

Aging and consumer reaction to word of mouth

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Abstract

Amid today's aging population, with older consumers spending twice as much time online as their younger counterparts, understanding their response to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is increasingly relevant. Four studies explore this phenomenon by drawing on self-control theory and youth age, which captures one's tendency to feel younger. Study 1 shows that as consumers age they rely less on eWOM. However, Study 2 reveals that feeling younger mitigates older consumers' skepticism toward eWOM by increasing their sense of control. Studies 3 and 4 focus on this consumer group by showing that situationally inducing older consumers to feel younger using scenarios or communication cues activates the predicted control mechanism, increasing their reliance on eWOM. These findings contribute to the psychology of consumer aging and influenceability and offer actionable insights for businesses and policymakers seeking to effectively engage this growing consumer segment in the online environment.

Keywords: aging, sense of control, eWOM

Track: Consumer Behavior