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The “participating consumer”- for the systematic collection of data on the willingness and the offers to be a prosumer in Marketing Communication

Its not new, that businesses outsource a portion of the value added by involving the customer. When we get train tickets or money at a machine, assemble Ikea furniture or get a drink at a self service restaurant, we are participating in the consumption of that product or service. The principle of the “participating consumer” appears in marketing and the media with several early examples. In 1980 The Camel Trophy took place as a staged Rally event where the selected driver from the adventure experience world shared marketing with a cigarette brand (Boltz 1994). Since then, the thrill seeking society (Schulze 1992) has been involved through marketing and the continuous innovations, from Maggis Cooking Studio to VW's Auto City.

“Wish Yourself Something”, the TV show from ORF (Austria TV), that in 1969 used three families in rounds of talks and games to entertain the TV audience. Since then, media has been used in many formats from “Lets Make a Bet” to “Germany Searches a Superstar” are getting a larger share of the programming.

The perspective on customer involvement today goes further to from integrated understanding. With the concept of “Interactive Value Added” (Piller, F./Reichwald, Ralf T. 2007) consumption plays a supporting role for the business of mass customization and open innovation. In the first case, the customer influences the production process with the view, an individual process for an individual sale. In the second case, the customer influences the production process in businesses with the goal to develop a new product for many customers. In both cases, engaging the so called “Lead User” (Von Hippel 1986), through special connaissance and business excellence.

Von Hippel speaks of “customer-active-paradigm instead of a “manufacturing-active paradigm. The development of the communication and information technology, especially the expansion of the internet requires an interactive value added and the integration of the customer. For business and their brands, there is the question of, if and how customer participation in the business processes should follow. With the definition of participation is a highly differentiated spectrum of activities and conditions. The assessment of an offer or a theme on the basis of a 5 Star Scale (for example ; Amazon.com) may seem rather weak respective of the meaning of the simple participation although the activities require time. On the other end of the scale of participation intensity stands the “interactive value added”, with the variety of elements of a Value Added Chain from the business to the consumer is outsourced. (I.e www.spreadshirt.com, the customers takes over the design of their product, the selection of the design, the decisions about production, price and the agreement over reprints etc.) For the differentiated forms of social networking Shirky (Shirky 2008) has a three levels of definition. From sharing and exchanging of information (co-sharing) through the open production of information products or services (co-producing) until now as collaborative action.

All three forms of networks (including possible interim forms) are of great relevance for the relationship between business and its customers. Can a model be derived from portraying the different forms and of participation and offers?