Journal of Business Research xxx (xxxx) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres

One for all and all for one? The bliss and torment in communal entrepreneurship

Marine Boyaval, Maud Herbert*

LSMRC – MERCUR EA 4112, Université de Lille – SKEMA Business School, IMMD - 651 avenue des Nations Unies, 59100 Roubaix, France

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Consumer collectives
Tribe
Consumer entrepreneurship
Prosumption
Retrogaming
Embeddedness

ABSTRACT

Consumers often share and nurture their passion for an object, a brand or an activity with other like-minded devotees in recreational groups called tribes. Supported by the tribe, some passionate prosumers turn to entrepreneurship. Following an interpretive agenda, this research explores 15 entrepreneurial initiatives in retrogaming tribes. The paper aims to empirically document this type of unconventional entrepreneurship and explore the role of the tribe in supporting the process. Specifically, we discuss the embeddedness of such projects and the supportive and subversive influence of tribe members.

1. Introduction

My first business was a retrogaming web site where you'd go and play all these cool old-school games. It was a good idea but ahead of its time.

Nick Woodman, founder and CEO of GoPro

Hell is other people.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Quite early, Bird (1989, p. 7) suggested that entrepreneurial behavior is "passionate, full of emotional energy, drive and spirit". Passion has been described as a strong and persistent motivational force of dedicated and successful entrepreneurs (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009; Chen, Yao, & Kotha, 2009). It fits with the idiosyncrasy of entrepreneurs and the "heroic" portrayal of entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1993) and is "perhaps the most observed phenomenon of the entrepreneurial process" (Smilor, 1997, p. 342). In reference to successful entrepreneurs, Breugst, Domurath, Patzelt, and Klaukien (2012) describe passion as a "fire of desire that drives their daily efforts" (p. 171). Interestingly, the same "fire of desire" terminology has been used in consumer research to explore consumer passion (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003). Starting with the seminal work of Levy (1959) and later of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) on hedonic experience, passionate consumption has been investigated intensively in consumer research. Mainly in the 1990s, several articles refer more or less directly to passion by focusing on vital energy (Gould, 1991), embodiment (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995), magic (Arnould & Price, 1993; Arnould, Price, & Otnes, 1999), fantasies and dreams (Levy, 1985), play (Holt, 1995) and temptation (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1994). At the time, this literature, labeled Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), debunked the perspective of a reasoned *homo economicus* consumer. It also drew attention to the community-based aspect of consumer passion (desire for sociability in consumption) and the fact that passion is shared and nurtured in tribal dynamics (Cova & Cova, 2001; Cova & Cova, 2002; Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Later, consumer research acknowledged the active role of the consumer in creating "end products" (Troye & Supphellen, 2012). There is a sociological tradition of considering people's creativity and self-production in ordinary circumstances (de Certeau, 1980). People who combine consumption with production have since come to be labeled "prosumers" (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). They engage in the production of products, services and experiences for their own use and/or for their tribe (Cova & Ezan, 2008). They can do this with the support of firms (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008) or freed from any managerial mediation – what is called emancipated self-production (Cova, Ezan, & Fuschillo, 2013). In this case, passionate consumers can turn into working consumers (Cova & Dalli, 2009) who produce prototypes, semi-finished or finished products that the market does not provide (Goulding & Saren, 2007). Supported by other passionate consumers, some of these prosumers take up an entrepreneurial activity based on their passion, skills and creativity (Scaraboto, 2015). Sometimes passionate consumers can shape an entire market such as the mini-moto market in the US (Martin & Schouten, 2014). Cova and Guercini (2016) propose a new profile of entrepreneur fueled by a dedicated and passionate tribe: the tribal entrepreneur, a passionate consumer who creates with and for the tribe, i.e. a group of like-minded passionate consumers with whom he bonds before considering this

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: Marine.boyaval@univ-lille2.fr (M. Boyaval), Maud.herbert@univ-lille.fr (M. Herbert).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.06.023
Received 15 January 2017; Received in revised form 21 June 2018; Accepted 28 June 2018
0148-2963/ © 2018 Published by Elsevier Inc.

passion as an entrepreneurial opportunity (Cova & Guercini, 2016, p. 38). Based on case studies, the authors provide evidence that the emergence and development of some entrepreneurial paths are facilitated by members of the tribe. We argue that the collective dimension of such projects calls for a deeper understanding of the motivations and dynamics of the entrepreneur and the tribe members.

In order to achieve this, we studied both the tribe and the entrepreneurial projects in collectives of retrogamers, i.e. people who play old videogames on vintage consoles (ranging from the 1980s to the late 1990s). We adopted an interpretive agenda based on mixed methods (Bahl & Milne, 2007). The analysis is based on two data sets. The first is composed of long interviews with entrepreneurs and the second contains quantitative and qualitative data collected from 134 members of 5 websites for retrogaming fans. Our contribution is twofold: we empirically document the figure of the tribal entrepreneur and explore the role and dynamics of the tribe in such unconventional entrepreneurial paths, which can be described as communal entrepreneurship. The article is structured as follows. First, we outline the conceptual framework. Second, we describe the retrogaming movement. We then detail the method chosen within this specific context, before presenting and discussing our findings.

2. Conceptual framework

When it comes to studying passion in consumer research, the level of analysis matters. Consumer passion is an individual embodied and powerful emotion that can come with mistakes and irrationality but is "primarily positive" (Belk et al., 2003, p. 343). Passion is both individually experienced and collectively shared and enriched. Passion for a product, brand or activity is therefore what binds most co-consuming groups (Goulding, Shankar, & Canniford, 2013). Sharing their passion is a reason why people gather offline and online to share communal practices. It can be based on strong devotion to a brand (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), fandom (Brown, 2007; Choi & Burnes, 2016; Goulding & Saren, 2007; Kozinets, 1997) and, more broadly, consumption practices that bring people together (Kates & Belk, 2001; Kozinets, 2002; Scaraboto, 2015).

The next section provides conceptual insights into passionate consumer collectives, the prosumer phenomenon and how the prosumer can turn into a tribal entrepreneur.

2.1. Passionate consumer collectives

Market subcultures (Kozinets, 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), consumer tribes (Cova & Cova, 2002; Cova et al., 2007; Maffesoli, 1988) and brand communities (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001) share a lot of similarities. They are all groups of individuals who gather to share their experiences and emotions in relation to a brand, a product, an activity or a philosophy. Most of the time, this passion generates online or offline networks in which to share tips, physical products and experiences (Cova & Cova, 2002; Cova & Ezan, 2008; Kozinets, 1999). Consumer collectives may act independently of the brand or be supported by the company, like the "my Nutella" community (Cova & Pace, 2006). Consumer collectives usually share rituals and may develop a strong 'ethos', i.e. a base of 'shared beliefs and values' for defining their subculture (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43). More broadly, practices within a collective are micro routines and rituals that produce value for the group, for the public and for the brand (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001; Scaraboto, 2015; Schau, Muñiz Jr, & Arnould, 2009). Brand communities are defined around the notion of a "community of interest" (Cova & Cova, 2002). People gather online because they have the same interest in a brand and want to share and nurture their emotions. They differ from tribes, which hold ephemeral gatherings based on the social linking value that an activity, product or brand can offer to support this societal framework. The concept of consumer tribes is rooted in a Latin-type bottom-up sociology (Cova & Cova, 2002; Maffesoli, 1996), i.e. a society that is made up of networks of micro-groups that support social interactions and allow a person to play different roles (Maffesoli, 1988). People meet in such micro-groups and shift away from a stable identity entertained by their common passions. Their meetings consolidate social links and create and support a feeling of group identity (Cova & Cova, 2002). Like-minded devotees (Cova & Shankar, 2012) are easy to find on the Internet and a consumer tribe can form easily. What is central to our rationale is that, in tribes, consumers work and re-work goods or add immaterial value through cultural and social interactions. The tribe is a place where appropriation, creativity and resistance to the market are common features. Researchers identify co-consuming groups as loci of co-creation (Schau et al., 2009) and sources of value for firms (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). By developing technical and commercial competencies, consumer tribes themselves can act as entrepreneurs (Cova et al., 2007). In other words, tribes can "become collective actors in the marketplace, much in the same way that companies already are" (Cova et al., 2007, p.16). This is further evidence that production and consumption are in such cases no longer separate but rather a new phenomenon, labeled prosumption (Cova & Cova, 2012; Cova & Dalli, 2009; Firat & Venkatesh, 1993; Ritzer, 2014; Toffler, 1980).

2.2. The blurred lines of consumption and production

Over the last 10 years, consumer research has highlighted the blurred lines between consumption and production and the market dynamics that occur in such cases (Goulding & Saren, 2007; Martin & Schouten, 2014; Moisio, Arnould, & Gentry, 2013; Watson & Shove, 2008). Contemporary self-production was initially theorized by Toffler (1980) and labeled prosumption. It has different meanings. On the one hand, individuals are increasingly interested in producing or at least participating in the production of what they consume because they want to increase the quality of their mundane consumption (Kotler, 1986). On the other hand, self-production has been incorporated into some business models – such as furnishing or catering (Ritzer, 1983) – and can be associated with a form of consumer labor (Dujarier, 2008). Prosumption has been detected among communities (Martin & Schouten, 2014; Scaraboto, 2015), mostly as members of a community start producing a product or service on their own that they cannot find on the market and their ideas or goods start spreading throughout the group (Martin & Schouten, 2014). In such cases, prosumers are filling a gap in the market and satisfying a need that has been overlooked. Like the mini moto community (Martin & Schouten, 2014), the fatshionistas (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2012), or the Gothic community (Goulding & Saren, 2007), the members of the community have collectively imagined, designed, created and diffused products/services to fulfil their own desires, thereby creating an alternative offer to the mainstream markets. In consumer research, value co-creation and the blurring of the roles of consumer and producer have initiated discussions, especially when prosumers freely collaborate with firms (Cova, Dalli, & Zwick, 2011; Ritzer, 2015; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Our work is rather focused on the *meso* level where collective prosumption activities lead to the creation or revitalization of a market or market segments. To provide a better understanding of this new form of collective dynamics, the next section is dedicated to the nascent literature dealing with the notion of the tribal entrepreneur.

2.3. Unconventional forms of entrepreneurship: the case of the tribal entrepreneur

In consumer research, the literature on consumer entrepreneurship is scarce and still developing (Biraghi, Gambetti, & Pace, 2018; Cova & Guercini, 2016; Martin & Schouten, 2014; Schouten, Martin, Blakaj, & Botez, 2016). The figure of the tribal entrepreneur (Cova & Guercini, 2016) caught our attention. Based on three case studies of SMEs (Drone Point, Stone Drill and Klikobil), Cova and Guercini (2016) show how

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11005103

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/11005103

Daneshyari.com