

## EXPERIENCE SHARING MARKETING AS A NEW MARKETING TOOL

**Katarzyna ŁAZORKO**

*Czestochowa University of Technology, Czestochowa, Poland*

*E-mail address: katarzyna\_lazorko@wp.pl*

**Summary:** The paper presents different actions undertaken by organisations that base on the aspect of experience sharing and it indicates when that approach would be applicable to gain attention and involvement of different groups of interest. The discussion in the paper is based not only on critical analyse of literature but also presents wide range of research on the topic of social media popularity, experience sharing, and Polish digital media customer profiles as well as results of the research conducted by the author among students of Czestochowa University of Technology.

**Keywords:** collaborative economy, sharing economy, digital consumers, digital natives

### 1. Introduction

Internet and its accessibility enable users to consume together, share thoughts, opinions, facts concerning their private and professional lives in the scale and with easiness that have not been accessible so far. Information and communication technologies development influence interpersonal contacts, determine consumption patterns, including ways of information gathering during purchase processes. Customers share their hobbies, points of view, interests and also get involved in movements or initiatives as experience sharing.

The paper is aimed at presentation of different aspect of experience sharing and its key elements that must be considered when marketing strategies are planned especially the ones addressed to new digital customers.

The discussion is derived from the collaborative economy idea as a new tendency that results in many new occurrences in the market, including sharing economy.

### 2. The concept sharing economy as an aspect of collaborative economy

The concept's of collaborative economy popularity has been increasingly growing in recent years. Collaborative economy may be defined as 'an economic model where ownership and access are shared between corporation, startups, and people. This results in market efficiencies that bear new products, services, and business growth' (Owyang 2013). The collaborative economy concept bases on *many-to-many* model instead of *one-to-many* model that has been describing business and customers activeness for many years. The *many-to-many* approach is possible to be spread among different groups of customers because of intensiveness of new interactive media development. The research conducted by Altimeter indicate that there are three groups of factors that have derived and enabled collaborative economy:

1. Societal: increasing population density – accessibility of more people meaning accessibility of more points of supply; drive to sustainability by reselling, renting, co-owning and gifting; desire for community – people want to bypass companies to transact with each other; generational altruism –sharing finite resources or 'paying it forward';
2. Economic: monetization of excess or idle inventory – using resources not used at the moment by owners; increase of financial flexibility as result of growing numbers of

freelancers and micro-entrepreneurs; access over ownership – in case of specialists or luxury products they become accessible by rental for example; influx of VC funding – as research indicate VC funding accelerate the growth of some industries;

3. Technological: social networking; growing popularity of mobile devices and platforms; payment systems basing not only on monetary exchanges but digital reputation (Oweyang 2013).

Nowadays communication tools enable the process of consumption in the dimension that was not available before. According to Buczynski (2013) the collaborative consumption ‘is a new way of living, in which access is valued over ownership, experience is valued over material possessions, and "mine" becomes "ours," and everyone's needs are met without waste. (...) the beauty of the sharing economy is that it is free, so anyone can participate and make a difference. No one has to sacrifice their individuality or comfort. Best of all, when we're actively engaged in sharing, personal connections are rekindled and we become invested in our communities again’. Thus within the process of exchange between buyers and sellers also changes have occurred as result of collaborative economy (table 1). The basic ideas related to transactions are interpreted slightly different because of the impact of collaborative economy.

**Table 1. Interpretation of transactions in collaborative economy**

sell	Not new but more and more individuals are empowered to provide goods directly to customers online
resell	For payment, a seller offers used products
rent	For payment a provider offers a product for use
subscribe	For a recurring payment, a provider offers repeat products
co-own/co-op	Two or more own or share a product together. Applies to individuals and business
invest/loan	Consumers become investors or banks, or invest in or lend directly t each other
swap	For no payment o a nominal fee, two parties trade goods or services directly
lend	For no payment or a nominal fee a ‘gifter’ provides a product that will be returned
gift/donate	For no payment or a nominal fee a ‘gifter’ provides a product to a receiver. Reciprocation may be a requirement.

Source: (Oweyang 2013)

Sharing is one of key elements of collaborative economy. There are many ways that sharing economy may be introduced. Customers share things they do not use at the moment (‘share your couch’, bookcrossing), they consume together (travel together: blablacars.pl) or split payments (FairSplitting, e.g.). In the model of sharing economy people posses sources without intercede of inefficient corporations, search for alternatives to established channels of distribution and even change inadequate legislation (Owyang 2015). The research conducted among students of Czestochowa University of Technology<sup>19</sup> indicate that students share things quite frequently (82% declare they share things that they do not use at the moment) - mostly books, clothes and games.

<sup>19</sup> The research were conducted on the group of 100 students using the random way of sampling. The quantitative research (auditorium questionnaire) were complemented by qualitative research – interviews on the topic of sharing and its different dimensions, including sharing of experiences.

### **3. Digital customers**

The changes mentioned above have taken place because societies evaluate. The ones present in internet change its nature. In Poland internet users represent Y Generation (30%) and Digital Natives also called Z Generation (23%) mainly (Fas 2015). Reports on Polish digital customers behaviour indicate that they want to participate in different societies and to learn opinions of other customers. They expect dialogue, openness and flexibility and situation when not rules but their preferences and expectation determine offers (ShoppingShow 2014). Nowadays market is shaped mainly by behaviours of new customers - Digital Natives who grew up in the environment where internet was present so they have been functioning in virtual reality since they were born. In consequence they prefer graphic forms of communication and without internet they feel lost. They follow many parallel stories at the same time. Internet is their natural environment and they need to feel linked in. They expect immediate satisfaction. They like playing games online (Kedzierski, 2012). Greenfiel indicate that their 'thinking skills enhanced by repeated exposure to computer games and other digital media include reading visual images as representations of three-dimensional space (representational competence), multidimensional visual-spatial skills, mental maps, mental paper folding (i.e. picturing the results of various origami-like folds in your mind without actually doing them), inductive discovery (i.e. making observations, formulating hypotheses and figuring out the rules governing the behavior of a dynamic representation), attention deployment (such as monitoring multiple locations simultaneously), and responding faster to expected and unexpected stimuli (Prensky 2001). Multitasking that is characteristic for the group enables them to follow a few plots at the same time. They can easily find any information that they search for (Pawlowska 2014). As consequence it's hard to attract and maintain their attention. They expect excitement and being taken aback during shopping.

The research conducted among students of Czestochowa University of Technology - typical digital customers indicate that they use social media frequently to share wide range of information. Most frequently they share information about places they visit, photos they took, hobbies and activities they perform with their friends. Quite surprisingly they are not eager to share the photos and films published by others, 1/3 of them does it, if they are asked to do so or if they like it so much that want their friends to see it. More than 25% search for people to perform some interesting activities through social media – rarely (no more than 9%) search for people to go out or to travel with in social media. Students indicate that they generally do not use social media to boast but at the same time they indicated during interviews that is one of the determinants of social media activeness of their peers.

### **4. Experience sharing initiatives**

In that part of the paper some of interesting initiatives that base on sharing are presented. They were introduced in Poland by different types of organisations but in all situations they were aimed at engaging participants in new experience and initiate exchange of experience in social media. Their goal was to promote the organisers by involvement of participants and spreading information among potential users.

One of Polish publishing houses announced the competition where participants should take a photo of one of the books published (the book concerned the topic of digital photography) and were asked to publish the photo on their wall on Facebook. The most interesting arrangements were to be rewarded. The goal of the campaign was quite obvious – to reach the group of photographs and promote the book among their "friends" some of whom probably share the same hobby. Another example of the experience sharing aimed also on commercial purpose comes from Zielona Gora. Participants were asked to visit one of the local shopping centres

and find the billboard with photograph of players of the local basketball team. After taking the photo with the billboard in the background the contestants were asked to publish it on their wall in Fb and indicate the localisation of the shopping centre. The first 10 people were rewarded with some special packs of club gadgets, the rest received stickers on cars and other small gadgets of the sport club. Bloggers, inspired by companies, use experience sharing method to propagate products. For example on one of the blogs addressed to mothers its author proposed readers to watch the trailer of the film for children that was going to be shown in cinemas soon after and discuss with kids their scenarios for play with the characters from the movie. Later mothers were asked to described the scenario as comments underneath the announcement about the competition. Some gadgets from the film and tickets were planned for the best descriptions. It was another interesting example of involving people to share experience to promote a product. Also local governments promote their offers using the tool of experience sharing. The city of Gdynia promotes bicycles as an alternative forms of transport for inhabitants. The city hall organised a competition that enables bicyclists to send photos of: bike lanes that are most frequently attended by them, things that must be carried when cycling. The photos were to be send to e-mail address and winners were tempted with rewards including different bike accessories. In the program local bloggers were involved and they created the challenges (topics of tasks ) for participants. In Poland there were also many social campaigns that encourage experience sharing. One of the most popular was the campaign aimed at preventing stereotypes concerning rapes. Men were asked to wear dresses, take photos and then publish them in social media with the note: “Jesli kobieta wkładając spódniczkę zaprasza do gwałtu, to ja też zapraszam (“If a woman wearing a dress invites a rapist, let me invite one”). The idea behind that type of actions (as world widely known Ice Bucket Challenge for example) is to draw attention to the problem by experiencing something new and sharing the experience.

The students of CUT who participated in the research on sharing cited above indicated that they would participate in new experience sharing activities because of (in order of indications – from the most important one): interesting goal of the action (e.g. charity), their friends’ participation, novelty of experience, awards and popularity of the action.

That elements may be a kind of indication for marketers who plan experience sharing event. It definitely should have a goal that would be attractive and this attractiveness is not measured by awards what is understood as behaviour of that group is aimed at gathering experience instead of gathering things. Though it must be remembered that as researcher indicate extraordinary experiences are not something what can be easily shared and they can cause the feelings of alienation and not fitting – the social costs excel benefits from the experience (Cooney, Gilbert&Wilson 2014). At the same time “ordinary” experiences become more valuable if they are shared with others (Boothby, Clark & Bargh, 2014).

To sum up it may be assumed that experience that marketers want customers to participate in and share must represent values and benefits that target groups expect and find interesting. Apparently addressees may not expect awards in traditional form, but they may desire for new experience, realisation of the goal that is important to them and popularity of initiative among their friends.

## **5. Conclusions**

The discussion in the paper was focused on the area of sharing experience as a tool for marketers to reach groups of customers and inspire their advocacy. That activeness was shown as an element that can be used effectively especially that communication technologies have changed and new opportunities have occurred.

Sharing new experience may be an alternative (or rather complementary) element in promotion of offers, especially in markets of X and Z generations. Polish social media users research provide another base for the assumption. Polish social media users perceive themselves as independently thinking individuals who experience different things as first ones and are asked to share their opinions (Euro RSCG 2010).

Moreover sharing experience is a tendency that, although require more efforts from organisations, directly relate to expectations of nowadays customers, including digital natives. The strategy of experience sharing should be aimed at customers who are the most valuable for organisations – their involvement is important for organisations and their opinions are advantageous (opinion leaders, e.g). This way the basic assumption of relationship marketing basing on awareness and involvement of the most valuable customers would be performed. Especially that, as the authors of the Report by Euro RSCG and IMAS International indicated, organisations tend to perceive social media as a tool of mass communication while not the number of contacts but their quality matters.

As discussed collaborative economy and sharing economy as its aspect, may be indicated as one of the trends that influence customer behaviour nowadays. People tend to share the experiences more often and tend to exhibit different elements of their lives more openly. That phenomenon may not be ignored when marketing strategies are being planned.

## References

1. Boothby E.J, Clark M.S., Bargh J.A. (2014): Shared Experiences Are Amplified, *“Psychological Science”*, 25(12), p.2209-2216.
2. Buczynski B. (2013): Sharing is Good: How to Save Money, Time and Resources through Collaborative Consumption, New Society Publishers.
3. Cooney G., Gilbert D.T., Wilson T.D. (2014): The Unforeseen Costs of Extraordinary Experience, *“Psychological Science”*, 12, p.2259-2265.
4. Euro RSCG (2010): KNOW. Konsument w mediach społecznościowych, <http://interaktywnie.com/public/upload/data/Konsument-w-mediach-spoecznościowych.pdf>.
5. Fas A. (2015): Internet w Polsce IX-XI 2014, <http://www.egospodarka.pl/119202,Internet-w-Polsce-IX-XI-2014,1,12,1.html>.
6. Owyang J. (2013): The Collaborative Economy, <http://www.slideshare.net/Altimeter/the-collaborative-economy>.
7. Owyang J. (2015), *Liberals and Conservatives Both Love and Loathe the Sharing Economy*, “The Wall Street Journal. Business.”, 20.02.2015, <http://blogs.wsj.com/accelerators/2015/02/20/weekend-read-liberal-and-conservatives-both-love-and-loathe-the-sharing-economy/>.
8. Pawłowska M. (2014): Generacja Z. Młodzi, otwarci, wychowani w dobrobycie, żyjący w świecie wirtualnym, skazani na kryzys, <http://natemat.pl/55617,generacja-z-mlodzi-otwarci-wychowani-w-dobrobycie-zyjacy-w-swiecie-wirtualnym-skazani-na-kryzys>
9. Prensky M. (2001): Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Part II, <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part2.pdf>
10. ShoppingShow (2014): Zwyczaje zakupowe konsumenta digitalnego. Badania jakościowe, [http://www.shoppingshow.pl/raporty/ShoppingShow\\_2014\\_RAPORT\\_zwyczaje\\_zakupowe\\_konsu-meta\\_digitalnego\\_q.pdf](http://www.shoppingshow.pl/raporty/ShoppingShow_2014_RAPORT_zwyczaje_zakupowe_konsu-meta_digitalnego_q.pdf)