# Crowdsourcing Platforms in a Participatory Model of Maritime and Sailing Culture Management - The Case Study of Szczecin Poland

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** *The main purpose of the article is to present the premises indicating the need to use the potential of crowdsourcing in a participatory model of culture management to activate and integrate communities to shape culture in their cities.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *The article uses the method of review and critical analysis of the literature (sources), the survey method, the case study method - the city of Szczecin and the Business Model Canvas (BMC) method.*

**Findings:** *The research results presented in the article indicate that a significant problem in creating culture in Szczecin and in the region is the lack of a common platform for cooperation in this area. This justifies the need to apply a participatory model of culture management to activate and integrate communities to shape culture in their cities. The potential of crowdsourcing confirms the legitimacy of creating an online cooperation platform for maritime and sailing culture in the city of Szczecin.*

**Practical Implications:** *The online cooperation platform enables the integration of various groups of stakeholders involved in the creation and maintenance of maritime and sailing culture and facilitated the taking and implementation of activities in the field of creating and cultivating maritime and sailing traditions in the city of Szczecin. This platform can also be a place of cooperation between the cultural and business sector in promotion and dissemination of maritime and sailing culture in the region.*

**Originality/Value:** *An in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject and the research results presented in the article indicate the need for further research on the concept of an online cooperation platform for maritime and sailing culture in the city of Szczecin. The article presents a proposal for a business model of such a platform built with the use of the BMC.*

**Keywords:** *Crowdsourcing, participatory management model, online cooperation platform, maritime and sailing culture.*

**JEL codes:** *D83, O35, L31, M15.*

**Paper type:** *Research article.*

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## 1. Introduction

The role and importance of the Internet community is constantly growing and evolving. The Internet is used in all areas of digital society activities, and new information and communication technologies - ICT (Information and Communications Technology) - influence the functioning of today's world.

The report Digital 2021: Global Overview Report (Digital, 2021) shows that at the end of January 2021, 4.66 billion people worldwide (59.5% of the entire world's population) were using the Internet. This is 316 million (7.3%) more than in 2020. However, due to COVID-19, which has significantly increased the number of internet users, the actual numbers may be higher. There are now 4.20 billion social media users worldwide (53.6% of the entire world's population). This number has increased by 490 million (13%) in the last 12 months (Digital, 2021). In Poland, according to the Digital 2021: Poland report, out of 37.82 million people, 84.5% of the population uses the Internet, and 68.5% uses social media. This is, respectively, 3.5% more Internet users and as much as 18.5% more social media users compared to 2020 (Digital Poland, 2021).

From a passive recipient of content, Internet users become a full participant in it, and often also a source and creator of various types of information and resources. A. Toffler, in 1980, introduced the concept of a prosumer (a new type of client) into the literature on the subject, presenting the concept of using the client as a designer, creator or even producer (Toffler, 1986). This tendency implies a more and more free use of various instruments (based on ICT technologies) activating local communities in various areas of social life. The functioning of online communities has become one of the fundamental foundations of the concept of crowdsourcing. The issue of using the idea of crowdsourcing to strengthen social participation has long been known, but in many areas of social life it is still not applied.
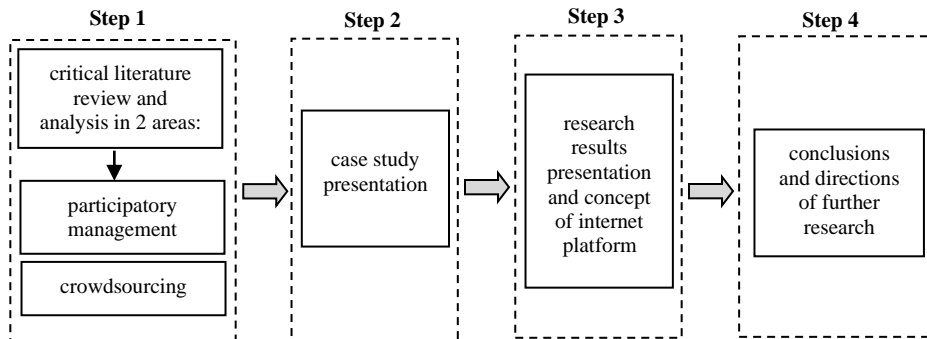
The main purpose of the article is to present the premises indicating the need to use the potential of crowdsourcing (a concept focusing on online activities and human need for cooperation) in a participatory model of culture management to activate and integrate communities to shape culture in their cities.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To achieve the purpose of this article, a research procedure was designed consisting of 4 steps as shown in Figure 1. In the first step, the focus was on critical literature review and analysis in 2 areas: participatory management and crowdsourcing. This step is to present the possibility of using the potential of crowdsourcing in a participatory model of culture management to activate and integrate communities to shape culture in their cities. The second step is a case study presentation. This step describes the specificity of the city of Szczecin and the conditions concerning the lack of common identity and tradition of its inhabitants. In this step, it was also

indicated that the link between the population of Szczecin, so different in many respects, could be the broadly understood maritime and sailing culture. In the third step, the results of the survey concerning the opinions of the inhabitants of the city and the region about their expectations in terms of undertaking initiatives related to maritime and sailing culture were presented.

*Figure 1.* Research framework



*Source: Own study.*

The results of a diagnostic study of the condition and prospects of Szczecin institutions as well as recipients of the culture "Energia Szczecińskiej Kultury" (Energia Szczecińskiej Kultury, 2019) were also presented. The results of the research indicate that a significant problem in creating and promoting maritime and sailing culture in the region among its inhabitants is the lack of a common platform for cooperation in this area. Therefore, in this part of the article, a proposal for a business model of such a platform is presented, built with the use of the Canvas (BMC) business modeling method. At the end, conclusions were made and the directions for further research were outlined.

## 3. Theoretical Background

Participation is a multidimensional phenomenon relating to various areas of social and economic life. The concept of participation is used in various contexts, with various adjectives, such as: public, social, civic, or individual. From a subjective perspective, participation occurs in three main areas of human activity: individual, social, and public (Brodie *et al.*, 2009). These concepts, although they have a common element at their base, i.e., participation, differ fundamentally in the form and scale of individual involvement, collectivism of actions and the level of impact on the public sphere. There are many approaches, views, and manifestations of participation (Cornwall, 2011). Participation as an activity at the local level are activities "*that focus on community or participation in society, usually in the sphere of civil society or where citizens are beneficiaries*" (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999).

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Participatory management as a concept has been the subject of interest in the theory and practice of general management for many years. Participatory management is a concept that arose from popular trends in social sciences - sociology of organization and network theory (Osborne, 2006). This concept assumes the participation of various stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation processes. The need to initiate activity and mobilize citizens to participate in social life is still a challenge, also for societies of mature democracy.

Before presenting the role of crowdsourcing platforms and the participation of citizens in their functioning, it is worth pointing out what factors transform the crowd - "*temporal and unorganized gathering of individuals, spatially adjacent and having a common object of interest*" (Goodman, 1997) into a group of citizens working together for the common good. To understand the essence of these social processes, it is worth referring to the definitions of such concepts as sense of community and citizen participation. Sense of community is "*a sense of belonging, a feeling of importance and importance to another person / group and a shared belief that the needs of group members will be satisfied by being together / acting together*". It is a compilation of elements of membership, influence, integration, meeting common needs and sharing common experiences (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). On the other hand, citizen participation should be understood as a process based on the independent / voluntary involvement of citizens, united by a common goal and working towards common ideas (often by NGOs) (Holdar *et al.,* 2002).

In the area of fusion of two domains, such as community involvement and new technologies, there are various approaches and initiatives that often appear in the literature on the subject under the common name of *crowdsourcing*. The creator of this idea is Jeff Howe. According to him, crowdsourcing is to be "*the outsourcing of all company activities to an undefined, wide group of Internet users in the form of an open invitation*" (Howe, 2006). Crowdsourcing is a process that uses the wisdom and potential of a community for the purposes of the individual or the public. In the literature on the subject, the term *crowdsourcing* is understood ambiguously and, in many aspects, (Brabham, 2013; Kleeman, 2008). Despite its meaningful capacity and multitude of applications, the basis for the correct understanding of the concept of crowdsourcing is to make people aware of the role played in it by issues of human involvement.

Crowdsourcing owes its rapid development to the tool of the Internet, i.e., a place that gathers millions of Internet users from around the world, enabling them all to participate in tasks that were once reserved for a narrow group of specialists (Hirth and Tran-Gia, 2011). A more up-to-date and precise definition of this phenomenon is proposed by Daren C. Brabham. According to this definition, to be able to use the crowdsourcing option, an organization must first have an organizer, i.e., a person who has a task to carry out and intends to outsource it to other people. An equally important condition is a community with the appropriate skills, willing to voluntarily undertake such a task. The other two components are digital space, i.e., a website, or

social media, where there is contact between the community and the organizer and mutual benefit resulting from the implementation of the task on both sides (Brabham, 2008).

The spread of crowdsourcing is characterized by two distinct dimensions - the commercial dimension (for business applications) and the non-commercial dimension. Non-commercial crowdsourcing is increasingly used in public initiatives. Among the many crowdsourcing categories, two of them, i.e., *civic engagement* and *community building* (Hanna and Ashby, 2016), strictly fit into the subject matter discussed in the article. *Civic engagement* understood as processes of collective action regarding public issues use crowdsourcing as a lever to support social initiatives (Sumner and Nelson, 2010). *Community building* is community development through active involvement of people connected by common passion, beliefs, or interests, it is a dialogue with the community used to increase commitment and build loyalty (Hyman, 2002).

## 4. The Specificity of the City of Szczecin and its Conditions - Case Study

Szczecin, like London or Hamburg, is a port city located inland. In most port cities of this type, we are dealing with a long-standing tradition cultivated by their inhabitants, related to the port and maritime character of these cities. However, unlike other port cities, Szczecin - the capital of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, has quite specific characteristics that result from its historical conditions. The lands on which Szczecin and the West Pomeranian Voivodeship are located over the centuries were under the rule of many different nations in different historical periods. A very important event that influenced the specificity of the city was the incorporation of Szczecin and the areas east of the Odra and Nysa Łużycka lines into Poland after World War II. In this relatively young - in comparison to other areas of Poland - region, there is practically no indigenous population. The immigrant population in the areas displaced by the Germans created in the West Pomeranian region a population consisting of many different cultures, traditions, customs, and national and ethnic identifications. This population for many years did not identify with Szczecin.

What largely shaped the identity of Szczecin, and its inhabitants was mainly the shipbuilding and port industry. These were permanent elements of the social reality, largely responsible for shaping the identity of its inhabitants (Kokiel and Cegiełka, 2012). It is around these industries that the identity of the city and the region has developed. A seaport has been operating in the city for years, serving shipowners from all over the world. It is the only Polish port with a waterway connection deep into Europe, and through the Szczecin Lagoon - with the Baltic Sea. In enterprises and companies related to the shipbuilding and port industry, thousands of residents of the city and the region found employment, schools and universities were established to educate future staff for these industries, and education and culture developed around them. The city is associated with the port, the Odra River, the

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Dąbskie Lake, excellent conditions for sailing - thanks to the modernization and construction of new marinas and yacht ports, and the Tall Ships Races. The relationship between Szczecin and water is obvious to all Poles. Szczecin has always related to the port, water, culture and maritime tradition.

However, the potential of this city, rooted in its maritime character was unused for many years. There were no initiatives and activities in the city that would strengthen the bonds of the inhabitants with the city, and which would contribute to mutual social integration. Actions around which it would be possible to build a common identity and tradition for future generations of residents of Szczecin and the region.

After many years of stagnation in the activities for the *maritime and sailing* of Szczecin, in 2008, on the initiative of the West Pomeranian region Sailing Association, the „Żeglarski Szczecin" (Sailing Szczecin) Social Committee, was established, which drew attention to the necessity for the Szczecin authorities to undertake real actions for the city and its residents in this area. The Committee stressed the need to develop a vision of a maritime city, open to water, for sailing and sea culture and for the sea. It initiated the project for the creation of „Aleja Żeglarzy" (Avenue of Sailors) (opening in 2013) and the city marina (in 2015). This investment has a positive impact on the image of the city and emphasizes its links with the maritime and sailing character of the city and preserves its sailing traditions. The „Żeglarski Szczecin" Social Committee also drew attention to the need to establish a Szczecin internet portal for the city of Szczecin and the construction of the Maritime Museum (Maritime Science Center).

In Szczecin, more and more activities are being undertaken to highlight the maritime and sailing character of the city and to emphasize the relationships of its inhabitants with the sea and sailing. However, as the results of the research presented in the further part of the article show, there is still no coherence and common platform for cooperation in this area in these activities. There is no use of the potential of the local community, there is also a lack of activities enabling its inhabitants to shape the image of their city in maritime and sailing culture.

## 5. Research Results

According to Kowalewski: *„(…) the identity of the city will be related to the degree of inhabitants' involvement in the process of co-creating its space, (…)"* (Kowalewski, 2011). Migdalski's study show that it is mainly built thanks to the involvement of the conscious needs of such actions by individuals or groups of people from the second and third generation. They focus on a locality or idea, often associate in associations or informal groups (Migdalski, 2017). An example of such actions are, previously mentioned initiatives taken by the „Żeglarski Szczecin" (Sailing Szczecin) Social Committee and by other associations and informal groups. Thanks to grass-roots initiatives, local communities can be actively involved in building an identity related to the place where they live. These types of events

contribute to the integration of the community and give the opportunity to meet and share experiences. It stimulates the inhabitants' activity and involvement in creating and cultivating Szczecin's maritime and sailing culture.

The results of the survey (Strulak-Wójcikiewicz, 2020) conducted in 2019 among residents of the West Pomeranian region on the level of interest in events related to maritime and sailing culture and the expectations of respondents in Szczecin in interest - show that:
  – 82.7% of people declaring participation in cultural and sports events in Szczecin are interested in the broadly understood maritime and sailing culture,
  – in the group of respondents (7.5%) who do not participate in events related to the broadly understood maritime and sailing culture, 70% of people - the main reason for not participating in such events was indicated by lack of information about them,
  – 98.4% of respondents believe that it is worth creating and cultivating the maritime / sailing / port character of the city,
  – among the events influencing the shaping of the maritime and sailing character of Szczecin, the respondents indicated such events as, Sea Days - Sail Szczecin (89.5%) and The Tall Ships Races (91.1%).

According to the respondents, there are also no other events or activities that could positively affect the maritime/port/nature of the city in Szczecin, as well as the creation and maintenance of maritime and sailing culture and traditions (62.9% of respondents). As the survey results show, the local society sees the need to identify with the maritime/sailing/port nature of the city and points to the need to intensify activities in this area. The conducted study also shows how important people in creating these activities are people who create maritime and sailing culture of the city. It is so universal that it allows you to build the identity of the city with which people identify.

On the example of observations and conversations with representatives of associations and informal groups dealing with broadly understood maritime and sailing culture, also several key difficulties that most young non-governmental organizations working for the local community are facing can be identified. They coincide with the information collected in the governmental document attached to Resolution No. 104/2018 of the Council of Ministers of August 7, 2018, regarding the adoption of the program for supporting the development of civil society under the name "Program for the Development of Civic Organizations for the years 2018-2030 PROO". The most important problem for third sector entities is limited access to financing their initiatives. The activities of associations are mainly based on grant projects. This causes competition between organizations in obtaining funds. The consequence of this is the large dispersion of activities and their low effectiveness. In addition, the environment of similar non-governmental organizations dealing with issues of maritime and sailing culture does not know each other. This leads to the

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lack of implementation of joint projects that could be carried out by the wider community on a larger scale. This affects the perception by the local community of the activities of individual organizations as insignificant and of limited scope. The funding deficit also causes that initiatives in the field of maritime and sailing culture are not continuous but come down to sporadic activities carried out "from one grant to the other".

It is also worth quoting here some conclusions from the diagnostic study of the condition and prospects of Szczecin institutions and recipients of culture "Energia Szczecińskiej Kultury" (Energia Szczecińskiej Kultury, 2019). The authors of the diagnosis note that culture plays an important role in city management. It is an important element of the local economy, it is an important component of the quality of life of the inhabitants, it is crucial for the urban identity of groups and individuals, it fosters building social ties, shapes values, makes the life of inhabitants more pleasant, it is an important part of the revitalization process. Finally, culture can be the main factor determining the attractiveness of a city, a tool of city marketing". The research results show, inter alia, that:
  – there is no coherent image of Szczecin as a city of culture,
  – information about individual events is limited in scope (most cultural institutions in the city provide their announcements in their own social media, newsletters, etc., and these sources are not known to all interested parties),
  – many survey participants assessed the potential of Szczecin's culture as not fully Szczecin is still treated as a city where culture does not have a strong identity, or even as an agglomeration without its own culture.

The authors of the report also pay attention to:
  – lack of a common information channel about cultural events in the city,
  – the need to improve cooperation between the environment creating culture in Szczecin and those managing culture - the organizers and creators of cultural events perceive the practice of culture management as its administration,
  – the need to create a platform that would allow cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, informal groups and other entities operating in this area to share equipment, devices, furniture, etc. resources that can be used.

The research results presented in the article show that Szczecin lacks a common platform for cooperation in culture, including in the area of maritime and sailing culture. The conducted analysis allowed the author of the article to formulate a proposal for a business model of an internet platform intended for cooperation in maritime and sailing culture (Figure 2). The business model of the internet platform was built using the Canvas business modeling method developed by Osterwalder (2004).

**Figure 2.** *Internet platform's business model*

| **Business Model Canvas** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project name: Internet platform for cooperation in the field of maritime and sailing culture** | | | | |
| **8. Key partners**<br>Who are our key Partners?<br>• NGOs dealing with maritime and sailing culture - ideas, presentations of their activities and proposals for joint activities;<br>• Informal groups dealing with maritime and sailing culture – as above + volunteers;<br>Who are our key suppliers?<br>• Local government units, central institutions managing programs and finances - information on the possibilities of financing cultural activities;<br>• Sponsors / financing the functioning of the platform;<br>• Sailing organizations (OZŻŻ, PZŻ - advertisers);<br>• IT company - design, construction, platform administration.<br>• Regional media (TV, radio, Press and thematic internet portals: INFOLUDEK, SZANTY24, wszczecinie.pl, szczecin.pl and others for spreading information about events, media coverage | **7. Key Activities**<br>What Key Activities do our Value Proposition require?<br>• Developing concepts with partners and creating a platform model;<br>• Developing and managing the platform;<br>• Acquiring new partners / recipients;<br>• Acquiring sponsors;<br>• Promoting platform services;<br>• Animating partner / recipient cooperation.<br><br>**6. Key Resources**<br>What Key Resources do our Value Proposition require?<br>• Mobile and responsive application<br>• Knowledge and contacts in the environment and sailing and social<br>• Space on the server?<br>• Financing under the project | **2. Value Proposition**<br>What value do we deliver to the customer?<br>• A modern tool for establishing and developing cooperation of currently dispersed entities dealing with maritime and sailing culture;<br>• Information in one place about entities dealing with maritime and sailing culture and their offer for recipients and the media;<br>• Integration of the environment dealing with maritime and sailing culture in the region;<br>• Information useful for entities dealing with maritime and sailing culture about programs and co-financing in one place | **4. Customer Relationships**<br>What type of relationship do our Customer Segments expect?<br>• Email contact and support<br>• Personal meetings<br>• Cyclical meetings with a group of partners,<br>• Facebook - keep up to date on events on the platform, with a link<br><br>**3. Channels of reaching recipients (sales channels)**<br>Through which Channels do our Customer Segments want to be reached?<br>• Social media<br>• Sailing organizations (OZŻŻ, PZŻ)<br>• Tourist organizations<br>• Yacht ports and marinas<br>• Marine trade press<br>• Facebook | **1. Customer Segment**<br>For whom are we creating value?<br>• Local community<br>• Sailors' community<br>• Yacht ports and marinas<br>• Cultural institutions (libraries, museums, cultural centers<br>• Educational facilities at all levels (kindergarten primary, secondary and higher education) and educational care centers<br>• Tourist organizations<br>• Agencies, companies, organizational units and budgetary units of territorial self-government units dealing with the organization of cultural events |
| **9. Cost structure**<br>What are the most important costs inherent in our business model?<br>• Costs of purchasing a domain, building and operating the platform<br>• Platform development (new functionalities)<br>• Marketing (advertising of platform services)<br>Which Key Resources are most expensive?<br>• An IT company that will create the application and platform<br>Which Key Activities are most expensive?<br>• Building and service of the platform | | | **5. Revenue Streams**<br><br>• Grants<br>• Advertiser fees<br>• Sponsorship | |

*Source: Own study.*

The main goal of the online cooperation platform for maritime and sailing culture, according to the author, is the integration of various groups of stakeholders involved in the creation and maintenance of sea and sailing culture. It is to be a place of cooperation between the cultural sector, local government, and business to achieve social goals in promotion and dissemination of the broadly understood maritime culture in this region. The online platform will facilitate the taking and implementation of activities in the field of creating and cultivating the tradition of the city, on a larger scale than currently done by individual non-governmental organizations. It is also to activate and integrate the local community around the broadly understood maritime and sailing culture.

## 6. Conclusions and Directions of Further Research

Current trends prove that the issue of using the idea of crowdsourcing to strengthen social participation is now becoming very desirable and important. Regardless of the size, purpose or scope of operation, an important goal of building crowdsourcing platforms is to create an effective communication channel (friendly, easy to use) enabling the effective flow of various resources (including information). In this

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context, the key aspect is replacing one-way communication with a two-way dialogue of the crowd (local community) with a given institution. In this respect, the following are important: an appropriate climate of cooperation, creating a properly functioning ecosystem and providing useful tools (friendly and mobilizing tools for participation) (Savalle *et al.,* 2010). The potential of crowdsourcing confirms the legitimacy of creating an online cooperation platform for maritime and sailing culture in the city of Szczecin. It would contribute to the implementation of a participatory management model in maritime and sailing culture. Further research should be focused on the practical application of this concept, determining the functionality of such a platform, its system architecture, and the principles of participation of individual stakeholders.

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