

Prosumption as an Experience

Experience, Distraction, and Recognition as Motives for Active Consumption

Prosumption, as the modern used term, describes not least due to its modifications over time and through the scientific disciplines that used and gave distinction to this term, a broad range of (mostly unpaid) active consumption-fields. This broad range of consumption-fields results in an equally broad array of effects for the actors involved. By focussing actor-specific motives it can be shown that most of these effects are lying presumably in a clearly defined framework: monetarily-rational reasons seem to be superficially decisive. Furthermore exists a lack of alternatives for consumers which can be identified in many consumption-fields and which results in fewer forms of traditional service offerings and therefore leads to an increasingly (enforced) active role of the consumer. All in all the prosumer seems to be rather a "victim" of its (involuntary) business-inherent existence as to be a committed and voluntary prosumer.

On the other hand, there can be found numerous forms of prosumption which supposedly could be connected with different kinds of experiences. These experiences can be seen as consumer-motives for participating in these prosumption-forms on a voluntary basis. This range of motives differs from the often discussed monetarily-rational field and constitutes an own scope of participation-motives. The internet-auction provider eBay for example offers, beyond the mere (partially time-intensive) auction-handling, a wide range of non-monetary offerings (like the eagerness while bidding in auctions), the fun-factor in the community up to a range of forms of everyday-distraction or the mere experience itself. Furthermore, a temporarily takeover of tasks differing from the workaday life – like for example assembling furniture or the competent handling of self-service facilities – creates everyday-distraction as well as forms of recognition through the enlargement of qualifications. Finally, the experiences as also the temporarily task-changes can also take a compensating role compared to the abstractions of the workaday life (Toffler 1983). Already Toffler stated the optimization of different life-areas as an achievement of the growing fields of prosumption. He accented the holistic recognition of humans which constitutes an important surplus beyond the material wealth and gainful employment, because its focus is on versatility.

The growing sector of experiences and adventures can be seen as an indication for the consumers' need for moments of everyday-distraction, which is an experience of its own. That sector of experiences (or of "enchantment" as Ritzer states the relevant term for that phenomenon) creates themed complexes, landscapes of shopping-experiences as well as themed gastronomy-offerings. This development can not only be found in its, perhaps genuine, place of emergence – the United States of America –, but also in Germany (Opaschowski 2000) where the usually used term for that kind of leisure-offerings is "Erlebnis". The increasing appearance of that term indicates its impact in Germany: Erlebnisweg, Erlebnisberg, Erlebnisindustrie, Erlebnistourismus, Erlebnissportarten and so on (Bach Leitner 2004).

Thereby, the term "Erlebnis" remains very mutable and reaches up to the field of triviality in its different forms of use. Therefore, it needs a situational classification in a reference framework (Vester 2004). Also, the nowadays frequently stated thesis of a general increase not only in the use of the term "Erlebnis" itself but first of all in the demand of experiences, needs to be examined so that can be seen if it matches reality. Much more important, however, appears to be the increasing and conscious placement of experience-offerings through the providers of consumption: The range of products contains also emotions that meet the customer's desires and hopes right in the moment of consumption (Steinecke 2000). The success of the increasing and organizational controlled experience-placement is hypothetically caused by the consumer's need for compensation of heavily rationalized and thus disenchanting areas (Ritzer 2005). Therefore, the successful experience-placement implies, besides its economical dimension, a potential explanation in the field of prosumption-motives of modern customers.

The presentation will expound the problems of compatibility of the genuinely different interests in rationalization and decreasing costs (to the consumers) on the company-side of the problem as well as the consumer's interest in monetary savings *and* experiences. Potential motives for a voluntary participation of consumers in prosumption-offerings will be identified in the presentation. Also, their importance for the field of prosumption will be discussed to integrate those voluntary motives in the overall discussion of the prosumer.

Bibliography

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