

MISQ Archivist

How Information Contributed After an Idea Shapes New High-Quality Ideas in Online Ideation Contests

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Abstract

Findings on how prior high-quality ideas affect the quality of subsequent ideas in online ideation contests have been mixed. Some studies find that high-quality ideas lead to subsequent high-quality ideas, while others find the opposite. Based on computationally intensive exploratory research, utilizing theory on blending of mental spaces, we suggest that the effects of prior ideas on the generation of subsequent ideas depend on the alignment of (1) crowd participants' subjective quality assessments of prior ideas, and (2) subsequent problem-related contributions made by the crowd. When a prior idea is assessed as high-quality, this motivates the crowd to emulate that idea. When this motivation is aligned with subsequent contributions that *expand* the mental space of the prior idea, a new high-quality idea can be created. In contrast, when a prior idea is assessed as low-quality, it motivates the crowd to redirect away from that idea. When this motivation is aligned with subsequent contributions that *shift* the mental space of the prior idea, a new high-quality idea can be created. The mixed findings in the literature can then be explained by a failure to consider non-idea information contributions made by the crowd.

Keywords: Online ideation contests, crowds, idea generation, group creativity, mental spaces, blending, innovation, open innovation