Perceived Online Community Support, Member Relations, and Commitment: Differences between Posters and Lurkers
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Highlights
- We explore the influences of perceived online community support and member relations on commitment.
- Perceived online community support has different effects on commitment between posters and lurkers.
- Trust positively moderates the effect of perceived freedom of expression on commitment among lurkers.
- The norm of reciprocity negatively moderates the effect of perceived freedom of expression on commitment among lurkers.

Abstract: Based on commitment theory and organization support theory, this study explores the effects of perceived online community support on member commitment and how these effects are moderated by members’ social relations in terms of posters and lurkers. The results indicate that perceived online community support had different effects on commitment between posters and lurkers. Trust was found to positively moderate the effect of perceived freedom of expression on commitment among lurkers; on the contrary, the norm of reciprocity was found to negatively moderate the effect of perceived freedom of expression on commitment among lurkers. The theoretical and practical implications are also discussed.

Keywords: perceived community support, trust, reciprocity, commitment, posters, lurkers

1. Introduction

With the prevalence of Internet technology currently, social media has changed the means of information sharing and social interaction.1-3 Social media refers to certain Internet-based applications that build on the Web 2.0 technology and encourage the creation and exchange of user-generated contents (UGCs).4 Examples include online communities, blogs, microblogs (e.g., Twitter), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), social shopping sites (e.g., Amazon), Wikipedia, and other content-sharing sites (e.g., YouTube). Facilitated by the universal use of social media, online communities have rapidly developed into an important form of human organization.5 Online communities serve as both communication platforms and social networks where people holding the same interest can share their knowledge and participate in interactive activities with one another to exchange the desired benefits.6

Despite the rapid growth of the online community, research has shown that members in online communities have a high rate of turnover4 and members have much choice to join and quit the
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