

**Title: Making Consumer Knowledge Available and Useful  
The Case of the Computer Games Industry**

**Author: Lars Bo Jeppesen**

**Abstract**

*Firms rely on an external organization to complement the relevant parts of their own knowledge base. In the present paper it is argued that consumers might form part of such an organization because they represent productive knowledge suitable and valuable for firm's purposes. But, as most knowledge, consumer's knowledge is dispersed and often fallible. Taking advantage of consumer knowledge revolves around coordination. In the paper it is argued that a technical innovation - the Internet - together with a social innovation - characterized by incentives and authority - allow firms to coordinate consumer knowledge and make it valid for processes of innovation in product design. In the paper is developed a micro-level notion of the consumer as being an active individual capable of acquiring knowledge (experience and skills) by way of consumption and use. Further is presented a concept of end-consumer producer interaction explaining under which conditions consumer's knowledge can be swapped over to producers and in which situations consumer knowledge might prove to be useful for producer purposes. A specific empirical example of a firm from the emergent industry of computer games show how systematic sourcing of consumer knowledge in several cases has assisted the firm in improving its product design.*

**Key words:** External organization, consumer knowledge, coordination, end-consumer - producer interaction, innovation, computer games industry.