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A Comparative Study of Online Forums in E-Commerce as a Customer Service Tool
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Abstract:
We investigate the communication occurring in the online forums that provide support to consumers of mobile phones and MP3 music players, products that garner a very large number of consumers worldwide. Unlike previous research, our study includes online forums that are publicly available to general consumers and include web sites owned and operated by retailers, manufacturers of the two consumer products, mobile telephone service carriers, and non-affiliated third parties. In addition, participants of the online forums in our study are from diverse geographical locations, including the U.S., European, and other countries. We developed a two-phase data collection procedure to thoroughly capture communication activities on these forums. Our comparative analysis allows us to extend the results from past studies to the realm of electronic commerce and gain additional insights into the nature and effectiveness of using online forums as a customer service tool.