

## Chapter 33

# A Formative Evaluation of Rendezvous: A Platform for Knowledge Sharing and Entertainment

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### ABSTRACT

*Web applications that offer entertainment rarely support knowledge sharing. Conversely, applications that are intended for knowledge sharing rarely offer entertainment. The intent of this paper is therefore to propose the coalescence of knowledge sharing and entertainment in a Web application. The objectives of this paper are twofold: (1) to introduce a prototype called Rendezvous, which serves as a platform for both knowledge sharing and entertainment and (2) to conduct a formative evaluation of Rendezvous by soliciting feedback and its appeal for users' intention to adopt. A two-stage data collection plan was used. First, qualitative feedback was obtained from a group of 38 participants through focus groups. Thereafter, a questionnaire was developed and administered to 124 participants to assess users' intention to adopt. On the whole, the behavioral intention to adopt Rendezvous seems promising. Factors that seemed to influence behavioral intention to adopt included perceived utility, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use and social influences.*

### INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the Web has been distinctly transformed from a repository of largely static knowledge into an environment that supports the co-creation and sharing of knowledge. Through online communities and social networks, users are able to exchange new ideas and share knowledge easily (Hooff and Ridder, 2004). As a result, a

shared knowledge base among participating users grows. This in turn facilitates group decision making or collective action processes (Godara, et al., 2009).

On the flip side, the online content contribution phenomenon faces two main challenges. One, the unregulated nature of the Web opens the possibility for spam and other unwanted contents to proliferate. Web platforms such as wikis and

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9562-7.ch033

discussion forums which would otherwise host useful information could be blighted by irrelevant contents. Two, content contribution is solely sustained by the good-will of users. When these users no longer feel compelled to contribute to a given Web platform, the dynamism of the online content will be lost.

Meanwhile, improvements to Internet technologies have spawned a slew of Web-based games ranging from Flash-based ones to sophisticated forms such as Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG) where players can interact, cooperate with, and compete against thousands of other players in a virtual world (Guo and Barnes, 2007). However, Web applications that offer entertainment are rarely designed for knowledge sharing. Conversely, applications intended for knowledge sharing rarely feature entertainment elements.

This paper thus represents on a timely endeavor to coalesce knowledge sharing and entertainment purposes by proposing a social web-based prototype. Specifically, as a proof-of-concept, the objectives of this paper are twofold. One, it seeks to introduce *Rendezvous*, a platform which affords both knowledge sharing and entertainment. Two, it seeks a formative evaluation of *Rendezvous* by soliciting feedback on its concept, as well as on its appeal for users' intention to adopt.

*Rendezvous* is intended to address two challenges commonly faced by Web-based knowledge sharing platforms, namely, the proliferation of spam and the waning of interest among content contributors. In gist, it gamifies content sharing through the recommendation of useful websites and the marking of spams within a given user community.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature on knowledge sharing, entertainment and behavioral intention to adopt. Following that, the design overview and the features incorporated in the prototype are described. Next, the evaluation of the prototype which was carried out in two stages is described.

The first stage involved a focus group study of 38 participants to garner qualitative inputs on the general appeal of the prototype. In the second stage, a questionnaire was designed and administered to 124 participants to assess the users' intention to adopt. After reporting the data collected, the penultimate section highlights the significant findings. The final section concludes the paper with a note on its limitations and future enhancements.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Knowledge Sharing**

While conceptions of what constitute knowledge are aplenty, this paper takes the view that knowledge is a socially-defined construct (Borland and Tenkasi, 1995). It encompasses opinions and insights which are constantly shaped and negotiated within a community. Thus, knowledge sharing is defined as a process of mutual exchange of knowledge among a group of participating individuals, thereby transforming individual knowledge into group knowledge (Hooff and Ridder, 2004). The situated nature of knowledge is thus broadened through its dissemination among the participants (Brown, et al., 1989). Knowledge sharing in online communities is posited by the Socio-constructivist theory, which asserts that knowledge sharing through social interaction is central to collaborative knowledge building (Mitchell & Myles, 1988). Specifically, participants share knowledge they currently hold while negotiating on new knowledge acquired from others through iterative cycles of conversations. This leads to new-found knowledge in the community, which in turn fosters knowledge co-creation. This is why knowledge sharing and knowledge creation are often intrinsically linked.

However, knowledge sharing does not always take place spontaneously. In fact, barriers to knowledge sharing exist at the individual, organizational and technology levels (Yesil and Hirlak, 2013).

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