

## PROSUMER AND DIGITAL LABOR ON FOOD VLOGGER AS WORD OF MOUTH POWER IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### ABSTRACT

This research is based on the emergence of a new profession due to the development of digital technology, namely food vlogger. This digital work sector is a form of application of the prosumer concept which is of great interest to the public, especially in Indonesia. The aim of this research is to analyze the prosumer concept in food vloggers which can become the power of word of mouth marketing communications in the digital era. The research method used is a qualitative literature study method. The data source uses secondary data from a number of related literature such as books, journals and scientific research, news articles and documents. Based on the results and previous discussions, this research concludes that the prosumer concept in food vloggers has been able to become a force for word of mouth marketing communications in the digital era because of several aspects, namely food vloggers with many followers have a stronger message and appeal in influencing people's behavior. Food vloggers carry out two important functions in mass communication and marketing communication practices, namely as gatekeepers and as new media in e-Word of Mouth strategies in digital communication contexts. The role of food vloggers in the successful marketing of a product is very important. And food vloggers are influential in the context of digital capitalism because of their ability to eliminate time constraints in the process of producing and consuming messages and content.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Have we ever thought that nowadays, before deciding to buy something, we subconsciously start by looking for information through social media. As in deciding what food we will buy, social media content and reviews from content creators are determinants in our decision making. In fact, currently there are many content creators who focus on providing reviews of products such as food. Names such as Tanboy Kun, Farida Nurhan, Nex Carlos, Ria SW and Mgdalenaf are probably just a few of the many food-themed YouTubers or what are known as food vloggers.

Its presence is also felt in the context of social media and culinary in Indonesia. Their presence certainly cannot be separated from changes and developments in information technology which have given birth to digital technology and social media which have changed the landscape of industry and capitalism in the modern era. In Fuchs's article, (2013) it is stated that the birth and development of social media such as Facebook, Twitter (currently X), YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn are expressions of changing regimes in capitalist society. This research conducted by Fuchs, (2013) specifically discusses the relationship between corporations or social media organizations and capitalist organizations that existed at that time and the changes they experienced. Fuchs, (2013) in his research used social theory to conceptualize changes in society and the regime of the times and how the changes that occurred shaped and gave birth to the development of the social media industry.

These changes are described in terms such as prosumption and prosumer, consumption labor, play labor and digital labor such as food vloggers who are currently very influential in the field of marketing communications. This paper Fuchs, (2013) contextualizes the digital work industry in social media with the help of a model of society through three subsystems (economic, political, cultural) and three forms of power (economic, political, cultural). Therefore, this research aims to analyze the prosumer concept in food vloggers who can become the power of word of mouth marketing communications in the digital era. Analyzing the development of food vloggers as part of digital labor. Analyzing the impact of food vloggers on marketing communications in the digital era. Analyze the role of food vloggers in the successful marketing of a product and analyze why food vloggers can be very influential in the context of digital capitalism.

Currently, food vloggers with lots of followers or subscribers have the power of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, positive reviews of a product will generate interest from many consumers, on the other hand, negative reviews will diminish consumers' purchase intentions. The food vlogger's field of work is the result of how digital capitalism is again able to influence various aspects of life such as marketing communications.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Digital Prosumption Labor on Social Media

Research from Christian Fuchs (2013) entitled Digital Prosumption Labor on Social Media in the Context of The Capitalist Regime of Time in the journal Time & Society explains how the presence of digital media and social media has an impact on changing or adapting the context of capitalism in terms of theories, concepts and applications in the digital era. In his writing, Fuchs (2013) uses Social Theory, Value Theory and Capitalism in assessing digital dynamics in the current era of capitalism. Meanwhile, the concepts discussed focus on changes in the paradigm of the world of work related to the formation of the concepts of production, consumption labor, play labor (playbour) and digital labor.

According to Fuchs, (2013) online platforms which are currently referred to as social media have something in common, namely that they make intensive use of contributions from producing consumers (content) known as the 'prosumer' concept. Prosumers are perpetrators of prosumption activities which are defined as production and consumption processes in the sense of built experiences that allow other people to share experiences based on what they produce (Williams & Marquez, 2015). Corporate social media prosumption is a form of sustainable, primitive capital accumulation that converts non-commodified leisure time into productive labor time that generates value and profit for capital. This is a form of accumulation through dispossession (Harvey, 2005), where consumption and leisure become spaces of labor accumulation.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is based on post-positivism thinking, where the approach used is related to the context of marketing communication and digital communication with qualitative methods of literature study. The data source uses secondary data from a number of related literature such as books, journals and scientific research, news articles and documents. The research subject is food vloggers on social/digital media, while the object of this research is the prosumer concept in digital workers such as food vloggers which has an impact on changing the marketing communications paradigm. The data analysis technique uses Miles & Huberman with a reduction process, data presentation and drawing conclusions.

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### The development of food vloggers as part of digital labor

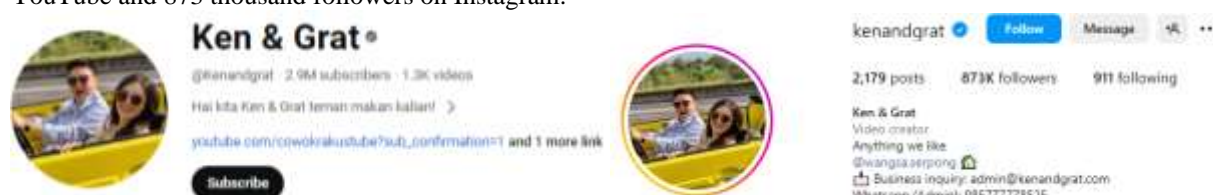
Food vloggers are one of the results of the birth of the 'prosumer' concept in the social media era. Prosumers in the context of social media are actors in the production and consumption process activities in the sense of experiences that are built which enable other people to share experiences based on what they produce (Williams & Marquez, 2015) where what is meant is producing content in the form of their experience of something. food/drink.

This field of food vlogger work has actually been around for a long time, before the era of videos on social media developed, the term food blogging was already widely known. At least in 1997, Jim Leff introduced food blogging activities as a feature on the Chowhound website with 'What Jim Had for Dinner' (Konde.co, 2023). In that era, Jim presented a catalog of the food he consumed every day. The presentation on the blog uses visuals through images with a strong focus on elements of food photography. So you could say that this field or food blogging is a feature of food journalism. Media developments continue to change, food blogging continues to develop in accordance with information technology, especially social and digital media. Until now, social media technology allows uploading video content, making food blogging into food vlogging.

The term food vlogger is a term used for someone who has a hobby of reviewing or providing reviews regarding the food they choose. These reviews will later be neatly compiled in a video and uploaded on social media (Kumparan, 2023). In Indonesia itself, a food vlogger is common and has even become a very popular profession. Starting from just reviewing food, then this activity can make money through collaboration or endorsements.

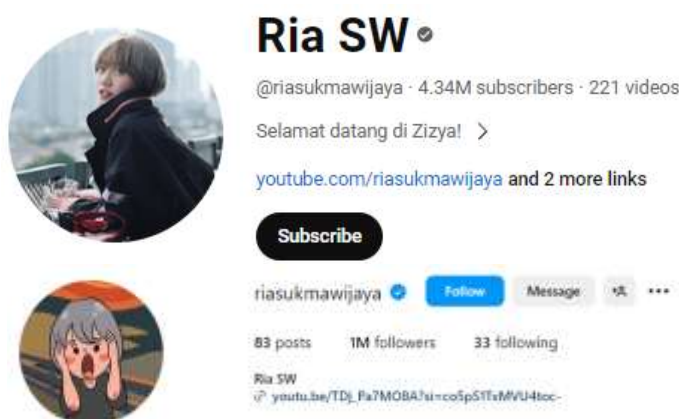
So it is not wrong that this field is one of the professions chosen by many people in Indonesia. From various sources, it is reported that there are at least hundreds of figures or individuals who label themselves as food vloggers by using various digital platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. Of the many food vloggers, it is reported that there are at least several food vloggers, especially on YouTube and Instagram, who are said to have had a big impact because of the large number of followers or customers on their social media accounts.

First is Kenneth Chandra and Gratiana Lianto (Ken & Grat). Food vloggers, who always appear in pairs in each of their content, are characterized by their content providing reviews of restaurants or cafes, and comparing celebrity food or expensive food with cheap food. As of June 2024 they already have 2.9 million subscribers (subscribers) on YouTube and 873 thousand followers on Instagram.



**Figure 1. Ken & Grat's YouTube and Instagram accounts**

Second is Ria Sukma Jaya or known as Ria SW. Food vlogger, who started his profession in 2016, has a distinctive and differentiated content on spicy food and Korean food as well as other foreign culinary delights. Through the content she presents on her account until June 2024, Ria SW even has 4.3 million subscribers on YouTube and 1 million followers on Instagram.



**Figure 2. Ria SW's YouTube and Instagram accounts**

Third is Bara Ilham or better known as Tanboy Kun. This food vlogger who comes from Padang has the characteristics and differentiation of spicy food content and large portions of food. Through the content he presents on his account, until June 2024, Tanboy Kun already has 18.9 million subscribers on YouTube and 1.5 million followers on Instagram. In fact, Tanboy Kun can be said to be the food vlogger with the largest number of followers in Indonesia and one of the YouTubers who has managed to get more than 10 million subscribers.

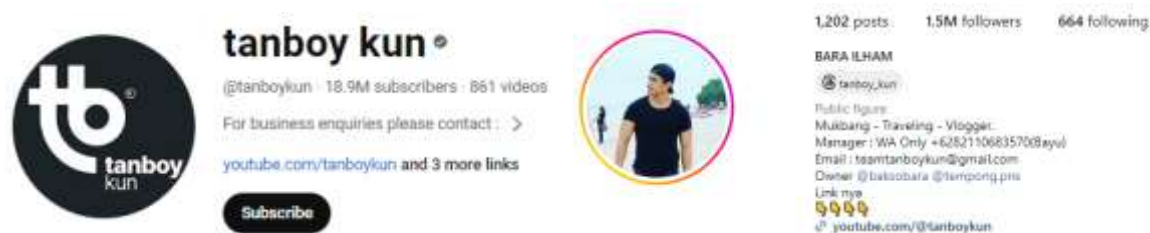


Figure 3. Tanboy Kun's YouTube and Instagram accounts

Fourth is Next Carlos. This food vlogger, who has distinctive characteristics and differentiated content that highlights the richness of Indonesian food or culinary delights, is known as the slogan "eating around Indonesia". Through the content he presents on his account until June 2024, Next Carlos already has 4.9 million subscribers on YouTube and 1.4 million followers on Instagram.



Figure 4. Next Carlos' YouTube and Instagram accounts

These four examples certainly do not represent the number of food vloggers who accompany the development of a new field of work in this digital era. There are many other content creators who of course come with their own differentiation to become one of the strengths in marketing communications strategies in the digital and social media era. In fact, some of the food vloggers who have very large followers, some of them already have and have opened a culinary business that is closely related to the food review profession they run.

#### The impact of food vloggers on digital era marketing communications

Food vloggers, like other content creators, were born and grew along with the constant increase in the number of social media users in recent years. Especially in Indonesia, various social media platforms are always interesting and record growth every year. Based on a report from We Are Social (2024), at the beginning of 2024 or January active social media users in Indonesia have reached 139 million. This number is equivalent to 49.9% of Indonesia's population.

Furthermore, according to the site, from the length of time users access social media platforms in Indonesia, the average internet usage per individual reaches 7 hours 38 minutes per day, 3 hours 11 minutes accessing social media (WeAreSocial, 2024). This means that most of the free time or productive time that people in Indonesia have in 2024 will be spent accessing content on the internet and social media. So food vloggers, especially those who have a very large number of followers, will be one of the spearheads in providing message exposure about products (food and drinks) which can influence the interests and decisions of a consumer.

This can happen because, basically, food vloggers can also make a list of recommendations for food places that they think are worth trying. Food vlogger is a profession that offers work to capture videos about reviews of various culinary delights (Kumparan, 2023). In the context of digital marketing communications, the position of food vloggers in the context of communication can be related to two contexts, namely food vloggers as gatekeepers and food vloggers as those who carry out word of mouth marketing strategies.

The first is related to food vloggers carrying out a gatekeeper function in mass communication. The term, which was first expressed by Kurt Lewin in his book Human Realtions (1947), is a term originating from the field of sociology which is intended to describe those whose job it is to influence information. This can also be said, in the old context of gatekeepers who provide the possibility for news to spread (Nurudin, 2014). Furthermore, according to John R. Bittner (1996) in Narudin (2024), gatekeepers are referred to as individuals or groups of people who monitor the flow of information in a (mass) communication channel.

If the meaning is expanded, what is called a gatekeeper is a person who plays an important role in mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, internet, television, and so on. Where in the context of this research discussion, food vloggers who have media platforms with many followers can carry out the role of gatekeeper by selecting the information that brands want to convey and disseminate. So food vloggers in creating messages cannot



be separated from their interest in an object, where there is a possibility that other objects never come to their attention so they don't get the opportunity to convey it to the public.

From this gatekeeper role or function, food vloggers also directly have an impact on shifting the context of marketing communications, namely word of mouth (WOM). According to Kotler & Keller (2012), this concept, WOM or word of mouth communication, is a communication process in the form of providing recommendations both individually and in groups regarding a product or service with the aim of providing personal information. In the digital realm, reviews or comments from someone who has experienced the service or food at a place are the main consideration for other potential consumers to come and try that place. So in this context, a food reviewer who presents review content about a product is carrying out this WOM function.

In the digital context, e-WOM uses the internet as a medium for distribution, where food vloggers are found in this context. The difference lies in the continuity of conversation between the actors. WOM is usually carried out face to face or via telephone, while e-WOM is different, communication between actors occurs discontinuously, the actors have the opportunity to think about what they are going to say before posting it (Berger & Iyengar, 2012). Furthermore, in the context of e-WOM, positive and negative statements regarding products (goods and services) made by current and former potential customers are available to many people and institutions or institutions via the internet. Through positive or negative statements from a food vlogger about the food or drink he reviews, this means that food vloggers can become a new form of e-WOM that occurs on social media.

#### The role of food vloggers in the successful marketing of a product

As previously explained, time context is fundamental to capitalist economic society, especially how social media takes up a lot of people's time. Then how does social media become a paradigm changing medium in marketing communications which is contextually also related to the context of modern capitalism, then the existence of social media is closely related to how social media is connected to the efforts of capitalism, such as in making the marketing objectives of a product successful:

1. Social media plays a role in accelerating the economy, politics and culture. The existence of social media changes life, especially these three aspects (Fuchs, 2013). In this context, food vloggers through their digital capitalism messages and media (Youtube, Instagram and other social media) can be the cause of changes in aspects of the social environment. Based on what this food vlogger does, it is not wrong that one food vlogger's post can be very influential in the decisions or purchasing intentions of his followers.

Based on several incidents, there are several cases that are examples of the power of a food vlogger or a review of food which determines the future sustainability of the food business. From the positive side, Next Carlos is often nicknamed an "online entertainer" due to the frequent content or reviews he conveys on his social media accounts which have an impact on increasing consumer interest in consuming the food he has reviewed.

Nex Carlos is said to have the power to make the restaurants he reviews always sell well. This could possibly happen due to two factors, firstly the high number of followers of a food blogger which results in high exposure to the content he creates. From the author's observations, one content or food review submitted by Next Carlos averages 700 thousand – millions of views. Some content even exceeds 10 million views.



Figure 5. Number of Viewers of Popular Nex Carlos Content

So in the example of the Next Carlos case, this very large number of direct viewers can certainly provide broad exposure about a location or food place that must be visited. The success of this food is even higher because of the content, Next Carlos has a positive way of giving reviews.

On the other hand, from the negative side, there will be many cases in 2023 and 2024 that will be debated regarding negative reviews which are said to be able to damage someone's business. Some people see this as something that makes everyone have to be more careful when giving reviews. This was conveyed by Anne Avantie (2024) who suggested that someone should think further about the impact of their posts, not just leave them in negative reviews and post them. It is better to convey criticism directly (Kompas.com, 2023). This view was expressed as a result of many cases of the demise of a business due to a negative review from someone which went viral on social media. However, these negative reviews are of course still accepted by some people as a form of control over the quality of the products being sold as well as considerations for other people in making decisions.

2. The emergence of the concepts of crowdsourcing, play labor and production, extending the working day to free time, which allows for greater exposure to messages from product marketing communications in the digital era.

Food vloggers as part of the context of crowdsourcing, play labor and production directly take advantage of changes resulting from the birth of digital technology and social media which have made the world interconnected in the context of space and time. They (food vloggers) work to create and deliver content that is no longer limited to the morning-afternoon context but has no limits throughout the night. This production of absolute surplus value is complemented by the production of relative surplus value, such as changes in the advertising landscape that adopts more targeted advertising or personalized advertising as a result of capitalist surveillance of society's economy. Likewise, their content can be enjoyed anytime and anywhere, thus having an increasingly positive impact on marketing communications strategies.

3. Social media is an expression of the situation where factories and workers have become social and spread to all levels of society. Exploitation in capitalism always extends to the household in the form of reproductive labor. A digital workforce means more and more time spent outside paid work in exploited factories and offices. This is also the strength of the birth of many food vloggers because there are no restrictions or special requirements for someone to carry out this profession. That way, there will be many choices of gatekeepers or e-WOM media that marketing communications practitioners can use in creating their marketing communications mix.

So the concept of prosumption, which is defined as a process of production and consumption in the sense of experience that is built which allows other people to share experiences based on what they produce, increasingly makes the concept of word of mouth marketing in the digital era have a very big impact. Food vlogger is a field of work that applies all of these things. Currently, the production of food vlogger content and the like is increasingly having an impact in influencing consumers. In the end, something that can go viral on social media will determine the success or destruction of something in society. So it is not uncommon for the sharing of experience (prosumption) through social media to determine the sustainability of a business.

#### **The reason food vloggers can be very influential in the context of digital capitalism**

According to Marx, (1857/58) in Fuchs, (2013) time is an important phenomenon that underlies the existence of the world, society and capitalist society. Time has objective and subjective, absolute and relative, natural and social, abstract and concrete aspects. Modern society is based on the necessity to accumulate economic, political and cultural capital. Therefore, the historically dominant form of modernity is not just a capitalist economy, but a capitalist society. This is related to the imperative of acceleration that allows the economy, politics and culture to gather more power in less time.

So the entire development of wealth rests on the creation of time that can be utilized more effectively. The relationship between working time and effective working time or what is actually required for a job will change along with different stages in the development of productive forces over time (Marx, 1857/58 in Fuchs, 2013). So time is an important dimension in capitalist society and economy which can be demonstrated by the emergence of the influence of food vloggers in digital marketing communications:

1. Capitalists try to reduce the turnover time (circulation time, production time) of capital to increase profits. In the digital realm, especially content creators such as food vloggers, message production and distribution are very short. Unlike conventional mass media which goes through a series of stages starting from concept creation, modeling process to taking pictures, editing to the editorial process, food vloggers can do this in a shorter context via smartphone.

2. Capitalists try to increase unpaid labor time (surplus labor time) by the production of absolute and relative surplus value so that capitalism means struggle over time. This is also related to the work context of food vloggers, where their work domain is no longer related to working hours in general, they work without time limits.
3. Capitalism establishes a special relationship between work time and leisure time. Unlike shows on mass media such as television, content or messages from food vloggers can be enjoyed with the on demand concept. So viewers are no longer presented with messages that suit their free time, but can access whatever they want at any time, so that the messages conveyed by food vloggers become more influential than content on television media from the point of view of message exposure.
4. Advertising and consumer culture accelerate the creation of artificial consumption needs. Food vloggers are one of the advertising media that shape consumption culture because they are able to carry out the functions of gate keeper and e-WOM simultaneously.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this era of digitalization and full of social media message traffic, the concept of prosumption has given birth to new fields of work in the digital realm, such as food vloggers. The prosumption concept is where a food vlogger, on the one hand, plays the position of a consumer, namely enjoying various features of a social media platform and consuming a food product so that he can produce experiences and share them through the content production he carries out. The impact is quite large in the context of capitalism, this food vlogger plays an important role in changing the effectiveness of advertising and efforts to create a consumer culture so as to accelerate the creation of artificial consumption needs that capitalism desires.

Currently, content creators such as food vloggers and other fields such as Instagram celebrities produce and consume messages at the same time, which allows for the influence of aspects of capitalism, especially those related to the concept of endorsements (Alaika, 2020), where food vloggers cannot be separated from sponsorship in every content. which is one of their ways of earning income. Then the food vlogger is also confirmed to carry out message production through exposure of daily life (related to food) which will be directly intended for the information consumption of his followers. The messages produced and delivered create or influence consumer perceptions. There are several aspects that make food vloggers influence consumer perceptions, namely information and education, visual appeal, trust and credibility, social influence, inspiration and lifestyle, influence on purchasing decisions (Marquerette, Wasi, & Hamidah, 2023; Safitri, Pradiatiningtyas, & Dewa, 2023; Yumna & Fadiati, 2023). The influence of food vloggers can be subjective and can be influenced by consumers' personal preferences. However, overall, food vloggers have a fairly large role in shaping consumer perceptions of food products and the culinary industry in general (Marquerette, Wasi, & Hamidah, 2023)

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and previous discussion, this research concludes that the prosumer concept in food vloggers has been able to become a powerful word of mouth marketing communication in the digital era due to several aspects. First, the development of food vloggers as part of digital labor allows a food vlogger with many followers to have a stronger message and appeal in influencing people's behavior. Second, food vloggers carry out two important functions in the practice of mass communication and marketing communication, namely as gatekeepers and as new media in the e-Word of Mouth strategy in the digital communication context. Third, the role of food vloggers in the successful marketing of a product is very important. Their experience and review of an object will determine the audience's perception which will then influence their intentions and decisions in making a gift. Fourth, food vloggers can be very influential in the context of digital capitalism because of their ability to eliminate time constraints in the process of producing and consuming messages and content.

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