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ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT IN VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Virtual communities have been growing in the last two decades and have become an important business tool for various purposes. This paper studied the relationships among three constructs—conflict, dissonance, and engagement—in their interaction with one another in virtual communities. Using dissonance as a mediating variable, the relationship between conflict and engagement was analyzed using data collected from 327 virtual community members. The results suggest that conflict has a positive influence on both dissonance and engagement. Dissonance was also positively associated with engagement. To confirm the findings and to fully understand the effect of conflict, more research is needed. For operators of virtual communities and their associated businesses, the most significant implication is that the existence of conflict may heighten the level of engagement. This study is the first step in understanding the relationship between dissonance, perceived conflict, and engagement in the context of virtual communities.