

Chapter 15

Web Designers, Social E-Value Creation and E-Business Planning: Understanding Resistance from Conflicting Demands

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the conflicting demands faced by web designers in the development of social e-atmospherics that aim to encourage e-value creation, thus strengthening and prolonging market planning strategies. While recent studies have shown that significant shifts are occurring concerning the importance of users' generated content by way of social e-communication tools (e.g. blogs), these trends are also creating expectations that social and cultural cues ought to become a greater part of e-atmospherics and e-business strategies. Yet, there is growing evidence that organizations are resisting such efforts, fearing that they will lose control of their e-marketing strategy. This chapter contributes to the theory and literature on online cross-cultural understanding and the impact website designers (meso-level) can have on improving the sustainability of e-business planning, departing from recent studies that focus mainly on firms' e-business plans (macro-level) or final consumers (micro-level). A second contribution is made with respect to online behavior regarding the advancement of technologies that facilitate the development and shaping of new social e-atmospherics that affect users' behavior and long term e-business strategies through the avoidance of traditional, formal decision making processes and marketing strategy mechanisms implemented by firms. These issues have been highlighted in the literature

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on the co-production and co-creation of value, which few organizations have thus far integrated in their strategic and pragmatic e-business plans. Drawing upon fifteen online interviews with web designers in the USA, as key non-institutional actors at the meso-level who are developing what future websites will be like, this chapter analyzes ways in which identifying points of resistance and conflicting demands can lead to engagement with the debate over the online co-creation of value and more sustainable future e-business planning. A number of points of resistance to the inclusion of more e-social atmospherics are identified, and the implications for web designers' roles and web design planning are discussed along with the limitations of the study and potential future research for e-business studies.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, it has become clear that e-business planning consists of (i) an increasingly complex and competitive set of activities and that (ii) new sources of sustainable value, above and beyond traditional 'user-friendly' websites (i.e. technology acceptance factors), need to be created to sustain the growth of e-businesses in practice. New alternative sources of value have been linked in the literature to a better use of the co-creation and co-production process that engages consumers and/or suppliers in collaborative ways to create sustainable, innovative, complementary and relevant competitive advantages (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). This chapter challenges the traditional strategic planning perspective which takes for granted that most e-firms are market orientated simply because of the nature of the channel and the possibilities offered by the new media. In this regard, value creation in e-business planning is defined by a definition which extends beyond traditional financial measures, i.e. generating sales and profit. Value creation is increasingly being recognized as a better management measure that enhances long-term competitiveness and growth by aligning firms' capabilities and actions to improve innovation processes through the utilization of supply chain and customer communities' creativity (e.g. collaborative online innovation communities). As such, the sources and drivers of value creation, which enable collective thinking, are considered to be within firms' management boundaries (formal suppliers, employees' tal-

ent and individuals social knowledge/network) and more importantly, *beyond* these boundaries (consumers, third party providers). Undoubtedly, a large amount of literature has emerged which shifts away from traditional new product development in areas such as new service development (Chesbrough, 2011), the open innovation concept (Chesbrough, 2003) and value co-creation (Edvardsson et al., 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004; Reichwald & Piller, 2005).

To date, there has been a differentiation in the literature between what firms *say they do or should do* and *what they actually do* in practice (Jaworski et al., 2000; Palmer et al., 2010). Debating traditional management processes by including a larger number of stakeholders and exposing conflicting demands regarding strategies for social e-atmospherics may not be perceived as a market-orientated behavior leading to innovation in the traditional sense. Pragmatic traditional e-business strategic processes encourage managers, after selecting potential strategies or future products, to test their ideas on consumers (market research) and then devise a future business strategy (often behind closed doors) regarding what is expected to be acknowledged, mainly by investors (i.e. the market), as appropriate e-marketing planning. In traditional e-business planning, consumers, suppliers and third party contractors such as web designers merely play a largely passive role in the development of future e-business planning (Wayland & Cole, 1997). However, the rapid development of online social media, which provides users with the opportunity to offer feedback

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