Preliminary User Study for Gratitude and Reciprocity in a Q&A System

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BACKGROUND
- Online communities experience a participation inequality phenomenon, only 1% of users are active contributors.
- How to motivate those of the inactive users?
- Existing solutions are a point-based system, gamification mechanisms, such as leaderboards and badges as extrinsic motivators.
- Altruism is one of the most influential reasons for active contributors to participate.

OBJECTIVES
- Propose a new approach to promote altruism by capitalizing on reciprocity and gratitude in a Question & Answer system.
- Nowak and Roch et al concluded that if the recipients of altruistic behaviors experience gratitude, they tend to be inclined to help either the contributor or a third person.
- We incorporate the most crucial factor, gratitude, in order to harness reciprocity in our Q&A system.

DESIGN GUIDELINES
- System should emphasize the norm of gratitude allowing users to easily express thankfulness.
- Remind users of the emotion of gratitude when receiving a response as some users are unlikely to consider this emotion.

IMPLEMENTATION
- EnishiSource, a Question & Answer Facebook application.
- A recipient is able to convey his or her gratitude to a contributor by using “send thanks” button.
- The contributor can see whether they are thanked with their responses.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS
- As with previous research, the motivation is a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.
- Only those users with leaderboard were motivated by being thanked.
- The participants noted that they felt better by sending thanks to the contributors.

FUTURE WORK
- Focus on conducting a large-scale experiment in order to track the behavior of recipients who have conveyed gratefulness towards a contributor or a third person.
- Explore the further actions of those contributors who have been thanked versus those who have not been thanked.