




The importance of trust in gaining acceptance into an existing Community of Practice


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Context

Two projects in the Knowledge Community subjects of the HKCyberU M.Sc. In KM program

 THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學

Master of Science / Postgraduate Diploma in Knowledge Management

Core Subjects

- Management of Innovation and Technology 
- Business Intelligence and Data Mining
- Enterprise Knowledge Portals
- Knowledge Communities
- E-Learning Technologies and Practices

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Context (cont.)

Guided by a mentor, over 14 weeks, a syndicate of 3-4 participants either

1. Pick a domain, identify potential members, promote and establish a community; or
2. Study an existing (public or proprietary) community, identify problem(s), introduce interventions (if needed) and observe reaction, provide assessment and recommendations; or
3. Resurrect a dormant community
4. Study, support and enhance the knowledge sharing and learning in the existing subject community



ISE5605

Knowledge Communities

A case study of
motorcycle community - eBike



www.ebike.hk

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Agenda

- Background of eBike
- Project objective
- Scope of the study
- Methodology of the study
- Focus: 5 aspects
- Challenges for future community development
- Recommendations
- Lessons learnt

eBike Background

■ What is eBike?

- eBike is a Hong Kong motorcycle community. eBike purposes to enhance technical knowledge, road safety awareness and share information to motorcyclists.

■ A brief history of eBike

- eBike was established in 2002 and found by Uncle Yeung (羊叔) and his friend Horse Owner (馬主) .
- At very beginning, eBike was an online forum which purposes to gather all motorcycle lovers together, providing a communicate platform for discussion and organizing activity.
- eBike has become a community which provides technical knowledge and information about motorcycle.

eBike Background

- eBike currently has about 12,000 registered members on the forum, and about 150 active members.

- eBike also has member card scheme, which requires membership fee. Member card holder benefits:-

- Gasoline discount at Esso petrol station
- Road service discount
- Free legal advice

These are benefits to the members who pay the subscription fee. Yet this [member card registration](#) does not limit their right to contribute and share online nor join the activities organized by eBike.

- Online content is generally open to public for reading for free. However, public cannot contribute online without [online registration](#), no matter he/she has a membership card or not. So registering online is the entrance barrier of this community.

Project Objectives

1. The objectives of this study focus on:
 - Understanding eBike culture in terms of
 - Mutual trust between members,
 - Sense of belonging,
 - Knowledge sharing, and
 - Acquaintance of new and old members
 - Diagnosing the online community forum interface from user's perspective
2. Provide recommendations and assist eBike to become
 - The most popular motorcycle community in HK
 - Multi-national motorcycle community

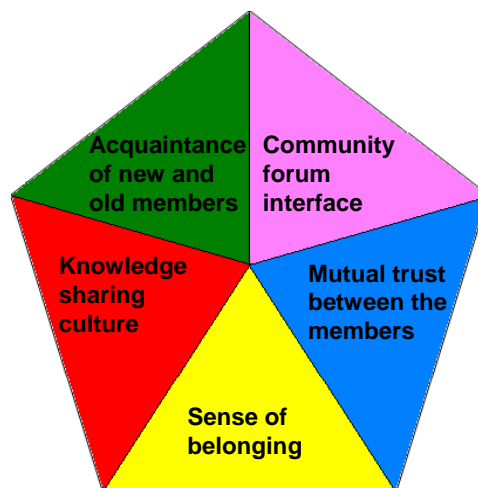
Scope of study

- Analyze the utility and the use of eBike's web site by the community and how this utility can be enhanced
- Compare and contrast of eBike and iBike as iBike is in the same domain as eBike
- Compare the eBike community to other biker/motor cars communities (locally and in Mainland China) and analyze the collaborative technologies used
- Formulate recommendations within their current structure and capabilities to the community leadership
 - Long term: require more detailed planning to implement
 - Short term: something that can be implemented before the semester concludes

Methodologies of the study



5 areas of focus



Community forum interface



Owner:

- Mainly text, not much images
- No taxonomy system concept
- Quality of knowledge: high (~30 postings/day)
- No technology enhancement since setting up (c.f. Mainland forum, more appealing)

Survey:

- Forum interface is too old.
- Features of the forum are not up-to-date and not advanced to meet the needs
- Outlook of the forum is not appealing compared with other communities of its kind. (Q.2 of Survey Part 3)

Activity:

- They are happy with the interface
- A platform to share "tricks" & skills (free parking space, shortest routes, cheap fuel)
- Share "tricks" in the perspective of female motor-cyclists

iBike team:

- Mainly text, not much images
- No concept of a taxonomy
- Quality of knowledge: not consistently high. Some facial expression icon
- "Commercial" background – bias

Findings:

- An interface to share experience. It is a knowledge base for new motor-cyclists to learn
- Lack of images and no taxonomy system will make the interface less appealing and not easy to search

Screenshots of eBike



Posting about a Private gathering

Homepage of eBike

Topic Title	Replies	Views	Date
【求助】... (highlighted)	19	474	2009/4/22
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	33	491	2009/4/23
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	24	624	2009/4/19
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	2	76	2009/4/18
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	21	320	2009/4/18
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	27	467	2009/4/18
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	20	303	2009/4/18
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	17	262	2009/4/18
2009年4月24日... (highlighted)	84	10391	2009/4/18

Screenshots of Community forums in Mainland China

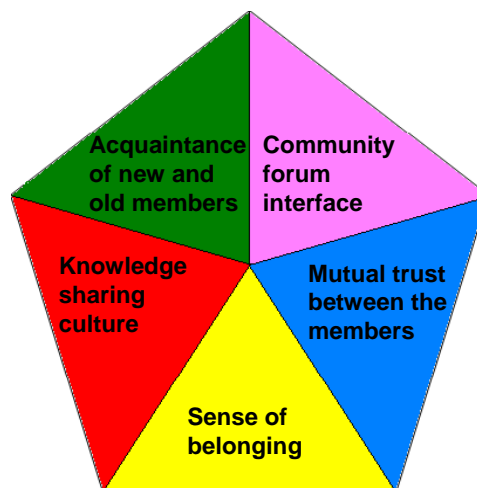


<http://www.xcar.com.cn/>

<http://www.chinacars.com/>

<http://bbs.pcauto.com.cn/>

5 areas of focus



Survey question and results about “mutual trust” between members

9. 有咩原因令你依然留係eBike玩? What makes you stay in eBike?

	Response Percent	Response Count
先入為主的觀念, 有感情 eBike is my first community.	25.0%	9
認識的車友都係eBike友 All my friends are in eBike	36.1%	13
eBike 唔係商業主義 eBike is no commercial background.	61.1%	22
eBike 夠多人睇 eBike has many members	8.3%	3
eBike 能夠解決你電單車上的問題 eBike could help me to solve my problem	61.1%	22
eBike 安排活動夠好玩(私人或官方) eBike's activities/events are fun.	30.6%	11
其他 Others	8.3%	3
其他原因 Other (please specify) view		5
	answered question	36
	skipped question	0

Survey question and results about “mutual trust” between members

Why do you recommend your friends to join eBike?

- | | |
|--|---|
| Find 1. 只建議做CD rom作參考 或者參與地區性的活動 但不宜投入 | Find 13. 是非太多... |
| Find 2. eBike商業性較低, 會員友善 | Find 14. 1 : 99 |
| Find 3. 可以學到不局限於電單車的知識, 還可以結交不同行業和背景的朋友 | Find 15. 希望多些人發言。 |
| Find 4. funny | Find 16. 因為玩開ibike |
| Find 5. Nice people in this community, mature in handling of the issue related to motorcycle driving, useful technical advice and help, not so much the way of commercial intervention. | Find 17. 真正幫到手解決有關電單車的問題 |
| Find 6. ebike係一個好free嘅地方 | Find 18. knew lots of fds on this web |
| Find 7. 中肯, 態度正確 | Find 19. 相識的會員比較正經及正氣。 |
| Find 8. user friendly 講乜都講得 有問必答 | Find 20. 講技術多, 唔多廢話, 開放, 但有時厚老會員既知識要追上時代... |
| Find 9. 少了狂歡三寶(俚非人) | Find 21. 好多實用資料睇 網友很樂意幫忙 |
| Find 10. I will because this site is useful to motor-cyclists in terms of the knowledge and technique on driving and mechanics. I like the way that the site is doing now - people can talk freely as long as they make sense. | Find 22. 資料有用 |
| Find 11. 言論自由 | Find 23. 好多人, 唔似其他forum只識吹, 有債有義 |
| Find 12. 可以在ebike吸收很多實用知識 | Find 24. A GOOD WEB SITE FOR RIDERS |
| | Find 25. EBike不會似iBike咁大把只會無料扮大袋既人亂教人 |

Mutual trust between members



Owner:

- New motor-cyclists join the ride trip with old members: promote road safety
- Quick response for the questions posted online (average an hour): eager to help

Activity:

- Exchanged phone numbers - support in case of accident free of charge
- Add to Facebook/MSN
- Weekend ride: gain driving experience
- New ones trust the experienced to accompany them to drive on highway

Survey:

- 61% of participants believe eBike could provide solutions to solve their problems.
- Survey result shows member trust each other. E.g. “相識的會員比較正經及正氣” and “真正幫到手解決有關電單車的問題”.

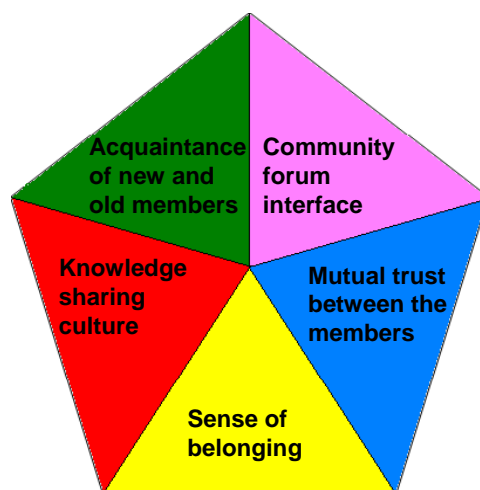
iBike team:

- Too many members, not easy to build up close relationship
- Members adopt a more “easy going” attitude as many answers come up with a facial expression symbol

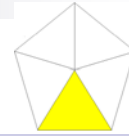
Findings:

- Mutual trust can be reflected by response rate of the questions raised & content quality, not the no. of postings/membership
- Build-up through two interfaces: face-to-face and online
- With this, they can self-help each other to build up harmony in their domain & real life

5 areas of focus



Sense of belonging



Owner:

- Consistent no. of online members (~30-40 in a single timeslot) and in face-to-face official events (~ 50-80 each time)
- Rejuvenate the community with other interest group discussions to build up even closer bonding

Activity:

- New comers in receive a warm experience in the online forum
- Many members have known each other for years. Trust underpins much of their social life
- Attend official gatherings whenever they can

Survey:

- 50% of forum members hold eBike member cards
- 47.2% of eBike members do not join other motorcycle communities
- 25% of people stay in eBike because of sensibilities

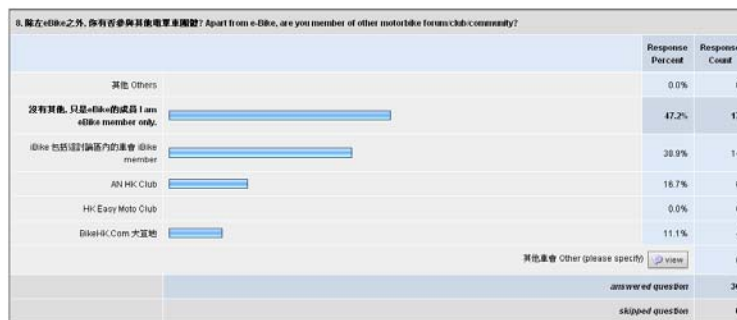
iBike team:

- Too many members, less serious talks
- Majority: senior members; little new ones
- Commercial reason to ban the postings, members cannot share what they want, not easy to build up sense of belonging

Findings:

- Warm welcome and face-to-face gatherings help to build up sense of belonging
- Too many members may create a "ignore" feel which is not pleasant to new members to result a loss of members and knowledge base
- Autonomy to express can satisfy members' need and build up sense of belonging

Survey questions and results about "sense of belonging"

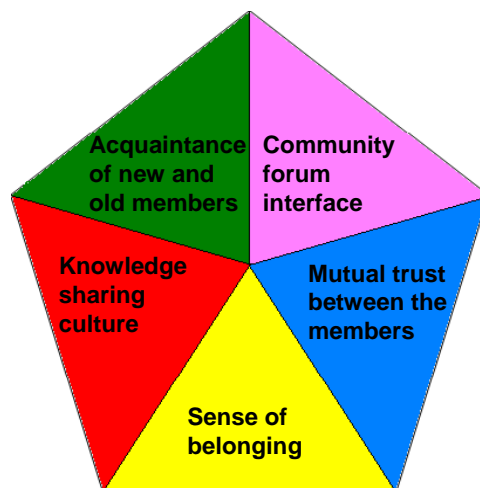


Survey question and results about “sense of belonging”

2. 請問你大約幾耐會上一次eBike網站? (請選擇其中之一) How often do you visit ebike site? (Please select one answer)

	Response Percent	Response Count
每天多於一次 More than once per day	47.2%	17
每天一次 Once per day	27.8%	10
每三天一次 Every three days	5.6%	2
每五天一次 Every five days	2.8%	1
每一星期一次 Once per week	5.6%	2
每兩星期二次 Once per two weeks	2.8%	1
每月一次 Once per month	0.0%	0
每月少於一次 less than once per month	8.3%	3
	<i>answered question</i>	36
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

5 areas of focus



Knowledge sharing culture



Owner:

- Good explicit online collaboration; official in-class/site visit gatherings to promote road safety and technical skills
- Private events: tacit knowledge transfer
- No commercial background: autonomy to express
- Branding: willing to share, quick response time
- Self-discipline: culture to minimize smiling face postings to improve content quality

Activity:

- Willing to share expertise knowledge in online forum (explicit knowledge) and events (tacit knowledge): autonomy to express

Survey:

- eBike member has freedom to share
- eBike members are willing to share
- 38.9% of members usually post new question on the forum
- 36.1% of members usually post answer on the forum

iBike team:

- Response time is quick
- Survey removal from the online forum: commercial decision
- Lots of non serious posting: smiling face

Findings:

- Knowledge can be share in 2 perspectives: explicit (online forum) & tacit (events)
- Non commercial background: autonomy to express/share help to foster a good knowledge sharing culture
- Disciplined/pleasant environment + members with a "heart" are essential

Survey questions and results about "knowledge sharing culture"

4. 請問你在 eBike 的留言板或 post 多會發些什麼? What kind of message you post on eBike forum at the most?

	從不post或很少發 Newer	好少post或很少發 Rarely	一般post或通常發 Normally	多數post或經常發 Often	Rating Average	Response Count
發問問題 Ask Question	13.9% (5)	36.1% (13)	50.6% (18)	0.0% (0)	2.36	36
回覆問題 Answer Question	0.3% (1)	41.7% (15)	38.9% (14)	11.1% (4)	2.53	36
發表分享心得、經驗、知識... Sharing (Know How, Experience, Knowledge...)	13.9% (5)	41.7% (15)	36.1% (13)	8.2% (3)	2.39	36
發起活動 organize event/activity	63.9% (23)	30.6% (11)	5.6% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.42	36
參與活動 Join event/activity	27.8% (10)	25.0% (9)	33.3% (12)	13.9% (5)	2.33	36
來水賣話、公仔 Bull Shit, Icon...	27.8% (10)	27.8% (10)	41.7% (15)	2.6% (1)	2.19	36
						answered question 36
						skipped question 0

6. 加入或加入 eBike 論壇的原因? Why do you join the forum?

	Response Percent	Response Count
能夠發表或分享意見	75.0%	27
能夠發問問題	58.3%	21
能夠參加或加入其他活動	63.9%	23
能夠認識更多的人	69.4%	25
其他原因 Other		5
		answered question 36
		skipped question 0

Acquaintance of new and old members



Owner:

- New members are welcomed by the old ones
- With a mind to share and to contribute: "Harmony" is the tradition
- Many events: anniversary celebration, in-class seminars, site visit, camping, "morning ride" in the second Saturday of each month

Survey:

- 94.4% of current member would recommend their friend to join eBike
- Only small percentage of members feel difficult to join the circle of existing members. E.g. "舊會員有少圈子，新會員少發言" and "會員人仕關係小圈子化嚴重 外人止步"

Activity:

- New motor-cyclists meet experienced ones and went out together to build up confidence
- Experienced share experience while new ones bring in new ideas: "give and take"

iBike team:

- Haven't attended any face-to-face events before
- Online forum, too many members and postings, hardly build up acquaintance

Findings:

- Culture in harmony and face-to-face events help to build up acquaintance
- Acquaintance within a community is based on harmonious culture, quality sharing, "give and take"

Survey question and results about "acquaintance of new and old member"

2. 你覺得eBike面對緊(或將會面對)什麼最大的困難或挑戰? Do you encounter any difficulties eBike may face?

	Response Count
5. 財政問題	Thu, 4/2/09 10:56 PM
6. 會員很少出Post (欠缺人氣)	Thu, 4/2/09 9:37 PM
7. 凝聚力不足	Thu, 4/2/09 9:15 PM
8. 會員老化	Thu, 4/2/09 7:26 PM
9. 少人吹水少人出車	Thu, 4/2/09 7:21 PM
10. 資金	Thu, 4/2/09 3:22 AM
11. 會員人仕關係小圈子化嚴重 外人止步 影響會員人數	Thu, 4/2/09 1:01 AM
12. 唔夠多女騎士	Thu, 4/2/09 12:12 AM
13. 舊會員有少圈子，新會員少發言，亦常被舊會員胡言亂語破壞討論，一些針對及侮辱字眼曾經出現，問題解決否? 少樣主作出回應。	Wed, 4/1/09 11:07 PM
14. 太多其他forum, 而且未能與iBike 相比	Wed, 4/1/09 11:00 PM
15. competition	Wed, 4/1/09 10:58 PM
16. 其他電單車車會競爭搶會員	Wed, 4/1/09 9:38 PM
17. other webs	Wed, 4/1/09 5:00 PM
18. 1. 香港地方細，推出車活動係難搞。 2. 熱心的騎手不多。	Wed, 4/1/09 3:32 PM
19. 個forum好舊... 功能邊唔上唔夠齊... 用discuz! la~	Wed, 4/1/09 1:15 PM
20. 經費??	Wed, 4/1/09 11:19 AM

Challenges for future community development

- Maintain and grow memberships
- Alternative social networking tools (e.g. Facebook)
- “Competition”: other motorbikes communities as it is not difficult to build up new communities of the kind due to the advancement of technologies nowadays
- Community forum interface: many appealing online community forum with eye-catching images and videos feed in Mainland China. This will be the trend for motorbikes communities moving forward
- Continue to ensure high quality content
- Technology enhancement costs – as they have no commercial parties funding support

Recommendations

- Build upon existing efforts of eBike
(more acceptable, tertiary benefits)
Ranked in terms of ease of implementation
1. **Post Pictures and videos of events:** exposes ebike, draws periphery members to the core group
 2. **Use visual media in the web site:** visually appealing informs the community more effectively, supports founders desire to enhance site (David Gurteen, Creating a Knowledge Sharing Culture 1999 Knowledge Management Magazine article)
 3. **Support the interests of core members:** Periphery members benefit from core member activity (Diane Gabrielle Trembley, 2004 University of Quebec)

Recommendations

4. **Have regular events:** builds a sense of community and promotes face to face contact (National Research Council of Canada 2004 study supports all of the above, I.L Kondratova and I Goldfarb)
5. **Build connections with motor bike businesses:** eBike members represent a portion of the customer base, business observation and/or collaboration can positively influence business efforts to support customers (Jerry Ash, Building a Knowledge Sharing Culture)

Lessons Learned

- Group efforts need to support community interests (community has something to gain)
- Phrase questions carefully, keep community sensitivities in mind (recreation v business community)
- For breadth of feedback use multiple quantitative and qualitative methods (interviews, questionnaires, observations etc)
- When possible, use primary language in dialogue (context is better understood)

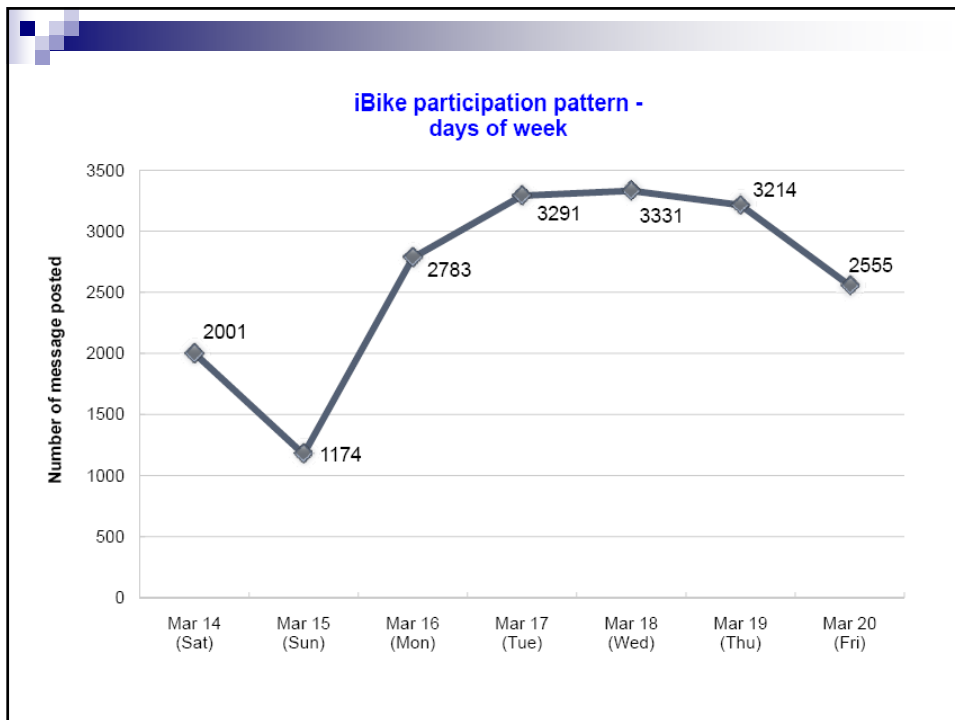
eBike private event on 11 April 09



Jenny's present from Uncle Yeung after the interview with him



eBike
membership
card



The importance of trust in gaining acceptance into an existing Community of Practice

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