Editorial

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Biographical notes: Piet Kommers is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente at the Department of Media, Communication and Organisation. He chairs the IADIS conferences and the E-society conference and Web-based Communities conference in particular. In his work for UNESCO, he brings forward the blend between the nature and the culture of learning. He distinguishes the 'new' media as catalytic to communication and awareness. In his view, learning gradually embeds in every aspect of life pertaining to the delicate question if learning can be orchestrated essentially. Similarly, we may question if communication can be 'arranged' as we ought to believe at the dawn of the social web.

Margriet Simmerling is 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.

More and more commercial companies show interest in the development around web-based communities and social media. Especially the marketing departments make investments to interact and learn from communities that discuss about their products. Results from researchers are welcome to improve the understanding around web-based communities and social media in a commercial environment.

A variety of articles around web based communities and social media address issues that are of major importance for those working in the domain of marketing and social media. The attitude and opinion of communities can have judge impact on the outside world. Especially in a commercial environment, the opinions within a social community are of major importance.

In the first article, 'Identification of influential social networkers', the focus is on the 'influential users'. Magdalini Eirinaki, Sumit Pal Singh Monga and Shreedhar Sundaram present a method aiming at identifying specific individuals that have a high impact and

influence on the communication within a community. They propose a set of profile-based characteristics that can be used as indications of activity and popularity. The results presented in this paper consist an initial study on the proposed ProfileRank algorithm.

Manuel José Damásio, Sara Henriques and Conceição Costa report from Portugal. The finding in the article is based on the MEDIACULT research project and reports if and how the introduction of SNS improves the level of social capital produced within a particular community.

The online gaming industry depends and is based on web-based communities and social media. It is big business and therefore research results in this area pays of immediately. In the article 'Relationships between brand awareness and online word-of-mouth: an example of online gaming community' important issues around this situation are presented. Shu-Hsien Liao, Chih-Chuang Wu, Retno Widowati and Mei-Ying Chen did a survey among players in Taiwan. The results could have impact on the activities of brand managers and marketing departments of companies.

An international journal has the opportunity to present research and report from different parts of the world. This give the reader the opportunity to step out of his/her own comfort zone. How do countries and culture differ from each other and how does it effects the finding around web based communities and social media?

Keeping this in mind, it is very interesting to hear more about the situation in Cyprus. Dimitrios I. Maditinos, Georgios N. Theriou, Elissavet Keisidou and Lazaros Sarigiannidis did a study and compared the results with the similar study done by Hsu and Lin (2008) in Taiwan. The results share both similarities and differences.

The next article is written by researchers from India, reporting about young people in the city Delhi. Monika Arora, Uma Kanjilal and Dinesh Varshney investigate the relation between the behaviour of young people in the social media domain with data retrieval in general.

Knowing how people behave is crucial for business development. Business opportunities in second life are described in the article 'Communication and online business opportunities in virtual environment: Second Life'. The current study is motivated by a need to understand the role of effective communication in business. Sharma Gajendra, Qiang Ye, Wenjun Sun and Lu Qi test the theory of communication and social systems and the media richness theory.

John W. Gibbons and Arvin Agah propose a new method for content sharing and online collaboration. They describe and evaluate the application 'Friend Lens' and compare this application with Facebook and Clipmark.

In the last article 'Motives and relevance of online friendships', the authors present the results of a short interview-based study, looking at the different motives why people establish online friendships. Is it a positive sign to have many Facebook friends? In the study, all respondents agreed that not all Facebook friends are equally important. Katharina C. Damaschke and Piet Kommers present four categories that helped to identify underlying reasons for the number of friends were established. The study revealed that the desired purpose often goes beyond 'staying in touch'. It includes motives such as 'avoiding spam through Facebook invitations' and 'implementing the marketing efforts of one's employer'. Starting points for further research are included.

This issue of *IJWBC* brings together 25 researchers, working in institutes located in the USA, Portugal, Taiwan, Greece, India, China and the Netherlands. It clearly indicates that around the world researchers are addressing the challenges of web-based communities and social media. It is valuable to read about each other's work, exchange

information via the virtual communities, but also to meet in person, for example during the IADIS international conferences, 'Web-based Communities', Lisbon, and the 'E-society', Berlin.

References

Hsu, C.L. and Lin, J.C.C. (2008) 'Acceptance of blog usage: the roles of technology acceptance, social influence and knowledge sharing motivation', *Information & Management*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp.65–74.