Research On Customer Participation Intention Based On Value Co-Creation Under Crowdsourcing Mode

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Abstract

This paper discusses the customer participation in the value co-creation activities with the enterprise through the crowdsourcing mode, explains the concepts of customer participation, crowdsourcing mode, value co-creation and the relationship of three subjects. In view of the theory of uses and gratifications and DART model, a model of customer participation intention based on value co-creation in crowdsourcing mode is established. The model shows that under the adjustment of the crowdsourcing platform, the various demands of customer will be converted into perceived value, which will further promote the future intention of customer to create value with enterprise. The crowdsourcing mode provides a way to achieve customer participation and acquire perceived value. Therefore, this paper puts forward the future development countermeasures according to the open crowdsourcing mode.

Keywords

Crowdsourcing mode, Value co-creation, Customer participation, Co-creation intention.

1. Introduction

With the advent of the information age, the business environment is booming and increasingly full of creativity and vitality. In order to satisfy the demands of customers and obtain more competitive advantages, enterprise needs to constantly explore more unique creativity and more efficient production. Internet resources provide an innovative way for enterprise. With the help of the Internet platform, customers can participate in the product design, marketing and other management links of enterprise, as well as jointly solve other problems together. It not only satisfies customers' demands in various aspects and improves quality of their experience, but also helps enterprise to innovate products, improve operational efficiency and save costs. This is a set of open innovation system that many enterprises have put into practice and achieved success [1]. Crowdsourcing mode emerges under this background.

At present, the crowdsourcing mode is developing rapidly. In terms of professional services, it cooperates with e-commerce platforms to realize high-speed, safe and high-quality distribution services. In the field of cultural development, many people with ideas have germinated the idea of actively participating in and changing the business ecology, so as to promote the development of cultural and creative industries [2]. In the field of product research and development, consumers put forward ideas and thought for product innovation through crowdsourcing. And now some innovative products have successfully launched such as object-sensing car, 55℃ cup, etc. The development of crowdsourcing mode not only improves the efficiency and service level of enterprise, but also caters to the demands of customer. It enhances the quality of experience perception of customer, and plays a role of value co-creation. This is a sharing way that can satisfy the interaction between customer and enterprise. It also opens up an environment that transforms customer's internal demands into real value, and provides a new way to realize the value co-creation of customer and enterprise.

At present, relevant researches focus on the application and development of crowdsourcing mode in different fields, the transformation of customer status in value creation based on service-oriented logic, the driving effect of customer participation on enterprise development and the influence on enterprise

marketing strategy under crowdsourcing mode [3, 4]. However, the research on the mechanism of value transformation based on crowdsourcing mode is insufficient, lacking of comprehensive analysis on customer participation and value co-creation under crowdsourcing mode. In view of this, this paper will review the concepts and relevant theories of customer participation, crowdsourcing mode and value co-creation. On this basis, it will establish the relationship among the three, put forward a customer participation model based on value co-creation under the crowdsourcing mode, and put forward new ideas for the development of crowdsourcing mode in the future.

2. Definition of Concept

2.1 Customer Participation

Customer participation arose in the field of service marketing. Initially, the seller considers the negative impact of customer participation on economic returns in the service process. With the change of the times, the leading logic of goods has gradually changed to the leading logic of services. Nowadays, the status of customer is more reflected, and the positive role of customer participation is highlighted. In recent years, there have been many researches on customer participation. Scholars began to pay attention to customer's participation behavior at first. They think that it really needs customer as participant to go deep into the production and transmission links of service, so as to achieve customer satisfaction for service projects in the consumption links. Subsequently, The customer participation in product cooperative development and product innovation has achieved initial results. It has also achieved the role of creating value with enterprise and gradually gained social recognition.

In real life, the transformation of consumption structure also drives customers to pursue to satisfy their own psychological demands on the basis of satisfying their own material demands. Customer has an urgent motivation to participate in corporate activities. With the rapid development of information technology, the Internet channel provides technical support for customer participation. The open network environment can easily meet customers to participate, and quickly realize the sharing and transfer of resources. There are many ways to play this role. For example, crowdsourcing mode, open innovation community, brand virtual community, etc. Such an open environment can not only transform the internal psychological demands of customer into actual value, but also lay the foundation for their subsequent participation behavior. At the same time, customer participation can boost the enterprise's market performance and R & D performance, gain more competitive advantages. Under the open environment, customer participation achieves the effect of value co-creation with enterprise. At present, the researches focus on the approaches and function of customer participation, the influence of customer participation on enterprise and society, and the factors influencing customer participation. However, at present, the analysis of the supporting effect of the open environment based on the crowdsourcing mode and the explanation of the mechanism for realizing value co-creation are insufficient.

2.2 Crowdsourcing Mode

The realization of customer participation needs an open environment to support, just as crowdsourcing mode is a channel. In 2006, Jeff Howe, a reporter from wired, put forward the term "crowdsourcing", which means the practice of an enterprise or organization to outsource tasks previously performed by its employees to a non-specific (usually large) public network in a free and voluntary manner. At present, the researches on crowdsourcing mode focus on the application and adoption of customer or enterprise. It is composed of three main participants: the employer, the receiver and the crowdsourcing platform. It has the core characteristics of open and complementary resources. Customer and enterprise can play the role of the employer or the receiver, and they can publish and accept tasks to each other on the crowdsourcing platform. According to their own ability to complete tasks and solve mutual problems to satisfy the demands of both parties. We can see that crowdsourcing mode has an open platform, which allows customer to easily participate in. Meanwhile, the operation of crowdsourcing mode is based on the network environment. Through the Internet,

customer can connect with enterprise and other participants to solve problems together. While satisfying the demands, participants can obtain corresponding value.

In view of the reason why crowdsourcing mode has achieved such remarkable effect, scholars pointed out that crowdsourcing mode can bring benefits to customer and enterprise respectively. Its online problem-solving operation mode can satisfy the psychological demands of customer. Estell é s-arolas et al. (2012) believed that crowdsourcing is an online activity in which individuals, institutions, non-profit organizations or enterprises give tasks to the customers with diverse knowledge and heterogeneity through public call. Customer will enjoy satisfaction such as economy, social identity, self-esteem, personal skill development, etc [5]. Some scholars also pointed out that crowdsourcing mode is an open enterprise innovation platform, which can enhance the competitive advantage of enterprise. Xia Enjun, Zhao Xuanwei and others (2015) believed that the enterprise innovation mode first changed from closed mode to open mode, then changed to online community network mode, and further evolved into crowdsourcing mode. Crowdsourcing is a process in which everyone participates in joint production and innovation [1]. Scholars generally agree that crowdsourcing mode is an open business model, which opens up a way for customer and enterprise to cooperate with each other, share resources, satisfy the needs of both sides and realize value co-creation. However, at present, the mechanism of crowdsourcing mode to achieve value co-creation and how to promote customer demands into actual perceived value are not fully explained.

Today, many enterprises have begun to put the concept of crowdsourcing mode into practice. For example, the LEGO enterprise established a crowdsourcing platform to realize the interaction between customer and enterprise. In this way, enterprise can collect customers' ideas for product design, expand product design ideas, and achieve task innovation results. It shows that under crowdsourcing mode, customer participates in task release to solve problems with enterprise is meaningful. Customer participates in the new products development stage of the enterprise, which is only a small part of the customer participation in the business operation process. In addition, customer can participate in various operational activities of the enterprise. Take China's Zhubajie network as an example, it is a typical crowdsourcing platform in China. The service categories involve enterprise management services, brand creative services, marketing services, product manufacturing services, software development services, personal life services, etc. Customer participation can involve the above fields.

2.3 Value Co-creation

The idea of value co-creation can be traced back to the 19th century, mainly scattered in the literature of service economics. When Storch (1832) studied the contribution of service industry to economy, he once pointed out that "service process needs cooperation between producers and consumers". Ramirez (1999) believed that this view implied the idea that service results and service value creation are jointly determined by producers and consumers [6]. In recent years, it has become common for customer to participate in business operations to solve problems, and at the same time to satisfy customer's own psychological demands. This is the process of value co-creating between customer and enterprise. The theory of value co-creation has attracted more and more attention from all walks of life. At present, more and more enterprises are introducing this theory by integrating customer thoughts and ideas in their business processes. This not only satisfies the demands of customers, but also brings opportunities for their own development. For example, since BMW launched its digital design kit on a crowdsourcing website, thousands of customers have joined in. Customers interact deeply there to design new cars and generate valuable new product ideas. On the crowdsourcing platform of SUNING enterprise, many customers actively contribute wisdom and interact with each other. So as to develop the object-sensing car to create a perfect new product experience value [7].

At present, the researches on value co-creation focus more on the participation of customer in value co-creation. Zhong Zhendong (2014) pointed out that in the service-oriented logic, customers are no longer the destroyers of value, but create value together with enterprise [8]. Grönroos, Ravald (2008) and others believed that customers not only master value creation but also determine the nature of

value [9]. Christine Gronroos (2009) pointed out that customers can not only use available resources and their own knowledge, skill and experience to create using value for themselves in the process of self-serving consumption. They can also enter the production or operation process of the enterprise through the platform as the cooperation creators of the value [10]. It can be seen that customer can really achieve value creation through crowdsourcing mode. However, few scholars have made in-depth study on the realization of value co-creation through crowdsourcing mode.

In the process of achieving participation of customer through the crowdsourcing mode and ultimately co-creating value with the enterprise, from the customers' perspective, it brings them a transformation from their psychological demands to the generation of perceived value. Customer perceived value is the perception and evaluation of the matching degree between the product or service quality brought by the enterprise and their own demands. It is also a lot of value obtained by customer in the acceptance of products and services. The experience value model proposed by Sweeney & Soutar (2001)is generally recognized in the academic circle, which divided the value into functional value, emotional value and social value [11]. Zhou Zhaoshan (2014)divided value into four dimensions: functional value, emotional value, social value and group value when he studied value co-creation in social network environment [12]. This paper combines with scholars' interpretation, perceived value will be divided into four value dimensions: functional value, economic value, emotional value and social value. Once customer gets value perception, it will promote their intention to co-create and participate.

In the process of realizing value co-creation, if the enterprise wants to maintain the value co-creation relationship with customer, it is necessary to establish an open co-creation environment, which enable customer to participate easily. The open platform of crowdsourcing mode coincides with the realization of such value co-creation environment for enterprise. Therefore, the introduction of crowdsourcing can be used as a way to open up the co-creation environment for enterprise. However, the current researches lack the mechanism of achieving value co-creation based on the characteristics of crowdsourcing mode.

3.   Model Building

Based on the above analysis, nowadays, the participation of customer has been paid more and more attention. It can satisfy the psychological demands of customer in all aspects. At the same time, the enterprise can realize mutual value co-creation by incorporating the concept of customer participation in the operation process. In fact, the process of co-creating the value is customer participates in the business operation and solves problems together with other participants. The open crowdsourcing platform and enterprise's environment play a driving role in this process. This circumstance can meet customers to participate in the enterprise's operation process, and they can create value together. For customers, this channel can realize their demands and generate perceived value. Once customer gets the value perception, they will generate participation intention of value co-creating. However, the current researches lack the comprehensive analysis about the role of transforming customer demands into value perception through crowdsourcing mode and enterprise environment. Based on such considerations, combined with relevant theories, this paper establishes an initial model, as shown in Fig. 1.
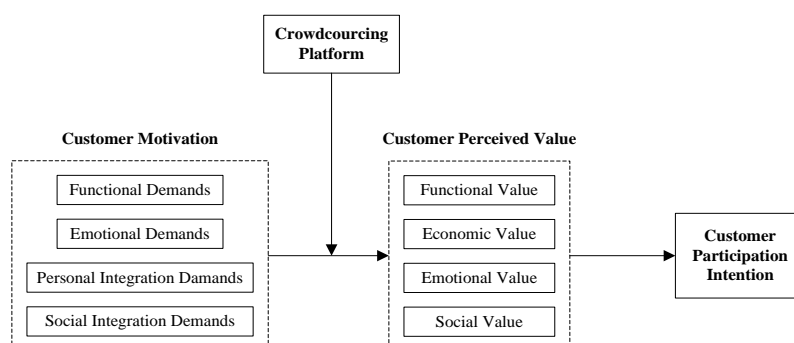

Fig. 1 Initial Model

Customer's behavior motivation is the basis and premise of customer participation in value co-creation, so the model takes it as an independent variable. Combining with the theory of uses and gratifications, this paper summarizes customer participation motivation, and finally divides it into functional demands, emotional demands, personal integration demands and social integration demands. In the crowdsourcing mode, customer can satisfy their demands and generate perceived value. Therefore, in the model, the crowdsourcing platform is used as adjusting variables. And the four elements of value co-creation in DART theory (dialogue, acquisition, risk assessment, transparency) are integrated with the characteristics of the crowdsourcing platform. The intermediate variable is customer perceived value, combining the theories of the crowdsourcing mode and the value co-creation, it is divided into functional value, economic value, emotional value, and social value. Once customers generate perceived value, they will be motivated to continue to participate in co-creation in the future. Therefore, the model takes customer co-creation participation intention as dependent variable.

3.1 Customer Motivation

Nowadays, customers are more and more willing to highlight their positions, and play their own initiative. They have diversified demands and motivations, such as participating in co-creation activities by solving problems with the outside world. Earlier scholars also explained customer participation behavior, developed and improved the theory of uses and gratifications. In the 1940s, Berelson, Blaise Hugh Katz, Brumler and Mcquill believed that audiences chose media and content based on their specific demands and desires. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) believed that customers use media with purpose to satisfy their psychological and social demands. Customers choose the specific media content according to the past media impression, and adjust the usage habits according to the satisfaction degree of the content. By analyzing the motivation to use the media and satisfaction of the demands, they examine the psychological and behavioral effects of mass communication on them, and then decide whether to continue to use the media. This theory includes four dimensions: cognitive demands, social integration demands, personal integration demands and hedonic demands. Cognition refers to obtaining information, satisfying curiosity, learning, acquiring knowledge, etc. Personal integration refers to improving personal value, seeking social status and respect. Social integration refers to obtaining friendship and intimate relationship among friends. Hedonism refers to eliminating boredom, increasing pleasure and relaxation through interaction and dialogue, etc [13].

Based on the theory of uses and gratifications, combined with the customers' behavioral characteristics in value co-creation through crowdsourcing mode, this study divides the motivation of customer participation into four aspects:

Functional demands. Many customers now know from their friends or on the Internet that it is very popular to solve problems online, and the effect is very good. The ease of using this approach attracts them to try and participate. They can contribute their intellectual resources to help those in need, thereby earning some profits. Or sometimes they can't do their job due to the restriction of time or ability, and they can also pay a certain fee to get help from others.

Emotional demands. Many customers think that helping others to solve problems or doing tasks online is a kind of affirmation of their own abilities. Once recognized and adopted by the other parties, they can get appreciation. This will make them feel happy and motivate themselves to continue to work hard.

Personal integration demands. Customers have the demands to develop their own skills, demonstrate their creativity and innovative ability. In the process of helping others to solve problems, this demands can be satisfied. And customers can also find problems, check omissions and make up for deficiencies, so as to improve personal ability. Some customers also hope to get solutions from others by publishing their own difficult problems, so this progress is also a way of resources complementarity.

Social integration demands. On the Internet, some information about solving problems online with others will attract customers to generate motivation to participate. They are willing to expand social

resources, access opportunities to contact with enterprise, and then expand their employment channels by communicating with other users on the Internet. At the same time, using their own skills to solve problems for others can also make contribution in serving the society.

3.2 Crowdsourcing Platform Realizes the Transformation from Customer Motivation to Customer Perceived Value

The integration of crowdsourcing mode into the enterprise environment can greatly play the role of open crowdsourcing platform, and satisfy customer to participate in the process of value co-creation with enterprise. The interaction between enterprise and customer is the cornerstone of value co-creation, so it is necessary to clarify the key elements in the interaction process. Prahalad and Ramaswam (1996) believed that the basic elements of value co-creation include dialogue, access, risk assessment and transparency, also known as DART model [14]. These elements provide a good reference for enterprise to achieve value co-creation, as shown in Fig. 2.
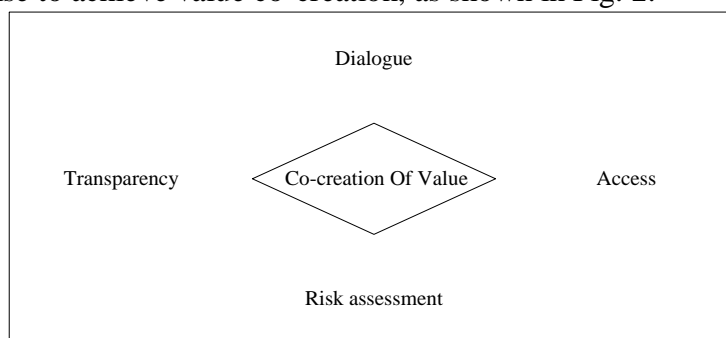

Fig. 2 DART Model

The crowdsourcing platform can meet these four elements:

Dialogue. It is advocated to actively talk with customer and regard information provided by customer as the source of competitive advantage of enterprise. Under the crowdsourcing mode, crowdsourcing platform can ensure good communication among the participants. It is convenient and fast to discuss the details of the solution to the problems with the other parties. The platform also adopts the VIP members charging strategy to provide exclusive customer service, which is more convenient for both parties to discuss the problems. At the same time, the platform will take some public measures such as tasks collection and evaluation competition to encourage customers to participate and play their personal ability to solve problems together with the enterprise.

Access. Through the value co-creation activities, enterprise can get solutions for problems from customer. The crowdsourcing platform will release the detailed information of the enterprise. Customer can easily understand the task requirements, so as to obtain the opportunity to solve problems and create value together with the enterprise. The crowdsourcing platform can also achieve the task docking between customer and enterprise, and urge customer to solve problems according to the direction led by enterprise. Therefore, this mode will satisfy customer's own demands and promote the generation of perceived value.

Risk assessment. Solving problems on the platform may cause risks due to credit or ability issues. For example, there may have losses caused by the failure of either party in the profress of fulfilling their contractual obligation. Or due to inadequate risk management, it will cause the leakage of customer information. On the crowdsourcing platform, it will establish a complete risk resolution mechanism, so that customer can safely participate in various value creation activities of the enterprise.

Transparency. Participants should have a comprehensive and profound understanding of mutual demands, motivations and behaviors. The crowdsourcing platform will establish a credit system to ensure that the information provided by the participants is true and accurate. The information provided by enterprise include the development tendency since its establishment, the current situation and so on. In this case, customers can facilitate the judgment of whether it satisfies their own demands. Meanwhile, customers also need to provide personal information to ensure that the enterprise can

know their true identities. In addition, the platform will establish a fair mechanism to open up the whole process of task solution collection, so as to ensure the smooth progress of value co-creation activities.

3.3 Customer Perceived Value

In the process of transforming customer motivation into perceived value through crowdsourcing mode, perceived value can be divided into four dimensions: functional value, economic value, emotional value and social value.

Functional value. Customers publish their own difficult problems on the crowdsourcing platform. Once they get the help of the receiver on the crowdsourcing platform, they will obtain the value brought by the platform. Not only they feel the convenience of crowdsourcing platform, such as saving time, but also their problems are solved. On the contrary, when customers contribute their own resources and help others to solve problems, they will eventually bring corresponding benefits to themselves, such as getting return. This progress can generate functional value for customer.

Economic value. Customers use their own resources to solve problems for others on the crowdsourcing platform can earn incomes. This will directly obtain economic value. At the same time, crowdsourcing platform enables customers to play their professional ability, skill advantages, creativity and innovation ability to help enterprise solving problems. This will save costs for enterprise and indirectly generate economic value for customers.

Emotional value. Customer will feel happy to help enterprise solving problems and earning incomes on the crowdsourcing platform, which will generate emotional value. In addition, this approach of solving problems online contributes to personal ability improvement. This will make customer feeling happy. Helping others to solve problems or do tasks on the crowdsourcing platform, and getting the other participants' approval will also bring incentive effect to customer. So, cusomer's emotional value can be generated.

Social value. Solving problems online through crowdsourcing mode will continuously strengthen the contact between customer and other participants on the platform. It will not only expand social resources, but also increase the online and offline connections between customer and enterprise, so as to promote employment opportunities. This will promote the generation of social value. At the same time, this progress can achieve customer to serve the society, thus produce social value.

3.4 Customer Participation Intention

Through the above analysis, we can see that customer can satisfy their own demands from function, emotion, personal integration and social integration, but also obtain perceived value through simple problem-solving on the crowdsourcing platform. The psychological results of perceived value will form the necessary prerequisite for active and continuous participation in value co-creation, which is usually called "participation intention" [15]. Stronger intention to participate may increase the quantity and quality of customers' contributions, so as to jointly create success. On the contrary, the good experience of value co-creation will also strengthen the positive emotional response. This virtuous circle will help the development of enterprise, and facilitate the managers of enterprise to obtain and retain the best groups. Perceived value will inspire customers to continue to participate in co-creation activities with enterprise through crowdsourcing platform in the future. They can also continue to enjoy the benefits of value co-creation activities, and generate participation intention in value co-creation. Therefore, customer perceived value will promote customer participation intention.

4. Measures for Improving Customer Participation Intention Based on Crowdsourcing Mode

In order to better play the role of crowdsourcing mode in the future, this paper puts forward relevant countermeasures to promote its development.

(1) The crowdsourcing platform should constantly improve the service level. For example, the platform can establish relevant stimulus measures to continuously explore and tap customer

motivation. Secondly, an effective feedback mechanism should be established. It can timely provide services and solve doubts for customers. In addition, regulators should timely screen and update the tasks information released by the platform according to the demands of customers. It is also noted that the security and stability of the platform should be constantly maintained, so that customer can easily apply the platform.

(2) Crowdsourcing platform should strengthen publicity. Let participants know the benefits of crowdsourcing mode, and feel that it is worth adopting as receiver or employer. In the daily operation process of the platform, it should combine with the four elements of dialogue, access, risk assessment and transparency to continuously improve the operation mechanism. In this way, the greatest value of the platform can be brought into play in the process of value co-creating.

(3) As for crowdsourcing platform, participants (receivers and employers) from all aspects will gather on the platform, such as talents, enthusiasts and stakeholders. So it is necessary to define and screen platform participants reasonably. Platform regulators should eliminate risks or dangers brought by unknown participants to avoid platform operation obstacles. Only in this way can the platform run stably and orderly and promote the value generation of customers. At the same time, for the customers who have doubts about the platform, regulators should timely solve the problems and encourage them to participate in value co-creation.

5. Summary and Prospect

In this paper, based on the perspective of value co-creation, starting from the crowdsourcing mode, the initial model is established. The results show that crowdsourcing mode can realize customer participation and create value together with enterprise. It can also transform the motivation of customer into perceived value, and then stimulate the customer participation intention in the future. At the same time, the open crowdsourcing platform also play a role in promoting. At present, this business mode has been recognized and adopted by enterprise. Therefore, in the future, enterprise and crowdsourcing platform should combine with the idea of creating mutual value to better serve customer.

This paper explains the logical framework of customer participation and value co-creation under crowdsourcing mode. With the rapid progress and development of society, future researches need to make further empirical measurement. This paper believes that the future researches can be completed from the following aspects. First of all, the relevant empirical or experimental tests need to carry out. Customer participation can positively affect value co-creation, but some scholars have pointed out that customer participation may have a negative impact on value co-creation. In the academic circles, the existing literatures have explored the problem of customer participation under the crowdsourcing mode from the perspective of customer. It is necessary to carry out further empirical tests from the perspective of enterprise in the future. Secondly, further complete the intermediary mechanism and adjusting mechanism. In the fig. 1, this paper sums up an adjusting variable, but it only focuses on the subject characteristics. The object characteristics are insufficient. This will cause the problem of homology variance. Crowdsourcing is an open activity, so it is different from the previous researches in the field of customer's participation. Whether the influence of customer participation will be regulated by some customer factors (such as customer knowledge heterogeneity, relationship quality), environmental factors (such as social environment, cultural atmosphere), etc. Although some scholars have made some discussion on the application and practice of crowdsourcing mode in different cultural backgrounds, there is no empirical test evidence. Therefore, the future research can be further explored based on this.

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