

It's Okay to Be Okay: Niche Marketing in Contested Ideological Spaces

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Abstract

Mainstreaming is a balancing game between acquiring many new consumers and potentially losing the most loyal ones. This article examines the role of ideology and marketplace sentiment in niche market acceptance and rejection of mainstreaming attempts. The authors conduct a netnography of 4 firms and 3 Reddit communities involved in the vegan niche and uncover 2 ideologically threatening mainstreaming events. The first is an in-store product placement change which results in niche acceptance. The second is a partnership with fast-food which results in niche rejection. The authors then examine the role of sentiment in ideological evaluation of the events. Only the second triggered negative sentiment in ideological discourses. However, both events trigger negative sentiment in non-ideological discourses. Thus, fostering positive marketplace sentiment is not required for the niche market to accept mainstreaming attempts. Instead, firms should evaluate and align with ideological beliefs.

Subject Areas: *Marketing Strategy, Product Categorization, Product Management, Segmentation*

Track: Product and Brand Management