

---

## Editorial

---

### Piet Kommers\*

Faculty of Behavioural Sciences,  
University of Twente,  
P.O. Box 217, 7500 AE Enschede, The Netherlands  
Email: [Kommers@edte.utwente.nl](mailto:Kommers@edte.utwente.nl)  
\*Corresponding author

### Margriet Simmerling

Helix5,  
Mendelssohnlaan 12,  
7522 KP Enschede, The Netherlands  
Email: [simmerling@helix5.nl](mailto:simmerling@helix5.nl)

**Biographical notes:** Piet Kommers is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente, The Netherlands. His specialty is social media for communication and organisation. As Conference Co-chair of the IADIS multi-conference, he initiated the conferences of web-based communities and social media, e-society, mobile learning and international higher education. He is a Professor at the UNESCO Institute for Eastern European Studies in Educational Technology and Adjunct Professor at Curtin University in Perth, Australia.

Margriet Simmerling is a Peer Consultant/Senior Manager for R&D projects in the area of e-society and web-based communities. She participated in the advisory board for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and is active as a reviewer for the European Commission. She designs and moderates e-learning modules and workshops e-learning modules and workshops in the domain of education technology and psychology at the PhD level.

---

In this special issue, we focus on the influence web-based communities have on its members. Findings from different perspectives are presented: community management, recruiting activities, collecting memories, cultural influence, relationships, finance and last but not least: the ‘user’ perceptions. The term ‘user’ is a contrived one, as community members can only be a member if they participate. This is the definition of community: members are subjects, objects and instigators all together. It does not mean that they fulfil all roles always at the same time. However, a systematic abstinence from one of the three will hamper their membership and the community at large inevitable. This is what this special issue is all about. Research from different parts of the world: Ireland, the USA, Italy, Taiwan, India and Greece gives input to new progress on the developments around web-based communities and social media.

In the article ‘Using visual analytics to support online community development’, John McAuley and Dave Lewis present a new approach to the management and development of online communities. This new mechanism integrates community members into the process of community design. Based on their research, conclusions around the usage of different types of analytics are presented.

Recruiting college students is part of the communication department of colleges and universities. How can they use social media to contact prospective students and influence their choice where to start their study. In the article ‘The role of social media in college recruiting’, J. Christopher Sandvig explores student perceptions and usage of specific social media in the college recruitment process. The results of a social media survey of admitted freshmen at the Western State University is presented. A literature review of social media in campus recruiting is included.

- Storing memories: The community environment offers simultaneously the premise for the intergenerational activity and its final goal.

In the article ‘How can technology help intergenerational reminiscence? A pilot study’, Luca Morganti et al. present a pilot study. The aim of this study was two-fold:

- a to test the usability of a reminiscing system (the NoBits website) with two different generations
- b to evaluate its role in supporting an intergenerational reminiscence protocol.

The study is supported by the European funded project: ‘Nostalgia Bits’. The positive elements of their study are the involvement of two kinds of users (seniors and children) in the two phases of the evaluation of a technological solution: development and application.

Stickiness is anything about a website that encourages a visitor to stay longer. A website is sticky if a visitor tends to stay for a long time and to return.

In the article ‘The stickiness of Facebook website: a value and culture-based view’ Heng-Li Yang and Chien-Liang Lin focus on the effects of national culture on the users’ stickiness on social network websites.

Social network is for sharing and communicating information between users, but what about the user’s influence. A ranking method to determine the users’ influence is the central issue in the article ‘A review on user influence ranking factors in social networks’. Anthoniraj Amalanathan and S. Margret Anuncia present the review that has been done to identify the adoption of functional blocks in popular social networks to determine users’ influence ranking method. The review focuses on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and MySpace. It is found that all of the ranking algorithms focus on identity, sharing, conversation, presence and reputation. None of the algorithms focuses on groups and relationships. Anthoniraj Amalanathan and S. Margret Anuncia stress the need to consider the semantics and timestamps of users’ content to improve more dependable user influence ranking algorithms.

In the article ‘Collaborative web-based financial communities: value and risks’, George N. Dikos provides an institutional framework for determining the drivers of value in peer-to-peer finance, analysing the related group dynamics and understanding the key success factors for sustainability. It gives a good understanding of current opportunities for the financial sector.

In the article ‘An analytical study of user perception of social networking sites features’, Praveen K. Choudhary and Susmi Routray discuss a very interesting and trendy topic from a unique perspective; this is the user’s perception. The study provided a broad view of the SNSs and the reasons users actually stay connected.