

Part 2: Paper**Engaging higher education students in voluntary activities through digital technology and interactive marketing – an exercise in technoheesion.****Background and context**

The debates over the purpose and nature of higher education need to consider the place and importance of student engagement in voluntary activities on campus as part of wider learning and personal development which promotes citizenship and community cohesion. However, there is a concern that any such positive effects from these activities are being limited by under participation which might be due to the negative perceptions and attitudes of potential service users.

In this theoretical, multi-disciplinary paper, we contend that technology has increasingly come to dominate our forms of social interaction yet this is rarely considered in existing research around the operationalization of social cohesion. The concept of 'technoheesion' is developed to describe how digital technology messaging and interactive marketing campaigns might have a positive impact on the attitude and perception of university students so facilitating their engagement in activities for the promotion of social cohesion in a university setting.

The role of universities in promoting social wellbeing and bringing social benefits, which go beyond economic impact and formal knowledge transfer, remains despite the increasing focus upon income generation and profit making as well as talk of students as outputs (Beider and Briggs 2010, DIUS 2008, Hancock, Hughes and Walsh 2012, Kitagawa 2012). Arthur (2005) explores this role through the consideration of citizenship and says there should be link between 'the affective life of student social engagement and the reflective life of the mind' (p3). Yet even when citizenship is in the curriculum,

there is less emphasis on active citizenship as a form of civic learning (McCowan 2012) so how much more difficult is it to engage students in extra-curricular and voluntary activities to this end? Furthermore, Read et al. (2003) have written about universities students' conceptions of belonging and isolation in which the latter works against participation.

Technology is changing universities as organizations (Bradwell 2009, Katz 2008), the ways in which university lecturers work (Kirkup 2010, Spring 2010, Weller 2011), the students themselves (Prensky 2001, Oblinger and Oblinger 2005, Hoffman 2010) and learning and teaching (Cheal et al. 2012, Ehlers and Schneckenberg 2010, Swenson and Taylor 2012, Wilen-Daugenti 2009). Digital social networking has become part of the process of building and sustaining relationships and younger people are perceived to favour digital forms of communication for messages and information (Lim, Chou and Melwar 2008). Technology marketing techniques are used in the commercial sectors to generate awareness and identity.

Social media has been used in a range of HE administrative contexts including student affairs, enrolment management, alumni relations and careers guidance (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno 2011, Hayes, Ruschman and Walker 2009, Wankel and Wankel 2011). McEwan (2011) calls for an exploration of social networking sites to aid retention through promoting social integration. However, 'little attention has so far been paid to the areas of behavioural analysis and classification of social media users' (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno 2011 p. 8) in university contexts and, we would add, to the implications for promoting engagement in community and citizenship activities. Therefore, we have developed the concept of 'technohesion' as a vehicle for such research.

The theoretical concept of Technohesion

'Technohesion' is a term to describe the action or process (the phenomenon) of the technologies for messaging and communication and social cohesion working together in a society where technological (rather than social) changes are influencing the environment and developing educational experiences. The derivation of this portmanteau style term indicates from its constituent parts an action or a process of the technology of sticking (OED 2009), in which 'hesion' is related to the verb from the latin *haerere* 'to stick, or cleave' as in the term cohesion.

Technohesion's 'technology or craft of sticking' may provide a way in which social cohesion and education policy can be operationalized and this is why we are drawn to the definition of social cohesion which is 'characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioural manifestations' (Chan *et al.*, 2006, p.298). However, we are not proposing the removal of physical and communal activities as technohesion does not seek for a cyber replacement or 'Second Life' activity but is, on the contrary, a means to engage people in those physical activities.

Our working research model of technohesion (to be explored further in the presentation) illustrates the importance of factors contributing to the social and technological changes. The factors of social changes include the policy context and social cohesion while the factors of technological changes encompass technological activities and technology marketing. The formation of 'technohesion' does not only include these four factors but it is also dependent upon the economic issues, capabilities of messaging and communication, the innovativeness of usage and adoption of technological activities and the development of these activities and technology marketing for educational benefits.

Some implications for further consideration

Interdisciplinary research is needed which extends the theorisation of the attitudinal structural model in technology marketing through studying the students' behaviour and the influence of digital technology and interactive marketing campaigns on their engagement in voluntary activities and considering how it might be applied to understanding and promoting social cohesion. Yet perhaps the optimism of using techno-marketing to promote engagement in social cohesion activities may be misplaced. Some research suggests a much more complex picture in terms of digital technology and students learning by noting 'a reluctance of 'of students to bring their own networked social worlds into the academy' (Lea and Jones 2011, p. 390) and that the rationale and suggested benefits of student volunteering lack the support of empirical evidence (Holsworth and Quinn 2010). How might the use of the techno marketing impact upon the development and the provision of the service or events? What insights might technohehion have for the vision of higher education in the future?