Online product testing programs – Bright and dark sides of rejecting potential product testers

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Abstract

Online product testing programs have evolved as a popular marketing tool. Manufacturers (e.g. Adidas), agencies (e.g. BzzAgent), and retailers (e.g. Amazon Vine) invite customers to take part in their online product testing programs where they give away free samples, typically in exchange for reviewing the product or giving feedback to the company. However, many customers who apply in a program will be rejected and therefore, will not receive a free product. Based on scarcity and exchange theory as well as a lab experiment, the current study reveals contradicting effects of rejections on purchase intention of the respective product. First, we find purchase intention to decrease because of increased perceived unfairness. Second, purchase intention increases due to higher scarcity perceptions with regard to the product. Companies should therefore carefully consider using online product testing programs and manage rejections carefully.