Emily Hedlund & Tyler Simko

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J. Nathan Matias

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Power Analysis for An Online Engagement Experiment

Online communities provide an important discussion space in the twenty-first century; from sports to politics to more obscure interests, there’s an online community for almost every topic imaginable. Thus, making everyone feel welcome is of the utmost importance to those who moderate these communities. The goal of this report is to discover new methods of encouraging participation in online discussions; specifically, we aim to explore whether or not “welcome messages” pinned to the top of a thread will increase engagement as measured by participant comments.

Each post in the community will be randomly assigned a welcome message or not. Two metrics will be used to measure engagement: total number of comments and number of comments posted by newcomers. A previous study found that such welcome messages increased newcomer comments by 38% and overall comments by 10%. Thus, in future experiments, though both types of comments should increase, we expect to see a stronger effect on newcomer comments than overall comments. % chance of finding the smallest effect you want to be able to observe?

