

Soccer Blogging in Social Network Sites: A community for leisure activity forming a community of practice.

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Abstract

The research question being explored is how does a blog's genre affect how bloggers experience a sense of community? I am particularly interested in comparing the results of this niche community of bloggers to the characteristics of the mainstream blogging community.

Keywords

Weblogs, Premier League (PL), globalization, leisure blogs, community of interest, Community of Practice (CoP), Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), soccer

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, cyberspace has spawned a range of text-based, digital genres – from chat rooms, to multi-user domains, to peer-to-peer file sharing networks – in which Internet users can write, communicate and interact with each other. Web 2.0 is a trend in World Wide Web technology, and web design, a second generation of web-based communities and hosted services such as social-networking sites, wikis, folksonomies, etc. which aim to facilitate creativity, information sharing, collaboration, and sharing among users. One of the modern online genres to enter popular consciousness, to revolutionize web-based experience, is blogs. The rapid growth in the popularity of blogs is due to three main reasons. First, the coming of age of the web users in sharing and producing content in Web 2.0 paradigm. Second are user-friendly blogging applications such as Blogger and LiveJournal coupled with the advent and popularity of social networking sites. Lastly, the global media exposure of 'A-list' bloggers like Salam Pax (aka the 'Baghdad Blogger') has made blogging more popular. With the advent of these specialized blogging services that have empowered the end user with free online publishing tools without the burden of having to learn HTML, blogging has become accessible to people from all walks of life. An illustration of the dramatic growth in blog use is provided by the blog

search engine, Technorati, which in December, 2007 claimed to be tracking over 112 million blogs, a figure which had risen from just 100,000 in 2002 [24].

Blogs provide a better understanding of the thoughts and inclinations of people from varied works of life sharing their experience in their own words. Blog authors often include hyperlinks to an external source which is the agency of inspiration, connecting one blog to another, mentions of other blogs and bloggers in entries posted to weblogs, and comments posted in response to other bloggers' entries. Blogs are not intrusive and no one is "forced to pay attention". Blogs have a broadcast nature; they put out information, and no one need respond unless they wish to. Through observations and interviews with bloggers it has been identified that the above activities are conversational in nature. Sometimes the content of the blog bothers the reader and leads to altercation, including "rants" and speculation.

A number of blog genres have been identified by Herring [6] in existence range from pure filter blogs- literally filters of one's web surfing- to warblogs, political, celebrity blogs, educational, vocational, hobby, professional blogs and pornographic ones. Broadly seeing, blogs fall into one of two major categories: Political focus or personal/hobby blogs, each with very different attributes. Media coverage seems to indicate that political bloggers seek to influence others through a large social community. Studies have shown that most blogs serve as a personal journal and are sparsely connected nodes in the blogosphere network [5]. In this paper, I am interested in how a blog's primary theme can affect the bloggers' notion of community. The research question being explored is how does a blog's genre affect how bloggers experience a sense of community? I am particularly interested in comparing the

results of this niche community of bloggers to the already documented study of the characteristics of the mainstream blogging community. To address this question, I have observed the blogging habits of people in a sports community of soccer (football in the non-American terminology) spread across five continents.

This analysis adopts Wenger's definition of a community of practice (CoP) and examines it within the online community of bloggers sharing a common interest for soccer. CoP provides a sound structure to understand social characteristics and activities in the Orkut fan community. The paper is structured as follows: In section 2, I provide the current definition of a community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, section 3 contains review of relevant work related to blogs and online communities. In Section 4, an introduction to the game of soccer and the Orkut community is provided. In section 5, I present the observational data describing the activities, structure and interactions in the community. Section 7 is the discussion to provide the analysis of the soccer blogging community as community of practice.

Theory Community of Practice

Several significant sources of theory are applicable to blogs and communities. As a social phenomenon they can be analyzed on many levels, from the psychology of the individual blogger up to broad societal trends. The concept of a Community of Practice (CoP) refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations. A CoP is, "in a nutshell, a group of people who share an interest in a domain of human

endeavor and engage in a process of collective learning that creates bonds between them: a tribe, a garage band, a group of engineers working on similar problems" [27]. CoP consists of a content domain, a group (community) of persons interested in this domain and a shared practice to increase the effectiveness of each member in the domain [26](p. 27). They are set apart from other communities by a special kind of practice, forming a joint enterprise with a mutual engagement to develop a shared repertoire of knowledge and competences [28](p. 208). In 1991, Wenger and Lave described a CoP in terms of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) [15].

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Wenger and Lave introduce the concept of "legitimate peripheral participation" to describe how newcomers are initiated in a community of practice: "required learning takes place not so much through the reification of a curriculum as through modified forms of participation that are structured to open the practice to nonmembers" [15](p.100). These modified forms of participation that Wenger and Lave describe are peripherality and legitimacy. Peripheral participation is similar to a supervised learning environment that introduces the newcomer to all three dimensions of practice (e.g., mutual engagement with others, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire). This environment involves the newcomer in the community and forces the newcomer to take part in the ways of the community.

Newcomers should also be granted legitimacy, the other form of modified participation. "In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members" [29](p. 101). In the real world, legitimacy can be granted if a

person is useful, sponsored, feared, or of the right birth. In the virtual blogging community, new members are granted legitimacy when they are regarded in the community, referred to by other members and contribute to the community. In acknowledging that communities of practice are not "isolated" entities, Wenger introduces the concept of bridges as connections across boundaries, connecting various communities of practice. Boundaries "refer to discontinuities, to lines of distinction between inside and outside, membership and non-membership, inclusion and exclusion" [29](p. 120). In the scope of soccer blogging, boundaries can be identified as encounters between members of different outlook and interests, since smaller communities of practice can be formed among members of the same supporting fan club.

Related Work

While the pace of business activity has been accelerated and globalized by communication technology, new social technologies provide new forms of social and intellectual collaboration support. In particular, blogs and wikis are easy-to-use tools for structuring both knowledge and relationships. They interact with the nature of the personalities of the contributors and are seen as a way to nurture productive social behavior. Blogs are not usually real-time chat tools. As such they definitely control the rate of information flow in discussions. Blogs are popular in part because they enable easy, inexpensive self-publication of content for a potentially vast audience on the World Wide Web, while being more flexible and interactive than previous publication formats, be it print or digital [6]. The characteristics that make blogs a genre include common structural features such as dated entries displayed in reverse chronological sequence and sidebars containing links and calendars [9], a culturally recognized

name, and the common purpose of sharing content with others through the Web.

The number of blogs continues to grow at an exponential rate, although the estimates varied based on the different methods used to count them [7]. The boom of the blogosphere, the universe of available weblogs, has also been propagated by a series of external events over the past few years that have inspired blogging activity: terrorist acts, political events, and natural disasters. Blogging about these events has attracted the attention of the mainstream news media, further contributing to the popularization and adoption of this new mode of computer-mediated communication. This is considered as the ability for people to respond to the world around them through blogs. Blog posting increased in numbers and frequency in the week after 9/11, as did the number of comments per post and the number of posts per individual blogger [14].

However, the success of blogging should not be judged solely on whether it generates obvious political effects. As alluded earlier, bloggers are expanding the notion altogether of what the internet is and how it can be used. The most high profile blogs have tended to operate in a largely one-to-many fashion, whereby individual bloggers have conveyed information and conjecture related to matters of public interest to large, dispersed audiences. Yet recent research suggests that the majority of blogs on the internet now take form of personal online journals which tend to reach smaller, more intimate groups of readers [9]. Blogs act as catharsis to provide an outlet for thoughts and feelings, their content is sometimes patently emotional [18].

Dearstyne [5] distinguished five classes of blogs. They are:

1. Individual personal news and views. These are journals often to share views, experiences and photos with family and friends.
2. News, Commentary and Journalism. Blogs are considered by many as legitimate news media.
3. Advertising, promotion, customer service and customer feedback.
4. Business and professional insight.
5. Internal information sharing and knowledge management (KM).

Many studies have been carried out to explore the motivation of bloggers in this practice. The blogging phenomenon is represented in all of this research as dynamic and evolving. Related research has examined blogs as a new communication genre, using content analysis [6] and ethnographic interviews [18] to characterize the forms, functions, and audiences of blogs, as well as people's motivations for blogging. Studies have investigated the motivation behind this underrepresented group of bloggers. Five major motivations for blogging have been uncovered: documenting one's life; providing commentary and opinions; expressing deeply felt emotions; articulating ideas through writing; and forming and maintaining community forums [18]. Longitudinal analysis of blogs was done by Herring and the three categories of results elicited are a) change over time, b) stability over time, and c) variability [9]. The variation reflects variation in external events, specifically, in the

concentration and nature of the newsworthy events taking place at the time of the three samples. [9]

Research [6] [19] has indicated that personal bloggers often blog for personal fulfilment and to seek other's opinions within a smaller community network. Typically however, these blogs take the form of online diaries or what has been called 'self-narratives', where private and intimate content is posted in daily, monthly and yearly snippets [9]. In this paper I have observed the blogging practice of a group of people as a leisure activity forming a community though not belonging to any organization or bound by a geographical location or political cause. This community of users shares the common interest in their love for soccer, a sport.

Recent research suggests that there are cultural differences in blogging practices [25], their content analysis of 358 Polish language blogs drawn from blog.pl, found that Polish bloggers are more often female (nearly 75%) and younger than English-language bloggers, often elementary and middle school ages. As we encounter people from other countries and cultures in mundane, playful situations, the artificial or corrosive boundary lines that shape offline life might be productively eroded. Or if you prefer a more multicultural model, through coming to learn about, debate, and value our diverse orientations, cultures, and backgrounds within the realm of online interaction, community blogging retains enormous potential in a fairly divisive world.

A word of caution: Here's a gist of the pros and cons of blogging, seen as academic resource for community study. Quick publishing. Blogs let the authors publish without much ado. There's no need for filtering, editing nor censorship. Feedback mechanism. Blogs let readers

instantly provide feedback, hence fostering a transparent exchange of information and discussion. One can get a lot of useful information from experts and knowledgeable people who blog. Wisdom of the crowds. Discussions on the blogosphere can serve as a snapshot of what the world is talking about.

The ability to interact with like-minded individuals instantaneously from anywhere on the globe has considerable benefits, but virtual communities have bred some fear and criticism. Others fear that spending too much time in virtual communities may have negative repercussions on real-world interaction. Lack of credibility. Most bloggers don't verify sources of information, and if there are sources, these might not exactly be credible. More noise than signal. There is a lot more nonsense in the blogosphere compared to the information that's actually useful. Virtual communities can serve as dangerous hunting grounds for online criminals, such as identity thieves and stalkers, with children particularly at risk. This was beyond the scope of this paper but more information can be found in references [31] [32].

Communities in Social Network Site Orkut

My primary observation in the activity of these members is in the discussion board of the communities of Premier League Clubs in Orkut [21], a social network service run by Google and Soccerlens [23], a sports blog site. The service states that it was designed to help users meet new friends and maintain existing relationships. Similar to Facebook and MySpace, Orkut goes a step further by permitting the creation of easy-to-set-up simple forums (called "communities") of users. The initial target market for Orkut was the United States, but the majority of its users are in India and Brazil. In fact, as of March 2008,

67.5% of the traffic comes from Brazil, followed by 15.4%, which comes from India [1]. Anyone with an Orkut account can create a community about anything. Community participation allows the user to post topics, inform other users about an event, ask questions to the group, start a poll or just play games.

My analysis in this paper is the observation of the Arsenal community.

Observation and Data

Methodology

A case study on the activities of a particular community of soccer club followers is done [30], and participant observation was carried out with content analysis of the blogs. Most of the data was gathered by first person observation - me looking into the blogs as a member of the community. More specifically, I created an account and joined a community remained mostly peripheral, primarily reading the threads and rarely participating in the discussion to avoid forming a bias to the discussion.

Primary activities in the community

Activities in soccer blog communities include prediction and guesses for the forthcoming match as one of the main discussion topics such as match outcome for the team (a win, tie or loss), final score line, name one of the goal scorer, time period in which the team will score a goal, player who will be booked in the match, starting eleven of the team and opponent, team composition and probable strategies, etc. A further characteristic of the sport – the primary theme of the community - is the uniformity of its-value structures. This encompasses not only individual

values, such as fairness and comradeship, community spirit and solidarity, but also includes combinations of values such as achievement, fun, joining in, self-esteem, competition, and joy. Thus uniformity of the value structure means that the structure of the sport experience ensues only when these individual elements are combined. The game is associated with the experience of winning and losing, self-esteem is associated with optimizing performance, and joining in is associated with competition. To put it simply, the experience of the game and the judgment of the results are inseparable. Supporters make their presence felt online by expressing their ideas through blogs forming online communities and forums in various social networking sites.

I SAY NOT ONLY 4-1 TO ARSENAL.....BUT ILL ALSO SAY THAT "THE CROWN" WILL BW OURS AND ONLY OURS.....and ARSENAL WILL GO ON TO BE THE YOUNGEST TEAM EVER TO WIN IT!

In this comment Jack used caps to write his prediction to make his statement clear stressing his support and optimism for the positive result. This is a distinct characteristic of the blogs in this community that include the predictions based more on personal inclination, hunches and opinions rather than expert views.

Internet collaborative technologies including blogs can be considered mass as well as personal media. A major theoretical perspective on media is uses and gratifications. As media blogs have uses and gratifications. Matsumura, et al. (2005) found three factors or constructs in online exchanges in Japan's 2channel, the largest on-line community, for the purpose of this paper I will focus on the first one [17]. The first factor Matsumura et al. defined consisted of two types of discussion. The one is

ARSENAL:
.....Almunia.....
.....Senderos.....Gallas.....
Sagna.....Clichy
.....Fabregas.....Flamini.....
Walcott.....Diaby
.....Hleb.....
.....Adebayor.....
Subs:
Lehman, Bendtner, Gilberto,
Denilson, Traore

A post by Jack, a member of the community pre-match predicting the team composition and match result. "Probable Line-up"

chitchat type consisted of people who joined a community to just chitchat, i.e., they did not have a specific topic to discuss. The chitchat discussion was conducted for the sake of interpersonal communication. The other discussion type was conducted by people who join a community to discuss a specific topic they share with each other. This discussion type was threaded and goal-oriented.

Many fantasy teams formed among members in these communities for example a predictor for Arsenal F.C. community has 10 teams like WengaBoyz captained by Hamza, the Arsenalists captained by Saumeet, Oursenal F.C. headed by Rubin, etc. These activities set the tone for exuberant and profuse interaction in the group. Common activities like expressing praise for their favorite players and team, eulogizing their style and team worship is one of the main activities of the community.

Social consciousness and organizational role in the community

Arsenal FC community also serves the medium for merchandizing and social activities like fund raising, spreading awareness, etc. the Arsenal Community Charity Initiative has 231 members and have a mission statement and use this medium of blogs for a cause.

"Most of us are aware of the 'Be a Gooner Be a Giver' fund raising initiative undertaken by our Club. The Arsenal squad, Club's directors and staffs have committed to donating a day's pay for this good cause. On the same lines, The Arsenal Community has decided to form a group of our own and work together for the general social welfare of the community.

Our group would strive to meet the needs of communities on a local and global scale. To make this a success, we would require the support of each and every one of you. We hope and wish for your active participation. "

Blogger characteristics in the community

Member Characteristics

Blogger characteristics include gender, age, occupation and identity indicators (e.g., choice of name, inclusion of photo). The gender ratio observation made by Herring and a growing body of research has identified gender differences in computer-mediated discourse, similar to those previously observed in spoken discourse [8] [9]. These include a tendency for women to be more polite, supportive, emotionally expressive, and less verbose than men in online public forums. Conversely, men are more likely to insult, challenge, express sarcasm, use profanity, and send long messages. The tendency for men to manifest a higher level of aggressiveness and/or to display more aggression than women is well documented. Discussion groups dominated by males have also been observed to use more impersonal, fact-oriented language [10].

Observing the 160,616 members Arsenal fan club community, some inferences could be drawn about its composition. The community is made up of 114,366 male and 35,045 female profiles (data gathered from the profiles in which the gender is mentioned). Some of the members refrain from using their own identity and post through anonymous profiles. From the composition of the community it can be inferred that this community has a majority of males with the ratio of three to one in their favor. This distribution can be concluded by the fact that

Swetha(F) said "Torres will be moving either to manu(Manchester United) or to pool(Liverpool) not here(Arsenal). don't we have like 4 ppl competing for 1 spot here?? why add another 1?? tho from a girlish view, another hunk to play for us.. i wouldn't mind!! "

Thumri(F) said "Woah. I hope Lauren doesn't go over to the Hammers." referring to Shandy's(M) comments on Lauren "Arsenal's right-back Lauren is another target for the struggling Hammers. -Daily Mail. The Gunners have also been linked with Dutch international left winger Ryan Babel from Ajax. -The Independent."

On another occasion the response to **Advyth's(M)** comments

"Arsene doesn't go in for players too old... he's rather develop the rising youngsters. and he's amazing at it too.", **Thumri's(F) response** was in affirmative "Yeah - perfect example: Cesc Fabregas."

Extracts from the comments thread related to a post.

the primary theme of this community that binds the member is their following the game of soccer.

Soccer is generally perceived as a masculine sport, supported by research carried out by Coulomb-Cabagno, found out through ethnographic study measuring the response to assess their feelings on gender issue in soccer on a 7-point Likert scale [3]. The average age of the community is 25 years with the majority of the members falling within the age group of 20-25 years. Most of the members are students attending schools and colleges and young working professionals. Analyzing the demography of the community by studying the members' profiles, it has been observed that the majority of the members are spread across three continents, from India and Pakistan in Asia, United States and the United Kingdom. This can be contributed to the fact of the enormous following of soccer in these sections of the world as well as the popularity of the social networking site, Orkut in these locations.

Comments by female members are infrequent and brief and are generally a query on a previous comment or an agreement to the ideas presented by others prior to her. Analyzing the participation of female members in a discussion on a particular topic by posting comments in the community, 124 out of 2554 comments to the topic "Non-Arsenal game discussion 07/08 season" were posted by female members.

Looking specifically at the comments made by female members in responses to another member's post some inferences could be drawn. Females are claimed to be more interpersonally involved and males more informative in their communicative orientation. This has been noticed to some extent from the conversation in the discussion on a topic. From the observation it can be suggested that

interactivity and informativity are properties of genres, as well. This could explain why men and women use similar language within this particular genre (soccer blogs); it is the genre's requirements, rather than the producer's gender, that dictate such usage. This leads us to propose that the functional requirements of the genres investigated—e.g. whether interactive or informative—lead bloggers to employ certain kinds of language, irrespective of their gender.

Member profiles and identity indicators

Profile of the members in the community: in the Arsenal community the users had the image of their favorite football star as their profile picture and their names would either be some players initials or their own first name. The profile picture often representing a favorite player of their team or its logo is a manner to show allegiance to the community and portray admiration for the star as a role model. The absence of ones own profile picture should not be considered as seeking anonymity or concealing identity. This observation is different from the studies made in personal blogs by [7] that blog authors increasingly presented themselves by their first name and decreasingly by other means, suggesting convergence towards a convention of friendly, informal self-identification [7].

Content producers are small fraction of the entire community

An overwhelming majority of blogs are created and maintained by one author [2003-2004, S.C. Herring]. Analyzing one of the topics discussing an upcoming match, "*Arsenal vs Aston Villa, 1st March*", there are 257 comments in total in the topic by 81 members. Three

members Paul, AsJaD and Praveen were observed posting at regular intervals, having written 105 comments between them. The characteristic of the discussion observed was that a few members actively participated in the discussion and the other members intermittently pitched in by contributing a lone comment expressing their thoughts and refrain from active involvement in the ongoing discussions. This pattern is noticed throughout the community in other topics of discussion. The large majority of the members are regular visitors reading the comments on the various ongoing discussions but refrain from adding content of their own.

The blogging practice falls under the more commonly used Web 2.0 paradigm, a catchphrase for the latest generation of web sites where users contribute their own text, pictures and video content, is far less participatory than commonly assumed. A tiny 0.16 percent of visits to Google's top video-sharing site, YouTube, are by users seeking to upload video for others to watch, according to a study of online surfing data by Bill Tancer, an analyst with Web audience measurement firm Hitwise [11]. Similarly, only two-tenths of one percent of visits to Flickr, a popular photo-editing site owned by Yahoo Inc., are to upload new photos, the Hitwise study found. The vast majority of visitors are the Internet equivalent of the television generation's couch potatoes — voyeurs who like to watch rather than create, Tancer's statistics show [11]. The same characteristics is observed in the blogging community with only a fraction of the members are active content writers and are active in sharing their ideas and responses within the community.

Role of administrators in the Forum Community

As well as regulating the behavior of existing participants, structural measures have to be kept in place, sometimes alongside formal sanctions administered by moderators, as a means by which online communities 'vigorously and successfully defend their electronic boundaries' against outsiders to the community. Administrators are responsible for regulating order in the community to control the proceedings of the discussion and moderate during an altercation among members often with an iron hand. The Arsenal community with strong 160,000 plus members have four administrators: Michelle Peters of United Kingdom, Eduardo of Bangalore (India), Nicholas Sharaf and Vacas Areph of Pakistan.

Looking for the structure of the community about the specific policies in place so that the discussion fertilizes in controlled settings and the argument proceeds in moderation and not take an ugly shape.

The administrators of the community sometimes feel the repercussions of keeping it tight. Sometimes these rules prevent people from deprecating against the club or making indecent comments, this sometimes irritate the neutral blogger. Indeed observing the conversation in the communities suggests that often, 'newbies' must earn the personal respect of other members by abiding by the rules and through establishing their presence over a period of time. There has been few incidents of dissent shown against the administrator such as "They're (Man United fans) trying to unjoin our community as to reduce the number of members in ours. Even in that topic they start abusing people like Vacas (administrator). Believe me, if this goes on, we'll be losing a precious 150 muppets who make our everyday so great with all their jokes and stupid comments."

Triggers: increase in the activity in the group

Soccer is defined by clear-cut rules determining: (1) the goal, i.e. when and under what conditions a competition is won or lost, (2) the means which may be used to reach that goal, and (3) the place and time within which the competition is to take place. It also includes (4) "skill rules"; which define the knowledge, abilities and techniques necessary for taking part in a sport. A further characteristic of soccer is the uniformity of its-value structures. This encompasses not only individual values, such as fairness and comradeship, community spirit and solidarity, but also includes combinations of values such as achievement, fun, joining in, self-esteem, competition, and joy. Thus uniformity of the value structure means that the structure of the sport experience ensues only when these individual elements are combined. The game is associated with the experience of winning and losing, self-esteem is associated with optimizing performance, and joining in is associated with competition. To put it simply, the experience of the game and the judgment of the results are inseparable. The game of soccer played by teams of 11 players each has a great degree of unpredictability creating a lot of interest among followers.

Many external incidents related to the game results in inspiring blogging activity resulting in increased frequency of participation. The events would range from an unforeseen incident occurring such as an injury to a player, player transfer and rumors or an unexpected loss to a weaker opposition or a hard fought win or a very important match coming up. The strategies and composition of the team are also discussed in detail, which provides a good reading and understanding of the game for the new members.

Polls in the community

One of the main activities in the community is participation in polls, taking place on a regular basis, which have a deadline of completion - an average period of 15 days - so the members could pitch in to express their opinion regarding an issue. This feature serves the purpose in sensing the mood and inclination in the group in the context of the sport and gives a rough estimation of the involvement and regular activity that takes place at a particular time period. The participation in a poll is carried out by casting a vote for the preferred choice among the multiple options provided in the topic accompanied by the feature of briefly providing a reason for the choice made which is not mandatory. A typical poll in the arsenal community would be related to the performance of the team or a particular player, opinion regarding an upcoming event or predictions of the season. (An example of a poll is topic: "Player of the month - January 2008". This is a poll, which is closed for voting had been participated by 1123 members.) A new poll could be created by any member of the group and is listed in the order of approaching deadline in the poll section of the community landing. A typical voting pattern is visualized by the bar graph of the percent of the votes for the choices.

Poll topic: "Who would you hate to see leave Arsenal?"

The total votes cast in this poll topic are 720. The number of members participating in the polls is just a fraction of the total strength of the community. This gives an idea of the active participation at a particular period of time.

Discussion

Analyzing the online community participation of the members a learning trajectory could be devised categorizing them on the basis of their activity using the principles of LPP in the works of Lave and Wenger [15]. They suggest five types of trajectories amongst a learning community. The categories of users are: -

a) *Peripheral* (Lurker) – Observing the community and viewing content. These members do not add to the community content or discussion. They occasionally go to the community landing-page to check the updates and read blogs of other authors.

b) *Inbound* (Newbie) – Just beginning to engage the community. Starts to provide content, adding comments to others posts. Tentatively interacts in a few discussions to topics and participates in polls.

c) *Insider* (Regular) – Consistently add to the community discussion and content. They interact with other members. Regularly post comments, start posts generating new topics for discussion. They make concerted effort to comment and rate other user's blogs.

d) *Boundary* (Moderator/ Expert) – Recognized as veteran participants. They connect with regulars to make higher conceptual observations. Community grants their opinion greater consideration. These members have been recognized as contributors to exclusive content. Possibly their blogs are insights on growth and policies of the community and are elevated to take the responsibilities of moderators and administrators. They would not consider reading another members' blogs without commenting on them. They will often correct other members in their behavior that the community considers inappropriate.

They will reference other member's blogs in their comments as a way to cross link content.

e) *Outbound* (Legacy) – Leaves the community for a variety of reasons. Interests have changed. Community has moved in a direction that they don't agree with (each for their own reason). Lack of time, the member got a new job that takes up too much time to maintain a constant presence in the community. The sports blogging community culture seems to be drifting to a corporate commercial endorsement model rather than a social, grassroots platform that it once was.

There have been elaborate discussions on the aspect of considering blogs, as the subject of research on social community. On the one hand, entering the blogosphere, with its endless blogs and blog voices, can be a disorientating, time-consuming and overwhelming experience that only reluctantly yields relevant data. Further, some researchers have cautioned about impression management and the general trustworthiness of blogs in research related aspect. The research should focus on the themes that people are blogging about, in order to probe in greater depth the relationship between blogging and the external world. Groups are well studied in the social science literature because of their importance in work and because they are easily assembled under a roof and administered. The purposes and compositions of groups vary widely. Despite the huge volume of studies, groups and meetings continue to be a subject of study due to the time and resources all enterprises invest in them. Group participation is, after all, the fundamental human activity, the pace and character of which has been accelerated and altered by blogging practice.

To the earlier mentioned categories, I would like to make one more addition to this list of classes of blogs. This would be the informal community of people involved in leisure blogging building a relationship linked by a common interest that results in a virtual community of practice. Much of the value of a blog network is the social capital that is built from relationships. People read each other's blogs to see what their friends of similar affiliation (and enemies/opponents) are up to, and then they add value by linking, commenting, elaborating and criticizing what is being said. Virtual community or online community is used for a variety of social groups interacting via the Internet. It does not necessarily mean that there is a strong bond among the members, although Rheingold [22] mentions that virtual communities form "when people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships". The implicit or explicit "swarmth" [online reputation] that individuals accumulate can be a vital indicator of their worth to the organization - who trusts whose recommendations, whose proposals seem to garner the most attention and who is a respected authority - which can be more effectively managed in the social matrix than in the command-and-control hierarchies that still seem to form the architecture of most businesses. As Cutter has observed the "non-social solutions - such as traditional content management solutions, portals and newsletters - cannot compensate for the missing social dimension that social tools engender." [4]

A variety of case studies in the sports community have demonstrated the capacity of such facilities to sustain highly committed and intimate social groups. While detailing a variety of case-specific arguments and interactions this study has demonstrated the consistent presence on discussion groups not only of a strong

symbolic or 'imagined' sense of group identity, but also of intense and intimate communication among participants and resolute commitment to coherent sets of values and norms as identified by Hodgkinson for interactive online journal like USENET [12]. Consistent with such evidence of group attachment presented in the paper, Lievrouw (2001) rightly argues that, by enabling users easily to find and spend time with those who share their existing affiliations, online communications 'may reinforce people's identification with narrow interests, their sense of difference from other groups and indifference towards larger social concerns' [16]. CoP provides a framework to describe the Social activity and the structure of how practice is done in Orkut soccer community and how the different constituents of the group and members come together. It explains how the community is constituted and its dynamics at a given point of time. A space of mixed collaborations provides variety in social bonding, interaction experience and flexibility in learning.

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