

The Impact of Digital Divergence on Customer Responses in Digital Service Interactions

Paula Liebig

University of Cologne

Franziska Völckner

University of Cologne

Martin Fritze

Zeppelin University Friedrichshafen

Cite as:

Liebig Paula, Völckner Franziska, Fritze Martin (2025), The Impact of Digital Divergence on Customer Responses in Digital Service Interactions. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (124103)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



The Impact of Digital Divergence on Customer Responses in Digital Service Interactions

Abstract

In digital service interactions, the digital appearance of customers and service representatives may differ due to personal preferences (e.g., camera on or off) or technical restrictions (e.g., device used). For example, a customer has their camera switched on during a video call, while the service representative has their camera switched off. The authors refer to this phenomenon as digital divergence. Across six studies, the authors show that digital divergence negatively affects customer satisfaction, using study contexts ranging from video calls to virtual reality environments. This negative effect occurs due to a lower level of shared reality, i.e., a lower commonality of internal states, when digital divergence is present. Strengthening instrumental value, i.e., the customers' perception that the service representative is well-suited, mitigates the negative effect of digital divergence on shared reality. The authors offer managerial implications for digital service interactions.

Keywords: customer service, shared reality, digital divergence

Track: Service Marketing & Service Innovation