

SOCIAL COMPUTING AND SOCIAL INFORMATICS: THE STOCKHOLDERS OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY EMPHASIZING SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES AT A GLANCE

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ABSTRACT

Social Computing [SC] is one of the important interdisciplinary names responsible for information and technological solution and services to the society or community. Social Computing is a branch of computing; which interact with both society and common people with computing systems. In Social Computing [SC] behavioral science and cognitive science are important name due to requirement judgment of the user or simply for seeking the demand. Social Informatics is also to some extent related with Social Computing. Today's Information Systems is fully depended on Computing and allied mechanism. Virtually, social computing is the smaller dimension of a circle and social informatics is larger. This paper mention so many aspects of Social Computing and Social Informatics with special referred to use utilization; their differences and similarly in the context of background, related fields, tools and technologies are used, stakeholder and user and so on.

Keywords: Social Computing, Social Informatics, Comparison, Challenges, Issues, Information Science-Practice, Information Technology, Trends, Knowledge Economy, Knowledge and Technology Management.

INTRODUCTION

Social Computing is actually intersection of Society, Computing and people. Social Computing and Social Informatics both have originally originated more or less same fields like Computer Science, Psychology, Cognitive Science, Information Science, Social work and so on. Social Computing actually deal, with so many new and commercial topic/tolls like- web 2.0, social networking, cable TV, Online TV, Blogs, E mail, internet, information kiosk [computer focused] and so on. While social Informatics is the practice of design and development of Information Systems for social development and for common masses. For Social Computing, computing and related tools are common but as far as Social Informatics it is optional. Directly and indirectly, both have close relationship with computing, networking, web development, information and content. Professionals of such field are

treated as Information Scientist, Social Engineers, Information brokers, Technological Gatekeeper, System Analyst and so on.

OBJECTIVE

Some of the aim for which this research work has been carried out:-

- To learn about Social Computing; its nature, stakeholders and exiting facet;
- To know about Social Informatics and its origin emphasizing relationship with Social Information Systems;
- To differentiate between Social Computing [SC] and Social Informatics; including professionals actual area and main tasks;
- To find out the similarities in between the fields;
- To prepare some 'note' as suggestion for better social technology and informatics practice.

Social Computing [SC]: Basics

Computing or Computational Systems dedicated to the society or larger community is called as social computing. This is an emerging area of social engineering; where machine, information and computers are fulfilled to the requirement of society for their all round development and help in Globalization. Social Computing [SC] basically involve with three stakeholders people [society], information and computing or tools. Fundamentally this is an interdisciplinary knowledge cluster responsible for easy information and technological availability to the society, not only people and but also for Animal [indirectly; like for wild life management, disaster management tasks and so on.

Social Informatics [SI]: Basics

Social Informatics [SI] is actually application, utilization and more deeply interaction between information and society. Though indirectly, social Informatics is also responsible for Community Technology utilization and technology transfer. Fundamentally design and development of Information Infrastructure or Information Systems to a particular community or group of community; or even larger society may be treated as social informatics. This involves higher user studies and practical demand judgment by authentic and sophisticated information seeking approach or cognitive approaches. Social Informatics is responsible for building Information rich society and thus it indirectly helps in Information Society building; many ways.

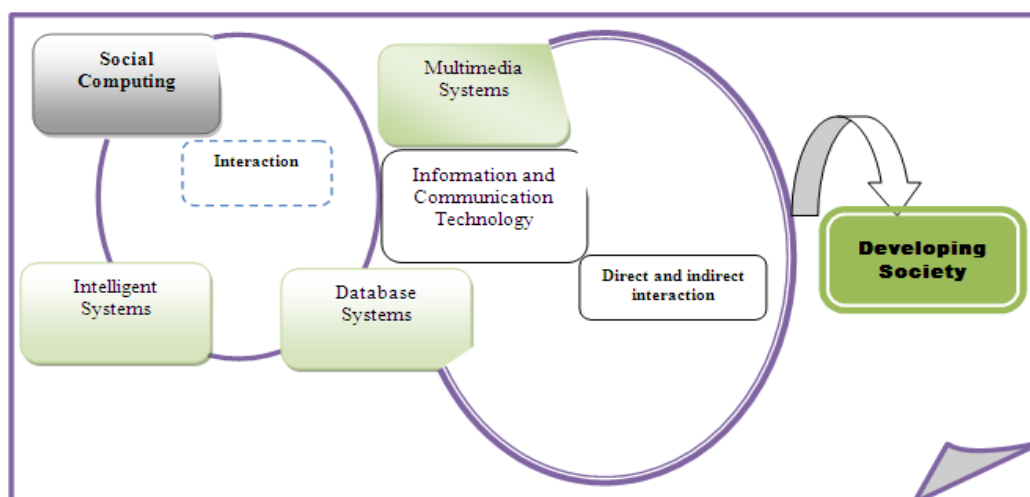


Fig: 1. Figure Depicted Social Computing Utilization for social development through tools and technologies

Information Society and Social Computing and Social Informatics

Social Computing [SC] and Social Informatics [SI] both have indirect relationship each other; due to their same type of aim and objective. SC is responsible for increasing computer literacy and providing value added community science and technology services to the society. Thus for healthy SC practices we need information, so interaction between the Social Computing and Social Informatics is mandatory in most of the cases. Fundamentally SC and information both have the following role; directly and indirectly

- Removing Digital Divide in between have and have not category of the society as far as access and utilization of Digital media accessories are concerned;
- Helps in creation of better computer literacy and information literacy by value added services to the community or society; thus perceptually and ideally both are responsible for removing information divide;
- As both are related with healthy information and technology practices for the common masses and 'have not' ; thus societal development and economical growth [GDP] many ways get indirect priorities;
- Ultimately both are responsible for building a information society; economically fit and making technology wise up to date; so it also help in globalization.

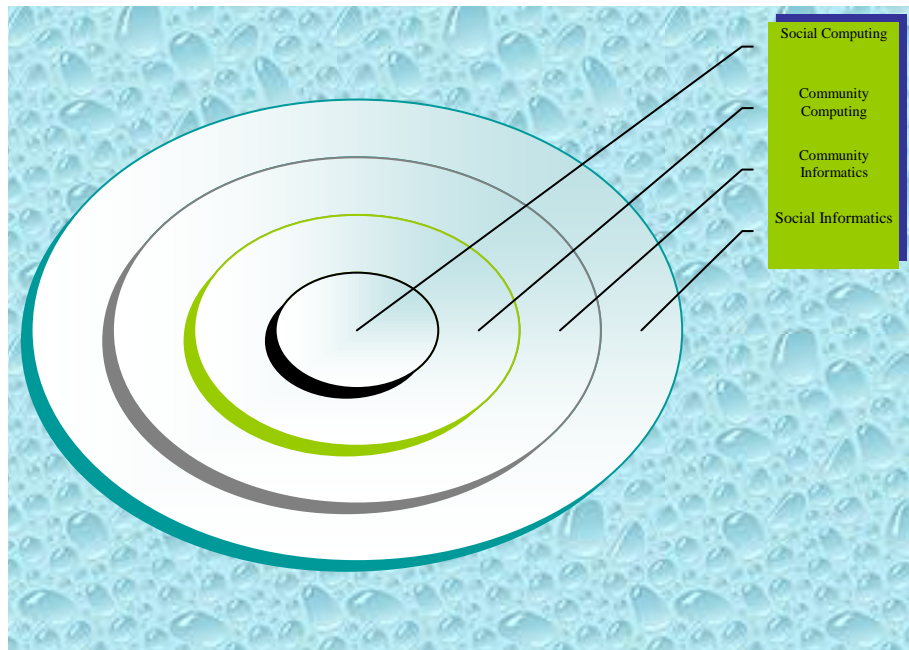


Fig: 2. Showing smaller and larger facet in between Social Computing and Social Informatics

Obstacle and Issue of Social Computing [SC] and Social Informatics [SI]

Easy Information Access, easy technological uses for the community and by the community, healthy technology transfer, disaster management are the common name for sophisticated social computing and informatics practice. Though, some issues and aspects are the key obstacle and challenges in these areas like

- Healthy technological solution, value added services, information infrastructure building from urban area to thousands villagers and remote areas still an emerging technological problems and issues;
- Adequate fund for healthy technological and information infrastructure building for the poor nation and developing countries like India still a big challenge;
- User awareness about E- Services, Ecommerce, E Communication still very minimum as far as rural India is concerned;
- Most of the technologies and solutions are costly; thus we need to build open source software and technology backed machines and systems. But understanding of skilled people, computing and the behavior and characteristics of information is to some extend challenging;
- Hesitation among the community people for the use of tools and technologies related to SC and SI is no doubt tough enough.

Social Computing and Social Informatics [SI]: Similarities

Virtually both SC and SI have some similarities and relationships take a look on this

- ‘Society’- Both are deal with Society; be it Social Computing or Social Informatics. SC is responsible for a easy computational system for the society and its development where as SI is responsible for building an information rich society by adequate information infrastructure building;
- ‘Computing and information both the facet are related with SC and SI but computing is directly related with SC and indirectly with SI and indirectly with SC, Virtually both computer and information are depended each other;
- People or community are the key stakeholders of both SC and SI;

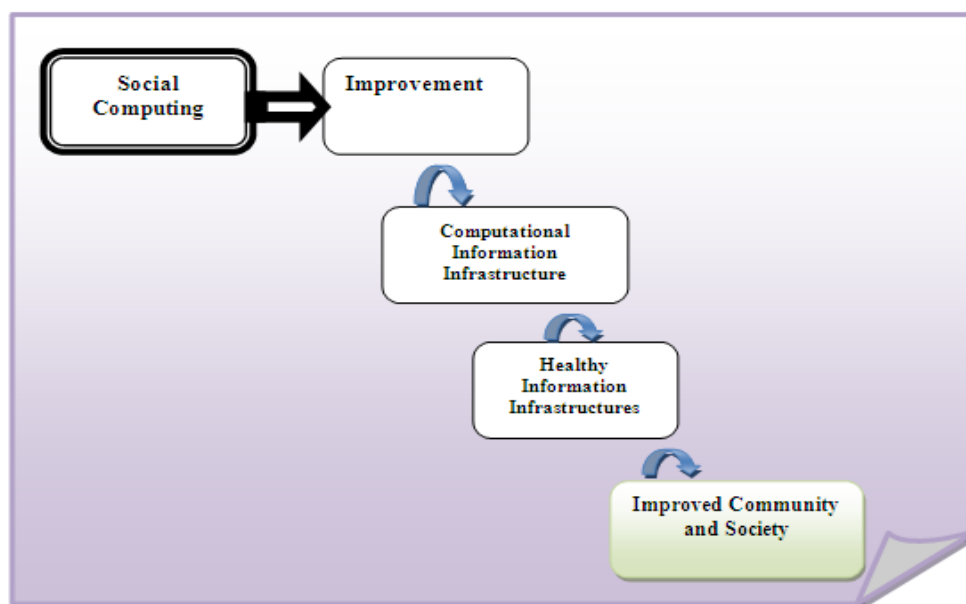


Fig: 3 Shows the step by step procedure for Digital Literacy building through Social Computing

- Both the practices depends on healthy cognitive and psychological studies to know the user demand and requirement; be it is technological requirement or information/content;
- Handling both SC and SI need some interdisciplinary skilled professionals who are aware and habituated in information and technologies;
- Societal development, community development, removing information divide and digital divide and similar aspects now truly depends on SC and SI; many ways.

SC and SI: Dissimilarities

Though we traced some similarities between SC and SI but virtually both are having some dissimilarities or differences as far as scope, aim, facet, tools are concerned. Now let us check these, one by one:-

- Regarding scope, social computing is higher than community computing but smaller than Social Informatics. Practically SI includes SC but SC does not;

- Social Computing is fully depends on Computing; here Computational Systems is must; where as Social Informatics may be manual also; thus here computing or use of technologies are optional;
- As far as skilled manpower in concerned, social informatics requires in depth knowledge of information; its nature, behavior, user ,management, computing or technologies and side by side cognitive science for healthy users perception judgment or demand judgment. But SC doesn't require healthy knowledge of information and psychological studies; in many circumstances;
- Regarding funding, planning also SC need less attention than that of Social Informatics;

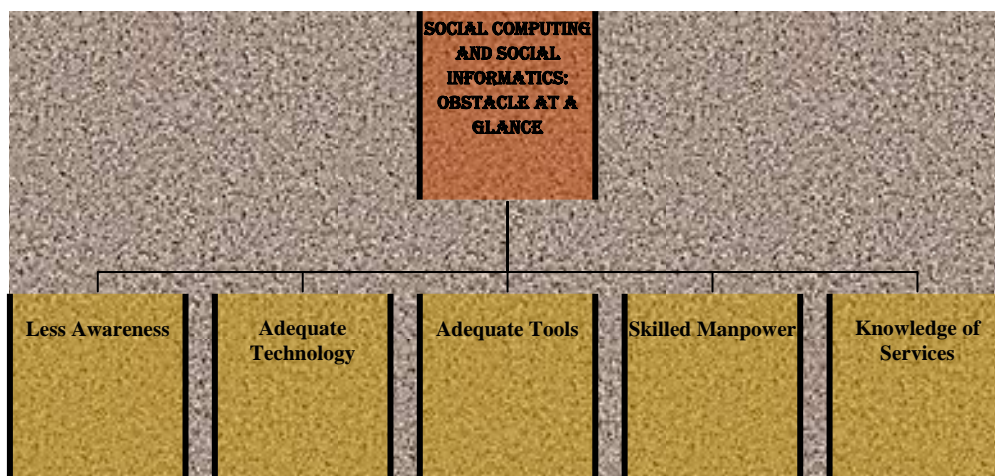


Fig: 4 Represents some problem and disadvantages of Social Computing and Allied Field

Recently user studies are also indicated that people are far habituated with use or utilization of information than that of computation or social computing media; whether E Services, E Bill payment, E commerce, Teleconferencing, Email or social networking uses.

FINDINGS

- SC and SI both have interaction and intersection between community[people], information and technology;
- Still Government awareness is very much limited in this emerging socio technical areas;
- SC and SI and their healthy and complete introduction may helpful to bring Information Society and indirectly economic development;
- National Knowledge Commission and National policy are the prime examples for social computing and SI Practices.

CONCLUSION

Government of every country needs to follow a policy on SI and Sc for all round socio economic development. As the agencies are responsible for information and technologies;

thus they are also responsible for complete sustainable development. Apart from traditional tools it is essential that, the government and policy makers should introduce user study, user education and of course some newer technologies like healthy usability engineering, HCI and cloud computing for better interaction with community and its real life uses.

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