Introduction to HICCS-50 Social Networking and Communities Minitrack

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The Social Networking & Communities minitrack focuses on questions of community building and management as mediated by social media and social networking platforms. By 'communities', we include communities of practice, epistemic communities, communities of inquiry, as well as fully virtual communities; and social media use that supports or complements geographically based community. The minitrack has been ongoing since 2003 under various titles. This year, the minitrack comprises 6 papers selected from 13 submissions, covering theoretical and empirical wide range of studies related to the interrelationship between social media and communities in all aspects of our online and offline lives.

The first paper 'Communities on Social Networking Sites: Testing a Socio-Cognitive Model for Brand Page Usage' by Christopher Ruehl and Diana Ingenhoff focuses on how and why community members use corporate pages on SNS. Specifically, they test a socio-cognitive model of brand page usage to investigate users' incentives to consume and interact with corporations on Facebook.

The second paper, 'Preservation of Indigenous Culture among Indigenous Migrants through Social Media: The Igorot Peoples' by Khavee Agustus Botangen, Shahper Vodanovich and Jian Yu investigates the use of Facebook groups to promote indigenous knowledge among Igorot peoples in the diaspora. The paper contributes to the literature about the sustainability of human societies through preservation.

Another paper titled 'Does Give-and-Take Really Matter? Dynamics of Social Interactions in Social Network' by Sunghun Chung, Animesh Animesh, Alain Pinsonneault and Kunsoo Han conceptualizes two types of user engagement (internal and external) and empirically examines the dynamics between user's engagement, friends' engagement, and network size. The study finds that when people externally engage in their friends' social space rather than one's own space, they can make more friends and also receive friends' engagement in one's own social space. However, when people receive more friends' engagement in their social space and make more friends, they are likely to reduce their engagement in social media (both externally as well as internally).

The fourth paper, 'Portraits of Participation: Exploring the Relationship between Social Motivators and Facets of Participation in a Twitter-based Community' by Sarah Gilbert studies what motivates people to follow and contribute to communities, and why they participate in varying degrees focusing on Twitter. The study identifies three important social motivations: tapping into a social network of people with a common interest, developing personal and professional relationships, and the community ethos.

The fifth paper 'Redditors Revealed: Motivational Factors of the Reddit Community' by Carrie Moore and Lisa Chuang examines what motivational factors influence frequency of participation on the social news website Reddit.com, which has evolved from a news aggregator into a thriving virtual community. This study takes the uses and gratifications approach to examine why people participate in this community. Findings for motivational factors were consistent with the current literature, with the exception of information seeking as a gratification that was sought or obtained.

The final paper 'Internet Ecologies of New Mothers: Trust, Variety and Strategies for Managing Diverse Information Sources' by Louise Barkhuus, Elizabeth Bales and Lisa Cowan is an exploratory study of how new first-time mothers navigate online resources as they transition into parenthood. Findings show that parenting tasks are supported by a variety of resources, which are often used in combination to accomplish a task. Also, the authors found that variety in sources was often valued over general source credibility, and new mothers relied on their own ability to filter information to assess how much to trust information.

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