Chapter 53

Typical Innovative and Involvement Characteristics of Contributors to Consumer Generated Media

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ABSTRACT

One key impact of consumer generated media on today's firms is that it has become an increasingly important source of information for consumers in their decision making process. Firms that are able to gather positive messages about themselves and their products or services on consumer generated media can be instrumental to the survival and success of their business. The quality and growth of consumer generated media depend on contributions from the consumer public, and some people are more likely to post their own messages, written or otherwise, on consumer generated media than others. Understanding some typical characteristics of these people, termed active contributors to consumer generated media in this chapter, is beneficial for firms, as they can be more ready to identify them and could do something to turn them in their flavour. Based on literature review, this study has identified a number of hypothetical variables that may influence whether a person is an active contributor to consumer generated media. A questionnaire survey on 430 respondents has shown that global innovativeness, electronic innovativeness and consumer involvement significantly affect contributions to consumer generated media. Active contributors to this new medium are also more likely to be male and of a younger age.

This importance of peer recommendations and consumer opinions online justifies the attention marketers continue to pay to the use of social and consume generated media. –From Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey Report (2009)

INTRODUCTION

Consumer generated media is a collective name applied to different forms of digital communications whereby consumers openly share their opinions and experiences, often about their reac-

tions to products and services (Shiu et al., 2009). It can take the form of blogs, podcasts, Internet forums, online community, and online social network (Table 1). It reflects the availability of new ways for authoring content that can be easily disseminated through the Internet (Dwyer, 2007). Consumer generated media should be treated differently from traditional media and its significance to businesses is likely to be greater than traditional media, because on this media platform consumers can consume, interact with, control, create, and distribute the media content.

Historically, consumer generated media or user-generated media as some other researchers may call, can be traced back to the bulletin boards on portal websites such as Yahoo and AOL in the 1990s. Over time, the number of 'appearances' of consumer generated media has been increasing. Some of the appearances, such as Wikipedia, function as a collective gathering of information. Some others such as MySpace and YouTube are about personal sites. Others like Flickr are the result of a combination of collective and personal sites (Lanchester, 2006). Daugherty, Eastin and Bright (2008) categorised consumer generated media into eight major types and studied differences in popularity between these types, among consumer generated media contributors and users respectively (Table 2). Their results show that 46.5% of the respondents have participated in a discussion forum, while 44% of the respondents

have contributed pictures to the consumer generated media community. These have been followed by 42.3% of the respondents who have created their own websites, and 41% of the respondents who have creased a blog. One can therefore see that texts and pictures are the most popular means through which people contribute to consumer generated media, while audios and drawings are comparatively less popular.

The situation is very difficult if consumer generated media is accessed merely for the purpose of using the content it provides. In this purpose situation, people are most likely to choose pictures and videos. The next popular grounds for consumer generated media users are personal websites, blogs and discussion forums. Therefore contributors and users of consumer generated media are different not only in their personal backgrounds, but also in their preferences towards consumer generated media.

In recent years there has been a drastic increase in the amount of information on the consumer generated media. In addition more and more consumers are relying on this information for making consumption and purchase decisions. A global online consumer survey study in 2009 by Nielsen shows that 'recommendations from people I know' is the leading source of product and brand information that consumers trust completely, while 'consumers opinions posted online' is the joint second most trusted source, which far

Table 1. Some major forms of consumer generated media

Form	Meaning
Blog	A user-generated website where entries, which contain commentary or news on a particular subject, are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order.
Podcast	An audio (or occasionally video) recording available on an Internet source (website, blog, etc) for real-time listening or downloading.
Internet forum	A web application for holding discussions and posting user generated content.
Online community	A group of people that primarily interact via a computer network.
Online social network	A collection of various web-based ways for users to interact, such as chat, messaging, email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, and discussion groups.

Source: Shiu et al. (2009)

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