

Sharing Personal Information for Connection: The Effect of Social Exclusion on Consumer Self-Disclosure to Brands

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Abstract : Most extant research on consumer privacy concerns and their willingness to share personal data has focused on contextual factors (e.g., types of information collected, type of compensation) that lead to consumers' personal information disclosure. Unfortunately, the literature lacks a clear understanding of how consumers' incidental psychological needs may influence consumers' decisions to share their personal information with companies or brands. In this research, we investigate how social exclusion, which is an increasing societal problem, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, leads to increased information disclosure intentions for consumers. Specifically, we propose and find that when consumers become socially excluded, their desire for social connection increases, and this desire leads to a greater willingness to disclose their personal information with firms. The motivation to form and maintain interpersonal relationships is one of the most fundamental human needs, and many researchers have found that deprivation of belongingness has negative consequences. Given the negative effects of social exclusion and the universal need to affiliate with others, people respond to exclusion with a motivation for social reconnection, resulting in various cognitive and behavioral consequences, such as paying greater attention to social cues and conforming to others. Here, we propose personal information disclosure as another form of behavior that can satisfy such social connection needs. As self-disclosure can serve as a strategic tool in creating and developing social relationships, those who have been socially excluded and thus have greater social connection desires may be more willing to engage in self-disclosure behavior to satisfy such needs. We conducted four experiments to test how feelings of social exclusion can influence the extent to which consumers share their personal information with brands. Various manipulations and measures were used to demonstrate the robustness of our effects. Through the four studies, we confirmed that (1) consumers who have been socially excluded show greater willingness to share their personal information with brands and that (2) such an effect is driven by the excluded individuals' desire for social connection. Our findings shed light on how the desire for social connection arising from exclusion influences consumers' decisions to disclose their personal information to brands. We contribute to the consumer disclosure literature by uncovering a psychological need that influences consumers' disclosure behavior. We also extend the social exclusion literature by demonstrating that exclusion influences not only consumers' choice of products but also their decision to disclose personal information to brands.

Keywords : consumer-brand relationship, consumer information disclosure, consumer privacy, social exclusion

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