How experience-driven community identification generates trust and engagement

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptualmodel of how technology-enabled virtual experiences contribute to community members' online trust and engagement through inducing their community identification. It also seeks to examine two types of social influence in the virtual community:
within-community normative pressure and normative pressure from outside the community.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors employed the structural equation modelling approach to estimate a conceptual model using survey data from participants in the World of Warcraft online game community.

Findings – The results mainly supported the hypotheses. It was shown that three types of experience could influence community members' engaging behaviour through an increase in community identification and community trust. More importantly it was found that normative pressure from outside the community exhibits a significant and inverted U-shaped relationship with online
community engagement, while within-community normative pressure had a positive relationship with community engagement. No evidence was found to support the inverted U-shaped relationship between within-community normative pressure and community members' engagement.

Originality/value – From perspectives of virtual experience, social identity theory, social trust, and susceptibility to normative influence, the current study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the process through which community members are willing to share what they

know, participate in collective actions, and spend their time with strangers in a virtual space.