon (2016) describes it. For instance, Yamini thinks that personal branding is an ongoing exercise that requires an individual practicing it to continuously engage with their followers. When I asked them about their frequency to share content on LinkedIn, they responded that it was "not as frequent" as others. The others seemed more like the imaginary audience described by Marwick and boyd (2011) and "not as frequent" had different meanings to each one of Mumbai-based participants. For Yamini and Kapil, it meant posting when they had something relevant to say. This translates into about once in 2-3 months for Yamini and 2-3 times a month for Kapil. For Rahul and Kadar, the frequency was about 2-3 times a week depending on the projects delivered for clients every week. However, none of them seem to think that they have a timeline to adhere to. They also expressed not being interested in sharing content on a regular basis because of two factors; one, because they think that entrepreneurs must only share content that is relevant to their work and should contribute meaningfully and within matters of their profession or expertise; and two, it is viewed as a time consuming process that requires dedication and perseverance.

Social capital (Utz 2016; Adler and Kwon 2002) is an important factor in how individuals use social networking sites. It allows individuals to enjoy goodwill that emerges from social relations in their network, and is available in the form of information, influence and solidarity (Adler and Kwon 2002). Utz (2016) states that social capital on SNS can be understood as informational and emotional benefits. The former, she explains, is a result of access, timing and referrals (Utz 2016). While in the context of job seekers, referrals are understood as mechanisms to find or being referred for a job, for entrepreneurs it can in the form of being recommended to a client or vendor or even endorsed as an expert on a given subject. During my interactions with entrepreneurs in Mumbai and Singapore, it became apparent that they see reward in the form of engagement and interactions play a big role in personal branding. When social media users receive likes and comments on their posts, they are more likely to post and share (Abidin and Thompson 2012). The number of likes is also used as factor to compare different and rank user's standings (Chua and Chang 2016). In their work on journalistic branding on Twitter, Hanusch and Bruns (2017) discuss the manifold benefits of branding for journalists that can boost journalists' economic and social capital. Similarly, entrepreneurs who engage in personal branding on LinkedIn are perceived to target benefits not only in the form of likes and comments but also external opportunities like a panel discussion, nomination on a company board and so on. Entrepreneurs in Mumbai view those who engage in personal branding on LinkedIn as social media influencers who seek likes and comments rather than entrepreneurs. In their view, entrepreneurs who engage in personal branding on social media treat it in the same way as their primary business and are on a quest for likes, comments and followers. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs therefore think that such presentations are not necessarily a true reflection of the self. This is in line with Marwick and boyd's (2010) insights where they pointed out how conscious interaction with one's audience can be perceived as inauthentic by some users.

Among the Mumbai-based entrepreneurs interviewed for this study, Rahul and Kadar have consciously attempted personal branding, and the lack of expected rewards deterred them for engaging online. Rahul told me that he tried personal branding during the first few years of being on the platform. However, the response that he received for his posts was abysmal and sighed that engagement was "Very low. Hardly (any) interactions." Kadar also shared a similar experience. He told me that after posting regularly for a year he realized that it was a full time job.

> “I don't think… what LinkedIn is good is if you post every day and you become a sort of influencer of sorts, then you that's a good road roadmap to take. And then that's your calling, you're not doing anything else. You're just giving gas, and you're talking and you're hopefully getting called on panels, etc. And you build a following and you've got now 50,000 followers, then your home. But that's another story. I don't do that. I don't know how to post something every day in eight days, which I'd like to do.” – Kadar (Production and Entertainment, Mumbai)

> “4 years ago, 4 years ago, I used to do that. It never yielded any results apart from one or two conversations with some corporate communications guys. Never yielded results so I never ventured into it. 4 years ago... Then I realized that most of the people who are on LinkedIn and say that they want to be reached out to or they want to engage or they want to converse no one’s interested in all those things.” – Rahul (Communications and Marketing, Mumbai)

> “I've tried it in the past, but I think we were not successful or maybe not so geared towards networking and getting because these are large ticket projects. The business that we are in, fairly, we do get direct orders from the customer or we approach (them). As such, there is no lead or anything that I could get through LinkedIn.” – Jeemit (Manufacturing, Mumbai)

> “People don't, even if they've sent me a connection request, and when you ask them for a call, the first thing that they ask is why, you know, so I mean, so it's it for me, it is kind of self-defeating because if the person has got in touch with me, he's got in touch with me for a particular reason. The only thing I gather is that they probably want to know what am I publishing or what is what are my interests so they basically are kind of expanding their, you know, area of it. They are not seeking to make any real connections there.” – Harman (Communications and Marketing, Mumbai)

Entrepreneurs like Rahul, Jeemit, Harman and Kadar experienced that their posts did not receive significant interactions and consequently did not result into positive benefits for the businesses they run. They therefore seem to have derived lesser social capital (Utz 2016; Adler and Kwon 2002; Bourdieu 1986) from LinkedIn. Even entrepreneurs who have managed to build a respectful following also assign LinkedIn

on the lower side of the value scale. Mumbai-based entrepreneur Kapil works in the wellness industry. He has 2,700 followers on LinkedIn and writes about his work on the platform. He told me that he does not engage in personal branding but uses LinkedIn to "amplify" his work. He clarified further stating that he writes about his work on a blog when he has something relevant to share and posts the link with a description on his LinkedIn profile. While doing so, he often tags his current or previous collaborators and individuals he wants to engage in a conversation with.

> "If I have 2000 people on my LinkedIn list, I will not try and get engagement from 2000 people, it's a lot more focused in terms of who I want to be engaging with on those posts as well" - Kapil

When Kapil shares something on his blog or LinkedIn, he seeks meaningful and productive engagement from those he thinks can truly contribute to his work. This strategy of not wanting to attract the attention of all his followers can be understood as an extension of Kadar, Yamini and Rahul's "noise" or "clutter" environment on LinkedIn. Since Kapil only posts what he considers important, he seeks to interact and engage in a way where he and individuals who read his posts can take away critical ideas that can be developed further or implemented He insisted that he does not engage in personal branding because for him, individuals who do so need to post regularly irrespective of whether they say something "truly meaningful" or not. The engagement that such individuals receive may simply be a like or comment without any attempt for change or improvement. For Mumbai-based entrepreneurs, sharing content regularly for the sake of it is part of personal branding which translates into a strategic presentation of the self. They insisted that those who share anything and everything in their quest to build personal brands often do so to get more followers and have created an industry out of it (interviews with Kadar, Rahul, Yamini, and Jeemit). Such entrepreneurs are viewed as selves rooted in institutions (Turner 1976) that conform to social demands and pressures for higher engagement. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs' content strategy to post only when they have something meaningful and focused only on their professional work, however, has not enabled them to simulate the production of social networks online. They have also not been able to build an online network and lament that LinkedIn does not fulfill the promise of an online community (interviews with Rahul and Harman).

For Mumbai-based entrepreneurs, they do not engage in personal branding as they do not share posts frequently, do not share for the sake of it and do not think of

themselves as experts. On frequency, two out of five participants share posts once in a month, two share posts once times in 1-2 weeks months and three share 2-3 times in a week. They share posts only when they have something meaningful to say in their area of work, and do not seek rewards in the form of comments and likes. However, Rahul and Kadar also revealed that they do not engage in personal branding because when they attempted it they did not receive any interaction. While Mumbai-based entrepreneurs insist that they do not share to come across as experts, five out of seven state their expertise in the headline and relay about it in their profiles. They perform different versions of the self; the static profile page captures personal, professional and non-professional information and the dynamic content sharing focuses only on the professional side. In their profiles, they seek to present their authentic selves and distinguish this presentation from personal branding as they think that personal branding and authenticity cannot co-exist. Inclusion of personal, professional and non-professional information in their profiles might also be due to the lack of response or the inability to build a network online. As a result, they use their profile as a tool of introduction and offer details that present not only their professional self but also offer glimpses into other roles they play or characteristics they embody as a person. Given that their profiles satisfy the flexibility criteria, it can also be argued that they legitimize their claims by chronicling work related posts which they think are relevant and meaningful to their connections and followers. They perform differently for the same audience based on what they seek. It is also shaped their interpretations of the self and experiences on the platform.

3.3.2. For Singapore-based entrepreneurs

In stark contrast to their Mumbai counterparts, Singapore-based entrepreneurs have a positive outlook on personal branding and claim to practice it. Unlike what Mumbai-based entrepreneurs allege, most Singapore-based entrepreneurs interviewed for this study told me that they use their LinkedIn profile to grow their businesses. Having said this, they acknowledge the importance of their self-presentation on LinkedIn and how it is important not only to expand their business but also their credibility and relationships with stakeholders. Jason is the founder of an AgriTech start-up in Singapore, and uses LinkedIn regularly to share posts and interact with others. I asked him about his presentation on the platform, to which he responded:

> "My identity is pretty tied to my work. So I answer that question, I guess by talking about my work." – Jason (Agritech, Singapore)

> "I want to show people that, you know, I'm not just someone who's hustling, I have technical achievements. I can think about things from different angles. That's not unique to being a founder, I think, in general, people want to show that on the profiles." – Jason (Agritech, Singapore)

Unlike the assumptions of Mumbai-based entrepreneurs, I found that entrepreneurs in Singapore primarily use their LinkedIn profiles for the organizations that they run. Entrepreneurs in Singapore display an awareness of what they do LinkedIn and what they get in return. They are cognizant that they are watched as they watch others, and that their LinkedIn self-presentations can be used effectively to reach and influence or impress upon a variety of stakeholders. Jason elaborated on this, saying:

> "I think most investors at the venture capital community are pretty obsessed with introductions. It's almost a meme, right? Like, you have to have an introduction. So it's all about engineering your way into an introduction with the right people. And LinkedIn is just so crucial for that because whenever I see an investor or one introduction to look them up on LinkedIn, I see who our first-degree connections are, and then I reach (out) to those connections and ask them to message me, and that may end up in a group chat." – Jason (Agritech, Singapore)

Jason uses his profile to present a professional self and shares details on his work, appreciates colleagues and highlights non-professional or personal achievements from time to time. This includes a post on his life as a dog dad, his fitness routine and general commentary on business policies in Southeast Asia among other things. Similarly, Chiang told me that he uses LinkedIn to establish their credibility through personal branding which allows him to make connections and help boost his business in the long run.

> "I think that (if) you use it to sell directly, is (what) most people don't respond to that. So what I do use it for is I use the platform to talk about anything and everything that interests me." – Chiang (Singapore)

Chiang told me that he writes about entrepreneurship, trends in his sector, hiring, movies and sports. Sometimes, he also publishes social commentary on latest developments in Singapore that affect people at large without politicizing it. However, he never directly talks about the services he offers. Rather, he highlights his work through posts on achievements of his clients and team's accomplishments. Among Singapore entrepreneurs, Kiran, Jason and Chiang practice personal branding consciously and share posts almost on a daily basis. Like Chiang, Kiran also expressed that sharing content from one's personal, non-professional and professional life helps to present them not as a salesman of their business but as a potential partner. This helps them derive social capital (Utz 2016; Adler and Kwon 2002; Bourdieu 1986) and has resulted into a strong network on LinkedIn. Chiang and Kiran told me at length about how these networks have made possible a wider reach for the content they share, translating into informational and emotional benefits (Utz 2016). At time, they further insisted, this reach has enabled them to tap into numerous opportunities for their businesses and themselves.

Some of my Singapore-based respondents practice personal branding in a limited way but value it. Vishakha who founded her Edtech start-up during the pandemic has received a grant from a Singapore-based fund. She admitted that she was not very good with social media and practices personal branding minimally. She also reflected on how, since incorporating the start-up, she has expanded her network on LinkedIn from a double-digit number to a few hundred. Similarly, Ashmeet, a Singapore-based FinTech entrepreneur, told me that while he does not extensively engage in personal branding, he ensures that it is updated on a regular basis to reflect his current status. He displays self-awareness about visitors forming an impression about him based on his LinkedIn profile. This is in line with the cycle of interpretation where individuals determine how others interpret the content they share (Uski and Lampinen 2014). When I asked him about ensuring an updated profile, despite not engaging in intense personal branding, he exclaimed:

> "If I am being honest, I think the kind of partnerships or the people we have reached out to, I don't think it would have been possible if there was not a social network like LinkedIn because I am not from a financial services background so getting those partnerships or getting those people within the industry to work with us and doing something first of its kind in the market has been the challenging part. If not for LinkedIn, it would have probably taken much more time and it wouldn't have been this simple. So I think from that

> perspective, yes, I think it really impacts in terms of product development and channel partnerships. I mean, those are a few things that wouldn't have been possible if not for LinkedIn." – Ashmeet (Fintech, Singapore)

While Ashmeet and Vishakha may not exercise personal branding or use their personal brands extensively, their presentations are purposely designed to make them look like selves anchored in institutions (Turner 1976) as they believe that demonstration of institutional values is appreciated in their business ecosystems. This is a result of the response that they have garnered through the platform and a general sense of what is expected from entrepreneurs on LinkedIn. Daniel, who runs a manufacturing organization, was the sole Singapore-based entrepreneur who held a contrarian view on personal branding. His profile is updated and he shares content and interacts regularly with individuals who, he considers, can help his work but does not think of it as personal branding since he uses it for professional work. Compared to his Singapore-based peers, he thinks that LinkedIn must only be used for professional purposes and not to market oneself. He however insisted that LinkedIn is important and not merely a social media platform but a network that helps him reach out to people across the globe.

I wondered why most entrepreneurs in Singapore practice personal branding. I found that their participation is often encouraged by other participants in their offline ecosystems. For instance, Jason told me:

> "I mean, what you should be doing, and not entrepreneur LinkedIn playbook, I think is making you know, a post every week or two weeks that posts should be a mixture of stuff related to what you're doing. And then during announcements about your company, and also shout out to different team members, and that kind of stuff." – Jason (Agritech, Singapore)

When Jason refers to the "entrepreneur LinkedIn playbook", he exhibits an awareness of the specific ways in which entrepreneurs are expected to post, share and interact on LinkedIn. Like Vishakha, Jason received funding as part of a Singapore-based start-up fund which he said was "notorious for being worried about branding and about execution." Entrepreneurs in Singapore, who had received grants for their start-ups, appeared to believe that they must use their LinkedIn profiles to highlight their work. Academic scholarship on startup entrepreneurs has underlined how entrepreneurship is a collaborative effort and not necessarily an individual endeavor (Roundy 2016; Ghosh 2019, 2022). Entrepreneurs who are part of accelerator ecosystems view these circles

as communities of idea exchange and work barter (Roundy 2016). Entrepreneur's success also reflects on the ability and decision making of the accelerator or investor in identifying profitable future pitches and plans. Roundy (2016) discussed how entrepreneurial ecosystems are produced through success stories, historical accounts and future-oriented narrative building. While success stories provide an account of a startup's valuation, historical and future-oriented narratives are tools to present the entrepreneur's vision. The notoriety of investors or funders that Jason alludes to focuses on building and publicizing successful entrepreneurial stories that can help them attract more emerging startups. As a result, entrepreneurs like Vishakha and Jason feel external pressure to brand themselves on LinkedIn as part of their networks and funding pedigree. Consequently, they use their LinkedIn profiles, which Shaili, the Mumbai-based social media expert told me is one of the important platforms available to reaffirm one's position, for informational benefits (Utz 2016; Burt 1999). By practicing personal branding, these entrepreneurs are not merely following the advice of their investors or accelerator programs but also claiming to be valued insiders (Brekhus 2020; Ghosh 2020). This helps them to strengthen their authenticity claims as embodied wealth-in-people (Guyer 1993; Guyer and Belinga 1993; Ghosh 2020) entrepreneurs. It could be said that Singapore-based entrepreneurs like Jason, Ashmeet and Vishakha use personal branding as per their comfort to resolve the dilemmas that they face in their entrepreneurial journey and maintain their relationship with the accelerator or investors.

The stress on personal branding by accelerator programmes or investors can also be tied with Kailash's statement on entrepreneur's being synonymous with the business in the startup ecosystem. In her study, Ghosh (2020) also found that investors often make investment decisions based on the founders. She points out how founders often improve their pitch and change business ideas after pitch meetings, making several amendments some of which may be quite different from what they initially started out with. Om, a Mumbai-based entrepreneur, told me that his business model has evolved over a period of time. He started the current organization with his brother (also an IIT alumnus) as a way to give them a creative outlet but soon realized that they could do it professionally. Since neither of them is technically trained in movie production or scriptwriting, they decided to tap into their network of friends and classmates who worked at startups and offered their services. After a few years in the business, they approached investors to raise funds, and their model has evolved with inputs from his investors and market demands.

During my conversation with Yamini and Ashmeet, a Singapore-based entrepreneur, both insisted that LinkedIn profiles were a mandatory feature when registering for startup incubators and fundraising pitches. Ashmeet narrated how investors are always interested to know more about him. His first startup failed after being in operation for over a year. Subsequently, he used lessons from his first startup to avoid pitfalls in the future and managed to maintain and foster relationships with potential investors and collaborators over time. He also asserted that his mission has always been to solve issues that he saw around him with technology. In his profile, Ashmeet states that he envisions a "technological utopia" – a world where personal and social issues can be resolved with technological innovation. His current startup is a FinTech solution for foreigners to remit money to their home countries. Ashmeet admitted that while there are traditional businesses that offered similar solutions, the way his startup solved the issue was effective and faster than what was available in the market. He also told me that the clarity of his vision, sound business plan and existing relationships with investors had resulted in successful fundraising for this venture. I use the above conversations with entrepreneur participants to show that entrepreneurs of this study realize that their LinkedIn accounts are important. It is a way for them to put out the best foot forward even before meeting stakeholders in person.

Entrepreneurs in Singapore see themselves as the face of their business. They also realize that they themselves are a business (Gershon 2016) and therefore need to be presented appropriately using the right tools which for some could be personal branding. Like their Mumbai counterparts, Singapore-based entrepreneurs also understand personal branding as a continuous process that requires them to post and engage regularly on LinkedIn. Sharing regularly also helps to make them appear on their followers' feed on a regular basis which could help identify them as trustworthy experts in the latters' transactive memory (Utz 2016). At the same time, they acknowledge that personal branding is about presenting a front (Goffman 1959) that they think will be valued by their stakeholders. Their self-presentations, nonetheless, are honest according to them and not drastically different from their authentic self. For them, since the personal brand is developed and nurtured on a day-to-day basis, it cannot be inauthentic or far removed from the real self.

In their performances, Singapore-based entrepreneurs present a formal and professional self in the profile and want to come across as a person and not merely a professional through their posts. It can thereby be argued that they present a flexible neoliberal self and legitimize their claims through an account of their professional journey in the

profile. This highlights the contradictions that arise out of performing the neoliberal self (Gershon 2016), underling the tension between flexibility and legibility of being an entrepreneur. Gershon (2016) has argues that personal branding enables individuals to mediate this tension; however, personal branding itself leads to tensions and conflicts. In line with Gershon's (2016:224) discussion on "the practical dilemmas of living as an entrepreneurial self", Singapore-based entrepreneurs' embrace and practice of personal branding (even on a limited scale) can be seen in relation to their cognizance of the audience that they perform for.

3.4.Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented how personal branding is a performance and highlighted different strategies of self-presentation used by entrepreneurs and their attitudes towards personal branding. I found that Mumbai-based entrepreneurs perform differently in the profile vis-à-vis their content sharing practices and the same hold true for their Singapore counterparts. However, they do not believe that they engage in personal branding and think of it as a front that is not necessarily the same as the back stage self (Goffman 1959). According to them, the self at the back stage or outside the platform is real or authentic (Goffman 1959), driven by personal values that may or may not be aligned to institutional morality and ambition (Turner 1976). For them, authenticity is distinct from personal branding and the two cannot co-exist. However, they exhibit a self that works within contemporary neoliberal conceptions. Gershon (2016, 2018) described the neoliberal self where the individual is flexible, adaptive and constantly upgrading oneself to present oneself as a business itself, and argues that there are several contradictions in performing such a neoliberal self which are resolved through branding oneself. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs use a purely professional approach in their content sharing strategy and share less often and only when they think their content is meaningful. In their profile presentation, however, they share personal, professional and non-professional information and use it to present themselves not only as a professional but an individual and potential partner akin to what Singapore-based entrepreneurs do through their content sharing strategy.

Singapore-based entrepreneurs embrace the neoliberal self on LinkedIn to satisfy institutional demands or expectations from investors or other stakeholders that value personal branding and online self-presentation and promotion. While they use their profiles to present them professionally, they engage in personal branding through their content sharing strategy that seeks to engage and interact with others on a daily basis.

Their presentations are akin to what Turner (1976) describes as self anchored in institutions but entrepreneurs in Singapore insist that what they say on their profiles and what they do online is not different from who they are. While they acknowledge their presentation is a front, they also argue that it is not different from their back stage self. Unlike their Mumbai counterparts, they think that authenticity is central to personal branding as it means performing the self over and over again to the same audience not only as a professional but an individual. In the next chapter, I discuss the dilemmas that emerge from the practice of personal branding and performances of authenticity on LinkedIn. I also highlight how entrepreneurs claim their authenticity by sharing or not sharing personal information, and how the meaning of term becomes flexible and is justified when conflicts arise. Lastly, I touch upon how offline social norms and context affect entrepreneurs' experiences of community and network building online.

Chapter 4: Authenticity and Dilemmas on LinkedIn

Rahul, a partner at a communications firm in Mumbai, was the first entrepreneur participant I recruited and interviewed for this study. He has been driving communication mandates for companies across different sectors for almost two decades. Some of his work involves advising clients on how to use social media, constantly monitoring what they say and do online, and keeping an eye on competing firms and leaders. His team also writes some of the content that their clients share. When Rahul told me that he does not believe in personal branding, I was not shocked. Having been a communications professional and done these jobs for my clients, I have often wondered about my convictions on the subject. What shocked me about Rahul's admission, nonetheless, was that he believes that he does not practice personal branding for himself. Before the interview, I analyzed Rahul's profile and noted that he had used his about section to present himself as a straightforward and well-meaning communications professional on LinkedIn. So I asked him about each section in detail without ever implying or suggesting that his self-presentation could be perceived as personal branding. In Rahul's view, he had shared details about himself with utmost honesty. He told me that his profile is not a carefully written document but a spur-of-the-moment articulation of who he thinks he is. He further insisted that it is focused on how he perceives himself and what he does without trying to appease anyone.

A few weeks after my conversation with Rahul, I interviewed Chiang, the owner of a video production company in Singapore. Chiang regards personal branding as an important exercise online and told me that practicing it on LinkedIn has helped him secure opportunities for his business and self. His profile is updated regularly and has a professionally clicked picture. He posts regularly about a variety of topics. However, he told me that he does not write anything negative on LinkedIn. When I asked him if this impacts his authenticity, he asserted that everything that he shares online is his honest and true opinion. He also emphasized that withholding views on sensitive or negative matters does not diminish his authenticity. Both Rahul and Chiang think that their self-presentations on LinkedIn are authentic. What differentiates their profiles is the intent of their actions on LinkedIn. Rahul views himself as a person who does not conform to societal pressures and pursues excellence for the sake of it. According to him, his profile was written to not appease anyone else but to show his strengths as a communications professional and entrepreneur. Chiang, on the other hand, acknowledges that he uses LinkedIn for commercial purposes but emphasizes that his efforts and content are authentic.

Entrepreneurs in Mumbai and Singapore largely understand authenticity as "the quality of being real or true" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). Social psychology studies on authentic leadership have described authenticity in similar terms, referring to it as "being true to oneself" (Weischer, Weibler, and Petersen 2013:478) or "being true to yourself" (Steffens et al. 2016:727). On social media, people often evaluate others' presentations depending on their personal view of authenticity and personal branding. Authenticity could mean adherence to a social norm as defined by one's tastes and context (Liu 2007), and therefore different versions of an authentic quality could hold true for different people. Authenticity is performed in a variety of ways and its meaning and perceptions are flexible in practice. When entrepreneurs present themselves on LinkedIn, their actions and behaviours are not only influenced by meanings of authenticity and practices of self-presentation online but also offline.

Authenticity is also at the core of the debate around personal branding. Authenticity and personal branding are deeply intertwined, particularly on social media sites where authenticity is expected to "enhance message receptivity and relationship quality" (Labrecque, Markos and Milne 2010:48) Social media executives like Callum and Rajani insisted time and again during their interviews that personal brands only work when they are authentic. This, they claimed, was so because a personal brand would need to be practiced on a daily basis and therefore if one were to fake it, there are higher chances of being caught. As mentioned in the previous chapter, authenticity and personal branding do not co-exist for Mumbai-based entrepreneurs, whereas for Singapore-based entrepreneurs authenticity and personal branding go hand in hand. Most Singapore-based entrepreneurs also told me that the personal brands that they created on LinkedIn were real and authentic. However, Mumbai-based entrepreneurs challenge this by stating that any form of carefully managed personal brand is inauthentic. What one deems authentic in self-presentation would thus depend on how they view personal brands.

Mumbai and Singapore-based entrepreneurs believe that their self-presentations are authentic. However, performing authenticity can lead to dilemmas whether or not one practices personal branding. This is accentuated by the fact that users are aware that they are watched as they watch other, and such peer surveillance raises further issues. In this chapter, I explore these dilemmas that emerge for entrepreneurs in India and Singapore, specifically focusing on the personal / professional divide and selective opinion sharing. This analysis highlights that authenticity is not merely a reflection of

one's core self but a social process (Williams and C. Schwarz 2020), a narrative claim (Brekhus 2020), and an interactional performance (Brekhus 2020). How entrepreneurs perceive and perform authenticity on LinkedIn is not static but evolving in nature, and is often shaped by the offline ecosystem and social relations in which they exist.

4.1. The Personal / Professional Divide

> "I have always found people who have so much to share, they don't often talk on public platforms. They don't want to share so much," - Rahul (Marketing and Communications, Mumbai)

Rahul runs a communications firm and some of his mandates require him and his team to build and manage client reputations online and offline. I interviewed Rahul in his capacity as an entrepreneur and his attitudes toward personal branding underlined an important theme for me – the distinction between personal and professional. In his professional life, Rahul spends several hours working with clients on how to position them and their organisations. However, he views personal branding with suspicion when it comes to evaluating or considering the practice, and seems cynical about those who engage in it. Having developed content for others that they share as their own may be the source of the cynicism he displays. However, Rahul's disregard for personal branding was shared by most other Mumbai-based entrepreneurs as well. They expressed frustration about posts where other users share personal information to drive home a corporate lesson is inappropriate and leaves the impression of being inauthentic.

> "So (I) realize posts that work better than others are posts that are more personal, and where there is some amount of vulnerability and self-disclosure. However, I don't do that I don't think my objective (is) to get engagement with the force necessarily this out there." – Kapil (Wellness, Mumbai)

> "I don't like mixing personal and professional too much and putting it out from a personal handle for me… that's not something I'm comfortable with, ever was." – Yamini (Technology, Mumbai)

Papacharissi (2009) has noted that LinkedIn is strongly used for professional reasons with little to none non-professional usage. This has been further strengthened by Utz (2016) who highlighted the professional informational benefits that one can derive

from the SNS. Entrepreneurs in Mumbai approach LinkedIn as a purely professional platform. They think that all activities that one undertakes on the SNS must be professional in nature and personal branding as a practice blurs the line between personal and professional. Marwick and boyd (2010) state how individuals behave and present themselves depends on who they are interacting with. They also implicitly acknowledge that by sharing personal content on LinkedIn, some users purposely collapse contexts (boyd 2008) on LinkedIn. The case against personal content stands on the belief that when individuals share it on LinkedIn, they are essentially doing so to get more engagement. This means that they are on the quest for more followers, likes, shares, and comments. Higher engagement activity leads to being noticed on and outside the platform. For Mumbai-based entrepreneurs like Rahul, authenticity claims are defined through individual expression (Brekhus 2020) that do not conform to larger societal pressures in keeping with Turner's (1976) selves anchored in impulse. Further, his focus on the organization he runs and not rewards for himself makes him disregard personal branding and casts a doubt on the value of authenticity within.

A Mumbai-based entrepreneur I pursued persistently for over two months, but could get an interview with, recently stepped down from the start-up she co-founded. As of today, she is a full-time content creator across multiple platforms, an angel investor, and a public speaker. She announced the launch of her first book recently; I found that some of the content from her LinkedIn posts has been repurposed and published as chapters in the book. During this study, I came across similar entrepreneurs who use LinkedIn to explore opportunities beyond their current organization or professional role. One of my Singapore-based entrepreneur participants Chiang cited a similar story. Chiang holds a positive view on personal branding and uses LinkedIn to not only build credibility but also find opportunities for himself. He told me that he had been approached by a university in India to give a talk on his craft and journey for a fee.

> "I've had an Indian University ask me to lecture, they came to Singapore and us, and then they invited me to be the guest lecturer. They paid me and all that was very nice for them. But, but that was only because they found me on LinkedIn." – Chiang (Production and Entertainment, Singapore)

Singapore-based entrepreneurs do not share the sentiments of their Mumbai-counterparts and think that there is merit in sharing anecdotes from their personal life. They do not draw a sharp distinction between personal and professional like their Mumbai counterparts, and thereby acknowledge the intricacies of navigating seemingly

collapsed contexts and performing for invisible audiences (boyd 2008) on LinkedIn. Sharing personal or non-professional information add multiple layers to an users' virtual performance and is a mechanism to present them as close to who they are an a person (Brems, Temmerman, Graham and Broersma 2017). Kailash, a FinTech entrepreneur from Singapore, told me that one or two out of every five posts shared by him on LinkedIn are personal.

> "It is important that you become more social. Meaning to say, you become like, as a person, people want to have a conversation with you. People want to sit and have lunch or dinner or coffee or beer." – Kailash (Fintech, Singapore)

Kailash underlines how sharing personal content helps to establish a connection with the people he knows on LinkedIn. Hanusch and Bruns (2017), in their study of personal branding by journalists in Australia on Twitter, state that the conflation of personal and professional helps users to appear more than just a professional figure and give a glimpse of their lives. For instance, sharing personal opinions on LinkedIn can help users gain acceptance and establish strong relationships with others in the network (Schwämmlein and Wodzicki 2012).

In their study of Singapore bloggers, Abidin and Thompson (2012) write about commercial persona intimacies where bloggers co-create value for themselves with their followers by building emotional attachment. They noted how sharing personal information and opinions allow bloggers to demonstrate their struggles and offer a glimpse into their life that their followers can relate to. When Singapore-based entrepreneurs on LinkedIn share personal stories, they intend to make their profiles an extension of themselves notwithstanding the personal-professional distinction. Posts, irrespective of their content, become a tool to start conversations and drive engagement (Abidin and Thompson 2012).

Singapore-based social media executive Callum exclaimed that when Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, posts on LinkedIn, he receives more engagement than posts published from the official Microsoft LinkedIn page. This, he argued, was because people want to connect with people and not companies because "people identify" (Callum, interview) with personal stories and emotions rather than corporate narratives. I verified this by following both Satya Nadella's and Microsoft's LinkedIn profiles. I found that most Microsoft posts received paltry engagement in double digits, whereas Satya Nadella's posts receive thousands of likes and comments irrespective of their

content. In a study of authenticity in political communication, Margaretten and Gaber (2014:3) explain perceived authenticity as "the belief that what is heard is the truth, as the normal person would present it, without the spin and manipulation…" When the individual entrepreneur or Satya Nadella – a CEO in the case of Microsoft engages in personal branding on LinkedIn, they are using their personal stories to build trust. This trust is used to inspire confidence in the organizations they represent. Like Ghosh (2020) found and Kailash (interview) asserted, investors or clients want to work with specific entrepreneurs and not an organization or start-up. It makes entrepreneurs' presentations on LinkedIn and their stories deeply connected to the success and growth of the organization. As a result, some entrepreneurs blur the personal-professional distinction to make their personal brands engaging. It also emanates from discussions on authenticity which also involves one's presentation in everyday scenarios (Jackson and Lillekar 2011) and revelation of personal or intimate stories (Abidin and Thompson 2012; Marwick and boyd 2010). When Singapore-based entrepreneurs share personal or non-professional stories, they want to present different versions of themselves. Their authenticity claims can therefore be said to rest on individual expression (Brekhus 2020) of their commitment to institutional values (Turner 1976) that can be demonstrated by connecting personal stories to present their multiple selves and how it adds to their entrepreneurial performance.

4.2. Un/filtered Opinions

Although entrepreneurs in Singapore are not much concerned about personal-professional distinction, they do not post their opinions on everything under the sun. For instance, Kailash told me that while he enjoys sharing pictures and stories from his travels on LinkedIn, he never says anything controversial. He told me that his organization is a meritocratic, equal-opportunity employer; however, he stays away from saying anything about LGBTQ.

> "We stay away from political views. We don't take any stand that is loud in terms of political affiliations. So those are the negatives" – Kailash (Fintech, Singapore)

> Chiang also believes that it is best to avoid saying anything negative online as "people say stupid things" and can be easily found out. "When I write, I write, like the way I'm talking to you. And my opinion is not meant to make anybody

> like me better. It really is my opinion… if I'm thinking worse, as in like, I'm really pissed, I don't write because like I say nobody needs to know. I make it a point (to) never criticize anyone. I don't talk. I don't compare… because nobody needs to know that I really hate something, you know, I mean, why spread more misery in the world? And you actually need to, you know, I mean, so usually when I write, it's pretty positive. If I'm very unhappy about something, even when I write, I'll couch my words."

Most entrepreneurs in Singapore avoid any topics that may appear controversial or negative which particularly include criticism or disagreement with political or governmental action. In their study on Dutch journalists, Brems, Temmerman, Graham and Broersma (2017) found that journalists who engage in personal branding on Twitter work with different boundaries irrespective of what and how much they share from their personal lives. The general rule that they observed among their participants was to "write on Twitter what you would not write in a newspaper" (ibid:453). Singapore's Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Law gives power to the government to police online platforms. It not only allows the government to remove content it deems false and fake but also take action against those found guilty of making false statement and spreading fake news. Kailash's statement on not saying anything political can be construed as influenced by political environment and indicates that entrepreneurs in the City-State work with the assumption that some things can and some things cannot be said online and publicly.

In their statements about profiles being "calling cards" and personal branding to fit into the startup ecosystems, entrepreneurs in Singapore and Mumbai displayed self-awareness about being watched by others. They willfully participate in a system of peer surveillance (Carah and Louw 2015; Carah 2011) and determine their own actions and judge those of others. In recent years, viral social media posts have sparked debates and created furore not only on the platforms but also outside them. The longevity of social media posts and its reach as well as the pressure to perform one's role can often create digital dilemmas (Cino and Formenti 2021), and entrepreneurs in Singapore appeared to acknowledge this and therefore exercise caution when posting online.

I asked entrepreneurs if withholding their views or expressing them in subtle ways diminishes their authenticity. Most believed that not sharing opinions they are not comfortable with does not affect their authenticity as long as they were otherwise being

authentic. Authenticity for Singapore-based entrepreneurs is not created by honestly sharing everything but as a response to their situation and a result of conscious profile work (Uski and Lampinen 2014). When entrepreneurs in Singapore share personal content on LinkedIn, the contexts between personal and professional are collapsed online. However, the offline-online continuum pervades LinkedIn and informs people's decisions on what they think they can or cannot say. In his essay on the public sphere, Habermas, Lennox and Lennox (1974) illustrate the ideal bourgeois public sphere as a virtual space that makes imagined collectivity possible. The indispensability of this public sphere (Habermas, Lennox, and Lennox 1974:54) depends on its coalescence into a virtual space. LinkedIn can be understood as one such virtual public sphere where "private individuals assembled into a public body" (ibid: 49). However, LinkedIn may not be the ideal bourgeois public sphere described by Habermas, Lennox and Lennox (1974) where public reason and ideas are supreme and openly debated but a space where participants measure and evaluate what they say. Individuals who sign up on the platform automatically apply the rules of conduct in an offline public sphere to it. When entrepreneurs in Singapore claim that withholding opinions does not diminish their authenticity, they assume that they are following such rules of conduct.

4.3. LinkedIn, Community and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

In this study so far, I have highlighted ways in which entrepreneurs in Mumbai and Singapore present themselves on LinkedIn. I have illustrated how they use the platform and how it is influenced by the perception of their self, what authenticity means to them and the dilemmas that emerge. Interactions with entrepreneurs gave me a perspective into why they do what they do on LinkedIn and why do not do specific things. While Mumbai-based entrepreneurs narrated tales of aversion to personal branding and listed specific, and in some ways limited, use of LinkedIn, I could not stop wondering why their approach was so different from their Singapore-based counterparts, all of whom lauded LinkedIn as a useful communication tool, and most of whom practice personal branding at different scales. Why entrepreneurs in Singapore receive more response than their Mumbai counterparts? As I pondered over the transcripts, the word community kept popping up in numerous interviews; in most interviews, the word had appeared without any prompts or suggestions from my end. Mumbai-based participants lamented the lack of community on LinkedIn whereas Singapore-based entrepreneurs were on a quest to build a community-like network

with their peers, investors and other stakeholders. Why did the latter succeed in building a network, even if not a community?

During my interview with Mumbai-based entrepreneur Om, I asked him if he recruited employees using LinkedIn. He informed me that he avoided using LinkedIn for recruitment owing to the sheer number of applicants on the platform; however, he "glances through" the LinkedIn profiles of potential candidates before interviews. This, he told me, gave him an outline of who he was interviewing. I asked him if this practice has been useful to which he responded saying that although he pores through one's profile to get a gist of their qualifications and experience one can form an opinion only upon meeting the candidate. This, he explained, applied not only in the case of potential employees but also other stakeholders like clients and investors. The idea that physical meetings were important was raised by a few other Mumbai-based entrepreneurs. He also told me that most often he gets access to new investors or clients from either a common connection both parties know personally or through his IIT alumnus network.

During our discussion on display pictures, Rahul told me that the display picture on his profile was from a few years ago and he hadn't bothered changing it. When I asked him more about it, he told me that LinkedIn profiles are often used as a game of perception. He went on to elaborate, "I know and you also know that perception online or perception offline doesn't matter. It only matters what a person has done for you." Om and Rahul's statements highlight the importance of in-person meeting and exchange to establish professional ties.

Most Mumbai-based entrepreneurs interviewed for this experienced lower rate of responses to their posts and direct messages on LinkedIn. In their attempts to build a community on the platform, these entrepreneurs were reaching out to individuals with whom they had little or no personal contact or shared offline network. These ties which would have been possible due to technology but not active yet have been referred to as latent ties (Haythornthwaite 2005). Interaction with latent ties should help set the foundation of a potential relationship. However for these entrepreneurs, a community or network could only be built when one has had an exchange of some sort with others, which would develop out of in-person meetings. This route to establish professional or business relations may also be true for other users in India. In his study on globalization and the advertising industry in India, Mazzarella (2003) noted that India's traditional community posed unique challenges to the Western values of market-

oriented individualism. Unlike in the West, social relations play an important role in building communities and also professional networking in India. Although the Indian State has pushed for the rise of entrepreneurial citizens (Irani 2019), entrepreneurship continues to thrive within the traditional social fabric. Despite a significant uptake in digital adoption, personal networks, shared history, shared background, etc. play an important role in establishing and maintaining social relations in India. This holds true for entrepreneurs in India who not only use personal networks to establish connections in the professional domain but also in the way they present themselves. While entrepreneurs may seek to disrupt markets or bring about change, they continue to embrace older forms of identities which are now reproduced through new forms of identifications. Entrepreneurs seek to find social or regional connections with investors (Ghosh 2022). Sometimes, forms of social relations are reproduced through education where merit and upper caste biases intertwine (Subramanian 2015). Professional ties in India are thus built through commonalities, shared connections and referrals from personal networks. If professional networks are a result of references from these sources, a direct message or post may come seem like an unappreciated and untimely cold call which is best ignored and left unanswered.

On the contrary, most Singapore-based entrepreneurs found that LinkedIn proved to be a "great communications tool" (interview with Daniel). It has helped them build connections which would not have been possible otherwise (interviews with Ashmeet and Jason). Chua (2019) noted how the Singaporean state has encouraged pursuits of technopreneurial careers and promotes it through programmes at universities to foster an innovation based mindset for younger generation students. Entrepreneurship cells at the university level, State-backed technopreneurship grants and abundance of multiple private accelerator and incubation programmes like Entrepreneurs First, Red Dot Venture and so on along with the push for a digital Singapore appear to have shaped the entrepreneurial landscape in Singapore. Jason, Ashmeet and Vishakha's apparent success at building a productive network which resulted in business opportunities highlights the model espoused by their funding partners and investors who insist on personal branding and extensive use of platforms like LinkedIn. The entrepreneurial ecosystem in Singapore is dominated by the values of investors, accelerators and other players who focus on narrative building. This is in line with Roundy's (2016) findings that highlight the importance of constructing and communicating narratives to bolster the interaction between entrepreneurs and stakeholders. LinkedIn thus becomes a platform where entrepreneurs not only attempt to establish their credibility but claim legitimacy for their ventures (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001). These narratives also help

entrepreneurs to “create favourable interpretations of the wealth-creating possibilities of a venture, thus increasing the likelihood that resources will flow to the new firm” (Roundy 2016). The narratives built by Singapore-based entrepreneurs not only to allow them to perform as entrepreneurs but also fulfill the expectations of their funding partners and other stakeholders. The entrepreneurial ecosystem in which they exist thereby shapes how they view themselves and their meanings and performances of authenticity.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented how performances of authenticity and personal branding practice can raise dilemmas of personal / professional and selective opinion sharing on LinkedIn. The offline-online continuum pervades LinkedIn as entrepreneurs’ social contexts influence their actions and behaviours. Offline social contexts and norms inform people’s decisions on what they think they can or cannot say online, and impact their ability to build social networks online. Entrepreneurs in India have not succeeded in building communities online because of their content strategy as well as the belief that physical meetings or connection through a common factor are important to establish and strengthen a relationship. In Singapore, entrepreneurs pursue personal branding encouraged by the ecosystem in which they exist and the response from their connections has helped them develop a strong professional network online.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

I undertook this study to understand how entrepreneurs view and present themselves using the social networking site LinkedIn. My analysis of LinkedIn profiles made it apparent that almost all entrepreneurs use their profiles to build credibility. I found that entrepreneurs use different strategies for constructing their profiles and sharing content online. While Mumbai-based entrepreneurs share personal, professional and non-professional information in their LinkedIn profile, the content they post is purely professional focusing on the work they do. These entrepreneurs believe that LinkedIn is a professional site and should only be used as such to grow their businesses. In contrast, Singapore-based entrepreneurs present a professional front using qualitative and quantitative information such as designation, achievements and so on in their profiles. However, they share both professional and non-professional information unrelated to their work on LinkedIn.

These differences indicate how varied methodologies used to investigate the same issue could lead researchers to distinct findings. Had I only used content analysis, I would not have identified the important cultural differences between contexts. Likewise, if I were to only conduct semi-structured interviews, I would have concluded that entrepreneurs in Mumbai and Singapore approach LinkedIn, their selves, and personal branding in contrasting ways which could be used to imply that their presentations must differ accordingly. However, as the findings indicate, entrepreneurs in these geographies hold differing views and attitudes towards the self, personal branding, and LinkedIn and present themselves in line with Gershon's (2018) entrepreneurial self. This indicates the impact of LinkedIn's template and how it shapes the way people view themselves and others professionally and otherwise on the SNS.

LinkedIn like other social networking sites stores information and content that people share; this data becomes a productive form of watching and enables the creation of social relations (Carah and Louw 2015; Carah 2011). When LinkedIn users share online, the content is watched by their followers and others. As users watch others' content, they engage in surveillance (Carah and Louw 2015; Carah 2011). Lyon (2007:14) states that surveillance is "focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction." In the context of social media, it is not only conducted vertically by those in power but also horizontally by users who participate on the platform Users watch others' profiles and

content as well as their own; this influences what content they share and what they refrain from posting online. Callum, the social media executive, told me that he advices his clients to share information not only about their work but also commentary on current events, people in their social settings and special moments from their life. He told me that he had observed and tracked the response on such posts which receive higher response than when people post about products, service or purely professional thing that lacked emotions and feelings. Personal branding, he told me, is about presenting a person and not only a professional. When a user performs their personal brand on LinkedIn, users in their network watch the performance as it unfolds through a series of posts and photos. How one's followers and connections respond to the post informs users which type of content attracts positive and negative responses. What users share depends on what they seek out of the platform and the value they derive which is determined on the basis of the response. Further, when entrepreneurs use their LinkedIn profiles as "calling cards" (interview with Rahul) or to build a personal brand, they are aware that their profiles and actions are watched. As a result, the profiles become online textual performances (Sunden 2003). Entrepreneurs create their profiles to present themselves in what they believe others expect of them and how it is interpreted by others (boyd 2008, 2010). As such LinkedIn becomes "a device for modulating social relationships and practices" (Carah and Louw 2015).

The personal brands that entrepreneurs create and perform and the authenticity they embrace on LinkedIn is an interactional performance (Brekhus 2020) and social process (Williams and C. Schwarz 2020). It is a result of their perceptions of what is expected of them, the results that such presentation and behaviour drive, and the fear of repercussions. One's commitment to impulse or institutions along with interactions and responses by followers, the ability to present oneself as wealth-in-people (Guyer 1993; Guyer and Belinga 1995), the need to be seen as a valued insider (Ghosh 2020) and social and business contexts outside the platform influence their commitment to authenticity in self-presentations. This is further complicated by the different elements that contribute to the importance and functioning of online environments. All of these factors shape and reshape authenticity which is then reframed by entrepreneurs within their personal or professional contexts as they build their brands on LinkedIn.

Authenticity for Mumbai and Singapore-based entrepreneurs translates into true and real. However, its meaning is flexible in practice and is often adapted according to the perception of the self. Apple's 1997 Think Different advertising campaign put "the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes" on a

pedestal, celebrating those who do not follow the rules. This campaign celebrated selves anchored in impulse (Turner 1976) who are projected as disruptors and often labeled as crazy ("Think Different Apple Commercial" 2016). Over the next few decades, excellence and passion became priorities (Tokumitsu 2015) in popular narratives. Entrepreneurs in Mumbai appear to be inspired by these ideas of being different and pursuing excellence. It is reflective not only in the way they write about themselves online but also in what they believe is the right way to use LinkedIn. The comparative study of Singapore and Mumbai-based entrepreneurs' profiles and interviews also helped identify such idiomatic styles of self-presentation on LinkedIn.

Both Mumbai and Singapore-based entrepreneurs use authenticity as a narrative claim (Brekhus 2020) that reflects their own experiences as entrepreneurs online and offline, as well as their interactions on the SNS. They acknowledge the offline-online continuum but their attitudes to personal branding and the personal-professional distinction lead to them deal with it in different ways. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs dismiss the idea of personal branding and think that personal branding and authenticity cannot co-exist. They view personal branding as a way to increase one's clout on LinkedIn for more engagement. Yet, the profiles of Mumbai-based entrepreneurs show how they use the attributes associated with personal branding. They claim their authenticity as selves anchored in impulse (Turner 1976) and judge others' authenticity by their standards (Brekhus 2020), which are deemed inauthentic when there is a mismatch.

By distinction, entrepreneurs based in Singapore present themselves as committed to institutional values, and are influenced by their ecosystems. For instance, some of the entrepreneurs interviewed appear to be influenced by the accelerators or investor funds as well as the general perceptions of an entrepreneur being the face of an organization in the larger business context. Entrepreneurs in Singapore share stories irrespective of the personal-professional distinction to present themselves as humane and use their vulnerabilities to strengthen their authenticity claims. They, however, do not speak on sensitive and controversial topics. This way, Singapore-based entrepreneurs choose moments and topics where they can authentically say what they think and decide to maintain silence or mince their words on sensitive or controversial issues. Entrepreneurs realize that what they say online may have consequences not only on LinkedIn but also outside of it with the reproduction of offline contexts on the SNS. The acknowledgement of the offline-online continuum also plays a role in their decisions to say or withhold something online. They, therefore, take their presentations

and behavior online seriously and recognize the possibility of backlash on themselves and potential harm to the business as a result of it.

Like any other identity group, several entrepreneurs strive to fit in by expressing and describing themselves in not only the best possible manner but also in ways that signal belonging (Ghosh 2020). Entrepreneurs' self-presentation on LinkedIn captures information that they think presents them as credible and worthy alliances (Gershon 2018) within their social contexts while adhering to social norms on LinkedIn. For instance, when entrepreneurs choose a picture for their LinkedIn profile, they use the one they deem fit as a professional image of themselves. During my interviews, I often discussed my participants' profile pictures and whether or not the participants thought of the pictures as formal and professional. I found that two entrepreneurs, who agreed that their picture were not exactly professional, changed their display picture a few weeks after our discussion. Another entrepreneur participant informed me that our discussion made him reflect on how he wants to come across on LinkedIn. He has made changes to the description in the about section. I do not wish to attribute the change of display pictures to my discussions with entrepreneurs but want to use these examples to demonstrate how experiences and interactions both on the SNS and outside it can shape how people choose to present themselves.

How entrepreneurs present themselves on LinkedIn and how they choose to say one thing or another can be understood within the co-production (Jasanoff 2004) framework. Jasanoff (2004:4) explains it as a framework for "more varied and dynamic ways of conceptualizing social structures and categories" through the "interconnections between the macro and the micro, between emergence and stabilization, and between knowledge and practice." Jasanoff (2004:16) also describes how the internet in a decade or more has become "a player in countless contemporary social transactions. In exploring its possibilities, millions of people began to alter not only the architecture of the internet but also, in diverse ways, their own preconceptions of what it means to belong to social units such as the family, community, workplace, firm or nation." LinkedIn has brought about changes in recruitment and hiring (Coverdill and Finlay 2017), and also how people can express and promote themselves online (Van Djick 2013). Entrepreneurs' experiences differ on LinkedIn and the dialectic relationship between value, LinkedIn, and personal branding leads to the co-production (Jasanoff 2004) of technology and self-presentation online. These changes have ramifications not only on the platform but also beyond it. For Singapore-based entrepreneurs, LinkedIn and personal branding are relevant and derive value. This value and the importance that

entrepreneurs assign to personal branding translate LinkedIn and the technology that it represents into a space for self-promotion and network building wherein personal branding becomes an online self-presentation norm.

At this point, I would like to reiterate how offline social practices and behaviours influence actions and behaviours on LinkedIn. Mumbai-based entrepreneurs' lack of success to building a network or community may be attributed to the way relationships and communities are built in India. Professional relations in India are developed from one's personal network arising out of affiliation to a school or university, work experience, social relations and so on. These factors could reproduce social relations and embody cultural capital. The entrepreneurial landscape in India thus still continues to be led by traditional values whereas the values of a capitalist State, investors and accelerators shape the ecosystem in Singapore. Consequently, Singapore-based entrepreneurs have experienced the value of creating their narratives on LinkedIn which enable to connect with peers, investors and other significant players.

5.1. Limitations and Future Direction

All research is subject to constraints. For this study, the covid-19 pandemic was probably one of the biggest issues that affected the design of the study as well as its execution. Data for this study was almost exclusively collected online because of restrictions and participants' apprehensions on meeting in physical settings due to covid-19. Most conversations with entrepreneurs and social media executives were conducted over zoom, except for Chiang and Callum. The pandemic also possibly affected the recruitment of participants as restrictions on physical meetings and conferences severely limited opportunities to reach out to entrepreneurs.

I also recognize the limitations of using LinkedIn profiles during the study. The profiles available for analysis were limited by the privacy settings of each user. Once downloaded the profiles became static. The information available on the profiles became limited as of the date when it was downloaded. Any changes made to the profiles after such date are unavailable. This made it difficult to learn the frequency at which users update information in their profiles. Future research could use digital ethnography as an alternative to profile analysis.

In broadly recapitulating the key insights from this study, I found that when entrepreneur present themselves on LinkedIn, authenticity becomes an important factor. Authenticity on LinkedIn appears as a social process and interactional

performance that entrepreneurs embrace and adapt depending on their goals and contexts. Performances of authenticity and personal branding lead to dilemmas and highlight how the online-offline continuum affects performances of the self on LinkedIn. These behaviours are an extension of the social contexts in which they exist. In India, community and social relations are primarily established through offline connections and referrals through personal networks, and this possibly impacts the experience of Mumbai-based entrepreneur. Conversely, in Singapore, entrepreneurs of this study have found success in establishing an online network on LinkedIn aided by the entrepreneurial ecosystems dominated by investors, accelerators and funding cells which encourage self-presentation as a tool to connect and collaborate. The insights from this study can be used as a pilot for further studies on entrepreneurs in the Indian and Singaporean contexts. The findings of this study also raise questions for the social study of performative contradictions, which may well be a fruitful line of further study.

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