

CO-CREATION VALUE THROUGH CUSTOMERS' PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY ON HEINEKEN (B)

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Abstract—The innovation efforts at Heineken company focus on using open innovation platforms in order to engage stakeholders in the co-creation process. Thus, the current case study continued the emphasis on company's approach regarding open innovation, focusing on digitizing innovation and the use of the online environment to interact with their customers, by collecting innovative ideas. The main purpose of the analyzed online platforms used by Heineken is the collaboration with external stakeholders, individual customers or innovative companies with activities based on technology, which may contribute with their innovations to providing new solutions for company's areas of interest. The scientific research aims to underline the importance of using online instruments for open innovation, highlighting the experience of Heineken, which engages innovators in the co-creation process, aiming to maintain a continuous dialogue with their customers and other external stakeholders.

Keywords—Online instruments, digitizing innovation, external stakeholders, co-creation process.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE online platforms for open innovation used by Heineken to create a continuous dialogue and open interaction with its customers and other external stakeholders brings competitive advantages for the company.

The current article continues the emphasize on Heineken model for open innovation, highlighting the process of co-creation in innovation through proactive engagement of customers and other external stakeholders to bring new ideas and creative solutions, using company's online instruments for open innovation.

Thus, Heineken digitizes innovation, using Ideas Brewery, by setting innovation challenges, Innovators Brewhouse, focusing on sending innovations for its areas of interest, and Heineken Frontier, a platform focused on innovative companies with technology activities, which are interested for a partnership with Heineken, bringing innovations for the company's established areas of

interest for innovation.

Thus, the current study emphasizes the importance of these platforms for open innovation in engaging customers or other external stakeholders in developing innovative ideas and solutions, in collaboration with experts and Heineken management team, in order to respond to innovation challenges, such as development of new technologies, new product development, new ways for beer consumption, identifying needs of a specific segment of consumers, etc.

II. CO-CREATION IN INNOVATION

A. The Experience of the Company: Projects Designed to Involve Customers in Innovation Process

The experience of the Heineken regarding the innovation refers to a long period of developing programs and projects for innovating products, through the proactive engagement of stakeholders. In 2010, the company aimed to double the innovation rate until 2020, 6% of Heineken sales coming from innovations.

Thus, the company being focused on proactive engagement of external stakeholders in the innovation process, in 2012 launched the online platform Heineken Ideas Brewery, which provides to innovators challenges regarding sending innovative ideas which are rewarded offering incentives [1].

Heineken Ideas Brewery represented a form of co-creation, in which Heineken was facilitator, supporting contests, aiming to extend its network at the global level, collecting practical ideas and consolidating the connection between Heineken, innovation and open collaboration. The benefits of this action for Heineken are represented by knowing the consumers' needs, ideas for developing new products and marketing/branding, and for co-creators, the benefits come from organizing workshops where they can collaborate with Heineken employees and experts for developing ideas and for obtaining feasible ideas and a strong commitment from

those participating to co-creation [2].

B. The Objectives and Results of the Heineken Ideas Brewery

The Heineken Ideas Brewery platform which was created in 2012, launched 4 challenges of ideas, bringing together innovators from the whole world. Although, at this moment there are no active challenges of submitting ideas on this platform, the past experience brought great results and 2 creation workshops [3], consumers could submit ideas now through the official website of the company, at Heineken Innovators Brewhouse platform.

The objective of the program referred to creating sustainable packages, reinventing serving of the draught beer, ideas regarding the lifestyle of the 60+ generation and the consumption of beer, but also ideas of developing and personalization of products for 60+ generation, which are suitable for their needs and lifestyle [3].

The first challenge aimed looking for sustainable ideas for packing beer in the future, being focused on three directions: re-using and recycling packaging, discovering new packaging materials, considering transport as a mean to create a sustainable future for beer packaging. The industrial designer Janne Kytanen interacted 48 hours with the audience on social media to respond to challenge launched by Heineken. There were gathered over 150 ideas, from the form of the bottles, using efficiently the space, transport, re-using bottles, new materials, only 57 being selected to be developed with Heineken innovators and evaluated by the jury represented by Willem van Waesberghe, Heineken's global research and development director, François-Xavier Mahot, Heineken's Senior Global Innovation Director, LinYee Yuan, Managing Editor of Core77, Jacquelyn Ottman, sustainability expert and Janne Kytanen, Industrial Design Creative Director of Freedom of Creation. The winning idea was called "The Heineken 1000 \$ Bottle" and was initiated by Helmut Witteler from Germany, the jury evaluating the innovative device, "Heineken-O-Mat", created to motivate consumers to recycle bottles, returning them having a positive impact on the environment and involving the company, consumers, retailers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) [4].

The second challenge aimed reinventing the consumption of draught beer, based on new technologies. The challenge brought 125 ideas, the 6 finalists participating to a co-creation workshop, to work with Heineken experts, bartenders and consumers to develop their ideas. The winner of the challenge, juried by Willem van Waesberghe, Heineken's global research and development director, François-Xavier Mahot, Heineken's Senior Global Innovation Director, Daniel Quinn, Managing Director (MD) of innovation Agency Happen, and two other experts on design and entrepreneurship, was Albert Soler Mas, which proposed Flavours of the World Skimmer idea, which implies

variety and flavour for the foam [5].

Regarding the third challenge which aimed to identify the lifestyle of the 60+ generation of consumers, Heineken focused on the advantages offered by using social media to better understand the needs of this segment of consumers, generating new ideas and satisfying needs of creativity, problem solving and affiliation. Thus, using this platform, Heineken achieved to identify that consumers aged between 60-70 years enjoy more liberty regarding the workplace, children, and stress and are focused more on enhancing quality of life, well-being and self-development [6].

The winner of the competition, among 10 finalists, juried by Florence Guesnet, Senior Director Global Consumer & Market Intelligence, Miguel de Jaime Guijarro, Regional Commercial Director Western Europe, Donald Petrie, Hollywood director, Naomi Harris, renowned photographer, and Kees van Duyn, cultural commentator, was Marie Cecile Schouwenaar, coordinator on strategic learning and sustainable transition management. She characterized the 60+ generation as being prepared to start a brand new phase as they are free, happy, and have time for everything and generally are enjoying the best time of their life [7].

Eventually, the fourth challenge consisted of creation of a new concept of beer for the 60+ generation, using as inspiration the insights sent for the previous challenge regarding the lifestyle of these consumers, in order to transform them in innovative products for these consumers' needs. There were obtained 150 ideas from which the jury, existing of Alex Goh, founder Designtaxi.com, Daniel Quinn, Managing Director Happen, Dominic Wilcox, speed creator and Paul Stanger and Bram Westenbrink of HEINEKEN, chose 6 finalists who participated to a co-creation workshop where they collaborated with experts in innovation from Heineken, but also with external coaches in order to refine their initial ideas. The first place was obtained by Tony Dianoff, who invented Fahrenheit 60+, a variety of beers produced differently to offer new taste, each one with a story to tell, his innovative and feasible idea originating in art of beer making and offering a strong platform for storytelling. The other prizes were offered for ideas regarding packaging, opening and beer consumption and for a beer recipe inspired by the idea of antique bottle of wine, which can be kept in the cellar, as a good bottle of red wine [8].

Thus, the online innovative platform, Ideas Brewery opened by Heineken involved internal actors from company (employees and managers, experts in the relevant fields for creation of new products or personalization of product), but also external stakeholders, managers with experience in the innovation field, research and development and new design creation, from other companies recognised internationally, or famous experts in the field. The results obtained helped Heineken in its projects regarding innovation and sustainable development, creating new packaging for

beer, enhancing the draught beer experience, collecting information regarding 60+ generation needs and creation of a new product according with their expectations and needs.

III. DIGITIZING INNOVATION – USING THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT IN INNOVATION

A. *The Description of the Existing Instrument for Interaction with Customers*

Focused on an open innovation strategy, through collecting ideas from the internal and external environment of the company, Heineken uses at this moment the official website for providing the online platform Innovators Brewhouse, which is designed for collaborations with mutual benefits leading to satisfying consumers' needs in an innovative way [9].

The areas of interest of the company regarding innovation for the new launched platform are identifying new methods to produce, deliver and to pack their products, but also, new ways of beverages consumption. There are two main directions which direct Heineken actions: the future of the beverages, the method of manufacturing and measurement (including methods of rapid microbiological detection, preservation technologies for beer, ways to prevent bloating, technologies for producing specific colours for beverages, etc.) and the future of packaging and serving beverages (including a new system of packaging/ serving suitable for special moments, process technologies and effective materials regarding cost for isolating against heat and reducing beverage temperature in bottles or metal cans, new technologies for packaging enhancing comfort regarding transportation, carrying, keeping fresh, storing, etc., [10].

Thus, accessing the official website of Heineken and the menu „About us: Innovation: Innovators Brewhouse”, the web page provides visual identity illustrating the symbol of the Heineken brand (the red star) and an image representing two heads connected to offering the most creative ideas for making beer.

From the description of the instrument by Heineken, it may be observed that it aims the open innovation, the company being focused on externalizing the instrument, through involvement of entrepreneurs, inventors, universities, supplies and “great beer minds” in order to develop the future of beer and ciders, through invention and participative development [9]. Thus, Heineken shows the intention “to connect to the external world” as the company knows it hasn't the all answers and there is great minds which can complete its activity and combining common knowledge can bring new solutions and innovations [9].

Heineken introduces the innovator in description of the instrument accessed, mentioning that innovative ideas may be send regarding the focused areas of the company, or other valuable innovations for Heineken. The company mentions that it doesn't require conceptual

ideas or undeveloped [11], which means that company refers to a target segment of stakeholders, maybe experts, who already have a developed idea which could be implemented in Heineken company.

The first stage in filling up the form regarding submitting innovation refers to mentioning some personal information (first name and surname of the innovator, e-mail address, etc.), if he sends the innovation in behalf of a company, and if the innovator has interacted before with Heineken [11].

The next step in submitting the form refers to submitting the innovation. The first question from the form refers to the link between submitted innovation and the focus areas of the company. If the innovation is not linked to the focus areas of the company, the next question addressed to the innovator refers to the type of submitted innovation, choosing from: a new beverage, a new delivery system, a new package or other [12].

Then, the innovator should mention the title of the innovation and a short description, indicating if he obtained a patent for his invention or he expects to receive one, if he is the only owner of the patent, etc. [12].

Also, the innovator should mention the problem his innovation solves, describing the consumers' needs the innovation will accomplish. The next questions refers to the basis of the innovation, been asked if he realized a market research before, if he has some prototypes available, or manufacture possibilities, the last question referring to the objectives the innovator has regarding submitting the innovation to Heineken [12]. Thus, it may be observed the importance Heineken gives to the basis of the submitted innovation, reflected by the information required to the innovator regarding the possible market research done, the model followed in realizing the innovation, but also the possibilities of implementing the innovation through personal capacities of manufacturing for the submitted solution.

The target segment of stakeholders to whom the online instrument for open innovation is addressed consists of individual innovators (“great beer minds”, consumers, artists, designers, inventors), suppliers (for packaging, devices, equipment, ingredients), companies (start-ups, small and medium-sized companies), academia (professors, students), technological hotspots (science parks, incubators) [1].

Similar to Ideas Brewery instrument, which aimed involving stakeholders expressed by challenges addressed to innovators, the Innovators Brewhouse instrument aims also “meet the many challenges we set ourselves in innovation” [10], but also satisfying the needs of consumers to which the company should respond with innovative ideas [9].

Regarding the intellectual property rights for the submitted ideas and innovations, the company informs innovators that ideas and submitted materials will be considered as being sent on a non-confidential basis, if these are not protected by rights of intellectual property,

which is also mentioned in the submission form [12].

Heineken uses the online environment for promoting products, identifying the needs of consumers, collecting innovative ideas and especially for engaging customers through creating platforms designed to open interaction with customers. Thus, the Heineken strategy aims promoting brands on social media, as this is the environment where the actual generation of consumers spends time. Also, the company aims to keep up with new communication technologies and established partnerships with Google, YouTube, for the marketing campaigns which could be visualised using mobile internet [13].

IV. INVOLVING EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS: THE FRONTIER INSTRUMENT

An efficient method to involve external stakeholders in the co-creation in innovation process by Heineken is the new online instrument, Frontier, an innovation and technology global program, launched in October 2014 and created for collaborating with innovative companies, focused on technology. Moreover, Heineken aims a partnership with 4 innovative companies for each of the 4 areas of interest: innovative music events, informed shopping choices, better beer experience at bars and methods to make drinking in moderation cool [14].

The online instrument Frontier can be accessed from the official website of Heineken, from the menu "About us: Innovation: Looking for innovation", in the bottom of the web page the button Frontier opening a new web page to Frontier instrument. Regarding the submission of applications, the website of the Frontier program directs the user to a new web page through the F6S network. A click on the "Enter" button leads the user to the web page of submitting the applications to which he can log in both with Facebook account and with LinkedIn, too, emphasizing the great presence of Heineken on social media.

Thus, the target segment of stakeholders is represented by companies which develop innovative technologies and services (digital innovators, inventors or companies which develop products) aiming to globally expanding, through a partnership with Heineken. Those which will be selected will receive 50 000 euro to implement the product or service in collaboration with Heineken, additional investments being offered to create a long-term strategic partnership [15].

The company launched the competition, application could be sent till 12 November 2014, aiming to attract partners which can help to develop an ecosystem of digital services and devices. The selected companies will be announced at the beginning of the December 2014, and Heineken will invite them to a virtual pitch day in January 2015 [16].

The jury will consist of Heineken experts, global managers, such as Global Heineken Brand Communication Director, Anuraag Trikha, or Senior

Director Global Heineken Brand, Gianluca di Tondo [17].

The web page for submission of applications for partnership between innovative companies and Heineken allows users, through the 3 buttons of the menu, to find out information about the online program Heineken uses to launch the submission of applications for partnership, in the bottom of the web page, following the description offered by Heineken, appear the employees which participate to the open dialogue, but also companies, existing the possibility to suggest employees or companies [18].

Another part of the menu aims the discussion group, where companies or representatives and employees of the companies can post messages regarding the method of submission of the applications, the possibility that a single company to apply for more areas of interest or aspects regarding the eligibility of companies to participate in the Frontier program [19]. The representatives of the Heineken team offer the answers for the received messages on this discussions forum.

In the third part of the menu, users can visualize the connections, the members of the teams, organizations or those who follow the activities of Heineken Frontier. Pressing the button which allows company representatives to apply for one of the 4 areas of interest of Heineken, a menu for filling up a form of application submission appears which should be filled up after the user logs in with LinkedIn or Facebook account [20]. After logging in, the user should mention if he sends the application in behalf of a company or individually, offering information regarding his address, abilities, and links for connecting on other social networks, having also the opportunity to create a team.

Filling up the application requires the address of the company, the headquarters, the capital of the company, the investors of the company, the number of employees from company, digital sectors suitable for company, an example how the product may respond to the business challenge described by Heineken, the description of the key actors from the management team of the company, mentioning 3 reasons to apply to Frontier program, the interest markets for the company which submits the application to realize a pilot study, what people or resources exists in Heineken company to whom the company which applies would want to interact, mentioning additional information or links which may be included in application, finally the user having the opportunity to request recommendations to people website suggests regarding the business challenge he applies for. Pressing the "Submit Final button, the user ends the application submission to Heineken team [20].

It may be observed that, according to this program which requires presence on social media of Heineken, the innovation efforts of Heineken aims the engagement of external stakeholders (in this case, innovative companies, based on technology using) to respond to business challenges regarding the discovery of innovation

solutions for aspects considered a priority for beer consumption.

Also, regarding the company efforts for sustainable development, Heineken interacts with other external stakeholders, too, through the „Brewing a Better Future” program, through 3 methods: research regarding reputation, meetings with experts and permanent dialogue with stakeholders. Regarding the reputation research, in 2013, the company completed the most extended cycle of reputation research, discussing with over 7000 stakeholders from 31 markets, such as customers, governmental and political stakeholders, media representatives, NGOs and commerce associations, through the personal interviews by telephone and online surveys, aiming to evaluate the action plans at the local and global level [21].

The external stakeholders co-opted in Heineken actions to communicate knowledge and opinions regarding sustainability performance and methods to bring improvements in key areas, were represented by science people, companies with the same profile, suppliers, governmental agencies and NGOs [21]. Thus, among the external stakeholders with whom Heineken collaborated in 2013 for the innovation efforts, such as creation and implementation of innovative solutions, can be mentioned The Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) or Green Freight Europe (an initiative which Heineken implemented, focused on reducing the impact of European road transport on environment) [21].

V. THE COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF THE IDEAS PROVIDED BY CUSTOMERS

The submission process of innovative ideas to online platforms for open innovation, as Heineken Innovators Brewhouse, aims in a first stage the submission of the innovation which will be analyzed by a team of experts from multidisciplinary areas, with relevant knowledge for the submitted solution, the evaluation process lasting to 8 weeks. After the evaluation, the decision of the experts is communicated to the innovator, the project proposal being implemented or rejected [22].

Referring to Ideas Brewery, which has no active challenges at this moment, collecting the ideas of customers/ stakeholders is realized through the online instrument, following the analysis of experts and the selection of the finalists. In the next stage, the team of experts collaborates with the innovators in co-creation in innovation workshops, analyzing their proposal and developing them [23].

Another method of processing and analyzing the ideas from stakeholders is provided by using the new program Heineken Frontier. The innovative companies will receive feedback from the Heineken team of experts, and by then they can collaborate with experts on F6S network, receiving recommendations from other experts, participants, company representatives, managers, etc. The first stage in processing and analyzing the ideas of

finalists will take place in a virtual pitch, followed by launching the pilot studies [16].

VI. THE FINANCIAL AND MARKET IMPACT OF INVOLVING CUSTOMERS/STAKEHOLDERS

The involvement of external stakeholders in the co-creation process with the online instruments brought positive results for Heineken, creating new products, cooling beer devices, new methods for serving beer, but also growth and partnerships on the emerging markets from Africa, South-East Asia, or Mexic, etc.

Also, the annual report of the company for 2013 emphasizes the company’s commitment to create value for stakeholders, and the financial performance indicates the revenues growth with 1.3%, and the operational profit growth with 2.8%. Thus, through continuous focus on innovation, strong prices, a better planning of the portfolio, the company succeeded to enhance the revenue per hectoliter with 2.7% and to reduce costs [24].

Focused on innovative marketing and involving external stakeholders through sponsorship, creative campaigns and distinct packaging [25], Heineken succeeded to anticipate and satisfy customers’ needs, in 2013, 1.1 billions of euro of company’s revenues coming from innovations. The company increased the innovation rate to 5.9%, compared to 5.3% from 2012 [24].

Listed by Interbrand on 95th position from the best 100 brands, the company aims to increase sales with 6%, focusing on enhancing visibility through innovation, collaborating with customers, creative companies, digital involvement and a brand reputation growth focused on social and environment responsibility [25].

VII. FUTURE PROJECTS

The future projects of Heineken refer to the 6 areas of interest on which the company focuses the innovation and sustainable development activities. The focus on innovation is highlighted by the active online programs, Innovators Brewhouse and Heineken Frontier, which aim to find innovation solutions for different aspects of beer consumption, packaging, manufacturing, etc., involving customers, consumers or innovative companies focused on technology.

Regarding the company’s customer-orientation, the company aims to focus on developing digital technologies, offering a large variety of choices for online navigation. The investments in innovative technologies are a priority for Heineken in the future. Thus, an interactive device was launched through Twitter @wherenext service, in order to help consumers to explore new experiences and places for Heineken beer consumption in their town, this digital innovation being a part of Heineken campaign “Cities of the World” [26].

Referring to sustainable development, the company will develop projects (such as the Myanmar project) regarding the opening of a greenfield brewery, which respects the environment protection standards [21],

focusing on developing plans for water consumption reduction in breweries, on the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, creating special means for transport/delivery, as the biggest electric truck for delivery from Netherlands, on developing projects of supporting the local sustainable sourcing from Africa, offering support for 100 000 farmers and families from Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone and promoting the responsible consumption of alcohol through allocating 10% of media spend on campaigns in this purpose [24].

VIII. CONCLUSION

Heineken online platforms for involving the external stakeholders in the co-creation in innovation process are very successful as bring new ideas and solutions for a variety of market needs identified by the company.

Thus, Heineken uses the online instruments for open innovation in order to engage innovators in the co-creation process, aiming to maintain a continuous dialogue with customers and other external stakeholders, to create new technologies, products, methods of serving beer, identifying the needs of a specific segment of customers, etc.

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