

Exploring the Sense of Belonging, Participation and Trust in Online Communities: A comparison between Spain and United States.

Explorando el sentido de pertenencia, la participación y la confianza en las comunidades online: Una comparación entre España y los Estados Unidos.

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ABSTRACT

Online Communities (OC) have become an important source of information for consumers. With their success, many companies have interest in introducing forms of online communities in their marketing strategy in order to improve their brand awareness. The influence and the use of these online communities can vary depending on different aspects (e.g. type of person, trust, type of community, etc.), standing out the culture and the nationality of the users. Since there are many variables affecting this issue, the main objective of this study is comparing the way different important variables in the use of online communities (trust, sense of belonging, participation, and influence in the purchase) react depending on the country the user is from, focusing on Spain and United States. Data was collected from 413 users of online communities from both countries who are members of OCs, using a structured questionnaire. The findings suggest that consumers from both countries are more similar than expected, showing high levels in all of the variables studied, but there are differences considering trust and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Online Communities, Trust, Online Comments, Participation, Sense of Belonging.

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RESUMEN

Las comunidades online (CO) se han convertido en una importante fuente de información para los consumidores. Debido a su éxito, muchas empresas tienen interés en introducirlas en sus estrategias de marketing con el fin de mejorar el conocimiento de sus marcas por parte del consumidor. La influencia y el uso de estas comunidades online puede variar dependiendo de distintos aspectos (p. ej. tipo de persona, confianza, tipo de comunidad, etc.), destacando la cultura y la nacionalidad de sus usuarios. Puesto que hay muchas variables que afectan al usuario de CO, el objetivo principal de este estudio es comparar la forma en que diferentes variables de importancia en el uso de estas comunidades (confianza, sentido de pertenencia, participación e influencia en la compra) actúan en función del país del usuario, centrándose la investigación en España y los Estados Unidos. Se recogieron datos de 413 miembros de CO de ambos países, utilizando un cuestionario estructurado. Los hallazgos sugieren que los usuarios de ambos países son más similares de lo esperado, mostrando altos niveles en todas las variables estudiadas, pero existiendo diferencias respecto a su nivel de confianza y a su sentido de pertenencia.

Palabras clave: Comunidades Online, Confianza, Comentarios Online, Participación, Sentido de Pertenencia.

Received on: 2016.04.29

Approved on: 2016.06.23

Evaluated by a double blind review system

1. INTRODUCTION

The way consumers relate with each other and with businesses have changed in the last years because of Internet and social networks. The arrival of new technologies and interactive applications, known as Web 2.0 or Social Web, allow an easier way of publishing and distributing contents as well as creating online communities and social networks (Gómez-Borja, Lorenzo-Romero, & Alarcón-Del Amo, 2013). The term Web 2.0 refers to a new form of web collaboration platform to benefit the collective intelligence (O'Reilly, 2005). This new context allows consumers to search for information, learn about products or get involved with brands (Crespo & Pereira, 2014). Consumers can be in constant contact anytime and anywhere with companies and other consumers.

There are many definitions of online community, also known as virtual communities,

but there isn't a consensus about its meaning (Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Aguilar-Illescas, & Molinillo, 2016). All of them consider that the participation of the user is voluntary; there are not any kinds of time or space constraints; they are focused on a topic; relationships are set on the Internet; and they generate a sense of belonging among users (e. g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2011; Lin, 2007; Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon, 2010). Moreover, there are three elements that exist in any community: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of duty to the community and its members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). According to Ridings, Gefen, and Arinze (2002), online community refers to places in which groups of people, with common interests and practices, share knowledge by communicating regularly over a period of time using a common mechanism on the Internet.

This new tool does not only affect individuals, but also affects the market and the ways in which companies act towards their customers due to the ease of seeking information (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Many companies have interest in introducing communities as part of their marketing strategy. They realized it might provide them with the advantage to reach their target market and to respond to the consumer's need in a faster and more efficient way compared to conventional marketing (Dargel, 2011). According to Constantinides and Fountain (2008), companies use Web 2.0 to create a direct and personalized one-on-one marketing as part of their direct marketing strategy. Thus, many brands have decided to establish a marketer-created community to set up a long lasting relationship with their customers while empowered consumers established their consumer-created community to share information with each other. Domínguez-Casas, Gutiérrez-Arranza and San José-Cabezudo (2013) define online brand communities as a group of people who are related to each other over the Internet in accordance with the interest that process to a particular brand. These interactions can be productive both to consumers and companies: consumers join to online communities focused on the brand because they want to share information and knowledge, set relationships with other consumers, buy products, get a better status or because they identify themselves with the brand (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Sicilia & Palazón, 2010; Sung et al., 2010); companies can reach higher levels of consumer loyalty and get consumer information, in addition to other benefits as brand strengthening, WOM and cost reduction (Ewing, Wagstaff & Powell, 2013; Flavián & Guinalú, 2004; Laroche et al., 2012; Marzocchi, Morandin & Bergami, 2013), or co-

create products in markets where consumers have an important control (Morais, 2014). Thereby, companies establish online communities regarding their brands to provide a major venue for consumers to: (1) share information and personal experience about products or services, (2) solve problems, and (3) interact with other consumers or company agents (Jung, Kim, & Kim, 2014; Parra-Azor & López-López, 2014). On the other hand, companies use online communities as a way to extract marketing knowledge (De Valck, Van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009). However, it should be noted that online communities would be effective if the users believe in the information provided and feel involved in them (Huang & Farn, 2009).

In this context, cultural differences among users of diverse countries may affect the way they interact and trust in other consumers and in the brand (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016). Certain researches have recently studied how cultural differences affect the way consumers behave. For example, Obal and Kunz (2016) investigate how consumers from Asia act differently to Northamericans when they trust in online experts, and Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger, Bobvnický and Bauer (2016) analyze the differences between European consumers in relation with their intention to visit a place. In online communities, Posey, Lowry, Roberts and Ellis (2010) showed that French participants were more individualists than British participants of online communities; and Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling and Stuedemann (2006) found differences in knowledge sharing among Chinese, Brazilian and Russian users of online communities of practice. Nevertheless, we have not found any paper that investigates how users from US and Spain act in online communities. The reason of comparing these two nationalities is because both are developed countries with high levels of Internet users but different cultures. Therefore, the following research question is considered: how different are users from United States and Spain regarding trust, feeling part of the community, participating and using reviews and comments of other users?

The rest of this paper is organized into 5 sections: first, we introduce the variables considered in the comparison; then, the methodology used to collect the data is described, followed by the results; finally, conclusions and recommendations for practitioners, in addition to the limitations and suggestions for future research, are commented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Members typically get attached to the communities and persistently visit them and interact (Ridings et al., 2002). Sociability and sense of belonging are two major concepts that online communities support (Ba, 2001). Regarding that online communities gather individuals with common interests to make relationships, and also for economic exchange (Huang & Farn, 2009). Thereby, it serves both social and economic functions: the participants can build relationships and can also be a trading platform where sellers and buyers interact (Wu, Chen, & Chung, 2010). Huang and Farn (2009:4) expose that “prior studies from the perspective of social psychology propose that individuals’ motivations to join online communities includes needs for social integration (a sense of belonging), for help in achieving goals by obtaining information, for realizing economic exchanges, for status enhancement (by impressing others), and for entertainment”. These authors showed that different kinds of motivation may vary the level of participation, from lurkers to heavy users.

Customer reviews posted in online communities have more power as a marketing tool than expert product reviews (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). “These social network qualities coupled with the perceived credibility of consumer evaluations, make the online community a powerful platform for exploding consumer-to-consumer recommendations, for example, by means of viral marketing campaigns, i.e., using online consumer-to-consumer referrals as a means of multiplying the popularity of a brand, product, or company” (De Valck et al., 2009:44). Hence, online communities can help consumers to avoid risks in the relation with the brand (Wu et al., 2010).

For this reason, we will study how trust in the online community, influence of comments and reviews, participation and sense of belonging, vary depending on the nationality of the community user. Following, these variables are explained in an online community context.

2.1. Trust in online communities

Wu et al. (2010) define trust as the extent of which the depth and assurance of the participants’ feelings are based on inconclusive evidence. A participant develops trust between him/herself with a group of strangers that form a community (Ridings et al., 2002). The participant’s trust affects his or her commitment to the community (Wu et al., 2010), which in the end offers positive supports to the community itself (Ridings et al., 2002) through registering as one of the members. It should be noted that when a

member puts trust on another member, then the information from this person is being regarded as trustworthy (Rejón-Guardia, Sánchez-Fernández, & Muñoz-Leiva, 2013). Ba (2001) notes that when the members start relying on online communities, that is when they start to build trust. Trust can also be built through the confidence and satisfaction when the members' expectations are fulfilled (Wu et al., 2010).

Online communities focused on brands can be divided in two types: marketer-created and consumer-created communities (Jung et al., 2014; Martínez-López et al., 2016). Porter and Donthu (2008) note that the sponsor of the community can cultivate members' trust, as non-sponsored communities do, if they provide quality content and foster interaction and relationships with the sponsor and other members. However, members' trust in sponsored communities tends to be less than on consumer-created communities (Rejón-Guardia et al., 2013). In consonance, Ruiz de Maya, Sicilia and López-López (2010) indicate that most consumers consider the opinions of other consumers to be more credible than the ones provided by companies. Ridings et al. (2002) and Parra-Azor and López-López (2014) also point out that consumer-created communities are more trusted by users.

2.2. Comments and reviews

Individuals in online communities participate actively or passively in many conversations and then are easily influenced by others (Huang & Farn, 2009). Ruiz de Maya et al. (2010) defend that there is a direct influence between the opinions over a product and a customer's behavior. In scenarios with uncertainty the consumer is more likely to be influenced by the opinions of others, first consulting experts in the category and then other consumers (Rejón-Guardia et al., 2013). When they intend to use the information for their purchase, they carefully examine the posts of other members before making the final decision (Huang & Farn, 2009).

Some publications defend that negative comments are more influential, whereas other publications obtain results that confirm the opposite (Parra-Azor & López-López, 2014). Those who defend the positive comments as more influential are based on studies that show that a high level of consensus increases the persuasiveness of a positive message (Huang & Farn, 2009; Parra-Azor & López-López, 2014). Conversely, positive comments can also be harmful because of the suspicious comments written by sources with commercial purposes (Parra-Azor & López-López, 2014). On the other hand, the defenders of the negative comments as influential believe in what is called

“negative effect”, sustained by the idea that consumers are more influenced by the negative comments (Parra-Azor & López-López, 2014). According to King, Racherla and Bush (2014) negative comments have a greater influence if there is a larger amount of positive ones. By way of contrast, some studies indicate that negative comments are less informational because consumers can relate it to irrationality (King et al., 2014). In any case, Constantinides and Fountain (2008) confirm that customer reviews have a lot more power as a marketing tool than expert product reviews.

Another way of influencing is by voting useful and relevant reviews. Parra-Azor and López-López (2014) make a study of webs like Amazon and eBay, where members can mark a comment they see as relevant or useful. Amazon clients vote the comments depending on the usefulness perceived in relation with the purchase decision, helping the next consumer decide if the comment is reliable or not. King et al. (2014) confirms that moderately balanced reviews (with three ratings) help perceive the reviews better.

2.3. Participation

User participation is considered the most important goal of the community (Martínez-López et al., 2016), because of its important consequences (e. g. commitment, positive WOM, loyalty, etc.). Huang and Farn (2009) categorize online community members in three types: information shoppers, those who rarely post comments and have little confidence in others' information; advice onlookers, those who rarely post comments, yet they have more confidence in others' information; and advice providers, those who frequently comment their experiences but barely refer to others' comments. Information search is the basic motivation, which may enhance user's participation (Huang & Farn, 2009; Jung et al., 2014; Sicilia & Palazón, 2010; Sung et al., 2010; Zaglia, 2013).

Participation in the community could be achieved by monitoring viewer feedback and the highly positive feedback content (Jung et al., 2014). It is also a motivation when a participant receives an answer to his comment, being that the expected benefit. This action can strengthen the credibility and future confidence (Palazón, Sicilia, & Ruiz de Maya, 2014).

2.4 Sense of Belonging

Muñiz and Schau (2005), and Casaló, Flavián and Guinalú (2010a) explain that identification with a group has a positive influence on motivation to participate in relationships with other users. Interacting with others causes a sense of being connected (Jung et al., 2014). Hence, sense of belonging is an essential success key to support

online communities (Huang & Farn, 2009): the participation is higher for those individuals with more sense of belonging, leading to a greater credibility of the information. A sense of belonging is always vital for the conviction of the information exposed in an online community (Huang & Farn, 2009). Most of the participants in these communities have a strong commitment to the interests and values shared (Ba, 2001). Those with high commitment are the ones that have bigger feelings for the company and for maintaining relationships with it, being more likely to broadcast positive comments (Rejón-Guardia et al., 2013). Accordingly, sense of belonging and user participation are high related variables (Abfalter, Zaglia & Mueller, 2012; Casaló, Flavián & Guinalú, 2010b).

2.5 Comparison between Spain and US

Consumers act differently depending on their culture and nation (Matzler et al., 2016; Obal & Kunz, 2016). The comprehension of these differences and the capacity of adapting to them are critical for companies to provide the best information possible (King et al., 2014). The main objective of this research is to compare how users from US and Spain interact in online communities, exploring if there are differences between both countries regarding trust, comments, sense of belonging and participation. Next, we will show some information about Internet use in US and Spain, considering that there are no public researches that compare both countries in terms of social media use. According to Globalwebindex (2016), Spain is one of the countries with a higher level of social engagement (Internet users with a social media account), while US show a medium level of social engagement compared to other developed countries. On Amazon websites there are noticeable differences between reviewers in the U.K., Germany, Japan, and the U.S. (King et al., 2014). 81% of Americans say that thanks to the Internet, they feel better informed about products and services. In addition, 72% of Americans state that the Internet has let them share their ideas and connect with other users. Social networks are used by two-thirds of Internet users (Purcell & Rainie, 2014). On the other hand, 34% of the Spanish individuals claim to have written or participated in social network, becoming the most active Europeans (Palazón et al., 2014). 32% of them buy online (ONTSI, 2014), a low percentage compared to a 72% of online buyers in the US (Statista, 2015). In the U.S. 71% of the adults use other consumers' online comments for their purchasing decision and 42% trust them as a source of information (Parra-Azor & López-López, 2014). Social networks have gained such importance that

Americans spend 22% of their time online (Dargel, 2011).

Regarding this information, we can guess that US users may trust, comment, and interact with consumers and brand more than Spanish users, although Spanish users are more active in general.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data was collected from users of online communities from Spain and US, using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed in English and Spanish. At the first section of the questionnaire, we asked screening questions in order to confirm that they usually visit an online community concerning a brand (Huang & Farn, 2009; Ridings et al., 2002).

In the second section of the questionnaire, we asked the respondents questions related to the variables of interest in this study. These items were all adapted from previous studies and measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”). Trust was measured with three items used by authors as Jung et al. (2014), Parra-Azor and López-López (2014), Porter and Donthu (2008) and Ridings et al. (2002). Comments were measured with four items used by King et al. (2014), Parra-Azor and López-López (2014) and Ruiz De Maya et al. (2010). Sense of belonging was measured by only one item, used by authors as Ba (2001), Domínguez-Casas et al. (2013), Huang and Farn (2009), and Jung et al. (2014). Finally, participation was measured using two items following Cambra-Fierro, Melero-Polo, and Vázquez-Carrasco (2013), Jung et al. (2014), Palazón et al. (2014), and Ridings et al. (2002). In the third section, we asked the demographic profile of the respondents.

Links to both online questionnaires were given to university students from Spain and United States, which indicated to be users of online communities regarding brands. Subsequently, we indicated users to share the questionnaire link in the community in which they participated the most. This way, a snowball sampling was used. In total, 413 questionnaires were gathered and deemed valid after deleting questionnaires and those with individuals who were not members of any community concerning a brand. The data collection period was between March and May 2015. The data was statistically analyzed using SPSS, version 21.

As to the demographic profile of the sample, 207 respondents are from Spain and 206 from the United States, with a proportional distribution among women (N=218, 52.8%)

and men (N=195, 47.2%). In relation to age, its average value stood at 32.74 years (SD=13.02), conditioned by the high volume of university students.

4. RESULTS

First, we performed a univariate analysis. 91.3% of respondents affirmed that they have searched for information in an online community, and 69.5% considered themselves as an active user. Concerning trust, comments and reviews, participation and sense of belonging, their means are shown in table 1. In general, respondents showed high levels of trust, comments and reviews, and apologies and responses increase their participation, with punctuations over 4. On the other hand, although the mean of the item related to sense of belonging is 3.69, it is considerably lower than the rest, so respondents showed lower levels of sense of belonging.

Following the univariate analysis, we use the t-Student test in order to study the differences between US and Spain regarding the items proposed. This test allows the comparison of two groups of data, detecting if they are significantly different. First, we conducted the statistical of Levene, which confirms if variances are equal (>0.05) or not (<0.05). In six items we can assume equal variances, while in four are different (trust in marketer-created online communities, positive comments are influential, comments voted as more relevant have a greater influence and useful reviews are more influential). Afterwards, we performed the t-Student test. Results between both countries were different concerning the following items (sig <0.05): trust in marketer-created online communities, trust in consumer-created online communities and feel sense of belonging in online communities (see table 1).

Hence, the main differences between US and Spain focused on a higher trust in both online communities, marketer-created and consumer-created, and in a more important sense of belonging in US. In any case, results demonstrate that US members of online communities concerning brands give higher punctuations to all of the items, showing more trust and sense of belonging, and reacting more positively to other users' comments and reviews, and to apologizes and company answers to their comments.

According to the results, we can answer the research question of this investigation: US and Spain users differ in how they feel part of the community and trust in both markerter-created and consumer-created communities, but they don't have significant differences in terms of participation, comments, and reviews. In any case, US users

show higher levels of every variable.

Table 1 - Comparison of means and t-Student between Spain and US.

Question	Total	Spain	US	t-Student sig.
Trust in marketer-created OC	4.23	3.98	4.47	0.002
Trust in consumer-created OC	4.46	4.19	4.73	0.002
Comments are made by the company	4.71	4.65	4.78	0.459
Negative comments are influential	4.83	4.71	4.95	0.162
Positive comments are influential	4.79	4.66	4.92	0.095
Comments voted as more relevant have a greater influence	4.56	4.50	4.62	0.459
Useful reviews are more influential	4.59	4.50	4.67	0.309
Feel sense of Belonging in OC	3.69	3.41	3.98	0.001
Effective that companies apologize	4.60	4.55	4.66	0.570
Response to comment increases future participation	4.57	4.46	4.67	0.192

In order to complete the study of the differences between US and Spanish users, we decided to group the individuals according to their punctuations of the variables. First, we performed a hierarchical cluster with all the items (trust, participation, sense of belonging and comments and reviews). Using the information from the hierarchical cluster, we performed a k-means clustering where we obtained four groups. Appendix 1 includes the means of each group regarding all the items. Next, we explain the main characteristics of each group:

- Group 1 (9 users): They have the least values, being all around 2. Their average age is 68.78, and they are the least trustworthy, not trusting neither company-created nor consumer-created online communities. In general, comments don't affect them, they have no sense of belonging in online communities and they are the only ones that don't search for information nor participate in online communities.
- Group 2 (170 users): Intermediate values. The average age is 21.77 (it is the youngest group). They trust both company and consumer-created online communities, and are more influenced by negative comments. It is equally divided into Spanish and US citizens.
- Group 3 (124 users): Intermediate values. Average age is 48. They trust more consumer-created communities and are more influenced by positive comments. Most

of them are Spanish citizens (70.2%).

- Group 4 (110 users): They give the highest punctuations in all of the items. They are the only ones that feel like part of a community. Most of them are US citizens (71.8%).

The Cluster analysis completes the results obtained by the t-Student test. Group 4 has the highest punctuations in all of the items, and has the highest percentage of US users. Group 3 has lower punctuations than 4, and has the highest percentage of Spanish users. Group 1 and 2 have similar numbers of users from both countries, but show a different user's age: group 1 gather older users, while group 2 is the youngest group. According to this, age could be another important variable that explains different behaviors in online communities.

We performed a one-way ANOVA in order to confirm that the groups obtained by the Cluster Analysis are actually different. In all of the items, signification of the F-test was <0.05 , so groups are different among them.

Post Hoc test is used to see which mean is different between the four groups. We used two types of methods: Tukey, for those with same variance, and Games-Howell, for those with different variance. From this test we can say that groups 2 and 3 are similar in their punctuations but different in sociodemographic variables (mainly age and nationality), while values of group 1 are quite lower and values of group 4 are higher.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural differences among consumers from different countries affect how they relate with brands, communities, places, etc. (see Ardichvili et al., 2006; Hudson et al., 2016; Matzler et al., 2016; Obal & Kunz, 2016; Posey et al., 2010). In this context, the aim of this research was based in exploring the differences of two developed countries with a high use of Internet (United States and Spain), in terms of trust, comments, participation, and sense of belonging in online community environments.

Online communities have gained importance in the last years, becoming a place where consumers talk, look for information and satisfy many needs (Martínez-López et al., 2016). This growth changes the way consumers relate with other consumers and brands, as well as modify how the company's image is developed. In this sense, different variables as trust in the community, sense of belonging, credibility of consumer's comments and reviews, and the effect on participation of the response of the online

community manager to comments of their users affect how members of online communities interact, search for information and buy. Besides, different types of users may participate differently, because their culture, habits, or personal needs vary (King et al., 2014).

Contrary to the results offered by previous studies (e. g. Huang & Farn, 2009; Jung et al., 2014), our results show that there are more of those users who actively participate, but the percentage of lurkers (those who just read and get information) is high. The reason of this fact may be due to the sample profile, with a high percentage of young people (under 25 years-old), which is the most active age group on Internet and Social Media (ONTSI, 2011; Statista, 2014).

In our study, online community members confide more in consumer-created online communities like Jung et al. (2014) and Ridings et al. (2002) suggested. These authors explained that consumers trust more in other consumers than in companies, because they don't have a commercial focus.

Our results confirm that negative comments influence more than positive comments, as King et al. (2014), Parra-Azor and López-López (2014) and Ruiz de Maya et al. (2010) revealed. Also as Parra-Azor and López-López (2014) explained, those comments voted as more relevant or useful make a comment more influential. This result supports strategies conducted by companies as Tripadvisor or Amazon. Moreover, as Ba (2001), Domínguez-Casas et al. (2013), Huang and Farn (2009) and Jung et al. (2014) stated, the participants that identify themselves as active users of online communities have a sense of belonging in the community. This fact is because higher levels of participation increase the interaction with other members, improving a sense of group and setting a common identification.

Regarding the differences between Spain and US on the effects of the different variables explained above, our results show different behaviors on three questions: trust in marketer-created online communities, trust in consumer-created online communities and sense of belonging in online communities. These results partially support previous researches which suggest that culture affects the way people trust and participate in online communities (Ardichvili et al., 2006; King et al., 2014; Posey et al., 2010). Considering the other questions, US users showed higher levels, but without significant differences.

Practitioners have to consider that people go on online communities mainly to seek for

information, and understand that this information is trusted more if it comes from a consumer-created community. Moreover, when the purchase decision begins, negative comments and those voted as useful or relevant are influential on consumers, so they have to know how to promote good comments, and how far they can publish comments from the own company. In addition, sense of belonging could be a good measurement of how members of the CV perceive the community; those members that identify themselves as active members, have a sense of belonging in the community.

For all these reasons, online community is set as a way to increase brand awareness and sales. Advertisers should be paying attention to new types of e-WOM based on comments and reviews, from where companies can conclude many ideas and improvements. We recommend companies to have someone on board as a community manager. They can listen to the customers, converse with them and ensure that the company is engaged with them. If a brand pays attention to its customers they will be appreciated. It is very important to read comments and consider them. Companies should encourage users to participate actively rather than just look for information, start consumer-created online communities, use a voting method for the comments to facilitate the search, and try to encourage the sense of belonging. These suggestions are valid for both countries, US and Spain, but in Spain online community managers should encourage consumer trust and sense of belonging particularly, because the results show that Spanish online community users are more reluctant to confide in online communities, so it is more difficult to form a cohesive group.

5.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Finally, our study has some limitations. Participants were not selected with a probabilistic method, what can bias the results. In the same way, the sample is not large; therefore we generalize our results to all of the Spanish and American citizens. Additionally, as this research is exploratory, we haven't used completed construct in the measurement of the variables, what determined the kind of analysis employed.

To compliment this study, more variables related to the community could be studied (e.g. identification with the community, loyalty, etc.), or related to the brand (e.g. awareness, trust, etc.). Furthermore, a probabilistic sample could be used.

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Appendix 1 - Comparison of means among Cluster's groups

Group		Trust in marketer-created OC	Trust in consumer-created OC	Comments are made by the company	Negative comments are influential	Positive comments are influential	Comments voted as more relevant have a greater influence	Useful reviews are more influential	Feel sense of Belonging in OC	Effective that companies apologize	Response to comment increases future participation
1	Mean	2,22	2,11	2,22	2,67	2,33	2,33	1,67	1,67	2,00	2,00
	N	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
	SD	1,986	1,537	1,481	2,000	2,179	1,658	1,118	1,323	2,121	2,000
2	Mean	4,16	4,38	4,74	4,98	4,81	4,53	4,63	3,32	4,66	4,68
	N	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170
	SD	1,449	1,764	1,748	1,542	1,473	1,535	1,620	1,687	1,757	1,529
3	Mean	3,85	4,12	4,41	4,29	4,48	4,25	4,15	3,60	4,27	4,27
	N	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124
	SD	1,661	1,680	1,613	1,695	1,605	1,555	1,725	1,798	1,984	1,759
4	Mean	4,91	5,16	5,22	5,39	5,30	5,15	5,25	4,53	5,10	4,94
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	SD	1,617	1,518	1,517	1,545	1,424	1,608	1,505	1,826	1,648	1,570

How to cite this article:

Anaya-Sánchez, R., Molinillo, S., Japutra, A., & Millán, A. (2016). Exploring the Sense of Belonging, Participation and Trust in Online Communities: A comparison between Spain and United States. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*. 6 (4), 69-86. Available at <http://u3isjournal.isvouga.pt/index.php/ijmcmn>