UNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLES OF CROWDSOURCING IN LIGHT OF THE COMMONS-BASED PEER PRODUCTION MODEL

ABSTRACT

Crowdsourcing initiatives are considerably growing in quantity and scope and can be considered to be on the verge of changing the way how value creation and organizational coordination takes place as we know it from today's business. The need for all involved stakeholders to understand crowdsourcing at its core and with its underlying principles becomes obvious and is not addressed yet. This paper shows that a) previously used attempts to explain crowdsourcing, i.e. the Transaction Costs Theory as well as the Knowledge-Based Theory, fall short for this purpose as they inherit an unsuitable perspective of either hierarchy or market and b) that the adequate theoretical grounding of crowdsourcing is the Commons-Based Peer Production Model. The model and its three building blocks broadcast of tasks (in order to initiate them), structural attributes of tasks (building on the principles of modularity, granularity and integration) and online platforms (as technical means of realization) are presented and their meanings in the crowdsourcing context are outlined and illustrated using salient crowdsourcing examples.

We contribute by providing a solid theoretical foundation that assists in understanding, illuminating and explicating crowdsourcing as well as its corresponding principles and mechanisms. Thus, we set the basis for the development of appropriate management methods and mechanisms and help crowdsourcing stakeholders in rethinking their current crowdsourcing understanding. The paper also provides an agenda for future crowdsourcing research.

Keywords: crowdsourcing, commons-based peer production, value creation.