Individual, Interpersonal, And Group Self-Representation On Social Media

The field of research on self-representation on social media is a dynamic and multifaceted area of study that explores how individuals construct, curate, and project their digital personas in the digital age. This research delves into the complexities of identity, communication, and the impact of online interactions, offering insights into the ways individuals use various online platforms to form their identities.

By adapting Brewer & Gardner's (1996) levels of self-representation - Individual, Interpersonal, Group - we delve into three different domains of social media (Google Map reviews, TikTok, and Tinder) where different aspects of self-representation take form and become a subject of cultural analysis. Throughout three research projects, we analyze the aspects of self-representation using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. We look at the group self-representation through the lens of social communication features integrated into the Google Maps cartographic system. We found the main topics of discussions pre and post-COVID-19 Pandemic and how they correlate with the demographic and mobility data of the Museum users. Our findings suggest that certain topics, like those related to the operating staff and infrastructure of the museums, are more discussed after post-pandemic reopening.

Interpersonal mode of self-representation is revealed through the use of TikTok by Latin American migrants who express their sense of belonging through creative and platformed practices, and how these practices contribute to their visibility, agency, and citizenship. There is a lack of research on how migrants use digital media, particularly TikTok, to express their sense of belonging and self-representation, and our paper aims to fill this gap. Our findings suggest two main modes of self-representation: aspirational and performative. The aspirational mode involves migrants appropriating dominant storylines and formats to fit their narratives, culture, and identity, and establishing a benchmark of achievement toward the desired life. The performative mode involves migrants using performative expressions of the self to guide the migrant community to exercise their citizenship and navigate services, policies, and rights that concern them. These modes of self-representation ultimately contribute to migrants' visibility, agency, and citizenship, and challenge dominant narratives of migration that portray migrants as passive and victimized.

The third research project focuses on individual self-representation by exploring the visual space of the online dating scene on Tinder in Estonia. There is limited research on how the large picture of visual practices looks on dating platforms. In our research, we fill this gap in knowledge by visualizing and performing sequence analysis and close reading of 10680 images of more than 3600 individuals. Our findings reveal the gendered difference in visual genres of self-representation dominant among men and women, as well as a large overlap in the visual similarity of profile images for both men and women. Additionally, we demonstrate how these genres of photography are distributed across the profiles, and how different these distributions are for men and women, contributing to the unique experience of swiping.

We anticipate all three of the abovementioned research projects to be a unique contribution to the field of Cultural Data Analytics and a starting point for new branches of research that will expand and deepen our understanding of self-representation and communication on social media.

Keywords: Self-representation, Group, Interperson, Individual, Social Media
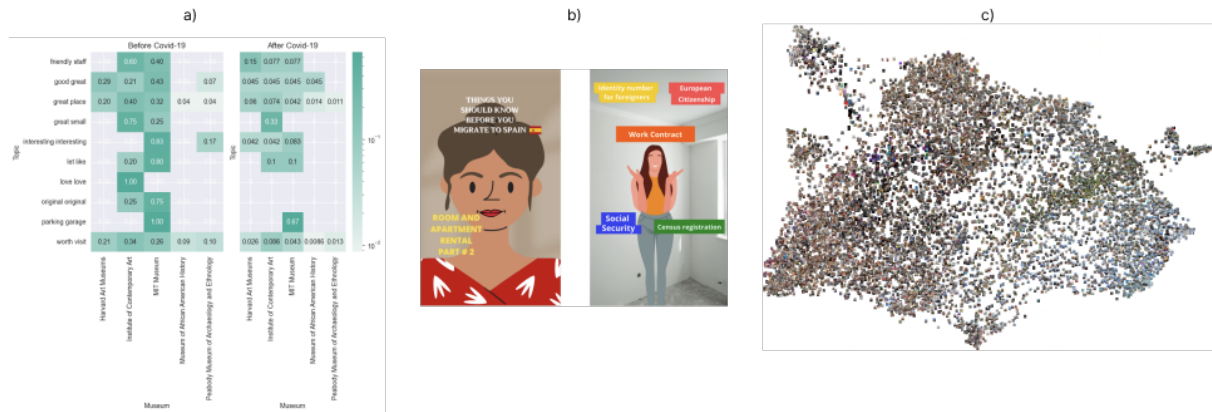
Figure 1. Three levels of self-representation: a) Group self-representation level as expressed through the reviews on the Google Maps platform, where two heatmaps expose a shift in the communication topics dominant before and after COVID-19 restrictions; b) Interpersonal self-representation level viewed through the analysis of migrant videos on TikTok, created to connect with and support other migrants; c) The individual level of self-representation explored in the analysis of the profile images on Tinder platform. Gendered differences and individualistic features of self-representation are explored through the means of preferred genres of photography.