Moderation Challenges for Generative AI Communities: Impacts of Platform Choice and Boundary Regulation

BRENNAN ANTONE and MALTE JUNG, Cornell University, USA

Online communities whose topics focus on Generative AI (Gen-AI) serves as venues for learning and sharing content from Gen-AI tools. Employing a case study approach, this work examines the Midjourney communities on Discord, Facebook, and Reddit. On each platform, affordances and boundary regulation shape community interaction. AI users may come into contact with AI critics or less engaged members of the lay public on each platform. Moderators face distinct challenges on each platform, which underscores the importance of community management for Gen-AI discussions online.

1 INTRODUCTION

As Generative AI tools have grown in their capabilities and their accessibility, an increasing number of users have explored these tools. Online spaces have emerged for Generative AI users to connect: teaching the tool, sharing creations, and inspiring one another. Large communities of Generative AI users have emerged around different tools and on different platforms (Discord, Facebook, Reddit, etc.). These communities influence the use of Gen-AI and shape the public discourse surrounding it. This study examines the structure and moderation of Gen-AI communities, building on theories related to boundary regulation [1].

Gen-AI communities must deal with accessibility by different audiences. In addition to Gen-AI users, there are harsh critics of Gen-AI and members of the broader public. Different compositions of these three groups may produce very different environments online. On their own, Gen-AI users may engage in deeper discussions about the use of tools. On the other hand, mixes of the three groups may promote shallower, more conflict-prone discussion.

Different social media platforms - with different affordances regarding visibility and accessibility - impact the composition of online communities. We hypothesize that the community boundaries will shape the nature of interactions for Gen-AI communities. Boundary theory, initially developed in work-life research, has since been adapted to understand behavior in online communities. In the context of online communities, boundaries can be understood as the rules, norms, and practices that govern membership, participation, and the sharing of information within a community. Boundary regulation evolves with community culture and moderation.

2 METHODS

To test the impact of boundary regulation, we employ a case study approach. We examine the community around Midjourney, an image-generation tool. Midjourney's communities were contrasted across three platforms: Discord, Facebook, and Reddit. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 community moderators, roughly half of the moderation team for Midjourney. These interviews examined community management, user interactions, and the impact of platform affordances. These interviews were supplemented with ethnographic observation of each community.

Authors' address: Brennan Antone, brennanantone@gmail.com; Malte Jung, mfj28@cornell.edu, Cornell University, 136 Hoy Road, Ithaca, New York, USA, 14850.

3   RESULTS

We found significant differences between platforms. Discord is designed to create focused, often private communities around specific interests or topics. It allows for specialized discussions and topic segmentation. Midjourney Discord members were almost entirely Gen-AI users who supported the tool. Discussion within the Discord was largely positive and collaborative, leading to the production of new knowledge about Midjourney use.

In contrast, Facebook communities often have more fixed and externally visible boundaries. Due to Facebook's broader audience and public nature, many AI critics and members of the broader public engaged with the content in the Facebook group. The discussion focused more on sharing images created with Midjourney and supportive/reactive comments. There was less deep discussion on how to use the tool. Moderators faced challenges in carefully regulating content, as conflict erupted between different types of users.

Reddit's structure is somewhat of a hybrid between the focused, closed communities of Discord and the broad, open networks of Facebook. Like Discord, specific rules and norms are enforced within a closed subreddit. However, the public nature of Reddit, similar to the Facebook group, allowed a wider audience to participate with minimal barriers to entry. Participants in the discussion included more fans of Gen-AI who were not yet frequent Midjourney users. The discussion was deeper than on Facebook and frequently was reactive to news or contemporary events.

4   SIGNIFICANCE

Online communities about Gen-AI provide their members with support and inspiration. Uses participating in these communities may build technical and creative skills for their AI-generated work. Social interaction in online communities may play a key role in AI adoption and education. But this depends upon content moderation and the maintenance of these online spaces.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how Gen-AI content is shared and how Gen-AI tools are discussed on social media. We establish how moderators face different challenges stemming from boundary regulation on each platform. It underscores the need for responsible moderation of Gen-AI communities, and how different platforms may be more suitable to foster positive and productive online spaces. Boundary theory offers insights for developers and moderators on managing these spaces and designing future social media spaces for Gen-AI.

REFERENCES

[1] Pamela Karr-Wisniewski, D Wilson, and Richter-Lipford. 2011. A New Social Order: Mechanisms for Social Network Site Boundary Regulation. *AMCIS Proceedings* (2011).