Master's Thesis Abstract

Topic	**Development, Maintenance and Increase of User Motivation in virtual communities**
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1. Objectives	
• What are the key objectives of the thesis? (concise and complete list)	The aim of the thesis is to explore the necessary proficiencies for the development, maintenance and increase of the motivation of users in virtual communities. Thereby the following research questions are answered: • How can the activity and motivation of the users of a community – concerning the contribution performance, contribution quality and communication performance – be measured? • How can the motivation of users in virtual communities to contribute content be increased?
2. Methodology and Structure	
• Which methodology has been used to reach the objectives? • What structure follows from the applied methodology?	• Theory: From literature a classification model for communities was derived. Furthermore an overview of the different theoretical approaches for describing the needs of users, the motivation of users and as well as for the interaction and bonding behaviour between the users and the social community within the virtual community was given. • Empiricism: The empiricism studies the webmaster community "DigitalPoint". In the process a web-analysis was conducted according to the factors for the assessment of user activity derived from the theory. Furthermore, an online survey of 542 participants of this community was conducted. The hypotheses that were created based on the theory were statistically verified through the results of this survey and the findings were interpreted.
3. Key Chapters and Contents	
• What are the most relevant chapters of the thesis? (brief summary)	**Subject of analysis – Virtual Community** This chapter summarizes the findings drawn from the literature on the typology of communities and the theoretical background for the growth of communities and creates understanding for what a virtual community is. Additionally, it presents metrics for the external evaluation of activity in communities. **Subject of analysis – Users of Virtual Communities** The main subject of analysis of this thesis is the people in the communities. This chapter deals with the basic needs of community members and basic concepts of motivation, sympathy and bonding (applied to community members). Thereby the foundation for many hypotheses is being documented. **Measures for Motivation Enhancement** This sub-chapter summarises many practical recommendations from the literature. Some of these measures were also implemented in the tested community, which led to the situation that a lot of recommendations could be tested on the basis of some hypotheses. **Interpretation of the Online Survey** The evaluation of all hypotheses by means of the online survey gives detailed information on the insights gained through the analysis. These findings are further summarized in the Conclusio. Furthermore ideas for the improvement of the analysis for further research are stated in this part of the thesis.
4. Findings and Conclusions	
• What are the key findings and conclusions of the thesis? (concise and complete list)	**Usability and Friendly Appearance** It was proved that the comfortable user interface of the community is a critical factor for motivational enhancement. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to usability (ease of use, short response time, help system, structured design). **Felt Benefit** It could be verified that community members contribute all the more the greater they perceive the benefit they receive through their membership. Community operators must therefore explore the different benefit potentials and increase user commitment through targeted offers. **Status Symbols and Rules** The knowledge about status symbols that are awarded within the community for efforts and the exercised community rules significantly contribute to increases in contribution efforts. The introduction as well as the friendly and effective communication of these tools is another duty of the community operators.