

## NICHE DIGITAL MARKETING: THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES ON PARENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

Virtual communities offer, among others, information sharing and support to their members. Parents of special needs children often participate in online communities to post questions and concerns and gain knowledge from other users. This presents an opportunity for marketers to promote products and services related to special needs. The current study aims at exploring motivations of parents with special needs children to communicate through Facebook virtual communities and particularly focuses on the support aspect of such communities by using certain constructs of TAM model. Results of the study showed that users believe that it's easy to get recommendations and answers by other members and virtual communities help them to stay informed about products and services related to special needs. Moreover, participants in the study argued that they can get information to support their families. Finally, a significant percentage of participants agreed that they intend to use information posted on virtual communities for making decisions on relevant products/services. Based on the key findings of the study, companies could build digital marketing strategies to gain competitive advantages in the special needs niche market.

**Keywords:** Virtual communities, Facebook, Digital marketing, Special needs, Niche markets.