ABSTRACT

Contemporary research indicates hegemonic masculinity negatively impacts on the recognised global male health treatment gap, spurring debate around the promotion of male health conversation. Through a case study, this chapter explores how Movember Australia, a global NPO dedicated to raising awareness of and funds for male health illness, has utilised principles of value co-creation in its online campaign to promote conversation around men’s health in Australia. Movember’s facilitation of online community conversation, engagement and its utilisation of hegemonic masculinity to promote online male solidarity and resultant health conversation is investigated. Research references previous online male health research indicating effectiveness of three themes for health communication and conversation facilitation: personalisation, environment and trust.
INTRODUCTION

Suicide, substance abuse, engagement in health risk behaviors and high prevalence of untreated illness are remarkably male phenomena (Möller-Leimkühler, 2003; Mahalik et al., 2007a). There is debate surrounding the contemporary identified gap in men’s health treatment, with men living shorter lifespans than women globally (Barford et al., 2006), and the prevalence of untreated mental illness and suicidality in young men rising in developed nations (Möller-Leimkühler, 2003). Research contends male preventable health illness and outcomes including aggression, alcoholism, and abuse are influenced by the construct of hegemonic masculinity in Western society (Mahalik et al., 2007b).

Movember, a non-profit organization (NPO) conceived in Australia in 2003, is dedicated to addressing the men’s health gap. To raise awareness and funds, the Movember campaign encourages men to grow and maintain moustaches during the month of November (Blanchet, 2011), with funds channeled into prostate and testicular cancer research, health education and awareness programs and mental health initiatives in 21 countries (Movember, 2014a). Movember employs a grass-roots communication strategy to generate cause participation and awareness (Drell, 2014), with a majority of promotion facilitated through empowered Mo Bros and Mo Sistas (participant activists) through social media and online communities, including Facebook, Twitter and Movember’s community board. This strategy has enabled exponential growth of Movember’s campaign around the world, by harnessing the effective power of the Internet and an active and engaged online community network (Movember, 2015a).

Movember’s global expansion, marketing strategy and positioning represent an interesting case for the empirical operationalization of service-dominant logic (SDL) and the concurrent theory of value co-creation in an online marketing context. Online community co-creation has garnered considerable research interest (e.g., see Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Ind et al., 2013; Wise et al., 2012). Through value co-creation, value is created through interactive, interdependent collaboration between marketers and consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). By employing cross-functionality of contemporary marketing practices, including market orientation and relationship marketing (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Payne et al. 2008, p. 89), value co-creation places the customer in an integral role within the exchange process. SDL and its underpinning ethos of value co-creation were devised in response to academic acknowledgement of the increased role of the consumer in the production process, enabled through their greater accessibility to and conversations with enterprises (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000).

While there has been an increase in co-creation research, such research is predominantly concerned with conceptual development (Lusch et al., 2006; Grönroos, 2012; Payne et al., 2009), there have been few empirical operationalizing co-creation studies. Particularly, while there has been empirical research into virtual community value co-creation from technological (Füller et al., 2009; Kohler et al., 2011) and brand (Brodie et al., 2013; Ind et al., 2013) perspectives, there is limited research in the non-profit online context, with notable exceptions (see, e.g., Juntunen et al., 2013; Wise et al., 2012). Juntunen et al. (2013) acknowledge that co-creation’s applicability within the nonprofit sector has been largely overlooked (p. 122), while Brodie et al. (2013) contend further investigative research should be undertaken into the nature of customer engagement—from a co-creation perspective—in virtual communities (p. 113).