

CO-ADVERTISING, E-WOM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

DAVIDE PELLEGRINI

University of Parma, Italy

FRANCESCA DE CANIO

University of Parma, Italy

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Abstract

Following the digital revolution, the traditional divide between value creation - R&D, production and advertising - and value distribution and consumption – sales, use and post-use- is blurring. Individuals and companies are called to exchange multiple inputs and outputs before, during and after sale. The new contemporarity of value processes is gradually leading to a new convergence among parties. Companies are enabled to promote, intermediate and intercept the customers conversation; individuals are committed to the new social game and keeping companies under non-contractual observation. This study researches the effects of e-WOM (Electronic-Word of Mouth) of individuals through a netnography on 20 worldwide crowd-sourcing platforms. Findings demonstrate that the new overlapping of dialogue and sale can generate a positive loop between companies and individuals responsibility and reduce the distance between market and society.

Keywords: Co-advertising; E-WOM; Co-value chain; Social responsibility; Company-consumer communication; Consumer behavior; Netnography.

1. Introduction

Following the digital revolution, production, distribution and consumption are no longer linear steps in a supply chain. In the past, companies made proposal – *value proposition* – while consumers purchased – *exchange value* – and used products and services – *value in use* - and the three phases of “proposition – sale – use” followed a clear logical and chronological sequence in time and space. Pre-sale data collection logistically implied being present at point of sale, which was usually the scene of the dialogue, and the phase of use took place at a different time. Now, the continuity of conversations is remodeling the value processes framework and can reduce the distance between individuals and companies. In this context, the recent attempt by companies to promote, intermediate and intercept the customer’s conversation is opening up a new ideological debate: is the new social game bringing new value for the gamers? Are we seeing a truly new form of value co-creation? In 2002, Gummesson put forward the idea of a “value-creation network society” which implies a science or discipline with

“new foundation, new values, new assumptions or new methods”. In 2004, Lusch and Vargo propose their *Service Dominant Logic* model in which the consumer is always the protagonist in creating value. In 2008 Grönroos stated: “...accepting value in use as a foundational value creation concept, customers are the value creators (...) the supplier can become a co-creator of value with its customers”. Value is interactively co-created by companies and consumers, rather than merely exchanged (Leavy, 2004). More recently, Gummesson (2011) suggests substituting the old B2B or B2C acronyms with the new A2A interaction: actors to actors, interacting in many-to-many networks. In 2008, an issue of the *European Journal of Marketing* entitled *Bridging the divide* and focused on the new opportunities for cooperation between company and customer. In 2009, Schau, Muñiz and Arnould clustered 52 articles from international marketing journals: all of them explicitly claim to examine collective customer behavior and its positive implication for the companies. There has been however less interest in the implications for customers.

Despite the over-optimism of the new service-marketing mainstream, many authors suggest caution. Prosumption is more than an economic activity (Holt, 1995; Xie et al., 2008; Firat, 1991), consequently, the theoretical debate requires a multidisciplinary approach. Many authors claim that new technologies are not reducing the distance between individuals and companies, which maintain their separate and complementary roles.

Humphreys and Grayson (2008), argue that when consumers take over steps that create *use value* (e.g., when they dispense their own soft drink at a fast-food restaurant or they assemble their own furniture for Ikea) their fundamental role in the economic system does not change. They suggest considering *use value* and *exchange value* separately, as in fact the situation is different when consumers produce something that they themselves do not use but can be sold to others (*exchange value*). Imagine a digital newspaper with free content supplied by readers and advertising revenues (*exchange value*) collected by the editor. In this example, who is driving the value creation process? It was not by chance that recently, thousands of bloggers promoted a class action against the Huffington Post, claiming the publisher refused to make fair payments despite profiting from their advertising revenues. At a first glance, the exploitation risk is doubled by the fact that the customer is the co-producer but in the same time is the co-user of contents and, as potential reader; he is the indirect buyer of advertising.

As Bowen (1990) suggests “it is one thing to leave assembly and transport to the customer, in return for a substantial cost advantage, like Ikea; but another thing to use the consumer’s knowledge and give no cost advantage”. Following Bowen’s original criticism, many researchers emphasize the risk of exploitation (Kelley et al., 1990; Faranda, 1994; Brodie et al., 1997; Ballantyne & Varey 2008; Humphreys & Grayson, 2008; Dujarier M.A., 2009; Salmon C., 2008). These researchers claim that exploitation no longer takes place in factories but is moving into the home, where individuals generate production but are not rewarded by the distribution of the value they have created. Fortunately, the consumer has a unique ability to defend him or herself against firms, which reduce his or her role to a sort of “part-time employee” of the service provider or as a “human resource at its disposal (Mills & Morris, 1986; Bowen & Schneider, 1988; Bateson, 1983; Keh & Teo, 2001; Kelley et al., 1992; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000)

Starting from the concept of *countervailing power* many authors open new perspectives. In 2006, Arnould et al. write “consumer groups have a greater voice in the co-creation of value...and exhibit a sense of moral responsibility”. In practice, individuals take part in *peer-to-peer* conversation with a mixture of narcissism and altruism in order to feel they belong to a community, gain recognition and continue their process of identity building. Since identity is built on differences, in many cases the new collective conversations are driven by a reaction against market power (Dholakia N. et al. 2009). In this, context Chia (2012) analyzes how

advertising is one of the most important element of discussion between people, and also how exposure to advertising influences their interaction.

Many authors demonstrate that individuals' conversations are strongly influenced by the social desire to share personal experiences, knowledge and opinions about who they interact with, in other words, companies or brands. Conversations are often based on the perception that "...there are things that the firm cannot tell you" (Firat A. *et al.*, 2005). The phenomenon of exploitation is sometimes a feeling, "a social construct dangerous for firms" and as such can feed on collective suggestion. Increasingly through blogs, forums and others web platforms consumers gather to talk about brands, products and services, both in positive – *co-advertising*, and in negative terms- *co-destruction*. As stated by Plè and Caceres (2010) "inappropriate or unexpected use of the available resources in an interaction will result in value co-destruction for at least one of the parties". Due to this fragile management of consumer WOM and e-WOM, many topics of research are influenced by organizational and psychological theory. In 2003 Bendapudi and Leone highlight the psychological implication of interactivity. More recently, Gilde *et al.* (2011) describe *customer citizenship behaviour*, or the discretionary response of a customer to external events, which require him or her to carry out functions other than consumption.

If customers act as citizens, every opening by companies on social topics - pollution free production, safety in the workplace, training, valorization of immigration, equal opportunities, etc. - represents a new opportunity for dialogue and convergence. It is important to note that conversation about these topics can lead to effective results when the company is aware of being under non-contractual type of observation by the crowd. This means that the company accepts a new mechanism of collective indirect control or "Public Scrutiny", in other words, people's ethical control of the topic on-line (Kozinets, 2002).

Ate and Buttgen (2008) introduce the concept of *customer orientation to the company* as a sentiment, which can influence the mood of conversation between customer and company. In fact, customers' contributions are, in this light, a form of *organizational citizenship behaviour*, which can be clearly affected by cultural atmosphere (Bettencourt, 1997; Kendrick, 1985; Goudarzi, 2009). In this perspective, the working customers can be seen as employees and the *socialization of their work* implies strong commitment to the company (Bowers *et al.*, 1990; Leary-Kelly *et al.*, 1994; Manolis, 2001; Vijiande *et al.*, 2009). What is clear is that the new social space belonging to the digital conversation is a new middle ground for the matching or tuning between market and society. In the new digital space, individuals talk as customers and citizens in the same time. Cova and Dalli (2007, 2009) suggest that the new collective conversations can be epitomized by the concept of *communities*.

Within communities, individuals are inspired by *linking value* or *gift logic* and aim to defend society. The authors ask whether this type of meta-market can be considered as an entity in itself, separate from the market and capable of protect citizens from the risk of exploitation. From the same perspective, other authors focus on the concept of 'sharing', as a fundamental consumer behavior that is similar to *gift giving* (Bergquist & Ljungberg, 2001; Belk, R. 2010). Starting from the idea of new-shared collective conversation, a new type of convergence come into being. Market and society do not coincide, companies and customer act as counterparts playing different roles but their interests are converging.

New concepts like *reciprocity* and *social trust* enter the marketing dictionary (Mathwick, Wiertz, & de Ruyter, 2008; Uzoamak, 1999; Paulin, 2006; Feldman, 1981; Buttgen, 2008; Fisher, 1986, Jeong & Lee, 2013). In many cases, prosumerism can generate a new loop between company and consumer responsibility, and consumers can commit to this *new social game* of being customer and citizen at work.

2. The New Co-Value Chain Model

At the light of the theoretical debate, we now assess whether the new digital conversation represents a new common ground of convergence. The logical framework of our empirical test starts from the numerous attempts, which have been made to conceptualize the processes of working customer. Several classification schemes have been proposed to analyze consumer inputs. Chase (1978) distinguishes services according to the extent of “physical presence of the customer in the system”; Mills and Morris (1986) also based their classification system on the extent of interaction, a more useful way to characterize participation-intensive services than the extent of simple customer contact (Faranda, 1994, Payne 2008). More recently, Buttgen (2008) tests a model implying different phases of co-production; Michel et al. (2008) identify three different roles for the working consumer and three different techniques used by suppliers to encourage consumer involvement. Recently Etgar M. (2008) and Maglio et al. (2008) propose a descriptive model of the consumer co-production process. In 2012, Seraj analyzes three specific online communities identifying the users’ desire for social action and their participation in the value creation.

Duque et al. (2009) explore hedonic and social benefit; Raval (2010) suggests “there is no value without enjoyment”; Helkkula et al. (2009) discuss the difficulties in measuring different levels of enjoyment; Chu & Kim (2011); Thota et al. (2012) analyze the increase in new types of technology platforms which has led to the growth in customizable content. The literature explores the e-Word of Mouth as a new pattern. In 1993, Moorman introduce eWom as the “willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence”.

Ten years later Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) describe eWom as a more complex concept ascribable to “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions”. Individual who take part in collective conversation are talking as an individual *-me-* and/or as a plural *-us-*. Chu & Kim (2011) suggest analyzing eWOM behaviors in depth with the goal of identifying particular influential individuals. Kilambi, Laroche and Richard (2013) emphasize the fact that “all members of a community know and understand themselves as a collective”. In this perspective, the contribution of peer-to-peer communication in co-creation of value becomes important especially with respect to its viral-like advertising (Strutton et al., 2011).

In the light of so many different approaches, we develop a new simplified matrix of consumer input to the firm and related output (Figure 1). Of course, input for the consumer constitutes output for the firm and vice versa, and *convergence* can take place only if the results are positive for both parties.

There are essentially three types of value input made by the consumer:

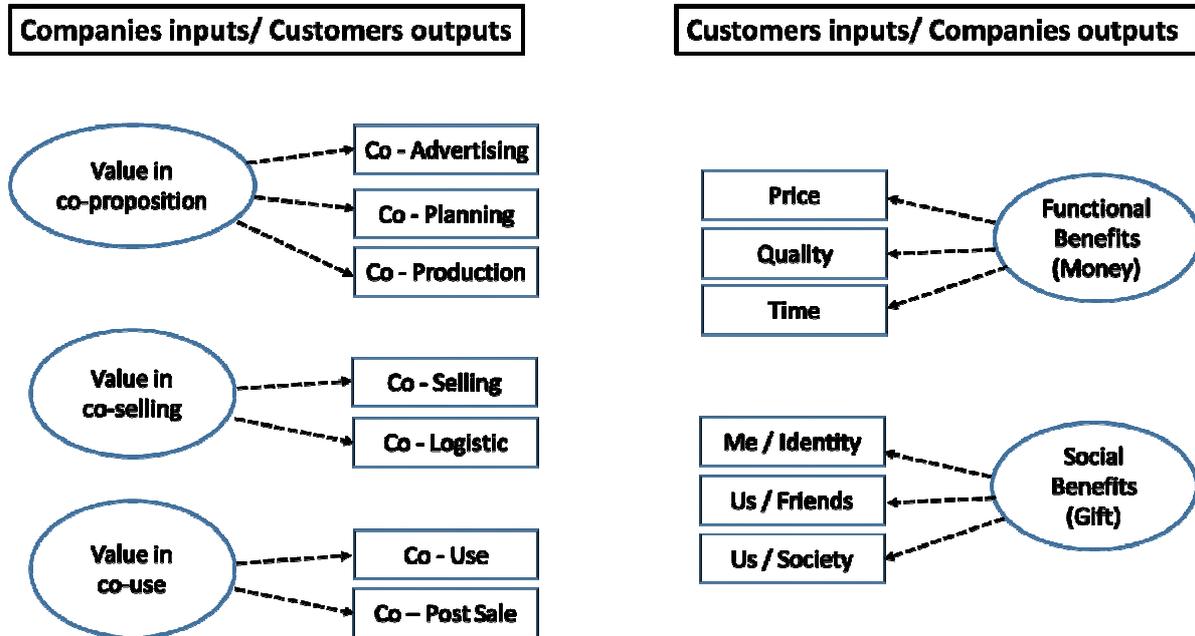
- 1) *value in co-proposition* - the consumer gives his/her opinion independently before sale and use (co-advertising, co-planning, and co-production);
- 2) *value in co-selling* - the consumer interacts when buying the good, collaborating in the sale and logistics;
- 3) *value in co-use* - the consumer interacts in use of the service and post-sales assistance.

At the same time, individuals receive two types of value inputs:

- a) *functional benefits* represented by their cognitive and affective perception of economic advantages like *price*, *quality* and *time saving*;
- b) *social benefits* classified as personal- *me/identity-*, relational – *us/friends-* and social – *us/society -*.

The arrows going in different directions are the key feature of the diagram and indicate that these benefits are the result of more than one type of investment. For example, social benefit can accrue in all three phases of dialogue, *pre-sale*, *sale* and *post-sale*.

Figure 1 - The Co-value model



Source: own

In order to test the robustness of the logic of the model, we develop four research hypotheses.

H1 - Contemporarity: *conversations enable the Actors (companies and individuals) to exchange multiple inputs and outputs before, during and after the sale. This means that the traditional divide between value creation - R&D, production and advertising - and value distribution and consumption – sale, use and post use- is blurring.*

H2 - Co-Advertising Relevance: *co-advertising is the co-creation construct with the highest level of consumer involvement since individuals conversations are strongly influenced by the social desire to share personal experiences, knowledge and opinions about the companies or brands they interact with.*

H3 - Collective responsibility: *conversations are often focussed on collective or plural topics –us/friends–us/society. This requires the company to accept a new mechanism of social or collective control.*

H4 - Convergence: *Actors conversations are focussed not only on customers' benefits- price quality and time- but also on citizens' benefits- identity, friends, and society. This leads to a new equilibrium or convergence between the customer perspective- logic of money- and the citizen perspective -logic of gift-.*

3. Methodology

In order to test our hypotheses, we divide the individual benefits into two categories: *economic benefit and social benefit*. Both inputs and outputs are measured through *semantic mining* of the key words used in online conversations. We aim to identify web sentiment through Netnography Analysis based on a sample of 20 crowd-sourcing platforms, like Innocentive, Quora, TripAdvisor, Amazon Turk, etc.. Netnography Analysis as defined by Kozinets “provides information on the symbolism, meaning, and consumption patterns of online consumer groups... it is an online marketing research technique for providing consumer insight”. We thus opt to use pure observational online ethnography to measure the normal flow of information that users exchange, without any kind intermediation from sources as used in Consumer Behaviour Analysis. Analyzing this “Social game” we intend to identify factors that affect online community usage like Usability and Sociability as defined by Preece (2001), or as we understand them in our perspective of market value, Money and Gift.

Conversation among participants from three sources: Facebook, Twitter and Google Blog is monitored (see Appendix). The web voice was first monitored May-June 2012 and in a second phase May-June 2013. For each of 21 platforms we gathered a total of 600 texts (12,600 texts) and from these we excluded:

- Impersonal descriptions which give no information about the user’s experience;
- All messages from bloggers who belonged to the company;
- All messages which were too brief to decipher objectively.

This left us with 4,601 texts and a total of over 250,000 words in about 2,000 pages of word scripts describing sentiment of consumers in the 21 online communities. Initially we tested open software for preliminary linguistic screening, like T-Lab, but the absence of a calibrated search engine for a web monitoring of very different case histories showed the limits of automatism¹. Therefore, we opted for a manual check of contents. Researchers were divided into 4 groups and a cross-linked system of control of words and phrases was used so that if observers in one group were not unanimous in interpreting a message it was submitted to a group of specialists.

For each of the 4,601 texts, a deep semantic analysis was conducted.

The following examples briefly illustrate the workings of text mining. A simplified matrix of consumer inputs to the firm and related outputs is helpful to show the result of this first conceptual screening (Figure 2)

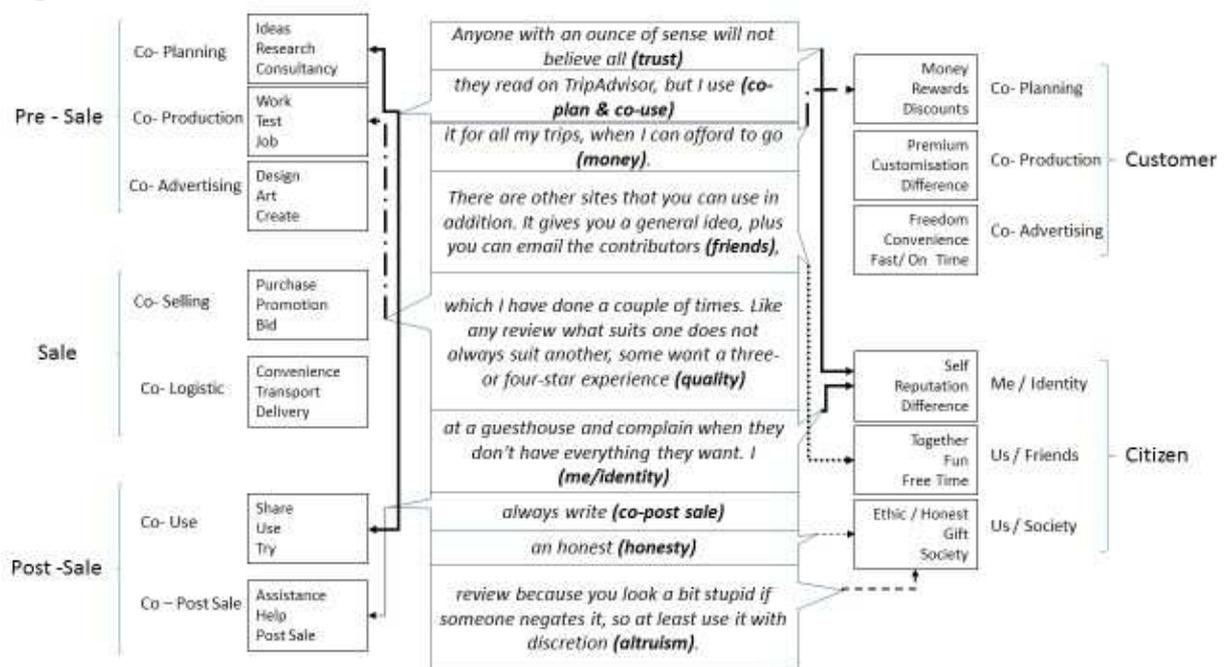
The example shows how consumers’ posts were decoded. The frequency of occurrence of the concepts is expressed as relative to a total of 100, but the original data-set, contains multiple frequencies.

4. Results

As show in figure 3, the Contemporarity is confirmed (H1). In fact, several case histories show actors co-acting at the same time in more than one process (Table 1). The overview shows that *co-advertising* is the process with the highest level of consumer involvement (28.2%) followed by *co-planning* of goods and services (16.4%), *use* (12.8%), *co-selling* (12.7%), *co-production* (12.5%), *co-post-sales* (9.7%) and *co-logistic* (7.8%).

¹ See Appendix for methodological details

Figure 2 – The co-value chain key words: a conceptual framework (example from TripAdvisor)



Source: own

Also the Co-Advertising Relevance is confirmed (H2). As we have seen, co-advertising is the co-creation construct with the highest level of consumer involvement (Table 2), but it is important to analyze the relation between this process and the individual benefit perception. *Co-advertising* proves to be closely correlated to *me/identity* with a Pearson correlation of r^2 : 0.695 at 0.01 significance. This relationship is explained by the individual wishing to “*be original*” and the emotive involvement of individuals using their own creativity. Moreover, *co-advertising* appears closely correlated to *friend/us* with a Pearson correlation of r^2 : 0.539 at 0.05 significance. Lastly, *co-advertising* proves to be closely correlated to *time*, with a Pearson correlation of r^2 : 0.498 at 0.05 significance. This last functional benefit can be explained by the “time saving” benefit for individuals who are collecting information about the products, which they are going to purchase.

Table 1 – Findings of web monitoring of 4.601 texts- Relative frequency of concepts

	Co-Planning and Research	Co-Production	Co-Advertising & Communication	Co-Selling	Co-Logistic	Co-Use	Co-Post Use	Price	Quality	Time	Me - Identity	Friends - Us	Society - Gift - Us	Number of texts
CO-PLANNING (collective research & innovation)														
INNOCENTIVE - co-research & prize contest	41.0	27.5	23.2	1.1	4.8	2.4	-	24.0	3.5	1.7	5.9	13.9	51.0	408
CITY 2.0 - knowledge sharing	88.2	-	11.8	-	-	-	-	5.7	1.4	-	11.6	3.0	78.3	136

CO-PRODUCTION (collective contents & tasks)

HUFFINGTON POST - user generated contents	10.0	51.2	28.7	-	3.7	6.2	-	3.3	53.3	2.2	13.3	10.6	17.2	166
AMAZON TURK - cloud labor/microtasks	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	43.7	15.1	21.1	-	-	20.1	57
QUORA - re-search tasks	10.0	40.0	30.0	-	-	20.0	-	-	53.1	14.3	14.3	4.1	14.3	92

CO-COMMUNICATION (collective creativity)

KLOUT - social rating	-	-	50.0	25.0	-	25.0	-	2.1	23.7	9.9	28.1	13.5	22.7	176
THREADLESS - product customisation	21.0	-	75.0	2.2	-	1.8	-	13.1	3.0	11.3	21.8	18.8	32.2	271
MOUNTAIN DEW - product selection	18.6	20.7	39.5	4.2	16.9	-	-	4.8	37.1	2.1	14.6	6.0	35.4	342

CO-SELLING (collective or interactive shopping)

EBAY - e-commerce	4.3	-	10.2	53.6	21.7	1.4	8.7	34.2	38.4	9.5	6.5	0.8	10.6	300
FAB - content markets	-	-	66.0	20.0	-	-	14.0	9.6	34.0	9.6	27.9	11.2	7.6	200
GROUPON - buying groups	6.7	-	-	40.0	13.3	20.0	20.0	31.4	41.4	3.1	7.9	15.2	1.0	162

CO-LOGISTIC (collective or interactive logistic)

FACEBOOK PLACES - check-in	-	-	32.0	23.0	35.0	10.0	-	6.1	39.8	-	3.3	11.0	39.8	209
DOMINOS - delivery	9.0	-	-	-	42.0	19.0	30.0	8.3	56.0	15.6	6.9	7.3	6.0	300
NEXTDOOR - physical sharing	10.8	8.1	8.1	8.1	13.5	45.0	6.3	4.3	38.0	2.2	-	13.0	42.4	181

CO-USE (collective and peer-to-peer cooperation)

WARCRAFT - game sharing	14.5	-	52.7	23.6	-	9.1	-	16.0	16.0	25.7	20.2	10.2	11.8	407
DROPBOX - joint application	7.0	-	47.3	2.8	-	40.0	2.8	20.1	64.4	0.8	5.3	6.1	3.4	200
AIRBNB - house sharing	19.6	2.2	19.6	38.7	-	20.0	-	37.3	27.0	5.0	2.1	20.3	8.3	266

CO-POST USE (collective & peer-to-peer cooperation)

TRIPADVISOR - service rating	39.1	-	4.4	-	4.4	-	52.2	8.1	64.7	0.6	4.0	4.6	17.9	220
PINTEREST - social commerce	27.2	-	24.5	11.7	-	6.4	30.1	4.0	12.0	17.3	32.0	9.3	25.3	409
PIRATE BAY - downloading	-	-	40.0	-	-	30.0	30.0	16.3	38.4	1.2	8.1	5.8	30.2	99
<i>Total /Average</i>	18.0	8.3	29.7	14.1	8.8	11.1	10.0	14.4	30.5	8.4	12.9	9.9	23.7	4,601

Source: own

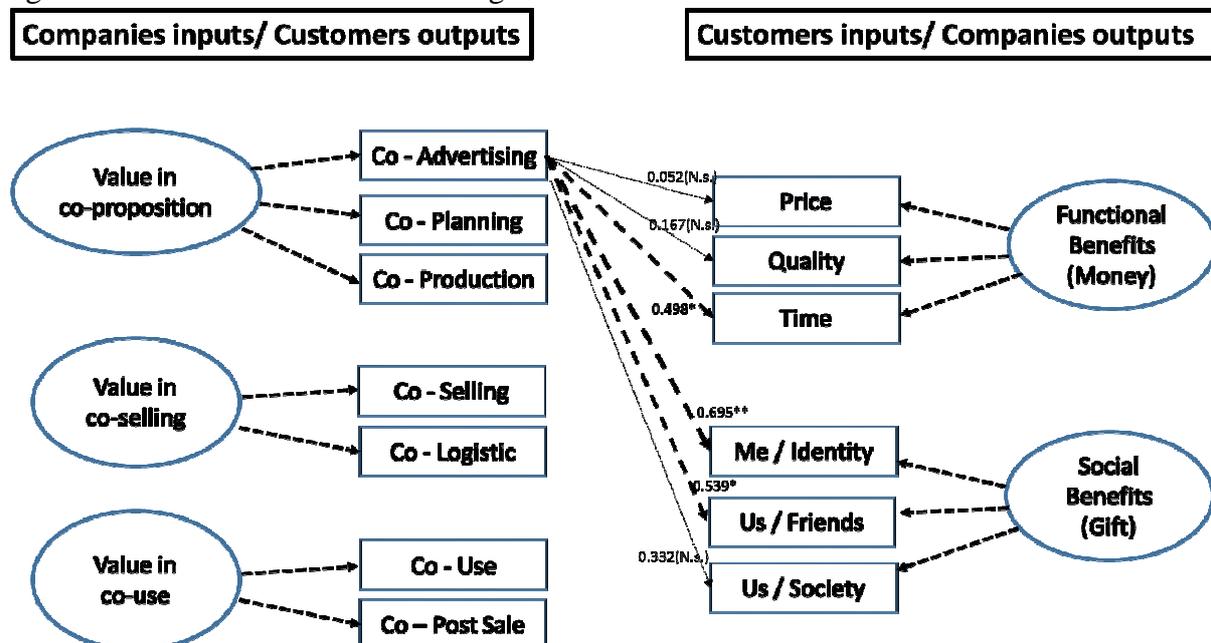
Table 2 - Internal Relationship between types of content and Co-Advertising

		Price - Money - Reward	Quality - Customisation - Difference	Time - Freedom - Convenience	Me identity - Reputation - Self esteem - Difference	Friends - Game - Fun - Emulation - Me too - All together - Us	Society - Ethic - Moral - Altruism - Relation - Gift - Us
Co-dvertising & Communication	Pearson Correlation	0.052	-0.167	0.498 *	0.695 **	0.539 *	0.332
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.872	0.481	0.026	0.001	0.014	0.153

Source: own

Figure 3 shows the correlations between co-advertising and the value inputs of the co-creation model.

Figure 3 - The effects of co-advertising on the Co-value Model



Source: own

In order to compare the intensity of relationships between inputs and outputs of the co-value model, we tested a bivariate correlation with two different levels of significance 0.01 and 0.05. Our sample shows a first set of relations (Table 3).

Co-advertising is confirmed to be correlated with three different benefits. A new very significant correlation is between *co-selling* and *price* with a Pearson correlation of $r^2: 0.718$ at 0.01 significance. This relationship can be explained by the fact that customers who are involved in co-selling focus their conversations on this economic issue. A second univocal correlation is between *co-logistic* and *quality* with a Pearson correlation of $r^2: 0.506$ at 0.05 significance. This relationship is explained by the functional goals of this form of cooperation, which mean customers discuss new forms of cooperation enabled by physical or logistical conditions.

Table 3 – Internal relationships between different types of content of conversations

		Price	Qualiy	Time	Me/Identity	Us/Friends	Us/Society
Co-Planning	Pearson Correlation	0.069	- 0.240	0.122	0.264	0.279	0.675*
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.774	0.308	0.610	0.260	0.234	0.001
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Co-Production	Pearson Correlation	- 0.079	- 0.268	- 0.265	- 0.204	- 0.110	0.312
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.741	0.253	0.258	0.388	0.642	0.181
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Co-Advertising	Pearson Correlation	0.062	- 0.167	0.498*	0.695*	0.539*	0.332
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.827	0.481	0.026	0.001	0.014	0.153
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Co-Selling	Pearson Correlation	0.718**	0.131	0.427	0.232	0.304	- 0.118
	Sig (2 tailed)	-	0.583	0.061	0.325	0.193	0.621
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Co-Logistic	Pearson Correlation	0.069	0.506*	0.006	- 0.169	- 0.053	0.153
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.773	0.023	0.805	0.477	0.826	0.521
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Co-Use	Pearson Correlation	0.121	0.316	0.085	- 0.112	0.266	- 0.304
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.610	0.175	0.720	0.629	0.257	0.193
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Co-post Use	Pearson Correlation	- 0.124	0.379	0.265	0.329	- 0.043	0.056
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.603	0.099	0.259	0.157	0.856	0.814
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20

** Correlation n is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation n is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

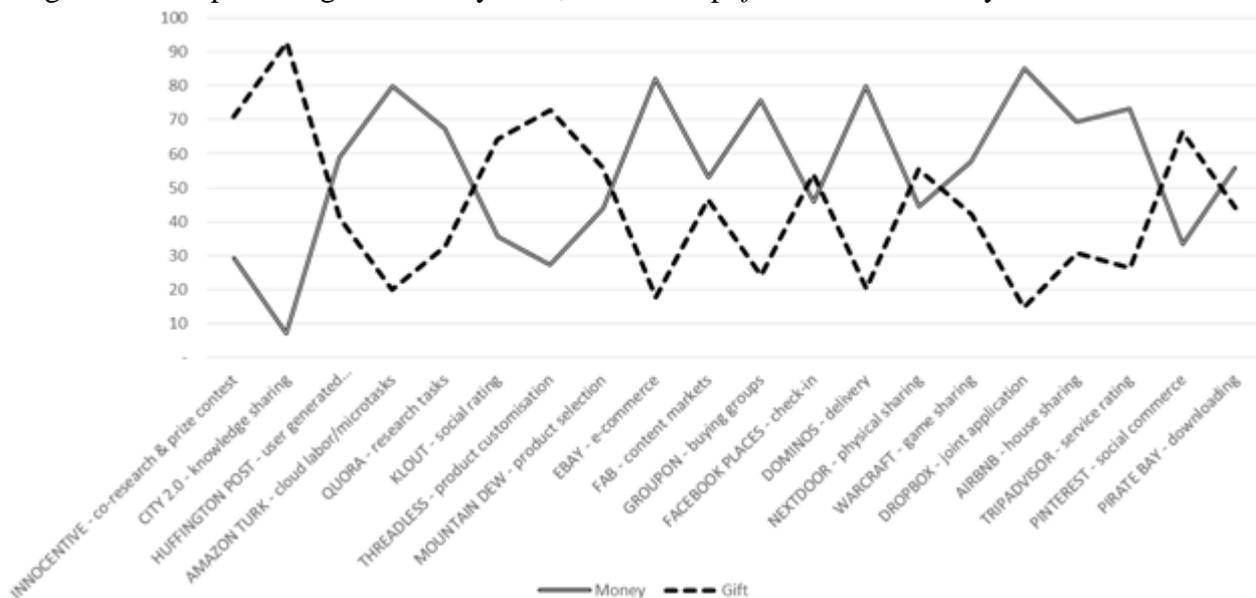
Source: own

A third group of significant and multiple relationships is connected to *co-planning* activities. First of all we observe that *co-planning* is closely correlated to *society/gift/us* with a Pearson correlation of $r^2: 0.675$ at 0.01 significance. From a theoretical point of view, these relationships introduce a rational and cognitive interpretation of social sensitivity. People commenting on their personal experience of *co-planning* use words, phrases and sentences which show their awareness of being intellectual *co-planners*. Last, but not least, it is necessary to observe the weak correlations between *co-use* and *co-post use* and social benefits. This is partially surprising because friendship and society were expected to be at the core of *co-use* and *co-post use* activities.

The Collective Responsibility is confirmed (H3). In order to test this hypothesis, we ranked the conversation on the basis of three variables of identity -*me*- relationships, -*friends*- and society -*us*- The first five communities involving a strong element of identity -*me*-, appear often well positioned in terms of relationship -*friends*- and society -*us*-. There are also intermediate situations like Groupon where consumers show interest in sharing purchase coupons with friends but do not find the game innovative enough to give distinction of self-identity. Overall, there are few communities where the consumer gives a low value to friend-

ship (Amazon MTurk, eBay, City 2.0.). Moreover, values are very high in the “society” variables and reveal an increasing awareness of ethical implications of being continuously connected (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - The percentage of identity *-me-*, relationship *-friends-* and society *-us-*

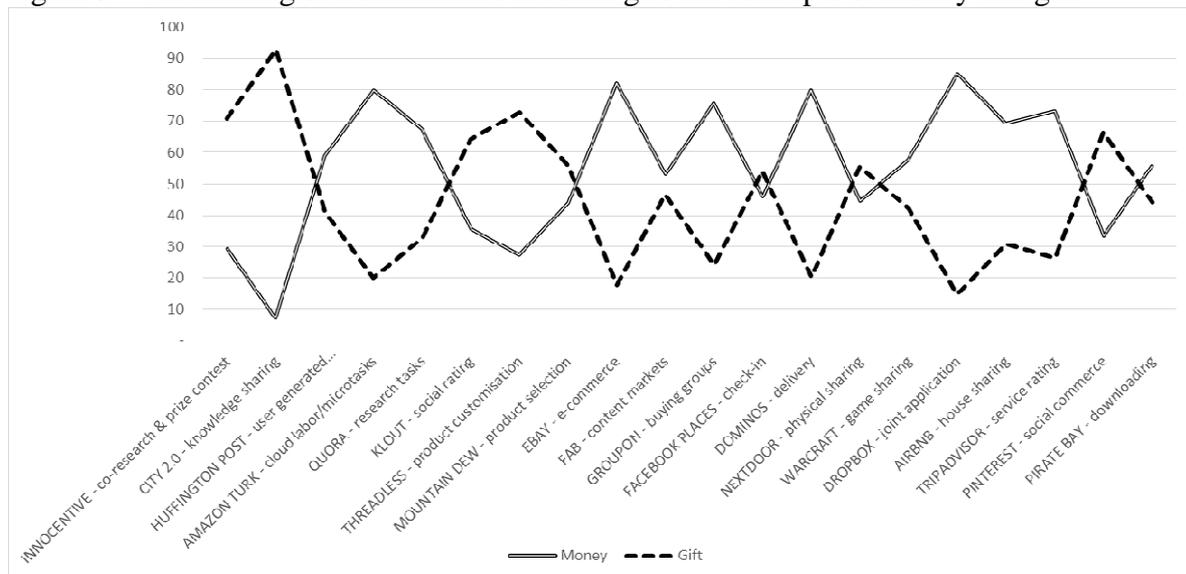


Source: own

Finally, we confirm also the Convergence (H4). The fact that the *social variables* were cited in almost the whole of the texts shows that the risks of consumer exploitation exist but are largely balanced out by consumer attention to the social content of services. What is significant is that consumer and citizen interests do not appear in inverted order: for example, it could be objected that communities like eBay and Groupon have a very small social dimension, but as a matter of fact, we found that dialogue is often about *following the rules*, and about the experiential and psychological dimension of use (Figure 8). These are frequent signals that the convergence of interests is not taken for granted, and many consumers comment on the need to be careful about their rewards. It is precisely this explicit mention of risks that comprises a *defense mechanism* against negative aspects of the convergence taking place. From our point view, this is new evidence of the convergence between the customer perspective - *logic of money* - and the citizen perspective - *logic of gift*.

With the aim of analysing in more depth the available data-set and clustering the 20 platforms we tested Principal component analysis (PCA) as to reduce the amount of redundant information. We then inserted two new latent variables (Components 1 and 2) into the model (Figure 5). These two components in fact explain 68.88% of the original variance of outputs.

Figure 5 - The ranking of communities according to the concepts of money and gift



Source: own

Table 4 - The results of component analysis

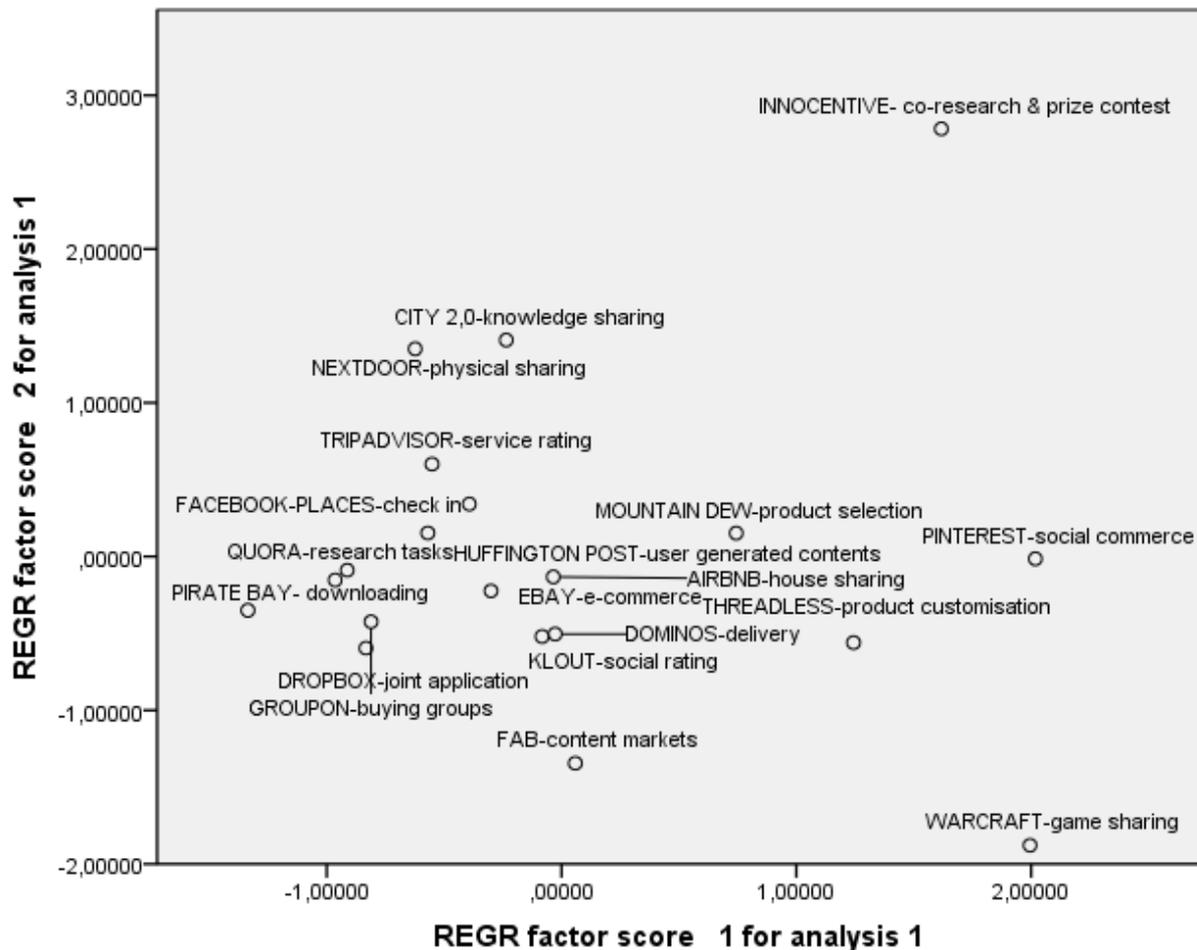
Components	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction sum of squared loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.272	47.470	47.470	4.272	47.470	47.470
2	1.927	21.412	68.882	1.927	21.412	68.882
3	0.863	9.585	78.467			
4	0.626	6.951	85.418			
5	0.466	5.173	90.591			
6	0.321	3.566	94.157			
7	0.213	2.368	96.525			
8	0.208	2.306	98.831			
9	0.105	1.169	100.000			

Source: own

Component 1 comprises the emotive world of “creativity, individual and friends” and Component 2 comprises the rationale world of “planning, price, quality and society”. The positioning of the 20 communities can be almost fully described by the two new Components (Figure 6).

The 20 platforms studied clearly have different vocations. It is not possible to identify a strong vocation for the emotive world of “creativity, individual and friends” for platforms such as Warcraft or Pinterest, or for others like City 2.0, Nextdoor or Tripadvisor more focused on the rationale world of “planning, price, quality and society”. A vocation as “Innocentive” proves to be ranked quite high in both these types. This finding confirms that digital conversations are focussed not only on customers’ benefits- price quality and time- but also on citizens benefits- identity, friends, society. It means that we are definitely seeing a new convergence between the customer perspective- logic of money – and the citizen perspective – logic of gift.

Figure 6 - Crowdsourcing platforms positioning



Source: own

5. Conclusion

This paper employed logic and empirical evidence to focus on the new positive *convergence* of customers and citizens at work. The metrics of the Co-Value Model were used to measure and reinforce the basic idea of convergence between the customer perspective- *logic of money*- and the citizen perspective -*logic of gift*-. The model was applied to a large number of recent case histories focusing on the managerial implications of the new social game.

The hypothesis of convergence was proven through the analysis of continuous conversation between customer and companies from 20 international crowd-sourcing platforms. The findings show that the *continuous* digital conversations between companies and individuals (customer and/or citizens) are changing the value creation process. Convergence is driven by a renewed social sensitivity, which is clearly influenced by *collective responsibilities*. In the new context, *co-advertising* is the co-creation construct with the highest level of consumer involvement since individuals' conversations are strongly influenced by the social desire to share personal experiences, knowledge and opinions about the companies or brands they interact with.

Consequently, companies are able to promote, mediate and intercept customers' conversations, but the only possibility for individuals is to keep companies under non-contractual observation. The new overlap of *dialogue* and *sale* can generate a positive loop between companies and individuals' responsibility, and reduce the distance between market and society.

Our panel of 4,601 texts was not geographically defined and this could represent a limitation of the results. Furthermore, although numerous studies show how socio-demographic characteristics influence the interaction between customers and companies, this study makes no cross-cultural analysis. In this perspective recent studies on peer-to-peer communication show their interaction varies according to the gender and origin of the user.

Moreover, our analysis does not consider the factors of mediation and moderation existing in forums and reviews, especially online. An additional avenue for future research could be to test the new co-value model in different industries and cluster the role of digital conversations in various contexts. Moreover, it would be interesting to analyze the role of various tools used by customers during their conversation. In fact, new technologies, and in particular mobile devices, could lead to new form of dialogue and value co-creation. Finally, the semantic mining of words and texts could be conducted with more advanced solutions. This requires a fine tuning of professional software in line with recent developments in the field.

Methodology Appendix

For Facebook we used Spiderbook, a tool developed by a web metrics company CaffeinaLab. The key word for the search was the name of the service (e.g. *TripAdvisor*). Spiderbook yields the *public status* of users who were then reclassified for the purposes of analysis. The public status shows:

- *No. of friends + No. of friends of commentators (reach)*
- *No. of 'likes' (engagement)*
- *No. of comments (engagement: Comments on status have the same audience as the "father status" and no result in terms of engagement.*
- *No. of 'share this' (engagement)*

Not all results have the same level of importance. Importance depends on a combination of "*reach*" (the extent of the audience who could in theory receive the message) and "*engagement*" (actual reaction on the part of receivers).

Here is an example expressed algebraically. Two *statuses - X and Y- each describe a variable:*

- *Status X is written by a boy who has 1000 friends and Y by a girl who has 100;*
- *X gets 300 likes, 3 comments and 10 shares;*
- *Y gets 30 likes, 30 comments and 100 shares;*

The weight of X is: $1000 \cdot 300 \cdot 3 \cdot 10 = 9,000,000$ and the weight of Y is $100 \cdot 30 \cdot 30 \cdot 100 = 9,000,000$. If there are no other comments, the system thus weighs X and Y at 50% each.

For Twitter we used its own search engine selecting "*All*" and set the key word as the name of the service without the hashtag (#). This shows all single mentions. Relevant replies to tweets were also included. The relative weighting of *reach* and *engagement* was carried out using the same principles as for Facebook and the following parameters:

- *No. of followers (reach)*
- *No. of retweets (engagement)*
- *No. of replies to tweet (engagement): Replies" have the same audience as the 'parent tweet' and were given no weight for engagement.*
- *No. of "favourites", in other word the number of times a tweet was added as a favourite by a follower.*

For the search on Google Blog the keyword was again the name of the service. In cases where there were fewer than 200 results, we used any available "*Google Suggestions*" to insert a

term to help the search. If possible we used terms linked to the concept of “opinion”, for example “used TripAdvisor”, “got TripAdvisor”, etc. Comments on posts were also evaluated. For Google Blog, *reach* and *engagement* were measured using a single variable reflecting the number of comments on each message.

In the final weighing, the three sources were given a weight corresponding to the number of mentions in each. The final result, the ‘web sentiment’, is thus a weighted average of opinions expressed by individual users.

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