
Guest editorial: Understanding prosumer behavior in the platform ecosystem

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2589

The term prosumer was coined by futurist [Toffler \(1980\)](#), who envisioned the trend of mass customization in the marketplace that consumers would partake in the producing process as producers and designers (i.e. do-it-yourself [DIY]) for their consumption. Thanks to the platform revolution ([Parker et al., 2016](#)) and the growing participatory culture ([Jenkins et al., 2006](#)), the lines between producers and consumers and/or between buyers and sellers have become increasingly blurring in all aspects of consumption. Prosumers play vital roles in brand coproduction, creation, promotion and distribution through interactive conversations and dialogues among fan cultural groups and brand communities ([Dessart and Veloutsou, 2021](#)). The widespread adoption of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, along with the proliferation of various types of social media platforms, have enhanced the processes of prosumer engagement and interactivity ([Kim et al., 2021](#)).

First, DIY has become do-it-with-us and the digital platforms shifted pipeline business models to a complex network of users or interconnect ecosystem, such as Alibaba, Amazon and eBay wherein one can be a buyer or a seller, a producer or a user and a provider or a client. The process of value creation is rapidly shifting from the product- and firm-centric view to personalized consumer and prosumer experiences based on enabled value-creating interactions between external producers and consumers ([Wang, 2021](#)). The market is becoming a forum for conversations and interactions among connected global actors in various platforms, in which participants can swap their roles from hosts to customers on Airbnb, from drivers to riders on Uber and Didi and from content creators to audience on Youtube ([Soylomez, 2021](#)).

Second, participatory cultures involve product/service users and/or brand fans acting as proactive consumers and product advocates. Fan culture and fandom behavior, in particular, have changed the consumer-brand relationship as such that consumers are acting roles like enthusiasts, hobbyists, reviewers, bloggers live streamers and influencers in various digital platforms including companies' own websites ([He et al., 2021](#)). Prosumers can interact with producers and customers, creating and sharing contents, giving feedback and reviews, promoting and "liking" products/brands to their social networks and playing an ever-increasing influencer role in fellow consumers' decision-making ([Niu et al., 2016](#)). For instance, the fast-growing game industry and thriving game consumption market have facilitated the growing of professional gamers and online game live streamers, who engage in both production and consumption processes in the cyber world of game fandom. Game streamers and online celebrities, sponsored by game developers, often become self-willing fan labors who converted the role from fans to buyers and promoters ([Fathy et al., 2021](#); [Stanfill and Condis, 2014](#)).

Third, proliferation of various types of social media dramatically altered the dynamics of consumer involvement in various online communities ([Yen and Dey, 2019](#)), including fan communities. Social media platforms are now hubs that congregate global brand fans, who act as brand evangelists to share and exchange experience with the product or brand ([Wang et al., 2019](#)). The more user cocreation, the larger the market size, as in the case of Facebook



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and Instagram, wherein millions of users contribute to the development of viral marketing. Live streaming media are particularly effective in creating fandom through interactive multimedia communications. Prosumers who become influencers and advocates usually possess particular professional knowledge that can affect fellow consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Dinh and Lee, 2021).

Despite the wide practices of prosumption (production by consumers) as a social and psychological phenomenon that changes the contemporary consumptionscape, the academic research on prosumer behavior has not kept in pace with this fast-growing trend. In response to this research gap, this Special Issue aims at advancing the field of prosumer and prosumption research, illustrating prosumption's impact on existing consumptionscape and shedding new light to the studies of consumer behavior. In this special issue, we introduce nine articles that addressed various issues of the prosumer conception.

Consumer engagement in marketing activities is important for brand cocreation (Zhang and Ma, 2022) and is a common practice of prosumer behavior. Sarkar, Sarkar and S (*Prosumption through advergaming: leveraging on advergaming format and reward elements to create a sacred brand*) examine how brands leverage on advergaming to foster a prosumer culture and build a sacred brand. The authors find that that cooperative (noncooperative) advergaming format generates strong cold brand relationship quality (hot brand relationship quality) leading to intention to prosume, which in turn drives brand sacredness. The results further demonstrate that using hedonic (vs utilitarian) rewards strengthens the impact of cooperative (noncooperative) advergaming format on hot (cold) brand relationship quality.

In a same vein, Casidy, Leckie, Nyadzayo and Johnson (*Customer brand engagement and co-production: an examination of key boundary conditions in the sharing economy*) investigate the role of customer innovativeness and perceived economic value as important boundary conditions on the effects of customer brand engagement behavior on cocreation. The results indicate that customer innovativeness and perceived economic value positively moderate the effects of customer brand engagement behavior on cocreation, which leads to customer satisfaction. The study provides managerial insights into how firms can customize marketing strategies to encourage customers as prosumers in cocreation by targeting highly innovative customers and focusing on perceived economic value.

Given brand cocreation requires firm–customer synergy, He and Zhang (*Dynamic brand positioning: A firm-customer synergistic strategy of brand meaning co-creation in a hyper-connected context*) explore how cocreated brand meaning builds and affects brand dynamic positioning in a hyperconnected context. Using in-depth interview data, firm materials and consumer-generated content in online brand community, the authors construct a matrix of dynamic brand positioning as the key analysis framework. The mutual transformation of core meaning and peripheral meaning promotes the practice of dynamic positioning of brands.

Employees are internal customers and thus play an important role in the brand cocreation process. Marcet-Alonso, Parsons and Pirani (*Career-washing? Unpacking employer brand promises on social media platforms*) examine how a global retail organization uses a social media platform to recruit new employees and retain existing ones via a process of online employer branding. The study involved a narrative and thematic analysis of posts of a global fashion retailer on LinkedIn. The results show that organizations are not effective in engaging with the affective and networked nature of communications on social media platforms. The authors introduce the concept of career-washing to theorize how employee brand promises operate as distraction and as hypocrisy given the gap between these idealized appeals and reality of contemporary retail work.

The platform economies create great opportunities for ordinary consumers to become internet celebrities such as online influencer or streamers (Shen, 2021). Zhou, Jin, Wu, Wang, Wang and Chen (*Understanding the role of influencers on live streaming platforms: when tipping makes the difference*) attempt to quantify the impact of live streaming celebrities (LSC) on tipping frequency, the potential mechanism and its heterogeneous impact across live streaming rooms. The results show that LSCs' participation significantly improves tipping frequency in the live streaming room, more users will be attracted to the live streaming room to view the live streaming, and more users will be encouraged to be more active and participate in singing. In addition, the positive impact of LSCs' participation will be further enhanced in the live streaming rooms with more number of social network links. Their findings provide managerial implications that encourage LSC to participate more into live streamings, stimulate users to build social network links on the platform and carry out finer management of livestream rooms would help improving tipping income.

Online reviews are parts of an interactive marketing communication process (Lopez and Garza, 2022). Chan, Zeng, Yuen and Yang (*Review platforms as prosumer communities: Theory, practices, and implications*) propose that online review platforms can be conceptualized as prosumer communities (and online reviews as prosumer-generated content). The authors find that review content is the result of a collaborative value creation process, characterized by three distinct value-adding processes of message tuning. Their paper enriches and deepens theoretical understanding of prosumption behavior in the product review context and offers practical advice for platform managers to guide the creation of high value review content.

Zhang, Lin, Qi and Liang (*The Effects of Online Reviews on the Popularity of User-Generated Design Ideas within the LEGO Community*) further look at how online review characteristics and designers' social network centrality interact to influence idea popularity in open innovation communities. The results show designers' in-degree centrality positively moderates the effects of review valence, review variance and review length on idea popularity, while their out-degree centrality negatively moderates such effects. It provides managerial implications, showing that designers should actively interact with other users to improve the volume of reviews on their user designs. Moreover, designers could also share professional product design knowledge and/or the journey of their design with reviewers to prompt heterogeneous reviews on their design.

In an attempt to understand the platform transparency and prosumer behaviors, Zeng, Song, Song, Zuo and Yu (*The Impact of the Number of Participants and Platform Transparency on Prosumers' Creative Performance*) examine how the number of activity participants and platform transparency jointly influence prosumers' creative performance and the corresponding mechanism. The results reveal that the large number of participants will stimulate creative performance on untransparent cocreation platforms but will inhibit creative performance on transparent cocreation platforms. The author further suggest that the stimulation effect on untransparent platforms is mediated by the arousal level, while the inhibition effect on transparent platform is mediated by the perceived constraint of idea expression.

The platform economy blurred the role of buyers and sellers (Parker *et al.*, 2016; Wang, 2021). Ertz, Boily, Sun and Sarigöllü (*Role transitions at the prosumer level: Spillover effects in the collaborative economy from an interactive marketing perspective*) identify and test the key factors that motivate transition from user to supplier and, subsequently, provide an in-depth understanding of the process and mechanism of the switchover effect in the collaborative economy. The results suggest that peer influence increases changes in individual motivations or preferences and individual behaviors. In addition, promoting

solidarity between members of the collaborative economy platform may help facilitate the transition of participants from users to providers. The perception of socialization and satisfaction and sense of indebtedness of the users may also play a significant role in the transition.

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- Guest editorial