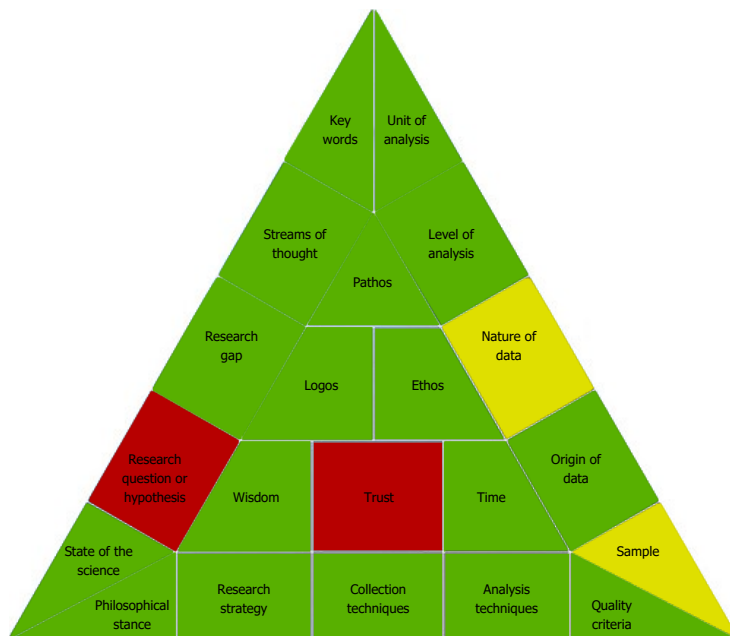# Co-creation of brand artifacts

Author: catarina lelis
Date: 2012-03-14 - 11:31:37 (GMT)
Self-evaluation: 86%

Key words

1/21. Theoretical question: which are the two main keywords of your research?

My research focus is the relationship between "employees participation" and "brand design process";

The title of my research is "Co-creation of brand artifacts: proposal of a computer-mediated communication model for employees' participation in
internal brand design activities".

In my research "employees participation" is related to making available latent creative skills and staff empowerment; "brand design process" defines the iterative process of research and enrichment of the organizational/corporate brand. This combination, through participatory design approaches, it is expected to become more easily achievable if technologically mediated.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Streams of thought

2/21. Theoretical question: which are the two main streams of thought of your literature review?

Scientific experts on my research topic include:
- Kensing (1998); Fischer (2002); Muller (2003); Kieslinger, Pata & Fabian (2009) for participatory design;
- Harris (2007); King & Grace (2008); Ind (2007); Ind & Bjerke (2007); Streader & Whitehouse (2008); Arnhold (2010), for employee participation in branding activities;
- Preece (2000); Miller, Fabian & Lin (2009); Walther (1996, 2005, 2007); (Bouwman, van den Hooff, van de Wijngaert & van Dijk, 2005) for online communities and computer-mediated communication in organizations.

Two opposite streams of thought on my research topic are "the authorship singulariry of the design process" (Kensing, 1998) and

"the participation of non-specialized individuals in the design process" (Streader & Whitehouse, 2008). The key debate between these two streams of thought is whether the design process should be exclusive to professionals (designers) or open to participatory activities and non-professional opinions and ideas.

Other two opposite streams of thought on my research topic are "the hyperpersonal capability of computer-mediated communication (CMC)" (Walther (1996, 2005, 2007) and "the lack of social presence and context clues in CMC" (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). The key debate between these two streams of thought is whether CMC can be used in relational/social cases or if it is exclusively task-oriented.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Research gap

3/21. Theoretical question: which is the main gap that your research addresses?

"A living brand is a collaborative performance, and every person in the company is an actor" (Neumeier, 2006: 136).

The stream of thought associated with the citation above is "the brand flexibility and stakeholders (in this case, employees) participation on its design process".

My research will focus on a theoretical gap related to the need of endowing employees with brand knowledge, so they can actively and creatively participate in design process activities for corporate brand enrichment.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Research question or hypothesis

4/21. Theoretical question: which is the main question or hypothesis of your research?

My type of research question is "what". My research question is:

"What computer-mediated communication model encourages the participation of employees in the co-creation of brand artifacts?".

My research focuses on theory development; in my conclusions I expect to achieve a computer-mediated communication model so that employees share their brand knowledge and participate in brand design construction. Is is also expected to propose a heuristic based on model's validation.

Self-evaluation: 0%

State of the science

5/21. Theoretical question: which is the current answer to your research question or hypothesis?

My approach to the state of the art is holistic as I consider for the state of the art everything that has been researched on each of the two main keywords implicit in my research question.

The main phenomena previously associated with the relationship between "employees participation" and "brand design process" are "employees participation in organizational activities" (e.g. Ind, 2007) and "participatory and metadesign" (e.g. Fischer, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2009).

The current answer to my research question is that employees should actively participate in corporate brand related cocreation activities, because they daily deal with the brand, on its tangible and/or intangible attributes. For that, they must know the brand. In fact, they realize its failures and gaps, but opportunities for opinion and interpretation expressing are scarce. An online community exclusively and entirely dedicated to the brand should allow this latent and empirical knowledge to be transformed in creative brand-related manifestations, which can be officially implemented, as plausible communication solutions, if aligned with the brand strategy.

For that, from the organizational point of view this thesis is of major economical and social relevance.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Philosophical stance

6/21. Methodological question: which is the philosophical stance of your research?

My research adopts realism as its philosophical stance. It is ontologically focused on the objective side of reality; epistemologically focused on the production of value-independent knowledge and methodologically focused on manipulative research strategies.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Research strategy

7/21. Methodological question: which is the qualitative, quantitative or mixed method of your research?

My research strategy type is qualitative. It is a case study research and it is expected to allow the development of a model and heuristics in order to answer my research question (what CMC model will allow employees to add value to the organizational brand) from a realist philosophical stance that focuses on reality and contextualised facts.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Collection techniques

8/21. Methodological question: which are the data collection techniques of your research?

The data collection techniques which are implicit in streams of thought on my research topic and that will be adopted in my research are collection of documents and artifacts, interviews and focus groups.

Collection of documents and artifacts, and interviews will allow the preliminary collection of data from a realist philosophical stance which focus on real contextualised facts. Focus groups will allow a validation of the previously collected data, allowing participants to contact and discuss a low-fidelity prototype of the brand-dedicated online community.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Analysis techniques

9/21. Methodological question: which are the data analysis techniques of your research?

The data analysis techniques which are implicit in streams of thought and adopted in my research are analytical induction, content analysis and discourse analysis.

The computer software adopted is WebQDA for qualitative data analysis.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Quality criteria

10/21. Methodological question: which are the tactics of your research to ensure scientific quality criteria?

The quality criteria adopted in my research are external validity, construct validity and reliability.

My research adopts tactics to increase external validity (analytical sample and inductive logic for analytical generalisation), construct validity (interviews and focus groups, clarifications in interviews and in focus groups, feedback from interviewees and focus groups participants, and interviewees/participants' verbatim responses), and reliability (data matrix, consent form, standardised open-ended interview guide, focus groups plan and computer software for qualitative data analysis).

Self-evaluation: 100%

Unit of analysis

11/21. Empirical question: which is the unit of analysis of your research?

The unit of analysis which operationalises the relationship between employees and corporate/organizational brand is "technologically mediated brand design processes with employee participation". The level of analysis of my unit of analysis is micro (organizational).

By giving employees the opportunity to participate in brand design processes in their real contexts I expect to develop a model and a heuristic on how employees can add value to the corporate brand when participating on its iterative construction/design process.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Level of analysis

12/21. Empirical question: which is the level of analysis of your research?

The unit of observation in my research is the same as the unit of analysis.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Nature of data

13/21. Empirical question: which is the nature of the data of your research?

The qualitative data collected in my research includes interview and focus groups transcripts and also corporate documents and corporate artifacts. The quantitative data collected in my research are internal key players of organizations (academic and

business/corporate). Thus, my research is, in nature, qualitative, because data analysis does not involve statistic treatment of data and the quantitative data collected will not answer my research question.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Origin of data

14/21. Empirical question: which is the origin of the data of your research?

The primary data collected in my research includes text interview and focus groups transcripts. The secondary data collected in my research includes organizational artifacts: documents and multimedia. My primary data is expected to increase the effectiveness of my data collection, even if efficiency decreases, because I will be greatly dependent on others and I will need time to test interviews and focus groups, in advance.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Sample

15/21. Empirical question: which is the sample of your research?

My sample will serve for a heuristic proposal, expecting an analytical generalization. It includes two different organizations as sample units with which I expect to achieve a convergent answer to my research question. The examples in my sample vary in nature since one organization belongs to an academic context (university) and the other is a corporation.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Pathos

16/21. Rhetorical question: which are the positive and negative emotions of your research?

The emotions which are emphasised by streams of thought on my research topic include the positive aspects of brand knowledge development in organizations and latent creative skills utilization, as well as the negative aspects of designers' authorship excessive power.

The positive aspects associated with my research are scientific publications for science, consulting services on organizational management, employee empowerment and commitment, and brand knowledge conversion, through participatory branding activities.

My research is associated with negative emotions related with micro-politics aspects, since many professional designers do not accept the participatory design perspective, as their individual authorship may be jeopardized.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Logos

17/21. Rhetorical question: which is the scientific logic of your research?

The scientific logic which is implicit in streams of thought on my research topic and adopted in my research is inductive and deductive logic, because themes on my research are diverse; thus, the research strategy adopted in my research is realism and case study research.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Ethos

18/21. Rhetorical question: which are the limitations of your research?

My research will triangulate:
1) theoretical keywords to increase the research focus,
2) streams of thought for an appropriate literature review, and
3) quality criteria to ensure validity and reliability.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Wisdom

19/21. Authorial question: which is your education and experience related with your research?

My previous education was a M.Sc. in Innovation and Knowledge Management and I have a Degree in Communication Design.

My previous experience included professional positions as communication designer, identity and brand consultant in several organizations being synergetic with my research on computer-mediated communication and new communication technologies, which

I teach for five years.

The expected benefits from the synergy between my previous education and experience and my research topic is a better understanding of literature, interpretation of data and combination of domains that have been, so far, disconnected.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Trust

20/21. Authorial question: who are the partners of your research?

My literature review is supported by my supervisor and experts who I personally contacted. My data collection is supported by work colleagues and acquaintances who have access to cases in reality. My methodological choices are supported by my supervisor and lecturers of methodological courses and seminars I attended.

Self-evaluation: 0%

Time

21/21. Authorial question: which is your availability of time and resources for your research?

Until now I have had part-time availability to conduct my research. Recently I was granted with a four year scholarship (from FCT), which includes a monthly payment, PhD fees and specific grants to attend international conferences. So I will become sooner 100% dedicated to my research.

I have self-organizing and project management skills to manage my research, namely in terms of time management and planning.

Self-evaluation: 100%