Chapter 1

User Involvement, Open Service Innovations, and Social Media:
Lessons from a Case Study

Ada Scupola
Roskilde University, Denmark

Hanne Westh Nicolajsen
Aalborg University – Copenhagen, Denmark

ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the use of social media to collect ideas from the users in the service innovation process. After a theoretical discussion of user involvement and more specifically user involvement using social media and blogs, the chapter reports the results from a field experiment at a university library. In the experiment, a blog was established to collect ideas for service innovations from the library users. The experiment shows that blogs may generate a modest but useful amount of ideas. The experiment furthermore reveals that blogs might be useful to provide the institution with an image of openness and willingness to listen to customer input.

INTRODUCTION

Concepts like Open Innovation (Chesbrough, 2003) and User-driven Innovation (Alam & Perry, 2002) are receiving growing attention. The concepts indicate that innovation is not confined to internal organizational processes but involve interactive processes, where organizations interact with external partners including customers and users. Research within innovation has traditionally focused on innovation within the industrial sectors. However, service innovation is becoming increasingly important as services form a significant part of economical and societal activities.

Libraries, and especially research libraries, are facing considerable challenges as their services are getting increasingly digitalized (Carr, 2009) and the Internet poses a threat to the services they provide. Thus, libraries face challenges to innovate their services to stay competitive (Scupola and Nicolajsen, 2010;

Scupola and Nicolajsen, 2012). According to Brindley (2006) library service innovation must happen in close contact with the users. Rutherford (2008) argues that such user involvement can be supported through new social software. By drawing on Brindley (2006) and Rutherford (2008), the aim of this chapter is, to investigate the potentials of using social media in user driven innovation service innovation in academic libraries. In doing so we limit ourselves to focus on the ideation phase of the innovation process in which the involvement of users has been found to possess particular potentials (Alam and Perry 2002). Therefore, the following research question is addressed in this chapter: How can social media be used in academic libraries to involve users in the idea generation phase of the service innovation process?

In order to investigate the research question we conducted an in depth case study at Roskilde University Library (Yin, 1994). The research design consisted of three steps. First a pilot study investigating existing innovation processes and user involvement in the innovation process at Roskilde University Library was conducted; then a field experiment was conducted in which social media such as blogs were set up on the library web page to collect ideas from the users; finally the third step consisted of follow-up interviews and workshops to get feedback and evaluate the experiment's results. All in all, the blog was considered by the library management as a useful tool to communicate with the users and to generate a manageable amount of useful ideas.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, we theoretically discuss user involvement in service innovation and in particular user involvement through social media with focus on blogs. Then we present our research method and the analysis and results. Finally we provide a discussion of the results and some concluding remarks.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

User Involvement in Open Innovation

Chesbrough (2003, p.26) defines open innovation as "a paradigm that assumes that firms can and should use external ideas as well as internal ideas, and internal and external paths to market, as the firms look to advance their technology".

Later research has focused on user involvement in relation to innovation, also in service innovation (Alam and Perry, 2002). This has resulted in a more detailed understanding of different types of user involvement. For example the so-called 'lead users' are users who develop new products/services due to specific needs they meet before the rest of the market (von Hippel, 1986, Morrison et al. 2004). These lead users include users who investigate new design opportunities (Baldwin et al. 2006) whereas "Co-innovators" are advanced users that combine existing products in new ways (Chesbrough 2003). Often the resulting innovations are neither owned nor controlled by organizations. However organizations may potentially commercialize these innovations if they can develop the prototypes invented by users or the ideas generated by the users and (mass) produce them. In addition, organizations may proactively involve customers/users in the innovation process in several ways: for example by asking for their opinion through surveys, involving them in workshops or by using social media such as for example idea competitions (Alam and Perry, 2002¸ Nicolajsen and Scupola, 2011). In relation to this, Nambisan (2002, 2008) differentiates between three roles that customers may play: 1) as a source of innovation in the idea generation phase, 2) as co-creators in the development phase or 3) as potential users in the test or implementation phase. The three roles are rather different as are the requirements for both the organizations and the customers/users.

Related Content

Social Networking and Local Controversies: The Construction of Rhetorical Devices in the Hazelnut Market in Turkey
Ebru Tekin Bilbil (2017). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking (pp. 15-28).*
www.irma-international.org/article/social-networking-and-local-controversies/206576

Interacting with Whom?: Swedish Parliamentarians on Twitter during the 2014 Elections
Jakob Svenssonand Anders Olof Larsson (2016). *International Journal of E-Politics (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/interacting-with-whom/146197

Facebook Communities of African Diasporas and Their U.S. Embassies: A Content Analysis Study
Hesham Mesbahand Lauren Cooper (2022). *Research Anthology on Usage, Identity, and Impact of Social Media on Society and Culture (pp. 950-965).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/facebook-communities-of-african-diasporas-and-their-us-embassies/308645

Effective Teaching Strategies for Overcoming the Challenges of E-Learning
Deepa Sharmaand Komal Bhardwaj (2023). *Social Capital in the Age of Online Networking: Genesis, Manifestations, and Implications (pp. 99-112).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/effective-teaching-strategies-for-overcoming-the-challenges-of-e-learning/328398

Understanding the Video Bloggers' Community
John Warmbrodt, Hong Sheng, Richard Halland Jinwei Cao (2010). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking (pp. 43-59).*
www.irma-international.org/article/understanding-video-bloggers-community/45778