How the Crowdsourcing Enhance the Co-Creation Into the Virtual Communities

B

Bahri Ammari Nedra
IHEC of Carthage, USA

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, more and more companies are increasingly following the trend, by actively integrating their customers in their new processes of developing products and services (Romero et al. 2014). Co-creation is the process by which products, services and experiences are jointly developed by companies, their partners and the final consumer; leading to a new space where the created value would be shared (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003). This form of cooperation has developed thanks to IT-based advances (IT) which promoted the development of social networks, blogs, forums and creative platforms (Peer et al. 2015). Many means that have allowed customers to interconnect with the world and to share, exchange, create and co-create knowledge (Lee et al, 2003). Through these new interconnected tools of socialization, customers can now actively contribute to the development of new products, ideas and concepts (Hoyer et al. 2010; Ogawa and Piller, 2006). Companies have soon realized its potential and seized the opportunity. Upstreaming or downstreaming the value chain, allowing for co-creation by costumers, resulted in customers as lead users (LU), simple users or emerging nature consumers (ENC). As such, customers represent a key to unlock new sources promoting competitive advantages for brands (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). By having access to brands' platforms, costumers could share their opinions about the product and experience. They could also discuss freely and participate in the evolution of the company's offer and develop its image and reputation. This is possible through crowdsourcing. This is an online participatory activity that involves two parties: the user and the company / brand. The user will be satisfied by a given type of need, either, social recognition, self-esteem or development of individual skills, meanwhile the crowdsourceur will have the advantage of gaining what the user will bring to the company. Thus, some brands have found the way to keep their customers loyal while reducing the risks associated with creating a new product or service (Romero and Molina, 2011). In this line of thinking, the eYeka platform allows consumers and major brands to collaborate on creative projects and give in return an amount of money to the winning project.

However, the consequences / strategic implications of value co-creation were studied rigorously and prolifically, in terms of the cognitive, emotional and intentional patterns of co-creation. The aim of this paper is to determine the contribution of crowdsourcing in facilitating co-creation in virtual communities. And, *in fine*, to present the consequences of IT on firm, in terms of: the strength of the relationship, productivity, and efficiency.

BACKGROUND

Online Co-Creation: Definition of Co-Creation

According to O'Hern and Rindfleisch (2009), co-creation can be defined as "an activity of collaborative development of new products (NPD)[1] in which consumers actively contribute and select various elements of a new product offering" (p.86).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2255-3.ch061

The recent literature pointed to the importance of integrating customers in the process of value creation as an effective way to develop better products while reducing the costs and risks of product / service failure (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The concept of co-creation presents a new value form, something that is co-constructed, not just consumed by the customer. Co-creation, also known as participatory marketing or "consumer made", is a new activity that refers to the participation of the customer as an active contributor from the start of the innovation process. It is a "situation in which consumers are working with companies to create value" (Humphreys and Grayson, 2008, p.963). In the value co-creation process, the customer can propose the company with innovative ideas for future products. In this regard, Sanders and Stappers, (2008) define co-creation as "any act of collective creativity, i.e. creativity that is shared by two or more people". Similarly, co-creation involves customers in developing new products where they act as a source of innovation in order to increase the new product or service value. Indeed, it involves transforming the roles of the traditional players into Co-creators and co-responsible actors over time. Co-creation techniques refer to crowdsourcing or even collaborative or participatory marketing. The concept of co-creation is far from being simply customer-oriented. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy, (2004), this tendency of the joint creation of products or services is a concept that shifts from a business-centric view to a product and experience-centric view of value co-creation.

Co-creating unique experiences with individual customers particularly helped to promote new sources of competitive advantage for companies. In this regard, several marketing researchers have investigated different facets of online Co-creation and its impact on business performance and the competitive advantage it may acquire. According to Zhuang (2010), co-creation is seen as a two-dimensional concept in which the customer may be considered either as a source or as a co-developer. Contrary to the approach that positions the customer "outside the company", the new approach places the customer within the company given the nature of the execution of value creation and innovation (Sahwney et al. 2005).

Co-Creation and Theoretical Trends in Marketing

Researchers show that the principle of co-creation has contributed to the emergence of several theoretical trends in marketing. We briefly mention the three main currents: tribal marketing, collaborative innovation and marketing Knowledge.

- *Tribal marketing or community marketing* (Cova, 2008). Tribal marketing builds on one central idea, which is the company's losing some control over the brand for the benefit of the community of consumers seeking to reappropriate it (Brincker, 2003).
- *Collaborative innovation* includes three major concepts, namely "lead users", "user innovation", "user design" that were well developed by the work of Von Hippel (1978).
- *Knowledge marketing* considers consumer expertise, skills and intelligence allowing the company to define its offer and its production (Abidi-Barthe and Kaabachi, 2010).

VALUE CO CREATING WITHIN VIRTUAL BRAND COMMUNITY (VBC)

"Customer Empowerment": Concept Presentation

Consumers dispose of limited tools to share their experiences and give their opinions. Today, with the emergence of Web 2.0, consumers have various means to share their passions, to know the opinion of others, and to produce and exchange content (kozinet, 2002). They can quickly gather