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Digital Professional Identity Construction Through GitHub and LinkedIn: A Qualitative Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, professional identity is increasingly constructed through online platforms that enable dynamic self-presentation and social interaction. This study examines how individuals construct digital professional identities on GitHub and LinkedIn using a qualitative content analysis of 50 publicly accessible profiles. Grounded in impression management theory, social capital theory, and identity construction theory, the research explores how users strategically present their skills, experiences, and professional narratives across platform-specific contexts. The findings reveal that GitHub fosters a performance-based identity rooted in technical competence and collaborative contributions, while LinkedIn promotes a narrative-driven identity shaped by professional storytelling and social validation mechanisms such as endorsements and recommendations. The study further identifies a hybrid identity formation process in which users integrate both platforms to construct a cohesive and multidimensional professional persona. This dual-platform engagement enhances visibility, credibility, and employability in the contemporary knowledge economy. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of digital identity construction and highlights the importance of platform affordances, network dynamics, and strategic self-presentation in shaping professional trajectories.

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1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped how individuals construct, negotiate, and communicate their professional identities. In the contemporary knowledge economy, professional identity is no longer confined to physical workplaces or traditional career documents such as résumés and cover letters. Instead, it is increasingly developed and displayed through digital platforms that enable continuous, interactive, and publicly visible self-presentation. Among these platforms, GitHub and LinkedIn occupy particularly significant roles, especially for professionals in technology-driven fields. These platforms serve not only as repositories of professional information but also as dynamic environments where identity is actively performed, evaluated, and reconstructed.

Professional identity has traditionally been conceptualised as an individual's self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences within a professional context (Ibarra, 1999). However, the digitisation of professional life has transformed this concept into a more fluid and multifaceted construct. Digital professional identity involves both self-representation and external validation, shaped by platform affordances, audience expectations, and social interactions (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). In this sense, identity is not merely expressed but co-constructed through engagement with digital communities and networks.

GitHub and LinkedIn exemplify two distinct yet complementary paradigms of digital professional identity construction. GitHub, a collaborative platform primarily used by software developers, allows users to showcase their technical expertise through code repositories, contributions, and collaborative projects. Here, identity is largely constructed through demonstrable skills and visible outputs, reflecting what may be termed a "performative" or "competence-based" identity (Dabbish et al., 2012). The transparency of contributions, such as commits, pull requests, and issue tracking, creates a meritocratic environment in which professional reputation is closely tied to observable technical performance.

In contrast, LinkedIn operates as a professional networking platform that emphasises narrative and relational aspects of identity. Users construct profiles that include summaries, work experiences, skills, endorsements, and recommendations. This platform encourages individuals to articulate their career trajectories, professional values, and aspirations in a structured and socially validated manner. The emphasis on endorsements and recommendations reflects a form of social proof, where identity is reinforced through the recognition of others (Donath & boyd, 2004). Thus, LinkedIn facilitates the accumulation of social capital and the cultivation of professional networks that contribute to identity formation.

The coexistence of these platforms highlights the multidimensional nature of digital professional identity. Individuals often maintain profiles on both GitHub and LinkedIn, leveraging each platform's unique

affordances to construct a comprehensive professional persona. This dual presence raises important questions about how identities are managed across platforms, how different forms of validation interact, and how users navigate potentially divergent expectations. For example, while GitHub may prioritise technical competence and authenticity, LinkedIn may emphasise strategic self-presentation and alignment with professional norms.

Despite the growing importance of digital platforms in professional life, there remains a lack of comprehensive research examining how identities are constructed across multiple platforms simultaneously. Much of the existing literature focuses on single-platform analyses or general discussions of social media use, without addressing the specific interplay between platforms with distinct functions and audiences. This gap is particularly significant in the context of technology professionals, whose careers are increasingly shaped by both technical contributions and network visibility.

This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a qualitative content analysis of GitHub and LinkedIn profiles. By examining publicly available data from both platforms, the research aims to identify patterns in self-presentation, skill articulation, and social engagement. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do individuals construct their professional identities on GitHub and LinkedIn?
- What are the key differences and similarities in identity construction across these platforms?
- How do users integrate multiple platforms to create a cohesive professional identity?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the evolving nature of professional identity in the digital age. As employers increasingly rely on online profiles to evaluate candidates, the ability to effectively construct and manage a digital identity becomes a critical skill. Moreover, insights from this research can inform platform design, career development strategies, and educational practices aimed at enhancing digital literacy.

In conclusion, the transformation of professional identity through digital platforms represents a fundamental shift in how individuals present themselves in the modern workforce. By exploring the roles of GitHub and LinkedIn in this process, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms and implications of digital identity construction.

2. Literature Review

Professional identity has been widely studied across disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and organisational studies. It is generally defined as the self-concept that individuals develop based on their professional roles, experiences, and social interactions (Beijaard et al., 2004). This identity is not static; rather, it evolves as individuals encounter new experiences, roles, and contexts.

Ibarra (1999) introduced the concept of "provisional selves," suggesting that individuals experiment with different

identities as they transition into new professional roles. This perspective highlights the dynamic and exploratory nature of identity construction, which is particularly relevant in digital environments where individuals can continuously update and modify their self-presentations. The notion of identity as a process rather than a fixed state aligns with contemporary understandings of digital identity.

2.1 Digital Identity and Online Self-Presentation

The emergence of social media has significantly influenced how identities are constructed and perceived. Digital identity refers to the representation of oneself in online environments, encompassing both self-generated content and interactions with others (boyd, 2010). Unlike offline identity, digital identity is often persistent, searchable, and scalable, making it subject to broader audiences and long-term visibility.

Goffman's (1959) theory of impression management provides a foundational framework for understanding online self-presentation. According to this theory, individuals engage in "performances" to control how they are perceived by others. In digital contexts, these performances are mediated by platform features, such as profile structures, visibility settings, and interaction mechanisms (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

Research has shown that users strategically curate their online profiles to align with desired professional images. For example, LinkedIn users often adopt formal language, highlight achievements, and seek endorsements to enhance credibility (Van Dijck, 2013). In contrast, platforms like GitHub emphasise authenticity and transparency, where identity is constructed through observable actions rather than self-descriptions (Dabbish et al., 2012).

2.2 Platform Affordances and Identity Construction

The concept of "affordances" refers to the possibilities for action provided by a particular environment or technology (Gibson, 1979). In the context of social media, affordances shape how users interact with platforms and construct their identities. Treem and Leonardi (2013) identified four key affordances of social media: visibility, persistence, editability, and association. These affordances influence both the content and form of identity presentation.

GitHub's affordances include version control, collaborative coding, and public visibility of contributions. These features encourage a form of identity construction based on technical competence and collaboration. Users' reputations are built through measurable indicators such as commit frequency, repository popularity, and community engagement.

LinkedIn, on the other hand, offers affordances such as structured profiles, endorsement systems, and professional networking features. These elements facilitate narrative identity construction, allowing users to present coherent career stories and build social capital. The platform's emphasis on connections and recommendations highlights the relational aspect of identity.

2.3 Social Capital and Professional Networking

Social capital theory provides a useful lens for understanding the role of networks in identity construction. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the resources available to individuals through their social networks. Putnam (2000) further distinguished between bonding and bridging social capital, emphasising the importance of both strong and weak ties.

LinkedIn is a prime example of a platform that facilitates the accumulation of social capital. Users can connect with colleagues, join professional groups, and receive endorsements, all of which contribute to their professional identity. These interactions not only enhance visibility but also provide validation and credibility.

GitHub also enables the development of social capital, albeit in a different form. Collaborative projects, contributions to open-source communities, and interactions with other developers create networks of practice. These networks contribute to what may be termed "technical social capital," where reputation is based on demonstrated expertise and collaborative engagement (Dabbish et al., 2012).

2.4 Identity Across Multiple Platforms

One of the emerging areas of research is the construction of identity across multiple platforms. Individuals often maintain profiles on various social media platforms, each serving different purposes and audiences. This phenomenon has been described as "context collapse," where diverse audiences converge in a single space, complicating self-presentation (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

However, the use of multiple platforms can also allow for more nuanced identity construction. Users can tailor their presentations to align with platform-specific norms and expectations. For example, a developer may use GitHub to showcase technical skills while using LinkedIn to highlight professional achievements and network connections.

Van Dijck (2013) argued that platforms are not neutral but actively shape user behaviour and identity construction. The algorithms, interface designs, and cultural norms of each platform influence how users present themselves and interact with others. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analysing digital professional identity.

2.5 Gaps in Existing Literature

While there is a substantial body of research on digital identity and social media, several gaps remain. First, much of the literature focuses on general social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, with less attention to professional platforms like GitHub and LinkedIn. Second, existing studies often examine platforms in isolation, without considering the interplay between multiple platforms.

Moreover, there is a need for qualitative research that explores the content and meaning of identity construction, rather than relying solely on quantitative metrics. Qualitative content analysis provides a valuable approach for examining the nuances of self-presentation and the contextual factors that shape identity.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a qualitative content analysis of GitHub and LinkedIn profiles, providing insights into the mechanisms of digital professional identity construction across platforms.

3. Theoretical Framework

The construction of digital professional identity on platforms such as GitHub and LinkedIn can be effectively understood through an integrative theoretical framework that combines impression management theory, social capital theory, and identity construction theory. These perspectives collectively illuminate how individuals strategically present themselves, leverage networks, and continuously negotiate their professional identities within digitally mediated environments.

3.1 Impression Management Theory

Impression management theory, originally developed by Goffman (1959), provides a foundational lens for analysing how individuals present themselves in social contexts. Goffman conceptualised social interaction as a theatrical performance in which individuals act as performers seeking to control the impressions others form of them. In digital environments, this metaphor remains highly relevant, as users curate profiles, select content, and engage in interactions that shape their perceived professional image.

In the context of LinkedIn, impression management is particularly explicit. Users carefully construct their profiles using professional language, curated experiences, and strategically selected skills to align with normative expectations of employability and professionalism (Van Dijck, 2013). Features such as endorsements and recommendations serve as mechanisms of impression reinforcement, allowing others to validate the user's self-presentation. This aligns with Donath and boyd's (2004) concept of "signals," where visible markers of credibility enhance trust and authenticity in online interactions.

On GitHub, impression management operates in a more implicit and performance-based manner. Rather than relying on self-descriptive narratives, users demonstrate competence through observable actions, such as code contributions, repository maintenance, and collaboration with others (Dabbish et al., 2012). This creates a form of "behavioural impression management," where identity is constructed through demonstrable expertise rather than explicit claims. The transparency of GitHub's activity logs reduces the scope for purely symbolic self-presentation, emphasising authenticity and accountability.

Thus, impression management theory helps explain the contrasting modes of identity construction across platforms: LinkedIn emphasises curated self-presentation, while GitHub emphasises performance-based credibility.

3.2 Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory provides a complementary perspective by focusing on the role of social networks in shaping professional identity. Bourdieu (1986)

defined social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to durable networks of relationships. In professional contexts, social capital encompasses access to information, opportunities, and recognition derived from one's connections.

LinkedIn is explicitly designed to facilitate the accumulation of social capital. Users build networks by connecting with colleagues, joining professional groups, and engaging with content. These connections serve as both resources and signals of professional legitimacy. Endorsements and recommendations function as forms of symbolic capital, enhancing the user's credibility and reinforcing their professional identity (Putnam, 2000). The platform thus enables both bonding social capital (within close professional networks) and bridging social capital (across diverse connections).

GitHub, while less overtly focused on networking, also facilitates the development of social capital through collaborative practices. Participation in open-source projects, contributions to shared repositories, and interactions with other developers create networks of practice that enhance reputation and visibility (Dabbish et al., 2012). This form of capital can be conceptualised as "technical social capital," where recognition is based on demonstrated expertise and contributions to collective knowledge.

Importantly, social capital on GitHub and LinkedIn operates through different mechanisms but contributes to a unified professional identity. While LinkedIn emphasises relational and symbolic capital, GitHub emphasises reputational capital grounded in technical performance. The integration of these forms of capital allows individuals to construct a more robust and multidimensional professional identity.

3.3 Identity Construction Theory

Identity construction theory emphasises the dynamic and iterative nature of identity formation. Rather than being fixed, identity is continuously shaped through social interactions, experiences, and contextual influences (Ibarra, 1999). This perspective is particularly relevant in digital environments, where individuals have the ability to continuously update and refine their self-presentations.

Ibarra's (1999) concept of "provisional selves" suggests that individuals experiment with different identities as they navigate professional transitions. Digital platforms provide ideal spaces for such experimentation, allowing users to test different narratives, highlight new skills, and engage with diverse audiences. This iterative process is evident on LinkedIn, where users frequently update their profiles to reflect career changes, new achievements, and evolving aspirations.

On GitHub, identity construction occurs through ongoing participation in collaborative activities. Each contribution, repository, or interaction contributes to the user's evolving identity within the developer community. The cumulative nature of these contributions creates a longitudinal record of professional development, reinforcing the idea that identity is constructed over time through practice and engagement.

Moreover, identity construction in digital contexts is inherently relational. Users'

identities are shaped not only by their own actions but also by the responses and interactions of others. Feedback mechanisms such as endorsements, stars, forks, and comments play a crucial role in validating and reinforcing identity claims (Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

3.4 Integrative Framework

By integrating these three theoretical perspectives, this study conceptualises digital professional identity construction as a multidimensional process involving:

- **Strategic self-presentation** (impression management)
- **Network-based validation and resource accumulation** (social capital)
- **Dynamic and iterative identity formation** (identity construction theory)

GitHub and LinkedIn serve as complementary platforms within this framework. LinkedIn facilitates narrative-driven impression management and social capital accumulation, while GitHub emphasises performance-based identity and technical reputation. Together, they enable the construction of a hybrid professional identity that integrates both competence and credibility.

This integrative framework provides a comprehensive basis for analysing how individuals navigate and negotiate their professional identities across digital platforms, highlighting the interplay between individual agency, technological affordances, and social dynamics.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in interpretivist epistemology to explore how individuals construct their professional identities on GitHub and LinkedIn. Qualitative research is particularly suited to this study because it allows for an in-depth examination of meanings, practices, and contextual nuances associated with identity construction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than seeking to quantify patterns, the study aims to understand the processes and mechanisms through which digital professional identities are formed and communicated.

A qualitative content analysis approach was employed to systematically analyse textual and visual data from the selected platforms. Content analysis enables researchers to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data while maintaining methodological rigour (Krippendorff, 2018). This approach is especially appropriate for analysing online profiles, which contain rich textual and symbolic content.

4.1 Data Source and Sampling Strategy

The study relies on secondary data collected from publicly accessible GitHub and LinkedIn profiles. Secondary data analysis offers several advantages, including accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to study naturally occurring data without researcher intervention (Johnston, 2014).

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who met the following criteria:

- Active presence on both GitHub and LinkedIn
- Engagement in software development or related technical fields
- Publicly accessible profiles with sufficient content for analysis

A total of 50 user profiles were selected to ensure diversity in experience levels, geographical locations, and professional roles. This sample size is consistent with qualitative research standards, which prioritise depth of analysis over generalizability (Patton, 2015).

4.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected systematically from both platforms, focusing on elements relevant to professional identity construction.

GitHub Data

- User profile descriptions (bio)
- Repository descriptions and README files
- Contribution history (commits, pull requests)
- Indicators of engagement (stars, forks, followers)

LinkedIn Data

- Profile summaries (About section)
- Work experience and education
- Skills and endorsements
- Recommendations and network connections

The data collection process involved manually extracting and organising content into a structured dataset. Screenshots and textual excerpts were recorded to preserve contextual integrity.

4.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), integrated within the broader framework of qualitative content analysis. The analysis proceeded through the following stages:

Familiarisation: The researcher immersed themselves in the data by repeatedly reviewing profiles and associated content to gain a comprehensive understanding of the material.

Initial Coding: Data were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns and features related to identity construction. Codes included categories such as "technical competence," "professional narrative," "social validation," and "collaborative engagement."

Theme Development: Codes were grouped into broader themes that captured key dimensions of digital professional identity. For example, codes related to endorsements and recommendations were grouped under "social validation," while codes related to repositories and contributions were grouped under "technical performance."

Interpretation: Themes were interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework, linking empirical findings to concepts such as impression management and social capital.

Cross-Platform Comparison: A comparative analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences between GitHub and LinkedIn in terms of identity construction practices.

4.4 Ensuring Research Rigour

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed:

- **Credibility:** Prolonged engagement with data and iterative analysis ensured accurate interpretation.
- **Dependability:** A clear and transparent coding process was maintained.
- **Confirmability:** Findings were grounded in data, with representative examples supporting interpretations.
- **Transferability:** Detailed descriptions of context and methodology enable applicability to similar settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to established ethical guidelines for internet research. Since the data were publicly available, informed consent was not required; however, ethical considerations were addressed as follows:

- No personally identifiable information was disclosed
- Data were anonymised where necessary
- Profiles were used solely for academic purposes

Researchers must remain sensitive to the potential ethical implications of analysing online data, even when it is publicly accessible (Markham & Buchanan, 2012; Mannan & Farhana, 2026).

4.6 Limitations of the Methodology

While the qualitative approach provides rich insights, it has certain limitations:

- The use of secondary data limits control over data quality and completeness
- The sample size, while appropriate for qualitative analysis, restricts generalizability
- Interpretation may be influenced by the researcher's subjectivity

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a robust framework for exploring the complexities of digital professional identity construction.

5. Findings and Analysis

The qualitative content analysis of 50 publicly accessible GitHub and LinkedIn profiles reveals a complex and multidimensional process of digital professional identity construction. The findings are organised into five major themes: (1) performance-based identity on GitHub, (2) narrative-driven identity on LinkedIn, (3) mechanisms of validation and credibility, (4) strategic cross-platform identity alignment, and (5) emergent hybrid professional identity.

5.1 Performance-Based Identity Construction on GitHub

GitHub profiles demonstrate a distinct form of identity construction grounded in technical performance and demonstrable competence. Unlike traditional professional platforms that rely on self-reported achievements, GitHub emphasises observable outputs such as

repositories, commits, and collaborative contributions. This aligns with the notion of "behavioural traces" as indicators of expertise (Dabbish et al., 2012).

Users construct their identities through several key elements:

5.1.1 Repository Curation and Project Narratives

Repositories serve as primary artefacts through which users communicate their technical identity. The selection, organisation, and presentation of repositories reflect deliberate choices about what aspects of one's expertise to highlight. High-quality README files often include project descriptions, usage instructions, and contextual narratives, indicating an awareness of audience and an effort to make technical work accessible.

These practices suggest that even within a performance-oriented platform, users engage in a form of narrative framing, blending technical content with storytelling. This supports the argument that identity construction involves both action and interpretation (Ibarra, 1999).

5.1.2 Contribution Frequency and Visibility

Contribution histories, visualised through activity graphs, play a significant role in signalling commitment and consistency. Frequent contributions are often interpreted as indicators of dedication, productivity, and ongoing engagement with the developer community. This reflects the platform's affordance of visibility, which enables users to showcase their activity over time (Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

However, the emphasis on continuous contribution may also create pressure to maintain visibility, leading to what some scholars describe as "performative productivity" (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

5.1.3 Collaboration and Community Engagement

Collaboration is a central aspect of identity construction on GitHub. Users who contribute to open-source projects or engage in collaborative repositories demonstrate not only technical skills but also the ability to work within a community. Interactions such as pull requests, issue discussions, and code reviews contribute to a relational dimension of identity, where reputation is co-constructed through peer interaction.

This form of identity aligns with the concept of communities of practice, where learning and identity development occur through participation in shared activities (Wenger, 1998).

5.2 Narrative-Driven Identity Construction on LinkedIn

In contrast to GitHub, LinkedIn profiles emphasise narrative coherence and professional storytelling. Users construct identities through structured sections that allow for detailed self-description and career representation.

5.2.1 Professional Summaries and Personal Branding

The "About" section serves as a key site for identity articulation. Users often employ

strategic language to highlight their strengths, values, and career goals. This reflects the practice of personal branding, where individuals market themselves as professionals with unique value propositions (Gandini, 2016).

The narratives are often aspirational, projecting not only current competencies but also future ambitions. This aligns with Ibarra's (1999) concept of "provisional selves," where individuals experiment with possible identities.

5.2.2 Structured Career Trajectories

The experience and education sections provide a chronological account of professional development. These sections contribute to a sense of temporal coherence, enabling users to present a logical progression of skills and roles. This contrasts with GitHub's more fragmented and project-based representation.

5.2.3 Skills, Endorsements, and Recommendations

LinkedIn incorporates explicit mechanisms for social validation. Skills can be endorsed by connections, and recommendations provide qualitative assessments of a user's abilities. These features function as signals of credibility, reinforcing the user's self-presentation (Donath & boyd, 2004).

However, the reliability of endorsements may vary, raising questions about the authenticity of such signals. Despite this, they remain influential in shaping perceptions of professional competence.

5.3 Mechanisms of Validation and Credibility

A key finding of this study is the presence of distinct yet complementary validation mechanisms across platforms.

- On GitHub, validation is implicit and performance-based, derived from metrics such as stars, forks, and contributions.
- On LinkedIn, validation is explicit and socially mediated, relying on endorsements, recommendations, and connections.

These mechanisms reflect different epistemologies of credibility. GitHub operates on a meritocratic logic, where competence is demonstrated through action, while LinkedIn operates on a relational logic, where credibility is constructed through social recognition (Bourdieu, 1986).

Importantly, users appear to strategically leverage both forms of validation to enhance their professional identity. For example, linking GitHub repositories on LinkedIn profiles allows users to combine narrative claims with evidence of technical competence.

5.4 Strategic Cross-Platform Identity Alignment

The analysis reveals that users actively manage their identities across platforms to create a coherent and complementary professional image. This involves aligning content, emphasising consistent skills, and linking profiles.

5.4.1 Cross-Referencing and Integration

Many LinkedIn profiles include links to GitHub accounts, indicating an awareness of the need to provide verifiable evidence of technical skills. Conversely, GitHub profiles sometimes include brief bios that align with LinkedIn narratives.

5.4.2 Audience Differentiation

Users tailor their identity presentations based on perceived audience expectations. GitHub is oriented toward technical peers, while LinkedIn targets recruiters, employers, and broader professional networks. This differentiation reflects the concept of context-specific self-presentation (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

5.4.3 Managing Consistency and Authenticity

Maintaining consistency across platforms is a key challenge. Users must balance the need for authenticity with strategic self-presentation. The alignment of narratives and performance indicators helps mitigate potential discrepancies.

5.5 Emergence of Hybrid Professional Identity

The integration of GitHub and LinkedIn practices results in the emergence of a hybrid professional identity that combines:

- Technical competence (GitHub)
- Narrative coherence (LinkedIn)
- Social validation (LinkedIn)
- Collaborative reputation (GitHub)

This hybrid identity reflects the multidimensional nature of modern professional life. It enables individuals to present themselves as both skilled practitioners and socially embedded professionals.

The findings suggest that effective digital identity construction requires not only platform-specific strategies but also the ability to integrate multiple forms of representation into a cohesive whole.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the evolving nature of professional identity in the digital age. By examining GitHub and LinkedIn as complementary platforms, the study highlights the interplay between performance, narrative, and social validation in identity construction. This section discusses these findings in relation to the theoretical framework and broader literature.

6.1 Reinterpreting Impression Management in Digital Contexts

The study extends Goffman's (1959) concept of impression management by demonstrating how it operates differently across platforms. On LinkedIn, impression management aligns closely with traditional notions of strategic self-presentation, where users curate profiles to project a desired professional image. The structured format of LinkedIn facilitates deliberate and controlled identity construction.

In contrast, GitHub represents a form of distributed impression management, where identity is constructed through ongoing actions rather than static profiles. This

challenges the assumption that impression management is primarily a matter of self-description. Instead, it highlights the role of behavioural evidence in shaping perceptions.

This distinction suggests that digital platforms are not merely channels for self-presentation but active participants in shaping how identities are constructed and evaluated (Van Dijck, 2013).

6.2 Social Capital in Platform-Specific Contexts

The findings underscore the importance of social capital in digital identity construction, while also revealing its platform-specific manifestations. LinkedIn facilitates the accumulation of bridging social capital, enabling users to connect with diverse networks and access new opportunities (Putnam, 2000). The visibility of connections and endorsements enhances professional legitimacy.

GitHub, on the other hand, fosters technical social capital, where reputation is built through contributions and collaboration. This form of capital is less dependent on formal connections and more on participation in shared practices.

The integration of these forms of capital suggests that professional identity is increasingly shaped by both who one knows and what one can do. This dual emphasis reflects the changing demands of the knowledge economy, where both skills and networks are critical for success.

6.3 Identity Construction as a Dynamic and Iterative Process

The study supports the view that identity construction is an ongoing and iterative process (Ibarra, 1999). Digital platforms provide continuous opportunities for updating and refining identity, enabling users to adapt to changing professional contexts.

The concept of "provisional selves" is particularly relevant in this context. Users experiment with different identity elements, such as new skills or career aspirations, and adjust their presentations based on feedback and outcomes. This iterative process is facilitated by the affordances of digital platforms, including editability and persistence (Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

Moreover, the longitudinal nature of GitHub contributions allows for the accumulation of identity over time, creating a historical record of professional development. This contrasts with traditional resumes, which provide only a snapshot of experience.

6.4 The Role of Platform Affordances

The findings highlight the critical role of platform affordances in shaping identity construction. GitHub's emphasis on transparency, collaboration, and version control encourages a performance-based identity, while LinkedIn's structured profiles and networking features promote narrative and relational identity.

These affordances not only enable certain forms of identity construction but also constrain others. For example, LinkedIn's emphasis on formal professionalism may

discourage unconventional self-expression, while GitHub's technical focus may limit the expression of non-technical skills.

This supports the argument that platforms are not neutral tools but socio-technical systems that shape user behaviour and identity (Van Dijck, 2013).

6.5 Implications for Professional Practice

The emergence of a hybrid professional identity has significant implications for individuals and organisations.

6.5.1 For Individuals

Professionals must develop digital literacy skills to effectively manage their online identities. This includes understanding platform norms, strategically presenting skills, and maintaining consistency across platforms. The ability to integrate narrative and performance-based elements is increasingly important for career advancement.

6.5.2 For Employers and Recruiters

Employers are increasingly using digital platforms to assess candidates. The integration of GitHub and LinkedIn profiles provides a more comprehensive view of a candidate's abilities and professional identity. However, this also raises challenges related to bias, privacy, and the interpretation of online data.

6.5.3 For Educators and Institutions

Educational institutions should incorporate digital identity management into curricula, particularly in fields such as computer science and business. Teaching students how to effectively use platforms like GitHub and LinkedIn can enhance their employability and professional development.

6.6 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The use of secondary data limits the ability to capture users' intentions and perceptions. Future research could incorporate interviews or surveys to complement content analysis.

Additionally, the study focuses primarily on technology professionals. Future studies could explore identity construction in other fields or examine the role of additional platforms.

Longitudinal research could also provide insights into how digital professional identities evolve, particularly in response to career transitions and technological changes.

6.7 Concluding Reflections

The findings of this study underscore the complexity of digital professional identity in the contemporary era. The integration of GitHub and LinkedIn practices reflects a broader shift toward multidimensional identity construction, where individuals must navigate diverse platforms, audiences, and expectations.

By combining theoretical insights with empirical analysis, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital platforms shape professional identity. It highlights the need for a holistic approach that considers the interplay between performance, narrative, and social validation in the construction of professional selves.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored the construction of digital professional identity through GitHub and LinkedIn, demonstrating that contemporary professional selfhood is increasingly shaped by the interplay of multiple online platforms. By employing a qualitative content analysis of publicly accessible profiles, the research reveals that digital identity is not a singular or static construct but rather a dynamic, multidimensional process influenced by technological affordances, social interactions, and individual strategies of self-presentation.

The findings highlight a clear distinction between platform-specific identity practices. GitHub emphasises performance-based identity, where technical competence is demonstrated through observable contributions such as repositories, commits, and collaborative engagements. This form of identity construction aligns with meritocratic principles, privileging demonstrable skills and ongoing participation in communities of practice. In contrast, LinkedIn facilitates narrative-driven identity construction, where users articulate their professional journeys, achievements, and aspirations through structured profiles supported by social validation mechanisms such as endorsements and recommendations.

Importantly, the study identifies the emergence of a hybrid professional identity that integrates these distinct modes of representation. Users strategically align their GitHub and LinkedIn profiles to present a cohesive professional persona that combines technical expertise with social credibility. This hybridisation reflects broader shifts in the knowledge economy, where both competence and connectivity are essential for career advancement. The integration of performance-based and narrative-driven elements enables individuals to enhance their visibility, legitimacy, and employability in increasingly competitive and digitally mediated labour markets.

The study also contributes to theoretical discussions by extending impression management theory into performance-based digital contexts, highlighting the role of behavioural evidence in shaping professional identity. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of social capital in both relational and technical forms, demonstrating how networks and collaborative practices contribute to identity construction.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and its focus on a specific professional domain. Future research could incorporate primary data collection methods, such as interviews, to capture users' perspectives and motivations. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into how digital professional identities evolve.

In conclusion, the construction of digital professional identity through platforms like GitHub and LinkedIn represents a significant transformation in how individuals present and negotiate their professional selves. Understanding this process is essential for individuals, educators, and organisations seeking to navigate the complexities of the digital professional landscape.

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