

Student ePortfolios and the intersection of multiple identities and audiences

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ABSTRACT

ePortfolios can be used to assist graduate students to develop emerging professional identities. Lecturers and graduate students in fields such as Marketing and Entrepreneurship are particularly aware that many employers use online searching when narrowing down their list of job candidates. Through developing and revising their online presence as part of an academic course, students reflect on who they are as emerging professionals and how they would like to be perceived by others. This paper adopts an ethnographic approach to investigating two students' strategies for representing themselves on their ePortfolios for multiple audiences (markers, peers, potential employers). The ePortfolios were assessed as part of an e-Marketing course where students completed authentic learning tasks and were encouraged to think about themselves as online brands. The paper aims to provide detailed insight into the complex identity work and strategies involved in the ePortfolio creation process by triangulating a range of online, visual and verbal data: students' ePortfolio 'About me' pages, audience graphs (appended bar graphs students produced to weight the importance of different audiences) and discussions shared during a student focus group. Our findings suggest that an ePortfolio as a public online space, personal online brand and assessment regime further complicates students' roles (as learners, emerging professionals, and so forth). In responding to these complex dynamics, students become more aware of how they represent themselves online and to whom. The paper concludes by arguing that ePortfolios be understood as relationships rather than decoupling technology, pedagogy, audiences and student identities.

Keywords: *ePortfolios; personal online brand; professional identities; authentic learning; educational technology; social media*

INTRODUCTION

While ePortfolios (electronic portfolios) have been defined in many ways, the consensus is that ePortfolios can reflect both a process and a product (JISC, 2014). An ePortfolio is a "purposeful collection of information and digital artefacts that demonstrates development or evidences learning outcomes, skills or competencies" (Cotterill, 2007). To create an ePortfolio, individuals select, organise and synthesise a range of digital artefacts to demonstrate their knowledge through reflective writing.

Blair & Monske (2009) argue that ePortfolios can assist Postgraduate students to develop professional identities. They draw on the work of Yancey (2004) who asserts that ePortfolios help to 'remediate' the self. Yancey argues that ePortfolios afford an expansive space for students to develop into professionals "who can make multiple connections and who create depth through multiplicity and elaboration...who can work in visual and verbal and aural modalities..." (2004, p.

751). Opportunities for graduate students to engage in this kind of technology mediated reflective work towards future employability as part of their academic programmes may be incorporated in curricula in various ways. In this paper we provide insight into some of the tensions involved in this process, especially as 'multiplicity' requires students to adopt strategies to address multiple audiences.

Developing a professional identity is particularly important for graduate students, many of whom are transitioning from the university to the workplace. University lecturers, especially those working in professional programmes, are under increasing pressure to create spaces where students can be encouraged to develop professional identities. Standards set by professional bodies are used as a guideline in some degrees, but the idea of what constitutes professional identities and how these can be developed is not clear across disciplines. Following their review of Higher Education literature, Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2011) find that the notion of professional identities lacks definition and they note a range of debates such as those between discipline-specific and generic professional identities and if universities influence such development or whether it can only take place after graduation. They argue that assessment regimes play an important role and draw on the work of Cornelissen and van Wyk (2007) who found that participation in the professional role or in preparation thereof are key for students to gain insights into professional ideology, motives and attitudes that shape professional identity. Following the 2008 global financial crash, there is renewed interest in what it means to be a professional in a commercial field.

The authors' pedagogical approach cannot be disconnected from how students engaged with the concept of an ePortfolio. The Postgraduate Diploma course in e-Marketing is situated in the Commerce Faculty and the use of ePortfolios is framed by marketing discourse and course content on brand identities and online reputation management. Students were encouraged to see their ePortfolios as an opportunity to craft a personal online brand and to leverage their use of social media and online presence for employability purposes. Lecturers and graduate students in fields such as Marketing and Entrepreneurship are particularly aware that many employers use online searching when narrowing down their list of job candidates. Through developing and revising their online presence as part of an academic course, students reflect on who they are as emerging professionals and how they would like to be perceived by others. This likely impacted how they chose to represent themselves online, both visually and in writing. The notion of crafting a personal online brand was explained as involving how they choose to package and communicate themselves, their skill set and career aspirations to establish a professional reputation. While audiences for these ePortfolios were explicitly identified as markers, peers and potential employers, emphasis was placed on career growth and attracting employment opportunities. This may have influenced how students chose to represent and perform particular identities online. While students enjoyed the expressive potential of ePortfolios, the strategies they employed are informed by more instrumental uses as explained during the course where the emphasis is on ePortfolios as a tool to enhance employability. Thus, our research questions are: (1) What kinds of identities do graduate students perform on their ePortfolios? (2) What strategies do they employ when using their ePortfolios to address multiple audiences? (3) How could tensions identified by findings of the afore-mentioned questions assist with the conceptualisation of ePortfolios in graduate courses more broadly?

AUDIENCE AWARENESS AND ADDRESSIVITY

Gallagher and Poklop (2014) argue that the concept of audience is under-investigated and under-theorised in research on ePortfolios. They are surprised that despite a long history of research and scholarship on audience in contemporary rhetoric and composition theory, the ePortfolio community is just beginning to attend to audience as a theoretical construct. They postulate that

this may be because we are still learning what it means to think of ePortfolios as a “distinct genre... as compositions unto themselves, rather than containers for other compositions” and that “audience, until recently, has largely functioned as a ubiquitous absent presence in the ePortfolio literature” (2014, p.8). They assert that the audience of student ePortfolios is always multiple and regard the “ability to craft compositions that successfully negotiate multiple audiences’ needs and expectations” (2014, p.7) as a critical twenty-first century skill. Gallagher and Poklop (2014) encourage lecturers using ePortfolios to go beyond general audience awareness in ePortfolio pedagogy by including instruction that helps students successfully negotiate multiple audiences.

Research by Ross (2014) echoes a similar sentiment. She finds that students writing reflectively for assessment purposes in an online environment are both strategic and audience-aware, whether or not lecturers acknowledge audience as a legitimate concern. She argues that lecturers need to welcome the concept of performance into reflective practices, and to allow reflection to take account of the addressivity of writing. She draws on Lillis (2001) to explain why she finds the notion of addressivity useful in understanding how it is that students are so audience focused and aware:

It is the theory that ‘in making meaning in language, whether in dialogue with someone else or thinking alone, we are always addressing, explicitly and implicitly, a person or people, a question or comment’ (Lillis cited in Ross, 2014, p. 3).

In this paper we consider both text and images students use on their ePortfolios as part of this addressivity.

INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ IDENTITY PERFORMANCES AND STRATEGIES

Gee (2000) argues that people have multiple identities connected to their performances in society. Similarly, Ivanič (1998) argues that ‘identity’ is misleadingly singular and instead proposes the notion of ‘identities’ as it

... captures the idea of people identifying simultaneously with a variety of social groups. One or more of these identities may be foregrounded at different times; they are sometimes contradictory, sometimes interrelated: people’s diverse identities constitute the richness and dilemmas of their sense of self. (1998, p. 11)

As will be discussed in the examples that follow, students employ a range of strategies when performing their identities and in doing so, negotiate particular roles in relation to audiences. The notion of identity as performance is adopted in this paper. With online communication, the notion of identity performances is often adopted, such as by Merchant (2006) who investigates how identities are played out across social networks in online and offline interactions.

The strategies students use to perform various identities on their ePortfolios are multimodal. In brief, multimodality

...entails making meaning through more than one mode (e.g., printed word, speech, image, music) and acknowledging that language is just one of many possible modes that serve as resources for meaning making (Anderson, 2013, p. 277)

The multimodal choices students make when creating their ePortfolios tells us about their ‘interest’ (Kress, 1997) as sign-makers. This also helps us to view student ePortfolios as being less or more instrumental or expressive in relation to particular modes and audiences. Kress and Van Leeuwen explain ‘interest’ in the following way:

The interest of sign-makers, at the moment of making the sign, leads them to choose an aspect or bundle of aspects of the object to be represented as being criterial, at that

moment, for representing what they want to represent, and then choose the most plausible, the most apt form for its representation. This applies also to the interest of social institutions within which messages are produced, and there it takes the form of the (histories of) conventions and constraints. (2006, p.13)

For example, the visual mode may allow students to convey information about their personalities that the written mode might not. By contrast, the written mode is more often associated with providing factual information, reflections and/or evidence of learning, and so forth. Curriculum Vitae (CVs) may be regarded as a convention and possibly constraint in relation to ePortfolios, as students may choose to adopt a minimalist approach to their biography page which reads more like a short CV because a CV is a hegemonic text that signals a professional identity. While this paper only looks at students' 'About me' pages, the choice of photo accompanied with a short biography provide a start in helping us to understand how students perform identities (professional and other) for multiple audiences on their ePortfolios.

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT: EPORTFOLIOS IN THE E-MARKETING COURSE

Students (N=94) enrolled for the Postgraduate Diploma course in e-Marketing at the University of Cape Town consist of students doing a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management where e-Marketing is a required course or a Postgraduate Diploma in Entrepreneurship (PDE) where the course can be taken in preference to Marketing 1. The student demographic for the years' cohort was between 21 and 44 years of age and comprised a range of ethnic groups, diverse backgrounds and a range of previous studies and work experiences. In addition to updated course content, tutorial hand-ins, a group project and an exam, students were required to complete three compulsory, small authentic learning tasks, and 'package' this as part of an ePortfolio. Rubrics were developed for these assessments and made available to students prior to the hand-in as well as online resources to support students in the process of creating their ePortfolios.

ePortfolios were introduced because it was aligned with the course objectives which involve learning practical skills related to the implementation and evaluation of various e-marketing tactics and the potential for students to engage in authentic learning. The postgraduate diplomas emphasise current practice, updated knowledge, workplace relevance and skills. The importance bestowed upon 'soft' skills is of particular interest, as some of these formed part of the ePortfolio assessment system. For example, being able to communicate with an audience beyond the university by using a particular writing style (conversational yet informative) may be valued in this field but remain largely unassessed in other courses.

Industry collaborators (advertising agencies and marketing companies) provided the scenario or data for tasks. Once assessed, the students' tasks with the highest mark were forwarded to the industry collaborator who selected a student as a 'winner'. The 'winning' students were offered an unpaid internship at the respective advertising agency or marketing company. While these tasks were assessed and published on students' ePortfolios (the WordPress blogging platform was appropriated for this purpose) as public texts, students were also graded on their overall ePortfolios.

METHODOLOGY

'Talk around texts' (Lillis, 2008) helps us to make sense of students' interests as sign-makers when designing their ePortfolios. For this paper we report on data from three sources: student ePortfolio 'About me' pages, audience graphs (students completed a bar graph template to

weight the importance of various audiences during the ePortfolio creation process) and discussions during a focus group. Thus, the authors employed a more experimental approach to data collection which recontextualises the online data (student ePortfolios) in small focus group discussion, both verbally and visually by completing and discussing the audience graph (see Figure 2 for an example). The audience graph allowed students to visually represent how important they thought the different audiences were during the ePortfolio creation process. This exercise became a useful prompt for more detailed questions around addressivity.

Two students' ePortfolios and focus group data were selected for this paper, as they represent popular strategies we observed students to be adopting with their ePortfolios. They were chosen based on their participation in the focus groups and interest in follow-up email exchanges with the lecturers. The authors had more extended engagements with these students and thus selected them on this basis. Thus, purposeful sampling was used.

More broadly, the research for this paper draws on ethnographic data collection methods and can be considered as participatory action research as findings are linked back to initiatives for project development (Tacchi, Foth & Hearn, 2009). In this case, the broader project of the first author is ePortfolio integration in a range of curricula. The second author was the course convener and lecturer on the course and the first author assisted with curriculum design, the integration of ePortfolios in the course and provided screencast tutorials on technical aspects (e.g. setting up a WordPress blog), online assistance and guest lectures to students to scaffold their use of ePortfolios. In the sense that this research assists with evaluating a curriculum intervention and the purpose is transformation through informing future curriculum design it may be considered as a critical research approach. The purpose of the research is to better understand graduate students' strategies related to ePortfolio use so that we might integrate such tools more mindfully in curricula, in particular, graduate programmes with an emphasis on showcasing the self for employability. Data analysis proceeded inductively using multimodal discourse analysis as multimodality more broadly strives to connect the material semiotic resources available to people with what they mean to signify in social contexts (Jewitt, 2013).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Informed consent had been obtained from students in the second semester of 2014 as part of a broader project which promised anonymity. The research proposal for this project was approved by the University's Ethics Committee. However, additional consent was sought from the two students below in 2015 as the nature of the paper depends on rich and authentic data (i.e. descriptive level informs further analysis). This meant that the students had to consent to being identifiable by research. As these students' ePortfolios are publicly visible, anyone can search text quoted or readable from an image-edited screenshot (despite using blur or editing out aspects such as the URL, student name and photograph) and find their ePortfolio online. When students consent to being identifiable, it means that the name of the institution becomes so too as a default. Even if the institution's name is anonymised, the course code used as tags in the students' posts on their ePortfolios as well as their graduation and other photos make the institution identifiable. Since this paper brings neither the students nor the institution into bad repute, nor impacts on students' future job opportunities, the authors note an absence of harm.

The two students cited were provided with copies of the paper, had the opportunity to withdraw consent as well as to make an input, whether this involved changing how they were being represented in the paper, providing comments and/or suggestions for further editing. Revised drafts were also circulated for comment. The paper thus evolved into a more participatory engagement, from being research *about* students, to research *with* students. It should be noted that the first student (Nontando Sokhela) consented to her name and surname being used in the

paper and saw it as positive towards her online reputation. The second student (James) consented to being identifiable in research but requested that his surname not be used in text so that the paper will not be visible when people search for him online. Thus, even with consent we note that students have different strategies and researchers need to engage with them about these and the implications it may have for them in the future. For example, students were informed that when the authors quote text from their ePortfolios, search results make them identifiable. By educating students about the ethical implications of research and making them conscious stakeholders, the students became part of the research process and it became more participatory.

STUDENT EPORTFOLIOS: MAKING SENSE OF STRATEGIES, IDENTITIES AND AUDIENCES

Nontando Sokhela (hereafter referred to as 'Nonz') and James are both in their early twenties and graduated with their postgraduate diplomas in Marketing Management in 2014. Their ePortfolios may be seen as examples of different strategies students adopted to perform their identities in relation to multiple audiences. Nonz's ePortfolio may be seen as communicating a strong representation of self (not limited to the professional) whereas James adopts a more 'generic' (CV-like) approach with minimal information. There is also a third approach resulting in what may be deemed as an 'unsuccessful ePortfolio', not represented here for ethical reasons. Instead of adopting a generic approach, a minority of students misjudged the audience and purposes of their ePortfolios (and thereby, the assessment) by posting clearly 'unprofessional' or inappropriate content. In the middle of the course, a student was flagged to revise his ePortfolio, as he was also using it as a space to collect and share images of 'hot babes'. The authors encouraged him to create a Pinterest board or Facebook album for these images instead and to keep his ePortfolio for university and career-related content. Students often used their profiles on social media platforms to compare how ePortfolios as a genre may differ and to articulate its value. This dynamic is also reflected by Nonz and James' comments below. The following sections start by analysing the students' 'About me' pages, their strategies in relation to this page (which includes their description of the 'personality' of their ePortfolios and how they weight the importance of different audiences using an audience graph) and then the ePortfolio more broadly.

Nonz: 'The battle for success begins and ends with me'

Nonz's 'About me' page (see figure 1) starts with a poem-like introduction:

*The youngest daughter
The loudest laugh
A dedicated young professional
A self-acclaimed boss in the making
Currently, working towards my second degree in Marketing and Management at the
University of Cape Town.*

This mix of registers communicates different identities: her position in her family, who she perceives herself to be at present and her aspiration for the future. The choice of genre and foregrounding of her family position may be seen as embracing African oral culture. She makes use of a photo from graduation, a personal photo that captures her throwing her scroll into the air. The photo is followed by the following written text:

A young aspiring black professional that is ready to take on the business world. The drive for success means that I willing to work hard and continue trying to reach the desired results. This is achieved by having good work ethic and team work traits, leadership and

communication skills as well as being a motivator and listener whilst, continuously learning and asking questions to be knowledgeable.

This text is consistent with the three words Nonz selects to describe the 'personality' of her ePortfolio during the focus group: 'driven', 'focused' and 'goal oriented'. She highlights how she sees herself, her aspirations as well as some qualities that she regards as currency, traits she sees as transferable that will help her in her 'battle' in 'the business world'. The 'traits' she identifies are also popular 'buzzwords' in the commercial field. Nonz says the following about her ePortfolio:

It's very me, so it's where I see myself in the future, what I aspire to be in the future, yes.

Ms. Sokhela

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About

- The youngest daughter
- The loudest laughter
- A dedicated young professional
- A self acclaimed boss in the making

Currently, working towards my second degree in Marketing and Management at the University of Cape Town.

A young aspiring black professional that is ready to take on the business world. The drive for success means that I willing to work hard and continue trying to reach the desired results. This is achieved by having good work ethic and team work traits , leadership and communication skills as well as being a motivator and listener whilst, continuously learning and asking questions to be knowledgeable.

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Figure 1: Nonz's 'About me' page on her ePortfolio

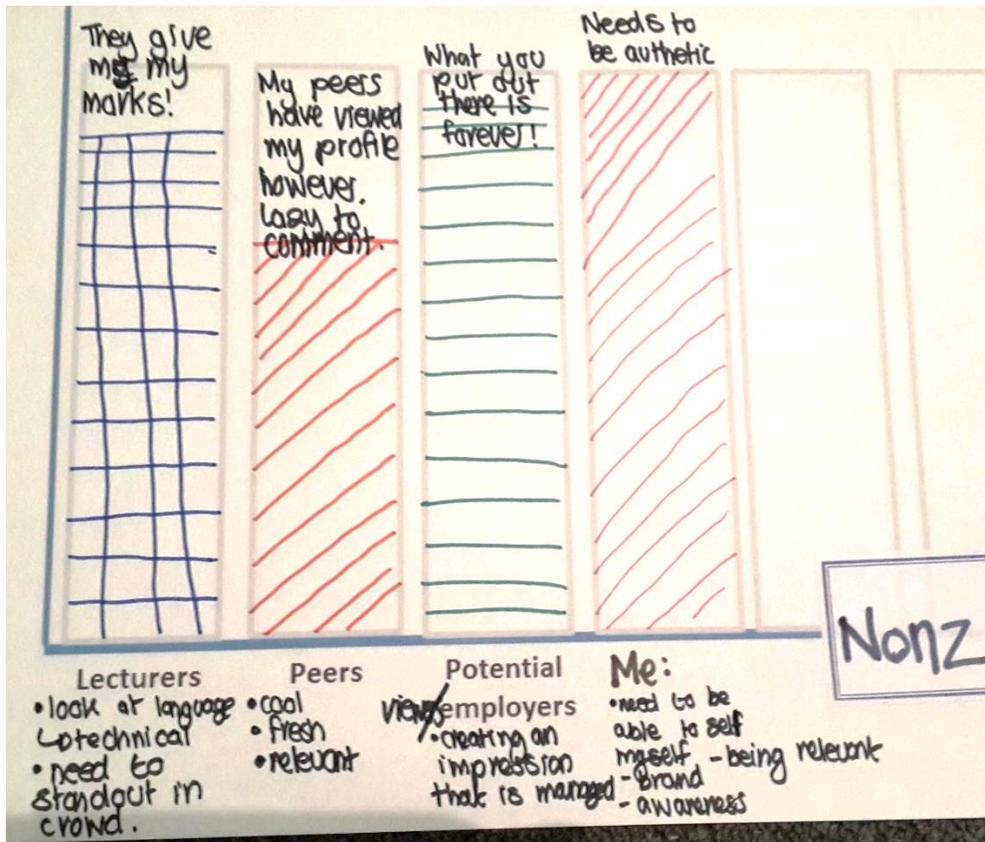


Figure 2: Nonz's audience graph

Nonz sees her ePortfolio as an aspirational performance. A short while later she states that 'an ePortfolio is a way of presenting yourself and showcasing your personality' but it is unclear which audience this expressive potential is directed at.

According to her audience graph (see figure 2), Nonz sees herself as the most important audience of her ePortfolio, followed by potential employers, lecturers and lastly, her peers. In relation to lecturers she notes that she thinks 'language' and 'technical' aspects are important to her lecturers and that she needs to represent herself in a way that allows her to 'stand out in (sic) a crowd' (configured here as her classmates rather than fellow job seekers in the future) because they are the ones awarding the marks. At the same time, she wants to 'be' things for herself: a 'brand', 'relevant' and 'authentic'.

Although she sees 'creating an impression that is managed' as being important ('what you put out there is forever!') in relation to potential employers, this may be seen as something that is related to becoming a personal online brand. She frames this as a responsibility and feels accountable to future potential employers rather than markers for the course or peers. She wants to be perceived as 'cool', 'fresh' and 'relevant' to her peers but possibly sees them as less important because they seem 'lazy to comment'. Here her meaning of 'relevant' in relation to peers is about having a 'cool' online persona.

Nonz also talks about her image in relation to social media and who she considers the most important audience of her ePortfolio to be:

Initially I had my Instagram there but then it was, like, two pictures. That was fine. And then I went to post another one and I was just, like, no. A person Instagramming needs to be aware it's also my blog, so now this is like a professional blog plus academic. Do I want to be seen in this light, because this is the image that I'm creating? And also in terms of, is this about me? I rated the most important audience here is me, actually. It needs to be authentic to myself as well as being an academic piece, so, yes, I guess you get to see a lot of my, like, serious side of personality, but in everyday conversation, like, I like joking and laughing and all that kind of stuff.

Here Nonz sees 'professional' and 'academic' as part of the 'serious side' of her personality and associates 'everyday conversation' with social media platforms like Instagram which she sees as 'authentic to myself'. This quote signals the tensions between how she would like to represent herself as well as her awareness that there are particular ways various spaces are interpreted by others where the 'professional blog' (ePortfolio) is associated with the 'serious' and social media with the 'everyday'.

In addition to these tensions, Nonz communicates different kinds of 'battles'. Her choice of header suggests a complex interaction between gender, power and wealth. The tie and blue colour thereof may be regarded as masculine imagery that she has co-opted to signify a particular kind of feminine authority and power. Her initials on the tie in 'bling' initials, thick gold chains and oversized gold elephant head ring suggest wealth. She explains that the picture was taken at her twenty-first birthday party. She motivates her choice of image as her desire to 'make a statement' and elaborates on it as follows:

I'm trying to do my LinkedIn profile, so I found this video that talks about how [unclear] aspire to be professional. So at some point I do feel like I might be coming over as a feminist, but I'm not. I'm just... I don't know. I want to be up there with you, hey, in the boardroom and, kind of, thing.

When asked what she learnt from the ePortfolio creation process, Nonz says:

...the way I present myself now will have an impact five years later. So that was quite interesting for me because I never thought that having an online profile was so important. But this is the trend. This is what's happening. So I don't know, it's a way of leveraging yourself.

While Nonz sees value of her ePortfolio as part of a wider 'trend' where she can 'leverage' herself, she hopes this involves the 'statement' she envisions as being an equal to male colleagues in the boardroom 'five years later', not as a 'feminist'. By contrast, the student identity where her ePortfolio submissions were assessed did not have a 'leveraging' effect, but rather one of confusion:

...the whole audience thing. The comment was always, like, remember there's a professional audience, so I'm, like, now what must I say because it needs to be conversational, it needs to be appealing, but, then, how do you address that particular audience. That was just... that was a challenge for me.

Nonz was not the only one who found the notion of multiple audiences challenging. James did too, although he adopts a different set of strategies.

James: 'Soon to be a grown up'

James includes the text 'HI THERE! I'M JAMES [SURNAME]' in bold above his graduation photo. This may be read as a personal introduction and friendly opening to someone he has not met before. Beneath his photo he provides a short biography, further anchoring his profile photo:

I'm a future Marketing guru, currently studying a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management at the University of Cape Town. In 2012 I earned a Bachelor of Social Science from UCT, majoring in Psychology and Media and Writing.

Like Nonz, his introduction includes the aspirational although he chooses to foreground it up front and provides follow-up factual information about his current and past academic background.

James chose 'conversational', 'humorous' and 'professional' to describe the 'personality' of his ePortfolio. He explains his reasoning as follows:

I said conversational, humorous and professional. Humorous, I hope. Conversational because I just wanted to keep it slightly informal, sort of, to appeal to a professional audience as well as classmates. Humorous because I like to think I can be funny sometimes... And then professional because I also wanted to keep it professional. I'm quite conscious about what I put on the internet, especially with employers and stuff, so I wanted... Like, I put in a lot of effort into making sure that I was 100% happy that someone, some potential employer could see it and not find anything to hold against me. So I was a bit apprehensive about linking social media. I went looking it up on Twitter so that when I did link it, I didn't think it was too bad. I, sort of, had a couple of quite strong statements on Twitter so I cut those out. And then something like Instagram I, sort of, couldn't decide if it was too personal and then I thought it, sort of, it's my personality...

Decisions about whether or not to embed social media extend to choices around photographs too. James' choice of images signify contrasting identities. His profile photo is from his undergraduate graduation whereas his header is a panorama shot where he is overlooking Table Mountain, turning to smile at the camera. These may be read as 'professional' and 'conversational' respectively. The landscape and sunglasses communicate who he is outside of the University and suggest that he might be an adventurous and 'outdoorsy' person. However, this might not have been his intention:

I really chose the graduate photo because I don't think I have any sort of nice head shots of myself, or very few, but then I thought, it is... it does relate to being a professional and, sort of, shows, you know, a graduate. But then I guess, on the other side, I don't know if I actually do like that, the complete antithesis of the outdoor photo with the... and maybe the... I think maybe I would have liked to have had a less formal head shot, but I've just got photos with people in them. I'd have to take a selfie or something.

His choice of 'J.B.[Surname]' rather than 'James' also encourages a particular kind of interpersonal relation. It is located in a dark grey block on the header and looks like a stamp over the sky with the tagline 'Soon to be a grown up'. In the process of customising the template and settings for the header (image, blog title, tagline) his choices signify a dissonance between the initials and surname which has an air of formality and the tagline which may be seen as humorous or a play on the reason for his ePortfolio ('Soon to be a grown up'). However, James explained the use of his initials and surname as an attempt to accommodate the template when viewing his ePortfolio on a mobile device, as the shorter name displayed better on a smaller screen. The contrasting genres of photography, the personal photo and the professional

graduation shot, also assist in communicating the intersection between the personal and the professional.

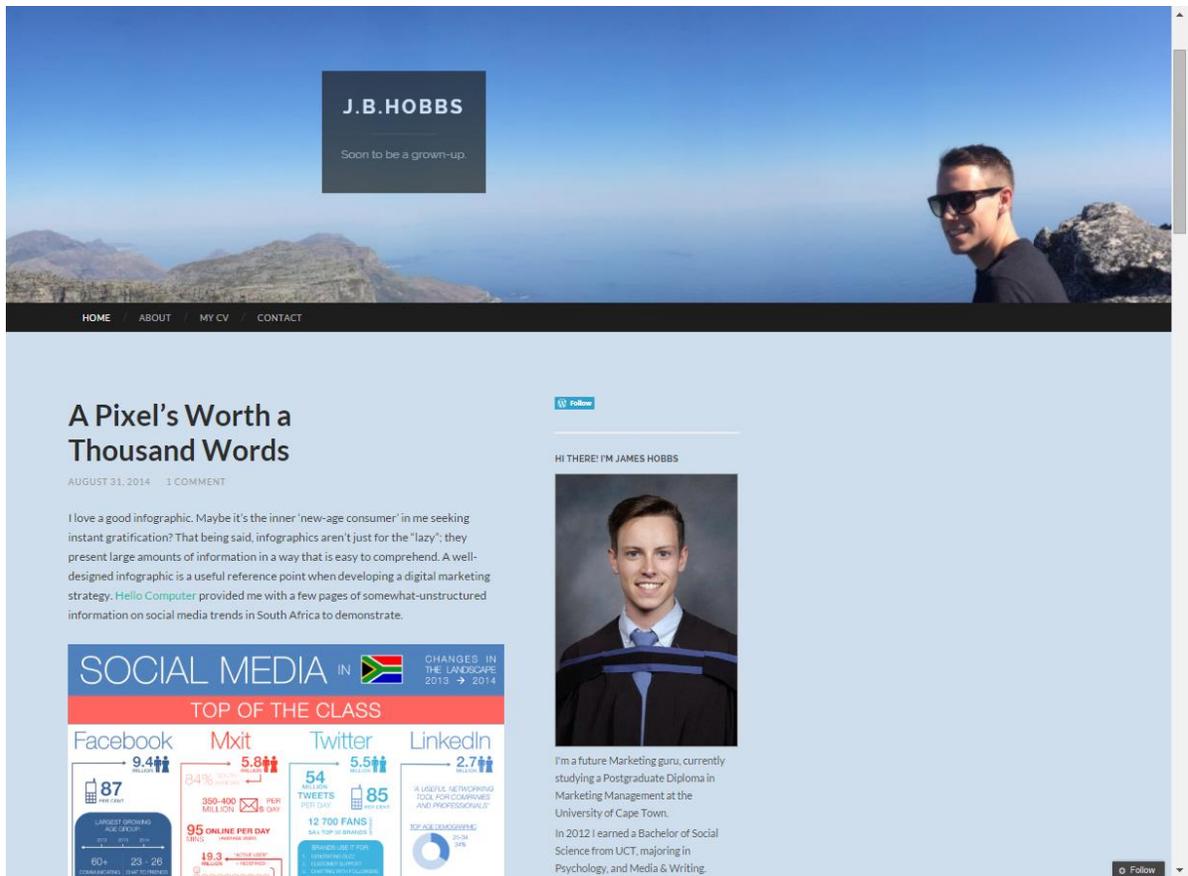


Figure 3: James' ePortfolio homepage with his 'About me' profile.

James' choices are consistent with who he believes the audience of his ePortfolio to be. He rates lecturers and potential employers as the most important audiences and his peers as the least important. He uses the words 'perfect', 'critical' and 'exhaustive' to describe how he would like his lecturers to perceive him, whereas he would like potential employers to see him as 'representative', 'perfect' and 'balanced'. In relation to peers he writes:

I don't care what classmates actually think) Irrelevant, Considerations (In terms of the writing style that the lecturers want)

Students were encouraged to consider their peers as an audience when working on their ePortfolios, so James admits they were a 'consideration' but does not regard them as an important audience he had in mind during the ePortfolio creation process.

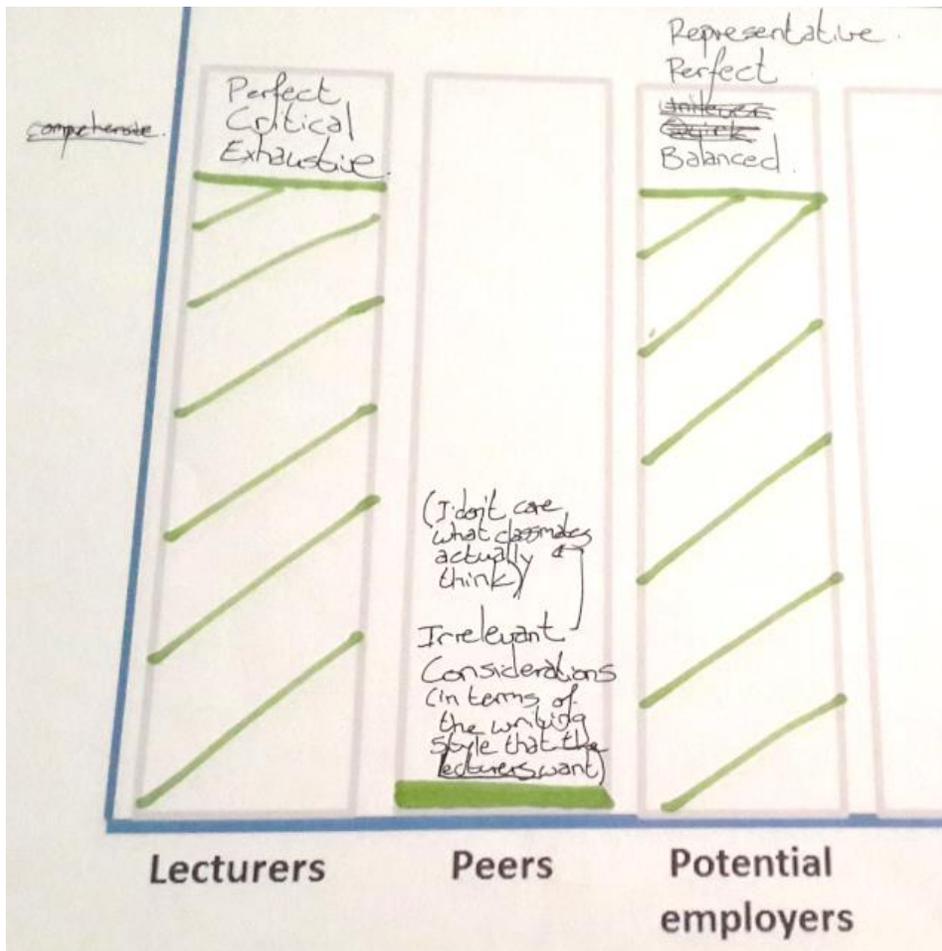


Figure 4: James' audience graph

During the focus group, James mentions how he felt a tension between tasks submitted to his ePortfolio and the image he preferred to project:

What I found difficult was integrating theory in a way that still sounded... without it sounding like an assignment, because I thought, you know, you're writing to Agency A but you still had to integrate all the theory about the different steps of the process, and had to reference and stuff, so I found it difficult to do that. And, in the end, like, I still look at it and I think it sounds a bit like I'm, like, giving a lecture or trying to teach someone, when, really, I should've been, you know, trying to present something for a client. So, I'm worried it came across a bit condescending, or something...

However, he also understands that there are differences among particular categories of audiences too, such as different potential employers:

My rule of thumb, and it's something I found difficult, was because this was, sort of... I saw it as something that employers would see, I said to myself... You know, I got so many different types of employers, especially with marketing, so my rule of thumb was,

someone from Company X would have to read it and someone from Company Y would have to read it... I had to find, like, that balance, and I guess in the working world you're not just a professional, your personality does have to come through, and I think maybe it, sort of, made me realise I don't want to work for Company X because, I don't know, with at least my interaction with them and things that I've seen is I don't... I wouldn't say that my personality would be able to come through, and I quite like...myself.

While Company X is a large, established and more traditional company, Company Y is a creative agency popular among young graduates. James understands that he would have to pitch or 'market himself' differently to them. While the minimal information he provides may be read as safe or generic, it is also part of his strategy. His ePortfolio communicates some aspects of his personality (choice of images, writing style, tone) and he sees this as important for potential employers looking for a particular kind of employee:

It reflects myself in a professional way with my personality coming through, so I think it, sort of, represents who I am for the companies that I do want to work for.

James' awareness of multiple professional audiences motivates his strategy of writing a biography with minimal personal information, but rather than reading this as generic it can be seen as a self-conscious act which actually makes it more targeted towards a broad range of potential employers rather than peers or lecturers. While the text may be read as 'professional' the 'personality' can be inferred from the visual design, choice of header image and welcome address on the homepage of his ePortfolio.

DISCUSSION

The two examples discussed show students trying to harness the expressive potential of ePortfolios and the range of identity performances which extend beyond a singular notion of identity. 'Professional identity' is highly complex and we can only start to understand it in relation to other kinds of identities students perform. The focus group discussions helped the authors to unpack the kind of strategies students use in relation to communicating particular kinds of information to different audiences. While both students understood the instrumental use of ePortfolios as an assessment regime and on online presence or 'brand' that can be used to share with potential employers, they also saw the expressive potential as a space to perform a sense of self they believe to be authentic. Both also understood the function of ePortfolios in relation to their broader social media presence and referred to their interactions in these online spaces when explaining their strategies.

In Nonz's example, performing a feminine gender identity includes discourses around equality, being an equal to men in a commercial field currently dominated by men in the South African context. This has implications for lecturers working to create spaces for students to develop professional identities, as it shows how students come with an awareness about power relations and representation in various fields. James' generic approach is meant to appeal to a range of potential employers and as such, he considers that this audience actually comprise of different groups. For example, while one agency may read an ePortfolio as professional, another might read its content as being too personal. Both students' motivation for their strategies suggest that they are seeking to find a balance more broadly, between the personal and professional as well as the use of ePortfolios as an assessment regime in a course and a tool for future employability. Therefore, their strategies also consider time and finding a balance that is suitable for the present and the future.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the intersection between students' identity performances as emerging professionals in relation to multiple audiences and the strategies they use to do so can help lecturers and educational technology practitioners to integrate ePortfolios more mindfully, attending to a range of features that include and go beyond technology and pedagogy. This has implications for how lecturers use ePortfolios as spaces for students to develop or practice the performance of professional identities.

Lecturers need to be aware of multiple aspects that come to the fore when integrating ePortfolios. An ePortfolio as a public online space, personal online brand and assessment regime further complicates students' roles (as learners, emerging professionals, and so forth). In responding to these complex dynamics, students become more aware of how they represent themselves online and to whom. The paper concludes by arguing that ePortfolios be understood as relationships rather than decoupling technology, pedagogy, audiences and student identities.

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