

Perspective

Parasocial Business: Platformed Authority and Organizational Influence in the Visibility Economy

Dag Øivind Madsen 

Department of Business, Marketing and Law, USN School of Business, University of South-Eastern Norway, 3511 Hønefoss, Norway; dag.oivind.madsen@usn.no

Abstract

Business influence increasingly unfolds in platform environments where visibility is ranked, repeated, measured, and monetized. At the same time, many platform interactions have shifted from reciprocal sociality toward creator-centered attention, mediated familiarity, and one-sided attachment. This perspective article develops the concept of parasocial business to explain how business actors convert platform visibility into credibility, trust, advocacy, and commercial value. Drawing on an integrative reading of research on parasociality, platformization, influencer labor, organizational reputation, marketing communication, and creator economies, this paper identifies three linked mechanisms: algorithmic visibility, persona design, and parasocial conversion. The conceptual analysis shows that parasocial business is not simply influencer marketing, personal branding, brand community, or consumer–brand relationship management. Its distinctive feature is the platformed conversion of repeated, persona-based familiarity into business-relevant authority and value. This paper develops the related concept of platformed authority and illustrates it through LinkedIn thought leadership, podcast-based business influence, and B2B expert visibility. This paper contributes to business administration and management research by showing how leadership communication, reputation governance, expert visibility, and organizational influence are increasingly shaped by platform infrastructures and public-facing personae.

Keywords: parasocial business; platformed authority; parasocial media; algorithmic meta-capital; persona design; influencer marketing; business visibility; organizational communication

1. Introduction

Business authority has always depended partly on visibility. Firms, leaders, consultants, brands, and management thinkers gain influence not only by possessing expertise or resources, but also by becoming recognizable and legitimate to relevant audiences. Research on legitimacy and reputation has long shown that organizational authority depends on social recognition, public evaluation, and perceived appropriateness (Fombrun, 1996; Suchman, 1995). Similarly, research on management ideas has shown that consultants, gurus, business schools, publishers, and business media help turn selected concepts into authoritative knowledge by presenting them as useful, timely, and rational (Abrahamson, 1996; Kieser, 1997). Business influence has therefore never been purely technical. It has always involved mediation, recognition, and symbolic work.

What has changed is the infrastructure through which such visibility is produced. For much of the twentieth century, business visibility depended heavily on institutional gatekeepers such as publishers, newspapers, business magazines, broadcasters, universities,



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consultancies, conferences, and professional associations. These actors still matter, but they no longer control business visibility alone. Executives, founders, consultants, analysts, creators, and brands now operate through feeds, recommendation systems, search rankings, follower networks, engagement metrics, podcasts, newsletters, clips, and platform-native formats. Platformization research shows how digital infrastructures increasingly shape cultural and commercial production, while research on algorithmic visibility shows that actors must operate within systems that rank, recommend, and reward particular forms of attention (Cotter, 2019; Lundahl, 2022; Nieborg et al., 2022; Van Dijck et al., 2018). In this environment, business actors must not only be credible. They must also become visible, repeatable, and platform-legible.

This shift has transformed business communication. Executives post on LinkedIn as recognizable public personae. Founders narrate struggle, resilience, and growth as ongoing stories. Consultants compress frameworks into shareable insights. Podcasters turn business commentary into routine companionship. B2B experts build familiarity through newsletters, webinars, clips, posts, conference fragments, and recurring appearances. Brands develop humanized voices that feel witty, responsive, familiar, and culturally present. These practices are often discussed separately as influencer marketing, personal branding, thought leadership, creator economy participation, social media engagement, or brand community work. Yet these labels do not fully explain the underlying mechanism through which platformed visibility becomes business authority.

The gap addressed in this paper is therefore conceptual. Existing research has explained important parts of the phenomenon: parasocial relationships between audiences and media figures, the platformization of cultural and commercial production, influencer labor, social media visibility, consumer–brand relationships, and organizational reputation. However, these studies do not yet provide a unified vocabulary for explaining how one-sided but affectively meaningful relationships become a source of business authority under platform conditions. In particular, they tend to leave underexplained the connection between platform-mediated recurrence, persona-based familiarity, and conversion into business value. This matters for business administration because platformed public visibility now affects leadership communication, reputation governance, employer branding, B2B influence, consulting, thought leadership, and the diffusion of management ideas.

boyd's (2026) recent argument that social media has become “parasocial media” provides a useful point of departure. The central claim is that major platforms are no longer organized primarily around reciprocal interaction among friends, but increasingly around one-sided attention to creators, advertisers, public figures, influencers, and media-like personae. This paper extends that diagnosis into business. However, the argument does not depend on boyd's formulation alone. It builds on a longer line of work on parasocial interaction, celebrity practice, influencer labor, self-branding, platformization, organizational reputation, and consumer–brand relationships (Abidin, 2016; Fournier, 1998; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Khamis et al., 2017; Labrecque, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Nieborg et al., 2022).

The concept developed here is parasocial business. Parasocial business refers to platform-mediated business communication and influence in which visibility, credibility, and commercial value are built through one-sided but affectively meaningful relationships with audiences. The concept does not replace existing work on influencer marketing, personal branding, consumer–brand relationships, brand communities, source credibility, or the creator economy. Instead, it identifies a more specific mechanism: the conversion of algorithmically mediated visibility into business value through repeated, persona-based familiarity and parasocial attachment.

The guiding conceptual question is: How does repeated platform visibility become business authority through persona-based familiarity and parasocial conversion?

This paper answers this question by developing three linked mechanisms. The first is algorithmic visibility: platforms do not simply host communication; they help select, rank, repeat, and normalize it. The second is persona design: business actors increasingly craft recognizable public roles that can travel across platforms and accumulate familiarity. The third is parasocial conversion: repeated exposure to a recognizable persona or brand voice can generate familiarity, perceived closeness, trust-like responses, and business-relevant action. Together, these mechanisms produce what this paper calls platformed authority: a form of business influence that emerges when algorithmic visibility, persona design, and parasocial conversion reinforce one another.

This argument is particularly relevant to business administration because it reframes platform visibility as a managerial and governance issue, not only a marketing tactic. When firms rely on visible founders, executive personae, expert employees, creator partners, podcast hosts, or humanized brand voices, they gain new possibilities for trust-building and audience access. They also assume new risks. Authority may become over-concentrated in a small number of personae. Platform metrics may be mistaken for durable trust. Vulnerability and authenticity may become scripted communication strategies. Expert knowledge may become simplified to fit the feed. These tensions show why parasocial business should be studied not only as promotion, but as a changing condition of organizational influence.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 explains the conceptual approach and scope of the perspective article. Section 3 reviews the conceptual foundations of parasocial business by linking parasociality, media and algorithmic meta-capital, platformization, and the creator economy. Section 4 defines parasocial business and distinguishes it from adjacent concepts. Section 5 develops a model of platformed authority. Section 6 illustrates the model through LinkedIn thought leadership, podcast-based business influence, and B2B expert visibility. Section 7 discusses theoretical and managerial implications. Section 8 concludes and identifies focused priorities for future research.

2. Conceptual Approach and Scope

This paper is written as a conceptual perspective article. It does not report an empirical study, test hypotheses, or claim to offer a systematic review of all research on parasociality, platforms, marketing, and organizational communication. Its purpose is to develop and delimit a conceptual vocabulary for analyzing a growing form of business influence: the conversion of repeated platform visibility into business authority through persona-based familiarity and parasocial attachment.

The approach is integrative and theory-building. The paper draws together five research streams that are often treated separately. The first is parasociality research, which explains how audiences can form one-sided but affectively meaningful relationships with media figures, hosts, influencers, celebrities, and other public personae (Giles, 2002; Hoffner & Bond, 2022; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Klimmt et al., 2006). The second is platformization research, which explains how digital infrastructures shape visibility, circulation, monetization, and cultural production (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Nieborg et al., 2022; Van Dijck et al., 2018). The third is research on influencer labor, self-branding, and persona construction, which explains how public identity becomes designed, performed, and maintained under platform conditions (Abidin, 2016; Duffy, 2017; Khamis et al., 2017; Marshall, 2014). The fourth is marketing research on consumer–brand relationships, influencer credibility, social presence, and parasocial conversion, which shows how familiarity and trust-like responses can shape consumer attitudes and behavior (Fournier, 1998; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The fifth is organization and management research on legitimacy, reputation, leadership communication, and the mediated circulation of business knowledge (Fombrun, 1996; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Suchman, 1995).

The contribution lies in connecting these streams around a specific mechanism. Parasocial business is not used here as a broad label for all online influence, all digital marketing, or all customer engagement. It refers to cases where three conditions are present: repeated mediated visibility, asymmetrical but relationally meaningful audience attachment, and plausible conversion into business value. The concept therefore excludes cases where platform exposure produces only awareness without familiarity, engagement without trust, or popularity without business-relevant consequence. This boundary is important because it prevents parasocial business from becoming a synonym for social media communication in general.

The paper uses LinkedIn thought leadership, podcast-based business influence, and B2B expert visibility as illustrative manifestations. These examples are not treated as a formal empirical sample. They are used to clarify how the conceptual model travels across different business contexts and platform forms. LinkedIn illustrates feed-based professional persona design. Podcasting illustrates voice-based familiarity and host trust. B2B expert visibility illustrates lower-intensity parasociality in professional markets where credibility, expertise, and organizational buying processes moderate the conversion of familiarity into value.

As a perspective article, the paper's aim is conceptual clarification rather than empirical validation. It proposes parasocial business and platformed authority as sensitizing concepts that can guide future empirical research. The model should therefore be read as a heuristic account of reinforcing mechanisms, not as a tested causal sequence. Its value lies in helping management and marketing scholars distinguish between visibility, engagement, familiarity, parasocial attachment, and business conversion, and in showing why these distinctions matter for leadership communication, reputation governance, thought leadership, B2B influence, and organizational visibility.

3. Conceptual Foundations

3.1. Parasociality After Social Media

Parasociality describes one-sided relationships in which audiences feel connected to media figures who do not know them personally. Horton and Wohl's (1956) classic account described this as "intimacy at a distance," emphasizing how media personae can appear to speak directly to audiences and become part of everyday routines. The concept was developed in relation to broadcast media, but it travels well to platform environments because platforms intensify repeated exposure, direct address, and the appearance of informal access.

Digital platforms have expanded the range of actors who can become parasocial figures. Celebrities, influencers, podcasters, streamers, founders, executives, consultants, and even brands can become recurring presences in users' feeds and routines. Social media also allows these actors to simulate backstage access, reply selectively to followers, disclose personal details, and stage intimacy at scale. Celebrity practice on Twitter already showed how public figures could use social media to create impressions of intimacy, availability, and fan recognition (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Influencer culture extended this logic by turning visibility, relatability, and authenticity into ongoing forms of labor (Abidin, 2016, 2018; Duffy, 2017; Hund, 2023).

boyd's (2026) intervention is important because it shifts the unit of analysis. Instead of asking whether parasocial relationships occur on platforms, she argues that major platforms increasingly operate through parasocial media. This means the dominant platform experience is not reciprocal interaction, but scrolling through curated content produced by creators, advertisers, influencers, and public personae (boyd, 2026). The shift matters because it changes the analytical question. The issue is not simply whether business actors

use social media. The issue is whether business communication increasingly operates in environments where mediated familiarity, one-sided attachment, and algorithmic recurrence shape influence.

For business and marketing, this is a significant move. Much of the existing research on parasociality focuses on media figures, celebrities, influencers, or consumer behavior. Parasocial business shifts attention toward the organizational and commercial consequences of parasociality. It asks how one-sided attachment shapes business authority, professional trust, thought leadership, brand credibility, and market influence. Repeated mediated exposure can make actors appear familiar to audiences even when no reciprocal relationship exists. In business contexts, that familiarity can matter because trust and credibility are often built through repeated signals rather than through direct interaction alone.

This does not mean that parasocial relationships are always intense. Parasociality exists on a continuum. At one end are strong fandom-like relationships with celebrities or creators. At the other end are milder forms of familiarity and trust that emerge when a person repeatedly hears a podcast host, follows a founder's updates, or encounters a brand voice in a recognizable style. Research on parasocial relationships and social media shows that such ties can have both beneficial and adverse effects, depending on context, intensity, and the nature of the attachment (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). Parasocial business therefore need not imply fandom; it may also describe lower-intensity forms of mediated trust and recognition.

3.2. Media Meta-Capital and Algorithmic Meta-Capital

Parasociality explains the relational form of platformed influence, but it does not explain why some actors become repeatedly visible while others remain peripheral. For that, the concept of meta-capital is useful.

Couldry's (2003) concept of media meta-capital describes the broader power of media to shape what becomes publicly salient and legitimate. Media do not simply report what happens in other fields. They influence how those fields are perceived, which actors become recognizable, and which narratives gain authority (Couldry, 2003). This is especially relevant for business because firms, gurus, consultants, executives, and management ideas have long depended on mediated recognition. A management idea becomes influential partly because business media, publishers, conferences, and professional intermediaries help circulate it. A CEO becomes symbolically powerful partly because media representations turn strategic decisions into leadership narratives.

Algorithmic meta-capital updates this logic for platform environments. Lundahl argues that algorithms exercise social power by shaping media consumption through curation systems. Recommendation engines, rankings, feeds, and search systems do not merely organize information; they shape what appears relevant, visible, and legitimate (Lundahl, 2022). Visibility therefore becomes a condition of participation. Actors must adapt not only to audiences, but also to systems that mediate audience access.

This does not mean that platforms determine authority on their own. Algorithmic meta-capital belongs primarily to platforms and digital intermediaries, but actors develop strategies for operating within its conditions. They learn to post at certain times, use certain formats, repeat certain themes, adopt certain tones, and monitor engagement metrics. Cotter's "visibility game" captures this kind of strategic adaptation among influencers, who attempt to infer and negotiate algorithmic rules in order to gain attention (Cotter, 2019). Christin and Lewis (2021) show how metrics can become tied to status, spectacle, and professional identity among creators, further demonstrating that metrics are not neutral indicators but active elements in symbolic competition.

The distinction is important. Algorithmic meta-capital refers to the infrastructural power of platforms to shape visibility. Actor-level platform competence refers to the practical ability to adapt to those systems. Parasocial business depends on both. Platforms create the visibility conditions. Business actors design personae and messages to fit those conditions. Audiences respond through attention, attachment, and action. Metrics feed back into platform visibility.

Recent extensions of algorithmic meta-capital into other domains also strengthen its usefulness. Ling and Yan (2025) apply algorithmic meta-capital to policy narratives, showing how algorithmic systems can shape what narratives travel, resonate, and gain strategic value. This is important for the present argument because business influence also depends on narrative circulation. Founder stories, product narratives, management frameworks, and category claims do not circulate in a neutral environment. They circulate through systems that shape recurrence, perceived relevance, and legitimacy.

3.3. Platformization, Creator Economy, and Attention

The wider literature on platformization helps explain why these processes are not confined to media industries. Platformization is typically defined as the penetration of platform infrastructures into cultural production, affecting how content is produced, distributed, and monetized (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Nieborg et al., 2022). Furthermore, platforms reorganize social and economic life through datafication, commodification, and algorithmic selection (Van Dijck et al., 2018). These perspectives clarify why business communication is not simply moving onto platforms. It is being reshaped by platform logics.

The creator economy makes this process visible since it can be viewed as an ecosystem involving creators, consumers, firms, and platforms (Peres et al., 2024). Platforms play a central role in the creator economy by enabling content creation, audience development, and monetization (Bleier et al., 2024). As a result, firms increasingly operate in creator-like ways. They collaborate with creators, sponsor hosts, encourage executives to become public voices, and build content strategies around recurrence and audience attachment.

Attention is the scarce resource in this environment, but attention alone is not enough. Heitmayer argues that attention increasingly functions as a symbolic currency across social media and beyond (Heitmayer, 2025). Yet its value depends on conversion. Some attention is fleeting. Some becomes routine exposure. Some becomes familiarity. Some becomes trust, loyalty, and advocacy. Parasocial business focuses on this conversion process. The key question is not only how attention is captured, but how visibility becomes relationally meaningful and commercially consequential.

This focus avoids a common weakness in platform studies: treating visibility as the end point. In business settings, visibility matters because it can be converted into authority, credibility, leads, sales, reputation, investment, and idea adoption. The link between attention and value is mediated by persona, relationship, and trust. This is why parasocial business must be analyzed as a process rather than as a simple label.

The creator economy also highlights the labor behind visibility. Abidin's work on visibility labor shows that attention must be actively cultivated through ongoing acts of self-presentation and audience engagement (Abidin, 2016). Duffy's work on aspirational labor shows how social media work often combines hope, unpaid effort, self-branding, and precarious opportunity (Duffy, 2017). These insights transfer to the business domain. Executives, consultants, founders, and brand teams do not simply "have" platformed authority. They work to maintain it through posting rhythms, performance style, responsiveness, and narrative consistency.

3.4. From Conceptual Foundations to Parasocial Business

Taken together, these studies supply the building blocks for parasocial business. Parasociality explains the relational form: one-sided but meaningful attachment. Platformization explains the infrastructural condition: visibility is selected, ranked, repeated, and monetized. Persona and influencer research explains the performative mechanism: actors design recognizable public roles that can circulate across platforms and become familiar to audiences (e.g., Abidin, 2016; Khamis et al., 2017; Marshall, 2014). Marketing research explains the conversion process: familiarity and trust-like responses can shape attitudes, advocacy, purchase intention, and brand credibility (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014). Organization and management research explains why this matters administratively: authority, legitimacy, reputation, and leadership communication increasingly depend on how organizations and their representatives are publicly recognized and evaluated (Fombrun, 1996; Suchman, 1995).

The theoretical need for parasocial business emerges at the intersection of these streams. Platformization research can explain how actors become visible, but not always how visibility becomes relationally meaningful. Parasociality research can explain one-sided attachment, but it has more often focused on media figures, celebrities, influencers, and consumers than on business authority. Marketing research can explain persuasion and consumer response, but it does not fully capture how executives, founders, consultants, experts, and organizational personae acquire authority in platform environments. Organization studies can explain legitimacy and reputation, but they have paid less attention to how these forms of recognition are increasingly shaped by platform recurrence, persona design, and parasocial familiarity.

Parasocial business is therefore introduced to connect these processes. It names the mechanism through which repeated platform visibility becomes attached to a recognizable persona or brand voice, produces familiarity or trust-like attachment, and can then be converted into business-relevant value. The concept is not intended to cover all social media communication, all influencer marketing, or all online engagement. Its focus is narrower: the platformed conversion of repeated, persona-based familiarity into authority, credibility, advocacy, and commercial or professional influence.

4. Parasocial Business

4.1. Core Definition

Parasocial business refers to business activity in which visibility, credibility, and commercial influence are built through one-sided but affectively meaningful relationships structured by platform environments. The concept has three core elements.

First, parasocial business requires repeated mediated visibility. The audience must encounter the actor, brand, host, consultant, founder, or expert often enough for familiarity to form. Single exposure may create awareness, but parasocial business depends on recurrence.

Second, parasocial business requires asymmetrical attachment. The audience may experience perceived closeness, trust, affinity, admiration, companionship, identification, or loyalty, even though the relationship is not reciprocal. This attachment may be intense, as in fandom, or relatively mild, as in repeated trust in a podcast host or B2B expert.

Third, parasocial business requires conversion into business value. Business value is used here in a delimited sense. It refers to outcomes that are plausibly relevant to organizational, professional, or commercial objectives, such as credibility, trust, lead generation, purchase intention, sponsorship effectiveness, brand advocacy, employer attractiveness, investor attention, reputation, expert authority, or the adoption of a business idea. Prior research on parasocial interaction, influencer credibility, and social media legitimacy shows

that mediated familiarity can shape consumer response, brand credibility, and public evaluation (e.g., Etter et al., 2018; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014). The term does not refer to any positive audience response. A post that receives attention but does not create familiarity, trust, or business-relevant action would be better understood as visibility or engagement rather than parasocial business.

Familiarity becomes consequential when it shapes purchase intention, brand credibility, electronic word-of-mouth, advocacy, professional reputation, lead generation, employee attraction, investor confidence, or idea adoption. Marketing research supports this conversion logic by showing how parasocial relationships can affect purchase intentions, brand credibility, consumer trust, advocacy, and electronic word-of-mouth (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Sun & Li, 2026).

The concept, therefore, connects media theory, marketing, and organizational communication. From media theory, the insight is that platform life increasingly organizes attention around one-sided relationships. From marketing, it takes the evidence that such relationships can shape consumer attitudes and behavior. From organization studies, it adds concern with expertise, legitimacy, authority, and professional influence.

4.2. What Parasocial Business Is Not

The key theoretical criterion is persona-based familiarity that can be converted into business value. Parasocial business differs from adjacent concepts not because it involves a completely different type of actor, but because it focuses on a specific process: repeated platform exposure attaches to a recognizable persona or brand voice, audiences develop some degree of familiarity or trust-like attachment, and that attachment becomes relevant to business outcomes. This criterion builds on work showing how public personae, self-branding, and micro-celebrity practices make individuals recognizable and relationally available to audiences (e.g., Khamis et al., 2017; Marshall, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011). It helps distinguish parasocial business from broader ideas such as social media engagement, influencer promotion, self-branding, and brand community.

Parasocial business should not be treated as a synonym for influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is one form of parasocial business, but the concept is broader. A consultant with a strong LinkedIn following, a podcast host with sponsor trust, a founder with a public persona, or a brand voice that feels familiar to consumers may all operate through parasocial business mechanisms without fitting the conventional influencer-marketing model.

Parasocial business is also not identical to personal branding. Personal branding emphasizes differentiation, market positioning, and strategic self-presentation (Khamis et al., 2017). Parasocial business emphasizes the relational and infrastructural process through which public identity becomes familiar, trusted, and commercially consequential. Personal branding may help create parasocial business, but it does not explain the whole process.

The concept also differs from brand community. Brand community emphasizes social relations among admirers of a brand (McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Parasocial business emphasizes one-sided familiarity with a brand, founder, host, expert, or public persona. Communities may form around parasocial figures, but the parasocial relation itself does not require mutual exchange among audience members.

Nor is parasocial business identical to consumer–brand relationships. Fournier's (1998) classic work shows that consumers can form meaningful relationships with brands. Parasocial business builds on this insight but places the relationship inside platform infrastructures where algorithmic visibility, persona design, metrics, and repeat exposure shape how those relationships form. Brand anthropomorphism research also supports this

link by showing how social presence and humanized brand communication can strengthen consumer–brand relationships (Kim et al., 2020).

Parasocial business also differs from ordinary customer engagement. Engagement may involve likes, comments, shares, purchases, reviews, or participation. Parasocial business focuses on the attachment mechanism that can sit beneath some of these actions. A customer may engage with a brand because of convenience, price, habit, or incentives. Parasocial business exists when engagement is supported by mediated familiarity with a recognizable persona, host, founder, expert, or brand voice.

Parasocial business also overlaps with, but is not reducible to, source credibility or mere exposure. Source credibility helps explain why perceived expertise and trustworthiness shape persuasion, while mere exposure helps explain why repeated encounters can increase familiarity and affective preference (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990; Zajonc, 1968). Parasocial business incorporates both logics but adds two further conditions: repeated exposure must attach to a recognizable persona or brand voice, and the resulting familiarity must be convertible into business value. In this sense, parasocial business is not simply “being seen often” or “being trusted”; it is the platformed conversion of repeated, persona-based familiarity into authority and commercial effect.

These distinctions are important because they prevent the concept from becoming too broad. Parasocial business names a specific process: platformed visibility becomes familiar through persona design, and that familiarity becomes valuable through parasocial conversion.

The concept of parasocial business overlaps with several established streams of research, but it is not reducible to any single one of them. Its contribution lies in connecting three elements that are often treated separately: platform-mediated visibility, persona-based familiarity, and conversion into business value. These distinctions are summarized in Table 1. The table compares parasocial business with adjacent concepts in marketing, media studies, and organizational communication. Its purpose is to clarify the concept’s specific focus: the platformed conversion of one-sided familiarity into authority and business value.

Table 1. Parasocial business and adjacent concepts (Source note: Author’s conceptual synthesis based on the literature on influencer marketing, personal branding, consumer–brand relationships, brand community, creator economies, platformization, and parasocial business discussed in the article).

Concept	Main Focus	Typical Relationship Form	How Parasocial Business Differs
Influencer marketing	Promotion through influential individuals	Influencer–audience–brand	Broader than influencers; includes founders, executives, consultants, podcasters, experts, and brand personae.
Personal branding	Strategic self-positioning	Individual–audience	Focuses less on differentiation alone and more on repeated, one-sided familiarity that becomes business value.
Consumer–brand relationships	Emotional and symbolic ties to brands	Consumer–brand	Places brand relationships inside platform systems shaped by algorithmic visibility, persona design, and metrics.
Brand community	Shared identity among brand admirers	Consumer–consumer–brand	Does not require mutual community ties; can operate through one-sided familiarity with a brand voice or public persona.
Creator economy	Platform-based content production and monetization	Creator–platform–audience–firm	Focuses specifically on how creator-like visibility becomes authority, trust, and commercial influence.
Platformed authority	Visibility-based credibility and influence	Actor–platform–audience	Treats authority as the outcome of algorithmic visibility, persona design, and parasocial conversion.

4.3. Boundary Conditions

The boundary conditions are central to the concept. Parasocial business does not occur whenever a business actor is visible online. It requires more than exposure, reach, or engagement. It occurs only when repeated visibility becomes attached to a recognizable persona or brand voice, when audiences experience some degree of relational meaning, and when that familiarity can plausibly influence business-relevant outcomes. This distinction is consistent with classic and contemporary parasociality research, which treats parasociality as a perceived relationship rather than as mere media exposure (Hoffner & Bond, 2022; Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Parasocial business is strongest under three conditions.

First, the actor or brand must be recognizable across repeated encounters. Recognition may come from a face, voice, writing style, narrative role, visual identity, recurring theme, or brand personality. Without recognition, repeated exposure is unlikely to become familiarity.

Second, the audience must experience some degree of relational meaning. This may be trust, admiration, companionship, identification, or perceived closeness. The relationship need not be emotionally intense, but it must be more than mere awareness.

Third, there must be a plausible route to business value. A podcast host's familiarity may transfer to a sponsor. A founder's public persona may support investor confidence. A consultant's recurring posts may generate leads. A brand voice may increase affinity or advocacy. Without conversion, parasociality remains communicative but not specifically business-relevant.

The concept works best as a continuum. At the low end, audiences may feel mild familiarity with a brand voice. At the middle, they may trust a host, founder, or expert. At the high end, they may form fandom-like attachments to a celebrity entrepreneur, management guru, or creator-brand ecosystem. This continuum helps avoid overstating the argument. Not every business relationship is parasocial, and not every parasocial relationship has the same intensity.

The concept also requires attention to platform specificity. LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, podcasts, Instagram, and newsletters do not produce identical forms of visibility. LinkedIn tends to reward professional narratives, status signaling, and career-oriented moral lessons. Podcasts reward voice intimacy, habit, and duration. YouTube rewards searchability, retention, and repeat formats. TikTok rewards immediacy, remixability, and affective compression. The mechanisms of parasocial business can operate across platforms, but they take different forms depending on platform affordances and audience expectations (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Van Dijck et al., 2018).

The concept would be weakened empirically if repeated exposure increased awareness without increasing perceived familiarity, trust, or business-relevant action; in that case, the process would be better explained as visibility, advertising exposure, mere exposure, or source credibility rather than parasocial business (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990; Zajonc, 1968).

5. Platformed Authority: A Model

5.1. The Core Process

Platformed authority refers to the form of business influence that emerges when algorithmic visibility is converted into credibility through persona design and parasocial attachment. It is not simply popularity. Popularity can be brief and shallow. Platformed authority implies a more durable capacity to be recognized, trusted, and followed in a particular domain. Platformed authority is therefore best understood as a platform-conditioned bundle of recognition, credibility, and influence, rather than as a wholly separate construct from legitimacy or reputation. It builds on classic concerns with legitimacy and reputa-

tion (Fombrun, 1996; Rindova et al., 2005; Suchman, 1995), but specifies how these forms of recognition are increasingly filtered through platform visibility, persona design, and metric feedback.

The model consists of five interrelated dimensions (Figure 1). The model should be read as an analytical model rather than as a fixed sequence of stages. Its purpose is to identify the main mechanisms through which parasocial business becomes possible: platform infrastructure, algorithmic selection and repetition, persona design, parasocial familiarity, and business conversion. These dimensions often reinforce one another, but they do not always appear in the same order. The model therefore functions as a heuristic for analyzing platformed authority, not as a universal causal chain. This approach is consistent with platformization and algorithmic visibility research, which emphasizes that platforms shape visibility and circulation without determining outcomes in a simple linear manner (Cotter, 2019; Lundahl, 2022; Nieborg et al., 2022).

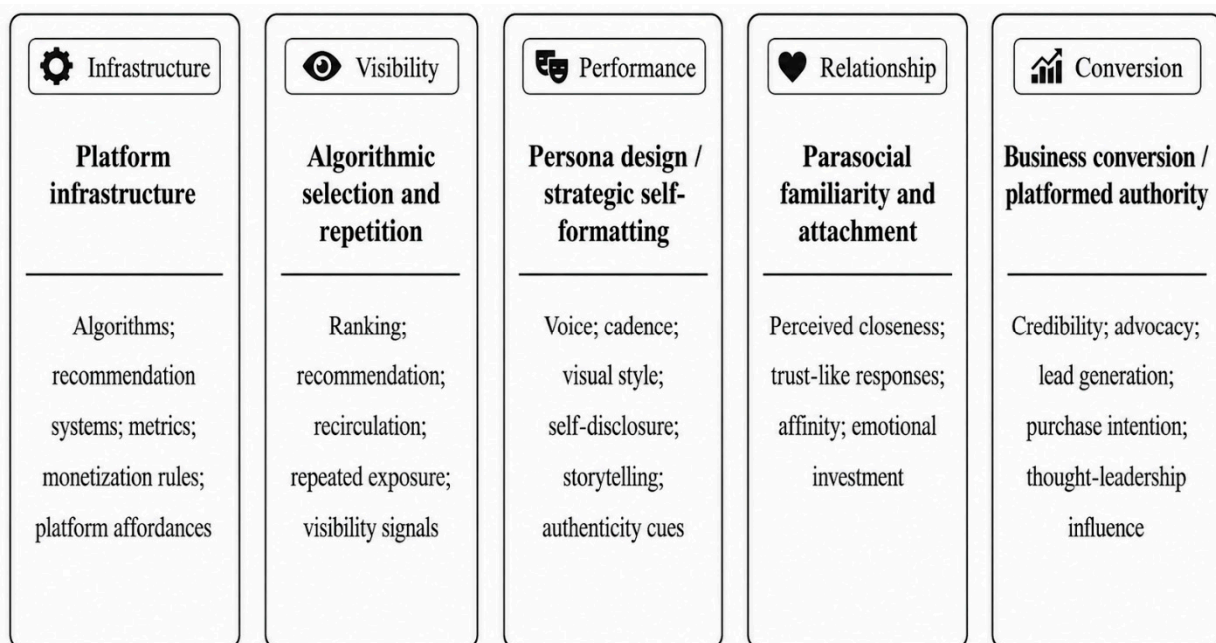


Figure 1. A model of platformed authority (source: prepared by the author).

The first dimension is platform infrastructure. This includes algorithms, recommendation systems, metrics, monetization rules, and platform affordances. These systems shape the conditions under which business communication becomes visible. Platformization research shows that such infrastructures do not merely distribute content; they shape production, visibility, and value (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Van Dijck et al., 2018).

The second dimension is algorithmic selection and repetition. Content gains influence when it is ranked, recommended, saved, shared, clipped, reposted, and recirculated. Repetition is crucial because authority rarely emerges from one exposure. It accumulates through patterned encounters. Algorithmic meta-capital helps explain why this dimension is important: platforms help decide what audiences repeatedly see and what becomes easier to recognize as relevant (Lundahl, 2022).

The third dimension is persona design or strategic self-formatting. Actors adapt their communication to become recognizable and repeatable. They use voice, cadence, visual style, self-disclosure, storytelling, humor, and authenticity cues. Influencer research shows that visibility requires ongoing labor and adaptation to platform norms, metrics, and audience expectations (Abidin, 2016; Cotter, 2019; Duffy, 2017; Hund, 2023).

The fourth dimension is parasocial familiarity and attachment. Repeated exposure to a recognizable persona can generate trust-like responses, affinity, and perceived closeness. These ties may be asymmetrical, but they can still affect attitudes and behavior. Parasocial marketing studies show that such relationships can influence purchase intention, brand credibility, advocacy, and electronic word-of-mouth (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Sun & Li, 2026).

The fifth dimension is business conversion. Familiarity becomes commercially or symbolically valuable when it produces credibility, advocacy, lead generation, purchase intention, brand salience, or thought-leadership influence. These outcomes then feed back into the platform through metrics such as engagement, saves, shares, comments, watch time, follower growth, and sales signals. Metrics do not merely measure platformed authority; they help reproduce it (Christin & Lewis, 2021; Heitmayer, 2025).

These dimensions also suggest an empirical vocabulary. Algorithmic visibility may be studied through impressions, ranking position, recommendation frequency, click-through, watch time, saves, shares, or follower growth. Persona design may be examined through voice, disclosure, narrative role, visual style, posting rhythm, and authenticity cues, drawing on work on self-presentation, persona studies, and influencer authenticity (Goffman, 1959; Hund, 2023; Khamis et al., 2017; Marshall, 2014). Parasocial conversion may be assessed through perceived familiarity, social presence, trust, affinity, and parasocial relationship scales, and then linked to outcomes such as advocacy, lead generation, purchase intention, sponsorship lift, or sales-cycle acceleration (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Labrecque, 2014; Rubin et al., 1985; Sun & Li, 2026). These measures are not equivalent, but together they offer a way to study platformed authority as a process rather than as a vague visibility effect.

5.2. A Recursive Rather than Linear Model

Although Figure 1 presents the dimensions in a simplified order, platformed authority is recursive rather than strictly linear. Persona design may precede visibility, audience attachment may affect algorithmic selection, and paid promotion may amplify visibility before deeper parasocial familiarity develops. Business outcomes may also occur without strong parasocial attachment. The model should therefore be read as a set of reinforcing mechanisms rather than as a fixed causal chain.

This clarification is important because platform dynamics are messy. A founder may already have institutional authority before gaining platform visibility. A brand may buy reach through paid media and then use persona design to create familiarity. A podcast host may first build parasocial trust through long-form intimacy and only later become algorithmically discoverable through clips. It is better understood as a heuristic account of reinforcing mechanisms, not a universal sequence.

The feedback loop works because each mechanism can increase the force of the others. Visibility creates opportunities for recognition. Recognition makes persona design more effective because audiences learn what to expect from the actor. Familiarity increases the likelihood that audiences will attend, trust, share, or respond. These responses produce metrics that may feed back into algorithmic selection, making the persona more visible again. Business conversion may also strengthen the loop by giving the actor resources, legitimacy, testimonials, or external signals that can be reused in future communication. This recursive logic reflects how platform metrics can become part of status, visibility, and professional performance rather than merely neutral indicators of audience response (Christin & Lewis, 2021; Cotter, 2019).

Platformed authority often compounds. Actors who gain early visibility receive more metrics, and metrics can feed future visibility. This is one reason platformed authority can

become unevenly distributed. Those with content teams, brand resources, media training, high production capacity, or existing institutional status may be better positioned to play the visibility game. Platformed authority can therefore democratize access in some cases while reinforcing advantage in others.

The recursive nature of the model also prevents over-attributing influence to platforms alone. Platforms structure visibility, but actors and audiences still matter. Audiences interpret, reject, remix, ignore, or amplify personae. Actors adjust their communication based on feedback. Organizations invest in communication capacity. Platforms alter their rules. Platformed authority is therefore best understood as a dynamic relation among infrastructure, performance, interpretation, and measurement.

5.3. Persona Design as the Mediating Mechanism

Persona design is the mediating mechanism because visibility alone does not tell audiences what kind of actor they are encountering. A platform may repeat a post, video, podcast, or profile, but parasocial familiarity forms around a recognizable public role. Persona design gives repeated exposure a stable object: the thoughtful founder, the expert educator, the contrarian analyst, the companionable host, the vulnerable leader, or the witty brand voice. Without such recognizable formatting, repetition may generate awareness but not attachment. Persona design therefore links algorithmic visibility to parasocial familiarity by making the visible actor interpretable, memorable, and relationally meaningful. This builds on persona studies and micro-celebrity research, which show how public identity is actively constructed for circulation, recognition, and audience connection (Khamis et al., 2017; Marshall, 2014).

Persona studies treat public identity as constructed, circulated, and interpreted (Marshall, 2014; Marshall et al., 2019). Marshall argues that persona studies concern the proliferation of the public self and the intersection between self and public in contemporary work economies (Marshall, 2014). Khamis et al. (2017) connect self-branding and micro-celebrity to the rise of social media influencers, showing how public identity becomes a market-oriented practice. These perspectives help explain why business actors increasingly design not only messages, but public roles.

Persona design can be defined as the strategic construction of a recognizable public role that can survive repeated circulation across platform environments. It includes voice, cadence, visual style, moral posture, disclosure style, narrative role, and recurring themes. A persona is not simply an image or a profile. It is a repeatable public form through which audiences learn what kind of actor they are encountering. On LinkedIn, the persona may be the reflective founder, the resilient operator, the generous mentor, or the contrarian strategist. In podcasting, it may be the companionable host, trusted explainer, skeptical interviewer, or entrepreneurial confidant. In B2B influence, it may be the field expert, category educator, analyst, or practical problem-solver.

Persona design differs from personal branding because it emphasizes role, repetition, and relational interpretation. Personal branding often asks how an individual differentiates themselves in a market. Persona design asks how a public role becomes recognizable and trusted through repeated mediated encounters. It also differs from authenticity, although it often uses authenticity cues. Authenticity in platform environments is often formatted through genre conventions, audience expectations, and metrics. A founder's confession, a consultant's failure story, or a host's informal tone may feel authentic, but these forms are still shaped by platform norms and audience demand (Hund, 2023).

The tension is structural. If persona design is too polished, it may appear fake. If it is too raw, it may undermine professional credibility. If it is too repetitive, it becomes formulaic. If it changes too often, it fails to accumulate recognition. Platformed authority

depends on holding these tensions together: credible yet familiar, strategic yet authentic-seeming, consistent yet adaptable.

Persona design also has organizational implications. In many firms, public authority becomes attached to a small number of visible personae: the charismatic founder, the outspoken CEO, the public-facing analyst, the creator-partner, or the employee advocate. These personae can humanize organizations, but they can also create dependency. When authority becomes attached to a single public role, the organization may benefit from visibility but become vulnerable to reputational shocks, departures, inconsistency, or audience fatigue. This is one reason parasocial business should be treated not only as a marketing opportunity, but also as a governance issue.

6. Business Manifestations

The following three manifestations illustrate how the model operates across different business contexts. They are not treated as empirical cases or as a representative sample. Instead, each example is used to show how the same analytical dimensions appear in different forms: platform visibility, persona design, parasocial familiarity or trust, and conversion into business value. LinkedIn highlights professional self-presentation in feed-based environments, including the strategic use of vulnerability and professional storytelling (Orgad, 2024). Podcasts highlight voice-based familiarity and host trust, where repeated listening can support parasocial attachment and brand advocacy (Madsen & Slåtten, 2025a; Sun & Li, 2026). B2B expert visibility highlights lower-intensity parasociality in professional markets where expertise, credibility, and organizational buying processes shape conversion (Mero et al., 2023).

6.1. LinkedIn Thought Leadership and Professional Personae

LinkedIn illustrates how professional authority becomes platformed. The platform is formally associated with careers, recruitment, networking, and professional signaling (Davis et al., 2020; Zide et al., 2014). Yet much visible LinkedIn content blends expertise with confession, moral reflection, leadership lessons, failure narratives, and motivational tone (Orgad, 2024). The style sometimes mocked as “broetry” (Hallab, 2024; Mac & Kantrowitz, 2017) is analytically useful because it points to a broader formatting pattern: professional communication is compressed, moralized, personalized, and made recognizable for feed-based circulation (Madsen & Slåtten, 2025b).

Research on LinkedIn self-presentation shows that users deploy self-presentation and self-praise strategies to project idealized professional selves and gain recognition (Weisi & Hajizadeh, 2025). This aligns with wider research on self-branding and micro-celebrity, which shows how individuals craft public identities for visibility and status in digital environments (Khamis et al., 2017). LinkedIn thought leadership is, therefore, not simply the sharing of professional expertise. It is the design of a recognizable professional persona.

The mechanism fits the model. Platform infrastructure shapes what is visible. Algorithmic repetition makes certain voices familiar. Persona design gives those voices recognizable form. Parasocial familiarity emerges when followers feel they know how a founder thinks, what a consultant values, or what kind of leader an executive is. Business conversion may then occur through speaking invitations, consulting leads, investor attention, job offers, reputation building, or idea diffusion.

The LinkedIn case also shows the risks of platformed authority. When professional credibility becomes tied to persona design, there is pressure to perform clarity, vulnerability, and wisdom in ways that fit the feed. Complex organizational realities may be compressed into simple lessons. Failure may become narrative capital. Vulnerability may become a

strategy. Leadership may become a style of posting. These dynamics reflect wider pressures of aspirational and visibility labor in digital work economies (Abidin, 2016; Duffy, 2017).

LinkedIn also demonstrates why parasocial business does not require celebrity-level attachment. Many followers may not experience strong emotional bonds with a founder or consultant. Yet repeated exposure can still create enough familiarity to influence judgments about competence, trustworthiness, and relevance. Parasocial business often operates through this middle range: not fandom, but repeated professional familiarity.

6.2. Podcasts and Host-Based Trust Transfer

Podcasting illustrates a different route to platformed authority. Unlike short-form feeds, podcasts create familiarity through duration, voice, and routine. Listeners may spend hours with the same host while commuting, exercising, cooking, or walking. The relationship can therefore feel personal even when it is entirely one-sided (García de Torres et al., 2025; Sun & Li, 2026).

Business podcasts play an important role because they convert ideas into hosted experience. Madsen and Slåtten (2025a) argue that podcasts are reshaping how management ideas are disseminated and consumed, with hosts acting as intermediaries in the circulation of business knowledge. A management idea presented through a familiar host may feel more accessible, credible, or relevant than the same idea encountered as a written abstract or formal report (Madsen & Slåtten, 2026).

Marketing research supports this mechanism. Listener-host parasocial relationships can enhance brand advocacy through emotional investment, showing how host familiarity can mediate commercial persuasion (Sun & Li, 2026). Host-read ads are powerful because the message passes through a trusted voice. The commercial relationship is not only between brand and listener; it is triangulated through the host's persona.

Podcasting also shows why platformed authority is not only about algorithmic feeds. Discovery systems, clips, subscriptions, rankings, and recommendations still matter, but the core parasocial mechanism is often slower and more routine-based. Voice, rhythm, repetition, and habit create intimacy. This makes podcasting a strong case of parasocial business because it combines platform discovery, persona design, parasocial attachment, and commercial conversion.

Business podcasts also occupy a distinctive position between expertise and companionship. A listener may value the host's knowledge, but the repeated listening relationship may become just as important as the information itself. This helps explain why hosts can become influential intermediaries in management culture. They do not only discuss ideas; they personalize and routinize them.

6.3. B2B Experts and Professional Familiarity

B2B influencer marketing shows that parasocial business is not limited to consumer culture. B2B organizations use influencer marketing through multiple strategies and B2B influence often involves experts, consultants, analysts, and professional communities rather than conventional celebrities (Mero et al., 2023). This makes B2B a useful test case because attachment is often expertise-based rather than fandom-based.

In B2B contexts, audiences may not form intense emotional attachments, but they may develop trust in recurring expert voices. An analyst whose reports, posts, webinars, and conference appearances shape a field may acquire platformed authority. A visible founder may become a proxy for startup credibility. A consultant may become associated with a particular problem frame. A category educator may define what counts as a modern solution.

Here, persona design is tied to competence. The actor must appear knowledgeable and field-relevant, but also accessible and recognizable. The persona is hybrid: expert and educator, analyst and storyteller, consultant and trusted guide. This helps explain why B2B authority increasingly develops across multiple channels: LinkedIn posts, newsletters, podcasts, webinars, conference clips, and reports. Expertise becomes more influential when attached to a repeatable public identity.

This also shows how platformed authority can shape markets before formal buying decisions occur. Procurement may still depend on technical criteria, but problem awareness, category legitimacy, and vendor credibility may be shaped earlier through platformed visibility. The most visible expert voices can help define what problems matter and which solutions appear credible.

B2B expert visibility also differs from consumer influencer marketing because credibility standards are often stricter. Entertainment, attractiveness, or lifestyle aspiration may matter less than competence, field experience, and problem relevance. However, parasocial mechanisms still play a role. Repeated exposure to a recognizable expert can create familiarity and trust before any direct sales interaction occurs. In this sense, parasocial business is not opposed to expertise; it is one way expertise becomes socially and commercially legible.

B2B parasocial conversion is likely to be moderated by procurement formality, deal size, regulatory intensity, technical complexity, and the number of stakeholders involved in the decision. Industrial marketing research has long emphasized that B2B buying is often collective, formalized, and embedded in organizational decision processes rather than driven by individual affect alone (Grønhaug, 1975, 1978; Webster & Wind, 1972). In highly regulated or expertise-certified sectors, formal credentials, compliance requirements, and organizational risk controls may limit the effect of persona-based familiarity. Parasocial familiarity may still shape problem recognition and vendor salience, but it is less likely to override formal evaluation processes.

This makes B2B parasociality less emotionally intense than celebrity fandom, but no less important. Its commercial power lies in familiarity with judgment, not intimacy with lifestyle.

7. Discussion and Managerial Implications

7.1. Theoretical Contribution

This perspective article develops the concept of parasocial business to address a gap between platform studies, parasociality research, marketing, and organizational communication. Existing research explains how platforms structure visibility and circulation (Nieborg et al., 2022; Van Dijck et al., 2018), how influencers and creators perform authenticity and visibility labor (Abidin, 2016; Duffy, 2017; Hund, 2023), how consumers form relationships with brands through social and parasocial interaction (Fournier, 1998; Labrecque, 2014), and how organizations manage reputation and legitimacy (Fombrun, 1996; Suchman, 1995). What has been less clearly conceptualized is the mechanism through which platform-mediated recurrence becomes business authority. Parasocial business fills this gap by identifying the conversion of repeated, persona-based familiarity into credibility, trust, advocacy, professional influence, and commercial value.

The first contribution is to extend parasociality further into the business administration domain. Parasociality has usually been discussed in relation to media figures, celebrities, influencers, streamers, fictional characters, or consumer behavior. Parasocial business shifts attention to executives, founders, consultants, business podcasters, B2B experts, thought leaders, and brand personae. This move is important because many business actors now operate as recurring platform presences. Their authority is not only evaluated through formal position, expertise, or organizational affiliation. It is also shaped by whether

audiences repeatedly encounter them, recognize them, and develop trust-like familiarity with them. This extension is consistent with parasociality research that treats mediated attachment as a continuum rather than only as intense fandom, and with marketing research showing that parasocial interaction can affect consumer trust, brand credibility, advocacy, and purchase-related outcomes (Hoffner & Bond, 2022; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014; Sun & Li, 2026).

The second contribution is to connect parasociality with platform infrastructure. Parasocial marketing research often focuses on the audience–persona relationship, but that relationship does not form in a neutral communication environment. Platforms rank, recommend, repeat, suppress, and measure content, and these processes shape what becomes visible, legitimate, and strategically actionable for platform-dependent actors (Cotter, 2019; Gillespie, 2018; Lundahl, 2022; Nieborg et al., 2022). Algorithmic visibility therefore helps determine which personae become familiar enough to matter. The concept of parasocial business adds this infrastructural layer to the analysis of mediated business influence. It shows that business authority is increasingly shaped by the interaction of platform systems, actor strategies, audience interpretation, and metric feedback.

The third contribution is to specify persona design as the mediating mechanism between visibility and attachment. Repeated exposure alone does not create parasocial business. The repeated object must be recognizable as a public role, voice, style, narrative position, or brand personality. Persona design explains how business actors make themselves legible across platform environments. It also explains why the same expertise may travel differently depending on how it is formatted. A consultant’s framework, a founder’s failure story, a podcast host’s recurring voice, or a brand’s witty tone can all become familiar public forms through which audiences attach meaning to business actors. This links the paper to persona studies and self-branding research, where public identity is understood as actively constructed, circulated, and interpreted rather than simply possessed by the individual actor (Khamis et al., 2017; Marshall, 2014; Marshall et al., 2019).

The fourth contribution is to clarify platformed authority as an outcome. Platformed authority is not the same as popularity, reach, or engagement. It is the more durable capacity to be recognized, trusted, and followed within a business-relevant domain. This concept links platform visibility with established concerns in management research, including legitimacy, reputation, leadership communication, organizational image, and the diffusion of business knowledge (Fombrun, 1996; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rindova et al., 2005; Suchman, 1995). The argument is not that expertise has disappeared. Rather, expertise increasingly has to travel through infrastructures and personae that shape how authority becomes visible, recognizable, and valuable.

7.2. Managerial Implications

Parasocial business creates practical opportunities for organizations. Visible founders, executives, experts, creators, consultants, and brand voices can make organizations feel more human, accessible, and trustworthy. In markets where attention is scarce and institutional trust is uneven, a recognizable public persona can help audiences understand what an organization stands for. This can support employer branding, investor attention, lead generation, customer advocacy, category creation, and thought leadership. These opportunities are consistent with research showing that mediated visibility can shape reputation, brand relationships, and public evaluations of organizational actors (Fombrun, 1996; Fournier, 1998; Labrecque, 2014; Rindova et al., 2005).

However, parasocial business also creates governance problems. The first problem is concentration. When organizational authority becomes attached to one highly visible founder, executive, host, or expert, the organization may gain attention but lose resilience.

Departures, scandals, inconsistency, burnout, or audience fatigue can damage the organization if too much trust has been concentrated in one public persona.

The second problem is metric substitution. Platform metrics can create the appearance of authority without proving durable trust. Prior research shows that metrics can become part of status competition, visibility work, and professional performance, rather than functioning only as neutral indicators of audience response (Christin & Lewis, 2021; Cotter, 2019; Heitmayer, 2025). Engagement, follower growth, saves, comments, downloads, and shares may indicate visibility, but they do not necessarily indicate credibility, competence, or loyalty. Managers should therefore avoid treating platform metrics as direct measures of reputation or trust. Parasocial business requires attention to the quality of familiarity, not only the quantity of exposure.

The third problem is formatted authenticity. Platformed authority often rewards personal storytelling, vulnerability, clarity, informality, and strong moral positioning, reflecting wider dynamics of authenticity, visibility labor, and aspirational self-presentation in platform environments (Abidin, 2016; Duffy, 2017; Hund, 2023; Orgad, 2024). These formats may humanize business communication, but they can also encourage formulaic confession, strategic vulnerability, and oversimplified lessons. Organizations should therefore ask whether public-facing personae are clarifying expertise or merely performing relatability.

The fourth problem is disclosure and responsibility. Parasocial business often blurs the boundary between relationship and persuasion. Podcast hosts may monetize listener trust. Executives may use personal authenticity to advance corporate strategy. Brands may simulate friendship while pursuing commercial goals. Consultants may convert familiarity into leads. These practices are not necessarily problematic, but they require transparency, disclosure norms, and internal review. This is especially important because parasocial attachment can make persuasion feel relational rather than purely promotional, a pattern documented in research on influencer marketing, host trust, and consumer–brand relationships (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sun & Li, 2026).

For these reasons, persona strategy should be treated as part of organizational governance rather than as a narrow communication tactic. Firms that rely on public-facing personae should develop persona portfolios rather than overdepend on one figure, clarify disclosure standards for sponsored or strategically amplified communication, create crisis protocols for persona-related reputational risk, and periodically assess whether platform visibility is aligned with organizational values and expertise. The managerial question is not simply how to become more visible. It is how to build platformed authority without confusing attention with trust.

8. Conclusions

Business communication is increasingly shaped by platform environments in which visibility is ranked, repeated, measured, and converted. This perspective article has argued that a growing share of business influence now operates as parasocial business. Firms, executives, consultants, podcasters, influencers, experts, and brands increasingly build authority through one-sided but affectively meaningful relationships with audiences.

The central mechanism is platformed authority. Algorithmic visibility makes some actors, messages, and personae repeatedly visible. Persona design gives that visibility recognizable form. Parasocial conversion turns familiarity into credibility, advocacy, purchase intention, professional influence, and other forms of business value. Metrics then feed back into visibility systems, making authority recursive and unevenly distributed.

The paper contributes to business administration and management research by showing how platform-based authority changes the management of leadership communication, organizational reputation, expert visibility, and public-facing business influence. It also

clarifies why parasocial business should not be reduced to influencer marketing or personal branding. Its distinctive concern is the conversion of repeated, persona-based familiarity into business-relevant authority.

Future research should prioritize three areas. The first is measurement. Scholars need better ways to distinguish visibility, engagement, familiarity, parasocial attachment, trust, and business conversion. Existing parasocial interaction and social presence measures offer useful starting points, but they need to be connected more carefully to platform metrics and business outcomes (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Labrecque, 2014; Rubin et al., 1985). Platform metrics may help, but they cannot substitute for audience-level measures of perceived familiarity, credibility, and trust. Future studies could combine surveys, interviews, platform analytics, and content analysis to examine how these mechanisms interact.

The second priority is platform specificity. LinkedIn, podcasts, YouTube, TikTok, newsletters, and webinars do not produce the same kind of familiarity. LinkedIn may reward professional storytelling and moralized career lessons. Podcasts may reward voice intimacy and routine listening. YouTube may reward recurring formats and explanatory authority. TikTok may reward rapid affective recognition. Comparative studies could show how different platforms shape different forms of parasocial business. This would build on platform affordance and platformization research, which shows that platforms do not simply distribute communication but shape the forms, rhythms, and visibility conditions through which communication becomes socially meaningful (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Nieborg et al., 2022; Van Dijck et al., 2018).

The third priority is the distinction between B2C and B2B settings. In consumer markets, parasocial conversion may operate through affective attachment, aspiration, and lifestyle identification. In B2B settings, the process may be more strongly moderated by expertise, professional norms, procurement procedures, deal size, regulation, and organizational risk. Familiarity may shape problem recognition and vendor salience, but it is less likely to replace formal evaluation. This makes B2B parasociality less emotionally intense than celebrity fandom, but still important for understanding how expertise becomes visible and trusted. This distinction is important because B2B influence is embedded in collective buying processes, professional expertise, and organizational risk evaluation rather than individual affect alone (Grønhaug, 1975, 1978; Mero et al., 2023; Webster & Wind, 1972).

Parasocial business does not mean that expertise no longer matters. It means that expertise increasingly travels through platformed conditions. To matter publicly, expertise must often become visible. To become visible, it must become platform-legible. To become durable, it often has to feel personal. Parasocial business names this transformation and offers a vocabulary for studying how business authority is built, governed, and contested in the visibility economy.

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