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## Editorial

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### 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)

### Tareq Rasul

Australian Institute of Business (AIB),  
27 Currie Street, Adelaide, South Australia  
Email: [tareq.rasul@aib.edu.au](mailto:tareq.rasul@aib.edu.au)

**Biographical notes:** Piet Kommers is a Professor of UNESCO Learning Technologies and affiliated with the Universities of Twente and Utrecht, 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 an Adjunct Professor at the 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.

Tareq Rasul received his Doctorate in Marketing in 2012 from the University of South Australia. Prior to which he received his MBA from the University of East London, UK in 2006. The central focus of his research is 'relationship marketing', 'e-learning' and 'social media'. He has ten years of teaching experience in both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He has also published articles in different journals and is currently teaching marketing and related subjects at Australian Institute of Business.

In this special issue research from different parts of the world comes together: The USA, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, New Zealand, India and the UK and give input to new progress on the developments around web-based communities and social media. Its main focus is how the subtler layers of community awareness may transform into manifest loyalty and web presence. How can we assess the likeliness of one's community affinity? To what extent allow web communities to find each other back, like after a long period of diaspora? Can social media predict the final acceptance of technological infrastructures? How should crowdfunding and communities of practice promote social capital and the willingness to invest in one's social media skills? These are the questions you will meet in the coming articles. Feel welcome to respond to the authors and editors.

Complex studies of online community technologies often demand a mixed method approach. To this endeavour, Federico Cabitza and Angela Locoro contributes by showing how questionnaires can be adopted and fitted into a qualitative study. The article 'Questionnaires in the design and evaluation of community-oriented technologies' contributes to easy and valid measures of community systems in online environments. Different evaluation methods are presented and good arguments concerning how to choose between different approaches are offered.

Can 'Facebook' be used as an educational environment? Ben Kei Daniel presents a valuable look into a virtual community. His study shows that in the specific situation of South Sudanese in diaspora, an important reason to join the community is to learn the Juba Arabic language. His article 'A descriptive model of sense of community on Juba Arabic Facebook' reports the growing interest to in investigating Facebook as an educational environment particular in supporting language learning.

Engaging and attracting new consumers is a real challenge of the communication managers, public information service officers, webmasters and those responsible for online communities and social media policies. Lauren Reiter, Roger McHaney and Kim Y. Hiller-Connell present research results that are inspiring and helpful. The article 'Social media influence on purchase intentions: instrument validation' focuses on the psychometric stability of the technology acceptance model (TAM) by Davis. A TAM overview is provided and the research results in the domain of environmentally sustainable fashion are presented.

How can we influence the intention of a person to finance a crowdfunding project? The article 'Crowdfunding: exploring the factors associated with the users' intention to finance a project online' conducts an analysis of factors influencing a crowdfunding user's intention to fund a particular project. Prodromos Kontogiannidis, Georgios Theriou and Lazaros Sarigiannidis present 12 hypotheses from which nine were verified.

Sami Miniaoui surveys a number of platforms used to support communities of practice (CoP) in various domains proposed accordingly guidelines for future development of dedicated platforms to support engagement in CoPs. In the article 'Surveying web platforms serving communities of practice: findings and opportunities', technological issues are well explained and examples are provided for less skilled users. The underlying technologies about the main functionalities for users are also analysed.

The concept 'online community' is evolving. In the article 'What is an online community? A new definition based around commitment, connection, reciprocity, interaction, agency, and consequences', Michael Hammond examines a range of definitions and uses of the term online community and offers a contribution to the discussion around the definition of an online community.

The article 'A survey on topological properties, network models and analytical measures in detecting influential nodes in online social networks' represents a synopsis of existing literature on the topological properties, models and analytical measures in social network analysis. Ebin Deni Raj and L.D. Dhinesh Babu set out different approaches made under the umbrella term of network analysis. The article contributes to the understanding of online social behaviour.

After having been introduced to the authors, we trust you will benefit from their expeditions and stories after all. In this special issue we introduce Dr. Tareq Rasul as an expert in the managerial aspects of professional and vocational training.