

Determining online community engagement based on diversity communication

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Abstract

An increasing focus on diversity and inclusion initiatives can be observed in the marketplace with varying success in terms of consumer response. Online communities create a virtual space where consumers can interact independent of their self in the offline world. This creates an opportunity to embrace diversity, but also a challenge of including the plethora of personas in the digital space. Our research focuses on the role of attracting new members to an online community as well as the engagement of these new members. To this end, we conducted an online survey experiment with 3000 consumers across six European countries. We find that explicit diversity communication increases interest to join the online community. Importantly, the increased interest in joining also increased engagement behavior with digital content. We contribute to the literature by showing that community diversity only indirectly affects engagement behaviour. We account for differences in consumers' diversity orientation, which support our overall findings that consumers value diversity in the digital space. An attractive online community offering enhances engagement, irrespective of the degree of diversity.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Services*

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