Changing Minds: Evidence of Social Conformity in Evaluations of Web Design

Emergent Research Forum Paper

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Abstract

Despite the large array of behavioral phenomena that have been linked to the desire for social conformity, the willingness to engage in such behavior in the context of web interface design evaluations has attracted very little attention in information systems research. This paper therefore reports on the progress of a study aimed at investigating the role of ex post facto social influence on evaluations of the quality of a web interface design. Using a controlled, randomized experiment involving 854 subjects, three different web interfaces, and five interface design characteristics, the preliminary findings reveal that information provided to subjects about the opinions of others can cause those subjects to revise their own initial web interface evaluations, such that their revised ratings more closely conform with those of the group. The observed effects are particularly pronounced among younger subjects and among subjects whose initial ratings differ widely from those of the group.

Keywords

Social conformity, web interface design, interface evaluation