Chapter XXI
Cross–Organization Virtual CoPs in E–Tourism:
Assembling Information–Based Products

Nikolas Vidakis
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

Anargyros Plemenos
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

Dimitrios Kotsalis
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

Emmanouela Robogiannaki
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

Giannis Milolidakis
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

Kyriakos Paterakis
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

George Vellis
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

Demosthenes Akoumianakis
Technological Education Institution of Crete, Greece

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes recent work and experience in setting up and supporting cross-organization virtual communities of practice to facilitate new product development. The authors' reference domain is tourism and the community's joint enterprise is assembly of vacation packages. The chapter contrasts existing practices involved in building vacation packages against the computer-mediated practices flourishing in an electronic village of local interest on regional tourism. The electronic village is considered as an aggregation of thematic virtual communities (i.e., neighborhoods) each with own rules, policies and primitive offerings covering tourism services such as accommodation, transportation, cultural resources, etc. Electronic squads are formed as cross-neighborhood communities of practice to engage in computer-mediated assembly of vacation packages. The chapter presents key tasks involved in managing both electronic squads and the workflows through which the shared resources are combined and transformed into new collective offerings.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a wide range of technologies have given rise to new business models, such as e-shop, e-mall, e-auction, e-procurement, e-marketplace, e-communities, e-brokers and other commerce-support e-intermediaries (Timmers, 1998), which increasingly catalyze information-based industries. In the majority of the cases, the distinction between these new virtualities is drawn around functional rather than technological characteristics. Moreover, although frequently non-homogeneous and seemingly different, these efforts tackle a variety of issues such as global marketing, 24/7 operations, quick responses, competitive pricing, multimedia and hypermedia information, interactive search and navigation process, personalized and customized services, innovative products and services, push and pull marketing mechanisms, thus establishing a new context for electronic commerce and practice.

Inevitably, the travel and tourism industries have also faced new challenges that pushed them to adopt more innovative Internet-based strategies and technologies (Yu, 2002; Stockdale & Borovica, 2006; Connell & Reynolds, 1999; Hjalager, 2002; Palmer & McCole, 2000; Werthner & Ricci, 2004).

A virtuality, which has recently received substantial attention, is the electronic village of local interest which represents a tight coupling between a virtual space and a corresponding physical space. In the literature, there are various examples of electronic villages / cities (e.g., Carroll et al., 2001) acting as catalysts to local community social and economic life.

In the context of on-going collaborative research and development, we are developing technology and tools for building local electronic villages as unified collaborative spaces for managing electronic services of local interest / scale towards new product development. This definition makes a sharp distinction between an electronic village of local interest and the notion of the 'global electronic village'. The distinction amounts to the fact that the former concept emphasizes a tight coupling between virtual and local physical activities, while it affords opportunities to develop alternative forms of productive social relations between members. Some of the design issues confronting the construction of electronic villages are common to other types of virtual communities of practice and include community visualization, awareness, social interaction, collaboration and knowledge persistency. However, as electronic villages need to function as catalysts towards added-value products and services, there are additional issues to be addressed, pertaining to a variety of organizational aspects.

To this end, eKoNEΣ is a collaborative R&D project, which seeks to extend the conventional connotation of an electronic village so as to provide an operational model of a virtual organization fostering strong social links between members of inter-organizational partnerships and an explicit focus on performing tasks to yield added-value products and services. The project's pilot application domain is in the area of tourism where it has set up and operates eKoNEΣ-Tourism, a regional electronic village on local tourism. In its basic form eKoNEΣ seeks to facilitate community problem solving by fostering tight collaboration between multi-sector community groups, frequently referred to as coalitions or collaboratives. Such coalitions may be permanent or temporal depending on the set targets. For example, in the tourism sector coalitions may be formed to facilitate transportation, local accommodation and entertainment for a group of people interested to visit archaeological sites in a region for a specified period of time.

The distinctive characteristics of such services are that they have a 'local' character (i.e. they are regionally bound and can be assembled and offered by locals), they typically have short life cycles (i.e., a few days), are targeted to specific customer groups (i.e., visitors of a specific destination within a particular age group), while

27 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/cross-organization-virtual-cops-tourism/30829

Related Content

Advanced Visual SLAM and Image Segmentation Techniques for Augmented Reality
Yirui Jiang, Trung Hieu Tranand Leon Williams (2022). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 1-28).*
www.irma-international.org/article/advanced-visual-slam-and-image-segmentation-techniques-for-augmented-reality/307063

Fast Single Image Haze Removal Scheme Using Self-Adjusting: Haziness Factor Evaluation
Sangita Royand Sheli Sinha Chaudhuri (2019). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 42-57).*
www.irma-international.org/article/fast-single-image-haze-removal-scheme-using-self-adjusting/228945

An Interactive Space as a Creature: Mechanisms of Agency Attribution and Autotelic Experience
Ulysses Bernardet, Jaume Subirats Aleixandriand Paul F.M.J. Verschure (2017). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/an-interactive-space-as-a-creature/169931

Using Annotations for Information Sharing in a Networked Community
Muhammad Asim Qayyum (2008). *Encyclopedia of Networked and Virtual Organizations (pp. 1722-1729).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-annotations-information-sharing-networked/17813

Augmented Reality Indoor Navigation Using Handheld Devices
Angelin Gladstonand Aadharshika Duraisamy (2019). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 1-17).*
www.irma-international.org/article/augmented-reality-indoor-navigation-using-handheld-devices/228943