Online Community

Authored by

mohammad looti

November 19, 2022

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2022). *Online Community*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=39448

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM

An online community is a virtual community that exists online and whose members enable its existence through taking part in membership ritual. An online community can take the form of an information system where anyone can post content, such as a Bulletin board system or one where only a restricted number of people can initiate posts, such as Weblogs. Online communities have also become a supplemental form of communication between people who know each other primarily in real life. Many means are used in social software separately or in combination, including text-based chat rooms and forums that use voice, video text or avatars. Significant socio-technical change may have resulted from the proliferation of such Internet-based social networks.

Classifying Online Communities

A number of authors have looked at classifying online communities and those within them to better understand how they are structured. It has been argued that the technical aspects of online communities, such as whether pages can be created and edited by many, as is the case with Wikipedia, or whether only certain users can post entries and edit them, as is the case with most weblogs, can place specific online communities into types of genre.

Some research has looked at the particular users of online communities. Amy Jo Kim has classified the rituals and stages of online community interaction and called it the 'Membership life cycle'. Clay Shirky talks about community of practice whose members collaborate and help each other in order to make something better or improve a certain skill. What makes these communities bond is "love" of something as demonstrated by members who go out of their way to help without any financial interest. Others have suggested character theories to break particular patterns of behavior of particular users into certain categories.

Some of the most successful online communities are those whose members have positively invested positive approaches to posting and carrying on conversations in forums and chatrooms. Online communities are used to chat and partake on a virtual social network.
Membership life cycle for online communities

Amy Jo Kim's membership lifecycle states that members of online communities begin their life in a community as visitors, or lurkers. After breaking through a barrier, people become novices and participate in community life. After contributing for a sustained period of time they become regulars. If they break through another barrier they become leaders, and once they have contributed to the community for some time they become elders. This life cycle can be applied to many virtual communities, most obviously to bulletin board systems, but also to blogs and wiki-based communities like Wikipedia.

A similar model can be found in the works of Lave and Wenger, who illustrate a cycle of how users become incorporated into virtual communities using the principles of legitimate peripheral

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM

participation. They suggest five types of trajectories amongst a learning community:

Peripheral (i.e. Lurker) - An outside, unstructured participation
Inbound (i.e. Novice) - Newcomer is invested in the community and heading towards full participation
Insider (i.e. Regular) - Full committed community participant
Boundary (i.e. Leader) - A leader, sustains membership participation and brokers interactions
Outbound (i.e. Elder) - Process of leaving the community due to new relationships, new positions, new outlooks

The following shows the correlation between the learning trajectories and Web 2.0 community participation.

Learning trajectory -- online community participation

Example - YouTube

Peripheral (Lurker) - Observing the community and viewing content. Does not add to the community content or discussion. The user occasionally goes onto YouTube.com to check out a video that someone has directed them to.

Inbound (Novice) - Just beginning to engage the community. Starts to provide content. Tentatively interacts in a few discussions. The user comments on other user's videos. Potentially posts a video of his or her own.

Insider (Regular) - Consistently adds to the community discussion and content. Interacts with other users. Regularly posts videos. Either videos they have found or made themselves. Makes a concerted effort to comment and rate other users' videos.

Boundary (Leader) - Recognized as a veteran participant. Connects with regulars to make higher concepts ideas. Community grants their opinion greater consideration. The user has become recognized as a contributor to watch. Possibly their videos are podcasts commenting on the state of YouTube and its community. The user would not consider watching another user's videos without commenting on them. Will often correct a user in behavior the community considers inappropriate. Will reference other user's videos in their comments as a way to cross link content.

Outbound (Elder) - Leaves the community for a variety of reasons. Interests have changed. Community has moved in a direction that he doesn't agree with. Lack of time. User got a new job that takes up too much time to maintain a constant presence in the community. The Deletionist versus Inclusionist Controversy in another such case within wiki-based communities.

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM

Motivations and barriers to contributing to online communities

Successful online communities motivate online participation. Several research studies have investigated methods of motivating participation in online communities.

An online community shares similarities and differences with a social community. Unlike a social community, an online community provides real-world communities a place to come together using the internet. Similar to a social community, being a member of an online community allows you to meet with several people in a chat room, or send messages to one another. An advantage of being a part of the online community is that it is always on and does not have operating hours. Online Communities are easier and is a more accessible way to keep in touch with people who are geographically far or with those who have conflicting schedules with oneself.

There are many persuading factors that draw users in to different online communities. Peer-to-peer systems and social networking sites rely heavily on member contribution. Users' underlying motivations to involve themselves in these communities have been linked to different persuasion theories of sociology.

The Reciprocation Theory infers that a successful online community must provide its users with benefits that compensate for the costs of time, effort and materials members provide. People often join these communities expecting a sort of reward, whether it is physical or psychological.
The Consistency Theory says that once an individual makes a public commitment to a virtual society, they will often feel obligated to stay consistent with their commitment by continuing contributions.
The Social Validation Theory explains how people are more likely to join and participate in an online community if it is socially acceptable and popular.
Additionally, one of the greatest attractions towards online communities is the sense of connection users build between each other. Individuals are most likely to join these sites in order to enhance their likability.

The majority of people learn by example and often follow others, especially when it comes to participation. Individuals are reserved about contributing to an online community for many reasons including but not limited to a fear of criticism or inaccuracy. Users may withhold information that they don't believe is particularly interesting, relevant, or truthful. In order to challenge these contribution barriers, producers of these sites are responsible for developing knowledge-based and foundation-based trust among the community.

Online community virtuous cycle

Most online communities grow slowly at first, due in part to the fact that the strength of motivation for contributing is usually proportional to the size of the community. As the size of the potential

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM

audience increases, so does the attraction of writing and contributing. This, coupled with the fact that organizational culture does not change overnight, means creators can expect slow progress at first with a new virtual community. As more people begin to participate, however, the aforementioned motivations will increase, creating a virtuous cycle in which more participation begets more participation.

Community adoption can be forecast with the Bass diffusion model, originally conceived by Frank Bass to describe the process by which new products get adopted as an interaction between innovative early adopters and those who follow them.

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM