

# MASS CUSTOMIZATION AS A CREATIVE ENERGY IN MARKETING

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**Abstract:** *Marketing, as a brand communication with the market and development of additional value for customers, requires innovation in communication, creativity, carefully listening and customer needs understanding and the power to attract attention, maintain interest and build relationships between brand and client. Mass customization is a potential creative energy in many phases of marketing, because it creates a new space of communication between the customer and product. Mass customization used in marketing campaign results in additional values for the customer and brand becomes directly linked to the personality of the customer. Objective of this work is to elaborate how mass customization could be a new tool of innovation during practical marketing campaign implementation. Specific marketing campaign realization becomes innovative and gets new energy from the creative application of the concept of mass customization in phases: strategic planning, branding, customer and market analysis, unique competitive propositions selection, launch planning, ad creation, media planning, interactive activities, implementation of the campaign and future customer care and experience.*

**Key words:** *Mass customization, Online creativity, Marketing communication, Customer experience*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mass customization emphasizes customers' creativity, and transform it into brand's unique selling proposal, by enabling the product creation that suits the best to a client, while price and realization time are competitive because of production efficiency. Mentioned unique selling proposal is the key information for developing advertising strategy. Consumer impact on marketing strategy is significant according to marketing statement that brands exist to satisfy consumer's needs. When buying a product customer not only gets a product but customer experience also. Experience makes him feel satisfied while shopping, using product and coming back for more. That's why

unique selling proposal builds additional value, and the way for this is through experience.

While searching for the right product people check many brands at online and real shops, investing their time and hoping that will get value for money. Consumers are becoming more and more informed about marketing tricks, hidden messages and overpriced product values what makes them more oriented to themselves or friend's recommendation than to an advert, and makes them ready to ask for the product that suits them a best without compromising. Generations X and Y (born between 1970 and 2000) that presents main purchasing long term potential shows strong individualism, seeking for the perfect experience and less emotional connection with a brand. Their purchasing decision making is based on reasonable aspects, reliability and comfort during shopping, and usage, functionality, utility, and post buy support and relation maintenance. Differences could be structured in few most common groups: 1 Cynical: pessimistic and skeptical, ask for reasonable reasons for involvement, 2 Traditional materialists: optimistic, ready to get what they view as the desire for material prosperity, 3 Hippies revisited: support non-materialistic values of the 1960s and a strong interest in spirituality; ask for product personalization, 4 Fifties machos: young conservatives who seek for perfect service experience [2] The New Consumers are smarter, more empowered, and more demanding than previous generations of shoppers. They make full usage of online tools to connect with others, find different opinions and decide about the right buys [8] while having good experience.

A service that is fun or enjoyable is essential for an experience. A mass customized goods are very much related to a service, and service empowered with mass customization would have great potential to be a good experience. Design-your-own offers makes consumer experience not only using product but also being respectful and capable to choose and create and being innovative in order to full fill own wishes.

Innovation strategy that include customer co-creation brings many benefits to marketing strategy because it decrease risk on customer feedback and acceptance, and provides specific direct information about customer preferences on specific market, during specific

period and conditions. Data about consumers help marketers to define the market and to identify threats and opportunities that will affect how consumers receive the product. The main effect of adopting external information is to enlarge the base that can be utilized for the innovation process. Mass customization is closely related to customer co-creation, one of the core strategies that today shape a modern corporate innovation management system [1]. Forrester Research also concluded that a large scale implementation mass customization is becoming real [1]. One of the benefits of Mass Customization that the Forrester Report points out is the new type of “relationship to the consumer” that can be created as more personal, more loyal, and more profitable relationship.

Implementation of mentioned strategy includes processes in the company marketing team and in outsourced team in marketing agency that is in charge of direct communication with client and strategy implementation. Mass customization as an innovation strategy, when used as instrument of marketing communication strategy execution includes processes from concept to implementation, from unique marketing challenges evaluation and planning till logo design, branding, QR codes creating, promo materials development, slogans communication, web design and Internet behavior strategies, commercials and viral marketing, media buying and realization through press releases, strategic planning, online social networking and event execution.

## 2. CONSUMERS ASK FOR CUSTOMIZATION INDIRECTLY

Advertising techniques are responsible for convincing consumers that they ‘need’ some product and that they can’t be happy or successful if they do not have these ‘it necessities’. Modern buyer is more suspicious about the ad message and more oriented to informative advertising that is more objective than image based advertising. However, needs are something what people are socialized to have. Ways to satisfy needs are always given by the social environment. Need is perception of missing something that will bring good mood, happiness, success, joy, social awareness or influence.

It’s important to make difference between perception, need and a desire for understanding co-creation involvement motivation.

Perception is the process by which physical sensations such as sights, sounds and smells are selected, organized and interpreted. The eventual interpretation of a stimulus allows it to be assigned meaning. People rely on colors, sounds, tastes and feelings, that products provide, when forming evaluations of them.

Desire, as a perception of wish that is not a need, is highly motivational aspect of purchasing, with a special value – it incorporates wish for a mile more, for interactivity and cooperation with a brand. Desire brings customer experience away from satisfaction and over to the top of the process of desiring - deep feelings involved in goods contribution to the consumers ‘self-image. That makes clear why “the best” product is not best seller, instead the “It” product that is desired as special image

instrument or personalized and specific to emphasize individuality. Desire brings motivation for involvement.

Involvement is defined as ‘a person’s perceived relevance of the product or advertisement based on their wishes, values, and interests [2]. Motivation factors for involvement can be something about the person, something about the product or advert, or something about the experience that will make clients motivated to pay attention and give any information felt to be relevant for achieving their goals. When relevant knowledge is activated, a motivational state is created to drive shopping and consumption.

In this case, knowledge means information that is understood and perceived as useful for client, as information that will affect his behavior. Transforming information into knowledge in this situation happens when client gets information several times and think about it in three levels – what is that, what for, what it means to me. That process could be long and risk of choosing competitor’s product is higher in every thinking step.

Involvement is the main instrument for faster transforming information into knowledge and for making special connection with a brand, as a competitive strength. When consumers are truly involved with a product, advertisement, web application - they enter an optimal experience characterized by a sense of playfulness; a feeling of being in control; concentration and highly focused attention; mental enjoyment of the activity; a match between the challenge and skills [2]. Involvement as a strategy have many practical appeal, for example including celebrity endorsers what makes fans identify with the celebrity and feel his/her experience, or build a bond with consumers by maintaining an ongoing relationship and cultivating brand loyalty. Mass customization and online environment have provided companies with new possibilities for creating loyalty bonds and personal experience same time. Leading companies are applying this method from the very beginning, from childhood. At Mattel’s My Design website, located at [www.b Barbie.com/mydesign](http://www.b Barbie.com/mydesign) children can specify doll’s name, her skin tone, hair and eye color and outfits. New generations might be used to have products that comes with a personality profile they can tailor from choices that all are the right, all suggested by company experts.

Functionality, the best suitable product that has been created based on perfect variants describes a product and service that motivate for involvement, generates desire, and makes purchase happen again and again.

Customer innovation depends on the degree of freedom and the degree of collaboration at the front end and the back end of the innovations process [3] what depends on their motivation to find fun in shopping process or to appear to reflexive innovation model, as an answer to the reflexive modernization [4]. A recent survey [2] found that 75% of American adults want more customized products and 70% are willing to pay more for this desire. 85% of generation Y between 18-24 years old wants more customized products, especially clothing, shoes, electronics and travel. 79% of online shoppers spend at least 50% of their shopping time researching

products [6], what implicates that offering possibility to just say what the wish is instead of search means 50% faster shopping, especially when supported with client relation and care management, when information should be provided just once and wish full filed every time customer come back.

Additional benefit is also that customers are coming online first. Many Americans begin their purchasing experience by doing online research to compare prices, quality, and the reviews of other shoppers. Even if they end up making their purchase in a store, they start fact-finding and decision-making online [7] and 61% of global internet users search products online, so it's the best place to arrange purchasing they need, as online mass customization portals provides.

### 3. CREATIVITY IN MARKETING AS A WAY TO CUSTOMER'S DESIRE

Figure 1 shows Lead user innovation process. This kind of process happens in outsourced marketing agency when creating communication strategy. During the creative process experts feel "with the consumer heart", producing wish effects and combining knowledge and inspiration in order to get the solution for innovative communication concept design that would be accepted by consumer, and positively marked as well.

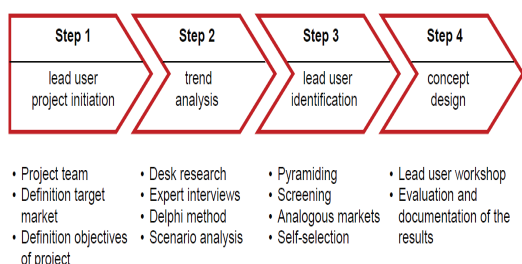


Fig.1 Lead user process (Reichwald and Piller 2009)[5]

When creating a launch message and choosing media channels marketers are oriented to prosumers, who are today's leading influencers and market drivers.

Prosumers are proactive and informed consumers, targeted because beyond their own economic impact, they influence the brand choices and consumption behaviors of others. It is a strong prosumer tendency to pursue multiple information sources in the search for information giving more credence to experts in science and to the knowledge they can get from information sources online and in traditional media.[8] Proactivity and new trends fast adoption make them a target for mass customized products and services.

According to this, marketing, as a function responsible for bringing customer to the shop, adopts communication style to shopping and retail style. Shopping trends underline shopping under the tech influence. Virtual shopping is going to change completely because the Kinect technology, first employed in gaming, is now being used to create virtual fitting rooms wherein 3-D models of our bodies can try on clothes online.

Augmented reality becomes more comfortable experience than real, so some brands are thinking of making this technology an in-store also. Macy's installed a MagicFitting Room 282 in its Herald Square store in New York City. Within minutes, shoppers were trying on the most popular tops, dresses and jackets, creating as many as 16 outfits that could be stored in a digital closet, and then shared on Facebook and by email. [9]

### 4. ONLINE INTERACTIVE MASS CUSTOMIZATION – THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE FOR CREATIVITY REALIZATION

Serving consumers, in a world where the frame and basis of customer engagement is rapidly shifting, is one of the biggest challenges for companies today. The last decade has brought a series of incremental changes to the marketing communications. The context of the relationship between an enterprise and its customers has expanded beyond advertising and contact center and spread across numerous media and devices. This is very challenging for customer care managers, media planners and the marketing communications team, who share online environment and seek for innovation in work.

Smart devices represent paradigm shifts in the way customers relate to the companies they interact with by simplifying consumer access to customer service across multiple channels. [10] Customers' ability to use mobile apps, voice, SMS, email, web self-service, web chat, video and social media to engage with a company through a single device but via all media. Mobility introduces the potential for a new kind of structured interaction, one that is best described as a "smart, connected interaction" (SCI) as mass customization platform should become.

SCIs are primarily characterized by awareness of the customer's context. In an SCI, the systems used inside the company detect the specifics of the device that the customer is using, and tailor aspects of the interaction to the particular capabilities of that device.

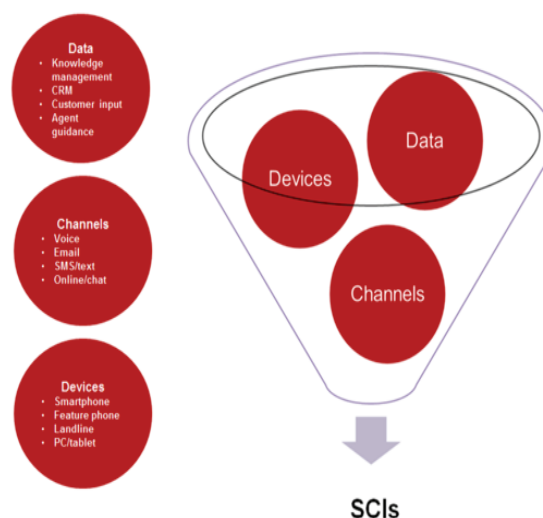


Fig.2 Smart Connected Interactions [10]

Figure 2 illustrates how smart, connected interactions arise from the combination of data, multiple contact channel options, and the choice of different devices available to consumers. The role of the customer care and marketing communication strategist is to understand the context in which these three variables interact. What makes these interactions “smart” is the persistence of knowledge. If a customer enters identifying information (and is authenticated) in one contact channel on a device, that ID will follow the customer through the interaction even if they switch to a different contact channel on the same device. The applications developed to involve customer in co-creation tend to be high-profile and visually interesting, often incorporating video and graphics in support of the company’s product variants. In many cases, the mobile app itself is considered the company’s personalized product, especially if the app is a game or a social connection tool where every profile is highly personalized. This forces the company to consider care integrations at a relatively early stage. [11].

Researchers expect that the way in which customer service is delivered will change over the next five years. This is due to the spreading influence of smart devices and on-device applications that enable customers to engage with enterprises in a more sophisticated and interactive manner than is possible at present.

Smart devices (smart phones and tablets) have simplified consumer access to customer service across multiple channels. The ability to use online applications as self-service applications and context relay can be applied to drastically reduce costs and improve the customer experience. The rapid adoption of smart phones by consumers is already having an effect on the deployment of care technologies in enterprises. This means that mass customization is now available all the time, when customer is spending time private, indoor, outdoor or at shopping center. Web pages and applications become the most competitive “retail” by availability, 24/7 indoor/outdoor, in comfort and possibilities of augmented reality.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Open innovation is characterized by cooperation within wide networks of customers and marketing teams in the company and outsourced agency. Sources of external creativity for the innovation process include customers, suppliers, competitors, research and science, technology, and mediating parties like media and marketing agencies [5] which can spread innovation value to communication value and unique proposal also. Mass customization is a new opportunity for having new ideas and being creative in marketing campaign and customer relations, especially in interactive advertising segment. Implementing a successful marketing communication with customer means that enterprises need to look beyond traditional measures and explore how they can communicate with the customer on the customer’s terms. A growing number of enterprises are supporting social media campaigns, mobile applications, web chat, and viral video in conjunction with traditional marketing and sales channels.

Marketing teams see the communication device as a touch point where they can differentiate themselves when it comes to the open innovation, customer experience and customer service. The next few years will show growth of apps on smart devices as they increasingly become the heart of communication between the customer and the company, main carrier of marketing messages. Customization is a new initiative in many organizations today, but the ability to translate this trend into the development of customer care depends on capabilities widely based on organizational dynamics and the center of gravity for innovation strategy within an enterprise. In most cases, the ability to intelligently route requests from both, marketing interactive campaign and innovation strategy, paired with an external creative capability, enables baseline functionality. More sophisticated tools, along with an ability to choose an appropriately level of customized variants, are required to deliver viral effects, brand loyalty and fulfill knowledge base about market needs.

Modern consumer demands that an enterprise be fast, flexible, and adaptive. [11] Those companies which decision-making will have an edge in customer engagement will continue this transition. When all of these elements are combined, the organization that care about the customers can perform a much more sophisticated analysis of the customer’s needs, and provide a personalized interaction that much better perform the overall customer experience during interaction.

What makes these interactions “smart” is the persistence of knowledge that follows the customer through the interaction even if they switch to a different contact channel on the same device, following the same customers thru many different campaigns, no matter which device is used during the campaign, what contribute to the continued delivery of better communication throughout the customer’s lifecycle.

Customers get additional trust in good choice, and relaxing choice making because of possibility to choose product elements combination that expert’s suggestions have given. Many variants are bringing customer back for more even they are satisfied even not, because of new options available for try. Using the latest IT tools and smart technology, any company can produce marketing materials that have customer personal relevance to adjust products and services to meet the individual needs of their buyers, without driving up costs.

Marketing materials could be subject of customization also. Brand faced with multichannel marketing goals can make excellent use of new tools to standardize certain aspects of campaign collateral and provide choice in others. For example, a multinational Christmas campaign might run in different countries showing appropriate nature and weather theme. Level of customization can go from national campaign, across local campaigns, to personal messages generated by mobile applications for every single user. Using this approach marketing teams can create better marketing materials using less time, money and resources.

The both side benefit is that customized offers based on knowledge of customer needs with brand appropriate

communications support the goals and strategies of customer care and innovation during marketing campaign.

Product customization allows consumer to co-create branded product, personalization allows him to add some personal point to the creation, and social media advertising makes him sharing of a unique but branded creation. In this win-win situation customer is highly motivated to communicate with his social environment, based on his social needs, sharing brand message as an indirect recommendation same time.

The result of mass customization concept in marketing communication is an interactive online brand experience which brings much more value than just a standard shopping web page, or a standard viral advertising content that people don't share when it say nothing about them. Adding a co-creation to social media marketing campaigns increase the chances that consumers will share a product.

Consumer generated content developed in consumer generated product makes augmented reality becomes reality that not only makes marketing message viral, but also add value to customer experience and make it more brand loyal.

New level of creative interaction gives customer opportunity to have more fun while shopping. Interaction by choosing options instead of origin creation makes customers feel comfortable and out of 'paradox of choice.' More social shopping experience brings auditorium and online word of mouth. Integrated marketing influences relationship marketing significantly where the message can become relevant to the customer and improves the state of the relationship.

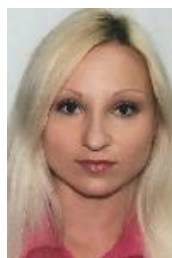
Mass customization can be used in campaign by Integrated marketing function, what includes Advertising, Promotion, Public Relations, Website content and Strategic online content. Relationship Marketing makes a long-term and mutually beneficial arrangement where both the buyer and seller have an interest in providing a more satisfying exchange.

Mass customization is a new tool in innovative approach to crucial phases of marketing and advertising implementation process.

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