

WHEN POST EXCLUSION BEHAVIORS ELICIT PRIDE: THE ROLE OF EXCLUSION TYPE

QUANDO O COMPORTAMENTO PÓS EXCLUSÃO GERA ORGULHO: O EFEITO DO TIPO DE EXCLUSÃO

ÁREA TEMÁTICA: MARKETING

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Resumo

De acordo com a literatura, os eventos de exclusão social prejudicam a necessidade de pertencer aos humanos. A mesma coisa acontece quando uma marca exclui um membro da marca da comunidade em uma interação comercial. Esse evento de exclusão provavelmente desencadeará um comportamento subsequente afim de regular o estado emocional negativo e tentar recuperar a conexão social com outras pessoas. Dado que existem dois tipos de eventos de exclusão (ser rejeitado ou ser ignorado), este ensaio explora como diferentes comportamentos subsequentes ajudam os consumidores a lidar com emoções negativas, regulando seus sentimentos de orgulho, dependendo do tipo de exclusão. Propomos que os consumidores rejeitados por uma comunidade de marcas despertarão orgulho autêntico usando comportamentos de conformidade, enquanto indivíduos ignorados despertarão orgulho arrogante ao adotar comportamentos de não conformidade.

Palavras-chave: exclusão social; orgulho; comunidade de marca; emoções auto conscientes.

Abstract

According to past literature, social exclusion events hurt humans need of belonging. The same thing happens when a brand excludes a community brand member in a commercial interaction. This exclusion event will most likely trigger a subsequent behavior to regulate the negative emotional state and to attempt regain social connection with others. Given that there are two types of exclusion events (i.e. being rejected and being ignored), this essay explores how different subsequent behaviors help consumers to cope with negative emotions by regulating their feelings of pride depending on the exclusion type. We theorize that consumers rejected from a brand community will elicit authentic pride by using conformity behaviors whereas ignored individuals will elicit hubristic pride by adopting non-conformity behaviors.

Keywords: social exclusion; pride; brand community; self-conscious emotions

1. Introduction

Social connection is an inherent human need. Individuals need to connect with others and belong to groups (Mead, Baumeister, Stillman, Rawn, & Vohs, 2010). Examples of social groups in marketing are brand communities. These communities are a type of consumer's association that has a brand as its center (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). For instance, Harley Davidson is a brand that has a strong community of users, which interact among themselves and the brand as well. Being a Harley owner comes with a lifestyle; community members have their own language and symbols, that together becomes a strong culture, full of meaning around the brand.

Brand communities can be initiated either by consumers or by the brand. Since firm-initiated communities must have a greater effort to engage members and gain consumer loyalty, one of their strategies is to hold selectivity tight. That is, some firm-initiated communities choose to exclude a portion of potential consumers in order to maintain an exclusivity status (Wang & Ding, 2017). It is already known that social exclusion put individuals in a negative affective state. It hurts fundamental human needs, such as the sense of belonging and meaningful life, power and control. Moreover, socially excluded individuals tend to restore their self-esteem and sense of belonging through a variety of behaviors (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009; Lee & Shrum, 2013).

After a social exclusion event in a brand community there will be a subsequent behavior to help consumers cope with their negative emotions and feel better. Considering that this behavior could be in conformity or non-conformity with community norms, we study in which situations it elicits pride as an emotional state. Pride is a positive self-conscious emotion that arises in response to a social event. For individuals, feeling pride means that important goals have been achieved, which contributes to a genuine sense of self-esteem (Lewis, 2016; Tracy & Robins, 2007) and that can be helpful to repair the loss of those fundamental needs affected by social exclusion. In fact, finding situations where social exclusion could lead to pride feelings could also help consumers in the maintenance of their well-being.

For this matter, the present research will discuss pride as coping emotion after a community member being either rejected or ignored by a brand. We argue that ignored individuals will elicit higher levels of hubristic pride in non-conformity conditions. That is, when ignored, consumers respond with refractoriness they tend to feel hubristic pride. Furthermore, rejected individuals will elicit higher levels of authentic pride in conformity conditions. In other words, after rejection consumers try re-affiliation and tend to feel authentic pride.

This work contributes to the literature of social exclusion, once discuss emotional responses to subsequent behaviors after an exclusion event. Also, it adds to brand community literature for looking to firm-initiated community's selectivity strategies. Finally, brand managers can also use the present essay to incentive conformity behaviors in order to maintain excluded individuals as "brand tourists" that do not pertain to their community, but admires it and spread positive word of mouth (Bellezza & Keinan, 2014).

2. Theoretical background

In this section we will develop our background on social exclusion, brand communities and pride as well as the relation between pride and exclusion type.

2.1 Social Exclusion and Brand Communities

It is already known that people are social beings and have a fundamental need to belong. Thus, forming and maintaining social relationships are driven by survival and safety needs. In the marketing context, this belonging need could be addressed through relationship ties between the consumer and the brand. Membership clubs, affiliation cards, football teams supporters, and brand communities are some examples (Lee & Shrum, 2013; Mead et al., 2010; Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, & Knowles, 2009).

Specifically, brand communities are a type of consumers' association that is centered around a brand. It can be defined as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001 p. 412). That is, it refers to a group of brand users that maintain relationships between themselves and the brand as well (Lin, Wang, Chang, & Lin, 2017). Furthermore, a brand community is characterized by having a "consciousness of a kind", rituals, traditions and moral responsibility with the community as a whole (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Brand communities can be initiated by both consumers and firms. Even though firm initiated brand communities have weaker brand loyalty and community commitment in the beginning, they still have a good potential to increase brand value and willingness to buy brand products. However, as a mean to achieve that potential, some brands make their community restricted from the general public. That is, there are brands that choose to make their community exclusive, for selected members only (Wang & Ding, 2017).

For instance, *Nubank* is a Brazilian startup that provides financial services. It is not a bank and provides a free of charge credit and cash card. As inclusive as it sounds, *Nubank* does not approve every consumer that asks for an account. In the startup phase, an individual need to be referred by other consumers that already have the account to then go through an analysis process. A few weeks later, the individual received by email the response to their solicitation.

In this context, occasions where a brand needs to select the community members, either by declining participation or by discontinuing the offering of certain product (service) category, could be considered social exclusion scenarios. As previous literature has already stated, social exclusion threatens human's inherent needs to belong, causing a variety of behavioral responses, including aggressive and anti-social behaviors (Lee & Shrum, 2013). For instance, Mead et al., (2010) have found that social exclusion could increase risk-taking behaviors (e.g. use of illicit drugs) as well as promote strategic spending as an attempt to re-affiliate.

Moreover, past research has also found that socially excluded individuals increase charitable behavior, conspicuous consumption (Lee & Shrum, 2013) and attachment to social media (David & Roberts, 2017). Additionally, it demonstrates that those individuals have a stronger preference for anthropomorphized brands (Peng, Wen, & Levy, 2016) and a higher propensity to switching behavior (Su, Jiang, Chen, & DeWall, 2017). Finally, a large part of extant research has shown that socially excluded individuals have a stronger need to re-affiliate, in order to repair lost social connections. In fact, social rejection is known to cause social pain and, consequently, the need to belong is heightened to heal the broken bond (Chester, DeWall, & Pond, 2016).

As social exclusion consistently hurts the fundamental need of belonging, it evokes negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, and fear (Molden et al., 2009). For this matter, there is further evidence demonstrating that social acceptance causes positive emotional states and social exclusion causes negative emotional states, ranging from upset to actual distress. Additionally, social exclusion could also contribute to feelings of low self-esteem (Blackhart et al., 2009).

Based on the premise that people need to maintain positive self-views and, consequently, positive emotional states, one can notice that an excluded individual will behave to cope with exclusion and recover their sense of belonging. To do that, this individual could have either conforming or non-conforming behaviors. Conformity “refers to the act of changing one’s behavior to match the responses of others” (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004 p. 606). That is, once an individual is socially excluded, he can match his behavior to the referred group in order to try re-affiliation. Following this rationale, non-conforming behaviors are those that demonstrate group independence or insurgency against group norms/influence. Both conformity and non-conformity behaviors have advantages. While conformity tends to fulfill in-group and affiliation needs, non-conformity addresses higher uniqueness and individualization needs (Griskevicius, Goldstein, Mortensen, Cialdini, & Kenrick, 2006).

Even though there is a body of research showing social exclusion behavioral consequences, there still a lack of studies focused on consumers’ emotional state regulation after an exclusion event, especially when the exclusion comes from a brand rather than a person or a group of individuals (Wang & Ding, 2017). For instance, consider a scenario where a brand discontinues a category of products to eliminate a group of consumers from its community (e.g. Abercrombie & Fitch do not offer extra-large clothes sizes). As previously stated, the excluded consumers will either have conformity behaviors and try to reconnect or they will have non-conformity behaviors and try to differentiate themselves from that brand community. But in which situation will the consumer better regulate his positive emotional state? Is there a condition when this consumer will feel proud of his action? For this matter, we theorize that conformity (vs. non-conformity) behaviors in response to a brand community exclusion will elicit pride depending on the type of exclusion suffered.

2.2 The Role of Type of Exclusion and Pride

Pride is a positive self-conscious emotion that occurs as a response to success and achievement. That is, pride arises when an individual completes an important goal and is related to a specific action (Lewis, 2016). According to Tracy and Robins (2007) Pride contributes to the maintenance of positive self-esteem. Furthermore, the authors explain that pride could be explored in two different types: hubristic and authentic. Hubristic pride is associated with a negative image of arrogance and superiority; it is attributed to intelligence, specific ability and/or personality traits. On the other hand, authentic pride results from a positive achievement of doing something right; it is associated with effort (Huang, Dong, & Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Tracy & Robins, 2007).

Because pride is a self-conscious emotion, it commonly arises in response to the positive outcome of social event (or context). In order to elicit pride, an event must be congruent with the individual’s self-view. Moreover, pride enhances one’s self-worth and encourages future behaviors on that same nature (McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014; Tangney, 1999). Following this rationale, one might say that social exclusion events tend to “hurt” an

individual's pride, once it is a negative social outcome that devalues their global self. Consequently, social exclusion events also tend to decrease one's self-esteem and self-worth as well (Blackhart et al., 2009). For this matter, what behaviors would lead consumers to enhance their pride emotional state in order to restore their positive self-view?

We argue that the subsequent behavior (conformity vs. non-conformity) after a social exclusion will help the consumer to elicit pride. Looking closely, social exclusion threatens four fundamental human needs, namely belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence (Lee & Shrum, 2013; Molden et al., 2009) and we theorize that these needs could be restored as consumers are in a prideful emotional state. For instance, Lee and Shrum (2013) have found that socially excluded consumers bolster their fundamental needs by either helping others and donating or by having conspicuous consumption, which is also means to increase one's pride (McFerran et al., 2014).

However, as previously stated, pride is a two-faceted emotion and we argue that the type of pride (authentic or hubristic) that a consumer will elicit after a subsequent behavior in response to a social exclusion will depend on the type of the exclusion suffered. Past research suggests that there could be a different experience of exclusion. For instance, Molden et al., (2009) posit that there is a difference between being rejected and being ignored. On one hand, the authors explain that being rejected is the presence of negative feedback and it is a more explicit exclusion. On the other hand, being ignored represents the absence of positive feedback; it is unilateral and a more implicit type of exclusion.

Furthermore, it is also known that while being rejected increases motivation for reconnecting with others due to loss of self-esteem and sense of belonging, being ignored increases motivation to regain the attention of others because it decreases power, control and sense of meaningful existence (Lee & Shrum, 2013). That said, we argue that ignored consumers will elicit higher scores of hubristic pride when having non-conforming (vs. conforming) behaviors. As ignored individuals try to impress others to reestablish their efficacy needs (power, control, and meaningful existence), we believe that non-conforming behaviors will help them to increase perceived status, autonomy and control through individualization and uniqueness signaling, outside the community (Griskevicius et al., 2006; Huang et al., 2014). Consequently, they would increase hubristic pride, which is attributed to personal ability and characteristics. On the other hand, rejected individuals will elicit higher authentic pride when having conformity (vs. non-conformity) behaviors. In this case, conformity behaviors would help rejected consumers in trying to (re)gain membership with the community and recover relational needs (self-esteem and sense of belonging). As a conforming behavior represents an effort to reconnect with others, it would elicit higher authentic pride (Lee & Shrum, 2013; Tracy & Robins, 2007). Therefore, we propose that:

P1: Ignored individuals will feel higher levels of **hubristic pride** in a **non-conformity** condition

P2: Rejected individuals will feel higher levels of **authentic pride** in a **conformity** condition.

3. Conclusion

The need to belong that is inherent to human being is also extended to the relationships between brands and consumers (Wang & Ding, 2017; Lin et al., 2017). Brand communities are a concrete example of consumer affiliation that grows around a brand. These communities could be formed and managed either by the brand or by the group of consumers. In brand managed communities, the brand has the power to include or exclude members (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Wang & Ding, 2017).

Past research has demonstrated that social exclusion events of any kind lead to negative emotions and re-affiliation attempts in order to regulate the individual’s emotional state (Molden et al., 2009). Given that there are differences in social exclusion events (being rejected vs. being ignored; Mead et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2013) we become interested in investigating the role of this differences in subsequent behaviors. Specifically, we want to explore when these subsequent behaviors could elicit a positive emotion, regulating a negative mood state that is generated after an exclusion event.

For this matter, this essay proposes that social exclusion type (being ignored vs. being rejected) determines coping behaviors that leads to different pride levels after a brand initiated exclusion event. Given a situation when a brand cannot respond to a community plea, we suggest that brand managers should prefer directly reject community members over ignoring them. That is because ignored individuals are expected to cope with noisy subsequent behaviors to restore a positive emotional state (hubristic pride), for instance, complaining in social media. Conversely, rejected members tend to respond with re-affiliation attempts, also to seek a positive emotional state (authentic pride), for example, buying a brand product.

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