

MARKETING COLLOQUIA

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Creativity in Open Innovation Contests: How Seeing Others' Ideas Can Harm or Help Your Creative Performance

ABSTRACT: Public open innovation contests are becoming an increasingly popular way for firms to generate new ideas. In this article, we investigate how seeing others' prior ideas influences the creative performance of individuals and how firms can improve idea presentation in contests to get more and better ideas. Based on five experimental studies, we first show that seeing numerous competitive prior ideas will harm creative performance. Exposure to an increasing number of prior ideas competitively presented reduces an individual's feelings of competence and resulting ability to generate original ideas. Based on these results, we investigate alternative ways to present prior ideas in open innovation contests including categorizing or restricting the display of prior ideas. Presenting prior ideas in categories facilitates their processing and reduces individuals' difficulty to distinguish their own ideas from the prior ones, increasing felt competence. We optimize the user interface of an open innovation contest platform based on these results and find that both a restricted and categorized interface significantly increase the number and originality of ideas suggested. These results offer viable ways to improve realized innovation outcomes merely by changing how prior ideas are presented in contests.