

# The Effect of Digitizing Community Activities on Community Participation: Evidence from Meetup.com

**Martina Pocchiari**

Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

**Jason Roos**

Erasmus University

Cite as:

Pocchiari Martina, Roos Jason (2021), The Effect of Digitizing Community Activities on Community Participation: Evidence from Meetup.com. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 50th, (93819)

Paper from the 50th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, May 25-28, 2021



# The Effect of Digitizing Community Activities on Community Participation: Evidence from Meetup.com

## Abstract

Brand communities are increasingly offering digitized community activities to their members. At first glance, activity digitization seems cheaper and more convenient than face-to-face meeting options. However, digitizing community activities comes at the cost of the social benefits that members extract from community participation. Effectively, increased digitization could lower members' participation in the communities, and threaten the existence of the communities in the long run. In this research, we study how the extent of digitization of community activities affects members' participation intentions on Meetup.com. Using structural causal models and machine learning, we show that higher activity digitization has a negative effect on community participation, and that the effect is heterogeneous across members, activities, and community types. This study has practical implications for the sustainability of brand communities managing the transition to digitized community experiences.

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

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media