Professional MBA
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The Role of the End User
in the Value Creation Process

A Master's Thesis submitted for the degree of
"Master of Business Administration"

supervised by

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Vienna, Austria, 28/06/16

Affidavit

I, **MICHAEL SCOTT HOLCOMB**, hereby declare

1. that I am the sole author of the present Master's Thesis, "The Role of the End User in the Value Creation Process", 65 pages, bound, and that I have not used any source or tool other than those referenced or any other illicit aid or tool, and

   2. that I have not prior to this date submitted this Master's Thesis as an examination paper in any form in Austria or abroad.

Vienna, 28.06.2016

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Signature

Abstract

The topic of my Master's Thesis is "The Role of the End User in the Value Creation Process". The problem that I am seeking to resolve is how to create, capture, and sustain value to both the business and the customer through collaboration. In order to resolve this problem the question that I have attempted to answer is "How can user involvement become a sustainable business model in the digital marketplace?" The proposed business model that I will develop and test will be within the context of digital publishing. The focus will be on the collaboration between the end user community and the publisher to create and sustain value.

As I have progressed through seeking the answer to the question in this study I have focused on five goals. First, defining what user involvement looks like. Second, analyzing a business model built upon user involvement. Third, determining the role of the stakeholders in the business model. Forth, identifying what enables or hinders user involvement as a sustainable business model. Fifth, assessing the value created for the stakeholders and how that value can be sustained. These goals provided me with a structure and framework around which I was able to progress in my research and analysis. Research clearly demonstrates that there are common techniques and strategies that can increase a business's effectiveness via collaboration with customers. What we know is that building an engaged relationship with customers is vital. In my thesis I seek to provide a model for how to build and sustain that relationship through engagement and collaboration.

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1. Introduction

Value creation is about creating and delivering a value that is of benefit to the customer based on a need or desire. Value creation is the foundation for the relationship that is sustained over time between a business and its customer base. In order for value to be created it is essential that there be engagement between the business and the customer. The business has to know what the customer wants and/or needs, and the customer has to know how to obtain that value from the business. Therefore, communication is crucial in order for the customer to receive the value which he/she is seeking. As value is created and captured over time, it must renew itself again into newly created value in a sustained cycle of value creation-value capture-value creation that will lead to sustained profitability.

User involvement is an engaging method of interaction between a business and the consumer. The sustainability of user involvement is built upon a foundation of collaboration and connection. As this foundation is strengthened, we see that the customer's life cycle is extended into perpetuity. The sustainability of user involvement comes down to the depth of the engagement between the business and the end user, and to the breadth of that engagement. As end users become actively involved with a business as well as other end users, they will become more comfortable and familiar with opportunities for collaboration. As a result, the end user will be more likely to sustain their involvement over a longer period of time. It is then that the business can incorporate that end user involvement into a sustainable business model.

An effective business model identifies what it is that a customer values. It then identifies how to provide that value to the customer, and serves as a plan for sustaining the provision of that value to the consumer. The key to a collaboration-based business model lies in its ability to engage the end user in a way that will provide sustained value to the end user. Such engagement heightens the experience of the end user and will strengthen their relationship with the business. If built into the initial business model and allowed to evolve as needed, then end user involvement can be the foundation for a profitable and sustained business model.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Secondary Research

For my secondary research I focused on previously published materials. These included books, articles, academic journals, and previously published academic papers. I focused my reading and analysis primarily on three main areas of focus including value creation, user involvement, and business models. Additionally, other topics of reading and research included the areas of value creation, value capture, collaboration, sustainability, profitability, and the evolution of the digital consumer community.

My research for the topics and the areas of focus was conducted within both the traditional marketplace and the digital marketplace. The idea here was to develop a direct comparison and contrast between these two realms of 21st century business transactions. The industrial context for my research was the publishing industry, specifically digital publishing. In addition to readings that were directly related to this particular field, all of the materials that I reviewed were interpreted, assessed, and analyzed within this industrial context.

Given the scope and range of the topics that I researched it was necessary to determine which information was of the most relevance, importance, and value to the overall focus of my study. The litmus test that I used for including researched content as I read and analyzed it was threefold. First, did the material relate to the proposed solution to the stated problem my thesis was addressing? Second, did the material contribute to the answer of the essential question of my thesis? Third, did the material contribute to the achievement of the goals set forth at the beginning of my research? If the reading material passed these three tests then I chose to include it in my study.

2.2 Value Creation

2.2.1 Value Creation Today & In The Future

Value is the worth or usefulness of something. It is the measurable method in which people assess the importance of an item, be it tangible or intangible. Value can come in

all forms. The utility of an item will impact its value. The extent to which the item is a necessity or a physiological need will affect its value. The profitability of an item is a determining factor when assessing value. But in these and countless other examples value always come back to that which is of benefit or gain.

In the business world, the creation of value can be considered from both the company and the customer vantage point. Studies show that value creation is based on creating and using new methods of operation (Agborya-Echi, Agbor-Ndakaw, 2010). The impact here is on the worth or positive benefit of an idea, a product, a service, or a new initiative as received by the company. The company profits from the value, in one-way or another. The relationship between the company's realized value and the value to the customer is a direct correlation.

With the emergence of new technologies that have diverse applications across all industries the concept of value creation has evolved. The foundational tenants and concepts of value creation have remained the same. Originally, the elements of value creation depended, primarily, on tangible resources, capital and assets that were necessary to create and deliver new products and services. These items were aimed at increasing customer value and, thereby, increasing the company's value. However, the drivers and enablers of value creation have expanded in both depth and breadth resulting in a gradual shift from the role of the tangible to the intangible when creating and delivering value. While this shift is not absolute and complete – and never will be – the increased role and importance of those intangible drivers should not be underestimated. We can see that these intangible drivers include innovation, people, ideas, and brand (Hillstrom). These changes in value creation are, as indicated, a direct result of new technologies and trends, but they are also a result of changes in customer value. Company's today are exploring ways to shift to this new method of value creation that is based on the intangible values that customers are seeking and, in fact, demanding. Those companies that accomplish this are positioning themselves to deliver that customer value today and to adapt to the changes that will occur tomorrow.

The evolution of value creation in the future will place a higher focus and emphasis on creativity. Studies show that the function of creativity will make it a premium driver in terms of value creation in the future, and that a greater emphasis will be placed on economies of creativity (Hughes, 2013). In this manner, creativity will be the foundation of creating additional or expanded value for the customer by offering something new, making an existing product better, or satisfying a new customer need. All of these efforts do provide value to the customer, and they are based on creative mechanisms and measures. A substantial need in these new efforts toward value creation will be the management of creativity.

The impact of creativity on the organization as a whole will not only effect internal operations but also the distribution of the newly created customer-focused value(s). This value chain management will follow the three-step process of create – coordinate – distribute with creative networks being one of the new, and essential, drivers toward scaling the effective reach of an organization's value creation.

2.2.2 Types of Customer Value

In order to have a deeper understanding of how to meet the changes, needs, and demands of the customer, it is essential to grasp what it is that exactly steers the customer's valuation of a product or service. While this assessment is individual in nature and extremely subjective on a case-by-case basis, it is still advantageous to an organization in order to be able to understand the concepts behind customer valuation. Customer value addresses how well a product or service meets the need or satisfies the customer's desire. However, Woodruff goes further in his explanation of customer value by considering the preference, evaluation, and consequences from use (Woodruff, 1997).

As Shanker identifies, there are two types of customer value that can be considered at the macro (or large-scale) level: desired value and perceived value (Shanker, 2012). Shanker clearly differentiates between the two: desired value is what the customer wants, while perceived value is the customer assessing what they got. The two valuations can be considered as a pre and post-valuation of the purchase based on expectations and

outcomes. These two macro-levels of valuation are important for an organization to be cognizant of as they are indicative of the process of valuation. That is, customer valuation is not a singular moment in the purchasing process and should not be treated as such by an organization. Rather, the valuation that a customer places on a product or service is linear in its nature. In today's economy that valuation has exponential reach in terms of its network impact and, as stated earlier, must be managed as an essential component of the value creation process.

When analyzing the factors that impact and influence customer value on the micro (or small-scale) level it is advantageous to consider this within a value creation framework. Such a structure will allow for the organization and segmentation of varying factors as they impact and influence customer value. Shanker references two value creation frameworks (Shanker, 2012) – one by Smith and Colgate in 2007 and the other by O'Cass and Ngo in 2011 – from which the five values in the following paragraph have been pulled as relevant to the industrial context of this thesis, that being digital publishing, and the opportunity for community collaboration within this field.

The first value is the functional/instrumental value. This value deals with the attributes of the product itself; the extent to which a product is useful and fulfills a customer's desired goals. The second value is the experiential/hedonic value. This is the extent to which a product creates appropriate experiences, feelings, and emotions for the customer. The third value is the cost/sacrifice value. This is the cost or sacrifice that would be associated with the use of the product. The forth value is the relationship value. This value is the firm's efforts to create and deliver a hassle-free purchase and consumption experience. The fifth value is the co-creation value. This value is beneficial to customers who desire to influence various parts of the business system to co-create or co-produce their own unique purchase and consumption experience.

When considered at the micro-level, these five values provide insight and understanding into the drivers of customer value as pertains to community-based business models in the digital publishing field. Additionally, they provide a framework from which an
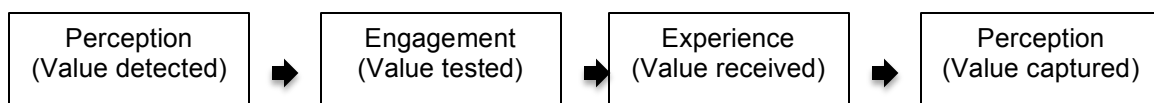
organization can build out those systems and enablers that will deliver these values to the customers. As these values are delivered to the customer it is, once again, imperative that the organization focus on delivering these values at the micro and the macro levels throughout the customer's experience with the organization.

2.2.3 The Role of Customer Engagement

While it is possible to understand the meaning of different customer values and how those values can be facilitated by an organization, it is quite another to be able to manage influence over those values while still allowing the customer to exert their own decision-making capabilities. A key organizational focus here is to be aware of the customer's value perception of a brand, a product/service, or an organization. Perception is based on the value that the customer is considering. In other words, perception is the lens through which the customer sees the value. By focusing on what the customer perceives an organization can better provide values. These values can be general for all customers with each customer receiving all of them, in a generic manner. Or these values can be tailored to each customer, and the customer has the opportunity to choose which value they will act upon. We will consider tailored or customized values for the purpose of this study.

2.2.4 The Result of Customer Experience

Perception draws the customer in and facilitates initial customer engagement, and the outcome of that engagement is experience. This experience has a positive (or negative) impact on the level of the customer's value satisfaction. In a cyclical manner, this level of satisfaction results in a reinforcement or reversal of the customer's brand perception. The conclusion is that the customer's experience influences their choosing of one value over another. The organization is thus able to not only facilitate and provide customer value, but to also create that value. The cyclical flow of this process can be shown in the following diagram:

Perception (Value detected)	→	Engagement (Value tested)	→	Experience (Value received)	→	Perception (Value captured)

2.2.5 Common Customer Value(s)

When considering the notion of value creation, it is essential for an organization to determine how that value will be delivered to the customer. Creating value is one thing, but delivering that value – facilitating and enabling its discovery and usage by the customer 2 is just as important. As indicated previously, there are a variety of values that can be delivered to customers through a product or brand. For example, product A may offer an experiential value and a functional value to all of its consumers. Conversely, each customer may approach a purchasing decision with their own value that they are seeking to have fulfilled. For example, customer 1 and customer 2 may both be approaching product B seeking a relationship value. However, in both of these instances the likelihood of "value overlap", common value(s) among multiple customers, is high. As indicated in both examples, value overlap presents the same type of value or fulfills a common need by delivering the same value, but to different types of people.

The advantage for the organization in this situation is that value overlap allows for an organization to increase its efficiency and effectiveness by understanding and delivering each value, combinations of values, and the emergence of new values based on the change of current values. The exponential reach of each value's delivery provides for a greater amount of customer value creation. If 100 customers are looking for the same value, then by providing that value 100 customers will be satisfied. In a perfect world, this would be the case. But in reality common values will still be presented and delivered to different types of customers. Therefore, a template approach for value delivery, even in regards to common customer values, should not be considered. The organization that decides that by providing this one value will satisfy 100 customers – because they share a common value – is setting themselves up for failure as it has not considered the individual customer. Values may be common, but what people are looking for in their acquisition of them varies from one person to the next. Organizations must understand this concept in order to create and provide customer value.

2.2.6 Individual Customer Outcome(s)

So how does a business present the same value to different types of people? The essential consideration here is to focus on that unique aspect which each person is seeking, that being the outcome. By providing the customer's desired outcome the reach of the common value is enhanced. Rather than providing common values as templates, businesses that provide them as blank pages are better equipped to meet the unique needs of each customer.

Every customer has a unique outcome that they desire to achieve. Data indicates that an outcome-based focus is important for businesses (Ulwick, 2012). An outcome focused approach tailor fits each value to each customer in a unique manner, which will, in turn, increase the customer value.

The common component amongst all types of customers is their desire to achieve their desired outcome. Organizations need to provide for common values at the big picture level, but then focus in on each customer's individual desired outcome. Consider the structure of a funnel. Experiential value is its own funnel and each customer approaches that value from the wide end. As they progress through the perception-engagement-experience process as described earlier they arrive at the narrow end of the funnel, which is their desired outcome. The direction, design, and implementation of the whole funnel – that is, the value – is in the hands of the business. By managing the common value the business can facilitate each customer's attainment of their desired individual outcome.

2.3 Value Capture

2.3.1 The Role of Customization

A foundational component when delivering a customer's unique desired outcome lies in the element of customization. Whether the outcome is customer-created or organization-delivered customization has three effects. First, customization provides for engagement between the organization and the customer. This is when the customer value is tested through involvement. When customization is a factor in engagement then the involvement occurring is tailored to the customer, addressing his or her specific needs

and wants. The second effect is that of experience, or value received. As a result of customization, customers are more likely to be loyal to a brand, product, or organization. A third effect of customization is that of positive perception or value captured (assuming a positive experience). When the customer has such a positive outcome the likelihood of them becoming brand advocates increases. The combined impact of customized engagement, experience, and perception should not be neglected when weighing the importance of customization.

So what is the practical role of customization in terms of it impact on the customer and its implementation in the organization? The focal point here has to do with engaging with the individual customer, providing for the individual customer, and creating value for the individual customer as opposed to a customer segment or cluster. All of the same efforts and intentions apply to the individual, who becomes a customer segment of one (Spaulding and Perry, 2013), as they would to the entire large-scale segment. But now the customer is treated as an individual and their desired outcome is a result of direct engagement with the organization. Their specific values are addressed and provided for, and their level of received customer value is complete. So, too, is the value that has been created for the organization.

2.3.2 Customer Advocacy

In today's business economy one of the strongest assets an organization can benefit from is that of customer advocacy. While this asset has been around for a long time, its exponential reach has increased dramatically over the past few years as new digital technologies and methods of customer social interaction have evolved. Research shows that the new model of customer advocacy is a combination of customer social behavior and organizational customer care (Kaufman and Horton, 2015). The social behavior is the word-of-mouth and the customer care is the positive customer value that the customer received. The result is the influence of customer-to-customer as opposed to business-to-customer, which has an exponentially greater potential for reach and the engagement of new customers with the organization.

Customer advocacy reflects very clearly as to the value created for the customer and the value being created and captured for the organization. It (customer advocacy) is a value for the organization, but it is also a value to new or potential customers. New customers can benefit from the positive experience of current customers, who will share their experience in terms of their engagement and the delivery of their desired outcome. Their positive perception will then be conveyed to the new or potential customer who will initiate their own progression through the perception-engagement-experience-perception cycle with the organization.

There is a direct connection between customization and customer advocacy. The cumulative value of the two when both are attained make them somewhat inseparable. Greater levels of customization can be provided as more customers come to the organization – a result of customer advocacy. Customer advocacy, in turn, will be enhanced as more customers receive the value as derived from their customized experience with the organization. Again, in both instances value is created for both the organization and the customer.

2.3.3 Epistemic Benefits

If values are what a customer receives from a product or service, then benefits are the manifestation of those values. They are of a positive or favorable nature to the customer, and they provide enhanced customer value. Benefits can be classified as either general or customized. General benefits are such that they are received by any and all users of a product or service. They are general to all consumers regardless of the value the customer is seeking to have fulfilled or the outcome they desire to have delivered. Customized benefits, on the other hand, are unique to each customer. These are the benefits that a customer receives based on his/her own utilization of a product or service. Other customers may happen to receive the same benefit, but the focus of the organization is to provide a specific benefit to a particular customer based on that customer's engagement and experience with the organization.

The first type of benefit we will look at are epistemic benefits. Studies show that with epistemic benefits the customer is immersed in unique opportunities of engagement (Lai, 1995). There is a tremendous amount of customization here in terms of the benefit received as the variety and novelty of the experience are crafted toward the individual user. The essence of this benefit is not the product's guarantee to provide novelty or variety. Rather, it is the direct vehicle – or manifestation – of that novelty or variety that the customer receives. This epistemic benefit can only be imparted and received through engagement and a deeper experience as the customer "invests in" the product in order to "receive from" it this outcome-delivered benefit.

A key point that is seen with epistemic benefits, and is similar with all types of benefits, is that they are the essence of what is being sold in a product or service, rather than the features. Customers want to invest in benefits that will have a positive value to them. The customer value stems from the receipt of these benefits, which, as previously discussed, are outcome-based. The attributes or features are the vehicles by which benefits are delivered to the customer, but they are not what the customer is buying and they are not what the customer values.

2.3.4 Hedonic Benefits

The second benefit we will look at are hedonic benefits. Hedonic benefits provide a release, they are an outlet through which pleasurable outcomes are experienced and received (Lai, 1995). Hedonic benefits are based on the "product's capacity" to deliver these benefits. Here, the organization must be aware of what value the customer has and then provide the means by which that value can be delivered to the customer. This understanding is based on the engagement-experience process by which the organization learns how to deliver the hedonic benefit and the customer learns how to incorporate that benefit into his or her life.

A key factor to both epistemic and hedonic benefits that must be understood is that they are both subjective in nature. Whereas the attributes that are being delivered are objective, the benefit – or the extrapolated outcome – is distinct to the customer and, as

such, has a heightened sense of relevance in terms of delivering customer value. The novelty and variety of the epistemic benefit is subjective to the customer's unique tendencies toward seeking experience. The enjoyment and pleasure of the hedonic benefit is unique to the customer's own desires and how they experience pleasure. Again, we return to the point that neither of these benefits are received by the customer as attributes but as the outcomes that they provide and deliver.

2.3.5 Transferring Created Value Into Captured Value

We have seen how customer value is a direct result of outcome-based experience, which provides the customer with the benefits for which he/she is looking. This experience stems from engagement, which is based on the initial perception a customer has of an organization. So if value has been created and delivered, then the customer will have a positive post-experience perception of the organization and they are likely to be a return customer, with the added benefit to the organization of the greater likelihood of strong customer advocacy. All of this results in value creation for the customer and the business.

But creating value is not the end result for the organization. Just because value has been created and even delivered to the consumer there is a greater opportunity – that being captured value. Studies show that captured value occurs when created value becomes sustainable (Verdin and Tackx, 2015). Verdin and Tackx present three key elements to capturing value. First, a captured value must originate from a created value. In this sense, it is the result of an intentional transformation from created value to captured value. The idea here is that creating value and then just holding it without advancing it is a waste of potential and opportunity. Second, captured value is to be sustainable. The value that was created can be harnessed and then replicated with an ongoing process of value creation-value capture for both the organization and the customer. Third, we see that captured value is created value that has been built into a structure or system. This system can be managed by the organization to provide for continuity of availability to and access by the customer.

The direct collaboration between the organization and the customer in the value capture process should also be emphasized. Here, again, we see the importance of customization, which allows for the value received by one to have an exponential impact on the organization and the value being created for other customers. Trends show that customization provides insights and information that businesses can use in creating new or enhanced value (Spaulding and Perry, 2013). These preferences reinforce the foundation of the value captured by providing additional opportunities for customer value creation and delivery based on proven positive experiences.

2.3.6 Sustaining Captured Value By Creating New Value

Customer and organizational collaboration has direct impact on the resulting value captured as it continues the cycle of creating value and then capturing that value. Studies show that capturing value is not enough and, in fact, can be a danger if it becomes the sole focus of an organization once an initial level of value has been created (Verdin and Tackx, 2015). Organizations cannot sit back and rely on one success to sustain them indefinitely. The organization cannot surrender creation for capture or, eventually, there will be nothing to capture.

From the perspective of value sustainability an ongoing cycle of create-capture-create-capture is evident. From every captured value for an organization there is customer value. And from that customer value can be extrapolated opportunities for innovation and new ideas in which may lie the next value to be created for both the organization and the customer. New value can be created from captured value thus perpetuating the cyclical nature of sustainability. In reality, that which is sustainable must be flexible and adaptable to change. Every captured value must evolve and expand with the changing nature of customer values, desired outcomes, and opportunities for engagement.

2.4 User Involvement
2.4.1 What User Involvement Is

The business-to-consumer dynamic must be about more than the exchange of goods and/or services for money. In order to develop a deeper relationship user involvement is necessary. User involvement is the active involvement of the user – or customer – to

produce or create something. User involvement is the collaboration between the organization and the customer in many different ways. This collaboration may result in new products, ideas, enhanced communications, deeper dialogue, and stronger relationships.

As stated, user involvement is active. It is not a passive position of receiving, but it is active and engaged contribution. And it is mutual with both parties contributing to the depth and breadth of the collaboration. Customers no longer want to be told what they can purchase and have their options set for them. This method of acquisition is no longer a customer value. Businesses, as well, realize that the more involved a user is and the more they work with their customers then the better equipped they (the business) will be to meet and provide for their customer's needs and desires. Therefore, user involvement has a positive outcome for all parties involved.

User involvement is not a singular act or a one-time event. Rather, the most beneficial types of user involvement are sustained. They continue on in either a deeper manner based on the initial collaboration or they branch off from the initial collaboration into a new opportunity for the organization and the user to continue to collaborate. The whole idea here is that user involvement is built around and spans the entire customer lifecycle beyond one purchase (Fallon, 2014). Here we see that one of the most important aspects of and outcomes to user involvement is a sustained relationship, not simply a one-time purchase. That relationship has to be built over time by both parties and it requires trust, engagement, time and effort.

The benefits of user involvement are vast and have positive implications for all areas of an organization including cost reductions, revenue increases, expanded capabilities, and new opportunities (Butler, 2009). User involvement can save money in marketing and promotions, research and development, and even personnel and staffing. As more users are involved there is a greater likelihood of a built-in market for what the organization is creating and distributing, thus increasing sales and revenue streams. An organization's capability is greatly enhanced as user involvement either a) increases the reach of one

arm of the organization or b) adds a new arm that strengthens the overall organizational outreach and effectiveness. Finally, user involvement opens the door to a vast array of new opportunities that stem from new ideas, new community engagement, and additional resources.

The organization's goal in user involvement is sustainability. This sustainability is achieved by delivering positive value or outcomes to the user. Additionally, the benefits of user involvement as mentioned above can be channeled back to the consumer. Reduced costs can be passed on to the customer through lower prices or better customer savings and values. As the organization expands its capabilities it can offer more in terms of variety and quantity of products offered, but also enhance its quality and the level of service it provides. Capability does not mean only "more" but "better", and this is passed on to the user. The customer will also benefit directly from the creation of new opportunities. These opportunities may include new methods of communication, the exploration of new markets, and the innovative utilization of new resources. The collaborative benefit of user involvement that is sustained over time results in short-term engagement that builds toward long-term goals, and this is of benefit to both the organization and the customer.

2.4.2 Types of Involvement

Individual involvement on behalf of a customer toward a business can take many forms and be either short or long-term. While there is no limit to how a user may be involved, the capacity of user involvement falls into two categories: individual involvement and group involvement. Individual involvement can take many forms but of particular interest and value is that of the lead user. Research suggests that lead users are presently aware of problems that the masses will experience in the future (Rohrbeck, Steinhoff, and Perder, 2010). Von Hippel's findings indicate that lead users are strong sources of marketing research regarding future needs (Von Hippel, 1986).

Lead users do not so much focus on how to make a new product or how to make an existing product better. Rather, they focus on future needs, problems, or conditions for

which they can find an immediate solution. Contrary to conventional users who's approach toward new opportunities is based on real world experience and familiarity, lead users focus on problem-solving and innovative thought. The benefit that lead users seek to realize is of direct value to themselves, but also has a residual and eventual – or dispersed – benefit on the larger community and/or market.

Von Hippel demonstrates that organizations must first identify underlying trends as areas of opportunity (Von Hippel, 1986). Then lead users can be identified as drivers to deliver upon that opportunity. Lead users do not respond to a market or create a new product. Rather, they solve a problem or create new outcomes to pursue an opportunity. It is the organization's role to pursue market creation, development, growth, and sustainability of that new or enhanced market.

The second category of user involvement is that of group involvement, or the community. The breadth of user involvement as created, delivered, and sustained through a community is immense. The key to a community revolves around a focal point or a common interest that the members are engaged in, and in which communal engagement is sustained over time (Wu, 2015). The common interest is that focal point which draws community members into the community. It is the core of the community. There can be sub-sets and spin-offs within the community, but the foundational common interest is what draws people in and compels them to be a part of the community. Therefore, the focal point is what binds the people together. The common interest, or focal point, is very important as it provides the core around which the community's relationship is established.

A second aspect of the community is that it is an engaging collection of individuals involved in active collaboration. This collaboration can involve the development of new ideas or the enhancement of existing ideas. Additionally, the community can aid in problem solving and decision-making by drawing upon the expertise, background, and experiential opinions of community members. Whereas the focal point brings the community together, it is the differentiated degree of active collaboration – everyone

offering what they have and who they are to the community – that deepens, strengthens, and advances the community.

A final element of a community is that it is sustained. Members of the community may come and go, elements and aspects of the community may change and evolve over time, but the community sustains itself. A strong focal point with engaged members are keys to this sustainability. Sustainability requires that the community always be moving forward, that all members have a purpose and something that they can contribute. Sustainability requires flexibility in the community's dynamic, but it also requires structure within which it can operate and grow purposefully and organically over time. Organizations that can facilitate and manage communities have a tremendous opportunity to build that essential relationship which is crucial to sustain the customer lifecycle.

2.4.3 Involvement in the Digital vs. Traditional Marketplace

The evolution of the digital marketplace in recent years has yielded outcomes and structures that are vastly different from the traditional marketplace. While neither is necessarily better than the other, both do have threats to be mindful of and opportunities that can be capitalized on to the benefit of both the consumer and the organization. One of the most noticeable differences is the role of the social web in the digital marketplace. The social web is the dynamic by which social interaction is conducted on the internet. This interaction can be conducted via blogs, communities, social networking, company websites, video hosting, and other methods of digital communications.

Regardless of the forum or venue in which groups or individuals engage in the social web all of this type of communication comes down to a conversation. Organizations should not only monitor those conversations, but they should listen and participate in them, as well as implement those components that will prove beneficial in building and sustaining the value-based customer experience and enhancing the community relationship.

In order for an organization to benefit from the social web, social exposure must lead to social engagement. In fact, the role of exposure in the traditional marketplace is being

challenged by that of engagement in the digital marketplace. The customer does not want to hear a voice but, rather, to engage in a conversation. If an organization does not engage in its social web, then it will be missing a tremendous opportunity to build relationships, to enhance its brand, and to assess new value-creation opportunities. The most effective communications are those that are interactive and in real time, and the social web facilitates both of these components but on a greater level with far-reaching impact. The organization need not be concerned with controlling the conversation but participating in the conversation, and the social web is an unlimited manner in which that engagement can be conducted.

Whereas the traditional marketplace identified capital primarily in terms of finances and tangible resources and assets, the digital marketplace puts a premium on intellectual capital including imagination, creativity, and entrepreneurship (Brian, 2012). The impact of intellectual capital on the digital marketplace has become so substantial that it is now a driver of innovation to be unleashed as opposed to the traditional approach of keeping it contained.

But what makes intellectual capital so valuable? Ideas, innovation, and creativity are the drivers of the digital universe. From creating something new to sharing it with others to building it and growing it over time and then allowing it to evolve and change into something new that meets a need or solves a problem – these are the essential components of capital in the digital marketplace. This intellectual capital is the foundation of creating and capturing customer value and sustaining that value in a business model. Whereas the traditional marketplace relied upon and was driven, to an extent, by the finances necessary to maintain operations, the digital marketplace impacts that by providing an environment in which ideas are the new capital requirement.

Along with this intellectual capital, however, does come the need for its effective management. Budgeting, planning, scheduling, goal setting, development – all of these are still required for an organization to be successful and to be able to sustain its operations in the digital marketplace. However, with intellectual capital new

opportunities to conduct these essential business functions are available. But the key differentiating factor here is that intellectual capital has an equal – if not greater – impact on an organization's external reach as it does on its internal operations. Intellectual capital enhances the internal operations and functions of an organization to allow it to build and sustain its external reach and voice. These ideas and innovations provide new opportunities for user involvement and engagement.

2.4.4 Depth and Breadth of Engagement

After having considered how users can be involved – individually or via a community – we must now look at how that involvement is manifested, and that is done through user engagement. There are two dynamics to address when looking at user engagement: the depth and the breadth of engagement. Depth of engagement focuses on the users experience that goes beyond the surface of purchase and acquire, shop and browse, or even provide simple feedback. Rather, depth of engagement refers to the user becoming a part of something. The user appreciates that they are valued for their contribution and their ideas rather than just their money and data.

Depth is relationship-based. It requires time and effort on the part of both the organization and the end user. Depth requires open and honest communication. It requires awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the environment but also how one can contribute to that environment. And depth requires that the end user make that contribution, that they engage. Depth is not attained on the sidelines or through observation, and it is not attained individually or in silos. Depth builds trust and it is the very foundation of a sustained relationship between the organization and the end user.

Depth requires not only that the end users open themselves and engage, but also that the organization be transparent and accessible to the end user. It is the organization's responsibility to initiate end user engagement and to open those doors that will facilitate a deeper relationship and foundation with the customer. Research indicates that engaged customers can translate into effective spokespeople for a brand (Fallon, 2014). Again, we see that depth is not about a product but a conversation, not a one-time transaction but an

ongoing experience. The opportunities for the end user to contribute are limitless as a) more doors are opened to them in the brand's world and b) they walk through those doors with the organization. There really is no limit to depth.

The second dynamic when considering user engagement is the breadth of the engagement. If depth is vertical, then breadth is horizontal. Breadth is the range of engagement, the extent to which a user is engaged with an organization. As discussed in the previous section, the social web is opening doors of digital communications (the means of exchange) that are exponentially increasing the conversations between users and organizations. At the same time the type of intellectual capital (the measure of exchange) is growing and expanding. Here we see the essence of breadth – more capital via a variety of new venues to open greater opportunity for more conversations between the organization and more end users.

Businesses that look externally to these new sources of intellectual capital are wise to do so, and this search will be broad in its reach. Findings indicate that customers are the key to product innovation, enhanced communications, and decision-making (Dwyer, 2013). A broader degree of end user engagement requires transparency by the organization. By listening to their customers, by seeking and acting upon the end users contributions the organization is not only furthering the depth of engagement, but it is expanding the breadth of the relationship. As more end users are brought in and engaged in various manners – manners which the end user creates rather than the organization dictates – the organic process of growth from within will be carried wide and far.

Neither breadth nor depth can be the sole focus. If an organization focuses too much on depth then it will reduce its impact and limit its own growth. However, if an organization becomes to "top heavy" with breadth and range, and there is not enough foundation to sustain it, then it will collapse. The reach of the quantitative is dependent on the strength of the qualitative, and that all starts from within. A balance between depth and breadth is needed to maintain a healthy foundation while growing out.

2.4.5 Reasons for Resistance

While many users do become actively involved to heighten their experience and relationship with an organization many do not. It is not a given that all users will seek out and embrace opportunities to collaborate in a community, to offer their ideas and feedback, or to build a sustained relationship with an organization. One of the reasons for this resistance to become actively involved is the presence of dominant processes. While there does need to be some organization and framework regarding user involvement, dominant processes, systems, and structures can repel people and dissuade their engagement. Process, systems, and structures are the frameworks within which involvement is facilitated. If a framework is too rigid, too controlled, then users will not want to be involved. Butler clearly indicates that overly formal or rigid systems that are too structured can repel participation and engagement (Butler, 2009). When seeking ideas and creative input, when fostering open dialogue and communication an organization does not want to impose too many rules and regulations. If this is done, then the very reasons that the end user had for becoming involved – creative expression, open dialogue, the free flow of ideas – will be prevented and the end user will stop participating.

So what are those dominant processes that are to be avoided? Guidelines are good, but structures or systems that are too rigid and inflexible are stifling. Organizations need to lead and manage change and opportunity, not dictate and dominate. Processes that discourage ideas that don't "fit the mold" or are considered too different should be avoided. However, this is a scale that is different for each organization. Some organizations want ideas that are very different and others only want moderately different ideas. Both are fine, but the scale of acceptance regarding different ideas should be clearly communicated to users at the beginning so that they are aware. Processes that ostracize some users while favoring others are to be avoided. Again, end users should be able to determine if they will be a good fit for involvement. If they choose to become involved, then they should be as engaged as all other end users. Finally, systems that are more about adherence to rules than exploration and discovery should be avoided. End users become involved and collaborate to be engaged, not to follow a checklist of rules and systems.

What we see here is that *dominant* processes are to be avoided. This does not mean that some structures and designs are not necessary, but that a balance between dominant and functional processes should be achieved. So what processes are good to include? Processes that facilitate the steady and reliable flow of communication and information are important. It is imperative that users know how ideas, questions, and feedback are to be exchanged and shared. Structures that inform all end users as to the goal or vision of the common element being focused on are essential. It is crucial to have processes in place that allow each participant to be himself or herself, and to engage as a part of community. Systems that create and sustain an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and understanding for actively involved end users are essential. The balance between processes that are too rigid and too lax must be carefully maintained in order to facilitate engaging and fruitful end user involvement.

In order for an end user to be inclined to become and stay involved there must be some sort of incentive. The varieties of incentives are limitless, but they must be present. External end users can be motivated by financial gain or the opportunity to sell a product or service for earnings. End users can be motivated by the opportunity to lead or co-lead the implementation of a new idea that they created or developed. The incentive to see one's idea come to fruition can be very strong. Incentive can be receiving the credit and recognition for something as a means to enhance one's professional qualifications or marketability. Some incentives are focused more on the intangible rewards and benefits that the end user receives – the opportunity to contribute to or be a part of something unique, meaningful, and special.

There is no one correct incentive and there is no guaranteed incentive that will work for everyone. But an incentive is necessary. In order for a person to surrender or relinquish their idea(s), time, effort, energy, or resources then they need to have a reason for doing so. This does not mean that incentives necessarily have to mean that people always get something in return, but there does have to be a reason for involvement. Research indicates that a large threat to collaboration is when individuals feel that their reward will

go to someone else (Coats, 2005). Here, we see that the essence comes down to providing a reason for collaboration.

Being able to provide the incentive that the end users desire requires that an organization know their end users. What does the end user want? What do they value? What motivates them to collaborate? How can we provide that incentive to them? The answers to these questions will reveal to an organization what incentives will be the most important to the end user and how the organization can deliver these incentives. However, this understanding of the end user comes about as the relationship is built, and this takes time. Incentives are not solely about giving something to the end user. Incentives are not a means of barter or exchange, in and of themselves. Rather, incentives provide a reason and spur the motivation for active and engaging end user collaboration. The essential question is what does the end user get in exchange for what they give up?

2.4.6 Incentives for Involvement

We have considered extrinsic incentives and their importance regarding end user involvement. Here we will consider the role that intrinsic incentives play in end user involvement. Intrinsic incentives are those that occur naturally in a person, they are not sold to or developed in a person. These are the incentives that are common to most end users who become involved, and they are crucial elements when an end user begins involvement.

The first intrinsic incentive that end users are motivated by and are seeking to have fulfilled is to be connected with people. It's a social thing. This connection can be for the purpose of professional networking. It can be to learn from other enthusiasts or experts in a field who have knowledge and expertise to share. This connection can be for the purpose of promoting an idea. Some people seek out and make these connections simply to meet people and make new friends. But in all of these we see a foundational component of social interaction in end user involvement. It is the organization's responsibility, and opportunity, to facilitate these interactions and to sustain the conversations and engagement that they generate. How can organizations do this? By

providing a forum for exchange, by listening to and engaging with participants, by incorporating the conversation into the decision making and planning of the organization, and by allowing the voice of each end user to be heard so that he/she will know that they truly are connected to people and that they are being listened to – as they would expect in any conversation. While the evolution of online and digital communications has changed the method of social interaction, it is still that incentive to connect with people with the same common interest – for whatever reason – that drives most end user involvement.

These connections, or social interactions, have to be initiated at some point as do all conversations. Here, we see that the first step may be getting to know somebody (Augustine). The beginning of these connections and conversations is very important as they allow new participants to see how the community functions, and how the conversation and flow of ideas operates. The essence of the relationship being built between the organization, the end user, and the community is not so much about ideas, feedback, or creativity – all vital – as it is about people. And people are the core of all social interactions and connections, regardless of the venue, the forum, and the medium.

A second intrinsic incentive that motivates end users to be involved is the sharing of a common goal. Common goals stem from an objective or purpose that is naturally within someone. The attainment or realization of these goals brings end users together in a spirit of collaboration to achieve the desired outcome. While goals are ongoing it is the recognition of the opportunity to achieve a goal that can serve as a very strong catalyst to initiate user involvement. The incentive to collaborate with others toward a shared goal is a very powerful starting point when generating end user involvement.

The power in a shared or common goal does not lie in the goal itself. Rather, the power lies in the collective nature of collaboration, of people working together. This collaboration brings in a variety of perspectives, opinions, experiences, resources, and skill sets. The dialogue and exchange from such collaboration – if managed properly – can be exponential in its impact to positively achieve a goal. The attainment of a measurable or discernible outcome must be measured against the successful achievement

of goals along the way. Research indicates the importance of goals in the group collaboration dynamic (Nayar, 2014). These goals should be clearly communicated to all participating end users and should be consistent. They should convey how participants can be involved in the process of achieving the goal – not just the participant's work, but also their collaborative contributions to solving the problem. The goals that end users participate in should be action-oriented in which steps are taken collectively once the group has collaborated on a solution or course of action.

When end users begin involvement they want to understand the goal that they will be collaborating on so that they can see how they will fit and how they can best contribute. Therefore, the goal should be specific to a certain problem or question or issue at hand. Participants can then see if this is something that they want to be a part of addressing or resolving. The goal should be measurable in terms of outcomes, time frames, and benchmarks of success. The participant can then determine if they are able to contribute based on the parameters and structures of the goal. Goals should be attainable and realistic. Here, we see the balance of innovation, ideas and creativity, but also how end users can be a part of something that has a level of reality in its achievement and successful completion. Finally, the common goal should be timely. End users want to know whether the goal has immediate or eventual application and opportunity, and that their involvement will bare fruit that they can enjoy. A shared or common goal and how that goal is structured, presented, and led is a very powerful incentive to generate end user involvement.

Once an end user has begun involvement there must continue to be the provision of incentives to continue involvement. In the previous section we discussed types of incentives that can be used to initiate end user involvement. Now we will look at those incentives that are necessary to continue, or sustain, that involvement. It is through ongoing involvement that relationships are built and strengthened between the organization and the end user, and the end user and other members of the community.

The first incentive we will look at that facilitates continued end user involvement is the catalytic mechanism. Catalytic mechanisms turn words into actions, they deliver results through a system of parts that work together (Collins, 1999). Each part has its own function and acts in its own way. It acts as a part of the whole, delivering that which nothing else can and making sure that the crucial component is always provided. In this way of a system or process, mechanisms differ vastly from events. Events are singular by definition, but a mechanism is ongoing; it is sustainable over the long run (Collins, 1999). Catalytic mechanisms are very powerful incentives for continued involvement because the end user understands what is in place and how it functions. The end user has seen signs and evidence of success via the mechanism, and the user sees how he or she fits into the mechanism as an essential component but also as a unique piece. A catalytic mechanism is twofold in its dynamic. On the one hand a catalytic mechanism is developed, implemented, and sustained by the organization that hosts the end user involvement. On the other hand the catalytic mechanism evolves and adapts over time to the level, type, and variety of end user involvement. Here we see the recurring idea of balance between the mechanism that the organization puts into place and monitors, and the mechanism that grows organically as a direct result of the end user involvement.

A second incentive for continued end user involvement is that of familiarity and comfort. These two aspects take time to develop and receive, but they are very powerful incentives in that they appeal to some of our most base needs and desires as people. When something is familiar and comfortable it is safe, it is pleasant, and it can be trusted. Familiarity and comfort allow the end user to not only know the environment in which they are collaborating – the organization, the forum, the method of communication, etc. – but they allow the end user to get to know the people. Familiarity and comfort are crucial to the ongoing idea of building relationships. Jarrett clearly expresses the importance and value of working and engaging consistently with the same people (Jarrett). These people can be people in the organization, but they will also be people in the collaborative community who are outside of the organization (i.e. – other end users). By discovering strengths and weaknesses the collaborative experience is strengthened as end users can contribute to and draw from the community in the most beneficial ways. Shared

experiences are one of the strongest ways to build a bond, and they allow for one person to get to know and understand another person or a collective community much deeper. Unspoken habits and rules further the mechanism that allows for the end users to contribute to and achieve the overall goals of their involvement in the first place.

Familiarity and comfort are extremely powerful incentives for continued and sustained involvement but they take time, effort, trust, and dedication to build. Organizations must provide open dialogue, transparency, and build respect with and among the community. As the end user becomes more familiar with the community and the mechanism as a whole that familiarity will result in understanding, which leads to comfort. People want to engage in and continue to be a part of those things with which they are comfortable. Therein lies the effectiveness of familiarity and comfort as an incentive for continued end user involvement.

3. Methods

3.1 Primary Research

3.1.1 Survey

For my primary research I wanted to speak with customers regarding their shopping patterns and preferences in the digital marketplace. As the context of my study is digital publishing, I focused on the digital component in my survey thus allowing for a greater survey pool. I chose to focus on the publishing aspect in the expert interviews section of my methods. Survey data was broken down into raw percentages and analyzed as comparison amongst the answer options to the multiple choice questions. Interview results were assessed for their objective content and feedback as to the answers given and the content of the discussion that was generated.

The first method of primary research that I used was conducting a consumer usage survey. For a list of the survey questions that were used please see the survey charts in the appendix. My survey structure was ten multiple-choice questions. I surveyed thirty-four consumers who included family, friends, colleagues, and casual acquaintances. My survey pool also included individuals I did not know, people who were forwarded my survey from direct participants. I structured my questions to be specific enough to allow for substantive findings, but also broad enough to allow for universal relevance. Participants were from across the United States at all income and education levels. Ages ranged from mid-20's to mid-70's and participants were from all areas and industries of the professional world. My goal was to obtain as broad a survey sample as possible.

In order to connect the survey data to the research I had conducted, I structured the questions to provide more insight into three areas. The first area of interest in the survey was to identify what the consumers value when purchasing a product or service. These questions focused on the different types of values and benefits that customers seek from a brand. Values here can be focused on the product itself or on the shopping experience, as well as how the business can provide these values to the customer: on an individual basis or via a digital community. The data gathered from these questions is important for a

business when assessing and determining what value is desired, and how to create and deliver that value to the consumers.

The second area of interest in the survey questions focused on the customer's preferred type and level of involvement with a business and/or other customers. Here, questions were structured around the different methods by which a consumer can engage with a business and how deep that involvement may go. The idea with these questions was to gauge whether consumers were desiring a relationship or to merely make a purchase, and if the former then how might that relationship be initiated and then grown over time.

The third area of interest in the survey questions was analyzing what may strengthen the likelihood that the customer will continue to purchase from a business. The idea here is that the purchase, in order to be sustained over the long-term, will be based on a relationship. Thus, a direct connection and follow-up with the types of questions mentioned in the preceding paragraph. These questions focused on reasons for brand loyalty and key drivers as to why a consumer continues to purchase from one company over another – what drives and sustains that purchase selection?

3.1.2 Expert Interviews

The second method of primary research that I used was expert interviews. My desire for these interviews was to seek specific answers to questions that I asked as pertains to the areas of value creation in publishing, writer and reader collaboration in the creative process, and the opportunity for sustainable design in a publishing business model. I structured my questions in order to acquire objective answers and feedback that is based on a wide variety of experiences in the publishing industry. I conducted these interviews in a manner that allowed for the conversation to evolve organically based on the answers that were given and the overall flow and progression of the discussion.

For my first professional interview I wanted to speak with a professional who is directly involved in the publishing industry, the context of my thesis. I interviewed Jody Berman, an editor from Boulder, Colorado, with whom I have worked on my first publishing

project. Jody has over 25 years of experience in the publishing industry. I spoke with Jody about three main topics. The first topic was about emerging trends in the publishing industry. I chose this topic to be able to make conclusions between research content in theory and the application of what is occurring in the real world of publishing. The second topic explored the opportunity for collaboration between the writer and the reader. I chose this topic to be able to understand the specific methods of creative collaboration that are unique to the digital publishing industry. The third topic discussed the importance of relationships and the opportunity for personalization in the publishing industry. I chose this topic to learn more about the importance of customization in digital publishing.

My second professional interview was with Jody Rein. I chose to interview Jody because she, too, is an experienced expert in the publishing industry. Jody is a former editor and now a literary agent in Colorado. Jody speaks at conferences nationwide and is a guest lecturer at the University of Denver. I spoke with Jody about three main topics. The first topic we discussed were various models for collaboration between writers and readers and writers and communities. I chose this topic as it enabled me to learn more about the role of the digital community in the digital publishing field. The second topic was how to develop and maintain an appropriate level of balance between different types of changes in the publishing industry. I chose this topic as a means to learn more about the changes that are occurring in digital publishing and how a writer can best manage that change. The third topic we discussed was sustainability of a profitable business model through collaboration. The main point of discussion here was in group story creation.

4. Findings

4.1 Surveys

All findings for my study were assessed and analyzed through the filter of the essential question: how can user involvement become a sustainable business model in the digital marketplace? The following section provides an in-depth analysis and review of the findings of the research conducted for my thesis. All charts and statistical outcomes for the survey questions are provided in the appendix section. The findings will begin with analysis of the results from the ten-question survey and then cover the information gathered in the expert interviews. The findings for each of the survey questions and for the expert interviews have direct relevance to a sustainable business model based on collaboration and value capture. The following findings show statistical and analytical data as to how to develop such a business model.

Survey question one focused on leading motivators when making an online purchase. Survey results indicated that 47% of consumers are motivated by product attributes and 44% are motivated by the cost of the product (Appendix chart 1). What's interesting in this question is that after these two values of attributes/features and price, the motivators plummet for online purchase experience (6%), customization (3%), and feelings or emotions (0%). While this does not mean that these latter three areas of motivation are not important, it does indicate that the overwhelming majority of customers are motivated by the same criteria. Another way to look at this data is that by putting extra emphasis on the values and motivating factors of attributes/features and cost a business is reaching the vast majority of its customer base. Thus, a business can increase its efficiency and effectiveness by putting extra emphasis on consistently and reliably providing and delivering the desired product attributes/features and on a fair and reasonable price.

Survey question two focused on the importance of customization when making an online purchase. Given that 50% of respondents indicated that customization was of little importance we will consider responses to the two options both above and below the option labeled "a little important" (Appendix chart 2). We see that 32% indicate that customization is "rather important" while 15% indicate that customization is "not

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important". At first glance it may seem that customization is not too important. However, when we break down the responses to this question in the above-described manner we see that 82% of consumers do value customization to some extent (85% if we add in the 3% who answered "extremely important"). Therefore, it is clear that customization is important but not an overwhelming factor for most consumers.

Survey question three addresses the role and importance of other customers on one's own online purchasing decision(s). 100% of consumers indicate that the experience of other customers has either an extremely or a rather high level of influence on their purchasing decision (Appendix chart 3). These responses indicate the extremely high level of importance that businesses should place on customer advocacy. Here we see a connection with the 85% of consumers in question two who indicated that customization is of some degree of importance to them. If that 85% of customers who value customization receive that value then they are likely to be strong, positive, and influential customer advocates for a business. These positive customer advocates will, in turn, influence the 100% of customers who do value the experience and opinion of others customers when making their own purchasing decision.

Survey question four provides a direct comparison between customers who will return to a reliable brand and those who will seek out a new and innovative brand. 76% of consumers will return to a brand that they like and have had a positive experience with even if that brand has not created anything new (Appendix chart 4). This does not say that innovation is not important, but rather that the power of sustainability and customer loyalty is very great if a customer has a positive brand experience, and if that customer receives consistently and reliably the value which is being sought. What we see here is that businesses should not sacrifice reliability and depth for new ideas and innovations. Just because a business "can" does not mean that they "should". Businesses need to focus on keeping customers, on building those relationships that will bring customers back.

Survey question five was very interesting, given current trends in the digital marketplace and responses indicate a tremendous opportunity. This question focused on motivating

factors as to why a consumer would engage in a digital community. 56% said that they would not become involved in a digital community (Appendix chart 5). This shows tremendous potential for the organization that can identify and address the reason(s) as to why these individuals are resistant to becoming involved. One opportunity here is to incorporate an element in the digital community that consumers have indicated they highly value. For example, survey question three indicates that customer advocacy is very important. If the digital community facilitated real-time and engaging opportunities for social advocacy then a sizeable portion of the 56% of consumers who are unlikely to join a digital community may be convinced to join and participate. By bringing into the digital community that which is most valued to consumers then this could increase the amount of consumers who actively engage in a digital community.

Survey question six focuses on what consumers value most regarding continued engagement with a business as opposed to a singular purchasing decision. Engagement is more relationship-based than a purchase. Engagement lends itself to long-term, sustainable interaction and experience between the business and the consumer. We see that 68% of consumers value feedback and response from the company above all other factors for continued engagement (Appendix chart 6). It is clear then that one way to build and sustain an engaged relationship is to provide the feedback and responses that consumers are seeking. Here, we see that dialogue is essential. Additionally, by providing this dialogue companies may be able enhance their level of digital community participation and strengthen their customer advocacy.

Survey question seven addresses the need for and the importance of processes and rules in a digital community. 53% of consumers are more likely to participate in a digital community that has processes and rules (Appendix chart 7). However, the data also reinforces that a sizeable amount of consumers, 47%, still will not participate in a digital community. This does not mean that community process and rules should be disregarded but balanced. While there is a clear indication in this data that processes and rules are important, there is no clear indication that consumers want dominant processes and rules in a digital community. Processes and rules are important, but the business must

differentiate between dominant and functional processes and rules. We can also see in this question that no consumers dismiss the need for processes and rules in a digital community, whether they are likely to participate or not.

Survey question eight considers the importance of a common goal on a consumer's decision to participate in a digital community. To analyze responses to this question we will take a similar approach as in question two. For those who would participate in a digital community 35% indicated that a goal is of "some influence" to them (Appendix chart 8). Considering one up and one down from this response we see that 15% see a common goal as a major influence and 6% say a common goal has no influence. It is clear then that the vast majority of those surveyed who would participate in a digital community do value, to some degree, the presence of a common goal. When considered in conjunction with question seven, a case could be made that part of a common goal are the clearly defined and followed process and rules that will be adhered to while the digital community is working toward achieving that goal.

Survey question nine focuses on motivating factors for building a sustained relationship with a business. 94% of those surveyed indicate that reliability is the key to building and sustaining a relationship with a business (Appendix chart 9). It is undeniable that reliability is crucial to sustainability. When considered in conjunction with the other values that consumers have indicated are of importance, businesses can provide reliability in product attributes and features (question 1), selling at a fair and reasonable cost (question 1), delivering good brand performance (question 4), and providing sustained engagement with the consumer (question 6). All of these are opportunities for a business to provide reliability in various ways that are valued by different customers. By reliably providing these values a business can consistently deliver the values for which the consumer is looking. Reliability is crucial to sustainability, and it has a universal connection to all values including product attributes and features, fair cost, brand performance, and ongoing engagement.

Survey question ten addresses how satisfied customers are likely to contribute to a business. 68% indicated that they would contribute money ahead of other methods of contribution (Appendix chart 10). But when analyzed further we see two additional pieces of interesting data. First, time is the least likely contribution that customers will make to a business at only 3%. This clearly indicates that a customer's time is of tremendous value to him/her. Businesses need to honor the time that customers have and provide the most effective and efficient customer experience for their market. Second, 82% of customers would contribute in some form to a business of which they are a satisfied customer with only 18% saying they would not contribute. Perhaps the takeaway from responses to this question is not so much *how* customers will contribute but that the overwhelming majority *will* contribute. That is a great opportunity for engagement and building a sustainable relationship.

4.2 Expert Interviews

The following section provides a summary of the findings as collected in expert interviews. The voice of communication in digital publishing is changing the way that value is transmitted between writers and readers. One of the essential values in the field of digital publishing is that of personalization to the reader. Readers want to have their life enhanced with substantive content to which they can relate. By generating such content, writers will then be able to provide the benefit that readers are seeking and open the door to a deeper writer-to-reader experience as the level of engagement grows.

There are several new methods of engagement that are allowing for enhanced types of writer-to-reader experiences. Serialization allows for writers to distribute their writings one piece at a time and solicit feedback from readers. In this method, readers are able to help the writer shape the final project. This guidance from the readership results from the writer opening the initial door of communication with the consumer. A second method of engagement in the digital publishing industry is virtual book groups, which allow for group members and authors to connect and collaborate regardless of location and geographic proximity. These groups can be constructed to discuss finished works or as a hybrid acting in combination with serialization.

Digital publishing is heavily dependent upon relationships. It is crucial to connect the author to the reader in order to establish, strengthen, and sustain that relationship. Here, the role of the relationship is incorporated into the value creation-capture-creation cycle very effectively. In order for a reader to collaborate with a writer on a story and on the creation of content the relationship is key. By establishing that relationship and building out from it the writer will be able to create value in conjunction with the reader, capture that value as their collaborative effort creates it, and then create new value as the common value between both parties for creative content is explored and discovered.

In the digital publishing field end user involvement has tremendous opportunity for impact and potential for innovative contributions. When seeking the creative involvement and contribution of the reader, writers must first establish the goal that they are pursuing with that involvement. The question here is what does the writer want out of that collaboration. Does the writer want feedback and assessment of his/her story? Does the writer want to collaborate with readers on the growth of a story he/she is in the middle of writing? Does the writer want to provide a forum or venue in which other writers can share their stories? The goal for this collaboration is crucial because then the writer will know how to structure the collaborative opportunity in terms of both individual and group involvement.

Once the goal has been set the writer can then create models for the collaboration to occur. Models need to be structured and organized, but they must also be flexible to allow for the creative process to occur in accordance with the originally intended goal. The models must also be sustainable. A strong portion of the sustainability of a model will be how well it handles and adapts to change. The writer's model for collaboration with the reader must be an effective balance between responsive and deliberate change. Responsive change is change and adaptation based on external factors and variables. It is change that occurs from the outside in. Deliberate change is intentional and initiated from within. It is change from the inside out.

We can see that in the field of digital publishing the setting of a goal and the management of change by the writer are essential in order to be able to lead the community effectively and efficiently. Communities that work collaboratively in the writing process are more successful. These groups are focused on a common goal and purpose, allowing for more voices to be heard in the creative process. In these communities, the writer needs to manage multiple factors of the group story creation process. These factors may include the starting point of a story, the retelling of a story, and the enhancement or growth of a story. All of these opportunities for writer-reader collaboration are expanding with new opportunities based on emerging technologies and evolving trends in group collaboration. Group story creation in digital publishing has tremendous opportunity in the digital age, and writers can sustain the value derived from these groups and build this sustainability into a business model.

After discussing the areas of creative collaboration and individual and group involvement, my interviews shifted toward that of profitability. How can a writer profit from the creative value that he or she creates? How can creative collaboration lead to profitability? And how can a business model be designed and implemented that will provide and, ideally, sustain that profitability? My research into the field of digital publishing has led me to one solution that can answer all three of these questions. That is, writers need to monetize a concept.

Monetizing a concept can take any number of means or methods including serialization, group story creation, or a platform for general creative dialogue. Regardless, the writer who wants to generate profitability from creative collaboration must complete three essential steps. First, the writer needs to create a concept for the creative collaboration that can be monetized. Second, the writer has to generate a model for that concept that is based on collaboration with the reader. Third, the writer must facilitate the delivery and maintenance of that concept over time. A key component of this third step is to continue the value creation-value capture-value creation cycle. The writer who can create a value-driven concept and then deliver it to the reader via a foundationally strong business model can achieve profitability.

5. Discussion

5.1 What a Business Model Is

A business model is the overall mechanism that is created, put in place, and maintained to generate and sustain profits. There are many layers and components that go into developing a business model. Magretta articulates an interesting point by going beyond the "how" of a business model to the deeper question of "why" – seeking the economic logic that lies behind a business model (Magretta, 2002). By considering the "why", a business owner can understand what the customer values. They can then determine how to best deliver that value. By providing that value, the business will be profitable and be afforded the opportunity to continue delivering that value to the customer through sustained operations.

In order to demonstrate how user involvement can be become a sustainable business model in the digital marketplace it is essential to analyze the structure within which this case will be built. For the discussion section of my thesis I will be working within the 9-part design created and presented by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur in their book *Business Model Generation*. The business model elements that Osterwalder and Pigneur identify include: customer segments, value proposition, customer relationships, channels to the customer, key partnerships, key resources, key activities, revenue streams, and cost structure. In the following sections I will detail the role that end users have in each of these business model components, and how collaboration between the organization and the end user can be built into a sustainable business model.

5.2 Components of a Business Model

5.2.1 Customer Segments

Customer segments allow for an organization to group its customers into groups or clusters. These segments can be by needs, location, values, benefit sought, etc. Clusters can be large or small, and an organization can focus on one or several different segments. Customer segmentation allows for a business to identify which clusters of customers to focus on, which is far different from focusing on all customers. Customer segments allow

an organization to know its customers better and from that knowledge the business will understand what the customer needs. Then the business can better position itself to be of value to that customer and build a strong relationship.

The concept of a "customer" is very broad and almost abstract. It tends to focus on the product being sold rather than on who the customer is and what he/she wants. But customer segments allow for a deeper customer-driven approach as there is more understanding of the customer and what they are trying to accomplish or what it is that they value. Research has found that understanding a customer and how they will use a product goes beyond merely identifying what they want (Tripsas, 2009). Segmentation allows for the business model to be built around the customer, not around what is being sold. This is a tremendous distinction in terms of effort, focus, perception, and priority.

What is it that a customer needs in order to accomplish or achieve that which they value? That is the underlying question to assess when segmenting customers. At the heart of customer segmentation lies communication, dialogue, and engagement. The better an organization gets to know a single customer and then builds a relationship with both the individual and the segment, the better equipped the organization will be to meet current, changing, and unanticipated needs. This relationship is built through ongoing collaboration that is relationship-focused, not sales-focused. The extent, in both depth and breadth, to which a business engages and collaborates with its customer segments – even if they are different segments – will determine how well the business is able to meet the customers' needs. This collaboration is vital to a sustainable business model.

5.2.2 Value Proposition

The value proposition is that which a business offers – the products or services – that creates and delivers value to the customer. The value lies not in the product itself, but in the benefits that the product or service is offering. Here, we see the organization tapping into the concept of a value-driven offering that delivers specific benefits to the customer(s). These value propositions seek to solve customer problems and satisfy their needs.

Value propositions stem from a careful assessment and a thorough understanding of the customer segments. The value being proposed to the customer offers a specific benefit to that segment based on what that segment needs. In order to provide that value the business must know the customer first. Again, we see the crucial role that understanding a customer – beyond merely knowing them – plays (Hudadoff, 2009). By understanding the customer in such a way the business can then bundle the benefits that are of direct value to the customer. These bundles can be customized to a customer segment of one or they can be broader in their appeal to a larger segment. Regardless, they (the bundles) are based on the customers' needs, not on the company's offerings.

In customer segmentation, the business learns who the customer is and what the customer needs. Value propositions seek to deliver the bundle of benefits that meet those needs. Here, we see the next level of interaction and engagement between the organization and the end user. In segmentation, the engagement focuses on who the customer is, identifying the need or problem. In value proposition the engagement and collaboration shifts toward solving that problem. However, it is not just about the organization determining what is needed and then providing that for the customer. Rather, in a business model based on collaboration between the end user and the organization, the end user has the opportunity to create their own solution. The organization may facilitate the solution's achievement and delivery but, to an extent, the end user controls the solution – or the value – itself. The power here lies, also, in the greater impact of the segment. The solution or value as achieved by one customer can then spread out to be available to other end users in that segment. Therein we see the exponential reach and impact of a value proposition that is based upon and open to the overall customer segment.

5.2.3 Customer Relationships

Customer relationships focus on the connection between the organization and the customer segment. These connections consider how the interaction is conducted. That is, what is the method of communication that is used between the organization and the segment? Customer relationships also look at the type of interaction. Is the interaction

based on feedback? Is it Q/A of an immediate problem or the sharing of new ideas? Is the type of interaction geared toward one customer's monologue or the segment's dialogue? Customer relationships also must address the scope or breadth of the connection – is it business-to-customer, segment-wide, or open to the overall market. These considerations all have impact on the depth of the connection and the transparency of the relationship as made available and embraced by both the business and the members of the customer segment.

It is essential to remember that customer relationships are built and that they grow over time. Regardless of the type of relationship, the organization must understand what it is that the customer wants out of their relationship with the organization. Here, we look beyond they product – and even the value – and begin to see the experience itself that the customer has with the organization. Customer relationships reflect the experience and type of engagement that the customer has with the organization. And it is from that experience that the relationship will either be sustained and grow over time or fade away and die out. It is the organization's responsibility to facilitate that relationship and the customer's opportunity to have that relationship.

Collaboration in a customer relationship provides for that crucial element of connection. However, the relationship is not limited to just the organization and the single customer. An additional benefit of customer segments is that there is the greater opportunity for larger relationships – with more engagement or more experience – between end users who are a part of these segments. This engagement and experience can take any number of forms and will grow over time in new and diverse directions. But it is the relationships of customers, segments, and the organization that is sustainable and imperative to a healthy and lasting business model.

5.2.4 Channels to the Customer

Channels are the ways by which an organization communicates with its customers. There are numerous types of channels and numerous functions of channels, but the one foundational element to channels is communication. Without communication with the

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customer segments, without channels to reach the customer, a business will not survive. Osterwalder and Pigneur identify five phases or functions of all communication channels: creating awareness among customers, aiding customers in evaluating a company's value proposition, facilitating the purchase of products/services, delivering the value to the customer, and providing post-purchase support.

In addition to the phases of a channel there are numerous types of channels. That is, different methods by which the organization communicates with the customer segment(s) – direct sales, web site, retailer, wholesaler, etc. The common factor regardless of the type of channel selected is that all of them utilize one or more of the five channel phases identified above. It is also clear that different customer segments can be communicated with in different ways. Further analysis when considering channels of communication are even possible when comparing the digital marketplace to the traditional marketplace. In the digital marketplace an online business can communicate directly or indirectly to one customer segment or multiple customer segments. The business can conduct these communications either themselves or through a partner (in any number of third party sites, forums, or venues). Finally, the business can determine which of the five channel phases will be the most effective method of communicating with the customer segment.

As communication channels are evolving in terms of methods and increasing exponentially in the number of customers who are utilizing them, it is imperative for a business to have inverse channels in operation, as well. That is, channels that allow for customers to communicate with the organization (not just receiving but also initiating the communication), communicating with other customers, and with the customer segment as a whole (or the community). This concept of "channel inversion" is essential to sustainability. Additionally, without channel inversion collaboration will not occur as there will be no balance of communication – the result of one side doing all the talking and the other side doing all the listening. The organization cannot talk to the customer but, rather, must talk with them. This will result in opening up channels for the end users to speak with each other and to initiate the dialogue that will foster deeper and more meaningful relationships.

5.2.5 Key Partnerships

If customers are the source of profit to a business, then partnerships are those external operational networks that help a business to function. Partnerships provide for enhanced and expanded distribution opportunities. They generate additional resources and materials needed in production. Partnerships streamline operational activities, and they allow for the management of risk factors. Partnerships can be with suppliers, competitors, customers, clients, and business entities in completely different industries. Regardless of the partner, the key aspect is leveraging what an organization has to get what it needs (or rid itself of what it doesn't need) in order to make its business model work.

The key to a sustained partnership is that it must be mutually beneficial. That is, all parties must give and take. Partnerships cannot be one-sided nor can they be controlled by one entity. There must be a positive gain or outcome for all parties involved. However, these elements must be considered differently when pursuing different types of partners. For example, the stipulations when partnering with a competitor will be different than when partnering with a supplier. And a partnership with a customer would be different from a partnership with a business in a different field. However, the end result is still the same – the business seeks that which it needs in exchange for that which it has to enable the successful function of its business model.

Open systems of operational infrastructure allow for the development of partnerships with customers. The role of the end users in the value creation process is connected to what they can provide in exchange for a value they are seeking. Here, we return to the idea of mutually beneficial value creation as it pertains to both the organization and the end user. Whether the partnership is with a single end user or a larger customer segment/community the connection returns to that of give and take on both ends. The segment/community will have more of a network and a greater degree of inter-workings within the partnership, but it still returns to the idea of giving what it has in order to get what it needs/wants. This close working relationship between a business and its end users is facilitated through collaboration for the leveraging of mutually beneficial value.

5.2.6 Key Resources

Key resources are those elements that are necessary to make a business model work. They answer the question: what do we need – what assets are required – to sustain operations? Every layer and component of a business model will have resources that are needed to allow for its successful function. The term "resources" is very broad and expansive. Resources are necessary for all operational areas of a business. They can be tangible and intangible. Resources can be both internal and external. They can be created, purchased, and hired. One of the key resources that all organizations must manage in today's business environment is that of innovation. Here, we see the utilization of an intangible, immeasurable, and undefinable key resource. But is innovation really that difficult to manage and incorporate into a successful and sustainable business model? Research shows that innovation is like any other resource in that it is an asset to be managed (Lewis). Upon its effective and efficient inclusion in a business model innovation can be a sustainable asset that delivers a competitive advantage to an organization.

As an organization looks outside of its operations it will see that the external opportunities afforded by its end users are vast. As the end user is already engaged and the relationship has been established, extracting the key resource from the end user is, again, facilitated through collaboration. Research indicates that external collaboration is of tremendous value, importance, and opportunity to an organization (Stacy, 2014). An organization that only looks within and only pursues those resources that are easily defined and determined as readily available is missing out on a wealth of opportunity that is available through the collaborative engagement of the end user. As such resources are extracted and utilized the business model is strengthened and reinforced, thus allowing for its sustained operation and function.

5.2.7 Key Activities

Key activities are the specific tasks or the work that is conducted to make a business model work. Key activities utilize all resources – financial, material, human, time, etc. –

to accomplish a specific and measurable end result or outcome. Osterwalder and Pigneur identify three categories of key activities: production, problem solving, and platform/network activities. Depending on the type of industry that a business is in it will encounter different types of activities and different degrees of each activity, be it a consistent or infrequent activity.

Key activities can be considered from a micro and macro perspective. At the micro-level a key activity has a defined timeframe, be it short or long-term, over which time measurable outcomes can be observed. Key activities at the micro-level are not random but, instead, that have a purposeful and intentional connection to other activities. Key activities utilize all types of resources including material, financial, human, time, etc. Finally, key activities – while providing a beneficial outcome – do have a cost for their completion.

At the macro-level, key activities become processes. Processes are a combination of activities that are taken in a specific order every time. Processes are a sequence of events in which groups of activities are conducted. Careful review here will show that processes, too, have the four characteristics of activities – they are just conducted on a larger scale.

The effects of a strong collaboration-based relationship between a business and the end user can provide for the exponentially effective and efficient completion of key activities. Here, we see that not only are additional resources made available to the organization from the end user (as stated in the previous section) but the completion of the key activities that utilizes those resources is achieved. The benefit to the end user is that they are involved and engaged in a more meaningful way. They are seen as active partners rather than passive consumers. The business benefits from the variety of perspectives, voices, and outlooks that enable it to develop a deeper relationship of engagement and experience. In this approach the organization and the end user are working together to create value in a sustainable method of collaboration that is mutually beneficial.

5.2.8 Revenue Streams

Revenue streams come down to the method by which cash is brought into a business by each of its customer segments. This cash is generated through the delivery of the value proposition to the customer segments. When a business establishes revenue streams it must first determine the value for which the customer segment is willing to pay. This is not the product or service but the value, benefit, or outcome that that product offers. Every business, be it traditional or online, has an underlying value that it is selling to the customer segment(s), and that value is what generates the revenue stream.

Once a business has determined the specific value customers will pay for, then the business needs to determine how that value is currently being acquired by the customer. This is not so much a competitive analysis on the part of the business as much as a purchasing analysis of how the customer segment is currently obtaining that, or a comparable, value from a different provider. This analysis includes assessment of the relative value the customer segment is currently purchasing and how do they complete the purchase. What value can the customer currently purchase elsewhere and how do they complete that purchase to receive the acquired value?

The business will then conduct a more in-depth purchasing analysis. This deeper analysis will reveal purchasing opportunities that can be applied to a businesses own internal operations. Here, the business will objectively consider two aspects. First, the business will look at the payment and delivery options that the customer segment is currently engaged in. This is less about the value and more about the purchasing/acquisition process. Second, the business will look at how this process can be enhanced and strengthened based on the value it is offering. In other words, how the revenue stream can carry the value to the customer in a more effective and efficient manner.

Finally, the business will develop its own revenue stream based on how to best deliver the value to the customer segment. This includes how the customer will pay. Will payment be a one-time purchase fee, a subscription charge, a rental or leasing fee, a licensing agreement, etc.? Second, the revenue stream will address how the customer will

receive the value (the product or service). Will the customer have online accessibility to a premium service, will the customer be able to resell their own value, will the customer have membership rights, etc.? Third, the overall revenue stream will allow for smaller revenue streams to feed into each other in terms of the business's aggregate revenues received.

What are the customers buying, in what form are they buying that value, and how do they receive that value? That is the essence of a revenue stream. In today's economy businesses have the opportunity to collaborate with their end users to create a revenue stream that both the business and the customer segments can travel along together. The business will be providing the value and the customer will be acquiring that value. A sustained business model stemming from such an approach will have a strong foundation as both parties keep the idea of the sustained value as the focal point rather than a singular monetary purchase.

5.2.9 Cost Structure

Cost structure identifies all of the costs a business model will encounter in operation. This includes one time costs, recurring costs, fixed costs, and variable costs. Additionally, cost structure is the orderly arrangement of these costs into an organized method of monitoring and managing them. Finally, an effective cost structure provides for the organized manner to meet costs. Meeting these costs is based on the planning and forecasting of growth, revenue, and expenses; the anticipated costs of operations, resources, and activities; and the reduction in or offsetting of costs due to partnerships.

Costs are but an outcome of the resources, activities, and operations necessary to deliver a value to a customer segment. In some business models costs are less of a factor in terms of the value being delivered. That is, the value to the customer segment is of more importance than the cost associated with its acquisition. Such business models have less of a need to focus on cost reduction. In other business models, lower costs are a key component to the value being received by the customer. Here, reducing the cost of acquisition, utilization, and allocation of resources, activities, and operations strengthens

the business model. Such a lower cost business model still encounters one time, recurring, fixed, and variable costs but it has enhanced its value-driven proposition to the customer segment by reducing the impact that those costs will have on the customer segment.

Costs are an outcome of resources, activities, and partnerships. Therefore, a direct correlation can be made between the costs reduction and a) the role that the end user plays in the acquisition of necessary resources, b) the completion of key activities and/or processes by the end user, and c) partnerships with end users that streamline operations. We can see here that end user collaboration allows for the reduction of costs, and this will have a positive impact on the sustainability of the business model.

6. Conclusions

The sustainability of a business model is based upon how well it is able to provide value to a customer segment over an ongoing period of time. However, this goes beyond offering something for the customer to buy. The idea of value facilitation lies at the heart of a sustainable business model. A business cannot rely on one approach, formula, or template to provide the means by which it delivers that value to the customer segment. This facilitation is not a process, but rather the engagement of the end user. It is a fluid structure that changes in real time – evolving and adapting as needs, wants, perceptions, and values change throughout the customer segment. The business that can tap into that fluidity and participate in its change and evolution with the end user will be better equipped to not only know and understand the customer, but to have a deep relationship based on interaction, engagement, and communication.

By collaborating with the customer the business will be able to know him/her better. There will be knowledge, insight, and understanding, and from these will stem innovative opportunity. The innovative opportunity to create new value through end user collaboration is a sustainable business model, and these opportunities can be built into all components of the business model. Therein lies the answer to the essential question of this study: how can user involvement become a sustainable business model in the digital marketplace? Purposeful and intentional collaboration that is driven by outcome-based values as deemed important to the individual customer and the community, as whole. By building this concept into each layer of the business model a business can create, capture, and sustain value that will allow it to be profitable. Within the context of digital publishing, this study has shown that the writer who can monetize a concept has the opportunity to capture and sustain value.

The problem as presented in this study – how to create, capture, and sustain value – is further understood when the business model is founded upon value-driven collaboration. This collaboration allows for the business to understand who their customer is and how they (the business) can best create and deliver the value that they (the customer) is

looking for. It is through this assessment and analysis that we can understand the role of the end user in the value creation process.

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Appendix

Chart 1: Purchase Motivators

When making an online purchase which of the following motivates you the most?

Chart 2: Importance of Customization

How important is product/service customization to you when making an online purchase?

Chart 3: Influence of Other Customers

To what extent does the experience and opinion of other customers influence your online purchasing decisions?

Bar chart with y-axis from 0% to 80%:
- Extremely high influence: ~24%
- Rather high influence: ~76%
- Little influence: 0%
- No influence: 0%

Chart 4: Return to a Brand vs. Try a New Brand

In general, when I am making an online purchasing decision I am more likely to:

Bar chart with y-axis from 0% to 80%:
- Return to a brand I like even if they don't create anything new: ~76%
- Try a new brand that I don't know if they have created something new: ~24%
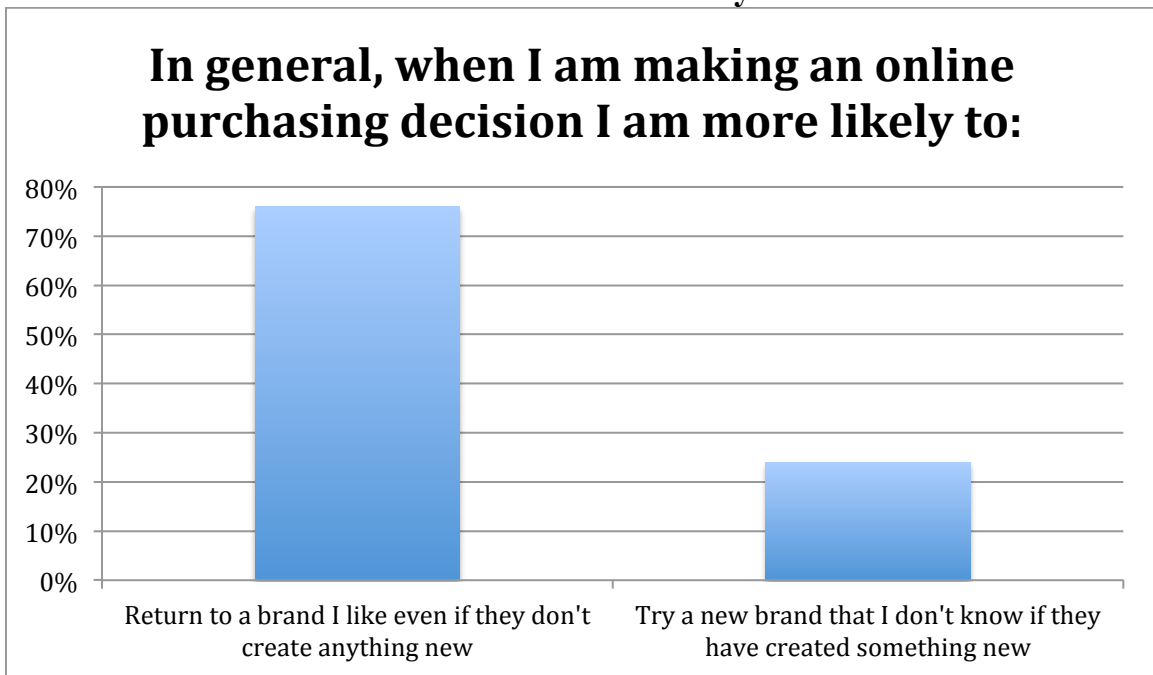
Chart 5: Why Engage in a Digital Community?

I am more likely to engage in a digital community in order to:

Bar chart (y-axis 0% to 60%):
- Contribute my thoughts and ideas: ~12%
- Engage in dialogue with others: ~18%
- Network and develop contacts: ~15%
- I would not become involved: ~56%
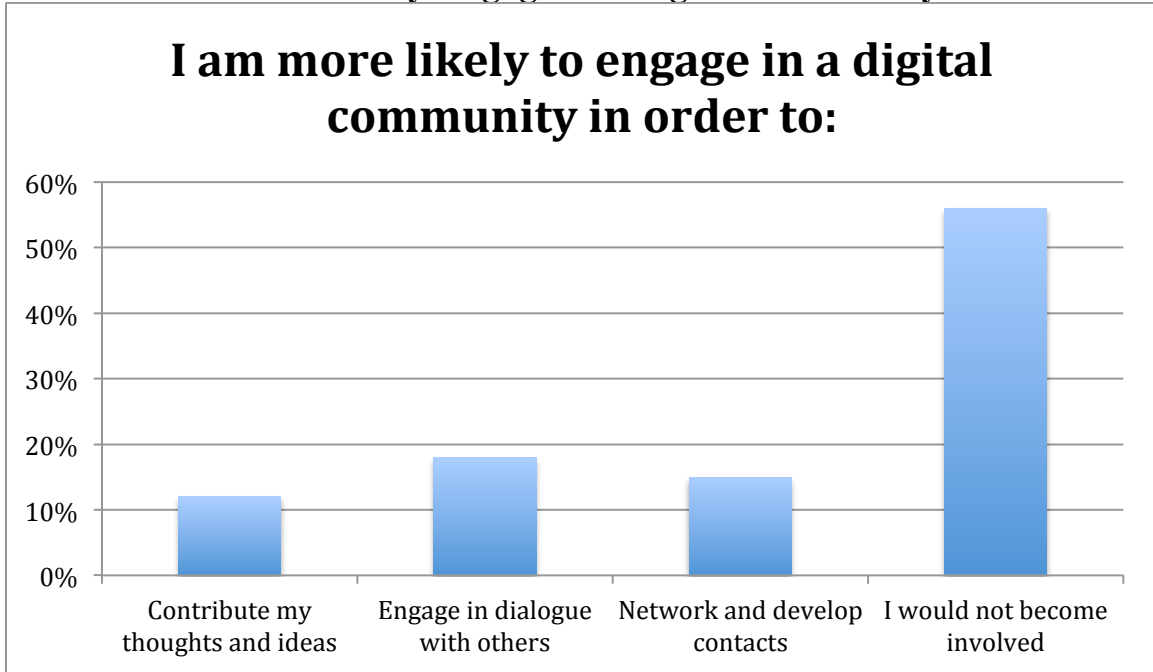
Chart 6: Why Continue in a Digital Community?

As a customer, the most important factor for my continued engagement with a business is:

Bar chart (y-axis 0% to 80%):
- Feedback and response from the company: ~68%
- Open and honest dialogue with other customers: ~6%
- Implementation of my ideas for the company: ~3%
- Clearly defined processes for engagement: ~23%
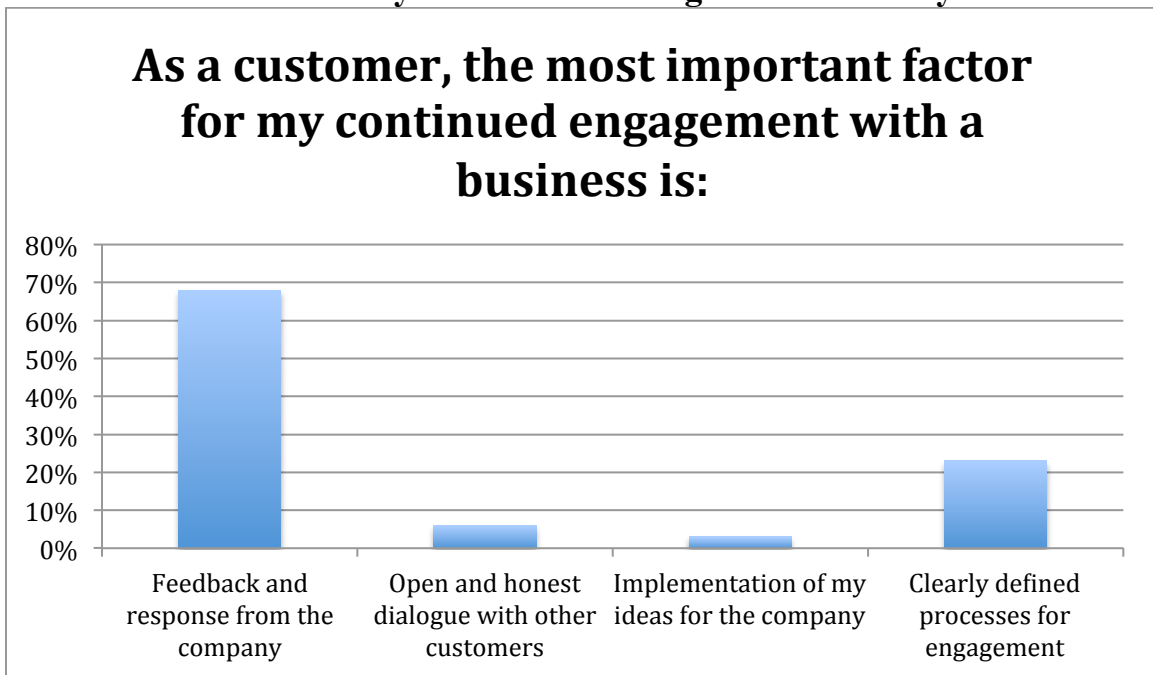
Chart 7: Community Rules and Processes

I am ____ to participate in a digital community with structured processes and clearly defined rules.

More likely	53%
Less likely	0%
Processes and rules have no impact on my decision	0%
I am unlikely to participate in a digital community	47%

Chart 8: Common Community Goal

Sharing a common goal with other people has ____ on my decision to participate in a digital community.

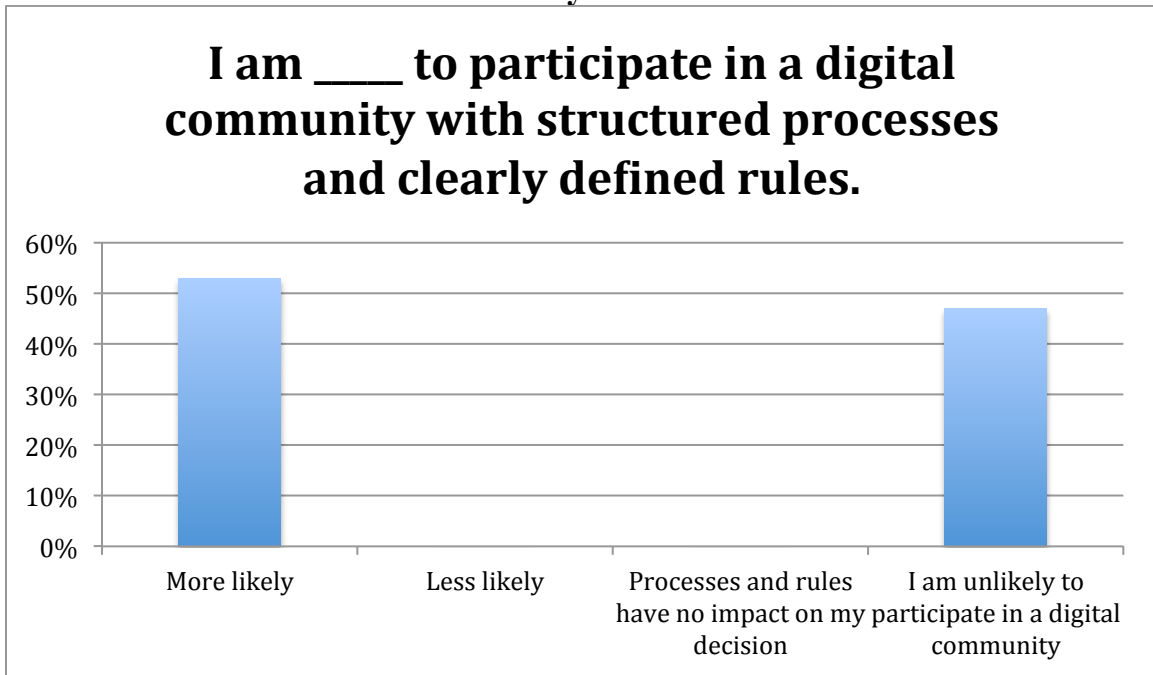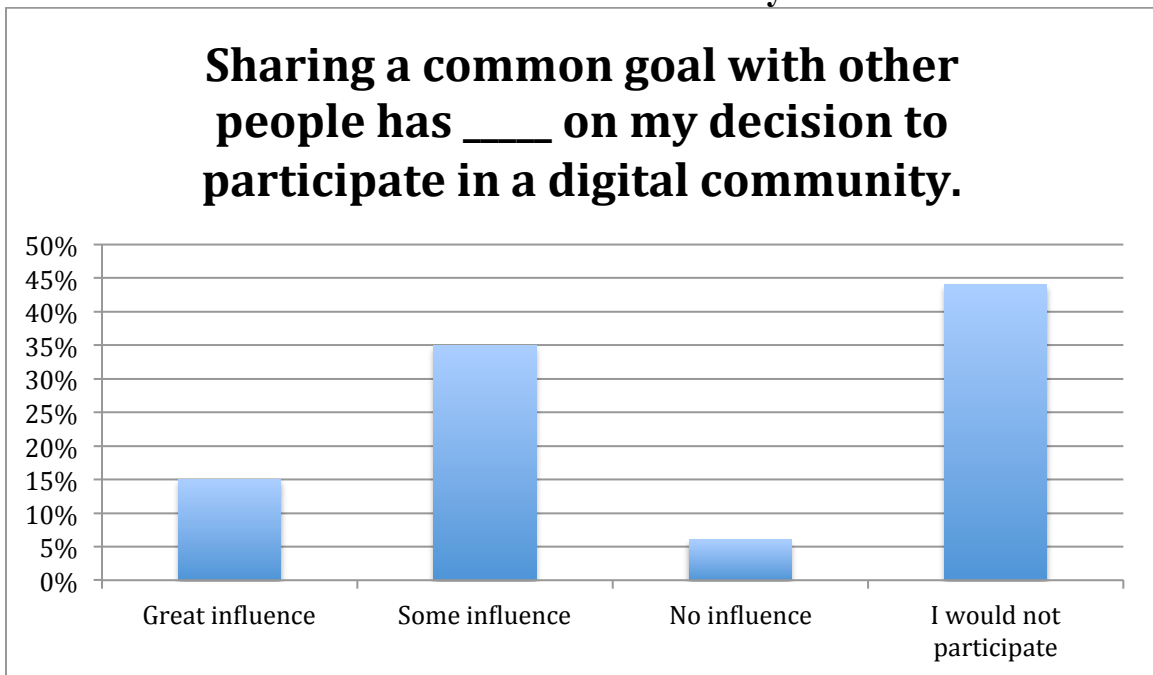|	
Great influence	15%
Some influence	35%
No influence	6%
I would not participate	44%

Chart 9: Sustaining a Relationship With a Business

As an online customer, I am more likely to build a sustained relationship with a business if it is:
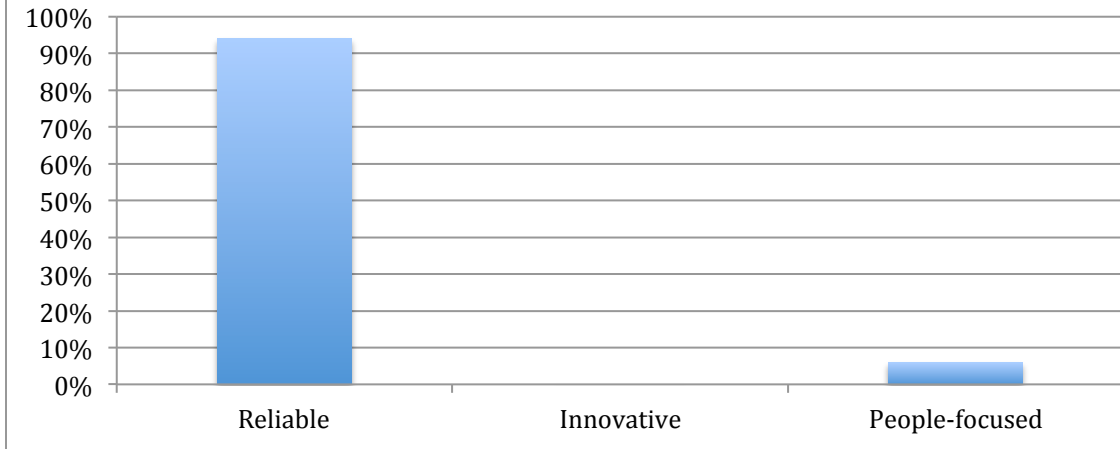
Reliable: ~94%
Innovative: 0%
People-focused: ~6%

Chart 10: Contributing to a Business

As a satisfied customer, I am more likely to contribute my ____ to a business.

Time: ~3%
Money: ~68%
Ideas: ~12%
Nothing: ~18%