

Understanding Creative Consumers: Implications For Intellectual Property And Brand Management

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Abstract

Two papers are presented that provide knowledge and build theory related to how and why creative consumers engage in creative consumption and what the managerial implications of their innovation activity are. The first paper presents an in-depth qualitative exploration of the motivations creative consumers have for tinkering with existing offerings and of their relationship to the organization linked to the source material of their innovation. This paper reveals that there are two main types of creative consumers – those who innovate in order to solve problems or needs, and those who innovate for the sake of creative exploration. This finding is consistent with theories of consumer behaviour that characterize consumption as either predominately utilitarian (i.e., task-related and rational) or as hedonic (i.e., fun or pleasurable). In the second paper, I focus on the branding and intellectual property implications of creative consumption. Because creative consumers innovate by changing existing offerings in some way, and typically do so without permission, intellectual property issues are not uncommon in situations of creative consumption. The second paper develops a framework that considers the extent to which intellectual property rights can be applied to stop or control creative consumption and the extent to which creative consumption is desirable from a brand value perspective. Research on creative consumers has provided interesting and influential insights concerning how firms should respond to them. This dissertation is intended to shed new light on creative consumers and the managerial implications of their creative activities.

Keywords: Creative consumers; consumer innovation; creativity; intellectual property; brand management

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General Introduction

Until recently, it was the prerogative of marketers to develop and bring products to market. A marketer identified the needs and wants of target customers and then developed or improved products to satisfy customer demand. This market orientation (Day, 1994) entailed a “closed” approach to innovation: the innovation process was closed from external sources as innovations came from within the firm itself (Chesbrough, 2003a) and were in direct response to market or customer needs. For many years, firms proceeded in this way: they maintained control over the development of innovations by investing heavily in R&D, hiring the best researchers, screening the ideas generated by their employees, and then securing intellectual property protection for firm discoveries. Ultimately, profits stemming from this process could be reinvested into conducting more R&D and subsequent offering development – thus creating a cycle of highly controlled and closed innovation (Chesbrough, 2006).

The innovation landscape today can no longer be characterized as a cycle of controlled innovation. A more contemporary approach to innovation involves looking outside the firm for ideas and then commercializing these ideas. This model, known as ‘open innovation’, opens up the innovation process so that ideas come from multiple sources, both internal and external to the firm, and are brought to market in a variety of ways (Chesbrough, 2006). In fact, research suggests that firms stuck within a closed innovation model may be at a disadvantage compared to those whose approach to innovation is open (Chesbrough, 2006; Enkel, Gassmann, & Chesbrough, 2009; Poetz & Schreier, 2012). By only commercializing ideas generated in-house, firms ascribing to a model of closed innovation limit themselves, which may place them at a competitive disadvantage. Open innovation also benefits individual consumers, as consumers themselves are able to directly contribute to the innovation process, thus facilitating production of precisely the product or service they want (Franke & von Hippel, 2003).

The focus of this dissertation is on consumer innovation, or the phenomenon of consumers of market offerings, rather than manufacturers or sellers of market offerings, engaging in innovation (von Hippel, Ogawa, & De Jong, 2011). Research points to a number of factors making consumer innovation an important phenomenon to understand. First, consumer innovation is on the rise, facilitated by a number of recent and related developments: the quality of both software and hardware available for innovation is improving rapidly, and at the same time consumers have better access to these tools for innovation (von Hippel, 2009). In addition, the rise of websites such as YouTube, Pinterest, and Instructables all offer detailed advice and tutorials on a wide range of innovation topics and projects, thus providing easily available information and guidance to many people with access to the internet. Ultimately, these factors mean that consumers today are able to access highly sophisticated software and design tools, many of which can be used on a personal computer. As both the quality of and access to tools for innovation increases, so too does the incidence of consumer innovation. Overall, research is clear that consumers are increasingly moving from the passive role of the target to the more active role of the producer or co-creator.

Second, user innovation, and consumer innovation in particular, has advantages compared to manufacturer-centric innovation. Manufacturers have long tended to rely on a strategy of developing market offerings that fulfil the needs of market segments large enough to profitably serve. Such a strategy does not lend itself to tailoring market offerings to the needs of individual users. In contrast, consumer innovators can develop exactly what they want, rather than relying on manufacturers to develop approximations for them (Franke & von Hippel, 2003). Particularly in an age where consumers prize customized offerings (Arora et al., 2008; Franke, Keinz, & Steger, 2009), providing tailored market offerings is increasingly important. Research shows that inviting consumers to participate in designing or customizing market offerings can increase product satisfaction (Moreau & Herd, 2010) or lead to products that provide more benefit to customers (Poetz & Schreier, 2012).

This dissertation aims to better understand a particular type of consumer innovator – creative consumers – and the managerial implications associated with their creative consumption. Creative consumers are those who take it upon themselves to engage in innovation with existing market offerings (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates,

2007). Within the body of work on consumers who engage in creative activities with existing market offerings, researchers use a number of different terms (at times interchangeably) to describe the individuals involved, the creative processes undertaken, and their creative output. Because the literature is fragmented and the terms used to describe and explain the actions and implications of these creative individuals are highly varied, there is a need to better understand the creative consumer construct. This is one of the goals of this dissertation. Understanding what creative consumers do and why they undertake these creative activities is the objective of Paper 1 of this dissertation. A deeper understanding of the creative consumer will hopefully stimulate research on the topic and allow researchers to better understand consumer innovation in the context of creative consumers.

Literature on creative consumers strongly suggests that innovations from these consumers have important strategic and managerial implications for firms and that this form of innovation will continue to occur (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates, 2007; Berthon, Pitt, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2015). In Paper 2 of this dissertation, I explore the implications of creative consumption for intellectual property and brand management. That is, research suggests that creative consumers treat firms' intellectual property with 'cavalier disregard' (Berthon et al., 2007, pg. 40), and as the activity of creative consumers increases, so therefore does the unauthorized use of intellectual property. Although firms often respond by exercising their legal right to prevent or stop consumers from such creative efforts, Paper 2 illustrates that there are a variety of situations in which it is not advisable for firms to pursue legal action despite having the ability to do so.

Specifically, in Paper 2 I present and discuss situations in which managers should choose to forego exercising their intellectual property rights or in which managers are unable to exercise their intellectual property rights. This paper presents a framework that considers the extent to which intellectual property rights can be applied to stop or control the creative consumption (i.e., enforceability), and the extent to which the creative consumption is desirable from a brand value perspective (i.e., desirability). The framework describes and illustrates four firm responses - *stomach it*, *shut it down*, *allow it*, and *enjoy the ride* – which advance our understanding of how to deal with unsanctioned use of intellectual property by creative consumers. I then present four

examples of how firms responded inappropriately to the unsanctioned use of their intellectual property and explain how they might have reacted more effectively. Intellectual property has been explored mainly with respect to its role as a competitive resource (Teece, 1998; Reitzig, 2004; Rivette & Kline, 2000), This helps managers and legal advisors to understand how to use the framework to respond effectively to unsanctioned use of intellectual property. Overall, this dissertation contributes insight into the implications of and theoretical development regarding innovation by creative consumers.

Paper 1: Understanding the Creative Consumer

Over the past decade, many researchers have described, investigated, or discussed the creative individuals who engage in innovative activities with existing market offerings. These individuals have been referred to as 'creative consumers' (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates, 2007), 'lead users' (von Hippel, 1986), 'co-creators' (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000), 'hackers' (Lakhani & Wolf, 2003), 'outlaw users' (Flowers, 2008), and 'user designers' (Franke & Piller, 2004), or as members of collectives known as 'online consumer groups' (Füller, Jawecki, & Mühlbacher, 2007) or 'creative consumer communities' (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008), among others. Further, these individuals have been known to generate output such as 'consumer generated ads' or 'spoof ads' (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008; Thompson & Malaviya, 2013), 'consumer generated intellectual property' (Berthon, Pitt, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2015), and 'outlaw innovations' (Flowers, 2008) among others. Within the body of work on consumers who engage in creative activities with existing market offerings, researchers use a number of different terms (at times interchangeably) to describe the individuals involved, the creative processes undertaken, the creators relationship to the organization affiliated with the source material of their creativity, and the creative output. Because the literature is fragmented and the terms used to describe and explain the actions and implications of these creative individuals are highly varied, there is no common understanding of the creative consumer construct and how it fits in with existing literature on consumer innovation.

At the same time, research suggests that innovations from these consumers have important implications for firms (Berthon et al., 2007; Berthon et al., 2015), and that this form of innovation will continue to occur, and indeed, accelerate (von Hippel, 2009; von Hippel, Ogawa, & De Jong, 2011; Kietzmann & Angell, 2014). That is, advanced technologies and increasing access to them enable and empower consumers to move from the more passive role of the recipient or target to the role of a co-creator or co-producer (Fuchs, Prandelli, & Schreier, 2010; Füller, Mühlbacher, Matzler, & Jawecki,

2009; Pitt, Berthon, Watson, & Zinkhan, 2002). For example, YouTube has given consumers a platform with which to share their spoof ads or parody ads (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008) thus “liberating” ads from exclusive control by advertisers and further blurring the lines between producer and consumer.

In summary, there is a need to synthesize existing research in order to clarify the various terms used in literature. In other words, who are creative consumers? What are the important conceptual and practical differences between the various terms used in literature to describe consumers who engage in innovative activities? What exactly do creative consumers do, and why? What is their output? In order to answer these questions, a common language to discuss this phenomenon is required. In addition, empirical investigation into the experience of creative consumers is needed in order to add depth to the current understanding of creative consumers. These are the goals of this paper.

Specifically, this paper explores the creative consumer construct through interviews. This paper begins by synthesizing and integrating existing literature in order to create a common language around creative consumers. Subsequently, I present the methods and results of in-depth interviews with creative consumers in order to better understand their motivations, output, and their relationships with firms or brands that produced or sold the source material (i.e., the products, services, or branded materials that creative consumers change in some way) of their creative consumption activities. This paper contributes to literature and practice by creating a common understanding of creative consumers. Researchers and practitioners alike can use this work to assess how their findings and experiences may, or may not, relate to other knowledge or practices regarding creative consumers.

Creative Consumers Defined

In order to clarify the creative consumer construct, I begin by discussing the emergence of the term ‘creative consumer’ and propose a modified definition of the creative consumer that better reflects the concept. In order to justify this modified definition, I review the conceptualization of the creative consumer in the context of the time at which it was introduced to academic literature. Subsequently, I review literature

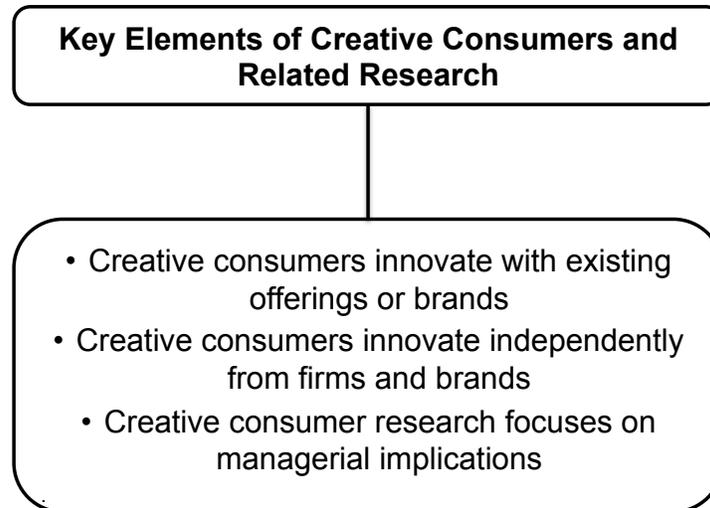
regarding creative consumers and other creative individuals that has emerged over the past decade. Throughout this review, I refer back to the initial and revised conceptualizations of the creative consumer, and justify why a modified conceptualization of the creative consumer is called for.

In 2007 Berthon et al. defined creative consumers as follows: ‘an individual or group who adapts, modifies, or transforms a proprietary offering, such as a product or service’ (pg. 40). Some frequently noted examples of creative consumers are those of farmers who adapted Ford’s Model T to become tractors in the early 1900s (Berthon et al., 2007; 2015; Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012), consumers who ‘jailbreak’ their iPhones (Kietzmann & Angell, 2014; Plangger & Robson, 2014), rebel fighters in the 2011 Libyan civil war who adapted Fisher Price Power Wheels toys to be unmanned weapons (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012; Plangger & Robson, 2014; Beninger & Robson, 2014), and individuals in impoverished situations who turn empty plastic Coca-Cola bottles into lightbulbs (Berthon et al., 2012; Plangger & Robson, 2014). These examples reflect the prevalence and range of creative consumers – they have existed for many years, they exist all over the world, and they tinker with all sorts of existing offerings.

When Berthon et al. (2007) introduced and defined creative consumers as those who, individually or in groups, adapt, modify, or transform offerings, they noted three key aspects of creative consumers and the research on them (Figure 1). First, creative consumers were those who took it upon themselves (i.e., without the support, endorsement, or permission of the firm) to engage in innovation. That is, creative consumers operate independently of the organization and do not necessarily communicate with the organization about their innovation. Rather, they innovate without seeking explicit or implicit permission or endorsement from the associated brand or organization. Second, creative consumers engage in innovation with existing market offerings or brands. In other words, rather than creating something from scratch, creative consumers take something that exists and change it in some way. To illustrate, consider the examples presented at the start of this section. In these examples, consumers took existing items – specifically iPhones, Model T cars, Power Wheel Toys, and Coca-Cola bottles – and innovated by changing them. Third, research on creative consumers is intended to focus on the managerial implications of this phenomenon. That is, rather

than focus primarily on theory building or testing, the goal of creative consumer research was to blend theory and practice in order to provide helpful insights for managers faced with responding to creative consumers.

Figure 1: Key Elements of Creative Consumers and Related Research



While the focus on managerial implications has always been and will continue to be important for this body of research, I argue that the research on creative consumers would benefit from better connections and theoretical grounding to research on consumer creativity (i.e., creativity traits and problem solving abilities of consumers). That is, the deliberate focus on managerial implications has led creative consumer research to be lacking grounding in conceptual or theoretical work. While there is some research on creative consumers that is grounded in theory and supported by data, this research is related specifically to creative consumers who tinker with hardware and software. The current paper links the existing body of work that focuses on practical implications of creative consumers to existing theory on consumer creativity behaviour; doing so requires a modified definition of the creative consumer. Thus, in this dissertation I define the creative consumer as *any individual or group who, working independently of the organization or firm, adapts, modifies, or transforms an offering or branded material, and in doing so causes it to be understood, used, changed, or combined in a manner that is different from its typical form*. In what follows, I review

relevant research and explain how this research ties in with my definition of the creative consumer.

Creative Consumers vs. Lead Users

A key distinction made by Berthon et al. (2007) was that creative consumers were not the same as lead users. By 2007, research on lead users had already gained a great deal of attention in academic literature and practice, and because of this attention it was important to clarify the creative consumer as distinct from the lead user. That is, at the time, research on user innovation often referred to a particular category of user innovator known as “lead users”, who were defined as users (e.g., customers) at the leading edge of market needs who stand to benefit significantly from obtaining a solution to their problems (von Hippel, 1986; 1989). As an example, von Hippel (1989) described a semiconductor producer with a strong need for a process innovation (which many other semiconductor producers would only need in two years time) as a lead user.

Berthon et al. (2007) were clear that creative consumers and lead users were not synonymous due to a number of reasons. First of all, a lead user does not necessarily engage in innovation themselves. Returning to the example above, the lead user – a semiconductor producer – did not personally engage in the innovation process; rather, they simply identified a market need years before the rest of the market did. In contrast, a creative consumer is defined by the fact that they innovate through changing an existing offering in some way. Secondly, a lead user is defined as being at the leading edge of market needs, whereas a creative consumer is not necessarily one who faces a need that will become general in the market place. In other words, creative consumers do not necessarily face needs that will become general in the marketplace, whereas lead users, by definition, do. For example, some creative consumers use trash or discarded goods (Beninger & Robson, 2014). In addition, for many years after Apple ceased production of its Newton PDA, creative consumers adapted and modified this device (Muñiz & Schau, 2005). In contrast to these examples of creative consumers innovating with all types of market offerings, lead users typically work with novel products only. Not surprisingly, much research on lead users has focused on how to formalize the process of identifying, selecting, and gaining insight from lead users (von Hippel, 1986; 1989; 2005).

Berthon et al. (2007) clarified that creative consumers were individuals or groups who, without seeking approval or endorsement from firms, took it upon themselves to innovate with market offerings. This was yet another key distinguishing feature of the creative consumer, which set these innovators apart from lead users and many other creative individuals. That is, Berthon et al. (2007) posited that creative consumers rarely ask for permission before adapting, modifying, or transforming a firm's offering, whereas firms have greater control over lead users. Berthon et al. (2007) suggested that creative consumers took it upon themselves to engage in innovation and “modify products, hack code, and adjust services to suit themselves” (pg. 39). As such, I include this aspect of creative consumers in the definition of creative consumers used in this thesis. Specifically, my definition emphasizes that creative consumers are individuals or groups who, *working independently* of an organization or firm, adapt, modify, or transform a product, service, or brand.

Creative Consumers vs. Co-creators

This aspect of creative consumers – that they do not engage in their creative activities with the support, or encouragement of the firm – also distinguishes them from co-creators. Co-creation is defined as “the joint creation of value by the company and the customer; allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit their context” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, pg. 8). For example, the t-shirt company Threadless relies entirely on co-creation for their t-shirt designs, selection, photography, and modelling. Members of the Threadless brand community submit potential designs for t-shirts and then vote on the best designs; ultimately, the top rated t-shirts are printed and become available for sale on the Threadless website.

Research suggests that co-creation has tremendous promise, and that firms could assist these consumers through providing ‘toolkits’ (von Hippel & Katz, 2002; Jeppesen, 2005) that include the tools needed to customize some essential parts of offerings or by providing virtual customer tools (Dahan & Hauser, 2002). By providing these instructional tools, firms could facilitate participation as well as transfer of the consumer’s knowledge or creative output. Indeed, a number of papers on user innovators involve looking at “tool-kits” for innovation. These are kits given to customers that provide products and devices to facilitate innovation (von Hippel, 2001; Thomke & von Hippel, 2002; Franke & Piller, 2004). For instance, Franke and Piller (2004)

investigated how and whether providing customers with toolkits leads to innovation benefits. This research looks at a “user designers” or customers who are engaged in design activities.

Kristensson, Gustafsson, and Archer (2004) explored two different types of user involvement – or involvement with users who have close interactions with and information regarding a corporate enterprise. These researchers argued that such users were capable of producing ideas for new products that could be of value to the firm. Specifically, they investigated ‘advanced users’, or those who engaged in innovation and had advanced knowledge or technical skills regarded as relevant to the innovation, and ‘ordinary users’, or those who engaged in innovation with no special competence. The work by Kristensson, Gustafsson, and Archer (2004) applies to a co-creative context. That is, the user innovators investigated in this research were those who were given a hypothetical task from a firm and had hypothetical interactions with a firm – as such, this research does not specifically relate to consumer innovators who engage in innovation without interacting with the firm and therefore does not fall within the realm of creative consumer research.

Harhoff, Henkel, and von Hippel (2003) conducted research on ‘innovative users’, or users who “developed an innovation for in-house use” (pg. 3), and often chose to freely reveal their innovation. Harhoff et al. (2003) argued in their research that the act of freely revealing their output could benefit both the user themselves as well as the firm that provided the source material, adding to the body of literature that suggested that there were a number of positive outcomes linked to user or consumer innovation. Ogawa and Pongtanalert (2013) distinguish between two categories of consumer innovators that firms may benefit from: ‘independent innovators’ and ‘community innovators’, with independent innovators being those who work alone and community innovators being those who are part of a community of similar innovators.

Like other research related to co-creation, the works of Kristensson et al. (2004), Harhoff et al. (2003), Franke and Piller (2004), Ogawa and Pongtanalert (2013) and others focus on the innovation benefits that user involvement has for firms. Furthermore, while these works use different terminology for the individuals involved and their activities, they are conceptually related. That is, user involvement (Kristensson et al., 2004) could – but does not necessarily – involve ‘user designers’ (Franke & Piller, 2004) and/or toolkits (Franke & von Hippel, 2003; Jeppesen, 2005) for innovation. User

involvement could also involve interaction between user designers and firms regarding design activities. Regardless, these works all imply some sort of cooperative or co-creative relationship between the consumer innovator and the firm, placing these works outside the realm of creative consumer research.

Consumers Who Are Creative with Hardware And Software

Berthon et al. (2007) likely devoted particular emphasis on clarifying the difference between lead users and creative consumers because of the emphasis on the former in the existing body of research at the time. That is, in 2007, research on lead users was already well developed. However, even in 2007 a number of other terms for users who engage in innovation by changing existing offerings existed, albeit with less theoretical and managerial development than the literature on lead users. Since 2007, these additional terms have attracted more attention. In what follows, I review some of the literature on these other types of consumer innovators and discuss how they are, or are not, the same as creative consumers.

The majority of research on consumer innovators who take it upon themselves to tinker with existing offerings refers to consumers who innovate with software and hardware specifically. Research by Flowers (2008) focuses on 'outlaw users', defined as "individual users who actively oppose or ignore the limitations imposed on them by proposed or established technical standards, products, systems or legal frameworks" and produce outlaw innovations, or "novel hardware or software modifications to existing products, systems that exploit security loopholes to gain unauthorised access to computer and other systems and protocols, algorithms and other systems that facilitate the illegal sharing of digital content" (pg. 4). Similarly, Lemley and Reese (2004) explored 'infringing users', or those users whose activities infringe on digital copyright laws, and Choi and Perez (2007) explored 'online pirates' who are individuals who engage in unauthorized use or reproduction of electronic material (e.g., music or software files). Indeed, all of these users are those whose innovations are related to digital technology, and in particular software.

Mollick (2005) reveals that there are two types of underground innovators of digital technologies which he terms 'elites' and 'kiddies'. Elites are those who are "wizards" of the inner workings of a proprietary system (e.g., video games), whereas

kiddies are those who use tools created by the elites. In either case, these individuals could be considered 'infringing users' (Lemley & Reese, 2004), 'online pirates' (Choi & Perez, 2007) or 'outlaw users' Flowers (2008), as they engage in innovation with software.

More importantly, however, these terms can be considered to be sub-categories of creative consumers. That is, all of these terms – outlaw users, infringing users, online pirates, and underground innovators – reflect various depictions of consumer innovators who take existing hardware or software and then change it in some way, without permission, support, or interaction with the firm. However, these terms do not encompass the full diversity of the creative consumer. This is because creative consumers tinker with all sorts of product offerings, not just hardware and software (Beninger & Robson, 2014; Plangger & Robson, 2014).

Lakhani and Wolf (2003) investigated another type of consumer innovator who innovates with digital technology. Specifically, these researchers investigated 'hackers', who they defined as individuals who contribute to the creation of open source software. The term open source refers to software that has its source code made available to the public so that people can write (i.e., co-create) their own code. Ultimately, an open source approach allows customers or consumers to be a source of ideas, information, and new products. Yet, the term hackers often has legal implications, the term as it is used in Lakhani and Wolf (2003) simply refers to software developers and programmers who contribute to projects, rather than those individual who break into programmable systems with malicious intent. Indeed, the majority of their informants were "skilled and experienced professionals working in IT-related jobs" who are intrinsically motivated to contribute to open source software. In addition, open-source software is intended to be collaborative in nature, is deliberately open to the public, and creators are not typically motivated by short or long-term profit (Lakhani & Wolf, 2003; Lakhani & von Hippel, 2003). Because of these characteristics of open-source projects, those individuals who contribute to them (i.e., 'hackers') do not fall within the realm of 'creative consumers'. That is, the open nature of these projects provides implicit welcoming to those individuals who contribute to the project.

Consumer Creativity

Part of the impetus for Berthon et al. (2007) to introduce the concept of the creative consumer was to expand beyond the body of research on 'consumer creativity' (e.g., Hirschman, 1980; 1983; Burroughs & Mick, 2004) which they argued was "...laudable from a scholarly perspective" but was "not that helpful to practicing managers" (pg. 43). That is, the existing research on consumer creativity focused on consumer problem solving and creativity traits. Moreau and Dahl (2005), for example, conducted a series of experimental studies in which constraints (e.g., time constraints, input constraints) in creative activities were manipulated, and found that constraints can lead consumers to be more creative in their problem solving. Specifically, in the absence of constraints, consumers will follow the path of least resistance, and solve a problem using their default approach (Moreau & Dahl, 2005). In later research, Dahl and Moreau (2007) conducted interviews with participants interested in creative activities or hobbies, ranging from cooking to putting together IKEA furniture. In this work, they found that consumers actually enjoy creative tasks more when they are constrained by kits, instructions, or models of outcomes. Although creative, these individuals should not be considered creative consumers. That is, because the consumers in the research by Moreau and Dahl (2005) and Dahl and Moreau (2007) were engaging in creativity that the product was intended for (e.g., IKEA furniture is intended to be put together) these individuals do not fall within the realm of creative consumers.

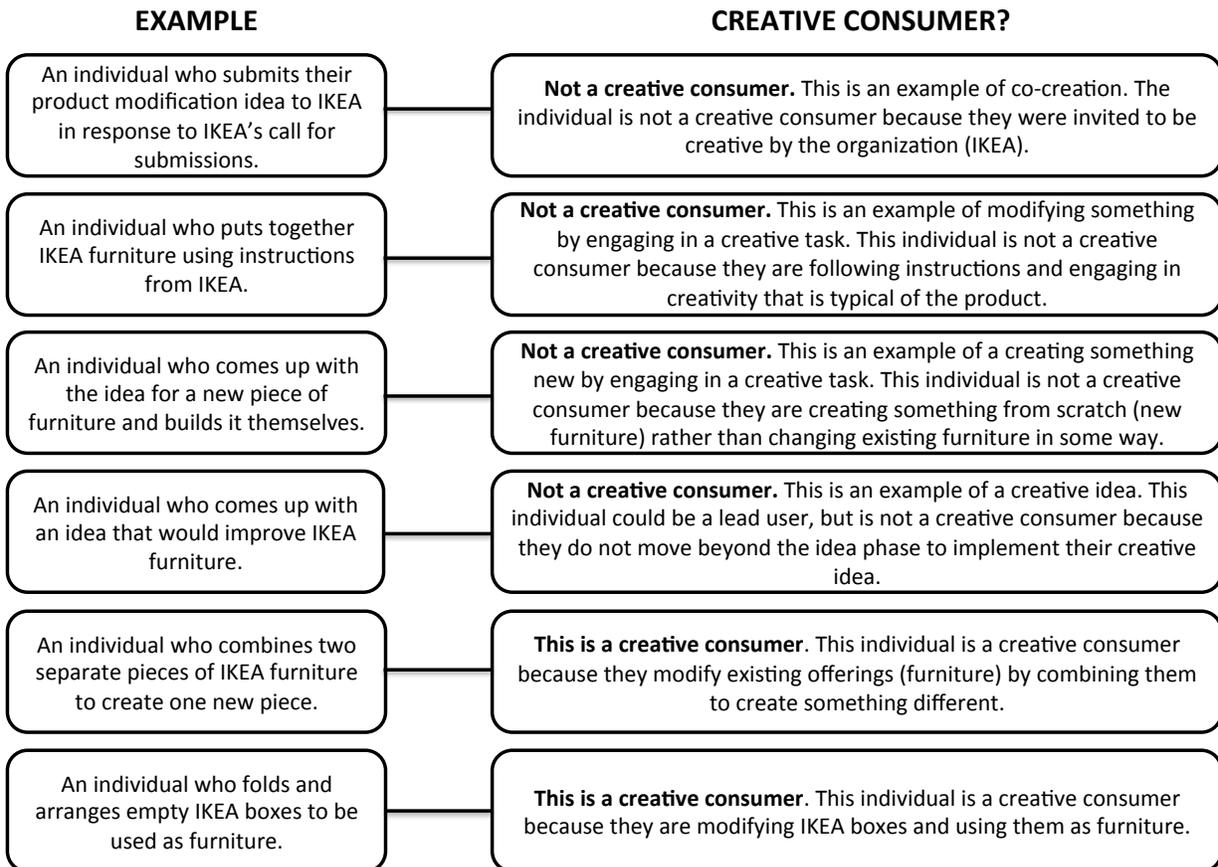
Consumer creativity research led to a number of important findings, however one thing omitted from this research was the link to managerial implications regarding consumers who operate separately from the firm. Thus, a key distinguishing feature of creative consumer research identified by Berthon et al. (2007) was in understanding and explaining the managerial implications of this phenomenon rather than focusing on theoretical development. Despite the lack of managerial implications, research on consumer creativity provides an important theoretical foundation for research on creative consumers. That is, this research explores creativity and problem solving traits – which are at the core of innovation activities. One of the primary areas of interest in consumer creativity research is that of consumer motivations. Burroughs and Mick (2004) studied 'creative consumption', which they defined as a practical and functional departure from how consumers typically consumed an offering – a concept that is at the core of the creative consumer. That is, creative consumers do unexpected or unintended things with

offerings – and this results in ‘creative consumption’. At the time, Burroughs and Mick (2004) noted that creative consumption could involve a number of creative endeavors or uses, such as altering the form of a product, or combining multiple products. Ultimately, Burroughs and Mick (2004) conceptualized creative consumption as consumption in which the original offering was used, changed, or combined in a novel way, which addressed consumer problems or improved upon existing solutions. I define creative consumers in part by the fact that they engage in ‘creative consumption’, in which their creative activities cause an existing offering to be understood, used, changed, or combined in a manner that is different from its typical form (Burroughs & Mick, 2004).

In sum, the definition of creative consumer utilized in this dissertation retains the core elements of the original definition from Berthon et al. (2007), but expands on it by tying it to key literature on creative consumption (Burroughs & Mick, 2004) and through understanding it in the context of more recent research on consumers who are creative. A summary of examples of individuals who engage in creative activities, and whether or not they are creative consumers, is presented in Figure 2.

In the following section, I review the literature on consumer motivations for engaging in innovations, as well as research on the managerial implications of creative consumers. That is, motivations are seen as key to understanding the relationship between consumer innovators and firms (Ogawa & Pongtanaalert, 2013; Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic, Krafft, & Singh, 2010; Lakhani & Wolf, 2003) and are discussed in the next section of this paper. As motivations of consumer innovators are seen as important characteristics for understanding consumer innovation, and as the creative consumer construct is grounded in theories of consumer creativity, I emphasize this in my definition of creative consumers. Throughout, I use relevant aspects of the literature to introduce the research questions of this paper.

Figure 2. Creative Consumers vs. Consumers Who Are Creative



Motivations of Consumers Who Are Creative

Below, I review research on the motivations of consumers who are creative, which are often described as either intrinsic or extrinsic. That is, one way of understanding consumer motivations is to conceptualize them as occurring along a spectrum between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This conceptualization focuses on the source of the motivation – specifically whether it is internal or external to a person. Intrinsic motivations are those that stem from an individual's innate interests, and include such things as joy, fun, creative expression, or the sense of accomplishment experienced when improving or adapting a product (Amabile, 1983; Amabile, Hennessey, & Grossman, 1986). Extrinsic motivations

are those that come from outside of a person, and include external rewards such as money, job opportunities, and peer recognition, among other external factors. These two motivations are not mutually exclusive, and research recognizes that motivations change over time, with an increase in one type leading to a decrease in the other, and vice versa (Amabile, 1997).

Consumers With Creative Hobbies

Dahl and Moreau (2007) found that consumers have seven basic motivations for engaging in creative hobbies such as cooking or scrapbooking. The two most common of these are competence (i.e., the satisfaction derived from successfully completing a creative project), and autonomy (i.e., or enjoyment derived from the freedom and ability to manage the creative project). Ultimately, these factors contribute to intrinsic rewards – specifically a sense of accomplishment. In this research, however, extrinsic rewards were also seen as motivators of creative activities. For example, Dahl and Moreau (2007) note that receiving public recognition regarding creative accomplishments is another basic motivation for creativity. In addition to these main motivations, learning, relaxation, identity reinforcement, and community sharing were all found to be basic motivations for creativity.

Consumers Who Co-Create

Research finds a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for engaging in co-creation. Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic, Krafft, and Singh (2010) conducted a review of the literature on motivations that consumers have to engage in co-creative activities, and found that financial rewards, social rewards, psychological rewards (e.g., self esteem) and knowledge are all potential motivators of co-creators. Ogawa and Pongtanaalert (2013) had similar findings in their research, revealing that consumer innovators are motivated to engage in creative activities for pleasure, peer recognition, to be able to help others, or to learn.

The research on consumers who contribute to open source software suggests that these innovators are also motivated by a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic factors. For example, both West et al. (2006) and Lakhani and Wolf (2003) find that enjoyment is a key motivator for contributing to open source projects, with Lakhani and

Wolf (2003) finding that this is the main driver propelling individuals to contribute to open source projects. Other motivations found by these researchers included compensation or rewards, skill improvement and intellectual stimulation.

Creative Consumers

Some research has involved learning about creative consumer motivations specifically, rather than on consumer innovators in general or on co-creators. Berthon et al. (2007) posit that intrigue could be sufficient to motivate a creative consumer, however this was not substantiated with primary data. Berthon et al. (2015) suggest that emotional value, pleasure, or need filling are some of the main motivators for consumers to engage in creative activities which result in generating their own intellectual property, however this article also did not collect primary data to test this.

Berthon et al. (2008) studied consumers who produced consumer generated ads, which they define as “any publicly disseminated, consumer-generated advertising messages whose subject is a collectively recognized brand” (pg. 8). As examples, they present cases of consumer-generated ads about Apple, Starbucks, and other brands. This research revealed, through a qualitative analysis of interview data, that creative consumers are motivated to create their own ads by some combination of three goals: self-promotion (an extrinsic reward), intrinsic enjoyment, and a desire to change perceptions of a brand. The motivation of self-promotions occurs when individuals create ads to attract attention to themselves or for inclusion in their own advertising portfolio. The motivation of intrinsic enjoyment is when individuals create for the sake of creativity or artistry. The motivation of a desire to change perceptions occurs when individuals produce ads in order to influence others such that they will think a certain way about the brand featured in the ad. Berthon et al. (2008) note that these goals are not mutually exclusive, although consumers tend to be motivated mainly by one of these goals.

In summary, understanding consumer innovator motivations is key to understanding how various types of consumer innovators differ from each other, how firms can attract and engage these innovators (Ogawa & Pongtanalert, 2013; Hoyer et al., 2010; Lakhani & Wolf, 2003), as well as how to approach situations in which creative consumers are at work (Berthon et al., 2008). However, the majority of the research on motivations of consumer innovators focuses on consumer innovators other than creative

consumers. Specifically, this research focuses on motivations for engaging in co-creation or on motivations for engaging in creative hobbies, and thus does not shed light on consumers who take it upon themselves to modify existing offerings in some way.

While there is some research that provides insight into creative consumer motivations specifically, this research either focuses on creative consumers who work solely with software and hardware, solely on creating consumer generated ads, or does not have primary data to substantiate the ideas regarding creative consumer motivation. Ultimately, it is not clear what the motivations engaging in creative consumption with products or service are and whether they are the same or different as those of consumer hobbyists, co-creators, or creators of consumer generated ads. As such, one of the research questions in this paper is:

Research Question 1: What motivates creative consumers to engage in creative consumption with products or services?

Managerial Implications of Creative Consumers

Unsurprisingly, in the years following the publication of Berthon et al.'s 2007 paper on creative consumers, a series of articles that focused on the managerial implications of creative consumers emerged. Research has subsequently investigated topics such as how to measure a firm's attitude towards creative consumers (Berthon et al., 2011), and how creative consumers factor into international marketing strategy (Berthon et al., 2012). In addition, Paper 2 of this dissertation looks at the intellectual property and branding implications of creative consumers. Overall, managerial implications have remained a key aspect of creative consumer research.

In their work, Berthon et al. (2007) outline a typology of firms the managerial stances towards creative consumers: firms can take a positive or a negative attitude towards creative consumers, and can take active or a passive actions towards them, leading to four responses. Firms can enable (active/positive), resist (negative/active), discourage (passive/negative), or encourage (passive/positive) creative consumers. More recently, Berthon et al. (2015) provided managerial guidance on how to manage the intellectual property created by consumers, which they refer to as consumer generated intellectual property (CGIP). As an example, this research reveals that

celebrity content on online social networks such as Facebook is a form of CGIP. This research suggests a number of alternative strategies for dealing with CGIP, which vary based on the extent to which the organization (as opposed to the consumer) controls the CGIP and whether the organization has a positive or a negative CGIP approach. Importantly, this work brings the concept of 'emotional property' to light, with emotional property referring to the emotional investment or attachment the creative consumer has to their CGIP. While organizations may be more concerned with the legal aspects of intellectual property, creative consumers may be more concerned with the emotional aspects of their creations.

In contrast to research on co-creation and co-creators, research on creative consumers often focuses on the threats or other negative impacts that these types of innovators bring. For example, Kietzmann and Angell (2012) suggest that there is a generational movement, which they refer to as Generation-C, of individuals who create or modify products without considering the legality of their endeavours. Nuttavuthisit (2010) suggests that millennial consumers have grown up with the expectation that they can take control of their consumption experiences. The threats and negative implications of creative consumption are even reflected through the labels and terms used to describe these individuals – the terms hackers, outlaw users, infringing users, online pirates, and underground innovators all have negative connotations. These labels and terms suggest that creative consumers are bad for firms.

In contrast to these negative perceptions of creative consumers, I contend that creative consumers present a number of valuable opportunities for firms, and in Paper 2 of this dissertation I argue that their seeming disregard for intellectual property is not necessarily problematic from a marketing perspective. However, understanding the extent to which creative consumers are (or are not) a threat for firms requires understanding the creative consumers' relationship with the firms or brands whose offerings they modify. Indeed, understanding creative consumers and their impact on firms requires understanding how creative consumers characterize their relationships with firms or brands. For example, creative consumers who view the firm or brand associated the source material of their creativity negatively may be more threatening, as their creative consumption may be a deliberate attempt at tarnishing the firm or brand in some way. In contrast, creative consumers who have strong positive feelings or attitudes

towards a firm or brand may not be as likely to be out to damage the firms reputation or cause other deliberate harm to the firm.

To date, no primary research has investigated the way creative consumers perceive their relationship with the firm or brand linked to the source material of their creativity. As this is important to understand in order to fully grasp the implications of creative consumption, the second research question in this paper is:

Research Question 2: How do creative consumers characterize their relationship to the brand or firm associated with the source material of their creative consumption?

Ultimately, this paper is intended to shed light on creative consumers – specifically what motivates them and how they characterise their relationship to the brands or firms whose offerings they innovate with. In what follows, I describe my methodology in investigating creative consumer motivations and relationships with firms or brands.

Method

I chose to utilize a grounded, inductive approach to my investigation of why creative consumers engage in innovation with products or services, what offerings they choose to engage in creative efforts with, and how they conceptualize their relationship with the firm or brand associated with the source material. Specifically, I chose to use semi-structured interviews, which are an appropriate approach to understanding creative consumption for several reasons. First, interviews enable an in-depth understanding of how an individual portrays the experiences in their lives (Creswell, 2009; Arnould, Price, & Moisio, 2006), such as experiences related to creativity and consumption. As a result, interviews are appropriate for studying and understanding first-person descriptions of creative consumption experiences. Second, semi-structured interviews allow a researcher the flexibility to follow up on initial responses through probing informants to elaborate on their initial responses. This allows deeper understanding of why and how creative consumption occurred – both of which are key to this investigation – while still providing some structure around which to organize and understand the data. Third, studies in consumer creativity and creative consumption often use interviews in order to

better understand why and how these consumers engage in innovation (e.g., Dahl & Moreau, 2007; Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008; Muñiz & Schau, 2005).

Informants

This research used a purposive, convenience sample of individuals who had previously engaged in creative consumption. All informants volunteered to participate in the research. Informants learned of the research and my contact information through a number of different sources: social media postings; flyers on the Burnaby, Surrey, and Downtown campuses of Simon Fraser University; based on classroom communications to the Beedie School of Business MBA, MOT, GDBA, EMBA, or BBA programs; or through referral from other informants. SFU students who were currently taking classes under my instruction were excluded from participation in the research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that data collection should end after one or more of four conditions are met. These conditions are: 1) that no further data sources are available, 2) that theoretical saturation has been reached, 3) that regularities have emerged and a sense of integration has been achieved, or 4) “overextension” has taken place and new information is beyond the scope of the research question. In the present study, after I interviewed 24 creative consumers, I met conditions 1, 2, and 3, and terminated data collection. Specifically, at this point I had no more individuals volunteer to participate, and the set of categories and subcategories that emerged already captured the bulk of the data. Thus, 24 creative consumers (Average Age = 44, Male =15) were interviewed for this study. Interviews lasted for an average of 24 minutes each, with a range of approximately 13 minutes to 47 minutes. The total interview time was approximately nine and a half hours. Appendix 1 presents a summary of the informants, including their age, location, source material, and creative output.

Data Collection

Ethics approval was obtained prior to data collection and this research was designated minimal risk. My first step in data collection involved creating a draft of interview questions based on existing literature. I sought feedback from my supervisors and colleagues, modified my initial draft based on this feedback, and then conducted two practice interviews. Based on the flow of the conversation and feedback from both the

individuals I interviewed as well as from my supervisor, I modified my interview protocol a second time. This interview protocol guided my formal interviews and is presented in the Appendix.

After a participant contacted me, I set up a time to interview them on the phone, in person, or via Skype. For interviews conducted on the phone or via Skype, the participant was emailed a copy of the informed consent form prior to the interview time and returned the signed form to me via email before the interview began. Participants interviewed in person signed the consent form in person. All participants were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study prior to participating in the research and were told that they could ask questions at any time during our conversation.

During the interview, participants were asked a series of questions following a semi-structured interview guide. Interviews began with a general question like “Can you tell me a bit about how you have changed or modified products or services before?” After participants had given their initial response to my questions, I followed up with clarification questions. The interview questions focused on why participants engaged in these creative activities, what exactly they did to change an offering, whether they are creative with source materials (i.e., products, services, or other branded materials) from particular organizations and if so what their attitude towards the brand or organization was and also how they showcase or communicate their creative efforts with the brand or organization which sold or made the original offering. Throughout each interview, participants often referred to multiple incidents of creative consumption, although each participant’s interview had an overall focus on one specific example of their creative consumption.

At the end of each interview, I collected demographic information from the informant (age, gender, and location), thanked each informant for his or her time, and asked whether they had any questions for me. Many of the participants noted that they enjoyed speaking about their creativity and suggested that if I had follow up questions that they would be happy to speak with me again, however I did not contact participants with follow up questions. Some participants contacted me a second time to share photographs of their creative output that we discussed during the interview or to share other ideas that had come to their minds. Some participants encouraged other creative consumers to contact me in order to share their experiences and insights on creative

consumption.

Immediately after each interview, I wrote a memo that summarized any initial impressions of the interview, as well as any aspects of the interview that stood out to me, and how the conversation fit in with previous interviews. In these memos, I wrote notes about definitions of categories and labels, and traced the relationships between categories. I also included notes on my interview style, such as how my probes and follow up questions were worded, whether I was more or less conversational than usual, and about my body language (if the interview was conducted in person or via Skype).

I transcribed all of the interviews in verbatim, and the audio recordings were then destroyed. These interview transcripts, as well as the researcher memos, served as the data set for this inductive study. The data analysis is described in the section that follows.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis were conducted simultaneously to allow for flexibility (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). That is, data collection and analysis occurred until concepts and themes were clear and detailed, and until no new information emerged (i.e., saturation has been reached). In addition, throughout the data analysis process I continued to read relevant literature to help inform my analysis.

Throughout the data collection process, the data was analysed using aspects of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Corbin & Strauss 2008). This analysis proceeded in several stages. First, I engaged in open coding of the first five interviews; this involved going through the interviews line-by-line and labelling components of the text. Constant comparison of these labels allowed the abstraction of higher-order labels. This iterative process allowed me to identify core categories. These core categories were then utilized in a second stage of data analysis: axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This analysis involved coding the data in order to explore dimensions and relationships among each core category identified. During axial coding, the definitions of core categories were thus further refined. Finally, the relationships revealed from the previous two stages of data analysis were analysed in the context of findings from literature on creative consumer motivations. Negative cases analysis was

used in the research analysis in order to enhance the rigor of the analysis. In this paper, negative case analysis involved re-examination of every interview after the analysis was completed in order to determine whether the emergent themes were applicable to all of the interviews. This process revealed no disconfirming evidence.

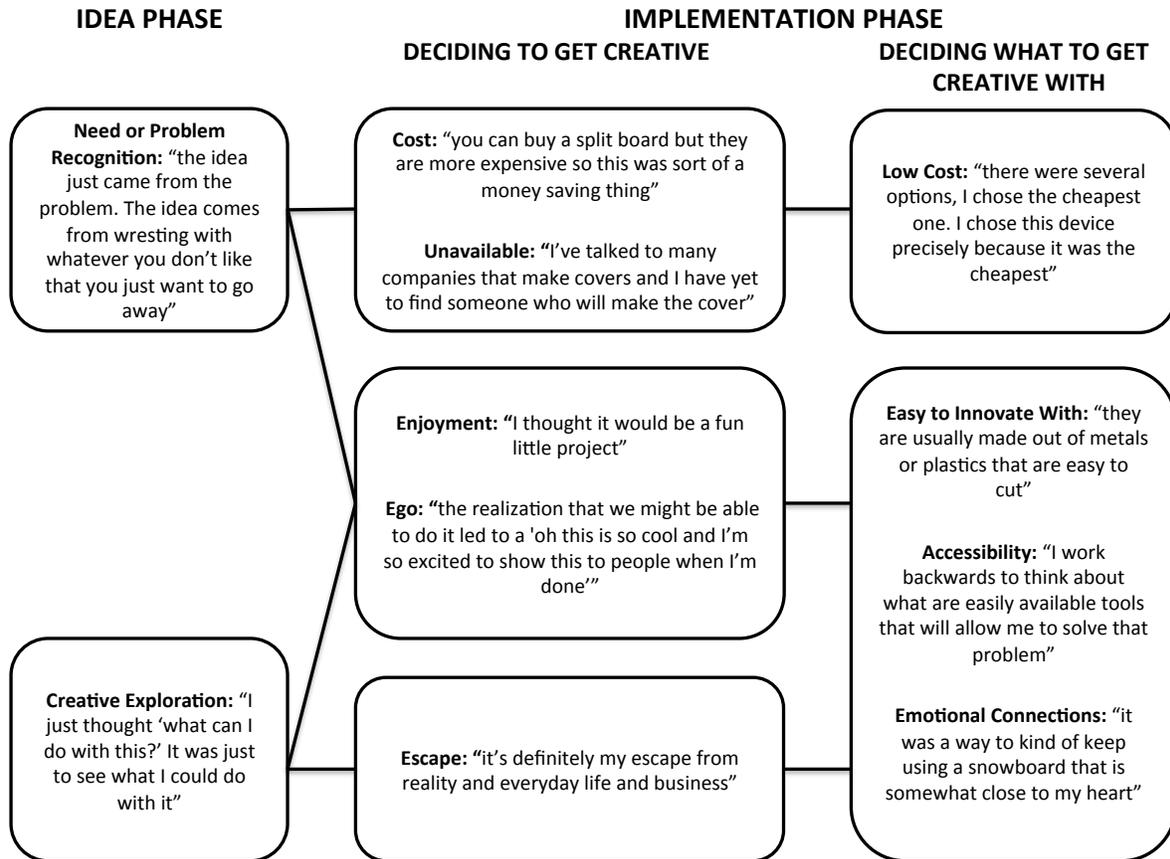
Findings

Analysis of the data revealed a number of interesting findings about creative consumers. In what follows, I reveal two key factors which initially prompt creative consumers to come up with the idea to engage in creative consumption and a variety of factors that prompt creative consumers to implement their creative ideas. In addition, I discuss how creative consumers choose to modify a particular offering and what their relationship to the organization affiliated with the source material of their creativity is.

Creative Consumers' Motivations: Idea Phase

My analysis revealed that creative consumers tinker with market offerings for a number of reasons, however informants had one of two initial motivations that led them to the idea behind their creativity: problems that needed solving, or creative exploration. In addition to these primary motivations, informants reported a variety of motivations throughout the implementation phase of their creativity. These motivations are summarized in Figure 3. Although the motivations reported by informants were not mutually exclusive (i.e., all informants reported having numerous motivations) the motivations reported by informants are presented separately in the following section for clarity of communication.

Figure 3: Summary of Creative Consumer Motivations



Problem or Need Recognition

One of the primary motivations that led informants to engage in creative consumption was a need or problem. Informant 2 summarized this nicely, speaking about his dissatisfaction with the pool cover he purchased and later modified:

"I thought: isn't there some way to not have this fight anymore? The idea just came from the problem. The idea comes from wrestling with whatever you don't like that you just want to go away. But it doesn't come quickly. I often grouse about these problems for months or longer before I think of things".

Informant 12 reported that her creativity was due to a problem in her daily life, saying:

“We have a rescue dog, a wolfhound, and he’s big – about 120 pounds – and his background was neglect primarily and some abuse, um so one of the things was that he was once locked for days on end in a minivan. But we need to get this dog to and from places and in the car he would freak out. He would howl, bark and would try desperately, always, to jump into the front seat. And holding back 120 pounds of agitated wolfhound is not an easy thing. It’s not safe”.

This problem led the informant to the idea to create a solution – a seatbelt that would secure her dog in the car. To do this, she purchased a dog sled harness and modified it to become a seatbelt that would work in her car.

Informant 6 recalled a recent problem in his daily life that motivated him to engage in creative consumption, saying:

“So the other day we had a leak in our crawl space. But, you know, I don’t want to go in there. But I want to know what’s going on. So I had a remote controlled rover and I added a wifi camera and just did my own crawl space inspection toy and sometimes its just that I need something to do something for me now... it was a need. I really hate my crawl space but I need to sometimes figure out what’s going on in there”.

He went on to describe this method of satisfying needs as an every-day occurrence for him, saying:

“I mean it happens sort of all the time. You’re tinkering around with something or something breaks or you want to modify something. Last week – my 3D printer has a printing surface that has to be level and it wasn’t, and the part that does it was broken and you don’t feel like ordering something on the internet and waiting three days so I grabbed a pen and a pan and that basically took over the part of the level. Sometimes it is borne of the need and I have something that sort of kind of works and I will just grab it. There’s a TV show about this. It’s called MacGyver!”

The problems or needs identified by creative consumers were at times social in nature. Informant 7 revealed that their problem was social – specifically that it was a problem for he (a skier) and his wife (a snowboarder) that they couldn’t go backcountry skiing and snowboarding together due to the fact that it is difficult to make long uphill trips with a snowboard. He said, “I myself like to backcountry ski but my wife is a

snowboarder and she couldn't go on these trips. So I wanted to make something that she could backcountry snowboard on". This problem motivated him to make a 'split board' – a snowboard which is split down the middle so that it can be used as two skis – for his wife so that she could join him on backcountry adventures.

Informant 8 engaged in creative consumption in response to a problem that he observed others having. He combined computer code he had previously written (for an entirely different purpose) with an ordinary computer mouse to create a mouse that causes the on-screen cursor to always move in the direction of the mouse movement, regardless of the mouse's orientation to the computer screen. He got the idea from observing someone struggle with a computer mouse while giving a presentation at a conference. He said:

"I was at a conference and saw someone at the conference giving a presentation and it was funny, them trying to move the mouse around the screen, and that's when I had the moment, that thought that they're making a mistake because the screen isn't in front of them, it's to the left of them, and if the mouse knew that it was also 90 degrees off then the technology that I've developed so far can adjust and then all of a sudden boom no more error and that was the point where this whole things started".

Creative Exploration

The other initial motivation that leads to creative consumption is their imagination and an interest in creative exploration. Informant 6 summarized this nicely, saying: "it's about pushing the envelope. Like, can you put a camera on this thing that's only 4 by 4 inches?" For informant 6, exploring what was possible with modifications to remote controlled airplanes was his initial motivation; his creativity was not a solution to a problem and had no clear end point. Rather, his creativity was inspired by his imagination and desire to explore what was possible.

In these cases, the end result is not perfectly clear to the creative consumer, but rather their creative project evolves over time and often involves testing boundaries and limitations of what is possible. In other words, these creative consumers like to explore what they can do with different source materials and see where it takes them. For example, when asked why she engaged in creative consumption with tiles and glass,

informant 16 said, “I don't know. I just thought ‘what can I do with this?’ It was just to see what I could do with it. I thought ‘it's here and I'll have to try something’”. Informant 23 had a similar experience, and said that “I think when I looked at all the parts and I started to imagine what I might build and I kind of got into thinking that way... visions of wind vanes came into my head”. To informants 16 and 23, the creative activity was not in a response to a problem and evolved over time.

Creative exploration often takes the form of repurposing items simply for the experience of doing so. Informant 5 reveals that his creativity is, at its core, about transforming things: “I like designing things, building things, repurposing things that already exist to do what I want them to do”. To informant 5, imagining what else something could be was at the core of his creativity. Similarly, informant 4 said that her transformation of car tires was about “taking the material and moving it beyond what the material is or does”. Informant 13 noted that he got into building rally cars because it allowed him an outlet with which to “apply every little bit of knowledge that you know about that one topic and see how far you go”.

Overall, and in contrast to those creative consumers who are motivated primarily by needs or problems, creative consumers who are motivated by the experience of creative exploration appear to be driven solely by their interest in transforming, repurposing, or playing with different devices or materials. Rather than having a specific outcome in mind, these individuals let their creativity guide them.

In summary, during the idea phase of creative consumption, my analysis revealed two central motivations of creative consumers: *problem or need recognition*, and *creative exploration*. In the following section I describe the variety of motivations present during the implementation phase of creative consumption.

Creative Consumers' Motivations: Implementation Phase

After an idea occurs to a creative consumer, the creative consumer must then become motivated to implement that idea. That is, first they think of something creative, and subsequently they do something creative. In this section, I describe the motivations creative consumers had for implementing their creative ideas. These motivations are not mutually exclusive, but are presented separately from each other for ease of

communication. After this, I describe how creative consumers decided what the source material for their creativity would be (i.e., how they decided what existing offering to innovate with).

Cost Savings

Many informants said that they decided to implement their idea for creative consumption because doing so had financial benefits – specifically, it would save them money to do it themselves. Indeed, those participants who were creative in response to a problem and had a commercially available solution to their problem often revealed that the reason they chose to create a solution (instead of purchasing one) was due to cost savings. Informant 9 put this succinctly saying, “we needed a large table. And going online and looking at them and thinking ahhhh that's what it costs.... the table we wanted was going to be around eight hundred and we did this for well less than two, probably about one fifty”. Similarly, informant 7 said that “definitely I was looking at cost” and that “this was sort of a money saving thing” and informant 18 said they were motivated to create something themselves because what they wanted was “really expensive to buy”. Informant 21 had a similar comment, saying, “coffee warmers cost about \$5 and sous-vide machines cost about \$500. So enhancing a coffee warmer was a big cost savings”. Informant 11 also filled their need through creative consumption due to the cost savings associated with this, saying, “these projects would have been because I didn't have a lot of money.... I know these things were really inexpensive”. Ultimately, this motivation for implementing a creative idea was often cited by problem solving creative consumers. However, this motivation was not mentioned by any informants who were initially motivated by creative exploration.

Unavailability of Commercial Options

For some problem-solving creative consumers, implementation was motivated in part by the fact that no commercial options appeared available to the creative consumer. However, no creative consumer who came to the idea based on creative exploration said that their implementation was due to a lack of commercial options. That is, only problem-solving creative consumers cited this motivation for their implementation.

Informant 2, who modified his pool cover reported that “I’ve talked to many companies that make covers and I have yet to find someone who will make the cover” and informant 12 said of her problem with her dog’s car anxiety, “I looked into dog seat belts but they just didn’t seem to provide the control that I needed to keep him in the back seat and keep him safe and keep us safe”. Informant 18 revealed that, as a petite woman, off-the-shelf options for a split board in her size were not available, saying:

“it’s nice to have the ability to get the right size for me. I’ve used the smallest one before and I did a face plant in front of my whole avalanche class because it was way too long. I looked like I couldn’t snowboard at all haha. Like I’m not sure how much you would get used to it but, um, yeah a board that doesn’t fit is challenging”.

Ultimately, to these creative consumers, the lack of commercial options meant that the decision to implement a creative idea was their only option: in order to fill their needs or solve their problems, these creative consumers had to create a solution themselves.

Enjoyment

Many informants – both those who gained the idea for creative consumption through need recognition or through creative exploration – revealed that the creative process itself was fun and enjoyable to them. Some of the concise answers which reflect this sentiment included informant 9’s comment that “it’s fun”, informant 7’s comment that “I thought it would be a fun little project”, and informant 24’s comment that “I get a lot of enjoyment and excitement out of it”. To these informants, the process of engaging in creative consumption was, quite simply, a fun activity. Several informants suggested that finding these types of creative activities makes it more likely that they will implement their creative idea, saying, “I think that if I hadn’t been the kind of person who likes creative things I wouldn’t have done it. Like, my friend Amy, we do a lot of creative projects like this” (21) and “its fun for me. I think that if it was not as fun I would be nowhere near as inclined to yeah....” (5).

Ego

Regardless of whether a creative consumer was initially motivated by needs or by their creativity and imagination, many described ego (i.e., wanting to show off and receive validation) as being a motivating factor in their creative consumption. For example, informant 21 said:

“wanting to have sous vide for a good price point and the realization that we might be able to do it led to a 'oh this is so cool and I'm so excited to show this to people when I'm done'. As soon as there was a feasible path it was a combination of wanting to have it and wanting to show it off”.

Informant 7 noted that although he was initially motivated by a need, that “having my wife think I'm this handy gentleman factors in at the end”. Informant 14 had similar comments, saying “I think you also get a sense of, I'll be honest with you, street cred because you made your own split board and not that many people have done it, and its kind of uncharted territory”. Informant 9 also revealed this, saying “there is a sense of ego there. When you go online and you look at all these things being created and you always think ‘I can do better’”. Overall, this motivation reflected the desire to show off the end result, or to boost their ego.

Escape

Finally, one motivation that was unique to creative consumers who were first motivated by creative exploration (i.e., not those creative consumers who faced needs or problems) was escapism. This motivation had to do with distraction from life, release from life, or otherwise escaping from reality. Informants 17 and 20 exemplified this, saying that auto related activities for him, including both auto racing and modifying his car was “I would say that the auto racing is really, ah, kind of a psychological release from everything else that I do. You know I like working on my car because I can pick up a wrench and turn things and it doesn't involve any real high level thinking.... Yeah, it's definitely my escape from reality and everyday life and business” (17) and “escapism is a huge part of it” (20). Informant 20 went on to say that writing fan fiction was “kind of a way to get into a universe that I am a bit more comfortable in”.

Informant 23 specifically uses creative consumption as a means of escaping his daily work, saying “its easier to be creative when you're free, I've worked in a job that's been stifling my whole career and I cant wait to get away from it in the daytime... it gives me a little bit of light”. Informant 4 also uses creative consumption to escape from her work as a professional jeweller. She says that in contrast to her work, creative consumption – which for her involves working with “random materials” such as rubber, glass, bottle caps and other materials – is a way of escaping the serious nature of her daily work. She said of her creative consumption:

“it tends to be more of a lark, more of a, this is something that's light and fun and less serious than the other work that I do. Um, because the main bulk of my work and my commissions tend to be weddings rings and engagements and things that are pretty serious, dealing with diamonds and precious metals, and so for me exploring other materials tends to be a great way for me to kind of let off steam and explore and have fun and play”.

Creative Consumer Motivations: Choosing What to Modify

Creative consumers had a variety of reasons for choosing what to engage in innovation with. Two factors that were unique to problem-solving creative consumers are cost (, innovating with the cheapest option possible) and the ease of modification (i.e., innovating with something that is malleable). Two factors that were evident in both problem-solving and experimenting creative consumers were accessibility (i.e., working with what whatever is available or handy) and emotional connections (i.e., working with source materials that the creative consumer has a personal or emotional connection to in some way). These factors are described in more detail below.

Low Cost

One key factor in deciding what to modify was financial – specifically choosing something to modify that was of low cost. Informant 21 summed this up nicely, saying, “there were several options - I chose the cheapest one. I chose this device precisely because it was the cheapest” and that “we wanted to make this sous vide on a budget”.

Informant 7 took a similar approach to purchasing something to modify, saying, “I looked for the cheapest, ah, board that was the right size that I could find. It was a Forum”, and informant 9 said, “budget wise you can buy IKEA stuff relatively inexpensively, without blowing the bank”. Informant 8 said of his choice of what computer mouse to modify, “so I went on Amazon and it was the cheapest one. It was just really simple and I thought ok good. So I think ultimately the reason was expense. I knew I was going to destroy this. It was expense”. Informant 1 suggested that there was a general category of items that he typically turned to and described them as “cheap, made in fill-in-the-blank tools or toys”. In all of these cases, the informant purchased the cheapest item that they could find that would serve as a starting point for their creativity.

The example quotes above illustrate situations in which creative consumers purchased something (of low cost) with the specific intent of then changing it in some way. Other creative consumers sought low cost options through using something they already had. That is, some consumers chose to modify items they already had in possession, because of the cost savings associated with using something they already owned. As informant 14 stated, “it was one I already had so I didn’t have to incur additional expenses”.

Easy to Innovate With

Many creative consumers specifically chose what to modify based on how easy that object was to manipulate or change in the way that they wanted to, a factor that often went hand in hand with being low cost. Informant 9 put this succinctly, saying that “IKEA – their products are so simple that they are so easy to change and manipulate”. Informant 1 noted that although there were no specific manufacturers or brands that he went to in order to obtain items to modify, he did look for specific types of items based on what they were made out of, saying “they are usually made out of metals or plastics that are easy to cut through or drill through or what not so there is actually something to be said for a cheap and easy construction that makes them much more amenable to modification”. In these cases, informants suggested that the items were easy to modify in part because they were made with cheap materials or little labour.

Informant 14 had similar comments, saying that part of the reason they modified a particular snowboard was due to its wood core, saying, “it was a board that I knew, and I knew it was a wood core board and that was important. To make your own split board you need to have a wood core board”.

Consumers who were modifying software also referenced ease of manipulation. Informant 8 said of his decision to modify a particular computer mouse that “I needed a PS2 mouse because its the easiest one to interface with external hardware and to create computer code for so I knew I wanted that type of mouse”, indicating that both hardware and software were factors in his decision. As such, ease of manipulation was a factor for both physical and digital product modifications.

Accessibility

Creative consumers sometimes decided what to modify based solely on what was immediately or conveniently accessible to them. Informant 23 stated, “it was just pretty well just about what was inside of any 'ol engine” and informant 4 stated that she was motivated simply by whatever around her happens to “[strike] my fancy at the moment as interesting”.

Many informants discussed wanting to use items or objects they already had in their homes. Informant 6 put this succinctly, saying he “found tools for solving it at home”, and informant 5 said that he experiences “a little bit a stubbornness about using things that I already have” when he is engaging in creative consumption in order to solve problems or fill needs. Similarly, informant 9 said “we had some material left over.... we needed a portable table for various reasons so we took a 4 by 8 sheet of plywood and essentially thought how do we make this into a table?” Informant 8 notes that this is common for him, saying, “If I ever needed to solve a problem I’m always able to find things around me to do that”.

Informant 10 explained that “cant should not be in your vocabulary, so when you come across a situation, you know don’t even bother to use that word because that’s not what a successful person does. They will take any situation always see the glass half full

and say, you know, ‘what can I do to make this work?’” To her, part of accomplishing this is ignoring labels and instructions. She says, “people need to say ‘you know screw the labels’ because what’s a label? It’s nothing. It’s just somebody telling you what you should be doing. Why not look at something and say if this didn’t have a label what would I use it for?”

Using whatever is available was also discussed by consumers who are initially motivated by creative exploration, with informant 4 saying that the items she innovates with come from availability “um some I get given to me some I actually just find on the ground... um a lot of it is, um, going through like going through old boxes that I have and kind of going oh ok this is completely useless to me”.

Other than using items that are currently owned by the creative consumer, informants noted that availability in stores they visit was a factor. Informant 5, for example, said that his choice of what to innovate with was based partly on “remembering what thing you can go and buy from ordinary stores like the hardware store or grocery store or drug store that are things you can go and disassemble for parts of that you can reuse in awkward ways”. In summary, for these consumers, deciding what to modify was based on what was available to them.

Emotional Connections

Some creative consumers decided what to engage in creative activities with based on an emotional connection they had to the item. Informant 14 modified his very first snowboard, which he had an emotional connection too, saying that this connection factored into his decision to modify it. He said that his creative consumption gave him “a sense of keeping my very first snowboard and it was a way to kind of keep using a snowboard that is somewhat close to my heart I guess hahah”. Informant 20 also had an emotional connection to the source materials of her modification (i.e., her choice of what to write fan fiction about) – and in particular a connection to the characters she wrote about. Specifically, she reported that she chose characters to write fan fiction about based on her admiration of them. She said, “I’ve picked up on something they’ve created

and its had an effect on me” as well as that “I think I picked them because they had the kind of, um, approach to life that I wanted to try to adopt as I maneuvered through life”.

For some informants, the emotional connection was to the brand of the source material. Informant 17, for example, said that his creativity was very “emotionally driven”, and that he always modified Subaru cars. He said, “in rally sport my tie is Subaru because in the 90’s my hero was driving a Subaru, because of that and for no other reason”, and also suggested that these emotional connections are formed early on, saying, “we are sort of hard wired at a young age”. Informant 19, who also modified cars, had similar thoughts on his emotional connection to the Volkswagen cars he modifies saying:

“I have no idea why. You know, like why do you like spaghetti? I don't know. During the time I was growing up there were a bunch of guys who had a Volkswagen and I particularly got into the Volkswagen group and um I’ve kind of never left. I have the odd, you know, love affair with a Porsche or whatever but it’s always short lived. It’s always been Volkswagen for me. I have no idea why”.

Creative Consumer Relationships With Firms And Brands

When asked if they had ever communicated with the brand or firm of the source material, the most common response from creative consumers was no, or even that it had never occurred to them. For example, initial responses to the question included the following: “almost never” (1), “nope” (9), “no, no” (10), “not at all” (11, 22), and “ah, definitely no” (17). When prompted to explain why not in more detail, two themes emerged which are discussed below.

Expectations That the Firm Doesn't Care

Many creative consumers suggested that they didn’t think the firm or brand would care about their creative efforts. Those informants who gave this response believed that this was because they were too low-level to care. That is, many creative consumers

suggested that speaking with the firm would be essentially pointless, as the employees of the firm would not care enough to have a conversation with them about their creative efforts. Informant 3 summed this sentiment up nicely, saying that he was “pretty much invisible” and that he thought firms only cared about this type of creative activity “when you are, ah, internet famous”. Similarly, informant 21 said that “it literally would not have occurred to me to do so. I think because I had the sense that I was buying an extremely low-end device and enhancing it.... the chances that someone at the company would care what I was doing with the product other than buying it seem very remote to me”.

The belief that a creative consumer’s efforts were not notable enough for the firm to care was shared by informant 8 who initially contacted the firm to talk about his modification to a computer mouse, and said of this interaction that “even though I pitched to them it wasn’t the sort of thing they were interested in.... they might be more interested if I were a fully fledged company but as of now its not of interest to them”. Informant 5 also put this succinctly, saying “naw it’s much to simple, it’s too simple of a device for there to be any point having contact when them.” Informants 13 and 23, respectively, had similar comments, saying “It’s, um, I am definitely not the level where they would have any interest” and “no, no I kind of kept it as a small low level project”. These sentiments were echoed by informant 17, who said, “I wouldn’t contact them unless I had just won a national title, in which case I would... Like, if a formula one driver contacts them and says hey it’s under-steering you’re going to take that seriously. If I contact Subaru and say hey your car is under-steering, who am I? I’m nobody”.

No Perceived Benefits

Another theme that emerged regarding communications with organizations affiliated with the source material of creative consumption was a lack of perceived benefits of contacting the organization. Informant 17 put this concisely, saying “there’s nothing in it for me to contact them”. Informant 10 said of this, “and what would I have to benefit from it? Unless they really like it and want to make that colour, but they have their own laboratory and chemists so, for me part of being an artist is the ability to just go nuts and mix whatever you want and I think most artists are like that”. Informant 6 suggested that more benefits might entice him to communicate with the organization, saying,

“maybe they might give me free stuff, that might be a reason I would communicate with the brand”.

Informants 1, 2, and 21 suggested that contacting the firm would be pointless as they did not think that an employee of the firm would be able to have an intelligent conversation with them about their creative activities. Specifically, informant 1 said:

“in most cases, you know, especially with some of the components what you’re receiving is written in the most astounding [English] and it’s clear that, you know, that this is not going to be a meaningful or useful interaction...[]... the source materials for many of these, you know, by their very nature is cheap stuff that’s manufactured quickly and knock offs. It’s not the type of company where it would be a useful interaction”.

Informant 21 said that they thought “the company wouldn’t even have the bandwidth to speak to someone like me about creative uses for their product”. Informant 2 suggested something similar – that it was specifically the individuals who answered customer calls that would not be helpful, saying “But you know how it is when you call in – you’re not getting real engineers you’re getting customer support people”. These three informants thus did not think that the employees had the training, knowledge, or capacity to provide any helpful insight or comments on their creative efforts.

Seeking Guidance

Of the few creative consumers who did initiate contact with a representative of the organization linked to the source material, two reported that their reason for initiating contact was to seek guidance about their creative activities. As informant 2 said:

“I had this idea about screwing this plastic PVC piping into a heat exchanger so I ran a simulation on it and it wasn’t going to work. So I called up the manufacturer and said what’s up with this and they said yeah that’s how it’s supposed to work. But the thing is that I was using it differently and they said it would be fine”.

Informant 5 said that “I thought, well I know most of what’s going on here but there is one design characteristic that I wanted to learn about, so I contacted them. But they haven’t gotten back to me”. In both cases, the informant initiated contact in order to

seek guidance about the capabilities and design of the source material of their creativity. In summary, the finding that emerged from the few creative consumers who had initiated contact with the firm was that their contact was motivated out a desire to seek guidance.

Brand Irrelevancy

Informants were asked about their opinion of or attitude towards any brand associated with the source material of their creativity, and whether the brand was linked to their creative consumption. Informants overwhelmingly revealed that their creative consumption had nothing to do with their feelings towards a brand or brand loyalty. In fact, many informants reported that they didn't even recall the brand. For example, informant 21 said that they "honestly don't remember the brand", and informant 24 said that brands were "not typically something we think about" when he and his creative friends engaged in innovation. Informant 6 said, "haha – if this is about brand loyalty it's not... haha". Informant 24 revealed:

"for myself the brand has very little to do with it. When you're purchasing a high-end item like a fridge or stove sure but it seems like a lot of the stuff you would ever tinker with doesn't have that same connection. You don't have that same brand connection. It's more of a tool or creative outlet than a brand... the vessel that is before you is just an outlet".

To informant 24, the brand linked to the source material didn't matter. In all of these examples, the brand was not a factor in an informant's decision to engage in creative consumption or what to engage in creative consumption with. While these individuals did not think about the brand (and therefore did not remember it), other informants did recall the brand linked to their creativity.

Informants who recalled the brand often revealed that they had neutral feelings towards it, saying that they were "neutral about the brand" (7), "yeah I mean the Volkswagen Jetta itself, I'm kind of neutral to it" (13) and "I don't know a whole lot about Logitech.... I think its Swedish or Swiss or something like that. I don't think any particular way about them" (8). Similarly, although informant 22 used Visa and Master Card credit cards in her creative consumption, she said that her creativity was "not particularly" about the brands themselves or how she felt towards them. Thus, even though these

informants recalled the brand, they did not reveal that the brand was in any way connected to their creativity and reported feeling neutral toward the brand.

Even those informants who reported having positive attitudes towards the brand linked to the source material of their creativity said that this positive attitude did not have anything to do with their choice of the source material. For example, informant 9 “I love IKEA, haha, I am a big fan of what IKEA promotes and essentially now I’m also a fan of where they are taking their business in terms of where they produce their products” but, as discussed earlier in this paper, that he ultimately decided to modify IKEA products because they were inexpensive and easy to work with (not because he liked the IKEA brand).

Even informant 19, who reported having a deep emotional connection to the Volkswagen cars he worked on, said of his creative consumption that “its not about me and the Volkswagen brand, corporation.... It’s about me and this hunk of steel that’s sitting in my garage. Like it doesn’t go beyond my garage”. Thus, creative consumers reported that their creative activities were not motivated or related to brand loyalty, or attitudes or opinions of brands, regardless of their attitude towards the brand. Rather, informants overwhelmingly revealed that the brand was irrelevant to their creative consumption.

Contextual Factors

Creative consumers noted one key contextual factor that impacted their creativity. Specifically, creative consumers commented on how digital technology enabled their innovation and creativity. For instance, several informants referenced watching YouTube videos or tutorials in order to plan their creative process. Informant 14 stated “I had done quite a bit of research and watched a bunch of YouTube videos and then my friend and I decided to do ours at the exact same time”. Informant 4 also made reference to the abundance of information available to them, said that that “when I start using the material I tend to go online and research ways to use it but I’ve never contacted the company”. Informant 9 had similar comments, saying that he consulted both YouTube and Pinterest for guidance in his creative project:

“As I was saying before, I am building this gigantic dining room table out of raw timber and I consulted Pinterest and YouTube just to get ideas and to get information I’m gonna’ need to finish this product off and what’s neat is that the information we have at our fingertips is endless and it comes to you so effortlessly and it gives you a lot more confidence to step in there yourself”.

YouTube and Pinterest were not the only resources informants referenced that facilitated access to tools and information. Informant 1 stated:

“you just have to look at how the 3D printing revolution has made it possible for people to, um, share not just items and but also ideas for what an item might be or what not and allows consumers to create items that are frankly as good as the ones from overseas but are very, very specifically tailored”.

Informant 13 predicts that this type of innovation will increase, saying “as a whole its a fascinating sector uh so much will change especially in well the next 15 to 20 years given how much knowledge is available to those who want to try with the internet and social media”. In his creativity, he personally relied on these online resources, saying “I had to trust a lot of online forums and guys who had built cars in the past to decide how I am going to approach the build and where to source the parts”. This informant noted that these were valuable resources where other individuals shared their photos and progress and provided valuable feedback to each other.

Informant 24 echoed these sentiments, saying:

“The tinkerers are all ages now and what powers them is that information at their fingertips. There is nothing that I don't Google first. You know everybody goes to Google and then you've got the YouTube link and you watch a video on it and fifteen minutes later you're an expert on this subject because you were just schooled. Fifteen minutes of intense scrutiny of the internet and you feel empowered”.

Overall, one theme across informants was that access to tools for innovation was easy – informants could easily go online and access the information or inspiration they needed in order to pursue their project.

Discussion

This paper reveals that there are two general types of creative consumers: problem solvers and explorers. Specifically, creative consumers appear to be initially motivated by one of two key factors – either they face a problem or a need and engage in creative consumption in response to this, or they simply imagine what could be and explore the possibilities of different offerings. In either case, creative consumers do not appear to have significant relationships with the firm or brand linked to the source material of their creativity, and typically do not initiate contact with them. Rather, they operate autonomously.

Part of the creative consumers' ability to engage in autonomous innovation is due to contextual factors. The findings of this research support those from previous research in which access to digital technology and the internet has been argued to empower consumer innovators (e.g., Berthon et al., 2012; Fuchs, Prandelli, & Schreier, 2010; Pitt, Berthon, Watson, & Zinkhan, 2002). That is, the findings in this research suggest that consumers today are particularly empowered to innovate with offerings due to the access to tools and guidance around the innovation process. This research also sheds new light on creative consumer motivations and relationships with firms and brands. In what follows, I discuss these aspects of the findings in more detail.

Consumer research suggests that there are two types of value consumers get out of their consumption activities: utilitarian value, which occurs due to the deliberate pursuit of an intended outcome, and hedonic value, which is more spontaneous (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994) and is defined as the aspects of consumer behaviour that relate to “multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of product usage experience” (Hirschmann & Holbrook, 1982, pg. 92). These two types of value reflect the difference in engaging in consumption activities because a consumer gets something out of it (utilitarian) versus loves it (hedonic) (Triandis, 1977). Using the descriptors of utilitarian and hedonic, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggest consumers are either “problem solvers” or seekers of “fun, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation, and enjoyment”, respectively (pg. 92).

The two initial motivations for engaging in creative consumption uncovered in this research – needs or problems on the one hand, and creative exploration on the other –

are consistent with Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) suggestion that consumption is utilitarian and hedonic in nature. That is, those creative consumers who are problem solvers are trying to achieve an outcome that will fulfil a specific need to solve a specific problem, making their consumption utilitarian. These consumers are deliberately pursuing a solution to their need. In contrast, creative exploration is related to imagination and fantasy, both of which are aspects of consumer behaviour related to hedonic consumption. These creative consumers have no specific intended outcome, per se, other than exploring what they might do with the materials they innovate with. Based on the findings of my research, I suggest that utilitarian and hedonic consumption is an appropriate way to conceptualise creative consumption. Research on hedonic and utilitarian consumption is typically related to shopping experiences (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000), however recent research suggests that this perspective should not be limited to shopping (e.g., Lowry et al., 2008) and I argue that creative consumption is an area in which this perspective is appropriate.

Hedonic and utilitarian consumption occur along a spectrum, and are not mutually exclusive – but they are also not typically equally salient during any consumption experience (Batra & Ahtola, 1991). That is, consumption can be simultaneously utilitarian and hedonic, with one of these being more salient than another throughout a particular consumption experience. The findings presented here are consistent with this understanding. For example, even problem-solving creative consumers noted that their creative consumption was fun or enjoyable for them. Thus, like other consumer activities (e.g., Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; O'Curry & Strahilevitz, 2001; Okada, 2005), I suggest that creative consumption can be conceptualised as being relatively more hedonic or more utilitarian at any given point.

The hedonic and utilitarian perspective is related to research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (e.g., Brown & Venkatesh, 2005; Venkatesh & Brown, 2001). Intrinsic motivation occurs when individuals are driven by joy or a sense of accomplishment that comes with a particular experience (e.g., the experience of creative consumption) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In contrast, extrinsic motivation occurs when individuals are driven by external rewards such as money or job opportunities (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As such, conceptualization of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is contingent upon rewards that are generated internally (intrinsically) or externally

(extrinsically). Returning to the findings of this paper, creative consumers who are problem solvers are more motivated by external factors – specifically having a solution to their problem. On the other hand, creative consumers who engage in creative exploration are more concerned with intrinsic rewards, such as enjoyment. This resonates with Lowry et al. (2008) who suggest that hedonic systems are linked to intrinsic motivations while utilitarian systems are linked to extrinsic motivations.

Creative consumer motivations may have implications for firms who wish to enter into co-creative relationships with creative consumers. Specifically, extrinsically motivated creative consumers want some sort of recognition or reward – as a result, firms may be able to ‘bait’ these creative consumers by providing a reward that is tailored to the creative consumer. In contrast, those creative consumers who are motivated intrinsically will not be attracted by rewards. Research suggests that allowing autonomy is necessary for maintaining intrinsic motivation in individuals (Ryan & Deci, 2000), making it more important than rewards for an intrinsically motivated creative consumer. In fact, some research suggests that rewards can even undermine the autonomy necessary for intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971; Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973). Thus, to engage these creative consumers, firms may wish to set up innovation spaces where these creative consumers can engage in innovation for the fun of it.

The findings of this research also confirm those of Berthon et al. (2007) and others, which suggest that creative consumers do not consider what firms or brands think of their innovations. Indeed, this paper found that creative consumers do not seek permission to engage in innovation with existing offerings. Overall, creative consumers reported that they generally did not see the point in contacting the firm or brand that sold or made the source material of their creativity.

Additionally, informants largely reported that their choice of source material was unrelated to their attitudes or opinions towards the brand linked to the source material. Some reported not remembering the brand or organization, some reported remembering it but feeling no particular way about it, and some reported liking it but that this still did not factor into their creative consumption. Some informants reported having emotional connections to the source material of their creativity, but still without experiencing brand loyalty, a love for the brand, or being brand ambassadors. These findings are unlike those in other research on creative consumers.

For example, in their study of creative consumers who continued to tinker with the Apple Newton PDA for years after Apple stopped producing it, Muñiz and Schau (2005) discovered that creative consumers were strongly motivated by their deep and emotional love for the brand. This research suggested that the creative consumption occurring with the Apple Newton PDA was directed towards ensuring the survival of the brand. The innovations undertaken by these individuals could be conceptualized as utilitarian in nature, as they were oriented towards ensuring the continuation of the device through such things as repairing and improving the device. However, unlike the creative consumers whose consumption was utilitarian in this paper, their creative consumption had strong founding in their relationship to the brand. Notably, the creative consumers were involved in an Apple Newton PDA brand community in this case – something none of the informants in this research revealed that they were a part of.

Another example is that of creative consumers who make their own advertisements. When investigating consumer motivations for creating consumer generated advertisements, Berthon et al. (2008) found that one of the key motivations was brand-related – namely the motivation to change perceptions of the brand. This motivation entail wanting to have a specific effect on those who watch the consumer generated advertisement – such as changing opinions of a brand or changing whether or not the audience likes a brand. In these cases, the creative consumer can be conceptualized as a sort of ‘activist’ who has a particular agenda in either promoting or disrupting the brand. Ultimately, the creativity researched by both Muñiz and Schau (2005) and Berthon et al. (2008) may have, by their very nature, been necessarily brand-related. That is, advertisements are by their very nature often brand oriented, and the individuals involved in the research by Muñiz and Schau (2005) deeply involved members of a brand community.

Many of the creative consumers interviewed for this research followed the general pattern of the basic consumer decision making process, beginning with problem or need recognition, going on to information search and evaluation of alternatives (i.e., information on and evaluation of alternative creative consumption alternatives). Importantly, however, not all creative consumers purchased the source material of their creativity deliberately for their project. That is, some creative consumers innovate with offerings that they have had in their possession for some time; others come up with an idea for their creative consumption and then purchase something with the specific intent

of modifying it in some way. The latter of these creative consumers may be of more managerial interest to firms. Specifically, these creative consumers may reveal potential marketed uses for offerings that firms or brands have not identified.

Limitations

One benefit of the interview methodology is that because the data is based on personal interactions, these interviews allowed me to ask participants for clarification, to elaborate, and to explain things in their own words. However, it is important to note that interviews are co-constructed by both the interviewer and the respondent. As such, interviews are necessarily impacted by factors such as the goals of the researcher. In addition, research shows that the interpersonal nature of the interview context may lead participants to respond in ways that are socially desirable (Richman, Keisler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999). As a result, like all interview data (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004), the data collected for this dissertation must be viewed as only a partial and incomplete understanding of creative consumers.

The sample of creative consumers who participated as informants in this study was obtained through my personal extended network and through the Simon Fraser University community. All informants in this study were from either Canada or the United States. Yet, creative consumption is known to occur in many countries around the world (e.g., Beninger & Robson, 2014; Flowers et al., 2010). As a result, it is possible that the sample obtained in this work reflects a particular subset of creative consumers and that a different sample may lead to different findings. Finally, because only one researcher (myself) coded the interviews, coding bias is a possible limitation of this work. However, past consumer research utilizing an interview methodology has relied on one coder, with some of this work being seminal in marketing (e.g., Fournier, 1988).

Future Research

Luthje (2004) suggests that the level of user expertise or ability of the consumer innovator is positively correlated with the likelihood of engaging in innovation. That is, users with extensive experience with a particular product may be more likely to engage in innovation with that product. Similarly, Lakhani and Wolf (2003) suggest that users' competence is positively related to participating in creative exercises; their research

reveals that highly skilled programmers are more likely to contribute to open source software. Future research should explore the link between creative consumer expertise and their creative output in more detail. In addition to this, research indicates that individuals who are motivated intrinsically or hedonically tend to produce more creative output than individuals who are motivated extrinsically, due to the fact that intrinsic motivation is linked to the human potential to explore and learn (Benware & Deci, 1984; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Stock, Oliveira, & von Hippel, 2015). Future research could investigate the output of creative consumer with a specific focus on the link between initial motivation and creative output to determine if this relationship holds true for creative consumers.

Finally, one type of creative consumption notably absent from the data set in this paper is creative consumption of services. Berthon et al. (2007) suggested that creative consumers do not necessarily engage in creative consumption with product offerings alone – rather, they also look into creativity with services. To date, there have been only limited investigations of creative consumption with respect to services, and this is obviously an area for exploration. Future research should explore whether the findings uncovered in this paper are the same for creative consumers who engage in services related innovations.

Conclusion

Research has discussed a variety of users who have moved beyond the role of mere consumers to being producers and innovators. This paper clarifies the meaning of the term ‘creative consumer’ by defining it as any individual or group who, working independently of the organization or firm, adapts, modifies, or transforms an offering or branded material, and in doing so causes it to be understood, used, changed, or combined in a manner that is different from its typical form. Using this definition, I clarify which terms (e.g., lead users, co-creators, hackers, etc.) used within the body of work on consumer innovators are creative consumers and which are not. In this paper, I also revealed the results on an in-depth qualitative study of creative consumer motivations and relationships with the firm or brand linked to the source material of their creativity. These findings suggest that creative consumers are either problem solvers or explorers. Furthermore, findings suggest that creative consumption can, like other consumer

experiences, be characterized as either predominately hedonic or utilitarian in nature. Unlike other research, this paper reveals that creative consumption is not necessarily brand oriented. Ultimately, this paper highlights and clarifies the distinctiveness of creative consumers, a type of consumer innovator who will only become increasingly important in the years to come.

Paper 2: Understanding And Responding To Unsanctioned Use of Intellectual Property By Creative Consumers

Users (i.e., any consumer, group, or firm that uses, rather than sells, a market offering) are an increasingly rich source of innovation (von Hippel, 2009; von Hippel, 2005; Berthon et al., 2007). Relevant users in user innovation range from multinational firms, to small enterprises, to individual consumers, and a growing body of research explores the innovation benefits that consumer innovation provides to firms (e.g., Bogers, Afuah, & Bastian, 2010; West & Bogers, 2014). This literature indicates that firms are increasingly positive to consumer innovation, with studies seeking to understand how firms search for (Olson & Bakke, 2004) and leverage (von Hippel, Thomke, & Sonnack, 1999) the output of consumer innovators. However, firms often view one of the largest potential sources of such innovation negatively. This is the innovation activity by 'creative consumers' (Berthon et al., 2007) who I defined in Paper 1 of this dissertation as any individual or group who, working independently of the organization or firm, adapts, modifies, or transforms an offering or branded material, and in doing so causes it to be understood, used, changed, or combined in a manner that is different from its typical form. As the first paper of this dissertation reveals, creative consumers are initially motivated by needs or problems, or by creative exploration, and subsequently take it upon themselves to engage in creative consumption for a variety of reasons, such as because doing so is enjoyable, permits a release from reality, boosts their ego, can save them money, or simply because creative consumption is their only option for filling a need.

Firms often have negative stances to creative consumer activity because they perceive these individuals to have 'cavalier disregard' for their intellectual property (Berthon et al., 2007) as they mess with product offerings independently (i.e., without collaborating with the company like in the case of lead users or in co-creation (von Hippel, 1989)). In some cases, firms will respond with legal action. Such legal action

may range from issuing cease and desist letters to commencing legal proceedings against the individuals who are tampering with market offerings. In this paper I argue that when considering intellectual property enforceability and brand value, initiating legal action against creative consumer activity can sometimes be warranted and sometimes be inappropriate. This paper does not seek to explain the role of intellectual property in competitive strategy generally, nor simply provide a primer on basic intellectual property law. Rather, I provide guidance for managers by explaining specific situations in which consumer innovation can involve infringement of intellectual property rights with differing and sometimes conflicting legal harm, legal claim and branding implications for firms. Helping firms understand how to deal with the unsanctioned use of intellectual property by creative consumers is important for three reasons.

First, the creative consumer activity of modifying and adapting existing offerings is likely much more common than the activity of producing brand new products. Yet, this abundant source of innovation for firms has been largely neglected by research, so management practice too often takes the wrong stance in dealing with these consumers. Instead, the research focus has been on understanding how to connect to, work with and learn from lead users who often collaborate with a firm on value-adding innovation projects (von Hippel, 1986). Yet, both the actions of the creative consumer and the reactions of managers have important and previously overlooked branding and intellectual property management implications.

Second, I apply and integrate concepts from brand management, innovation, and legal strategy. This practical, cross-disciplinary approach sheds new light on intellectual property management strategies for open innovation. Much of the research on the relationship between intellectual property and innovation investigates whether and how formal appropriability, including via intellectual property, fosters or inhibits open innovation (Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke, & West, 2006; West, 2006). That is, one of the cornerstones of closed innovation is a strict appropriability regime, with intellectual property being considered the most important appropriability mechanism (Teece, 1986). As intellectual property rights are ex-post limits to competition (Peteraf, 1993), they are thought to foster innovation in part because any ex-post limit to competition allows firms to extract rents from resources by preventing others from imitating or substituting the resource. In other words, firms should be more likely to innovate when there is strong

intellectual property protection in place, because the benefits to exploiting something that is protected can greatly exceed those from exploiting something that is not protected. In contrast to this perspective, other research explicitly argues that there are situations in which firms should voluntarily surrender formal appropriability regimes in order to achieve firm goals (West, 2003). Ultimately, although there is some research emerging that combines managerial and legal expertise on open or user innovation (e.g., Torrance & von Hippel, 2013), and on intellectual property management (Fisher & Oberholzer-Gee, 2013) more cross-disciplinary research is needed to better understand the controversy over “the importance (and desirability) of strong rights for inventors to appropriate the returns to their inventions” (West, Salter, Vanhaverbeke, & Chesbrough, 2014, pg. 808). This paper contributes to such an understanding.

Third, creative consumer activity can involve not just product and service innovations, but also branding innovations as consumers are known to use brand logos or names in their creative endeavours (e.g., Berthon et al., 2008). In this respect, creative consumer activity around branding involves potential trademark and copyright issues far more than patent infringements, which arise when dealing with technical inventions. Much of the previous research on intellectual property issues in open and user innovation has been case or sector-specific, such as software (Graham & Mowery, 2006; Bekkers & West, 2009) or biotechnology (Hope, 2008) and focuses on patents. Discussion of creative consumers’ activities and the implications for brand management requires a different focus, namely one on trademarks and copyright as these forms of intellectual property are most closely related to brand management. Consider for example the case of the ‘chavalier’ (the term ‘chav’ is British slang for a low-class individual), which is a Vauxhall Cavalier car that consumers repainted with the classic Burberry check. The car was to be auctioned off on eBay until Burberry’s lawyers got in touch demanding that the car be destroyed for infringing their copyright (Bothwell, 2005). Trademarks and copyrights are among the most widely used and valued forms of intellectual property (Jankowski, 2012), yet they receive insufficient attention in the research area of open or user innovation. This paper explains the innovation situations in which managers should or should *not* enforce trademarks and copyrights, not just patents or intellectual property generally, and will benefit from doing so.

The paper begins with a review of the literature on creative consumers. In particular, I focus on the branding and intellectual property impacts of creative consumer activity. I also review relevant literature on intellectual property law with a particular focus on how trademarks and copyright can work as mechanisms for appropriating brand value. I explain that the issue of legality is not binary, and that the strength of the legal claim firms might have on intellectual property varies along a spectrum depending on the situation. To help managers understand when unauthorized use of intellectual property is permissible and/or desirable I present a framework that considers four responses firms can adopt: *stomach it*, *shut it down*, *allow it*, and *enjoy the ride*. These responses are based on the extent to which intellectual property rights can be applied to stop or control the innovation activity (i.e., enforceability), and the extent to which continued consumer innovation activity is desirable from a brand value perspective (i.e., desirability). I then provide illustrative examples to describe the creative consumer innovation activity and the resulting branding implications. The paper concludes with a discussion of implications for managers and also identifies avenues for future research.

Creative Consumers, Intellectual Property, and Brands

The consumer innovators focused on in this paper are one specific type of consumer user – the creative consumer (Berthon et al., 2007). These are individuals and groups who take it upon themselves to innovate with existing offerings or brands. Such individuals have long existed – an early-recorded example of this is from the 1900s, when farmers adapted their Ford Model T cars to use in agricultural work. Today, these individuals are common; they are a worldwide phenomenon (Beninger & Robson, 2014), and are empowered to innovate and share their efforts online (Berthon et al., 2012).

This paper's focus on creative consumers is appropriate as firms tend to have a greater understanding of and control over other types of consumer innovators (i.e., lead users, co-creators) than they do over creative consumers. Firms have even tried to formalize the process of identifying, selecting, and gaining insight from such consumer innovators and often work collaboratively with them (von Hippel, 1986; 1989; 2005). In contrast, and as revealed in Paper 1 of this dissertation, creative consumers rarely communicate with a firm and do not ask for permission before adapting, modifying, or transforming a firm's offering. Indeed, creative consumers often treat intellectual property

with 'cavalier disregard' (Berthon et al., 2007, pg. 40) – this increases the likelihood that creative consumers will engage in unauthorized use of intellectual property, relative to other consumer innovators who are invited or encouraged by the firm to innovate. In summary, those consumers who undertake creative efforts with intellectual property, and who do so without permission, are more likely to be creative consumers than other types of consumer innovators.

Branding and Creative Consumers

This paper focuses on consumers whose creative consumption impacts a firm's brand. Such instances are of interest to firms as brands have long been recognized as among the most valuable and important assets that a firm can hold (Madden, Fehle, & Fournier, 2006). In the 1900s, brands were conceptualized as a means of identifying a manufacturer and their goods, with brand value being created when brand identifiers were embedded onto individual products, thus allowing consumers to easily identify manufacturers (Mertz, He, & Vargo, 2009). Today, brands continue to create value by acting as identifiers, however brands are recognized as more than identifiers. Importantly, brands are now conceptualized as dynamic and social processes, with brand value being continuously co-created by interactions between the firm, its customers, and its stakeholders more generally (Merz et al., 2009; Pitt, Watson, Berthon, Wynn, & Zinkhan, 2006). Importantly, research acknowledges that brand value is not solely created and managed by the brand owner, but rather is co-created with individuals, such as creative consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

For example, creative consumer activity can strengthen brand communities, which can be very valuable to brands (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009; McWilliam, 2012). Specifically, brand communities are known to promote dialogue and to encourage active participation by customers, both of which can create value for the brand owner (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009). These communities serve as places for consumers to connect with each other and share their love for a brand. Brand community members engage in practices like welcoming (i.e., greeting or recruiting others to join the brand community) or empathizing (i.e., lending each other emotional/physical support in brand-related endeavours) (Schau et al., 2009).

Whether or not creative consumers are members of a brand community, their activity can create brand value through customizing, which occurs when consumers modify the brand to suit individual or group level needs (Schau et al., 2009). Customizing allows the brand to be valuable in a way that it could not be without the efforts of the creative consumer. Consider for example, Lego and its Mindstorms, a software and hardware kit for building Lego-based robots (Berthon et al., 2015). Soon after its release, consumers added to and rewrote the software, and modified and extended the hardware. Lego allowed and cultivated this creativity, which helped to maintain and grow a loyal brand community.

In addition, creative consumer activity may create brand value through promoting the brand. There are many ways in which creative consumers may promote a brand – for example by showcasing the brand, bringing attention to the brand, making and sharing consumer-generated ads, and/or by fostering positive word of mouth about the brand. Such actions can inspire other consumers to join a brand community, which potentially strengthens brand communities. More specifically, the creative acts of consumers can enhance a brand via grooming and commoditization (Schau et al., 2009). Grooming is when consumers produce and share complementary inventions to better own and use their products. Commoditization is when consumers innovate to recycle and extend the reach and life of a brand.

Intellectual Property and Creative Consumers

Empirical research shows that for firms that consider intellectual property important, trademarks are considered the most important, followed by trade secrets, copyrights, industrial designs and, lastly, patents (Jankowski, 2012). Importantly, however, trademarks are the category of intellectual property most pertinent to the branding implications of creative consumers' activities. The importance of trademarks in this context is because registered trademark protection is available for words, symbols (such as brand logos) or other signs (including potentially sounds, smells and other unorthodox indicia of brands). Trademark law protects against others' use of marks that is likely to cause confusion in the marketplace or that dilutes a brand by blurring its distinctiveness or tarnishing a brand's reputation. However, in most jurisdictions,

including the United States, a trademark owner may not be able to stop others from using its proprietary marks in all circumstances.

Copyrights can also be important. They protect works of original expression, including literary, artistic, dramatic and musical works, as well as related rights in performances and recordings. Copyright owners are able to control the reproduction, adaptation, performance and distribution of their works. While patents operate mainly in respect of science and technology, copyrights tend to be used more in arts and cultural industries although software is a notable area of overlap. In the context of creative consumers, copyrights can be used to protect designs, jingles or even characters in some circumstances, and also protects software.

From the perspective of creative consumers, rights of fair use significantly restrict the scope of copyright and trademark protection. As a general principle, the more transformative a creative consumer's use of an original work, the stronger the claim to fair use, although transformation alone is not determinative of the fair user's rights under copyright law (Patry, 2015). Under U.S. copyright law, determining whether a use is fair is governed by four factors: the purpose and character of the use; the nature of the protected work; the amount and substantiality of the portion taken; and the impact of the use upon the potential market (17 U.S.C. § 107). Creative consumers are beneficiaries of both copyright protection and copyright limitations. The creative consumer can legally avail themselves of fair use rights to engage with another's work (without permission), and at the same time automatically obtain their own copyright protection for new (but not derivative) portions of the resulting creation. Under U.S. trademark law, a descriptive or nominative use of another's mark may not be illegal, because such use is not confusing or is a fair use (15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(3)(A)). Creative consumers may be able to legally use a protected mark to describe the characteristics of their own goods or services (e.g., *Zatarain's, Inc. v. Oak Grove Smokehouse, Inc.*, 1983), or to refer by name to trademark owners' goods or services. Parody can also be fair use of a trademark. These contours and limitations on the scope of a brand owner's intellectual property rights have crucial strategic managerial implications for dealing with creative consumers.

A Framework For Managing Brand Value and Intellectual Property

When creative consumers engage in innovation activities, managers and intellectual property holders have a number of options with respect to how they can respond. In what follows, I introduce a framework for understanding how to respond to such unauthorized use of intellectual property by creative consumers. I begin by defining two dimensions that managers should consider before taking action: desirability and enforceability. Together they capture how both the actions of the creative consumer relate to the brand (desirability) and how the actions of the firm relate to the brand (enforceability).

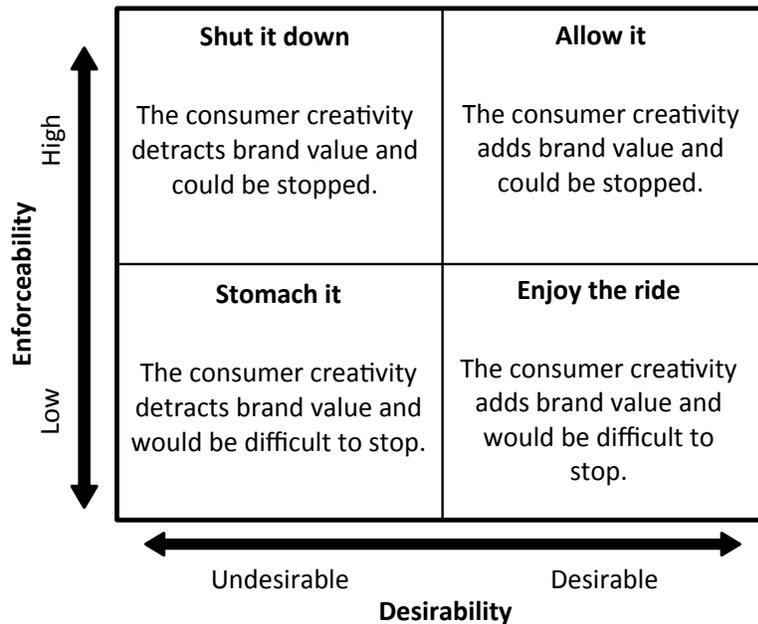
The first dimension in the framework – *desirability* – relates to how the activity will impact the brand. That is, the creative consumer’s use of intellectual property can be highly desirable when it has a positive impact on brand value. As discussed earlier in this paper, creative activity can have positive impact on brands through building or maintaining brand communities, through customizing brand offerings, and/or through promoting the brand. In contrast, the creative consumer activity can be undesirable when it threatens to weaken a brand community or fosters negative word of mouth, for example. In addition to these considerations, desirability is partially determined based on whether attempting to prevent the creative consumer from continuing will damage or harm the brand through, for example, brand community backlash. That is, desirability relates not only to how the actions of the creative consumer impact the brand, but also how attempting to control the actions of the creative consumer will impact the brand. Thus, desirability is the extent to which continuing consumer creativity benefits (rather than harms) the brand.

The second dimension of the framework – *enforceability* – is a firm’s ability to respond to the creative consumer activity with legal action. Enforceability is determined by whether intellectual property rights holders can enforce trademarks and copyrights. On the one hand this is governed by the extent to which consumer creativity is legal or illegal. However, while using intellectual property protected branded materials may, at first glance, seem to be prohibited by law and trigger legal threats by a brand owner, not all uses are illegal. As discussed previously, under copyright and trademark law there are instances in which unauthorized use of the protected material is deemed fair use. As

such, enforceability is the extent to which trademarks and copyrights can be enforced to stop or control the creative consumer activity.

In summary, desirability relates to the extent to which the creative consumption benefits or harms the brand, and enforceability relates to the extent to which intellectual property rights can be applied to stop or control the creative consumption. Together, the dimensions of desirability and enforceability lead to four different responses firms can take to the unauthorized use of intellectual property by creative consumers – *shut it down*, *stomach it*, *allow it*, or *enjoy the ride*. In situations where a firm's ability to enforce intellectual property rights is high – for example, when the creative consumer activity is clearly illegal – firms have two responses: shutting the activity down or allowing it. The decision as to which of these to pursue depends on the desirability of the creative consumer activity. In cases where the activity is undesirable – for example because it is confusing or dilutes the brand – they can shut the innovation activity down. In cases where the activity is desirable, bolsters a brand community or fosters positive word of mouth, firms can allow the activity and potentially work with the creative consumer. In situations where enforceability is low – for example when the creative consumer activity is a legal fair use – firms have two responses: they can either stomach it or enjoy the ride. In cases where the activity is undesirable – for example because there will be consumer backlash to attempts at stopping the creative consumer from continuing – firms may have no option but to stomach it. In contrast, when the activity creates brand value, then firms can respond by simply enjoying the ride. Figure 4 summarizes these four possible responses to the unauthorized use of intellectual property by creative consumers.

Figure 4: Responses To Unauthorized Use Of Intellectual Property



Using Intellectual Property Without Permission: Four Examples

To illustrate the value of the framework, for both scholars and managers, I now present four examples of situations in which firms have faced creative consumers using their intellectual property without permission. With each example I explain what the creative consumer did, and how this creative consumption involved unsanctioned use of intellectual property. I selected these examples because the reactions by the firms to the creative consumer activity exemplify the dimensions of the framework and its four responses. More interesting though, is that these are cases of how firms should *not* have responded to the unsanctioned use of their brands and intellectual property. I use the framework to explain how a firm's response can diminish brand value because the creative consumer activity was desirable from a brand value perspective. I then use the

framework to explain what the firms' responses should have been to the unauthorized use of their IP.

Paying Homage to a Brand

Cosplay, a portmanteau of 'costume' and 'play', is a form of performance art in which people wear costumes of characters in television, movies, comics, or literature. This practice is common at events such as Renaissance Fairs and Comic Con meetings, and can be tremendously effortful. Cosplayers allocate a great deal of time, money, and energy into creating not only perfect costumes but also in learning the correct mannerisms of the character or in adapting their bodies to be more like those of the character (Bolling & Smith, 2014). A cosplay occurs when someone, typically a fan, recreates him- or herself in the image of a character that exists in an original work. Importantly, these characters may be protected under copyright and trademark law. Thus, copyright owners may allege that cosplayers have copied substantial parts of protected works, potentially including specific characters, sets, costumes, props or other aspects of the original work. Similarly, trademark owners can take action against creative consumers engaged in fan fiction alleging dilution of brands – that is, specifically, blurring the distinctiveness of the association between a mark (such as a name, title, image or sign related to the character or work) and its owner. A similar situation occurs with fan fiction, or when fans write their own versions of television shows, movies, comics, or books.

In some situations where cosplay and fan fiction involve substantially taking from underlying works, cosplayers and fan fiction writers may require permission from the copyright owner (i.e., the owner of the character(s)) in order for their creative and artistic efforts to be lawful. However, these individuals rarely seek permission for their creative endeavours; cosplay and fan fiction are therefore two types of user innovation activity that may violate intellectual property laws. Despite this, the prevalence of these phenomena would suggest that cosplayers and fan fiction writers are seldom forced by intellectual property rights owners to stop their creative efforts. For example, author of the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling, has long supported writers of Harry Potter fan fiction, stating that she was "flattered" that fans wanted to write stories based on her characters (Waters, 2004).

Pokémon Fan Party: What Happened and What Should Have Happened

In contrast to J. K. Rowling, the Pokémon Company took legal action (i.e., the 'shut it down' response) against a group of fans who planned to throw an unofficial Pokémon cosplay party. These fans decided to have a fan party, which they promoted on Facebook – using images of protected Pokémon characters Pikachu and Snivy. Importantly, the fans planned to charge guests \$2 each for tickets admitting them to the party. Not only did the Pokémon Company take legal action against the fans, but they also asked for \$4,000 from the fans to cover their legal fees. The fans cancelled the party and refunded the \$2 to each of the individuals who had purchased tickets, however they were unable to pay the legal fees and turned to the crowdfunding website GoFundMe.com (see: <https://www.gofundme.com/ng5f2ukk>). The fans were quickly able to achieve \$4,000 in crowdfunds, with many individuals voicing their anger at the Pokémon Company. For example, comments on the GoFundMe.com donation page included "...The Pokémon Company is being a huge jerk on this", "Pika Pikaaaaa Pika! Translation: I think its not cool that these lawyers are stopping my fans from having a party for me!" and "Really disgusted by how the Pokémon Company is treating a fan who just wanted to share his love of Pokémon with other fans".

In cosplay and fan fiction, individuals are heavily involved in brand communities with fellow fans. In terms of branding, these fan practices appear to create brand value more than they destroy it. Many have argued that such fan practices should be considered fair use (Stroude, 2010; Lewis, Black, & Tomlinson, 2009). Furthermore, legal scholars have proposed that these practices have no measurable adverse impact on the intellectual property rights holders and that they even appear to strengthen fan communities (Tushnet, 1996). In such cases, the fair use argument is strong.

From a management perspective, such activities are one of the ways in which brand communities (which are often composed of fans) create value for firms. Specifically, activities such as fan fiction or fan art are known to create value for firms through customizing. In the case of cosplay and fan fiction, this involves modifying characters and stories to suit the specific tastes of consumers. In addition to this, these practices lead to positive externalities for the brand owners in that cosplay and fan fiction further promote the original work (Arai & Kinukawa, 2014). These creative efforts were expressions of 'fandom', which pay homage to the brand and can have a positive impact

on the brand. Indeed, these efforts are intended to be expressions of love for the brand. Ultimately, I argue that this case reveals a situation where an aggressive negative response was inappropriate, and where the brand would have been better off by adopting the 'enjoy the ride' response. That is, the gathering of Pokémon fans was desirable from a brand perspective, and as mentioned above, the fair use argument is strong in these types of situations.

Hacking a Brand

Consumers are increasingly able to access tools for innovation (von Hippel, 2009) and are ever more sophisticated with their use of technology. One concern for many firms is that of hacking. Consider the consumer practice of hacking or 'jailbreaking' iPhones, a process that involves modifying the device's operating system. Consumers jailbreak their phones to bypass Apple software restrictions that limit the phones to default and approved applications and prevents users and third-parties from customizing the phone's software and functionality. Apple previously argued that this practice is a violation of their copyright. There are also numerous cases of copyright infringement involving creative consumers and video games. For example, a group known as the ValiantChaos Hackers wrote code that enabled them to view more of the virtual space in the video game StarCraft II. By modifying the software to extend the capabilities of video games, the video game owner, Blizzard entertainment, argued their copyright had been infringed upon (Chan, 2014).

Although reports are sometimes unspecific about the legal basis for such claims, brand owners' core allegations are typically grounded in the anti-circumvention provisions of the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)* (17 U.S.C. § 1201). It is illegal to circumvent technological measures that control access to, or prevent copying of, copyright-protected works. Trafficking in any technology, product, service, device or component that is primarily designed to enable others to circumvent technological protection measures is also a violation of the *DMCA*. Further, it is illegal to remove or alter copyright management information. There are very limited exceptions to these provisions; engaging in these activities even for purposes that would be fair use has been ruled illegal (*Universal City Studios v. Reimerdes*, 2000). Brand hacking, therefore, illustrates an enforceability issue that depends more on different legal rights than the

cases discussed above. Legal rights in this area are very strong, although the questions remain whether and how such rights are best exercised from a brand management perspective.

The Sony Aibo: What Happened and What Should Have Happened

An example of hacking involves the Aibo, a robotic pet dog marketed by Sony in 1999 that could bark, sit, and fetch. A hacker known as AiboPet cracked the encryption for the Aibo, and wrote a number of other programs to expand the capabilities of the product. With this new code, for example, the Aibo was able to dance and speak. AiboPet then shared this code with the Aibo community. The software was made freely available, thus allowing other consumers to expand the repertoire of their own robotic dogs (Flowers, 2008).

The Aibo software was legally protected under copyright law, although Sony's legal threats were premised more specifically on prohibitions in the *DMCA* against the circumvention of technological protection measures. Even more specifically, Sony alleged that the operators of the website www.aibopet.com were making information about how to circumvent technological protection measures available to other creative consumers. Sony sent multiple cease and desist letters pertaining to this action (i.e., the 'shut it down' response) (Lessig, 2004). Shortly after news of Sony's threatening legal tactics emerged, however, there was public outcry. Importantly, this outcry came from within the Sony Aibo brand community. A number of news stories about Sony's threatening tactics led to irate letters from Aibo owners, and members of the Sony Aibo brand community threatened to boycott the company (Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2008). In the face of brand community backlash Sony decided to rescind its threatening tactics.

The brand community for the Sony Aibo was very strong, with Aibo owners meeting and sharing information in online forums such as Aibohack.com (where AiboPet initially shared his DiscoAibo software), Aibo-life.org, and many others. Ultimately, Sony's decision to engage in threatening legal tactics harmed its brand community by alienating those consumers who loved the Sony Aibo most. As brand communities are recognized for having a strong role in creating value for brands, I argue that the decision to rescind the threatening tactics was beneficial from a brand community damage control perspective, but that the Sony would have been better off not using such threatening

tactics in the first place. Instead, I argue that Sony could have benefitted from using the ‘allow it’ response.

Mocking a Brand

Consumers, critics, and comedians have long parodied brands, and parody is a common circumstance where fair use is argued as a defense to copyright and/or trademark threats. Despite being commonplace, parody demonstrates an interesting legal paradox involving individual user innovators and brand owners. To be effective, a parody must by its nature be similar enough to the original work or brand to ensure the public recognizes the parodied subject. Yet it must not be so similar as to cause confusion about the origins or affiliation of the parody with the original. The legal line dividing these circumstances is not clear, which exacerbates the dilemma managers face in dealing with creative consumers. Since the public does not generally expect a firm to parody its own brands, consumers are not likely to be confused to believe that the firm is the source of the parody. The public may, however, be confused whether there is some affiliation between the firm and the parodying creative consumer, such as express or implied authorization. Courts generally look less favorably upon parodists with commercial motives and more favorably upon parodists using a trademark for commentary or critique. Parody is an explicit statutory defense to allegations that a creative consumer has diluted or tarnished a brand. Cases in which a parody is unwholesome, unsavoury or evokes unflattering thoughts are among those in which a brand owner is most likely to succeed in a legal claim against a creative consumer.

Dumb Starbucks: What Happened and What Should Have Happened

In 2014, reality TV star Nathan Fielder opened a store called “Dumb Starbucks” in California. This store had a name and logo that was identical to that of Starbucks – with the exception that the word ‘Dumb’ always appeared before the brand and product names. The inside of the store was the same as a typical Starbucks: the menu boards listed “Dumb Lattes” and “Dumb Frappuccinos”, there were pastry cases with typical Starbucks pastries, and employees dressed in black clothing with green aprons. But for the word ‘Dumb’, the store was designed to look exactly the same as a Starbucks.

Fielder argued that his parody of the protected material – the Starbucks brand name and logo, both legally protected as trademarks – was, in fact, legal under the fair use doctrine (Brown & Nagy, 2015). However, the use of the mark was both disparaging and commercial (as Fielder showcased his creative efforts on his reality TV show), which substantially weakened the claim to fair use under trademark dilution law. Despite having a potentially strong legal claim, Starbucks did not sue Fielder for intellectual property infringement (i.e., the ‘stomach it’ response). Nevertheless, the Dumb Starbucks coffee shop was quickly shut down by the Los Angeles Department of Health due to the lack of proper permits for selling food and beverage.

Starbucks did not provide any details on its decision not to pursue legal action against Fielder for his use of the Starbucks brand name and logo. At first, from a branding perspective, it could be assumed that Starbucks did not pursue legal action (i.e., stomach it) because the creative act was at least arguably a fair use parody. However, Starbucks had in the past successfully opposed an attempted registration of ‘LESSBUCKS’, which would have diluted the Starbucks brand (*Starbucks Coffee Company v. Marshall S. Ruben*, 2006). On the other hand, Starbucks had also engaged in long, costly and ultimately unsuccessful legal action against a competitor who used the mark Charbucks (*Starbucks Corp. v. Wolfe’s Borough Coffee, Inc.*, 2013). While it has been argued the Dumb Starbucks example was at the very least a close case, several comments from legal practitioners suggested this was clearly infringement (McGeeveran, 2015; Loughlin & Maisel, 2014; Singer & Wildes, 2014; Zara, 2014).

Perhaps most importantly, the individual involved with Dumb Starbucks did not appear involved in the Starbucks brand community and the actions behind Dumb Starbucks could have angered members of the Starbucks brand community through this disparaging parody of Starbucks. The message of Dumb Starbucks was clearly negative, as the preface ‘Dumb’ is an insult to the Starbucks brand and potentially also to Starbucks brand community members. As such, Starbucks would have been unlikely to upset their brand community by pursuing action, and may even have been perceived as protecting its brand community from being mocked by the creative consumer.

Although Fielder argued that his unauthorized use of intellectual property was protected under the fair use doctrine, Starbucks likely had a strong legal claim due to the disparaging and commercial aspects of the use. Overall, the enforceability in this

situation would have been high: the message of ‘DumbStarbucks’ was disparaging to the brand and commercial in nature, and was also likely to be confusing. The desirability in this situation would have been low. Given the negative message of Dumb Starbucks, this use of the Starbucks brand was undesirable. Further, pursuing action would have been unlikely to seriously upset the Starbucks brand community, and may even have been welcomed by the brand community. Given the undesirable nature of the use as well as the high enforceability, I argue that Starbucks could appropriately have approached this situation with the ‘shut it down’ response. Notably, Starbucks might have done so if the Los Angeles health authorities had not acted first.

Adapting a Brand

As Paper 1 of this dissertation revealed, adapting, modifying or tinkering with a product offering to satisfy a user’s needs is one of the key types of creative consumer output. Sometimes, consumers modify products only slightly, making improvements or adjustments that do not fundamentally transform an offering to perform an entirely different function than intended. In other cases, however, users come up with innovations that radically change the objects into something completely different. For example, consumers have been known to transform empty drink bottles into light bulbs, 3D printers into tattoo machines, and to use food packaging as clothing; similarly, there is a long list of ways in which consumers use the Coca Cola drink other than as a beverage (Piangger & Robson, 2014). These include, for example, using Coca Cola to neutralize a jellyfish sting or as a cleaning solution to remove oil, grease, rust, or bloodstains. In these cases, the owners of the brand and intellectual property seem to “allow it”. However, even if the creative consumer or creative use of the offering does not imply anything about the intended use of the offering, it arguably dilutes the brand by associating it with wares and services that the brand doesn’t want to be associated with. That is, a brand owner must guard (at least to some extent) against dilution for fear of losing control over their brand.

FedEx Furniture: What Happened and What Should Have Happened

In 2005 Jose Avila moved to Arizona with no furniture and no money with which to buy furniture. He did have an abundance of Federal Express (FedEx) boxes. Using these boxes, Avila created tables, chairs, and every other piece of furniture he needed.

He decided to showcase his creative efforts by creating a website called fedexfurniture.com, which quickly attracted attention and admiration from individuals and the press. However, FedEx had a different perspective: shortly after his website launched, Avila received a cease and desist letter demanding that his website be taken down (i.e., the 'shut it down' response). FedEx argued that Avila infringed on its intellectual property rights and violated the terms of use of their packaging. Specifically, FedEx argued that the domain name fedexfurniture.com and the use of FedEx trademarks on the website would confuse consumers about the source of the furniture or its association with FedEx, and was therefore a trademark infringement. FedEx also alleged that images Avila displayed were copyright-infringing derivative works from its packaging materials, and complained of unspecified violations of the *DMCA*. Ultimately, Avila capitulated to FedEx's threats and took down his website.

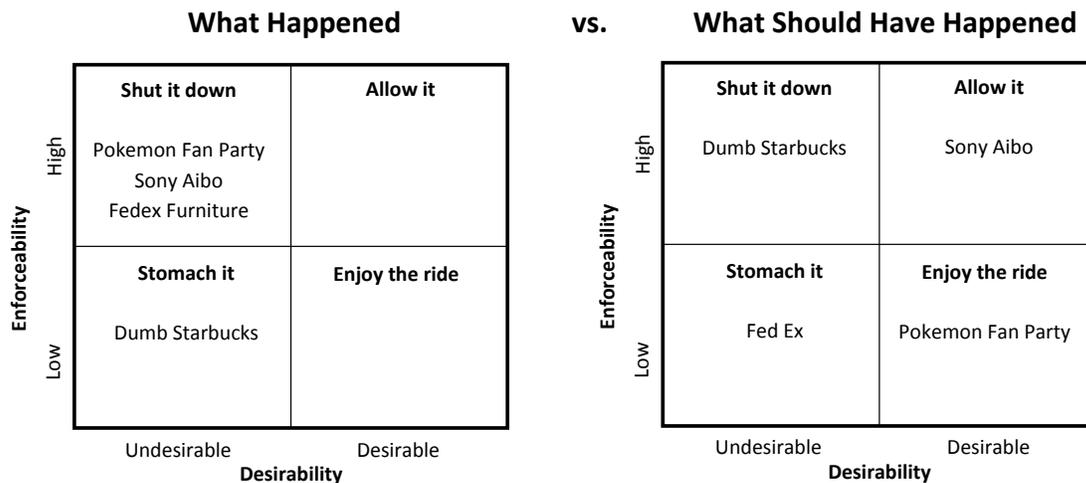
The copyright infringement threats that FedEx made have little or no legal credibility. FedEx's argument that Avila's actions would cause confusion is similarly weak, and contradicted by relevant case law (*Mattel vs. Walking Mountain Prods.*, 2003). FedEx's brand was not tarnished by Avila in any way. A somewhat more plausible but still unpersuasive legal argument might have been that Avila blurred FedEx's brand by associating it with wares and services that FedEx did not approve of. While brand owners are wise to guard (at least to some extent) against the risk that the distinctiveness of their marks will be blurred by association with other products, some brand owners go too far. In Avila's case, it may not have been the furniture that really bothered FedEx, but rather the slippery slope of losing control. In addressing that concern, however, I argue that FedEx overreacted.

Avila did not disparage or tarnish the brand through his creative use of FedEx boxes or through setting up a website to showcase his efforts. Indeed, if the brand was tarnished at all, it was by FedEx's own overreaction. Although not part of a FedEx brand community, public commentary on blogs revealed that FedEx came across as tyrannical by pursuing the 'shut it down' response (Berthon et al., 2007). Comments included "This really brightened my day! The letters are classic lawyer exchange. My husband and I laughed and laughed. Lawyers jousting at windmills..." and "FedEx needs to lighten up" (www.bookofjoe.com/2005/08/fedexfurniture.html). While FedEx may not have appreciated the unfaithful appropriation of their boxes or the FedEx Furniture website,

these activities did not cause significant harm to the brand and a ‘stomach it’ approach would likely have prevented the company from coming across as a bully, and ‘no fun’.

Ultimately, these four cases reveal how firms have previously responded to creative consumers who engaged in innovation that involved using intellectual property that did not belong to them. Figure 5 displays a summary of the cases, depicting what response the firm had in each case and the alternative response I argue they should have had, based on the enforceability and desirability of each case.

Figure 5: Four Cases of Responding To Unsanctioned Use Of Intellectual Property



Discussion: It's Time To Really Open Up

The aim of this paper is to present a framework that will help managers and legal advisors understand how to respond effectively to unsanctioned use of intellectual property by creative consumers. The two dimensions underlying the framework are enforceability (i.e., the extent to which intellectual property rights can be applied to stop or control the innovation activity) and desirability (i.e., the extent to the innovation activity

is desirable from a brand value perspective). These dimensions are increasingly noted as important factors in open and user innovation practice (e.g., Chesbrough, 2003a). They combine in the framework to be the basis for four responses to the unsanctioned use of intellectual property.

Ultimately, each response and the illustrative examples I provide reveal the different interests and goals of consumers and firms in situations involving unsanctioned use of intellectual property, as well as the fact that firms can sometimes respond to creative consumers inappropriately. These examples do not represent *loopholes* in the legal system; that is, they do not represent ambiguities or inadequacies in a system that can be used to circumvent or otherwise avoid the intent of the system (Merriam-Webster, 2004). The examples presented in this paper show the legal system functions as it was intended to. And as I argued at the start of the paper, creative consumers are considered to be one the largest sources of user innovation activity – but are somewhat overlooked by scholars and managers because they modify existing propriety offerings, as opposed to producing completely new products. Managers and intellectual property holders can expect incidents of consumers using their intellectual property without permission to continue in the future.

Consequently, a key issue for managers is how to handle such situations. The framework and illustrative examples in this paper reveal that firms have options with respect to approaches in these circumstances. This provides insights into the intellectual property dilemmas presented by creative consumers. The framework and its responses can be viewed as a set of prescriptions for managers to follow. While for researchers, the framework is a set of tentative and high level premises that can be unpacked to understand in more detail how and when to apply each response in different contexts. Thus, the framework and ideas in this paper have a number of major implications for both user innovation research and the practice of managing user innovation, which I now discuss.

Open and Interpretive Control

User innovation practice and research has focused on promoting the innovation benefits of such innovation activity to firms (Bogers et al., 2010), and how to foster and undertake user innovation projects (von Hippel, 1989). A major implication for managers is to realize that their responses must involve openness to interpreting and making sense of the brand-related value of creative consumer activity in conjunction with their ability to apply intellectual property rights. This framework provides a comparative model for managers to consider different interpretations and implement appropriate responses. It is likely that most managers will have spent their careers adopting “shut it down” responses. The value of this framework is that it presents viable alternatives based on a brand value logic that helps managers to understand what might typically happen versus what else could happen.

For firms that wish to take an open approach to their innovation practices, consumers can provide excellent ideas. Consequently, this research is particularly important for those firms who are or wish to be engaged in co-creative practices with their consumers or members of the public. The key message is that it is also important to understand the intellectual property issues at play. If firms take an aggressive negative stance towards a creative consumer who, without permission, innovates with intellectual property, this stance is likely to send the wrong signal to those consumers who the firm wishes to co-create with. Instead, the unauthorized use of the intellectual property may present an opportunity for the firm to encourage co-creation by showcasing and promoting the consumers creative efforts through an ‘allow it’ or ‘enjoy the ride’ response.

Open Branding

The concept of open innovation has been shaping both the practice and theories of innovation since 2003 (Chesbrough, 2003b; West et al., 2014). Similarly, branding is not just a firm endeavour. Branding is a creative and open process based on the collective outputs of creative consumer practices. In the same way that open innovation is defined as a “distributed innovation process that involves purposively managed knowledge flows across the organizational boundary” (West et al., 2014), this paper highlights the importance of a related concept for marketing, or ‘open branding’. Open

branding is a branding process that involves interpreting and supporting the creative activities of individual creative consumers and communities of creative consumers. It has long been recognized that consumers co-create brands (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009), and that if firms give consumers the chance to build brand communities and allow them to modify intellectual property, they will (e.g., Schau et al., 2009). But despite the spread of such work, there has not been an “open” oriented approach to the branding process.

Firms should consider the potential for value creation that comes from providing customers with the freedom, incentives, tools and support to foster open branding. Not only does this paper argue the importance of open branding practices, but more significantly, it also suggests how managers would use this framework to assess how to respond to different creative consumer activities, including hacking a brand, loving a brand, adapting a brand and mocking a brand. Like user innovation, brand management benefits from having a good understanding of two types of information: information on customer desires and information on how to best satisfy them (von Hippel, 2005).

Open Intellectual Property

This paper calls into question a longstanding assumption that intellectual property must be fiercely guarded against being used by others. Indeed, the examples presented in this paper highlight situations in which firms may wish to ignore or even encourage creative individuals who use intellectual property without permission. In deciding on how to respond in different situations of creative consumer activity, firms and consumers must first determine whether they have a strong or weak legal claim. Importantly, however, being able to take legal action and having a strong legal claim does not necessarily mean that a firm should. Specifically, managers should consider not only the opportunities to the brand that come with the unauthorized use of intellectual property, but also the threats to the brand associated with pursuing legal action.

There are times that intellectual property rights holders may benefit from “underplaying” their hand – that is, by forgoing legal action even in cases where they would have a very strong claim if they wanted to pursue it. Indeed, in situations where individuals’ use of intellectual property benefits the brand – perhaps through providing positive word of mouth – firms will likely have a positive attitude towards these efforts. In such a case, exercising the legal right to stop individuals would not benefit the firm. Even

when a firm has a negative attitude towards unauthorized uses of intellectual property and can take legal action, this still does not necessarily mean that a firm should pursue this option. Before deciding on whether to take legal action or not, it is imperative that a firm understands the extent to which the individual is involved in a related brand community. The consumer backlash that ensued after Sony initially took legal action against AiboPet created new costs to pursuing legal action – specifically, the consumer backlash created costs to Sony’s reputation and brand image. This consumer backlash changed the overall costs of pursuing legal action, leading Sony to drop its case against AiboPet.

Conclusion

A firm’s knee-jerk reaction to consumers who use intellectual property without permission may be to condemn their efforts and to exercise, to some extent, their legal rights to prevent consumers from continuing. Undoubtedly, intellectual property protection has had a key role in the innovation process: it has created barriers to imitation or substitutability, and has increased the payoffs to entrepreneurs and inventors by providing legal protection for intellectual assets. Because of this, it is no surprise that intellectual property has become a key resource to many companies (James, Leiblein, & Lu, 2013; Teece, 1998; von Hippel, 2005) and that intellectual property has been explored mainly with respect to its role as a competitive resource (Teece, 1998; Reitzig, 2004; Rivette & Kline, 2000). Indeed, intellectual property is much more than just a legal mechanism – it can act as a powerful financial asset or competitive weapon (Rivette & Kline, 1999).

However, as this paper suggests, managers should ensure that they make sense of such situations prior to taking legal action, as a valuable brand can be negatively impacted with this type of reaction. In some situations, creative endeavours are likely to have a positive impact on the brand – through, for example, bolstering a brand community, paying homage to the brand, or in fostering positive word of mouth. As some creative uses of a firm’s intellectual property can lead to positive outcomes for the firm, firms would be well advised to consider carefully before serving such a consumer with a cease and desist notice. In addition, consumer involvement in associated brand communities is important, as the greater the extent to which a user is involved in a brand

community, the more likely it is that taking legal action against the infringing consumer will result in consumer backlash. Ultimately, this paper is intended to help readers understand the branding implications of creative consumer use of intellectual property so as to allow firms to decide whether they *should* take legal action against creative consumer user innovators – not merely whether they can.

General Conclusion

Creative consumer activity is on the rise. Increases in the modularity and reconfigurability of products, as well as in the availability of technologies that allow creative consumers to exchange knowledge and share innovations mean that consumers today have easy access to tools for innovation. At the same time, consumers today are empowered to tinker with offerings as they want, and many have an attitude of expecting that products or services can or will be tailored to them. Creative consumer innovation activity will continue into the future, making a nuanced and in-depth understanding of creative consumers important for organizations and scholars alike.

However, there is a lack of primary research on creative consumers and a lack of conceptual clarification on how creative consumers compare to other types of consumer innovators. This gap in literature leaves researchers unable to verify how their findings may or may not apply to other research, and prevents researchers and managers from developing effective managerial approaches to responding to creative consumers. In response, Paper 1 contributes a new definition for the creative consumer and provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of creative consumers. This paper reveals that there are two main initial motivations for engaging in creative consumption – these are an initial motivation in response to problems or needs, and an initial motivation based on a desire to engage in creative exploration. Creative consumers have a variety of motivations that impel them to implement their creative idea, such as enjoyment, escape, and cost savings, among others. In addition, attitudes or opinions of brands tend not to factor in to creative consumption, and creative consumers tend not to contact the organization associated with the source material of their creativity. Ultimately, Paper 1 finds that creative consumption, like other forms of consumption, can be classified as either utilitarian or hedonic in nature.

One of the key aspects of creative consumers is that they engage in innovation without the permission of the firm, which can mean that they are violating intellectual

property rights. Paper 2 of this dissertation provides guidance and advice for managers who are in the position of needing to respond to the unauthorized use of intellectual property by creative consumers. Although firms often respond by exercising legal rights to stop consumers from continuing their creative efforts, there are a variety of situations in which managers may benefit more from foregoing their intellectual property rights. That is, Paper 2 reveals that creative consumers have implications not only with respect to innovation, but also with respect to brand management. I argue that enforcing intellectual property rights can tarnish a brand and lead to brand community backlash, and that there are even situations in which unauthorized use of intellectual property has a positive impact on a brand. This paper contributes a framework for understanding the managerial responses to situations in which consumers use intellectual property without permission.

This dissertation contributes to literature by offering a deeper, more nuanced understanding of creative consumers than is provided by current literature. In addition, this dissertation provides managerial guidance on issues related to creative consumer infringement on intellectual property rights, a previously un-researched area. As creative consumption continues and increases into the future, the knowledge and frameworks in this dissertation will allow academics and managers to better understand and respond to creative consumers.

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Appendix 1.

Summary of Informants

Informant	Source Material	Creative Output	Age	Gender	Location
Informant 1	Toy Helicopter	Toy Blimp	43	M	San Jose, CA, USA
Informant 2	Pool Cover	Modified Pool Cover	46	M	San Jose, CA, USA
Informant 3	Software	Modified Software	34	M	Cambridge, MA, USA
Informant 4	Car Tires, Garbage	Clothing, Jewelry	38	F	Baltimore, MD, USA
Informant 5	Zoomed Snake Heating Lamp	Cat Heating Pad	34	M	Seattle, WA, USA
Informant 6	Remote Controlled Airplanes	Modified Remote Controlled Airplanes	44	M	Silicon Valley, CA, USA
Informant 7	Forum Snowboard	Split Board	33	M	Squamish, BC
Informant 8	Computer Mouse	Modified Computer Mouse	36	M	Langley, BC
Informant 9	IKEA Kallax Storage Unit	Table	34	M	Parry Sound, ON
Informant 10	Lipstick	Lipstick, Eye shadow, Blush	49	F	Surrey, BC
Informant 11	Antique Window	Mirror	62	F	Mountain View, CA, USA
Informant 12	Dog Sled Harness	Dog Seatbelt	54	F	Calgary, AB
Informant 13	Volkswagen Jetta	Rally Car	31	M	Vancouver, BC
Informant 14	Rossignol Snowboard	Split Board	31	M	Vancouver, BC
Informant 15	Weed Wire and Fishing Lines	Harp Strings	84	M	Edmonton, AB
Informant 16	Tiles and Glass	Mirror Frame	79	F	Edmonton, AB
Informant 17	Subaru Sedan	Rally Car	40	M	Vancouver, BC
Informant 18	Burton Custom Snowboard	Split Board	29	F	Vancouver, BC
Informant 19	Volkswagen Sedan	Modified Volkswagen Sedan	40	M	Langley, BC
Informant 20	Batman, Dukes of Hazzard	Fan fiction	37	F	Calgary, AB
Informant 21	Coffee Warmer	Sous Vide	34	F	San Jose, CA, USA
Informant 22	Credit Cards	Sunglass Lenses	52	F	Calgary, AB
Informant 23	Car Engine	Wind Vane	63	M	Calgary, AB
Informant 24	Robot	Modified Robot	37	M	Nelson, BC

Appendix 2.

Interview Protocol

Notes: This is not a structured questionnaire – it suggests topics for discussion but may vary depending on the respondent’s answers to the initial questions. The interview should (hopefully) flow like a conversation. These questions are not meant to be followed in any particular order.

Start out with broad questions like “Could you tell me a bit about your creativity with products or services?” and then ask natural questions that come up based on their reply.

1. Can we start by your telling me something about the types of things that you have modified – what are they, what are they supposed to be used for, and what did you do to it/them?
 - a. Follow Ups: What exactly did you do to the original offering? When you did this, how did you change the functionality of the offering? Could it still be used for its original intended purpose?
2. Why did you choose that particular item or concept to modify?
 - a. Follow Up: Were there other options available to modify?
 - b. Follow Up: Do you tend to innovate with offerings from a particular brand? From brands or companies that you are a fan of or are neutral about or that you dislike?
 - c. Follow Up: Do you use the offering? How long? Why?
 - d. Follow Up: Do you know other people who tend to innovate with items or concepts from this brand?
3. Where did the initial idea for the modified product come from? What made you think of doing this in the first place?
- 4.
5. After the idea came to you, what were some of the main reasons you engaged in these creative practices? What motivates you to implement your creative idea?
 - a. Follow Up: What made you decide to engage in the creativity yourself?
 - b. Follow Up: Could you have purchased something instead? If you could have, why didn’t you?
6. What do you do with it once you are finished?
 - a. Follow Up: Do you ever share your output with the firm/brand/company? *(If not, why not; if so, how)*
 - b. Follow Up: Have you ever initiated contact with the firm/brand/company?
 - c. Follow Up: What would encourage you to communicate with them?

- d. Follow Up: Do you ever share your output with your friends, family, or others? (*If not, why not; if so, how*) Do you ever showcase it online? In person?
- 7. Are there any other things you'd like to tell me about consumer creativity in general, or about yourself in this regard in particular? Would you say you are like most creative people, or are you different (e.g. more or less creative, more or less knowledgeable, motivated in a different way?)
- 8. Finally, can I ask some questions about you?
 - a. What line of work are you in? Does your work impact your creative consumption?
 - b. What city do you live in?
 - c. How old are you?

Before ending the interview, remember to ask participants if they have any questions and to thank them for their time.