

Foreword

The successful development of new products requires profound knowledge about customer needs. The transfer of this knowledge is often difficult and cost-intensive ("sticky data transfer"-phenomenon), depending on the quality of the information. The resulting information gap can be completed by the application of several methods and tools: These include, among others, users who modify existing and develop completely new products ("lead user"), the application of tools to directly transfer know-how, including tacit knowledge ("user innovation toolkits"), as well as techniques of participatory observation. The mentioned phenomenon received increasing scientific attention over the past 20 years and was researched intensively. The existence and characteristics of user innovators has so far been analyzed in the areas of sports and outdoor activities, so that the focus was mainly on younger users.

At the same time, a dramatic demographic change was visible especially in industrial nations. As a result of increased life expectancies and lower birth rates, the many countries' median age of the population and especially the share of the population above 55 years are increasing. This so called "Silver Market" is growing constantly and offers assumed business opportunities for tailored products and services.

The research at hand by Mr. Wellner is the first study which analyzes the relationship between user innovation and age. The main objective of the research is the evaluation whether user innovators exist across all age groups and if yes, how older user innovators and their innovations differ from younger ones. For this, Mr. Wellner analyzes user innovations in the area of camping tourism. Methodically, he conducts only surveys in relevant communities as well as laborious on-site examinations (surveys and observations) at German camp sites. As a result, Mr. Wellner can show that older users also innovate, but differences compared to younger users are smaller than initially assumed.

The research results linked with the competent interpretation and precise presentation confirm the chosen research approach of Mr. Wellner. His essential contribution to research lies in the well-grounded discussion, application, and extension of the existing theory in the context of a relatively new phenomenon (age-based innovation). Therefore, Mr. Wellner's work constitutes an important contribution in theoretical as well as practical regards.

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