

Marketing Colloquia

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Where: 741 JMHH

When: 3:00 PM to 4:20 PM

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Administration

Product Ideation in Social Networks

ABSTRACT: Marketers are increasingly using online product ideation communities whereby consumers suggest and discuss new product ideas and how existing products can be improved. Participants in these communities are, in essence, connected to each other in social networks that allow them to access each other's ideas. This paper examines what happens when individuals ideate interdependently by focusing on how the structure of a consumer's network of "inspirations" (other consumers) can affect their own ability to generate innovative ideas. While it may be beneficial to be connected to many other consumers because they provide one with many sources of inspiration (degree), this may not always be the case and depends on how densely interconnected one's sources of inspiration are (clustering). Across six experiments involving real-time product ideation in social networks and covering three different product categories, the authors show that having more sources of inspiration (higher degree) only helps one's ability to generate innovative product ideas when their network neighbors are relatively independent of each other (lower clustering or sparser ego-network). This is because clustering makes individuals more interdependent, which in turn makes it more likely that their ideas socially converge to a narrowly defined set of concepts, which stifles creativity. Further, clustering makes it easier for mediocre, low-innovativeness ideas to spread.