

The Value of Social Media Customer Support During the Pandemic

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Abstract

Many companies are utilizing social media as the primary avenue for customer service during the pandemic. However, how customers' behaviors and interactions with customer service agents on social media are impacted by the lockdowns has not been well understood. In this study, we examine the impact of lockdowns and physical distancing on changes in customers' behaviors, such as emotional expressions in tweets and customers' satisfaction with social media customer service. Using a difference-in-differences research design, we find that with the lockdowns and physical distancing, customers expressed more negative emotions when tweeting the company they were having issues with. Surprisingly, compared to before the pandemic period, customers' emotional expressions became more positive and they were more likely to express their satisfaction after interacting with customer service agents. Interestingly, our findings reveal that gender differences exist in these scenarios. We also discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

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