

WikiProducts

A participatory approach to food-transparency

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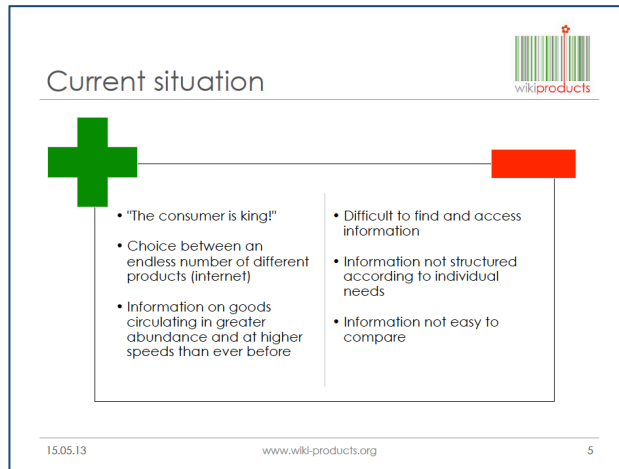
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- Forrest Gump once said: „Life is like a box of chocolates“ and unfortunately most of the time the second half of his sentence is true too: „you never know what you get!“
- This picture of a chocolate-bar-rack illustrates the endless number of choices we have as a consumer today and evokes the question: „Which one do you pick?“ - or even more precise „On which basis do you make your choice?“
- Is it only a question of price or taste? Our answer is: No, because if you are either a vegan, a muslim, a cook, an ethical consumer or an allergic person many other dimensions of chocolate start to matter!
- What you have to do today if your really want to know what you get is to study this:

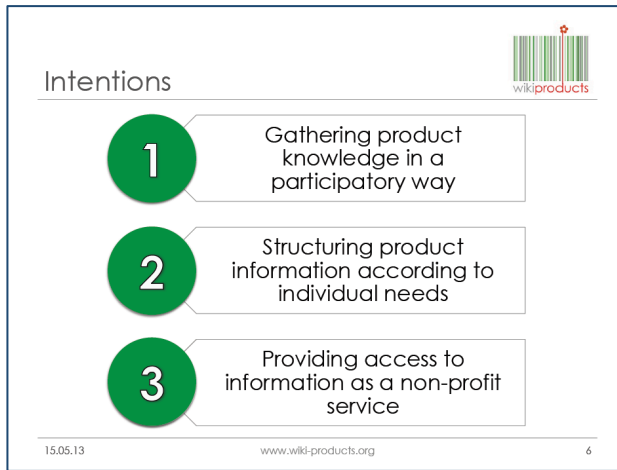


- This picture shows that a lot of information on chocolate already exists, partly provided by the chocolate-companies themselves as shown in this picture, and partly provided by web-sites, friends, press or other sources - but the information is often really difficult to find and even harder to compare! This is where Wiki-Products provides a solution...

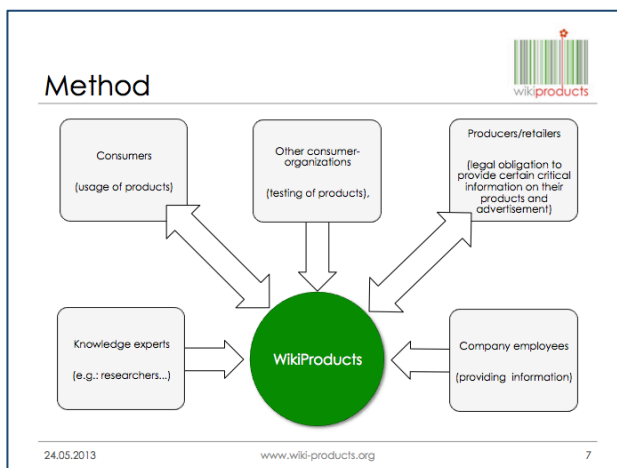


- The current situation suggests that "the consumer is king!" and in fact there are two positive aspects of the current situation:
 1. Today consumers have a choice between an endless variety of products - as we have demonstrated by looking at the chocolate-bar-rack.
 2. Information on consumer goods is circulating in greater abundance and at higher speeds than ever before.
- Both, choice-options and circulating information have increased significantly by the broad opportunities of the World Wide Web. But who takes the effort to search the Internet for hours or turns around all the chocolate bars to compare the different aspects of a product?
- We believe that almost no one does, because it takes too much time and energy to do so. If our assumption is correct it means that, even though the preconditions are not bad at the moment, consumers today are most of the time not kings, because they are not able to make a decision regarding their interests.
- So, from our point of view information on products is:
 - difficult to find and access
 - often not structured according to the individual needs
 - difficult to compare

All these aspects prevent the customer from becoming an empowered consumer!



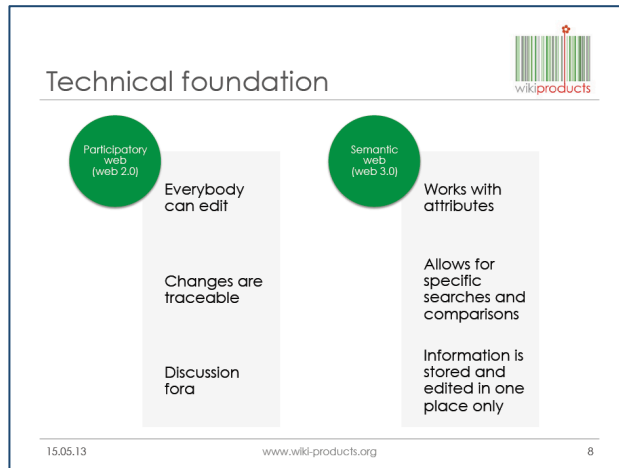
- What are the Intentions of Wiki-Products? We are aiming to build a tool to empower the consumer! We believe that the following aspects are of key importance for reaching this goal:
 1. Gathering information on products in a participatory way.
 2. Structuring the product information according to the consumer-needs to promote a customization of product-information - which means that ideally Wiki-Products could give the consumer tailor-made answers on products in the future.
 3. We provide the access to the information as a non-profit service.
- We believe that a broad movement on ethical consumption (aimed at by most other consumer movements) already exists. Therefore we are not primarily aiming at a normative discourse, meaning, what kind of decision the consumers *should* make, but we try to develop a platform for gathering and structuring information of all kinds.



- The information we would like to collect and structure is distributed under the following parties consisting of:
 - Producers/retailers who have a legal obligation to provide certain critical information on their products and also do advertise certain aspects of their products
 - Consumers themselves while using products acquire information
 - Other consumer-organizations often produce information by testing products
 - Company employees who might provide information

- Knowledge experts hold information as well (e.g.: researchers, passionate consumers...)

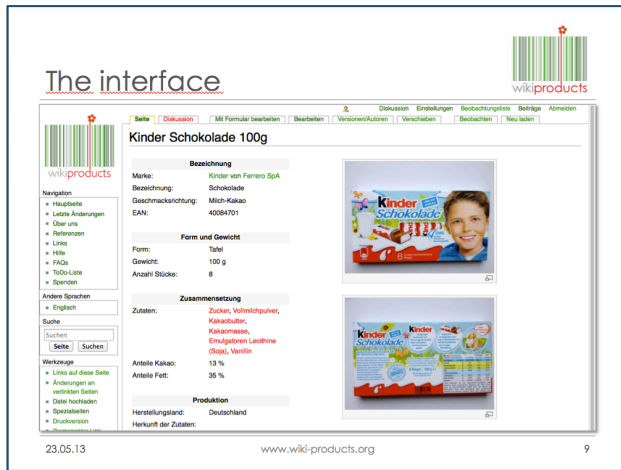
So all these participants could give input to the project. Not only consumers would profit from WikiProducts. Producers and retailers would profit too, by promoting their products and also by using the platform as a source for learning about their clients' needs and preferences.



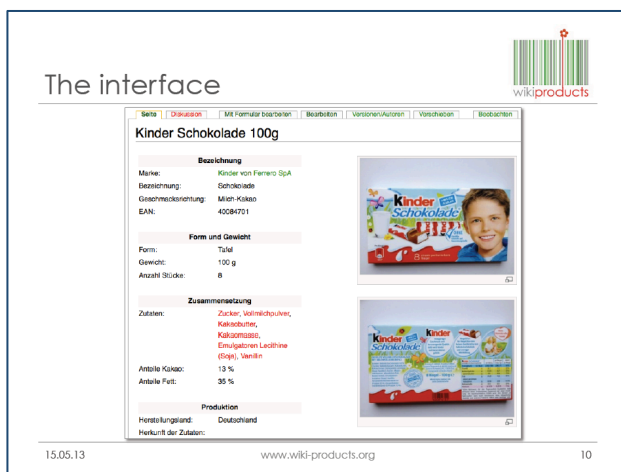
- The technology we are using is state of the art web-technology and is called Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. Both are powerful tools for re-organizing information according to its participants' needs. So what do the two acronyms stand for?
- Web 2.0, also called participatory web, is characterized by the following qualities:
 - Everybody can edit content
 - Changes are traceable
 - Option to enter into a dialogue in discussion fora

This principle you might know from Wikipedia. It is actually the Wikipedia open-source software called MediaWiki, which we use for operating WikiProducts.

- Web 3.0, also called semantic web, is characterized by the opportunity to:
 - Link an attribute to a specific product-information, for example:
weight (attribute) - 100g (is the information how much this chocolate bar weighs)
 - Information is categorized, which allows a specific searches in a data base and makes products comparable
 - Information is stored and edited in one place only - this allows comparison pages to work properly and it is easier to update information
 - The technology was developed by the University of Karlsruhe as an extension to the MediaWiki-Software and is made available as open-source software as well.



- This slide shows our interface and what a Product-page looks like today. First, it is important to know that each product has its own page on which standardised and un-standardised product-information can be collected.
- The whole page works like Wikipedia, which means that every user can edit content.
- On the left hand side we have the navigation tools for the whole Wiki and in the very top line we can see the tabs for the user account. I will not focus on these two aspects, so let's put them aside at this moment.



- On each product-page we have the attributes on the left hand side and the specific information on the right hand side. For example:
 - Brand (which would be the attribute) – Kinder (which would be the information)
 - Type of article (attribute) – chocolate (information)
- You might wonder why some of the information is displayed in green and red. Green means that there is a link to more information and red means that there can be potentially a link, but that there is no page yet.
- And if you click on the tab called “edit with form” you enter this page:

Form for entering information

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- This is the form to enter the information. It is important to know that we do not announce the attributes but that any user can edit them.
- In the top line you have more tabs to navigate the various subpages of a product-page:
 - The discussion forum - which is displayed in red - and means that there is no discussion to this product at this moment
 - The form for entering information
 - The page history with all past edits
 - If you click on “watch” you will be informed by mail as soon as another user edits the product-page

Filtering by needs


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Marke	Produkt	Geschmacksrichtung	Zutaten	Spuren von	Gewicht (g)	Anzahl Stücke	Brutto	Anteil Kakao	Anteil Fett	made in
Coop	Grandio Leit 100g	Milch	Zucker Kakaobutter Kakaomasse Vanilleschokolade Mandel Pflanzöl Hauptbestandteile Eigenschaften Beitrag Mengenangaben Energiegehalt (kJ/100g) mit Salz Natürlicher Aromastoff	Soja	100 g	12	keines	32 %	42 %	keine Angaben
Coop	Bio Nussbutter	Nussbutter	Kakaobutter Kakaomasse Vanilleschokolade Kakaomasse Kakaobutter Vanilleschokolade Vanilleschokolade		100 g		Körner	36 %	48 %	Schweiz
Frey AU	LAT	Milch	Kakaobutter Kakaobutter Vanilleschokolade Kakaomasse	Natürlicher Aromastoff Eigenschaften	100 g		Milch	35 %	37 %	Schweiz

- This page shows the result of a user-query. In her query the user searched the database for chocolate, which is produced according to the Max-Havelaar fair-trade-standard. She also asked to have a number of other attributes displayed, which are listed in the various columns of this list. So every user can query the data-base according to her/his own needs and interests.
- The users can also save and publish their queries, so that other users can see them.

Mechanisms of participation		
		
Who	How	Why
Wiki-Team	Providing the platform	Idealism
Consumers	Using the platform for getting information	Transparency, quality of information
Other non-profits, activists	Providing critical information, defining attributes, controlling	Idealism
Producers, retailers	Providing content	Promoting their products
Professionals	Programming	Paid for by <u>WikiProducts</u>
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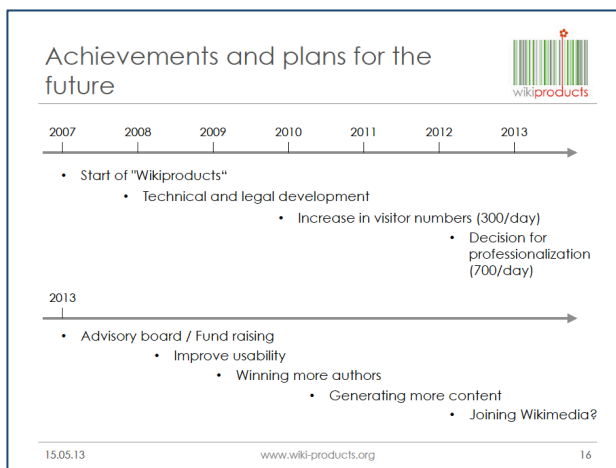
- Who participates, how and why?
 1. The WikiProducts team: we provide the page, because we are idealistic and it makes us feel good ☺.
 2. Consumers: they receive information on products. They consult the page because they value the quality and transparency of product information.
 3. Other non profits and activists: they provide critical information, define attributes, and control the upload of information - for an idealistic reasons.
 4. Producers and retailers: they provide content to promote their products.
 5. Professionals: e.g. programmers are paid for their work by WikiProducts.

Mechanisms of participation											
											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaining information produces blank spots 											
example:	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Produktion</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Herstellungsländ:</td><td>keine Angaben</td></tr> <tr> <td>Herkunft der Zutaten:</td><td>keine Angaben</td></tr> <tr> <td>Fairtradelabel:</td><td>Max Havelaar</td></tr> <tr> <td>Biolabel:</td><td>keines</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Produktion		Herstellungsländ:	keine Angaben	Herkunft der Zutaten:	keine Angaben	Fairtradelabel:	Max Havelaar	Biolabel:	keines
Produktion											
Herstellungsländ:	keine Angaben										
Herkunft der Zutaten:	keine Angaben										
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Biolabel:	keines										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blank spots increases pressure to publish Raising awareness for consumer needs 											
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- There is another mechanism of participation: We believe that producers and retailers will enter a dialogue with other stakeholders about their products. If the producer withholds information on the product this will produce a blank spot on WikiProducts - as you can see in this example: We have the attribute on the left and on the right it says: no data provided!
- On the one hand this puts a certain pressure on the producers to provide information. On the other hand producers also benefit from this mechanism by developing an awareness, what kind of information is valuable to their consumers.




- We know that there are other consumer initiatives and here are shown some examples of initiatives from German-speaking countries. But WikiProducts differs from them in many ways. These initiatives are either:
 - Not as participatory - except of Wikipedia
 - Some of them generate information on products themselves
 - Are normative
 - Do not provide a data-base
 - Miss the option to compare products
 - Are commercial or not for free



- This is a timeline that gives you an idea of what happened in the past and how we would like to develop the project in the future:
 - The project started in 2007.
 - In the following years we developed the project technically and with respect to legal aspects.
 - In the time between 2010 and 2012 the visitor-numbers increased from 300/day to 700/day - so that we decided last year for professionalization.
 - This year we are going to install an advisory board and will focus on fund-raising, because we would like to employ a project-manager.
 - For the future we would like to improve the usability, which might be an important step to win more authors and to generate more content this way.
 - Maybe one day we could join the Wiki-Media-Group.

Challenges



1. Critical mass of authors
2. Documentation of sources
3. Updating of information
(products change over time)
4. Comparability with some products
(limits of data base structure)
5. English version

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- What are the challenges?
 1. We have to win a critical mass of authors to ensure that the breadth of information is not narrowed down by the producers and retailers.
 2. It is important to know the sources - sometimes authors do not provide them.
 3. Products change over time which makes it necessary to update the data-base once in while, which becomes less of a problem the more users and authors there are.
 4. Some products are not so much comparable - so we know that there is a limit to a data-base structure.
 5. We would like to develop an English-version of our Website.

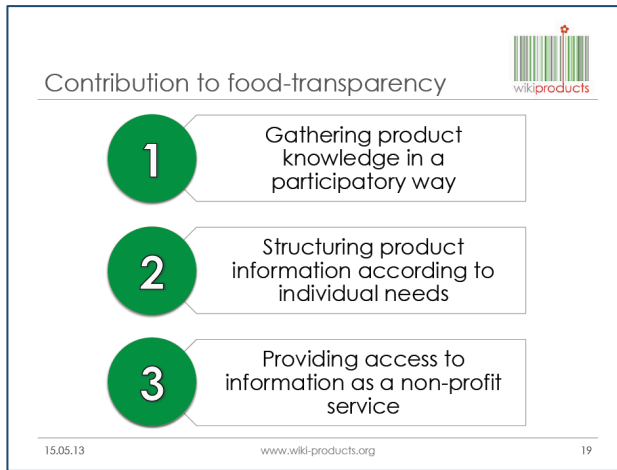
The WikiProducts team



	Selina Ingold Lecturer in media and communication		Daniel Michels Ophthalmologist
	Diyana Petrova Lecturer in management education		Cordula Hieke Architect
	Christoph Michels Lecturer in org. studies and urban development		Sophie Rudolph Lecturer in film studies
	Robert Ruttmann Banking and Finance		

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- We are basically a group of friends with a quite diverse background - besides Cordula, Robert and myself everyone is working at the university, but in different disciplines.



- Summary: What are the contributions of WikiProducts to Food-Transparency:
 1. Gathering product-knowledge in a participatory way.
 2. Structuring product-information according to consumer-needs.
 3. Providing access to information as a non profit service.



- So maybe the next time you are standing in the supermarket in front of the chocolate-bar-rack thinking: Oh lord, if I just would know what differs them beside the colour of the paper they are raped in – maybe WikiProducts can help you out...
- Thank you very much for your attention!