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Growth Hacking Strategies for Virtual Research Environments

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Although Virtual Research Environments (VRE) are not designed for a mass market in first place but as expert system serves for a market niche, many principles of growth-orientated website development also apply to them. Being well accepted and valuable is a sufficient precondition for any VRE to be successful in the long run.

In the following, some best practices applied in our institute during the implementation and operation of three different VRE are presented. As they aim for increasing the number of users and their satisfaction, in an economic environment these strategies would be filed below the catchword ,growth hacking'. Especially the VRE tambora.org with its main focus on Historical Climatology delivers important insights on this topic, as it is public accessible for anyone interested.

Beside approved methods of software development, marketing and public relation, a concept is highlighted to evaluate the potential of a VFU from four perspectives. Technical, social, thematic and legal aspects are essential for a frictionless collaboration. To avoid trouble and maximize benefit, each enhancement and new feature should be examined regarding these four points of view. In an exemplary scenario this approach is demonstrated for the areas standardization, visibility, publication and reuse of data, support of users and transparency of workflow.

The concept of the four perspectives suits well as a guideline to identify concrete steps towards an evolving platform. At the same moment it is universal enough to be transferred to any VRE as well.