

# Leveraging Member-Initiated Online Communities: The Role of Brand Prominence for Generating Word-of-Mouth

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## **Abstract**

Member-initiated online communities (MIOCs) are on the rise and constitute potential new market segments for companies to seize. Prior research has investigated value generation in MIOCs for members, but how companies can leverage MIOCs for marketing is an unexplored research field. The current research investigates brand-generated posts in MIOCs from a persuasion knowledge and social capital theory perspective. Adopting varying levels of brand prominence, our findings from an exploratory MIOC member survey, three online experiments, and a field experiment show that lower brand prominence of a brand-generated post induces higher WOM, a relationship which is mediated by perceived post authenticity. The mediating relationship is weaker for MIOC members with high social capital. Our study is the first to generate insights into how brands can best leverage MIOCs, contributing to the literature on brand prominence in online communities and monetization of social capital.

**Subject Areas:** *Channels, Decision-Making, Marketing Planning and Implementation, Promotion*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media