

SocialQ&A: An Online Social Network Based Question and Answer System- A Review

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Abstract- Data number of Community Question Answering (CQA) services have emerged and proliferated in the last decade. Typical examples include Yahoo! Answers, WikiAnswers, and also domain-speci_c forums like StackOverow. These services help users obtain information from a community | a user can post his or her questions which may then be answered by other users. Such a paradigm of information seeking is particularly appealing when the question cannot be answered directly by Web search engines due to the unavailability of relevant online content. However, question submitted to a CQA service are often colloquial and ambiguous. An accurate understanding of the intent behind a question is important for satisfying the user's information need more effectively and efficiently.

Keywords : Question and answer systems, Social networks, Information search

I. Introduction

With over 80 percent of teen Internet users frequenting social media sites, it's no wonder the real world social lives are seeing some changes. Social media is definitely changing the way people communicate, but in many ways it's for the better as we expand our social circles and explore new horizons through our online connections (Chopra, 2013). Every age it has passed through has been based on beliefs and new technologies, responding to the needs of individuals anxious to adjust to new forms of socialization. A time of great change is a period in which society looks for meaning. Information is already a tool, the principal tool, which people use to perceive and understand their environment (Idakwo, 2011).

The emergence of online forums has become hugely popular in recent times with interactions based on similar discussions, posts and threads (Xiaolin, et al., 2009) (Sumit & Prasenjit, 2010). Online forums have become powerful tools for sharing information (Bedmar, 2010). Online discussion forums have also become one of the most popular places to ask and answer questions (Falls, 2012).

Online Forums, compared to the other social media sites, have various unique features like threads; where discussions and posts are made, RSS feeds, polls, etc. Online Forums, provide a unique type of social environment that enables people to share and access information freely. Users can either start new topics or leave comments in the threads of existing topics (Xiaolin, et al., 2009).

II. Problem

Prospective students of an institution (the University) have had issues in the past when it comes to selecting careers, choosing their course of study and indecisions about the right school to apply for (Ogu, 2008) (Orndorff & Herr, 1996). However, to solve these problems, a platform needs to be created where these students can relate with others who can answer these questions.

Consequently, relevant requirements have to be taken into consideration in the development of a web application to solve these problems stated above.

III. Literature Survey

Social media is a form of electronic communication which facilitates interaction based on certain interests and characteristics. Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social dialogues (Idakwo, 2011). A social media network platform is one that provides a medium for interaction by groups of people making it easy to share information (such as lecture materials, pictures and ideas) across a circle of people or groups. Statistics has shown that the use of social network such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn is on the increase most especially among young individuals, the crop of which are students of tertiary institutions (Ikhu-Omoregbe, et al., 2012).

According to Idakwo (2011), The Social media started as a concept many years ago but has evolved into sophisticated technology. The concept of social media can be dated back to the use of the analog telephone for social interaction. The most recognizable use of social media was through innovative application, an online dialogue framework, created by Ward Christensen, a former IBM employee and Randy Suess. Initially, they envisioned a place where they could immediately contact their co-employees for announcements, i.e. meetings, reports, and other affairs, rather than making multiple phone calls, distributing memos, and the like. They were looking into creating a computerized bulletin board, which is why they named the program CBBS (Computerized Bulletin Board System). Soon enough, more and more employees contributed their ideas and comments in the said online community. That event

was a momentous episode in the history of computer and internet. It was the birth of online social networking.

The CBBS platform was made known to other companies and has been used for specific purposes. The Bulletin Board System expanded largely and began breaking into the mainstream much sooner than it was planned to. It was during the rise of the Internet Service Providers in the

early 1990s when social networking sites began to flourish. Along with the availability of internet service to people, many people rummaged to have themselves acquainted with this new technology. With the fast response of people to the budding internet community, the bulletin boards which were usually used by companies have started to expand their roles by offering their service to more people around the globe. More and more people joined the online community with the innate goal of creating an identity in this space and at the same time exploring the vast place that is the internet. Because of this, many internet-savvy companies gave what people wanted- getting to know more people and sharing common interests and points of view; that is through websites where they can socialize, websites which are now referred to as social networking sites.

Social media attained a great measure of success with the launch of the then very popular friendster.com. Creator of Friendster, Jonathan Abrams concocted a perfect mix of popular features from earlier social networking predecessors. Friendster became an instant success and gathered about three million members who signed up in its early months of launch.

As years passed, Friendster reached an overwhelming hundred million users from all over the globe. With much demand from its users, Friendster unfortunately got out of hand and suffered from too many glitches in the server. Today, Friendster has been announced as a newly owned entity of a Malaysian Company, and outshone by present social networking sites but still remains to be patronized most especially in Asia.

The conception of myspace.com opened the internet users to vast opportunities of self-expression which include wide control over a user's profile content. Practically different people from all walks of life have dedicated pages in MySpace. In MySpace, users experienced the best of creating unique identities to show to the online world.

MySpace remained as the uncontested favorite among all the social networking sites until 2005 when it met its future competitor in the market. Soon enough, MySpace created additional features like mobile applications in order to keep up with the latest trends in the online community; and at the same time be at par with the

growing popularity of contemporary social networking sites, more specifically the next thing in line.

Facebook started as a local social network made for the students of Harvard. It was developed by a sophomore, Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook was actually made by hacking Harvard's database containing identification images of students. The initial idea was actually to compare the faces of students with images of animals, for entertainment purposes. However, due to the potentially damaging contents of the site, the creators decided to put it down before it caught the attention of school authorities.

The application was shut down, but the idea of creating an online community of students came to existence. The platform was then improved and sooner than they expected, Facebook was released in campuses other than Harvard. Thereafter, high schools were already starting to get attracted to the idea of having online communities, thus opening the website to the younger population. In 2006, facebook.com ultimately offered the opportunity to the rest of the world. As 2007 approached, the registrants reached an overwhelming digit-roughly a million dozen. Facebook has grown to become the biggest and most popular social networking site today with a population of above 500 million active users.

Other social networking sites continued to appear in the scene. Blogging sites like Bebo, Multiply and many others came into view. Microblogging partnered with social networking became popular with the launch of Twitter. On Twitter, online users can post their Tweets, basically a 140 character phrase or line about what they have in mind. An Online forum is also a system designed for the discussion of topics, with each topic separated into its own area, called a thread. A thread is begun by a user writing a short document, called a post, which introduces the topic or asks a question about the topic (Liu, et al., 2010). Internet users search online forums, generally, for two types of information. Some of them search the forums for subjective information such as different viewpoints, opinions, emotions, evaluations, etc., on specific problems instead of a single correct answer (Prakhar, et al., 2012).

An Online forum as a whole contains various categories (broad subject areas), which themselves contain forums (more specific subject areas) which contain topics (threads or discussions) which are made up of individual posts (where a user writes something) (vBulletin, 2014). It is arranged in a very unique way/form i.e. From Categories to subforums, from subforums to more subforums and from these subfolders to threads, where members can start their discussions or posts.

1. Usergroups and Levels: Usergroups are groups of users that divide the community into manageable sections board administrators can work with. Each user can belong to several groups and each group can be assigned individual permissions. This provides an easy way for administrators to change permissions for many users at once, such as changing moderator permissions or granting users access to a private forum (phpBB, 2007). There are three major usergroups in a forum:

a. Moderators: They are individuals (or groups of individuals) who look after the forums from day to day. They have the authority to edit or delete posts and lock, unlock, move, delete and split topics in the forum they moderate. Generally, moderators are present to prevent users from going off-topic or posting abusive or offensive material (phpBB, 2007). Common privileges of moderators include: deleting, merging, moving, and splitting of posts and threads, locking, renaming, stickying of threads, banning, suspending, unsuspending,

unbanning, warning the members, or adding, editing, removing the polls of threads

(vBulletin, 2014).

b. Administrators: They are members assigned with the highest level of control over the entire board. These members can control all facets of board operation, including setting permissions, banning users, creating usergroups or moderators, etc., dependent upon the board founder and what permissions he or she has given the other administrators. They may also have full moderator capabilities in all forums, depending on the settings put forth by the board founder (phpBB, 2007). These are individuals who have been assigned to manage a forum. They can also be referred to as forum owners. There are also forums where administrators relate to each other to share their knowledge.

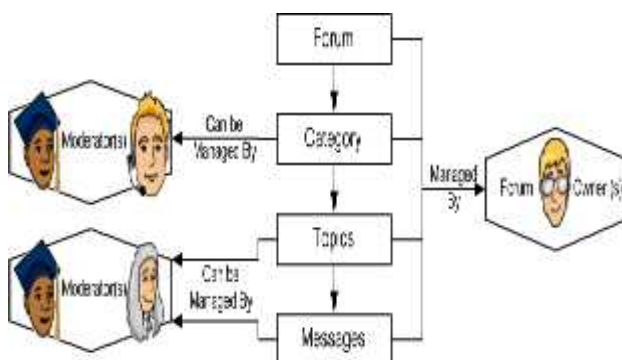


Figure 1: Usergroups of an Online Forum

c. Users: are individuals or members who have been given access to a forum or who have publicly registered to access the forum. These members do not

have any special privileges unless otherwise given by the Forum Owner. Users can become Moderators or Administrators, if designated by the Administrator (IMS Global Learning Consortium, 2014).

This figure describes the arrangement and flow of communication on an online forum. It consists of the Moderators, Forum Owners, the function they perform and the contents of the online forum (like Category, Topics and Messages).

With the help of API (Application Programming Interface), microblogging sites like Twitter and Tumblr and other dedicated sites like Flickr, Photobucket and many others were able to connect with popular social networking sites, making an unending link of information in the World Wide Web (Idakwo, 2011).

IV. Conclusion

This paper is review analysis of different author work.

Online forums have presented students with systems designed for the discussion of topics, with each topic separated into its own area, called a thread. A thread is begun by a user writing a short document, called a post, which introduces the topic or asks a question about the topic.

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