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Use of Crowdsourcing by Young Poles¹

Summary

The main aim of the article is to identify ways of using crowdsourcing by young Poles. Therefore, attempts were made to show the essence of the analysed marketing concept as well as its applicability. The first part of the paper presents the concept of prosumption and its forms. In particular, the notion of crowdsourcing is particularly focused on. The article is a kind of presentation of the author's own research results. A diagnostic survey was used as the test method. The study was conducted in May - June 2017. Its participants were students of the University of Economics in Cracow. A total of 610 students studying at different faculties of the university participated. The article points to the key characteristics of crowdsourcing. The methodology of own research was outlined, and the examined group was described. The last part of the article presents the respondents' opinions on crowdsourcing. It was found that more than half of the students surveyed used at least one opportunity to tailor a product to their needs, as well as sharing opinions about products with other users. At the same time, respondents rarely propose to modify (43.1%) or create a new product (16%) to entrepreneurs. The study ends with conclusions being a synthesis.

Key words: open innovation, prosumption, consumer behaviour, crowdsourcing.

JEL codes: M31, O35

Introduction

The concept of crowdsourcing is an example of economic activity which is increasingly being discussed by researchers and practitioners alike. First and foremost, this is due to the change of pace resulting from the development of information technology (Pukas 2014; Krawiec 2014). The literature identifies the key benefits that businesses achieve through crowdsourcing. Most researchers point to the possibility of creating competitive advantage and creating an open innovation (Lenart-Gansiniec 2017, p. 25). It is interesting to know how crowdsourcing can be applied to any initiative dedicated to involving young people in modifying existing solutions on the market and those that are still in development. It is also important to conduct research on the use of crowdsourcing by modern consumers, especially by the young generation.

In this article, an attempt was made to present the results of the author's own research. Its key goals were to identify ways to use crowdsourcing by young people. The diagnostic sur-

¹ The publication was co-financed from the funds granted to the Faculty of Management at the Cracow University of Economics as a grant to maintain the research potential.

vey was conducted from May to June 2017. Its participants were students of the University of Economics in Cracow. The study was predominantly a reconnaissance. First of all, it was a starting point for further discussion on consumer participation in undertakings related to the broadly understood crowdsourcing.

Prosumption and its manifestations

For the first time, the term “presumption” was used in his book *The Third Wave* by American sociologist and futurologist A. Toffler (1997). This concept meant moving production from the sphere of economy officially recognized by economists to the sphere of neglected economy. However, A. Toffler understood prosumption primarily as a shift of certain tasks to the consumer – in line with the “do it yourself” concept. Increasing consumer engagement involves doing things that someone else has done for them before. B. Jung (1997) emphasizes that the term “prosumption” comes from the combination of the two words – “production” and “consumption” – and implies the interpenetrating of production and consumption. Prosumption is the phenomenon of the intertwining of consumption and production processes until the boundaries between them become blurred.

According to D. Tapscott (1998), prosumption is expressed by:

- loss of control over the products and their subsequent life-cycle after production and sales,
- providing customers with the tools and materials they need to create their own products,
- partnership, involving the evolution of customers into business partners,
- sharing the fruits of their work — customers want to, in fact, enjoy the perks of their commitment.

In practice, this engagement of consumers can take the following forms.

Personalization. Consumers have an impact on the final version of the product or service they buy – they decide on the product’s features that reflect their desires and needs. An example of such a consumer engagement includes car dealer offers: the customer selects additional features and the color of the car according to their preference. In the services sector, an increasing phenomenon are *tailor made services*, suited to individual customer needs.

Product hacking. Modifying products to improve them to fit customer needs, often without brand approval, although some companies, knowing their customers, allow them to improve their products. Examples of product hacking include, for example, IKEA furniture modifications (the effects of consumer creativity are often posted as instructional videos), or changes in audio-video equipment (such as iPods).

Collective intelligence. This concept in the virtual community was brought to life Pierre Lévy (2007), defining it as “any human group not so much interested in creating a virtual community but rather one approaching an ideal of collective intelligence, more ingenious, faster, more capable of learning, inventing than collectively intelligently conducted” (Lévy 1997, in: Jenkins 2006, p. 31).

Crowdfunding. This is a type of accumulation and allocation of capital that is transferred to the development of a specific project in return for a specified return service, which involves a large group of donors. It is characterized by the use of information and communication technologies, a lower entry barrier and better transactional conditions than those available on the market.

Crowdsourcing – system of concepts

Crowdsourcing is an example of an interdisciplinary phenomenon. As a result, the distinguished research category is discussed by representatives of various scientific disciplines (including medicine, technology and economics). However, the general trend shows that the vast majority of published work on crowdsourcing is the work of economists. Crowdsourcing is an example of an important research category from the point of view of marketing studies.

The term “crowdsourcing” was first used by J. Howe in 2006 in the American “Wired” magazine. The author described it as different forms of cooperation of companies with Internet users, using their knowledge, skills and ideas. On a wider perspective, crowdsourcing can be considered as a kind of outsourcing, in which instead of one external contractor, there is an entire crowd (Kasprzycki-Rosikoń and Piątkowski 2013, p. 21).

According to J. Howe (2006), crowdsourcing can be seen in several ways:

- common problem solving and suggestion of improvements with the participation of collective intelligence,
- use of the so-called crowd wisdom and in this particular case the use of the potential of Internet users,
- microwork,
- social funding of projects (crowdfunding),
- analysis and selection of the best solutions from the proposals presented.

Underlying the assumption of the theory of crowd wisdom lies the conviction that collective problem solving by a group of people provides better results than the creativity of individuals. According to J. Surowiecki (2010), the source of “crowd” advantage is not reaching consensus, but aggregating ideas of individual participants in a given group by using their proactivity, creativity and independence. The motivation of the participants in crowdsourcing initiatives can be either material or immaterial (Kaufmann et al. 2011). There is a belief among researchers that intangible factors contribute more to consumer involvement in crowdsourcing projects than tangible ones (Krawiec 2014, p. 16).

The research conducted by E. Estelle – Arolas (2018) shows that different initiatives will require a different crowd configuration. Consequently certain initiatives will require diverse crowd, others a more specialized one. However, not every community – functioning in a virtual network – can be seen as a crowdsourcing community. In the opinion of researchers, such communities are not merely users focused around projects dedicated to generating content (eg. Wikipedia). According to Brabham (2013), crowdsourcing is an up-down process, organized and managed by a specific entity (organization, institution, or private person), and

it has predetermined goals (Kowalska 2015, p. 127). The mentioned research view makes it important to distinguish those projects that have the characteristics of crowdsourcing.

An attempt to define crowdsourcing was made by E. Estelle – Arolas and F. Gonzalez – Ladron de Guevara (2012), based on the analysis of more than 40 propositions of definitions available in the literature. The authors identified this phenomenon as a kind of participatory Internet activity in which an individual, an institution, a nonprofit organization or an enterprise issues an open invitation and a voluntary take on a specific task to a group of people. Satisfaction of the person performing the task can be typically economic (financial), social (recognition), individual (self-esteem, development of skills). In turn, the person who orders the task gets the solution to the problem (Adamska-Mieruszewska and Mrzygłód 2012).

The research conducted by R. Lenart-Gansiniec (2017) shows that domestic and foreign researchers define crowdsourcing in two ways. In the first approach, the concept is considered as a tool for generating content, information, data or information resources. In the other, crowdsourcing is seen as a mechanism to improve customer participation, access to knowledge, and knowledge sharing. In the light of the observations collected, it can be concluded that there is no agreement among the researchers on the unambiguous definition of crowdsourcing, as well as a method of analyzing phenomena that are the nature of crowdsourcing projects.

It is also interesting to propose a broad and narrow definition of crowdsourcing, as did M. Kowalska (2015). Broadly speaking, crowdsourcing means any activity involving any type of knowledge, skill or financial resources of a broadly engaged crowd (whether paid or free) specified in an open invitation by a private individual, an organization, an NGO or an enterprise. Crowdsourcing, in the narrow sense, means the activity of heterogeneous virtual communities, involving their knowledge, skills or assets to carry out certain activities commissioned in the form of an open invitation on the Internet.

In the literature, crowdsourcing is also treated as a way of confronting service providers' ideas with the expectations of service receivers. Undoubtedly, such an approach favors the development of e-services offered by a given market entity (Wolny 2016, p. 150). However, the dissemination and development of undertakings based on the idea of crowdsourcing should be analyzed not only through the prism of businesses but also with the perspective of consumers in mind. These activities also contribute to the development of innovations in the sphere of consumption (Mazurek-Łopacińska and Sobocińska 2016, p. 179) or they contribute to the popularization of new consumer practices.

In business practice, crowdsourcing is identified with a business model or a resource acquisition approach. In the first place, the company has its own tool (usually an online one) to acquire goods and services from people/companies on a mass scale, and it manages relationships with partners. The most commonly cited tool is a crowdsourcing platform. This business model assumes the possibility of buying goods and services through it (Mazurek 2016, p. 12). In the latter approach, crowdsourcing can mean one-off activities aimed at engaging consumers in solving a problem or using their knowledge.

It is important to indicate the limitations of crowdsourcing. Generally, crowdworkers remain largely anonymous and remote from researchers. The research conducted by C. Conley, J. Tosti – Kharas (2014, p. 684) shows, that future research should examine how self-reported demographics, motivations, and rates of compensation affect crowdworker participation and performance in content analytic tasks. In this way it is possible to obtain more reliable and useful data.

The considerations can be concluded with a statement that crowdsourcing is often perceived as an extremely flexible term that can take many forms. It is worth noting that the above-mentioned perspective does not facilitate analysis. In addition, there is no agreement among the researchers on the ways of defining it, so various concepts are presented that show its essence and application possibilities. The studied conceptual category is analyzed in various sections, including broad and narrow terms. Under the latter approach emerge new research areas, which correspond with changes in the business environment.

Methodology of own research

The aim of the study was to identify ways in which young people could be involved in the crowdsourcing process. Such a scope of subject matter has set research directions. The diagnosis of these characteristics was based on the analysis of behavior of students of the University of Economics in Cracow. The survey was mainly aimed at verifying hypotheses accepted for the needs of conducted research.

The following research hypotheses were put forward for the purposes of the present study:

- H1: Young people often ask manufacturers to improve their products.
- H2: Young Poles are interested in the possibility of product personalization.
- H3: Young women, as much as men, engage in crowdsourcing.

A diagnostic survey was performed to obtain the primary information. As a research instrument, a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions, of which 4 are the particulars. The relatively small number of questions results from the fact that it was assumed the respondents would fill out the questionnaires themselves. It was therefore decided to facilitate their task and to encourage them to participate in the survey.

The analysis of the collected empirical data was carried out using the SPSS statistical package. The choice of this program was dictated by the method of presentation of numerical data, i.e. its readability and the available statistical tools. The chi-squared test (χ^2) was used to test the relationships noted.

The survey was conducted on 610 respondents. The principle of non-random selection was adopted, including a discretionary trial method (Giddens 2012, p. 54). Most often, the elements of the sample are selected on the basis of the belief that they are representative for the researcher interested in the given population. In the opinion of researchers, this method of selection is also used as an incidental test (non-random selection of subjects) (Francuz and Mackiewicz 2007, p. 92).

The proper survey was launched in May 2017 and completed by the end of June in the same year². Before the proper examination, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study implementation allowed semantic correction of some questions as well as improvement of the technical aspects of the questionnaire. The factors that hindered the gathering of the appropriate research material were eliminated.

Characteristics of the studied population

The study involved 610 university students, of which 62% were men, 35% were women, and the rest did not answer the question about gender (3%). First of all, students of the first (43%) and the second year (38%) of university participated. The students represented different faculties of the University of Economics in Cracow: management studies (24%), marketing and market communication (24%), accounting and controlling (18%), and economics (17%). The majority of respondents studied at full-time studies (78%), while 21% of respondents were extramural students (Table 1).

Table 1
Research group profile

	Detailed list	N	%
Sex	Female	375	61.5
	Male	216	35.4
	Missing data	19	3.1
Year of studies	1	264	43.3
	2	234	38.4
	3	4	0.7
	4	73	12.0
	5	31	5.1
	Missing data	4	0.7
Faculty	Economics	101	16.6
	Management	147	24.1
	Accounting and controlling	110	18.0
	Marketing and market communication	147	24.1
	Logistics	62	10.2
	Commodities	20	3.3
	Land Management	13	2.1
	Missing data	10	1.6
Type of studies	Full-time	473	77.5
	Extramural	129	21.1
	Missing data	8	1.3

Source: own research.

² The authors of the study distributed the questionnaires mainly on their own. Based on adopted research assumptions, it can be concluded that the survey was largely a participatory observation (Giddens 2012, p. 48).

Based on the above data, the profile of the survey participant could be identified. The general trend was that the study participant was typically a woman studying at the first year of full-time studies. The interviewed was a student of management or marketing and market communication.

Crowdsourcing in the opinion of young Poles - results of own research

In order to verify how crowdsourcing is understood by young consumers, they were asked to provide three spontaneous associations with the word. As a consequence, a free association test was used, so as not to suggest the respondents in any way. Crowdsourcing was most often associated with the crowd (54%), less often with information (23%), with acquisition (21%), outsourcing (12%), ideas (10%), knowledge (6%) and improvement (3%). It can therefore be said that young Poles properly associated the notion of crowdsourcing with crowd and exchange of information. However, it should be emphasized that only one in 10 respondents noticed the link between the word and ideas. Fewer people pointed to the association with knowledge and exchange. The general trend was that the participants relatively rarely identified crowdsourcing with the opportunity it presents to the consumer.

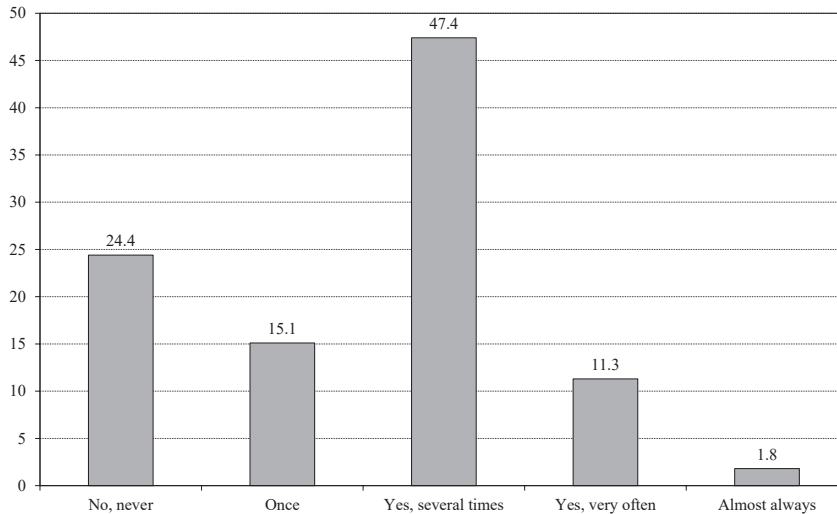
Involvement in the crowdsourcing process should be addressed in two ways: passive (such as the use of open Internet platforms, exemplified by the Wikipedia, and using social networking sites where other users share their opinions, such as Tripadvisor) and active, where, apart from the role of the user, the consumer is also involved in co-creation and active influence. Thus, the active consumer attitude meets the basic criteria of the definition of prosumption.

To see how the young people are involved in crowdsourcing, it was decided to verify the following aspects:

- frequency of sharing opinion about a product or service,
- getting acquainted with the opinions of other consumers,
- suggesting improvements or modifications to the manufacturers,
- proposing the introduction of a new product or service into the offer.

A large percentage of the respondents wrote at least a few opinions about a product they purchased (47% - a few times, 11% - many times, 2% - almost every time). Such an opinion was written once by 15% of respondents, while the others never reviewed a product they purchased online (24%) (Fig. 1). The results show that sharing opinions after purchase has become commonplace for young people – 75% of respondents have described their experiences in the form of online reviews or opinions. In further stages of the study, it seemed necessary to verify the motivation of respondents, i.e., see whether sharing opinions is socially motivated or is connected with communication with the brand and is treated as feedback for the manufacturer. It would also be interesting to examine whether positive or negative opinions predominate.

At the next stage, the respondents were asked about the frequency of their reading product reviews published by other consumers before making an online purchase. A large percentage of the respondents read product reviews before making an online purchase: almost always (39%), many times 42%, a few times 16%, once (0.7%), or never (1.6%).

Figure 1**Frequency of leaving feedback about products or services by the respondents**

Source: own research.

Most of the young people never proposed changes to the product or service they used (57%), did it once or several times (nearly 40% of the respondents), while only 3% of respondents did it many times. Men were more likely to propose such changes (53% of them suggested that at least once) than women (38%). The difference between the groups is statistically significant ($p = 0.001$) (Table 2). The difference between the groups is statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). It should be stressed that the demonstrated inactivity may be due both to the attitudes of the surveyed consumers and to the lack of incentives for such activity by the producers themselves. Such encouragement may be manifested, for example, by facilitating and inviting consumers to bilateral communication (e.g. through social networking sites), conducting consumer research and encouraging and product (or service) reviews, and creating platforms for the exchange of innovative ideas (e.g. MyStarbucks Idea - a website developed by the Starbucks coffee bar network).

Most of the respondents also did not propose the creation of new products/ services that were not available on the market (83%); 10% of the respondents suggested this once, 6% of the respondents did so several times, while the rest of the respondents did it repeatedly (1%). Also in this case, suggestions were made more often by men (23% of them did so at least once) than women (13%). The difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.007$).

The study subjects were also asked for another manifestation of prosumption, which is the use of personalized products.

The most preferred type of personalization of a product is the addition of more features and accessories (43%), a less frequent one is custom color (28%), and adding one's own

name or a slogan on the product (22%). The least preferred form of personalization was placing a photo on the product (6%).

Table 2
Frequency of proposing product improvements

			Gender of the respondent		
			Female	Male	
Has the surveyed person proposed to change/improve the product or service he/she used?	No, never	Number	234	102	
		% of Sex	62.4%	47.2%	
	Once	Number	52	33	
		% of Sex	13.9%	15.3%	
	Yes, several times	Number	81	69	
		% of Sex	21.6%	31.9%	
	Yes, very often	Number	8	10	
		% of Sex	2.1%	4.6%	
	Almost always	Number	0	2	
		% of Sex	0.0%	0.9%	
	Chi-squared test			$\chi^2 = 17.80; p = 0.001$	

Source: as in Table 1.

52% of the respondents asked for the personalization of a product more than once, while 21% did it once. The others never used customized products (28%).

Conclusions

The obtained results allow us to formulate the statement that the young Poles are familiar with the concept of crowdsourcing. However, they use it in a passive way, because they often assume the role of a recipient-beneficiary rather than an active co-creator. Less than half (43.1%) of the respondents proposed the manufacturer to change their current service or product at least once, but only 16% of the respondents suggested extending the product range with a new item. Certainly, empirical verification requires knowing the motives and attitudes (overt and hidden) that govern such activity. It is also important that men are more inclined to co-create open innovation as well as accept the role of the prosumer.

The participants in the survey are ready to co-create products with the manufacturer, tailoring them to their needs. Most often, this process involves the addition of desired functions and accessories (40% of indications). Moreover, more than half of the students surveyed used at least one opportunity to tailor a product to their needs.

It can be stated that the respondents know and understand the concept of crowdsourcing. However, they are not fully engaged in the process, so they are not fully aware of the opportunities that modern consumers have. It should be noted, however, that the research was conducted only among a group of selected students. Therefore, in the longer perspective, it is necessary to extend the study and to include persons with different socio-economic status.

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Wykorzystanie *crowdsourcingu* przez młodych Polaków

Streszczenie

Podstawowym celem artykułu jest zidentyfikowanie sposobów wykorzystania *crowdsourcingu* przez młodych Polaków. W związku z tym starano się pokazać istotę analizowanej koncepcji marketingowej, jak również jej możliwości aplikacyjne. W pierwszej części opracowania przedstawiono pojęcie *prosumpcji* oraz jej formy. Kolejno zwrócono szczególną uwagę na pojęcie *crowdsourcingu*. Artykuł stanowi rodzaj prezentacji wyników badań własnych. Jako metodę badawczą zastosowano sondaż diagnostyczny. Badanie zostało zrealizowane w maju – czerwcu 2017 roku. Jego uczestnikami byli studenci Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie. Łącznie przebadano 610 osób studiujących na różnych kierunkach wyróżnionej uczelni. W artykule wskazano na kluczowe charakterystyki *crowdsourcingu*. Zarysowano metodykę badań własnych, w tym scharakteryzowano badaną zbiorowość. W ostatniej części artykułu zaprezentowano opinie respondentów na temat *crowdsourcingu*. Stwierdzono, że ponad połowa badanych studentów korzysta z możliwości dopasowania produktów do własnych potrzeb, jak również dzieli się opiniami na temat produktów z innymi użytkownikami. Równocześnie, respondenci rzadko proponują modyfikację (43,1%) lub stworzenie nowego produktu (16%) przedsiębiorcom. Opracowanie kończą wnioski o charakterze syntetycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: otwarte innowacje, *prosumpcja*, zachowania konsumenckie, *crowdsourcing*

Kody JEL: M31, O35

Использование краудсорсинга молодыми поляками

Резюме

Основная цель статьи – выявить способы использования краудсорсинга молодыми поляками. В этой связи старались указать суть анализируемой маркетинговой концепции, а также ее аппликационные возможности. В первой части разработки представили понятие потребления и производства

как одного целого и его формы. Затем обратили особое внимание на понятие краудсорсинга. Статья представляет собой вид презентации результатов собственных исследований. В качестве исследовательского метода применили диагностический зондаж. Обследование провели в мае и июне 2017 г. Его участниками были студенты Экономического университета в Кракове. В общей сложности обследовали 610 человек-студентов разных направлений университета. В статье указали основные характеристики краудсорсинга. В общих чертах представили методику собственных исследований, в том числе дали характеристику обследуемой популяции. В последней части статьи представили мнения респондентов о краудсорсинге. Констатировали, что больше половины опрошенных студентов пользуется возможностью приспособления продуктов к их собственным потребностям, а также разделяем мнения насчет продуктов с другими пользователями. Одновременно респонденты редко предлагают предпринимателям модификацию (43,1%) или создание нового продукта (16%). Разработка заканчивается выводами синтетического характера.

Ключевые слова: открытые инновации, потребление и производство как одно целое, потребительское поведение, краудсорсинг.

Коды JEL: M31, O35

Artykuł zaakceptowany do druku w kwietniu 2018 roku

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