

Virtual Service Agents' influence on General Consumers' Perceptions of Inclusion

Christopher Cunliffe

Aarhus University

Anne Peschel

Aarhus University

Susanne Pedersen

Aarhus University

Lina Jacobsen

Aarhus University/MAPP Centre

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Abstract

Representation of marginalised groups in marketing is important to foster inclusion also in a digital context. Virtual service agents can be designed to represent marginalised or general consumer groups, but their effect on perceived inclusion is so far unclear. We conduct an online survey experiment (n=800) comparing how virtual service agents, representing marginalised (vs. general) consumers, influences general consumers' perceived inclusion at brand, market, and societal levels. We show that working with virtual service agents representing marginalised consumers, enhances perceived inclusion of the brand, the specific market, and the society towards marginalised consumers. However, general consumers do not feel more included themselves at any level. The research highlights the role of companies in shaping perceived inclusion at different levels (i.e., brand, market, societal level) and therefore its potential as a strategic tool for service marketing.

Track: Service Marketing & Service Innovation