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Introduction

Nowadays, it is impossible to talk about any culture product without mentioning its fans. The Internet has changed the role of fans in the production process. Formerly, the fans' choice was almost as simple as the question "to buy or not to buy", "to watch or not to watch", and so on, but these days, with such a powerful tool as the Internet, fans have gained a way to express their desires and hopes and their voice cannot be disregarded, because it often means "to be or not to be" for many companies. But the issue of the income is only a small part of the vast topic that fan communities (fandoms) are. Fandoms may be a perfect example of neo-tribes mentioned for the first time by M. Maffesoli in 1988⁸. The French sociologist predicted that people would form communities based not on their age or country of origin, but rather on passion and interests they would share. They would form a completely new common identity. In the era of the Internet his predictions are even more real and fandoms may be the most vivid examples of the processes we can observe all over the world. Especially social media, that allow people to form networks, seem to help to build neo-tribes and the so-called "network of networks"⁹ even faster

⁸ M. Maffesoli, *Czas plemion. Schyłek indywidualizmu w społeczeństwach ponowoczesnych*, Warszawa 2008.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

than ever. Those media, however, allow people not only to communicate, and thus form new communities, but also to change the definitions of producers, consumers and A. Toffler's "prosumers"¹⁰. The aim of this paper is to find the answer to the question how fandoms these days use social media's potential and in what ways it can deepen the prosumption processes. We believe that this topic is especially interesting, because if Maffesoli's idea comes true, society will be formed of groups very similar to fandom communities – varying from them only in terms of commitment.

Fandoms in the 21st Century

First generations of scholars, whose research interests focused on fans, tried to find a definition of the word "fan". Firstly, it was derived from the Latin word *fanatic* and also had rather negative connotations. Fans were often called other-worldly or even insane and were forced to focus on "serious things". Critics would often say that such a person is childish, or even that he or she doesn't fit the social norms. It was also very often to associate that notion with women, who were thought to be emotional, while men supposedly were always factual and objective¹¹. It is true, however, that fans were very often people, who for some reason sought alternative approaches to culture, being excluded from the mainstream one, and women were frequently an example of that phenomenon. According to P. Siuda, we can distinguish three phases of the approach to fans among the scholars¹². During the first phase, called the "deviation phase", fans were seen as neurotics and people who were not mentally stable. Researchers from the second, "resistance phase" (starting from 1992) treated fans as a part of the community – fandom. In opposition to the scholars from the "deviation phase" they underlined the creativity and activeness of the analyzed enthusiasts. The "mainstream phase" (associated with

¹⁰ A. Toffler, *Trzecia Fala*, Warszawa 1997.

¹¹ H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers. Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, New York & London, 1992, p. 64.

¹² P. Siuda, *Od dewiacji do głównego nurtu – ewolucja akademickiego spojrzenia na fanów*, "Media Studies", Vol. 3, 2010, p. 90.

the release of H. Jenkin's "Convergence culture" in 2006) seeks to find the common ground between those two approaches. The scholars analyze fans as a part of the production process and show them as prosumers – producers and consumers¹³. The change in fan studies goes hand in hand with the change in fans' activities that were allowed by the Internet. Thanks to the World Wide Web people from all over the world were able to find others, who shared similar interests to theirs, and interact with them, as long as it was possible, considering language differences and time zones. It allowed for the emergence of large fan communities, even if operating only among people from the same country or even the same region, the interactions were faster and more frequent. Fans didn't have to wait for the next gathering or event to meet and talk – they could do it every day after work or school, not leaving their homes. Of course, the number of interactions and geographical range of fandom differs among many fan communities, and it would be extremely difficult to indicate what are the reasons of fans from one community preferring face-to-face interactions during gatherings over relations via Internet or why some fandoms exist only in a form of small groups rather than homogeneous worldwide networks, but we can certainly say that the Internet has changed those relations and that it offers new possibilities.

Fan communities are often defined by common recognition of its meaning "as a group of people who collectively enjoy and are dedicated to a particular text, genre, or performer"¹⁴. They usually don't demand any kind of formal membership and the membership is not obligatory – it's based on the community of shared interests¹⁵. Fan communities are also very interesting, because they don't fit any definition of different social groups such as subcultures, gangs or neighborhood communities. They form their own codes and norms for their communication, although they don't meet every day¹⁶. Also,

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 90–96.

¹⁴ S. Annett, *Anime Fan Communities. Transcultural Flows and Frictions*, New York 2014, p. 13.

¹⁵ D. Porczyński, *Prosumpcja w polskim fandomie gier fabularnych*, [In:] *Prosumpcja: pomiędzy podejściem apokaliptycznym a emancypującym*, P. Siuda and T. Żaglewski (eds.), Bydgoszcz 2014, p. 104.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 105.

it is worth noting that not every internet portal allowing for communication can be called a community. According to P. Siuda it should exist for some time, its members should talk also about private matters, not only fandom's issues, and support each other. Furthermore, they should be recognizable among their group, instead of changing their identities often¹⁷. J. Fiske, on the other hand, suggests that fandoms can be defined in three spheres, or so-called headlines: Discrimination and Distinction, Productivity and Participation, and Capital Accumulation¹⁸. The author underlines that each fandom differs when it comes to exhibiting those features. Discrimination and Distinction means that the members are very strict in terms of drawing the line between the things that fall within their fandom and what does not¹⁹. People who call themselves fans often stress that a common viewer misses a lot of points of a certain cultural product, while people, who are not fans tend to draw attention to the fact that fans are going too deep into something, looking for meanings that may not be originally there. Fiske talks also about opportunities one can draw from being a part of a fan community and that distinction between this group and the rest of the society. He states that it *"may at times be translated into empowered social behavior (...), but at other times may remain at the level of a compensatory fantasy that actually precludes any social action"*²⁰. The last two spheres are more connected to the leading topic of this paper – prosumption. The sphere of Productivity and Participation means that pop culture is actually formed by the members of fandoms out of the cultural products made by cultural industries²¹. Fiske argues that fans are particularly productive and divides their work into semiotic, enunciative and textual productivity²². The last sphere mentioned by the author – Capital Accumulation – refers to

¹⁷ P. Siuda, *Kultury prosumpcji. O niemożności globalnych i ponadpaństwowych społeczności fanów*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 94, 95.

¹⁸ J. Fiske, *The Cultural Economy of Fandom*, [In:] *The Adoring Audience. Fan Culture and Popular Culture*, (eds.) Lewis Lisa A., London & New York, 1992, p. 34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34, 35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 37–39.

knowledge, but also similarities and differences between fans and official culture. While in terms of material capital and its relations with economic they share many similarities, in terms of the non-material capital they differ widely²³. It means that fandoms may offer chances and opportunities for people who for some reason may feel excluded from the mainstream culture. Fans have a dual role within relations with commercial culture – they are something that Fiske calls “excessive readers”, they add to the original product and fill the gaps in it, but on the other hand, they form another, and often more profitable, market²⁴. But they also buy more products, they want things “normal” consumers may even not know about and they provide free feedback for the companies. They add to cultural products and they use it for their own purposes, but they also drive the consumption of cultural products.

Fandoms activity in the prosumption culture

The dual role of the fans reflects perfectly in the definition of a prosumer. Fans buy cultural products, but they don’t just “receive” it, they make something new out of it and the internet and social media only help in doing that.

H. Jenkins, the author of the notion of “participatory culture” writes that “(...) *rather than talking about interactive technologies, we should document the interactions that occur among media consumers, between media consumers and media texts, and between media consumers and media producers*”²⁵. He argues that the aforementioned participatory culture in the 21st century is a mix of new technologies and tools, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) media production and economic trends that “demand more active modes of spectatorship”²⁶. P. Siuda too, states that the said technological advance that allows people to create networks of common interests, is also a cause of

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.

²⁵ H. Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers. Exploring Participatory Culture*, New York and London 2006, p. 135.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

the domination of prosumption. The tools of creation are now widely accessible and we can see the so-called immaterial labor, which means that the production of cultural goods takes place in the “social factory”, rather than in a secluded enterprise’s factory oriented for economic success only²⁷. Unlike such a factory, that provides things, the social factory provides ideas and thoughts²⁸.

The change in the flow of information can be also seen in the internet communication – Web 2.0 being the best example. A. Bruns observes, however, that we shouldn’t overstate content creation and collaboration in doing it, because such behaviors could be observed since Greek *agora* or even from the beginning of farming²⁹. He argues that the industry age and production companies that forced people to play the mere role of passive consumers should be considered a historic aberration, thus the start of engaging the users or consumers dated for 1980s is only a way of going back to their original role³⁰. It’s worth nothing, however, that nowadays the utopian model of cooperation doesn’t seem to come true. There are still many aspects that make users’ feedback and work into unpaid activities they do just for the sake of the huge companies. It is also hard to differentiate activities that are led by the companies from those who are completely invented and conducted by the users only. What’s more, M. Bauwens states that while in the past we could observe cases of panoptism, where only a few could control the whole production process, while the majority of the participants was being controlled, P2P systems allow for something he’s called holoptism – a situation when every participant has the possibilities to see the whole³¹. The aforementioned A. Bruns thinks that this is exactly why the Toffler’s, industrial-aged notion of prosumption is not enough to explain the complexity of

²⁷ *Prosumpcja: pomiędzy podejściem apokaliptycznym a emancypującym*, (eds.) P. Siuda, T. Żaglewski, Bydgoszcz 2014, pp. 11–13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁹ A. Bruns, *From Prosumption to Produsage*, <http://snurb.info/files/2014/From%20Prosumption%20to%20Produsage.pdf> [access: 30.11.2016], p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ M. Bauwens, *Peer to peer and human evolution, Integral Visioning*, <http://integralvisioning.org/article.php?story=p2ptheory1> [access: 01.12.2016].

the information-aged Web 2.0 concept³². He suggests looking at the user-led content creation from their own perspective, rather from the perspective of the companies and its commercial use, proposing the notion of *produsage*, instead of apparently already obsolete prosumption, thus suggesting how profound changes in the network communication we are still witnessing³³.

Although researchers may not comply with one definition of prosumption or its influence on network communication and production cycle, Web 2.0 is still a useful analytical concept in many areas – fan studies being one of them. P. Siuda notes that transmedia storytelling are gaining popularity not only among fans, but companies as well. They use more and more genres and become more complicated and diverse³⁴. He gives the example of the TV series called “Lost” being the first so-called “TV series 2.0” – the first production to rely on audience reaction to such a significant extent³⁵. But although fans and companies are becoming gradually more dependent on each other, it is worth stressing that fandoms’ activities have a rather scarce chance to be appreciated outside of it³⁶. Fanarts and other forms of fan communities’ activities are hard to understand by someone who doesn’t participate in everyday communication between fandom members. If someone doesn’t know the codes, norms or even vocabulary, the community work would be most probably misunderstood or just unappreciated. We have to remember, however, that fans may be the most vivid and the most engaged audience, but they are only a part of a broader phenomenon and companies still must consider “common audience’s” opinion.

Communication context

Social media is a dynamic and slightly open environment where people’s opinions come out. Users very often use web to break the silo of silence and present their individual statements, ideas, feel-

³² A. Bruns, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4–8.

³⁴ P. Siuda, *Kultury prosumpcji...*, *op. cit.*, p. 141–143.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁶ D. Porczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

ings, passions or solutions which are an expression of their imaginations about the reality. Social media understood as a communication space facilitate all attempts to establish the digital fandom. J. Fulk, J. Schmitz and Ch. Steinfeld provided categorization of facilitating factors in relation to social media use including: media accessibility, availability of communication partners, experience in the particular medium, personal style in using media and what is very important, time and costs advantages and disadvantages³⁷. Authors emphasize the meaning of individual decisions of media users leading to create own communication connections with other users in the social media space. The investigation on fans involvement in the prosumption culture requires from us understanding how users take an action aimed to enrich the particular space of fandom and how the process of information contribution looks like. Prosumption activity and participation in both production and consumption simultaneously are a multifaceted and multidimensional processes of constructing mental concepts about past, present and future.

The fact is, that all of social media users have an ability to express themselves in various ways. N.K. Baym stated that there is no difference in “quality” between online and traditional fandoms. The only difference concerns internet which provides possibility to interact freely with another fans via new media³⁸. It has to be mentioned that in the case of social media all fans are users but not every user is a fan. Presumption that “everyone is a fan” is in the colloquial meaning correct, because everyone is a fan of something and people are still fans of television cult in traditional context, outside the social media space³⁹. It of course depends on the actions taken by the users willing or not to be a part of fandom community or those who decide to observe given page in order to gain information or spread knowledge on particular subject. R. Pearson tries to emphasize that the ground rules for being a fan may remain the same in the case of analog and digital media, however, new communication technologies

³⁷ J. Fulk, J. Schmitz, Ch.W. Steinfeld, *A social influence model of technology use*, [In:] J. Fulk and Ch. Stainfeld, *Organizations and communication Technology*, London 1990, p. 118.

³⁸ N.K. Baym, [In:] *Tune in, log on: Soaps, fandom, and online community*, Thousand Oaks, California 2000.

³⁹ P. Booth, *Digital Fandom*, New York 2010, p. 20.

offer many more opportunities to enter the so called “walled garden”, as producers seek to profit from the mass of user generated content⁴⁰.

That is why we should distinguish three categories of actions taken by the fans: (1) related to prosumption based on user generated content which is the most expected form of activity from the group administrators or fanpages owners point of view, (2) thoughtless activities limited only to share already disseminated and well known and popular content and (3) activities which are only an expression of approval or disapproval of discussion or content disseminated within fanpage sphere. It is crucial that the first mentioned category provides all required conditions to fulfil the aim of fandoms which is development and existence in users awareness.

The assumption is that fandom as an analytic unit (from the social media perspective) is a specific kind of data base consisting of information and ideas flows and processes related to exchanging knowledge in particular subject supplied by sets of interrelations between users interested in the selected topic. This kind of information could be interesting and valuable for all members of fandom communities. While one or more people in online community may share these types of information, sooner or later they choose to do so is at their discretion⁴¹. What is more, the communities itself provides strong incentives for creative expression and active participation. The most important here is that development of participatory culture shifted the focal point from individual expression to community involvement⁴². It means that all attempts to share or distribute content is up to individual users and the high or low level of involvement in spreading the discretionary information depends on willingness to contribute for the community. It should be mentioned that online communities grow as more information is contributed by the people who possess that information and experience or knowledge⁴³.

⁴⁰ R. Pearson, *Fandom in the digital era*, *Popular Communication*, Vol. 8/2010, pp. 84–95.

⁴¹ X. Li, *Factors influencing the willingness to contribute information to online communities*, “*New Media & Society*”, Vol. 13(2) 2011, p. 280.

⁴² H. Jenkins, *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for 21st Century*, Massachusetts 2009, p. 6.

⁴³ X. Li, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

Fans involvement in the prosumtion culture

The whole process of users' involvement oscillates around actions taken by particular entities and consists of several stages (Figure 1). User of social media(fan) makes an individual decision and choice when it comes to joining a particular community. The fact is that social media environment is shaped by its users. Thus, their activity within this space led to the emerging of some kind of specified state of reality understood as a picture of society or its culture. Users guided by their interests and expectations select those parts of the whole image which are vivid and actual in a given situation.

The first stage [1] is a moment when user (future fan) starts to establish contacts with other users. The process of selection should be emphasized here because not all elements of the whole information flow are transferred to the users awareness. Media use theory seem to be important here because it proposes that: “ (...) *individuals choose media through a matching process. This matching involves assessing the requirements of the particular communication task at hand and selecting a medium with communication capabilities that match their requirements*”⁴⁴. According to this statement the matching process occurs also in the case of objects capturing when users selectively choose particular elements of the information flow.

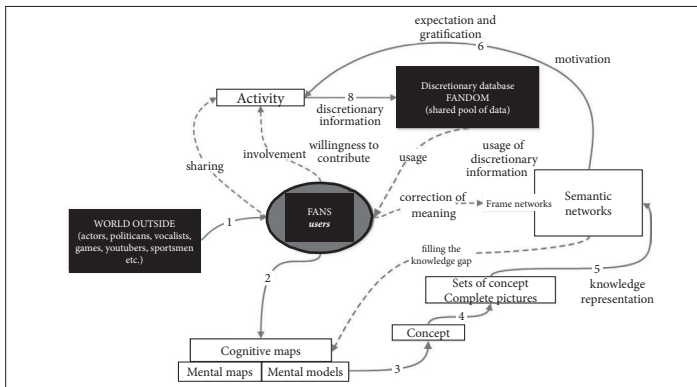


Figure 1. Process of fans community involvement in the prosumtion culture. Source: Own

⁴⁴ J. Fulk, J. Schmitz, Ch. W. Steinfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

The next step [2] is strongly connected to the first one and refers to the human perception. Members of particular fandom communities construct their individual – rarely repeatable – imaginations about culture. These imaginations are based on previously observed or obtained information on a particular topic. Cognitive maps which are a reflection of people's imaginations sometimes do not overlap with the reality. Fans who participate in the individual fandoms or communities try to create appropriate mental models and maps from their point of view. Very often first impressions are deformed by our expectations, needs, feelings triggered by the subconscious. It is crucial to understand that particular online communities or media associate different objects and their attributes and other pieces of information in different ways that have significant impact on how social media users link these elements in their minds⁴⁵. Thus, both first and second stages of presented conception are essential and indispensable parts of the whole process of users involvement. A. Bandura noted that cognitive factors determine which environmental events will be observed, what meaning and labels will be conferred on them and what is more important, what emotional impact and motivation power they will have and how the information they convey will be prepared and organized for future use⁴⁶.

The third [3] and fourth part [4] marked on the graph above are an implication of the aforementioned people's perception. Users acquire knowledge about culture or its specific parts and construct sets of concepts which in result are their knowledge representation about perceived objects. J. R. Anderson argue that cognition perspective emphasizes that meaning, so our imagination about "world outside" is represented in both the perceptual and motor systems used to interact with others⁴⁷. It means that the cognitive process is an indispensable element of taking any action which in result leads to high or low community engagement. It must be said

⁴⁵ L. Guo, M. McCombs, *The power of information networks. New directions for agenda setting*, New York 2016, p. 19.

⁴⁶ A. Bandura, *Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication*, Media Psychology, Vol. 3, 2001, p. 267.

⁴⁷ J.R. Anderson, *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications*, New York 2015, p. 109.

that to convert a representation of a picture in our heads into representation of an action, first we should transform the image of an object and its attributes into some kind of an abstraction and its significance representation, and then convert that representation into a specific action⁴⁸.

Very important questions should be answered here: if it is necessary to take the cognitive psychology under the consideration when talking about social media, and whether it is important to explain the process of fans' involvement from the behavior perspective? Due to the fact that all media, including social media, play an influential role in how society understands the mechanism through which symbolic communication imply our thoughts, affects an action⁴⁹.

Social media are a kind of a virtual public sphere where all events and behaviors are reflections of those occurring in traditionally understood public sphere and very often are transferred from one space to another. Z. Pappacharissi assumed that a virtual sphere does exist in the strong tradition of the public sphere, but in a radically different form⁵⁰. Users during the process of cognition are enabled to identify themselves among a group, community or society. Whole relations, actions, behaviors or even groups, communities and fandoms profiles depend on particular and individual choices of users. According to social cognitive theory, it is a network of connected vessels based on interrelations between three elements: personal determinants, behavioral determinants and environmental determinants which together constitute triadic reciprocal causation⁵¹. It seems to be confirmed by G. Ritzer, P. Dean and N. Jurgenson who argued that: “(...) *users are not alienated on social media because they are not disconnected from the content they produce on the site and they are free to create what they choose*”⁵². This assumption emphasizes the role of the environment from which users derive knowledge in various topics.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ A. Bandura, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁵⁰ Z. Papacharissi, *The virtual sphere: the internet as a public sphere*, New Media & Society; Vol. 4(9) 2002, pp. 20–22.

⁵¹ A. Bandura, *op. cit.*, pp. 266–267.

⁵² G. Ritzer, P. Dean, N. Jurgenson, *The Coming of Age of the Prosumer*, American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 56(4) 2012, p. 389.

The next stage [5] is equally important as the previous ones. Fan communities construct unique and sometimes special set of symbols which are useful in communication. Knowledge and awareness of these symbols allow fans to communicate in a proper way. It protects community members from ambiguous situations arising from differences in understanding the aforementioned rules of the fandom which were created to arrange internal and external ventures. Constructing semantic networks is a process of cognitive maps complementing and is represented in our minds in the form of concepts connected to each other and meaning expressed in language⁵³. Semantic networks play huge role in complementing, expanding and even in modifying our knowledge. Additionally, this stage of the whole process on the one hand facilitates, on the other hinders the transposition of knowledge, experience or ideas from user to another user or from user to community. It all depends on categorical organization of our knowledge which influences the way we code or encode and express our experiences⁵⁴. The fact of how deep our knowledge on particular subject is, diversifies our willingness to contribute any piece of information to community or group we are the member of.

All of the components presented so far(Figure 1) are related to the intrinsic mental constructions and our individual idea of the world which may or may not affect the action we decide to take. Next stages will be strongly determined by the presence in social media environment which gives users many different opportunities to join and participate in a chosen community in an open and active way. Very interesting here is the fact that according to prosumption culture, fans have not only the opportunity to receive stimuli but also to send impulses to another users. It stimulates the process of creativity which is more or less used by companies. There are many examples of fans' ideas usage by companies, for instance, which produce additional levels and stories or whole expansion pack games basing on gamers or fans opinions and claims. Social media intentionally call notions of originality, intellectual property and creative effort into remix understood as a recombination of semiotic resources into new digital texts which are proliferated online⁵⁵.

⁵³ R.J. Sternberg, K. Stenberg, *Cognitive Psychology*, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Belmont, USA 2012, p. 334.

⁵⁴ J. R. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁵⁵ O. Estrad, O. Gilye, T. Lange, *Re-mixing Multimodal Resources: Multiliteracies and digital production in Norwegian media education*. "Learning Media and Technology", Vol. 32(2) 2007.

The sixth part [6] of the presented process led to conversion the abstract representation of knowledge to representation of an action. Because of the technological advancements, social media users do not depend on time and space and can operate in an open and free way. In the social media sphere people are expected to add, change and interact with the contributions of others, who are involved into the process of information exchange⁵⁶. Social media users are enabled to personalize and shape their information environment internally and externally. It means that all fans can specify and modify all the information they will to share (external personalization) and compose own social media profile according to individual needs or interesting, then the social media profile reminds some type of personal newsroom⁵⁷.

To take an action or not, people need some motivational factors that force them to contribute the information. The expectancy theory explains that in general someone's decision depends on needs for obtain the reward⁵⁸. F.C. Lunenburg stated that a person is motivated to the degree that he or she believes that effort will lead to acceptable performance which could be rewarded and the value of the reward is highly positive⁵⁹. In the case of social media, motivation to take any action leading to contribute to online community may depends on: the value of the rewards from contributing or the reward that users believe to get from contributing⁶⁰. But it has to be mentioned that some aforementioned distortion may occur when it comes to decision-making about taking an action. The cause is that there could be conflict between our perception and expectations. Sometimes there the so called social dilemma could occur, especially: "*when people share public goods and resources that are in short supply and there is excessive consumption*"⁶¹.

⁵⁶ K. Pepler, *Social Media and Creativity* [In:] D. Lemish, The Routledge International Handbook of Children, Adolescents and Media, New York 2013, p. 195.

⁵⁷ J. Nożewski, *Profil użytkownika mediów społecznościowych – osobisty newsroom 2.0?*, "Media Studies" Vol. 4(63), Uniwersytet Warszawski 2015, pp. 35–48.

⁵⁸ V.H. Vroom, *Work and motivation*, Wiley, New York 1964.

⁵⁹ F.C Lunenburg, *Expectancy Theory of Motivation: Motivating by Altering Expectations*, International Journal of Management, Business and Administration, Vol. 15 (1), 2011, p. 2.

⁶⁰ X. Li, *Emerging Media. Uses and Dynamics*, New York 2016, p. 155.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

The last phase [7] is related directly to specific involvement in community communication sphere. Different social media services offer various interfaces which allow users to express their opinions, ideas, humor etc. There are two main interdependent types of involvements in social media: (1) information seeking and (2) information exchange. The information seeking is a typical communication kind of involvement aimed on acquire information for certain purposes. Information seeking is mostly limited when it comes to interaction between user and the community. People establish contacts usually when other users are able to satisfy their needs. In comparison, information exchange is an interactive communication operation involving other users in sharing ideas and experiences with others. Information exchange is interactive in nature so other participants can be involved in the process and the context of information exchange could matter to both sides of this process⁶². It is the main aim of all fandoms to establish and develop complementary information space based on reciprocity and equal access for every member. Users involvement may take different forms especially when we consider social media. Fans are enabled to share their opinions in the form of comments or post own images or videos in particular subject. It has to be mentioned that different communities expect different kinds of fans involvement, since it depends on particular fandom characteristic and to what or whom it is dedicated to.

The considerations about fandom in the social media sphere force us to take into account the issue of information possession. Online community as a kind of organized structure of users is filled by information which comes from fans and is a result of information exchanging between them. If we assess that the involvement of any user in this space is under his or her discretion, then the whole community space should be called discretionary database. This database can be understood as a shared pool of data to which fandom members can, if they want, contribute information⁶³.

The rule is that the higher involvement is, the wider and more capable the database is. If users will be able to find out that being

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

⁶³ T. Conolly, B.K. Thorn, *Discretionary databases: Theory data, and implications*, [In:] J. Fulk, C. Steinfeld (eds.), *Organizations and communication Technology*, pp. 219–223.

involved is profitable, they will more likely contribute data for common use. Users create and maintain communication aspects of social media community. It is vivid that fans involvement support all processes aimed to establish communication space for all kinds of debates.

There are also five levels of alternative ways of information transferring related to: (1) sharing without involvement, (2) feeling of knowledge gap, (3) feeling of misunderstanding, (4) use of discretionary information and (5) being strongly involved (Figure 1). It is important that this alternatives may occur only once, simultaneously, repeatable or always when user feel that the experience and knowledge could be not sufficient to make an action. Additionally, it should be mentioned that solid lines represent the main process of users engagement in flow of information and dashed lines represent actions which are secondary to the core process of peoples involvement (Figure 1).

In general, people have two ways to disseminate information among community members. The first one was analyzed above as a complicated, multidimensional and completed process of personalization both internal and external users environment. The second one is related to sharing of information without any knowledge about it – just to share. In an online fandom consideration about taking an action or sharing the information creates similar kind of conflict because there are much more consumers than producers or prosumers.

Another alternatives are the straight implications of community database usage. It depends on fans perception of all the information inside the fandom and processes strongly tied with users activity. The alternative means here that fan who have possessed some knowledge in particular subject may at some point change his mind to information seeking. It means that there are two possible moves to make in that situation. People can involve in community communication basing on the existing knowledge. In that situation, users share their opinions, thoughts about something, and express agreement and disagreement or satisfaction and dissatisfaction with something. They can also practice sharing in that phase. The one of the important things here is that we can recognize some kind of loops consisting of both main and alternative links. In the case of the situation mentioned a moment ago, loop consists of: information usage, involvement de-

gree and main part – data contribution which is the indispensable element of all loops appearing in this schema.

The second way appear when fan who simultaneously is a member of a particular community starts to feel uncomfortable because of the lack of understanding of the basic components of the fandom. Then he or she tries to search the database for information indispensable to complement the gap. It partly explains why social media users participate in more than one communities and observe other users pages. They try to seek appropriate and sufficient information about something. The motivation is one of the key factors here. If user is motivated enough, he will seek information until his or her “mental catalog” is complemented. But there are situations when new item or object occurs, then users must go back to the beginning of the whole process and go through the whole process once again. The return from the semantic network to cognitive maps can occur when users perceived an objector event incorrectly and have problems with definition and categorization of particular event. Before making any next step users go back to previous phase and try to obtain new and more comprehensive information about the subject. The shape of the aforementioned loops and their components depend on how big the amount of knowledge is, ideas or experience possessed by users.

The proposed concept of users’ activity should include one more connection between discretionary database and the world outside. The sequence of processes where actually mentioned “world outside” construct another world outside but with different, modified characteristics. Social media are open so everyone can join in. Thus, things created by one user support the community, which supports other users, who provide information supplies to other communities.

The importance of this kind of analysis lay in the availability of diversification of two processes – production and consumption. Prosumption culture forces users to participate in both seeking and exchanging information processes. Their willingness to contribute to community depends on many of factors with are rooted in people’s minds. Social media as a communication sphere facilitate relations establishing, which is vital, when it comes to content distribution. Social media as an technological solution, give many new possibilities to “be engaged” or “be involved” in the context of whole society.

Nevertheless, as it was stated above, all processes appearing in social media are reflections of those occurring in traditionally understood society. Despite the fact, that communication in social media is actually limited to binary communication, there are so many ways and so many place for different expression.

Conclusions

The prosumption culture emerged when technological, social and economic factors were merged. This processes have led to changes in people's behavior, particularly when it comes to willingness to participate in the flow of information and desires to be a part of community based on information exchange. Technical capabilities allow people to be active users which means that they operate on prosumption and consumption intersection. Social media can be analyzed from different perspectives, but it has to be emphasized, that all signs of activity depend on how users behave in the communication space. Maffesoli's conception of neo-tribes seems to be confirmed, because people always aspire to manifest their social presence in both digital and non-digital space. It turns out that pop culture implies users behaviors in a particular direction and draws their attention to objects they could be interested in. Nevertheless, fan is a user who possess all indispensable sources to change, in small extent, the state of communication space of fandom.

Users, same as non-users, construct their imagination about the world and transfer it through social media to chosen communities. All collective actions taken by them are strongly connected to willingness to contribute. Prosumption culture as a kind of social construction, motivates people to share their thoughts even when the reward is not a material thing. Self-identification and self-efficiency which enhance the individuality of social entities are very important factors of prosumption processes in which users are involved. Social media as a communication space facilitate processes of people grouping around particular subject, but it does not mean that these platforms change the basis of social perception. Social services change only the way how we perceive objects and their attributes because each of us have

grounded imagination about world around us. Nevertheless, pictures in our heads are not stable, but they constantly change. Of course, the internet provides us much more information than we could receive beyond digital interfaces and that is why we should pay more attention to all behaviors focused on selection, creation and contribution data through online communities. However, people are more likely to contribute information and share their experience within social media communication context. Users are forced to take an action very rarely because it is under their discretion. Being a fan means that we have a choice to maintain current state of mind or to supply fandom community with individual, creative and useful data.