Mapping the Landscape of Prosumption Research: A Bibliometric Investigation and Research Agenda

Wyssal Abbassi
University of Tunis El Manar, National Engineering School of Tunis, Tunisia
Wyssal is the corresponding author, and she can be contacted at: wyssal.abbassi@enit.utm.tn

Leyla Jaoued Abbassi
Institut de Recherche en Gestion, Gustave-Eiffel University & Paris-Est Créteil Universty, Marne la vallée, France

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Abstract

Prosumption, where consumers create goods and services for their personal use, remains underexplored in management and marketing research. This study delves into the current research landscape on prosumption, with a distinct emphasis on understanding the intellectual structure within marketing literature. Using bibliometric analysis and Vosviewer visualisation software, we conducted a broad search across all domains and narrowed our focus to articles specifically from marketing-related journals. Extracting data from the WoS and SCOPUS databases, our findings reveal that prosumption research is still in its early stages, but the recent increase in publications highlights its growing significance as a hot topic. We identified key themes associated with prosumption and proposed a research agenda, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field. By understanding prosumption dynamics, managers can tailor strategies to engage consumers as active value co-creators, enhancing brand loyalty and driving sustainable growth.

Keywords: Prosumption; Prosumer; Bibliometric analysis; VosViewer; Trend Analysis

Introduction

The advent of social media and the mobile web has abolished social and spatial boundaries and given rise to new jobs, innovative marketing strategies, and alternative approaches to engaging with consumers. The sharing and collaborative consumption culture gained dynamism and popularity, enabling consumers to save money and engage in more responsible consumption. Gradually, peer-to-peer platforms have significantly reshaped the sharing economy, redefining the role of the consumer and introducing responsibilities and behaviours. From a simple passive consumer, using the goods and services offered to him, we have seen the birth of a new type of consumer, demanding, participatory, and actively engaged in creating and producing the goods and services he consumes: The return of the prosumer!

Prosumption involves both the consumer's consumption and production of goods and services. Coined by Toffler in 1980, the initial concept of a prosumer blends the roles of 'producer and 'consumer', referring to individuals who create assets for their personal use. However, its interpretation has evolved over time, shifting from solely producing for self-consumption to generating value for oneself and others (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Seran and Izvercian, 2014; Xie *et al.*, 2008). The concept of prosumption has gained attention from researchers in various disciplines since the seminal work by Ritzer and Jurgenson in 2010. Despite its increasing prominence in the broader management context, prosumption is often assimilated with related concepts such as co-creation and co-production, particularly within the marketing field. All three concepts refer to the role of the consumers and the dynamics of their participation in the production of goods and services. Unlike in other fields, little marketing research has addressed this topic.

This study employs bibliometric analysis to examine existing research on prosumption, specifically focusing on mapping the intellectual structure within the current landscape of marketing literature on the topic. We intend to uncover key trends and influential contributors and identify distinct research clusters around the concept. We aim to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What research has been undertaken regarding prosumers and prosumption?
RQ2: What is the current state of research on prosumption in the marketing literature in particular?
RQ3: What are the emerging research themes on prosumption in marketing studies?
RQ4: What are the main research opportunities and hotspots within the marketing field?

Background

The concept of prosumption was introduced by the sociologist Alvin Toffler (1980), who identified three waves of societal development: the first wave, linked to the agrarian revolution, and blended production and consumption, which later separated during the Industrial Revolution (the second wave). The third wave anticipates the emergence of a novel consumer type known as the prosumer, driven by modern societies and shaped by the social changes brought by the transformative effects of Web 2.0 (Toffler, 1980; Kotler, 1986; Ritzer, 2010).
The technological evolution has emphasized key aspects such as increased exchange, user-generated content, participation, and collective intelligence, merging production and consumption into a unified sphere. This departure from the traditional binary understanding of production and consumption is considered a fundamental shift in modern societies. Some scholars even employ terms like 'consumer workers' (Cova and Dalli, 2009) or describe consumers as actively 'put to work'. This trend has manifested both offline, with the 'McDonaldization' of companies, and online, with the evolution of Web 2.0 (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010).

Xie *et al.* (2008) conceptualize prosumption as a multifaceted process that integrates physical activities, mental effort, and socio-psychological experiences. They define it as 'a value-creating activity by the consumer, resulting in the production of goods that he or she eventually consumes, and which become his or her consumption experience' (p. 110). Beyond its economic implications, prosumption yields subjective experiences that generate personal benefits and social values for the prosumer (Xie *et al.*, 2008). This evolving conceptualization of the prosumer, as highlighted by Shah *et al.* (2019), posits that prosumers not only create value for themselves but also extend this value creation to all members of their community, sharing it globally (Tapscott and Williams, 2006). Prosumers are informed and empowered individuals who use digital technologies, especially Web 2.0, to actively engage in the design, development, testing, and use of products and services. They exert considerable influence within their social networks and communities (Seran and Izvercian, 2014).

The concept of prosumption is often associated with the co-creation of value, but the two concepts are not interchangeable. Prosumption distinguishes itself through the depth of effort and expertise involved (Alhashem et al., 2021; Wolf and McQuitty, 2011), accompanied by higher levels of involvement, commitment, and creativity (Seran and Izversian, 2014). Prosumption goes beyond mere resource exchange for value creation, requiring a more intricate and committed involvement from the prosumer. Importantly, while prosumption is an antecedent of value co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Chandler and Chen, 2015), the exchange of value is not central to prosumption, differentiating it from co-creation (Kotler, 1986; Toffler, 1980). A prosumer may create value independently by producing new goods or services, not necessarily engaging in collaborative exchanges with a company (Alhashem et al., 2021). Consequently, while collaboration with a company is integral to co-creation and co-production, it is not a requisite for prosumption (Alhashem et al., 2021). Prosumers do not need to interact with others to create value for themselves or others.

Materials and Methods

To address our research questions, we conducted a bibliometric analysis following the prior work of Shah et *al.* (2020). Bibliometric analysis is a relatively recent addition to business research, and its potential is yet to be fully harnessed (Donthu et al., 2021). The general outline of our search strategy is summarized in (Figure 1, Annexes).

We used Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science (WOS) and Elsevier's Scopus databases, recognised for their extensive academic coverage. Our analysis comprised two stages. First, we searched for the keyword *prosum** across all fields, identifying areas where the prosumption concept was studied. This search covered publications from 1980 to January 31, 2023. In the second stage, we focused on marketing-related journals, following the same process, covering publications from 1986 to March 2023. To be included, articles had to be peer-reviewed, written in English, and feature the term *prosum** in keywords, title and, abstract. Duplicate entries were removed, and the data underwent independent review and coding. Any discrepancies between coders were resolved through discussion and consensus.

In the initial stage, we retrieved 1834 articles from WOS and 828 from Scopus. The second stage, focused exclusively on the marketing literature, yielded 33 WOS and 39 Scopus references. After screening for relevance, 53 articles met the criteria for further analysis. We conducted bibliometric analyses, including citation, co-authorship, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling, with visualisation done via WOS analytics and VOSViewer (version 1.6.19), developed by Van Eck and Waltman (2010). Each article was thoroughly reviewed to enhance our understanding of the literature on prosumption.

Findings and Discussion

Trend Analysis of Prosumption Research Across all Fields (RQ1)

In the first stage of our study, we gathered a corpus of 1,986 articles. The results show the evolution of articles published annually, showcasing the most influential journals, authors, and countries publishing articles related to prosumers and presumption (Figure 2, Annexe). A significant growth in the number of scientific articles dedicated to presumption is observed, increasing from around 10 articles in 1995 to over 482 in 2022, with a particularly sharp rise in the last five years (Figure 2 a, Annexes). These findings highlight the escalating interest among researchers in this field. The United States and China emerge as the leading countries in presumption publications, constituting 15.28% and 12.41%, respectively. Germany and the UK follow, each contributing around 8%, while Spain and Italy both account for around 7% (Figure 2 b, Annexes). In this case, we can observe a difference compared to the study by Shah et al. (2020), where China was only ranked 10th. This shift may suggest a widespread adoption of presumption practices in China. The most prolific contributors include Liu N, Vale Z, Catalao JPS, Saha TK, and Tzscheutschler P, primarily associated with the energy and power sector (Figure 2 c, Annexes). This trend also extends to the subsequent nine authors. Notably, sociologist Ritzer G, renowned for his extensive publications in the field of social sciences, holds the 15th position on this authorship list.

Figure 2d (Annexes) illustrates the top 20 most prolific journals, shedding light on the interdisciplinary nature of presumption research, which spans various fields, including energy, sustainability, business and economics, technology, consumer culture, and social sciences. Notably, energy-related journals occupy a prominent position on the list, constituting 61.5% of the total, underscoring the pivotal role of presumption in the energy sector. Additionally, the presence of journals in social sciences, such as "Journal of Consumer Culture" and "American Behavioral Scientist", suggests an increasing interest in comprehending the sociocultural aspects and consumer behaviours associated with presumption. On the other hand, the only journal from the field of business and economics present in the list is the "European Journal of Marketing", positioned at 39th. This indicates that business research is lagging behind in comparison to other domains studying the concept of presumption, despite the recent growing interest that marketers are starting to show in this topic.

These findings are reinforced when examining the research areas related to presumption literature (Table 1, Annexes). Most of the published works on presumption were related to "energy, ecology, and environment" accounting for nearly 31 % of the total number of publications, followed by "engineering" (25%), and "Computer Science" (8 %). Research within the domains of "management and economics" and "human and social sciences" constitutes approximately 12% of all publications on the concept.

We completed our analysis with a word cloud, which visually represents the most frequent keywords associated with the concept of presumption (Figure 3, Annexes). Unsurprisingly, the term 'energy' dominates as the most frequently used keyword in our dataset. Additionally, other terms associated with the energy field are prominently represented, including 'grid', 'peer', 'distributed', 'renewable', and 'power', among others, exhibiting the highest frequency in the word cloud. These results show that research on presumption is mainly concentrated in the field of energy where the role of the prosumer, as a producer of electricity thanks to new digital technologies (such as photovoltaic panels), is often analysed. It is worth noting that the terms 'prosumer' and 'prosumers' are employed more frequently as keywords compared to the term 'presumption'. This observation suggests that, thus far, scholars have predominantly focused on investigating the roles, characteristics and behaviours of individuals who engage in presumption, rather than examining the broader concept of presumption itself. This could indicate a need for further studies addressing the theoretical framework and conceptual aspects of presumption beyond the scope of individual prosumers.

Bibliometric Analysis of Prosumption Research in the Marketing Field (RQ.2, RQ.3)

The results of the trend analysis, available in Figure 4 (Annexes), unveil a gradual increase in the number of publications from 2017 to 2022, reflecting the growing interest among marketers in the study of prosumption. In terms of geographical distribution, the USA leads with 19 publications, followed by England (9), Australia (7), and both China and Canada with 7 publications each. The most productive authors in the marketing field include Ritzer, G., with 5 publications and Dolan, R., with 3 publications. The most influential marketing journals in prosumption publications are the "Journal of Consumer Culture" (17 publications), the "European Journal of Marketing" (7 publications), and the "Journal of Consumer Behavior" (3 publications).

Citation Analysis: Table 2 (Annexes) displays the citation report for the most cited publications related to prosumption in the marketing literature. Ritzer and Jurgenson's (2010) article stands out as the most cited reference in our dataset, establishing itself as a cornerstone in prosumption literature. Another work by Ritzer (2014;) is also in the list (ranked 4). Both articles were published in the 'Journal of Consumer Culture', and they critically examine the concept of prosumption in the digital age and its implications for capitalism. They raise important questions about exploitation, as prosumers are often engaged in unpaid labour when they produce content for digital platforms (e.g., user-generated content). The second most frequently cited reference is the article by Xie *et al.* (2008), published in the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, followed closely by Eckhardt *et al.* (2019) work in the Journal of Marketing. Xie et al. (2008) consider prosumption as a value co-creation process driven by motivations like attitudes, self-efficacy, and past behaviours. Eckhardt *et al.* (2019) examine the impact of the sharing economy on marketing strategies, illustrating the evolving role of consumers who actively engage in both consumption and production activities.

Co-authorship analysis: It is a method used to evaluate scientific collaborations among researchers in a specific research field (Reyes *et al.*, 2016). It quantifies the number of publications co-authored by two or more researchers. In Figure 5 (Annexes), we present the visualization of the co-authorship network generated using VOSViewer. Our study included 41 authors who met the criteria of a minimum of 20 citations and a Total Link Strength (TLS) greater than 0. VOSViewer identified 13 clusters of authors, with the proximity of nodes indicating strong collaboration. The size of each node corresponds to the total number of articles published by the respective authors. The largest cluster of connected authors (shown in red) consists of 6 authors, including Eckhart, GM et al. The blue cluster brings together authors with the highest Total Link Strength, featuring authors like Dolan, R et al., with TLS values ranging from 6 to 7. The collaboration between Eckhardt, GM et al. (red cluster) is ranked second, with a TLS of 5, followed by the collaboration between Berthon, P. et al. (green cluster), with a TLS of 4.

Co-Citation Analysis: It establishes a mutual relationship between two articles when they are cited together by another article (Leung *et al.*, 2017). The more documents citing two documents together, the stronger the co-citation strength becomes (Small, 1973). Figure 6 (Annexes) displays the results from our co-citation analysis. The map of the intellectual structure generated by VOSViewer showed three clusters of articles. Each node represents a publication, and a link between two nodes means that two publications were cited together. The first cluster (shown in red) comprises 18 items and primarily gathers the early publications in the prosumption research field. Included references were published most frequently in 'Journal Consumer Research' (9 publications) and were mainly focusing on the socio-economic aspects of prosumption. Four marketing-oriented references were also listed in the cluster, namely Kotler (1986), Schau *et al.* (2009), Cova B (2012), and Cochoy (2015). The second cluster, marked in green, includes 15 items and features mainly references published in marketing journals. Cluster 3, presented in blue, also encompasses 15 items and highlights the most recent publications in the field, predominantly published in the last decade. There is a

strong tendency to study prosumption within the context of the sharing economy in the mentioned publications. Furthermore, based on TLS, Ritzer (2010) was ranked first with 274 TLS, followed by Toffler (1980) with a score of 195 and Vargo and Lush (2004) with a score of 161.

Bibliographic Coupling: Bibliographic coupling reveals the publications that refer to the same works (Kessler, 1963). The bibliographic coupling network, shown in Figure 7 (Annexes), identified four clusters obtained from the analysis. The cluster represented by the red colour, was the largest cluster reuniting 13 items, followed by the green cluster with 12 items, and the blue and yellow clusters including 7 items, respectively. According to the TLS values, the three articles that showed the highest scores were Perera (2020), Alhashem (2021), and Chandler (2015), with a score of 160, 154, and 148, respectively. All these articles belonged to the green cluster.

Co-Occurrence Analysis (RQ3): Keyword networks enable the identification of research hotspots within a specific research domain (Zupic and Cater, 2015). Keywords occurring at least three times were included in our analysis. The conceptual network provided in Figure 8 (Annexes) shows that the keywords are arranged in four different clusters. The nods represent the keywords, and the node size corresponds to the number of occurrences associated with it. The smaller the distance between two nodes, the stronger the link between the two keywords. The most occurring keywords in our study were 'prosumption' with 30 occurrences followed by 'consumption' (27), 'co-creation' (19), 'prosumer' (19), 'consumers' (10), and 'sharing economy' (7). The first cluster (marked in red) is the largest with 12 items. It displays variables affecting the behaviour of the consumers engaged in prosumption activities, such as antecedents, motives, and satisfaction. This cluster also features keywords related to sharing economy and collaborative consumption, enabled by digital technology. It should be noted that the articles featuring these keywords represent recent publications published from the 2020s. The second cluster, represented in green, consists of 7 items and primarily focuses on the interconnectedness of co-creation, consumption, production, and prosumption within brand-related studies. The third cluster, shown in blue, comprises 7 items and encompasses themes connected to McDonaldization, capitalism, participatory culture in the era of Web 2.0, and social media. Finally, cluster four (in yellow) exhibits 6 items that associate consumers with the concepts of innovation, value co-creation, and service-dominant logic. Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008; Lusch and Vargo, 2006) frequently serves as a theoretical foundation for understanding the involvement of prosumers in value-creation processes.

Overall, our findings highlight the predominant focus of marketing research on understanding the antecedents and motivations of prosumption and its impact on satisfaction. Additionally, they reveal that prosumption has been investigated within the realms of the sharing economy, Web 2.0, social media, brands, and services. However, a noticeable gap emerges concerning research on prosumption in the context of responsible consumption and pro-environmental behaviour in marketing, despite substantial research in other disciplines.

Research Agenda (RQ4)

The findings derived from our trend and bibliometric analyses and the study of the articles included in our dataset revealed several promising avenues for future research extensions:

A further distinction between prosumption and related constructs: A deeper exploration of the distinctions between prosumption and two analogous constructs, namely co-creation, and co-production, is crucial for precisely delineating the boundaries of each concept. Conducting an integrative literature review encompassing these constructs would significantly contribute to the refinement of the research field. Clearly defining the boundaries between these concepts allows managers to better understand how to engage consumers in product

development and service delivery. This distinction helps in identifying strategic partnerships by clarifying when consumers act as co-creators versus prosumers, leading to more targeted collaborations and enhanced value creation. It also empowers managers to tailor consumer engagement strategies, by designing precise interactions, ensuring that prosumers are effectively leveraged without being confused with other roles, such as co-creators or co-producers.

Enhancing understanding of prosumer behaviour in marketing: Given the scarcity of qualitative and quantitative studies in this area, there is a need to delve deeper into prosumption behaviour. This involves identifying individual and contextual variables that explain it, as uncovering the motivations and responses associated with the prosumption experience. Understanding these motivations and behaviours enables managers customize marketing strategies to appeal to prosumers, who are often more involved and active in shaping their own consumption experiences. This insight also supports audience segmentation by discovering new consumer segments that act as prosumers, facilitating the targeting of these groups with customized offers or engagement tactics.

Investigating prosumer exploitation: Further research is needed to examine consumer exploitation within the context of prosumption, particularly by revealing its manifestations and implications. This exploration should consider an examination of power dynamics, ethical considerations, and impact on consumer well-being. Such research can reveal potential risks for managers when leveraging prosumers, particularly around ethical practices and regulatory compliance. Ensuring that prosumer engagement remain fair and non-exploitive is essential for preserving brand integrity and customer trust. As awareness of consumer rights increases, understanding where prosumption risks crossing into exploitation can help prevent both legal and reputational threats.

In addition, our study underscores a research gap in the field of pro-environmental consumption and the tourism sector. Despite substantial consumer engagement in generating personal and, at times, collective value in these domains, there is a discernible scarcity of scholarly investigations. Hence, we propose the following research directions:

Prosumption in responsible and pro-environmental consumption: Exploring prosumption within the realms of responsible and ecological consumption is crucial. Consumer commitment and active participation are fundamental to adopting practices aligning with societal and environmental imperatives. Existing works dedicated to the prosumer in environmental sciences and ecology literature can serve as foundational material for developing a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework for understanding and modelling the behaviours of green prosumers. In the field of marketing, a recent study by Dubois and Sinea (2023), highlighted how the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have led to 'energy poverty' among millions of households. Managers can apply this knowledge to sustainability strategies by promoting green prosumption behavior, where consumers actively participate in sustainable practices, thereby supporting corporate environmental goals. Additionally, these insights can be integrated into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, aligning company policies with the growing trend of responsible

consumption. This can strengthen brand loyalty and appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

Examining the prosumer experience in the tourism sector: Considering the changing tourism landscape driven by increased digitalisation and evolving consumer aspirations, there is a need to study the prosumer experience in the tourism sector. This includes understanding more sustainable consumers actively producing their personal tourism experiences, from information search to experience construction through social networks and sharing platforms. In the tourism sector, understanding prosumers can help managers to enhance customer experiences by designing more personalized and sustainable tourism offerings and leveraging social networks and digital platforms to co-create travel itineraries. It also helps managers adapt to digitalization by better integrating tools that allow tourists to actively shape their own travel experiences, ultimately increasing engagement and satisfaction.

Conclusions

Our bibliometric analysis has provided insights into the current landscape of prosumption research. However, some limitations remain. For example, our dataset only included articles written in English, potentially excluding valuable contributions in other languages. Additionally, bibliometrics may lack an in-depth qualitative understanding of the literature. Future research should consider combining bibliometric analysis with other research methods, such as a systematic review, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the literature, and to delve deeper into the content, theory, methodology, and context of prosumption studies. Finally, this research offers managers deeper insights into consumer behaviour, enabling them to engage more effectively, design better products or services, and align their strategies with ethical and environmental values.

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Annexes:
List of Figures:
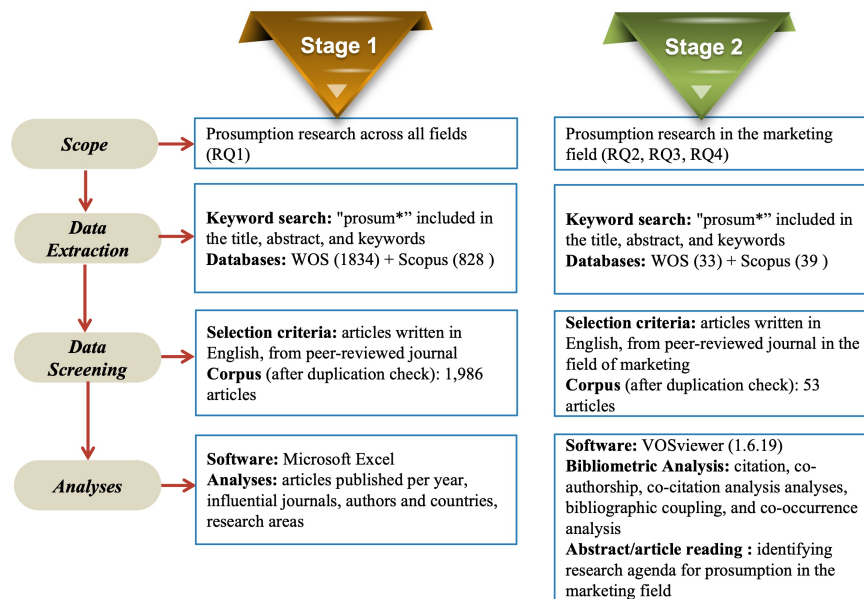
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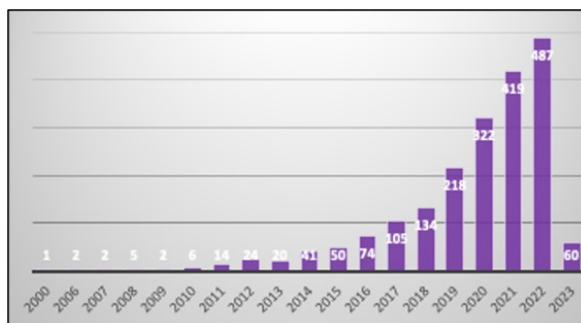
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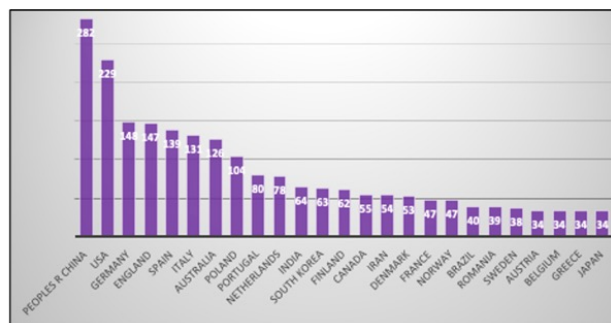
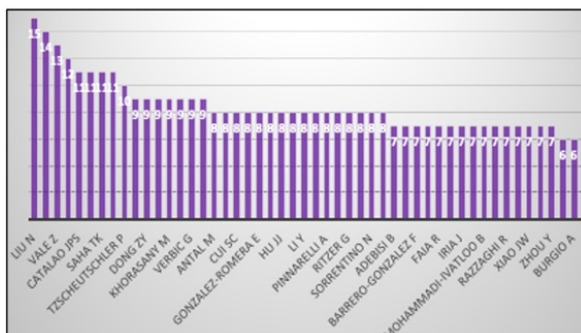

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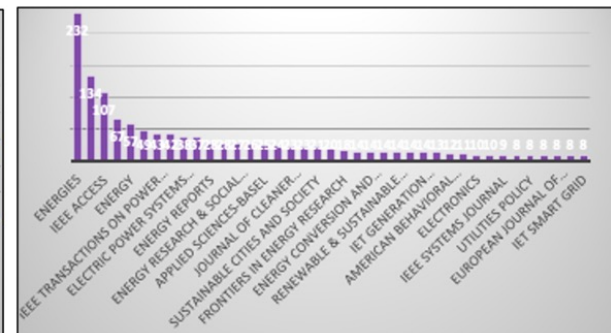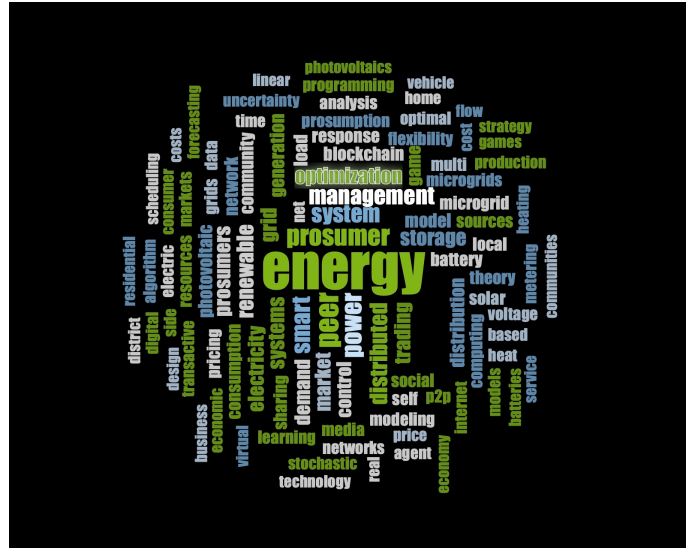

Figure 2 c: Publications by Author

Figure 2 d: Publications by Journal

Figure 2. Trend analysis of prosumption research across all fields

Figure 3. Word cloud of the most frequent keywords associated with prosumption
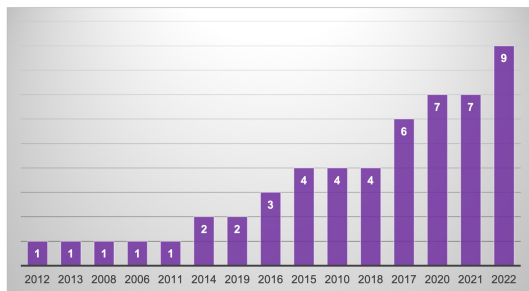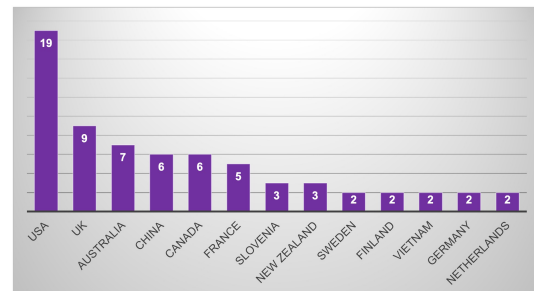

Figure 4 a: Publication by Year
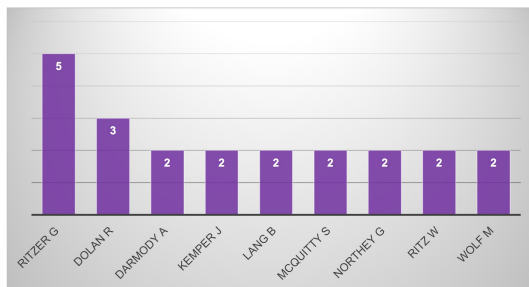
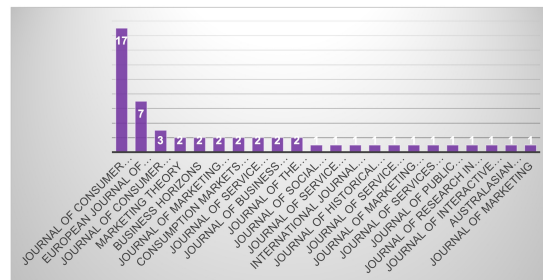*Figure 4 b: Publication by Country*
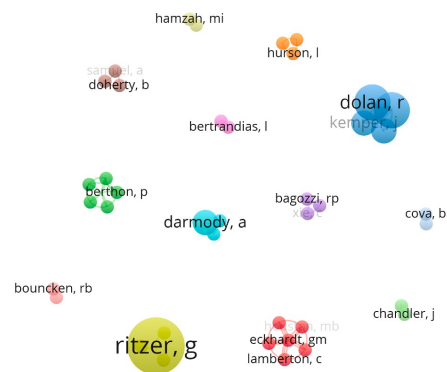
Figure 4 c: Publication by Author

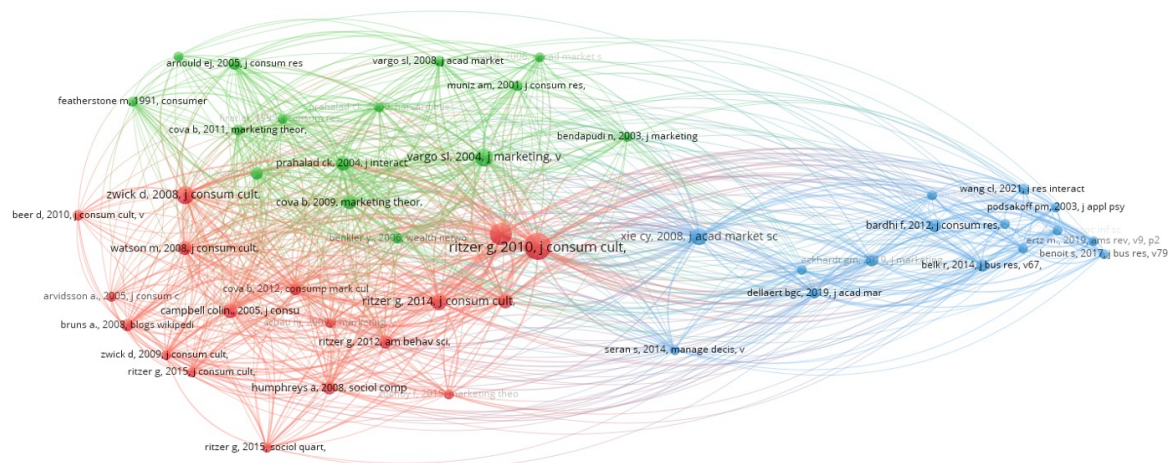*Figure 4 d: Publication by Journal*

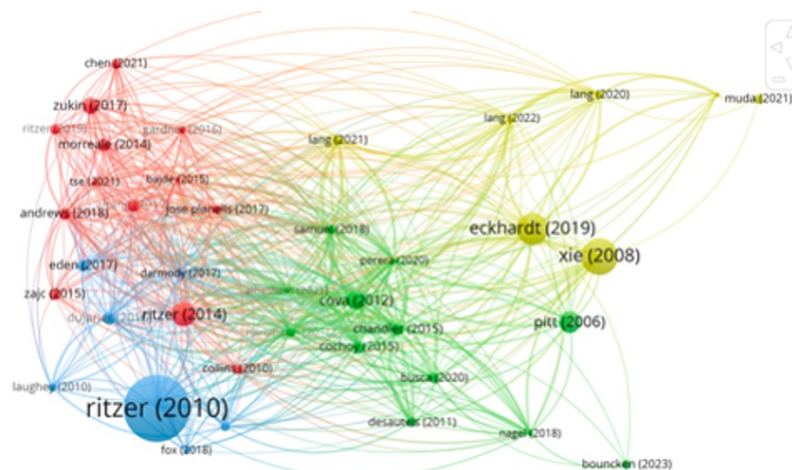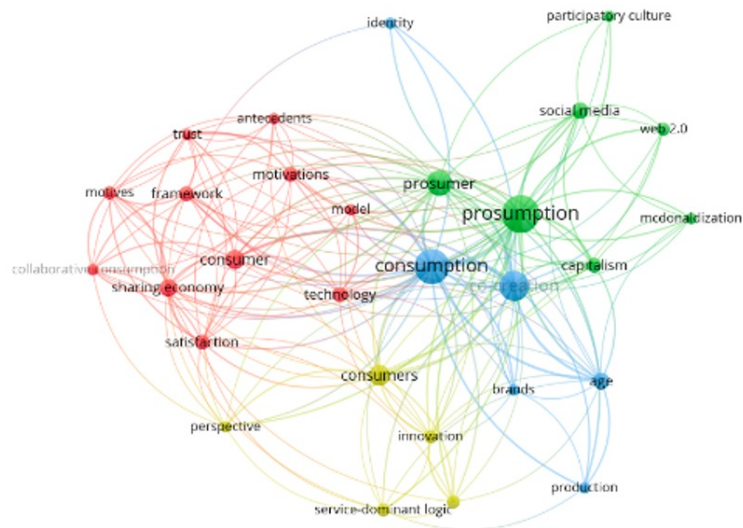**Figure 4. Trend analysis of prosumption research in the marketing field**

Figure 5. Co-authorship analysis

Figure 6. Co-citation analysis

Figure 7. Bibliographic coupling of documents

Figure 8. Co-Occurrence Analysis

List of tables

Table I. Research Areas

Research Area	Number of Publications
Energy, Ecology & Environment	998
Engineering	794
Computer Science	267
Social Sciences	190
Science Technology Other Topics	189
Business Economics	181
Telecommunications	151
Thermodynamics	76
Automation Control Systems	50
Chemistry	49
Physics	43
Materials Science	39
Construction Building Technology	37
Others	112

Table II. Citation Report

Authors	Title	Source Title	Total Citations	Average per Year
Ritzer & Jurgenson (2010)	Production, Consumption, Prosumption The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital 'prosumer'	Journal of consumer culture	1101	78,64
Xie et al. (2008)	Trying to prosume: toward a theory of consumers as co-creators of value	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	345	21,56

Eckhardt et al., (2019)	Marketing in the Sharing Economy	Journal of Marketing	258	51,6
Ritzer (2014)	Prosumption: Evolution, revolution, or eternal return of the same?	Journal of consumer culture	145	14,5
Pitt et al. (2006)	The Penguin's window: Corporate brands from an open-source perspective	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	123	6,83
Cova B & Cova V (2012)	On the road to prosumption: marketing discourse and the development of consumer competencies	Consumption Markets & Culture	91	7,58
Zukin et al. (2017)	The omnivore's neighborhood? Online restaurant reviews, race, and gentrification	Journal of consumer culture	74	10,57
Dujarier (2016)	The three sociological types of consumer work	Journal of consumer culture	43	5,38
Morreale (2014)	From homemade to store bought: Annoying Orange and the professionalization of YouTube	Journal of consumer culture	42	4,2
Chandler & Chen (2015)	Prosumer motivations in service experiences	Journal of service theory and practice	40	4,44
Andrews & Ritzer (2018)	Sport and prosumption	Journal of consumer culture	35	5,83
Zhang (2017)	Fashioning the feminine self in prosumer capitalism: Women's work and the transnational reselling of Western luxury online	Journal of consumer culture	35	5
Cochoy (2015)	Consumers at work, or curiosity at play? Revisiting the prosumption/value cocreation debate with smartphones and two-dimensional bar codes	Marketing Theory	34	3,78
Zajc (2015)	Social media, prosumption, and dispositives: New mechanisms of the construction of subjectivity	Journal of consumer culture	34	3,78
Eden (2017)	Blurring the boundaries: Prosumption, circularity and online sustainable consumption through Freecycle	Journal of consumer culture	33	4,71
Busca & Bertrandias (2020)	A Framework for Digital Marketing Research: Investigating the Four Cultural Eras of Digital Marketing	Journal of Interactive Marketing	30	7,5