CustomerSourcing: Intrinsic Motivators

FRED KITCHENS & CAMERON CRANE

Abstract Crowdsourcing is a well-developed concept, which has become very prevalent with the growth and development of the Internet; Web 2.0 in particular. CustomerSourcing is a sub-category of Crowdsourcing which has developed a following in recent years. This article explains the development and conceptual underpinnings of CustomerSourcing; followed by the introduction of a 16-point framework for identifying specific intrinsic motivators. The motivation framework is applied to the major categories of Crowdsourcing; followed by a more specific application to CustomerSourcing in particular. The value of such a model is to help web site developers identify the specific motivators for the potential site users; so that the motivators can be enhanced and supported – resulting in improved web sites with increased use and increased frequency of use.

Keywords: • CustomerSourcing • Crowdsourcing • Supply Chain • Value Chain • Intrinsic Motivation •
1 Introduction

Conceptually, crowdsourcing is not a new concept at all. It is simply the process of calling upon the general public - the “crowd” – to contribute, by whatever method appropriate, to solving a business problem. In the 1700’s the Alkali Prize was established to solicit from the general public a less expensive method of producing sodium carbonate (Nesta, 2017). And in the 1800’s the Oxford English Dictionary asked the general public for new words which might be added to the dictionary (Brabham, 2013). Successful examples of crowdsourcing can be found throughout history; but the exponential growth of the concept did not begin until the Internet gave quick and easy access to the “crowd” – and particularly, the enabling characteristics of Web 2.0 (Tredinnick, 2006; DeVun, 2009; Chaordix, 2014).

Although the concept is nothing new, the term “Crowdsourcing” was coined as recently as 2006 when it appeared in a seminal article, “The Rise of Crowdsourcing” (Howe, 2006). Initially, Howe only described the phenomenon, without providing a succinct definition. After the ‘crowd’ had some time to explore and discuss the concept, Howe proposed a formal definition:

“Crowdsourcing is the act of taking a job traditionally performed by a designated agent (usually an employee) and outsourcing it to an undefined, generally large group of people in the form of an open call.” (Howe, 2008)

Capability and awareness are the two most important factors in Crowdsourcing. First, the Internet provides the capability of reaching and communicating with the crowd – the general public to which the open call is placed. Second, public awareness of the concept of CustomerSourcing as a new business tool (Horton & Chilton, 2010). As awareness quickly lead to popularity, a wide variety of sub-categories arose, each with varying purposes and characteristics. For example:

- CrowdFunding
- Cloud Labor (Macrowork and Microwork)
- Crowdvoting
- Crowdsearching
- Crowdsolving
- Crowdsourcing
- CrowdReviews
- CustomerSourcing

As a subcategory of crowdsourcing, CustomerSourcing is the focus of this article, as first described by Crane & Kitchens (2013). In particular, the focus will be on the intrinsic motivation which individuals have for participating in CustomerSourcing activities.
2 Rise of CustomerSourcing

Many traditional business processes have been altered with advancement of the Internet and e-business (Laudon, 2012); CustomerSourcing is one such example. It can be described as a modification from the traditional value chain and supply chain models; as described here.

2.1 Supply Chain Model

The supply chain model is traditionally depicted as a chain of business entities, one leading to the next, in a linear fashion. The supplier leads to the firm, which leads to the distributor, to the retailer, and finally to the customer (Kathawaia, 2003). This represents the flow of goods from raw materials to finished product, as depicted in Figure 1: Supply Chain Model.

![Figure 1: Supply Chain Model](image)

2.2 Value Chain Model

The value chain model depicts the primary activities and support activities occur within a business unit (Porter, 1985). The activities included in the traditional value chain are depicted in Figure 2: Value Chain Activities.

![Figure 2: Value Chain Activities (Porter, 1985)](image)

The effect of the Internet and disintermediation has, in many cases, caused the elimination of the middle-man (Pinto, 2000). Thus, by eliminating the Distributor and retailer from the supply chain model, and by inserting the value chain model in place of the manufacturer/service provider, the resulting new model depicts the customer, a business
unit with related activities, and the customer; as depicted in Figure 3: Disintermediation and the Merger of Value Chain with the Supply Chain Model.

In the realm of e-commerce, all of the traditional functions of the supply chain continue to exist; but the individual firms have been disintermediated. The result is fewer middlemen; perhaps reduced to a single entity providing the services of the entire supply chain. This single firm is then collecting the resources from suppliers, performing some operation on the material to produce a product or service, and supplying the end product to the customer.

In the case of Crowdsourcing, the “suppliers” may actually be the “crowd.” The resources generated from the crowd-suppliers could conceivably be anything. Recalling a few of the various sub-categories of crowdsourcing reveals the wide variety of CustomerSourced resources available to a firm:

- CrowdFunding could generate operating capital
- Cloud Labor (also known as Macrowork and Microwork) could provide some of the necessary labor which is needed to run the firm or produce the output – any of the primary or support activities could be performed by crowd labor
- CrowdReviews could provide suggestions for product or service improvement
- Crowdsolving might replace a research and development team

In short, recalling Howe’s (2008) definition of crowdsourcing, a significant portion of the activities found in the Value Chain Model could be, ‘outsourced to a group of people in the form of an open call.’

The combination of disintermediation and crowdsourcing has created a new landscape in e-commerce. What is even more remarkable is the advent of a particular category of crowdsourcing, called CustomerSourcing.
2.3 CustomerSourcing

CustomerSourcing is a unique category of crowdsourcing in which the customers are also serving in the model as the suppliers. The resources which are being provided by the suppliers are actually coming from the customers themselves (Crane & Kitchens, 2013). Perhaps the easiest resource to supply in an e-commerce model would be data. There are many examples of situations where data is supplied to a firm; in which the firm processes the date in some way, and provides it back to the customers.

Examples of CustomerSourcing abound. In the most pure form of CustomerSourcing, the customer-suppliers are a closed group; all customers are suppliers, and there are no suppliers who are not customers. A popular example of this situation is found in online-dating sites (Kitchens & Crane, 2014). In this situation the potential customer is required to create an account and upload certain data describing themselves before they are allowed to download any information about other people who might be potential dates. Thus, the customer is forced to first become a supplier, before they may become a consumer of the online-dating site’s services.

There are other situations, where the customer-suppliers are not necessarily an exclusive group. Customers might be “potential suppliers;” or suppliers might have an interest in improving the output, but may never choose to consume the resulting output themselves. The social networking industry is built on this concept. Facebook, for example, is the largest social networking site in the world with 1.1 Billion unique monthly visitors (eBiz, 2017). They allow anyone to browse a limited portion of their content (the “public profiles”). To see more content, a potential customer is required to create an account and befriend other customers. This model is depicted in Figure 4: CustomerSourcing Model.

![Figure 4: CustomerSourcing Model](image-url)
3 Motivation

The financial aspect of CustomerSourcing has been explored by Kitchens & Crane (2014); in which the customer-supplier participants were found to fall into 3 broad categories: those with net income, those who broke even, and those who experienced a net outflow. The prospects of breaking even, let alone volunteering to knowingly experience a net financial outflow, gave rise to the question of motivation. Specifically, why do the customer-suppliers participate in an endeavour in which they know they will experience no financial benefit, or will result in a net financial loss? In addition, if these situations harbour ulterior incentives, then perhaps the prospect of financial gain is not the only incentive in the net income category. It has been shown that the motivation for individuals engaged in crowdsourcing can be a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Aparicio, 2012).

3.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Traditionally, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were thought to be mutually exclusive categories of motivation. The more contemporary view is that these exist as to distinct types of motivation which create a continuum (Vallerand, 1993). While multiple motivators may exist simultaneously, the strength of each motivator may vary from person to person, and from task to task (Aitamurto, 2015; Aitamurto, 2016; Brabham, 2008; Brabham, 2010; Kaufmann, 2011; Brabham, 2012).

While financial incentive is one possible motivator on the extrinsic end of the motivation continuum, it may not be the only motivator (extrinsic or intrinsic). On the other end of the continuum, intrinsic motivation can be categorized into sixteen basic desires (Grabmeier, 2000; Riess, 2002). The sixteen categories of intrinsic motivation are:

- Acceptance, the need for approval
- Curiosity, the need to learn
- Eating, the need for food
- Family, the need to raise children
- Honor, the need to be loyal to the traditional values of one’s clan/ethnic group
- Idealism, the need for social justice
- Independence, the need for individuality
- Order, the need for organized, stable, predictable environments
- Physical activity, the need for exercise
- Power, the need for influence of will
- Romance, the need for sex and for beauty
- Saving, the need to collect
- Social contact, the need for friends (peer relationships)
- Social status, the need for social standing/importance
- Tranquillity, the need to be safe
- Vengeance, the need to strike back and to compete
3.1.1 Crowdsourcing and Intrinsic Motivation

Using these categories, it is possible to classify the major motivators for each of the main crowdsourcing sub-categories. Crowdfunding for example is where the crowd provides financial resources for anything from business start-ups to study-abroad trips for students. Crowdfunding could provide multiple forms of intrinsic motivators. Selecting from the list of 16 intrinsic motivators (Grabmeier, 2000; Riess, 2002), those that most likely apply to Crowdfunding are:

- Honor: such as the satisfaction of supporting a family member studying abroad
- Curiosity: the opportunity to learn more about a new invention, possibly even being one of the first to own a prototype
- Idealism: the opportunity to aid in correcting social justice by supporting an underdog
- Saving: the chance to add to a collection in exchange for a financial contribution
- Social Status: the chance to be a major (or first) investor in a promising start-up business

The classification of forms of crowdsourcing into the 16 forms of intrinsic motivation can be performed for every category. Figure 5: Crowdsourcing and Intrinsic Motivation depicts the classifications for some of the most common forms of crowdsourcing.

![Figure 5: Crowdsourcing and Intrinsic Motivation](image)

3.1.2 CustomerSourcing and Intrinsic Motivation

Focusing specifically on the CustomerSourcing form of Crowdsourcing, it is easy to imagine how each CustomerSourcing site might embody a specific set of intrinsic motivators. Even within the same industry, specific sites may have differing sets of motivators. For example, within the social media industry, two of the leading sites are
FaceBook and Linkedin. Each has a different purpose and a different audience. This leads to different sets of motivators. FaceBook could have motivators such as:

- Acceptance: gaining the reassurance that friends and family approve of one’s choice of holiday or new puppy
- Honor: expressing support for one’s family or ethnic group
- Independence: an opportunity to express one’s personal opinions or unique interests
- Romance: a place to express one’s feelings for another
- Social Contact: an opportunity to accept invitations, offer invitations, and to reflect of social events
- Curiosity: a place where questions can be posed to friends and family, seeking approval or advice
- Idealism: an opportunity to express one’s opinion in an effort to sway public opinion on a social cause
- Order: a place where individuals can provide explanation and structure for complex topics
- Power: while it is generally considered socially unacceptable; some have used Facebook as a platform for bullying
- Social Status: an outlet for the need to brag about oneself
- Vengeance: another motivator which is generally considered socially unacceptable; some have used FaceBook to launch social attacks on people or organizations

On the other hand, another social media platform, LinkedIn.com, provides a different set of motivators; as do each of the CustomerSourcing platforms. A sample of some of the most common forms of CustomerSourcing, with specific web sites for each, are depicted in Figure 6: CustomerSourcing and Intrinsic Motivation; with the corresponding potential motivators for each.

![Figure 6: CustomerSourcing and Intrinsic Motivation](image-url)
4 Conclusions

Identification and classification of intrinsic motivation for crowdsourcing, and more specifically CustomerSourcing, websites is not an activity without consequence. Websites need users. In particular, CustomerSourcing web sites are vitally dependant on their customers as users in order to receive some form of supply for their Value Chain. Yet, some of these sites have no extrinsic benefit to the users – financial or otherwise. Studying these intrinsic factors is vitally important. Site developers need to identify the motivators, and create web sites which support and enhance the users’ intrinsic motivators. The ultimate goal when a site relies on users for some of its value chain items is for an increased number of users, with increased frequency of visits.

Further research should seek to quantify the most important motivators which result in increased users and increased frequency of use.

References


