

The use of virtual communities in the process of creating customer capital

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Abstract: Creating capital enterprise customers are increasingly using virtual communities. The key objective of the study is to identify opportunities and barriers to the use of these communities in the process of creating customer capital. In order to achieve this objective so it is assumed that exploiting the potential of online communities is conducive to creating lasting and profitable relationships with customers.

Keywords: customer capital, customer potential, value enterprise, virtual communities

JEL classification: A11; A14; B16

1.The essence of customer capital

It is not disputed that in terms of growing customer demand barrier becomes the primary resource company whose acquisition determines its existence and development. This is undoubtedly a unique resource, having immaterial which is determined, not the purchase price, but the value possible through the extraction and use of this resource supply equity finance. Power is often identified with customer capital.

In the literature, the capital client is variously defined, being developed in this field of ideas, focus either on the final outcomes to establish and develop relationships with customers (Dobiegała-Korona, Herman, 2006), or on some property characterizing the clients that allow you to reap the benefits resulting from their use during the term of the customer relationship. (Heidemann, Hofmann, 2009) these concepts are not contradictory, the amount for net cash flows, which is able to acquire a company using this resource is derived from two factors: the potential customer to the capital power company, and so from the perspective of customer value realization of its interests and the willingness and ability of the company to its acquisition and development, which is the direct result of the value offered by the company to the customer (customer value). (Fig.1).

The first of these factors reflects the willingness and ability of the customer to supply capital companies which may be direct or indirect.

Direct power supply is a result of the transaction to establish contacts with customers. These contacts enable the company in the short term to acquire financial assets, such as, for example. Receivables from supplies and services or cash, while their maintenance in the long term most often leads to increased loyalty both sides of the relationship, and thus transform contacts in long-lasting relationships, and relationships. Creation of such relations can not only maintain the direct supply of capital in the long term, but also reduce the risk of customer loss, which translates into a positive as the profitability of customer relationships, and the value of the company. It should be noted, however, that the profitability of customer relationships measured by the value of direct contributions is dependent on market potential client who is in direct relation to the willingness and ability of the customer to make

purchases (potential income), the possibility of their development in the long term (growth potential). (Wangenheim, 2003)

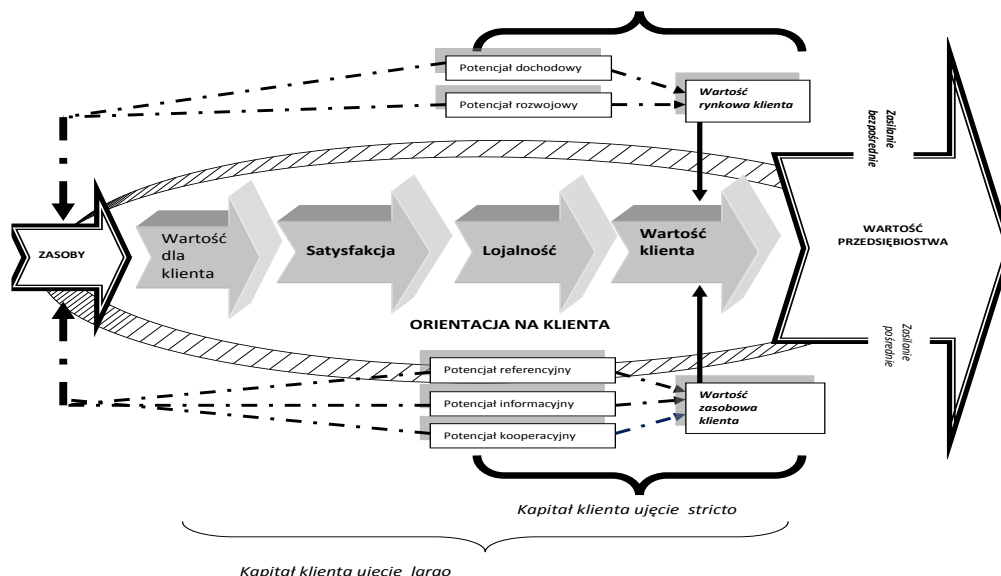


Fig. 1 Customer capital model approach
Source: Own study based on: (Caputa, 2015b)

Indirect power manifests itself in the form of a transfer of information, which may take place as a group of current and potential customers (potential reference), and between the customer and the enterprise (the potential of information and cooperative). However, regardless of whether the message is accompanied by interpersonal communication, or business, its meaning is considered through the prism of a client utility that can analyze dimension:

- economy, which implies the possibility of acquiring new customers, reduce costs and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the investment process,
- strategically related, among others, with the development of competencies, matching long-term partners, reducing time to market access and innovation.
- whether behavioral, which is reflected in the development of social ties, supporting the transformation of transactional corporate culture to a culture resource, in which the interests of the client determines the actions of businesses, and consequently in creating trust. (Caputa, 2011)

Indirect supply of capital company by the customer is therefore in connection with the resource potential client. This potential reflecting the client's willingness and ability to provide information that may contribute to the process of creating enterprise value is the result not of the customer relationship, but building lasting relationships based on satisfaction, intimacy, trust and customer commitment. [Caputa, 2015a) p. 113] Creating such relations at the conditions of increasing pressure from the competition growing and changing customer requirements, increase market transparency, which results in the increase of resources the customer's knowledge about the products offered by the company and themselves, require an undertaking specific competencies that allow for the design, manufacturing, delivery and communication to the market unique value for the customer.

As can be seen from Figure 1, the starting point for building lasting relationships with our customers is to provide the value to the customer, which in subjective assessment of a client is valued higher than the value offered by competitors. This value must connect with the wider usability of the product and therefore its ability to solve the customer's problem. As a result, this value reflects not only the customer's preferences and priorities, but also the sum of its comprehensive experience with the product. (Piercy, 2003) (Szwajca, 2012) These experiments are related so with the purchasing process, as well as use of the product. As a result, customer value based on a three-level product concept is based on three interrelated components:

- the offer that reflects the benefits of the real characteristics of the product and associated after-sales services. In this case the customer is the subject of an Ex.: price, availability, functionality, etc.
 - brand value, reflecting the benefits of the image of the company,
 - the relationship that evaluation is a direct result of the benefits from the cooperation.
- (Rust, Lemon, Narayandas, 2005) (Kotler, Bliemel, 2005)

As a result, each product is evaluated by the customer so on the basis of rationale and emotional. Emphasize is important to note that with the development of client relationships, rational evaluation gives way to assess the emotional. (Storbacka, Stradvik, Grönroos, 1994)

Such an understanding of customer value has two essential characteristics. This category:

- subjective, defined and evaluated by a specific customer, and
 - dynamic, changing upon inter alia place, time and circumstances in which an exchange.
- These features are decisive for systematically obtaining information from the customer and creating on the basis of their knowledge resources. Creating competitive advantage because that leads to above-average long-term capital supply, makes it necessary to offer the market a unique product. (Caputa, 2015a). Such a product comprehensively solves the problems of the customer, fulfilling his multidimensional needs. His substance creates enterprise knowledge not only about the needs of the customer, but also efficient and effective ways to satisfy them.

2 The importance and role of the customer in the contemporary processes of creating value

The source of that knowledge may be a client who through their preferences and expectations defines the value prejudging the architecture of processes occurring in the enterprise, and deciding on its acquisition at a specified price shall assess the results of which translate into capital power company. In addition, attention should be drawn to the fact that the product unique, is to be chosen by the customer from the whole mass of others on the market. Therefore special importance positive message for information about the product or the company in an environment of existing and potential customers. This communication not only facilitates customer choice of products and reducing the risk of making wrong decisions, but also allows the company to reap the benefits of contracts awarded by customers references and recommendations. It follows that, in the present conditions exchange client is not only addressed to the activities undertaken within the enterprise and user knowledge, but also the architect of these actions, yet they censor. He will through the acquisition of a product prejudice which actions create value and which are "empty", which translates to a power level of capital, and thus the value of the company. In light of the foregoing, need to move from passive to active perception of the importance and role of the customer in building the value

of the company is evident. (Rudawska, 2008) The client under current conditions the exchange ceases to be merely a participant in the exchange of purchasing the products offered by the company. It becomes a fundamental economic force that determines the fate of the company and the ability to satisfy the interests of its other stakeholders. At the same time becomes embroiled in a specific process personal activity, the ultimate goal is to meet the needs (Skowron&Skowron, 2012) Hence, it should be seen on one hand as a key resource (asset) undertakings, on the other hand, as an active partner of the market game (co-creator of value). (Caputa, 2015a, Skowron&Skowron,2012)

The customer, as a key resource of the company is an entity, which is the source stream: revenues, costs and flow of capital employed, and thus the source of the company's value. Appearing in this role, contributing (tangible and intangible) processes occurring in the company, becoming the object taken in the company operational and investment.

While appearing as an active partner of the company is incorporated in the value creation process that most often takes the form of communication of information:

- the content of which is the opinion of the customer resulting from his: experience, feelings, expectations. The effect of this flow is the most common product improvement, references and recommendations of the product (the company) in the group of actual and potential customers,
- based not only on experience but also knowledge and commitment to the customer. As a result of such transfer, the customer becomes not only a co-creator of values, but also a new source of competence, which creates an opportunity for startup leverage resources. (Caputa ,2003)

It follows that a customer by running their own competency resources can actively participate in the whole process of creating customer capital. In relations with the company's knowledge and information can assist the process of defining, designing, manufacturing and distribution of value. In relations with customers by launching its own relational networks can assist in the process of communicating values, which in the conditions of overproduction is fundamental to secure the effectiveness of this process.

3. Virtual communities as a source of knowledge and the object of creating customer capital

The use of the resource potential customer, which is a reflection of his willingness and ability to provide references and recommendations as well as the provision of information, the use of which may assist the company in the process of creating value facilitated the development of infrastructure and the Internet. The Internet, being now one of the leading communications media not only enabled the acquisition and transfer of information between all stakeholders involved in the exchange, but also the opportunity to establish interactive contact, resulting in the emergence and rapid development of virtual communities.

Online community of can be defined as a social network computers use to communicate between members of the group. It is therefore a collection of people who share certain features in common: interests, objectives or social origin. The members of such

communities can play different roles, eg. A mentor, an expert or leader of the reviews that are assigned to them in a formal or informal. An important feature of this community is that creating content and acting as the sender information, do not receive remuneration and motivation to create and run an information transmission alone participation in the project, the ability to interact with others with similar interests, or the desire to promote himself. (Radziszewska, 2013) This understanding of the community can be created (Tang, Yang, 2006):

- on its own initiative participants. Relationships in the community are created on the initiative of the founders of the group and are by themselves managed. These communities can have a social character (professional) or social (non-professional). The socially-oriented communities, relationships are personal and are developing mostly based on hobbies participants or ways to spend your free time. In contrast, professional communities are created based on shared professional interests that can connect to the exchange of experience, information and knowledge.
- initiative of the organization: commercial, official and non-profit organizations that will reap the benefits resulting from the operation of the virtual community. These communities include relationships both among the forum participants, as well as the relationship between the forum participants and the sponsoring entity. In these communities the sponsoring entity acquires the most opportunity to obtain information to support the process of creating value.

Regardless of how they are created, virtual communities relying on the network of relationships used to meet the needs of its members, can be successfully used in the creation of capital the customer, which focuses on building and developing lasting and profitable relationships with customers through comprehensive means of subsistence.

As indicated previously, these communities are created to meet the different needs of their participants. They can consequently be produced and used both by enterprises as well as individual and institutional customers, in order to obtain information directly related to the rational and emotional premises making purchasing decisions. Interactive communication between the participants of the community, directly or indirectly, can affect all components of customer value, which for meeting the interests of companies that can use the resulting information phase: design, manufacturing, distribution and communicating customer value. Developing their knowledge resources by "*listening to the customer*" - the participant network, the company gains the ability to:

- support the knowledge and understanding of customer requirements, and hence the discovery and development opportunities, and create desired by the customer in the form of solutions, products and services,

directing the activities and processes taking place in the company to create value for the customer, and thus the systematic recombination of resources in activities of value and eliminating activities "empty", (Caputa, 2008)

- the adaptation of production potential business to the changing requirements of the environment,
- enhance and develop the knowledge resources, including through their use and extend the range of their users.
- acquiring additional customers, as a consequence of an increase in sales revenue,
- reducing the cost of customer acquisition, through, inter alia the effects of the use of mouth marketing, which translates into reduced operating costs,

- increase the possibility of reinvesting profits, and thus create new opportunities, increase innovation, improve quality, etc.,
- risk reduction commitment of resources in activities that are not active approval from customers, resulting in an improvement of resource efficiency, (Jonek-Kowalska, 2011),
- building trust and reputation of the company following a shoot spiral reference, resulting in particular limit the risk of loss of capital injection coming from the customer, increase the stability of business relationships, the possibility of higher prices, as well as reducing the cost of capital involvement. (Caputa, 2015a), (Jonek-Kowalska, 2011)

When analyzing the possibility to use of virtual communities in the process of creating a client capital should be paid attention to two key factors determining the resource potential customer: the frequency of communication and power transmission. They remain in direct relation not only with the forum participants, but also with the status of a participant in a virtual network of relationships. As stated C. Anderson this status on social networking sites, determines the participants' involvement in content creation. (Anderson, 2006) Therefore, of particular importance in the creation of capital attributed to the so-called client. opinion leaders, or entities that informally transmitted by strengthening the credibility of information can influence the behavior of others. Underlying this communication is leading reputation resulting from his personality and expertise, which in turn means that his views and behavior serve as a basis for the rest of their orientation. (Roch, 2005)

Therefore, in the interest of the company is creating a network involving opinion leaders.

Speaking of the benefits offered by the company to use the internet community should pay attention to the fact that the company's customer base is diverse and the customer deciding to purchase a product meant to dissolve own problem. In enterprises centers offering extensive customer base is unable to meet the expectations of all customers. The Internet community, with the capacity for creativity is a large collectivity, which, through frequent interactive communication and information systematically creates its own resources and knowledge can be shared, without having to pay to pay. The use of this community, by allowing mass participation in the process of creating value for the customer, the company thus creates opportunities to reduce, and even bridging the gap between the offered and desired by the customer value. The result is an increase not only the satisfaction and confidence in the company, but also customer engagement, which fosters lasting and profitable relationships, translating into a market perceptions of its assets. It should be noted, however, that the virtual community is often based on relationships dialed with anonymous participants. It can not be assumed that the content of any communication of information used by the company supports the realization of its objectives. As a result, use of the Internet community in the capital building client company must: be clear about your goals for the use of virtual community, interact with, if possible to the selection of its participants, which connects to the evaluation of the potential of the resource the client, select collected information as well as motivate participants network for such activity, which results information is useful for the company. As a result, the use of virtual communities in the process of creating customer capital can not rely on obtaining and processing all the information from the forum participants, but deception is connected with the need to develop such a strategy, which will be an integral part of the global strategy of creating its value.

Summary

Increasing demand barrier, which results in the intensification of the fight for the customer forces companies to focus activities on creating customer capital. In building this capital, you can also take advantage of virtual communities. These communities relying on networks of relationships enable the acquisition and transmission of information that from the perspective of its interests, companies can contribute to the process: design, manufacture, deliver and communicate value to the customer. With the growth of the Internet and IT infrastructure information may be obtained from a number of broadcasters and passed to a wide audience at a relatively small capital outlay. However, effective use of the potential of virtual communities of knowledge connected with the need to develop a strategy.

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