

Chapter 15

The Influence of Twitter on the Academic Environment

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years, microblogging has become a phenomenon of our daily lives. Communicating, sharing media files, as well as acting on digital social communities platforms using mobile devices assist our everyday activities in a complete new way. Therefore, it is very reasonable that academic environments are influenced arbitrarily too. In this publication, different settings for the use of microblogging are pointed out – for teaching and learning as well as for further scientific purposes such as professional conferences. It can be summarized that there are different possibilities to use microblogging in an academic context; each of them are new advantages for the academic life. The publication gives a short overview and a first insight into the various ways to use microblogging.

INTRODUCTION

Dominating platforms of the World Wide Web of the last years belong to the type called social networks. The most popular ones are Facebook, Twitter, and the newcomer Google+. First of all, a short look at the characteristics of a social network must be taken to understand the typical idea of such systems. According to Koch & Richter (Koch

& Richter, 2008) social software is a web based information system of the Web 2.0 generation, which allows interaction within a community in various ways. In contrast to Web 1.0 technologies users are made possible to search, find, and connect to each other as well as exchange multimedia content in a very handsome and easy way. Schmid (Schmidt, 2006) stated that the software itself is not social per se; the people who are using it collaboratively are the moving power to make such

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software become social. Koch & Richter (Koch & Richter, 2008) also defined the three crucial components of social software:

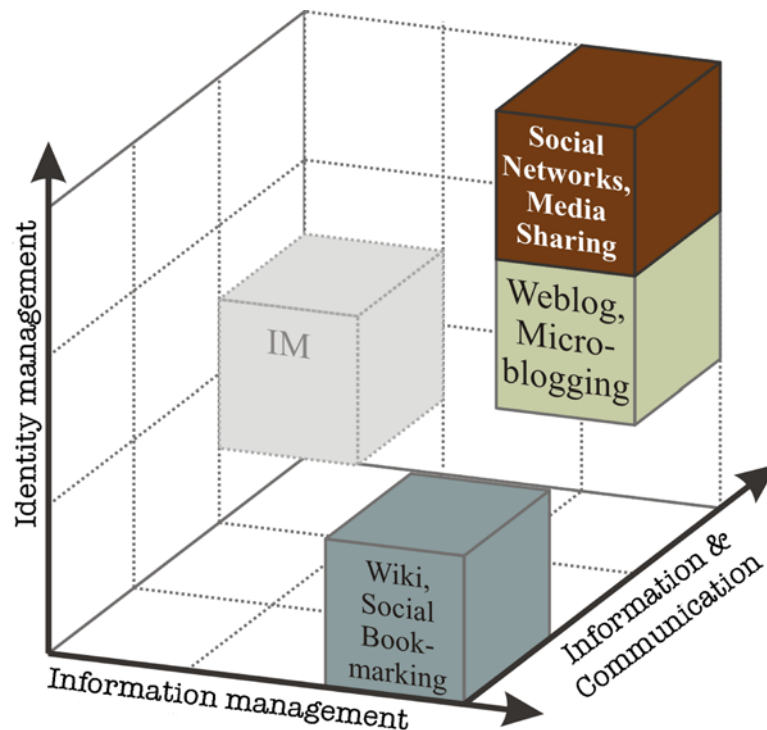
- **Identity and Network Management:** Allows user to create his/her own profile as well as the possibility to connect with each other.
- **Information Management:** Allows user to exchange, find, and rate their multimedia data.
- **Interaction and Communication:** Allows communication and interaction between users in various ways.

In the last years many different social networks were introduced to the World Wide Web community. Actually it has become hard to categorize them. Ebner & Lorenz (Ebner & Lorenz, 2012) carried out a model according to the described three crucial components. Each factor

displayed in the model represents one axis in a three-dimensional cube. Figure 1 shows different information systems like weblogs, wikis, or even microblogging systems with their representation and relation to social networks. For example, social bookmarking systems and wikis are excellent platforms for delivering information but of less interest for providing identity management or interaction amongst users. In opposite, instant messaging services (like MSN or Skype) allow excellent communication but are not appropriate for presentation of information.

Microblogs are very close to social networks according to the definition pointed out in Figure 1 due to their main components such as making friends, becoming ones followers, creating a user profile, and interacting with users via posts and direct messages. Furthermore various multimedia data can be uploaded in order to exchange it with other users (Haewoon et al., 2010). Templeton (Templeton, 2008) defines microblogging as a

Figure 1. Definition and overview of social software according to Ebner & Lorenz (2012)



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