The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Department of Information Systems, Business Statistics and Operations Management

Seminar Announcement

Complementary or Substitutive? Low-Effort Content Production and High-Effort Knowledge Contribution in Online Q&A Communities: Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment

by

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Date	:	**24 October 2022 (Monday)**
Time	:	**4:00 pm - 5:30 pm**
Venue	:	**ISOM Conference Room 4047, LSK Business Building**

Abstract: We study a novel strategy deployed by user-generated content (UGC) platforms to address under provision. This strategy involves the use of an additional low-barrier content curation tool that allows users to post low-effort content distinct from the high-effort content that is standard on the platforms. It remains theoretically ambiguous whether the introduction of this low-barrier content tool complements or cannibalizes the contribution of high-effort content. By leveraging a quasi-experiment on a large Chinese online question-and-answer (Q&A) platform, we identify the causal effects of the low-barrier content tool on incentives for users to contribute high-effort content (i.e., answers to others' questions) in a difference-in-differences framework. We find that the use of this low-barrier tool complements the contributed answers; adopters of the newly introduced low-barrier content tool increase their volume of contributed answers without compromising the effort spent on each answer. Further analyses suggest that the reason for this complementary effect might be that the additional content tool increases users' engagement levels on the platform and prompts them to consume more knowledge content, increasing their incentives to contribute answers. Additional analyses show that this complementary effect is more pronounced for new users and users who mainly use the new tool to post knowledge-related content instead of personal, casual content. Our results have novel implications for platform designs and interventions to motivate users to contribute UGC.

Bio: Yingpeng Zhu is a PhD candidate in Information Systems, Department of ISOM at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His primary research interests include user generated content, digital platform, AI and human interaction, and email marketing. His research methodologies include econometrics analyses, natural and field experiments, machine learning, and text mining. His work is currently under review in academic journals such as Information Systems Research, Management Science, and Marketing Science.