Testimonial Knowledge and Trust in Virtual Communities: A Research in Progress of the Case of Wikipedia

Elham Mousavidin
University of Houston

Leiser Silva
University of Houston

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Elham Mousavidin¹, Leiser Silva²

1. DISC, University of Houston, Houston, TX, USA. 2. University of Houston, Houston, TX, USA.

Abstract:
Wikipedia is one of the fastest growing phenomena of today’s world. People increasingly rely on this free source for gaining encyclopedic knowledge regardless of its controversial nature. The goal of this research in progress is to investigate the reasons why people trust the content of Wikipedia. The findings of this research might shed light on understanding knowledge sharing in virtual communities. There has been extensive research on virtual communities as sources of knowledge. Researchers have studied the factors that motivate individuals to consult and contribute to the content of these communities. This concept has been studied from perspectives such as sociology, psychology and economics. Moreover, trust has been mentioned as an important factor in consulting these communities as sources of knowledge. This research in progress intends to apply the idea of “testimonial knowledge,” popularized by John Hardwig to studying Wikipedia. In so doing, we discuss trust in the accuracy of content of Wikipedia.