

The Effects of Prominent Brand Orientation and Digitization of Community Activities on Participation Intentions: Evidence from Meetup.com

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Abstract

Brand communities are an increasingly popular tool to connect directly with customers and achieve a variety marketing goals. However, without the active participation of their members, brand communities are bound to fail and disappear. This research assesses the effect of prominent brand orientation and of digitization of community activities on individual members' participation intentions, in the empirical context of the online platform Meetup.com. The effects are estimated across a large number of communities with varying degrees of brand-orientation and digitization, using both a structural model and causal random forests. Preliminary results show that a prominent brand orientation has a positive impact on member participation in community activities. Furthermore, organizing a community activity online does not affect participation on average, but the effect varies significantly across potential attendees. The results of this study can help marketing managers to improve brand community design and achieve higher member participation.

Keywords: *brand community engagement; machine learning; structural equation modelling*

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