Transforming Online Complaints into Positive Word-of-Mouth with Webcare

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Abstract

The present research develops and tests a theory explaining the effectiveness of implicit and explicit direct requests from a company embedded in webcare responses to change negative reviews (NWOM) into positive word-of-mouth (PWOM). Based on three scenario-based online experiments with between-subjects designs (n1 = 293, n2 = 349 and n3 = 424), this work offers three important findings: First, explicit requests lead to a higher intention to change the negative review to the benefit of the company compared to implicit requests. Second, it is through the perceived legitimacy that the request influences revision intentions. Third, boundary conditions such as problem stability and post-recovery satisfaction that make the request (un-)effective should be considered. These studies show that, contrary to popular belief, the negative publicity generated by public complaints is not inevitable and can be turned into an asset for the company by simply asking.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Customer Relationship Management and Customer Satisfaction, Electronic Commerce and Internet Marketing*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media