Shape Shifting Across Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

Behaviour changes according to the situation and context each person finds themselves in. The context and structure of the social network shapes and dictates their behaviour (e.g., a teacher will behave differently outside the classroom). These behavioural changes are known as switching 'social roles'.

We can see changes in role both on and offline. From understanding behaviour across contexts (e.g., home vs work or friends vs colleagues), we can better understand the individual. As the social network offline dictates behaviour; this is mimicked online by the human-computer interaction (HCI) perspective of systems shaping behaviour. Therefore, the individual conforms to a set of social norms online (as well as offline), which is a key concept to this study.

Background & Aims

This poster presents a mixed methods study that seeks to investigate user interaction and behaviour across social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). It aims to understand patterns of behaviour and interaction associated with particular platforms, for example:

- *Do users share different information and/or build different personas on different platforms?*
- *Why do users use one platform over another for seemingly similar information sharing and behaviour?*
- *Why do certain users have multiple accounts on one platform?*

Why is this important?

This study aims to provide insight into 'normal' behaviour and 'abnormal' behaviour within each context (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). This study is the first step into a larger series of quantitative studies aiming to understand patterns of behaviour and whether these patterns are robust to changes in context. This has impact for research on radicalisation, as it will provide a framework of understanding normal/abnormal behaviour within and across context.
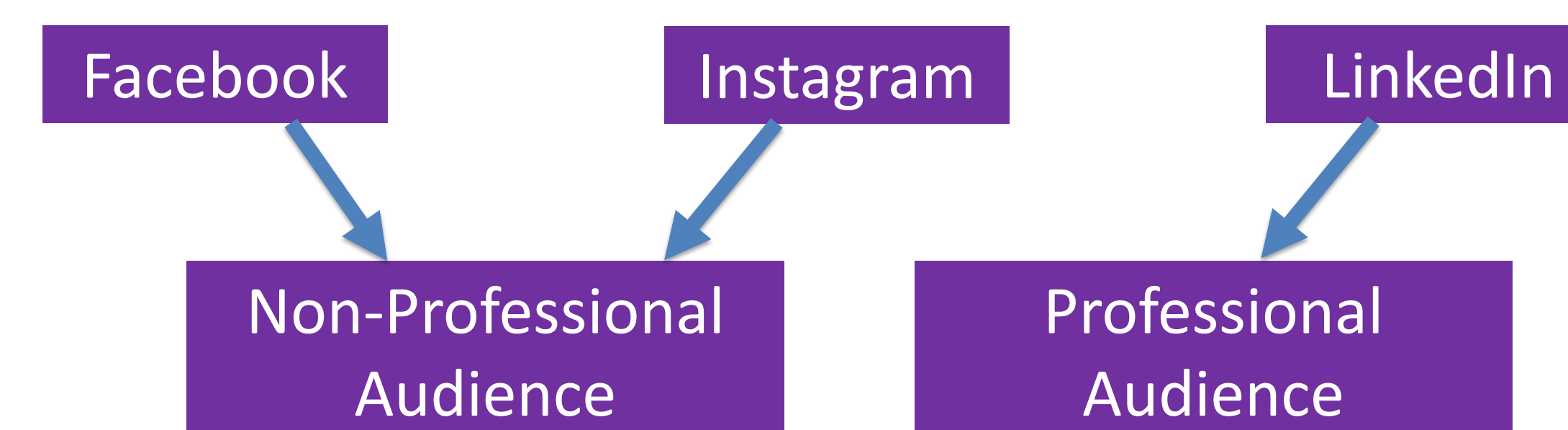
Example of the RepGrid Technique
1. Facebook, Instgram, and LinkedIn are *elements*
2. Non-professional vs Professional audiences are examples of *constructs*
3. Facebook and Instagram are similar, and LinkedIn was the dissimilar platform in this example

METHODS

Repertory Grid technique

RepGrids are an old therapy technique, which aim to elicit constructs and to understand the similarities and differences between them.

- Participants are provided 'element' cards (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) in groups of three
- They are asked what is similar about two and different about the third
- Their answer is the construct, which is used to produce a grid (see below), which aims to provide insights into platform usage

Example Interview Questions

- Could you walk me through the different social media platforms you have had and currently use?
- What kinds of information do you share on each platform? Does this change from platform to platform?
- Are your friends/ followers/ contacts the same across platforms? Is this a conscious choice?

	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube	Skype	SMS	Whatsapp	LinkedIn	Email	Facebook
Professional/Vocational	■						■		0
High frequency of use		■		0			■		
Very public		■			0		■		
Used for communication			0	■				■	
Inspiration seeking		■					0		
Being an active user	0								■
Excitement for notification			0			■	■		■
Stressful to use					0		■		■
Need to build a persona						0			■
Necessary/obliged to have						0			■
Pressure to reply fast								0	

Section of RepGrid output (above) showing similar platforms (blue) and the third dissimilar platform (0) e.g., First row: Twitter and LinkedIn (elements) are considered professional/vocational, whereas Facebook was considered non-professional

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Often, there is a clear segregation of personal/ social life and professional lives online (e.g., contacts, content shared, platform used).
- Few used Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and various others to maintain a professional online presence, with one referencing their 'personal brand'.
- Behavioural and communication patterns changed over time.
- Habits and routines are common with social media usage.
- Continued use for platforms is related to the purpose of the platform for users.
- There were common uses for platforms, e.g., Facebook was often used for 'communication' and acting as a digital 'memory storage', which lends itself to the HCI perspective of *systems shaping human behaviour online.*
- Varied opinions on which platforms users are most authentic.
- Facebook appears to be the most controversial with many users actively disliking the platform
    - Several participants commented on irritating types of user, e.g., those who overshare, boast, or post too frequently.
    - Facebook was described by one participant as a 'dark playground', where it is easy to lurk and 'stalk' other users, which is a key use of Facebook for many.
- Platforms like YouTube, Reddit and other forums tend to be used for specific content consumption, whereas Instagram, Twitter and Facebook tend to have less focused content consumption.
- Platforms like Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube often are used for 'lurking' rather than active participation (e.g., commenting and interacting with other users).
- Several participants mentioned concerns over data usage from social media and security aspects of platforms.