

The communication pattern in prosumption practices through free e-books at membacacepat.com

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How to Cite This Article: Wibowo, T.O. (2022). The communication pattern in prosumption practices through free e-books at membacacepat.com. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 6(2). doi: 10.25139/jsk.v6i2.4885

Received: 11-04-2022, Revision: 21-05-2022, Acceptance: 11-06-2022, Published online: 30-07-2022

Abstract This study explored the occurrence of a free e-book titled Speed Reading for Beginners that can only be obtained by signing up for an email newsletter at MembacaCepat.com. Through Web 2.0, the Internet facilitated the emergence of a new culture centred on shifting consumer relationships in which individuals both consumed and produced the products they consumed. The purpose of this study is to carry out further research into the communication pattern regarding how the practices of production and consumption, also known as prosumption, occurred at the same agency via the web manager or web owner and e-book downloaders. This study employs virtual ethnography by interviewing informants and observing artefacts as data via the Internet. This study aims to utilise the circuit of culture as an analytic framework, similar to the consumption circuit outlined in continuing consumption practices. The findings indicate that the pattern of production and consumption can be mapped as a collaborative effort between website owners and visitors, with the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book catalysing increased visitor participation.

Keywords: prosumption practices; the involvement of prosumer; communication pattern; cyberculture

INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the Internet has made it simple to obtain information that was previously only available through newspapers, television, and magazines, but it has been digitised in bits. The growth of the Internet and the digitisation of media and information channels are related to new media. The portrayal of new media has significantly changed due to the rapid development of digitisation (Bartosik-Purgat, 2019; Bartosik-Purgat & Bednarz, 2021). How information technology, data communication, and processing technologies are used as tools for manipulating, organising, transmitting, and storing digital data This means that there is a cultural shift occurring during the digitisation process toward the dematerialisation of information; for example, a physical book can be read only by holding it and turning the pages page by page. However,

transferring a book as an e-book (electronic book) makes dissemination easier in the digital era.

On the other hand, Web 2.0 enables users to write and create content on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and personal websites. In this case, users can create what they have consumed. Many productive activities are voluntary and non-monetary in many production communities. They are voluntary because people contribute to these communities without obligation and capability. Nobody directs an employee to contribute an article to Wikipedia or code the Linux operating system. They make their own decisions and desire to produce (Tapscott & Williams, 2008, p. 67). Cesareo (2011) asserts that consumers' active engagement in locating, selecting, and utilising information enables them to be positioned as producers in rewriting what they have read. The Internet aided in the formation of culture by repositioning consumers in such a way that they consume while simultaneously producing what they consume.

Along with advancements in technology and digitisation processes, as well as the evolution of the Internet, this article focuses on the use of a digital version of a printed book or e-book, specifically on the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book (*Panduan Membaca Lebih Cepat, Lebih Cerdas, dan Pemahaman Yang Lebih Baik*) that is freely available on MembacaCepat.com. If there is no consumer appreciation for this e-book, it is unlikely to attract a large number of interested individuals. Since its initial publication in July 2009, this E-book has been downloaded more than 30,000 times by e-book downloaders. This e-book is distributed for free on the condition that interested parties register and submit their name and email address to the website's email newsletter via a form referred to as an opt-in form.

The concept of an email newsletter from Ferreira and Silva (2012), where a community manager can know what the members of a community want and need through online activities conducted via email, such as tracking the activities like opening an email, sharing the email, and clicking the link inside the email. A well-organised newsletter will be a great communication tool. Everything is recorded in a system and registered email as a database. Thus, the question arises as to why the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book is provided for free, although e-book downloaders are required to sign up for an email newsletter.

An adequate study of how individuals build visibility on the Internet has been carried out, for example, by Wibowo (2019), which analysed individuals using a website to offer premium products from a newsletter and freemium product/e-book. Furthermore, this article will explore how individuals use freemium products (e-books) to offer more premium products in a newsletter.

In the literature review, the title of this study began with production-consumption studies (prosumption) to integrate production and consumption processes through appropriate prosumption theories in the digital age. Although only these two processes are studied, this

research remains within the context of the cultural circuit as a framework of thought that includes three other circuit processes: representation, identity, and regulations as postscripts or additional notes that could be improved in the future studies.

The concept of prosumption was first coined by Alvin Toffler in his book *The Third Wave* (1980). Prosumption can be best understood as how individuals simultaneously perform the activities of production and consumption (Sugihartati, 2017), thereby encouraging prosumers (Papadimitropoulos, 2021). Prosumption has various distinct properties. The first is people's involvement in the manufacturing of goods and services. People contribute to this process by contributing their time, effort, and expertise. Second, people produce for their use. In the case of products, they start with raw materials and work their way up to the finished product. Their happiness with the finished product and emotional experiences during the manufacturing process will impact their following consumption experience (Xie, 2005, pp. 2–3). Tapscott and Williams (2008, p.3) suggested that Web 2.0's flexible access supported a type of collaboration called Wikinomics. A term which describes a situation when it reaches a point in the new forms of mass collaboration are changing how goods and services are founded, produced, marketed, and distributed on a global basis, as in the example of users' participation in publishing, modification and perform customization of content on Wikipedia, YouTube, LinkedIn, online community, online forums, and participate in open-source software such as Linux and WordPress.

In the digital economy, internet users are prosumers (Papadimitropoulos, 2021). This "new" category of customers is referred to as prosumers when they provide goods or services to other consumers in sharing contexts (Barnes & Mattsson, 2016; Costello & Reczek, 2020; Klein et al., 2022). Consumers assumed expanded roles in sharing underutilised goods (Eckhardt et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2022). Not only are they passive consumers who appreciate cultural texts as a leisure pastime, but they are also part of a group of active fans who act as producers and indicate "free digital labour" (Sugihartati, 2017).

According to a number of studies on prosumers, monetary incentives, social interaction, and the sharing economy are individual factors that influence prosumers (Renuka, 2019). Prosumers' activities by providing reviews increase trust (Agag & Eid, 2019). Similarly, reviews containing distrust and perceived risks diminish the confidence of other consumers to purchase (Del Chiappa et al., 2021). Similarly, websites facilitating feedback from prosumers (users) increase their propensity to buy the product (Xu & Schrier, 2019). However, there are not many studies on prosumers focusing on a website that creates a newsletter system to offer freemium products and premium products (Wibowo, 2019), especially on the communication patterns that occur in detail in prosumers activities.

Furthermore, this study explores the communication pattern

between the web management and the e-book downloaders based on prior conceptions of their engagement and position as prosumers via the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book, which can be downloaded via this website's email newsletter. This means that this e-book crosses the prosumer activity process.

As a result, this study attempts to investigate two major questions. First, how do the prosumption (production-consumption) behaviours that occurred in this phenomenon of the free e-book by considering this e-book as a part of a cultural product from MembacaCepat.com? Production and consuming processes are interconnected and overlapped. A cultural circuit's mindset is required to investigate how both activities occur to see this occurrence.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research with the constructivist paradigm. Furthermore, according to Crotty (1998, p. 46), constructivism is "*the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.*" The author used online communication for data collection through technology (such as smartphones and email). Thus, trust is required at the time to conduct the interview between the researcher and the informants who do not know each other.

Thus, ways and strategies are required to perform the initial contact with the informant, which begins with an introductory question and continues with a contextual query regarding the e-book as a research object before raising some research questions. The data was gathered in various ways, including through online interviews and observation of comments. To begin, an online interview was performed directly with the web manager, Muhammad Noer, via email. Second, the author conducted some deep-chats with the three informants (e-book downloaders), and three additional informants gathered from blogs who published a review of the e-book Speed Reading for Beginners via Facebook Messenger. Thirdly, data was obtained from the reader and e-book downloader comments on the website and some online content created via blogs, websites, social media, and media sharing documents online (such as Scribd.com, Slideshare.com, and Showdocument.com).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MembacaCepat.com Website

Muhammad Noer is the webmaster of MembacaCepat.com, where he has created a website that allows visitors to download an e-book about speed reading. However, the e-book Speed Reading for Beginners can be obtained only after registering with someone's name and email address. It tracks their activity via email newsletter. It may be argued

that this book was the culmination of years of past writing experiences, some experience establishing his Speed-Reading program, and finally, he wrote on his blog at MuhammadNoer.com. His experiences are the foundation for his cultural capital as the blog's creator. Muhammad Noer recognised that many visitors discovered his site by searching for information regarding fast reading, so he tended to write and share more in this category.

MembacaCepat.com is a continuation of the Muhammad-Noer.com blog. Noer stated in an article on MuhammadNoer.com that his initial subject was speed reading. In other words, after receiving positive feedback from the publication of the e-book Speed Reading for Beginners on the Muhammad-Noer.com website, he saw a greater opportunity to develop further in another space that focused exclusively on speed reading, which is why the MembacaCepat.com website was created. This means that this website, in particular, speaks a lot and focuses on speed reading. The website is a platform for online self-promotion before selling premium goods after providing freemium goods (Wibowo, 2019). The evolution of e-book downloaders becoming subscribers is depicted in Table 1 through subscribers who join his website email newsletter. Furthermore, in this case, the email newsletter also shows the total subscribers who are interested and involved more in this website.

Table 1. Total *Subscribers*

Year	The sum of <i>subscribers</i>
2009	1500
2010	8000
2011-2013	20.000
2013-2015	over 30.000

Source: Collected by the author (2015)

The Collaboration in Disseminating E-book

Through its development, both on MembacaCepat.com and MuhammadNoer.com, around 30,000 subscribers indicate that speed reading online via the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book has become their preferred method of online learning about speed reading, where the e-book has supplanted printed books as a medium of online learning about speed reading. This attachment can be viewed in the website's comments section. It demonstrates that the e-book Speed Reading for Beginners has the potential to attract e-book downloaders who, after reading it, give their impression to produce content that is relevant to what is on their minds, as evidenced by a bunch of feedback expressing gratitude from MuhammadNoer.com and MembacaCepat.com websites.

With a positive tone, much feedback had been recognised as well by Muhammad Noer, that in an online interview on 17 April 2015, said, "of course, there was negative feedback, yet the numbers were much less than the positive. Those can be seen in the book comments and on Muhammadnoer.com and Membacacepat.com. Some negative feedback

said that it is impossible to do a speed reading." However, "this book has received positive comments from more than 400 readers from all over Indonesia." The feedback or reviews demonstrate the assumption of the actions taken by prosumers. Reviews on Web 2.0 can be a prosumption activity of reviewing a product without needing a review platform, slightly different from Chan et al. (2022)'s article. In addition, social media platforms play a significant role (Bartosik-Purgat & Bednarz, 2021), and they can be categorized into homogeneous categories (Alsaleh et al., 2019) to share the same information about speed reading. Then, settings where numerous consumers are present synchronously (physically or online) are referred to as collective consumption contexts (Bouncken & Tiberius, 2021; Kelleher et al., 2019).

Considering the e-book in terms of some values obtained from the e-book downloaders' unique experiences, it establishes the e-book as a part of their culture, enriches cultural meaning, and provides value to the e-book downloaders. Of course, the interpretations of e-book downloaders may differ. They had given the e-book *Speed Reading for Beginners* a set value for each of the e-book downloaders based on their meaningful experiences. Either the interpretation is sent directly to the web manager through email or shared with other bloggers via comments on MuhammadNoer.com & MembacaCepat.com or by some other method.

Premium products and a *Speed-Reading book for Beginners* are available on the MembacaCepat.com website. These products are not the result of the development of the previous *Speed Reading for Beginners* e-book. These products result from a partnership between the 'customer' (e-book downloaders) and emotional and distinctive experiences on a single lap (see Figure 2). They contribute to the value of the *Speed Reading for Beginners* e-book by providing positive comments on the website and exchanging information via online sites. At the same time, the web manager organises this digital community and plans and launches premium product phases based on their expertise.

The Prosumers Position in the Dissemination of Speed Reading for Beginners E-book

To understand the communication pattern in prosumption practices, it is necessary to apply a circuit of culture mindset to see it as a sustainable activity. It is not as simple as the form of delivering a message by a communicator to communicants through a website that offers an e-book, but through an e-book, it builds a long journey of a continuous and ongoing communication process.

Moreover, George Ritzer delivered more detail and better by exposing the actors involved in the prosumption practices (2013, p. 8). He explains that there is no such thing as either pure production (without at least some consumption) or pure consumption (without at least some

production); the two processes always interpenetrate.

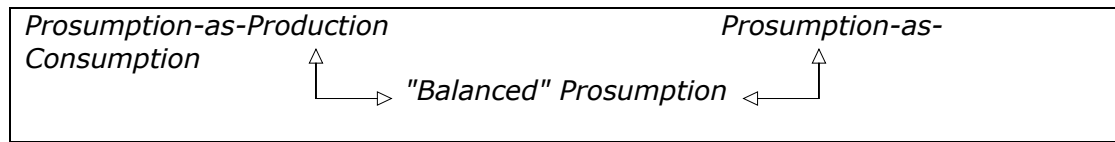


Figure 1. The Continuum of Prosumption
 Source: Ritzer (2013)

Figure 1 above offers a perspective if prosumption is not a stand-alone process but rather the sequences of processes that are the involvement of the production as "prosumption-as-production" (p-a-p) and consumption as "prosumption-as-consumption" (p-a-c). He formulated prosumption in the extreme production and consumption that are a sub-type of prosumption. To make it easier to understand, the author tries to portray this concept in a table as follows:

Table 2. The Position of Processes and The Prosumers

	Process		The Agents	
	Production	Consumption	Producer	Consumer
Outdated concept (A)				
Ritzer's concept (B)	1. Prosumption-as-Production	1. Prosumption-as-Consumption	1. Prosumer-as-Producer	1. Prosumer-as-Consumer
	2. Prosumption-as-Consumption	2. Prosumption-as-Production	2. Prosumer-as-Consumer	2. Prosumer-as-Producer

Source: Ritzer (2013, p. 9)

Table 2 above indicates that any process in column A distinguishes between production and consumption practices as separate processes, as do the agents. However, unlike column B, production and consumption practices consist of two prosumption practices, as do the agents.

Moreover, from the description above, the author tries to look at more detail in the prosumer concept of Web 2.0 in a scheme between the position of the web manager in this context as producer (or, more accurately, according to Ritzer if prosumer-as-producer) and the e-book downloaders in this context as consumers (prosumer-as-consumer). There are two central positions here at the position of the web manager (labelled with the letter A) and e-book downloaders (labelled with the letter B). Both have had the same position, either as a prosumer-as-producer or prosumer-as-consumer. In the scheme above, the e-book downloaders create the collaboration that occurs in a circuit. In total, there are three main sequences of the process to form a circle or 360 degrees scheme, three times the prosumption (-as-production) and the prosumption (-as-consumption) in one lap circuit. In Figure 2, the result of the production of Prosumer A (prosumer-as-producer) in the first

process of prosumption (-as-production) generates the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book offered to Prosumer B (prosumer-as-consumer).

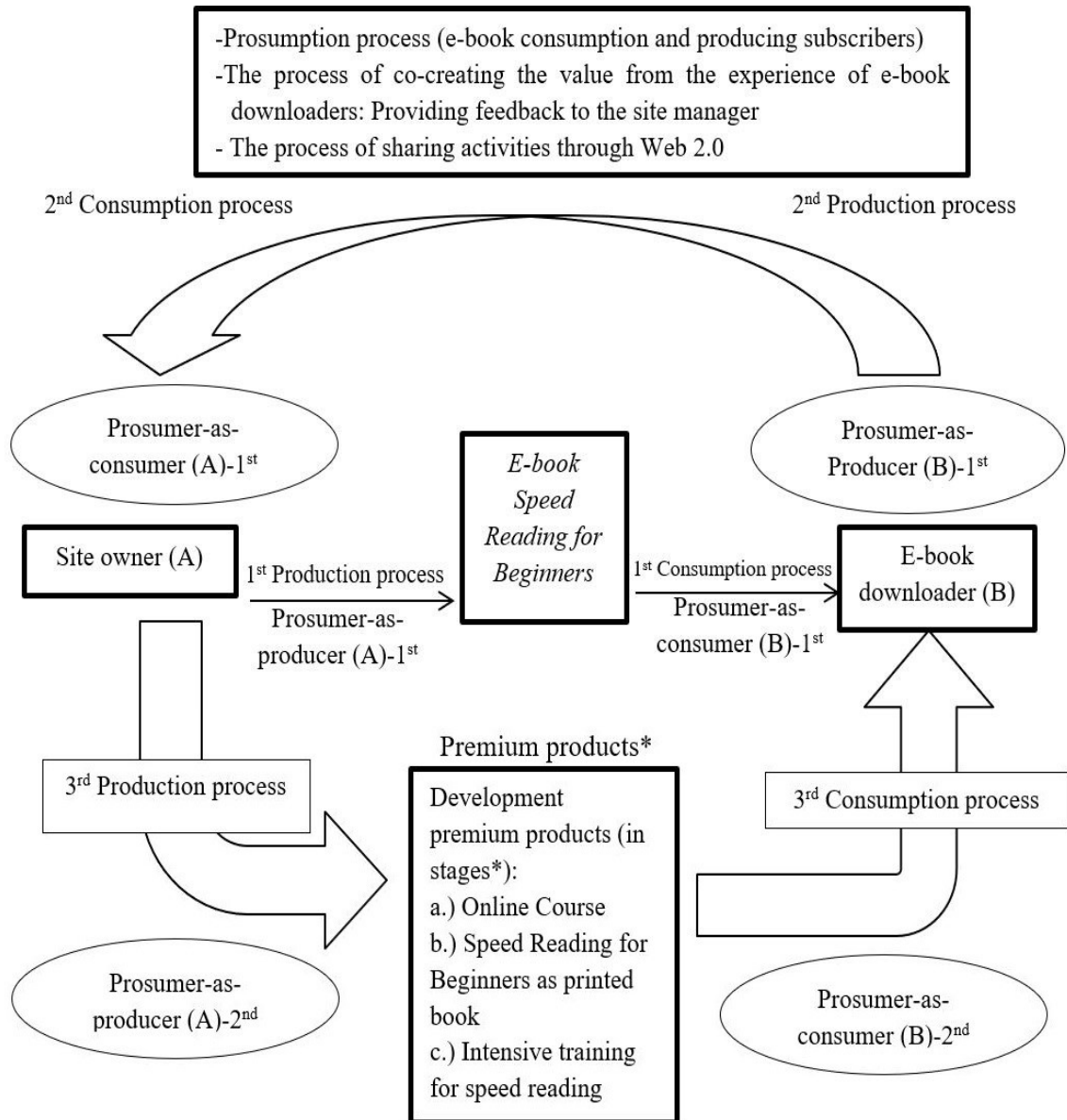
In the next process, it occurs in the refinement and development of the e-book product, which is made by Prosumer A (prosumer-as-producer) after taking the value created by the prosumer B (prosumer-as-producer) through the registration in the form of an email newsletter to build a database of the subscribers from the e-book downloaders and written feedback by the Prosumer B either via email or the comments in the website. Prosumer A, after surpassing every one lap, produced and offered the premium product (the online course of Speed reading (2010), printed book of Speed Reading for Beginners (2012), and intensive training for Speed Reading (2014)) to the Prosumer B (prosumer-as-consumer). Prosumer (A) who owns numerous properties may want to benefit from an intermediary to help recirculate the necessary services (Xiang et al., 2022).

In the scheme (Figure 2), it can be seen that the different results obtained from the prosumption (-as-production) process indicate if the collaboration of Prosumer B (e-book downloaders) is under the control of Prosumer A (the web manager) to wait for premium products that are developed through a process prosumption-as-consumption to consume feedback from the Prosumer B. Although Prosumer A and B have the same position in the process of production and consumption, Prosumer A produces the finished product. At the same time, Prosumer B can be said as a 'quiet' activity because they wait for the finished product or are 'under the control of Prosumer A in creating the emotional experience of advanced products that will be produced. Prosumer A gains information greatly from Prosumer B's engagement in the production process in one lap of the Figure 2 scheme. Prosumer A receives information from prospective customers and can develop unique or premium products (Ziamba et al., 2019).

In this study, these prosumers (as-consumers) not only consume but also reshare information (Sugihartati et al., 2020) about e-books with others without any compensation or monetary label but with a sense of fulfilment since the e-books are meaningful to them. It can be seen from feedback that has been mentioned previously. Prosumers who have already subscribed to this website can play a role as buzzers because of their unique ability to always share knowledge (Jeon et al., 2019). According to Xie (2005, p.3), the means of prosumption extends backwards from consumption to include the part of the production process that traditionally is under manufacturers' control. Therefore, prosumption is "the combination of consumers' participation in the production process of products or services they eventually consume and their subsequent consumption experience".

Prosumer A (prosumer-as-producer) and Prosumer B are two categories into which the prosumers' activities can be more precisely classified. Although in the process, as Sugiharti (2017) said that prosumers could occur by individuals at the same time carrying out

production and consumption activities, Figure 2 shows a detailed scheme, prosumers will always place one of the production or consumption activities when viewed synchronously by adding a hyphen (-) sign to make it clear.



* The process of introducing the premium products is carried out in stages, which means that each premium product requires one rotation of the prosumer position scheme in one lap.

Figure 2. Position scheme of Prosumption Practices
 Source: Author (2015)

In addition, the discussion results provide different findings from the writings of Klein et al. (2022) in that these prosumers (-as-consumers) not only acquire and consume resources but also supply them as services (A) for sale to others. In this study, Prosumers B does not

always share economic activities with others, but a meaningful product is an adequate compensation. Even though prosumer is not a new thing, it creates a gap in today's digital world if consumers participate in producing information or content. The prosumption (-as-production) practices of e-book downloaders demonstrate that they do so willingly and without compensation during the process of sharing. They enjoyed learning about speed reading and expressed gratitude to the web owner for providing them with "something meaningful." Therefore, it implies the emergence of free labour that enables the distribution of e-books. Specifically, In the prosumer concept, it is assumed that there are collectively moving individuals who collaborate in unpaid labour (Daros, 2022). According to Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010), however, prosumers enjoy what they do, and their actions cannot be viewed as simple capitalist manipulation. The presence of Prosumer B (e-book downloader), who collaborates with site managers to transform some of their creations into agents who disseminate through social media and document sharing and produce content through blogs and websites, is the last factor. While this activity is profitable for site owners and managers, it is uncompensated, making these individuals "unpaid workers" or free labour.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that e-book downloaders are far more than passive consumers who simply download and read e-books; rather, they are prosumers whose actions add value to the e-book. In this study's result, production and consumption are intertwined, which is particularly pertinent in Web 2.0 research. As depicted in Figure 2, the communication pattern between site managers and visitors (e-book downloaders) can be viewed as an interconnected prosumption circuit resulting from prosumer activities, indicating prosumers' position on both sides.

Studying the prosumer activities surrounding the Speed Reading for Beginners e-book on the website membacacepat.com reveals that prosumers (e-book downloaders) play a significant role in disseminating the speed reading. As previously stated, the development of Web 2.0 also enhances prosumption actions within the context of cyberculture. Given that the Internet is still an evolving medium, prosumption will continue to create more forms of prosumption and free labour and change in line with the Internet's development, which will soon include the emergence of web 3.0 or even 4.0.

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