Tacky and Proud

Exploring Tecnobrega’s Value Network
by Ana Domb Krauskopf
Executive Summary

Media industries are currently navigating a period of relentless transformation. Due to its industrial, technological and cultural affordances, the music industry has played the role of loss-leader in these shifts. Understanding the behaviors of music audiences can provide insight into the nature of this transformation, perhaps pointing towards ways in which these processes can be experienced as productive growth rather than inevitable downfall.

This paper explores the role of audiences as productive actors in the music industry and uses the value network as an analytical tool to facilitate the process of locating audience involvement and specifying the audience's role as creators of economic and symbolic value.

Why Tecnobrega?

Our main case study in this white paper is Tecnobrega ("Cheesy Techno"), a grassroots Brazilian music industry found in Belém (the capital city of Pará, a northern state of Brazil). This study is based on the ethnographic research conducted during ten days of interviews and participant observation in Belém in March 2009. Belem is a city of only about 1.5 million people, yet it hosts approximately 4300 Tecnobrega parties a month, and 1700 concerts by Tecnobrega musicians (Lemos & Castro 162). Tecnobrega audiences are composed primarily of working...
class young people in their 20s, an unsurprising fact given that 38% of Brazil's population is between the ages of 15 and 29. Tecnobrega evolved outside mainstream media, yet it became a successful music scene thanks to its innovative forms of production, distribution, promotion, and its strong relationship with audiences.

Tecnobrega has also benefited from increasing widespread internet access throughout Brazil. According to the Center of Studies on Information and Communication Technologies, 17% of Brazilian households owned a computer in 2005. By 2008 this number had increased to 27%. Internet access within the household increased from 13% to 20% in the same period. While in 2005 the majority of households with Internet used a dial-up connection (65%), today 58% connect at broadband speeds (Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil). As in many nations outside of the US, mobile web penetration is ahead of computers per household. In 2008, 70% of the population used cell phones (up from 55% in 2005) and 24% of them were already using them to download music or videos. (Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil). Access to technology, along with the audience’s impetus to participate, created a fertile arena for creative appropriation of technologies, be it through music sampling or music sharing.

In the midst of this increasing technological development, Tecnobrega artists have implemented a business model that responds to their audience’s context. Tecnobrega’s creators do not enforce copyright, relying on audiences and pirate networks to spread their content. The result is a loyal and tremendously participatory music scene, where the audience’s engagement is as much part of the events as the shows themselves. Fans distribute, promote and “bring the heat” to the Tecnobrega environment. This paper will describe Tecnobrega's value network, tracing the way monetary and non-monetary value moves through the system.

**Breaking Away From The Value Chain**

To appreciate the breadth of the audience’s participation, it is first necessary to understand the audiences’ actions and map their engagement. Understanding the value they provide to industries requires them to be acknowledged as participants within an industry’s broader value production scheme. The manufacturing industry’s standard tool for the analysis of value generation is the value chain, a model that has long described the processes of music industries as well. Such a model struggles, however to effectively account for the role of media consumers - audiences. When adapting the value chain to media industries, the role of the audience/consumer is
commonly anchored at the end of the productive process, ignoring the variety of multi-directional exchanges of audiences participating within the modern media landscape.

A **value network** provides a more detailed way to understand the relationships between the respective participants contributing to the success of media industries, while retaining the basic idea that value increases as products circulate. The network is a dynamic concept with fluid dependencies. Analyzing the circulation of value around a network provides a more nuanced way to account for the value audiences add to media properties as it recognizes that they are not the end-point; many are involved in the creation, distribution, and promotion of content.

A value network approach can also highlight activities that fall outside the realm of the monetary economy but which nevertheless add value to the industry as a whole, such as the work of consumers acting as grassroots intermediaries. The Tecnobrega network is made up of two complementary sub-networks, one dedicated to monetary transactions and a second one where symbolic exchanges take place. The latter sub-network is where social capital circulates. Symbolic and economic value emerge out of different types of transactions, but it’s the co-existence of these different forms of value that energize the Tecnobrega industry. The DJs’ recognition of their audience, the social bonds built around the parties, that is what motivates the fans’ loyalty and economic support of the industry.

The main actors in the Tecnobrega network are the DJs, the musicians, the audience (and superfans), the event producers and the sponsors. While some actors, like the event producers, sustain the network primarily through monetary transactions, others, like the DJs, trade mostly in symbolic capital, publicly recognizing the fans’ and the musicians’ contributions to the environment. It is the synergistic relationship between these actors, and between the types of value that they produce, that creates and sustains the Tecnobrega environment.

**Beyond Tecnobrega**

Prioritizing social capital and audience participation is not exclusive to Tecnobrega, nor is it the only industry where the productivity of audiences are revealed by value network analysis. For this reason, the paper also explores the value network of American political satire talk show *The Colbert Report*. 
Conclusions

Many media properties today, could benefit from acknowledging their audience as active participants in the value generation process. Recognizing them as actors beyond the act of “consumption” is a key step towards being able to locate the different forms of value that today’s creative and engaged audiences produce.

If industries move to embrace the different types of value produced by their audience, this can then be incorporated into the industry’s value generating process. Taking this stance means companies can spend their time, energy and money uncovering new strategies to benefit from the value provided by all the agents in the value network around a property, rather than expending these resources trying to enforce one-way value flows.

Adopting a value network approach provides insights into the way value is generated around media properties or industries, and the contributing roles different actors play. By overlaying monetary and non-monetary relations in the network, it is possible to account for different types of value as well as identify their interactions.

Whether for Tecnobrega or The Colbert Report, audiences have already engaged with content by adding their own contributions. Content owners now need to understand what motivates their behavior and decide if and how they will recognize audiences as both consumers and collaborators.
Acknowledgements

Image 1: Super Pop’s grand finale. Photo by Henrik Moltke published under a Creative Commons attribution/non-commercial license.¹

Thanks to the Tecnobrega fans, and particularly to the fantastic equipes that received me in Belém: Super Amigos, S.Coelho, As Coelhetes and the Equi-psicopatas. Also much thanks to my friend Kevin Driscoll who led me to Holmes Wilson who in turn introduced me to his brilliant girlfriend Giselli Vasconcelos who put me in touch with the journalist turned documentarian Vladimir Cunha who was kind enough to introduce me to Bruno Regis who put me in touch with Acácio Canto, my dedicated field "producer", who, once he had a notebook in hand, efficiently led me to the generous and passionate Tecnobrega audiences. Thanks to all of you.

On the homefront, I would like to thank Dr. George Yúdice for pointing me in the right direction, Dr. Henry Jenkins and Eleanor Baird for their generous feedback and particularly Dr. Joshua Green for all his comments, contributions and many hours spent helping shape this paper. I also want to extend my gratitude to Dan Pereira and our Brazilian partners, IG and Petrobras, for making this research possible.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all pictures included in this paper were taken by Ana Domb Krauskopf
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Introduction

The music industry, along with the world of media as a whole, is in a state of transition. What is being sold is not so clear anymore, nor is it obvious what parts of the traditional business will survive. Over the past ten years, the recording industry has proven to be a loss-leader, the first industry radically affected by the changes wrought by technological innovation, digital culture and the changing nature of audiences and consumers. The issues the recording industry has faced, particularly around the decreasing control over the distribution of content, are now becoming part of the reality for the television and film industries. At the core of these shifts lie questions about where and how is value generated, and how to profit from it.

The changes brought about by digital technologies have destabilized the once apparently clear relationships between audiences, producers and distributors. As this paper will argue, audiences and consumers must be re-imagined as agents who add value to media business beyond the act of consumption -- the energy audiences invest in the circulation, distribution, and creative appropriation of content generates new forms of value for media business. This paper will argue that this value can be recognized by situating the audience as a participant within the productive activities of media businesses. Rather than locating them at the end of a value chain, the paper argues for a model that sees media moving through a value network, which allows us to recognize audiences as an actor contributing to the success of content. As will be discussed, audiences play an important role in the creation of the network through which content moves.

This paper studies the dynamics of participatory audiences through a case study of Brazil’s Tecnobrega (literally "cheesy techno") scene. Born in the capital of the Amazon, Belém, this grassroots music industry has turned traditional conventions upside down, purposely forgoing revenue from copyright in favor of allowing their music to circulate through the “pirate” channels favored by local audiences (see Image 2 below). With monumental aparelhagens (sounds systems) that evoke retro-futuristic spaceships, Tecnobrega parties are all spectacle, movement and passion. But behind the fireworks supporting the performance, is a rich history of local and foreign, old and new rhythms, of appropriation and evolutions. This is music whose elements originated partly in first world countries, then remixed, enhanced and ultimately reinvented in the South. New rhythms, voices, instruments and textures are added. It is never quite a finished product, even as it is distributed and shared, it continues to morph. The result is a vibrant industry with a loyal fan following, and a network that draws value from audiences in a variety of ways. Examining media flows through a value network recognizes the multidirectional
flows of value around media properties, bringing to light monetary and non-monetary interactions that take place, and making apparent the fluid relations between different participants. Such a model has benefits for understanding how best to account for participatory audiences - active, migratory media consumers.

**Studying Tecnobrega**

Tecnobrega is an understudied but fascinating culture which is quickly drawing international attention from business and anthropologists alike. The recently published Tecnobrega: O Pará reiventando o negocio da Música, by Rolando Lemos and Oona Castro is the only extensive research published on this topic and it has proved an invaluable supplement to my rather limited on-site research. Lemos, a law professor who directs Creative Commons Brazil, and media researcher Castro describe the dynamics that organize this industry. This research revealed the complex organization and economic weight of this seemingly “informal” industry.\(^2\) **Nevertheless, this work doesn't sufficiently recognize the audience’s role in shaping Tecnobrega and moving it forward.** This project is a first attempt to close that gap, an opportunity to carry on with the inquiries initiated by Lemos and Castro, this time placing the audience at the center of the study.\(^3\)

Drawing on a 10-day field trip to Belém, the capital of Pará and Tecnobrega, where I conducted interviews with various members of the Tecnobrega fan community and attended several parties, this paper will describe Tecnobrega's value network, tracing the way monetary and non-monetary value moves through the system. As I will discuss below, many sales within this network rely as


\(^3\) Given its focus on audience practices, this paper does not provide an in depth description of the complex relationships between the other industry players, like street vendors or event producers. Lemos and Castro’s book, mentioned above, does address the roles of all those players, down to the cars with external loudspeakers that announce the shows.
much on the non-monetary contributions of Tecnobrega audiences and fans as they do the market forces which shape the production and distribution of cultural goods. A good part of the revenue that comes from the sales of Tecnobrega music, for instance, is drawn from sales through 'pirate' or unofficial channels, and of "unprofessional," live recordings. Similarly, as we shall see in the discussion of Tecnobrega equipes -- the groups super-fans of the genre organize themselves into -- some members of the Tecnobrega audience see financial rewards for their proselytizing and evangelizing of the culture.

This paper will discuss the ways Tecnobrega operates as spreadable media, looking at how content circulates through the intricate web of relations, both online and off-line. It will describe the ways both DJs and audiences -- professionals and amateurs, producers and consumers -- harness both old and new media to distribute Tecnobrega and build the community. In the following section, I will introduce the key participants in the Tecnobrega system and map their relationships onto a value network - a model of industrial relations author and business consultant Verna Allee (2008) suggests provides a more dynamic appreciation of the functioning of elements within a business cycle. The two sections that follow will explore in more detail the activities of Tecnobrega producers, DJs and audiences, looking at the way the grassroots industry built a business model supported by audience practices that are still considered illegitimate in many parts of the creative industries. Mapping the way content moves through the network, the final section of this paper will describe the interactions, monetary and non-monetary transactions that bind the actors in the network.

Charting these actions reinforces the notion that more than one form of value operates in this industry. Table 1 below, which will be discussed later, collects together the variety of monetary and non-monetary transactions that take place with Tecnobrega. What is especially important to realize looking at this table are that there are a number of key dependencies between these types of value. The monetary success of DJs, musicians and event producers, for instance, is directly reliant on the types of non-monetary value audiences and fans draw from participating in Tecnobrega. This is not just because it is these audiences who purchase the recordings or attend the live parties. Within Tecnobrega, audiences participate in a more dynamic range of ways. As I will discuss below, audiences not only assist in the circulation of content, but through their socializing they create and trade social capital that directly affects the popularity -- and consequently the potential worth -- of various parts of the Tecnobrega culture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monetary transactions</th>
<th>Symbolic transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DJs</strong></td>
<td>Receives payment from event producer.</td>
<td>Recognition of audiences on stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition of musicians through their remixes.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasional sponsorship.</td>
<td>Recognition of teams playing their songs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing off-stage social bonds with audiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing off-stage social bonds with street vendors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Musicians</strong></td>
<td>Income from shows.</td>
<td>Developing off-stage social bonds with audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition of musicians by including their names in songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selling CDs at shows.</td>
<td>Developing off-stage social bonds with street vendors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>Buying tickets.</td>
<td>Sharing music.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proselytizing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Buying CDs.</td>
<td>Creating teams (and creating teams’ identity markers).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hiring musicians to compose music about teams.</td>
<td>Giving DJs their songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing off-stage social bonds with musicians and DJs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buying Tecnobrega merchandise.</td>
<td>Documenting their participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event producers</strong></td>
<td>Buying <em>aparelhagens</em>.</td>
<td>Event producers don’t trade in symbolic goods, but in order to further their activities in such a small community they are obligated to be in good social standing with their peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hiring bands.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hiring DJs, Creating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sponsorship agreements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street vendors</strong></td>
<td>Occasional sponsorship.</td>
<td>Curating collections with specific DJs or bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selling CDs.</td>
<td>Featuring specific DJs or bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sponsors</strong></td>
<td>Financing specific events or processes in exchange of their brand presence.</td>
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</table>

*Table 1: Tecnobrega's monetary and non-monetary transactions*
As Xiaochang Li discusses in the C3 white paper *More Than Money Can Buy - Locating Value in Spreadable Media*, success within the contemporary creative industries often requires recognizing the value contributed by both monetary and non-monetary exchanges, as well as developing strategies for working across both systems of value. Studying Tecnobrega provides a specific context for exploring the relationship between these differing modes of value exchange. Exploring the application of the value network idea outside of Tecnobrega, this paper will conclude by looking at what it might reveal about the value flows around a program such as *The Colbert Report*. 
Breaking Away From the Value Chain

As noted in the introduction, the role of audiences within the creative industries is shifting dramatically: those who were once considered the end of the value chain of the creative industries are now also creators, producers and distributors. Managing the implications of this shift has become an important daily reality for media business, yet identifying the most effective strategies remains a vexing issue. In many cases, the transition of the audience away from a position of ‘consumption’ has been characterized as a struggle over control -- frequently control over content (as we see in the diversity of response to fan fiction and user-created content) or control over the means of distribution (as demonstrated by the variety of response to the rise of file sharing and peer-to-peer networks of circulation). As the Consortium has suggested in previous white papers, the contemporary media landscape requires not only a ceding of certain expectations about control established within the broadcast era, but a re-conceptualization of the way producers, distributors and consumers relate. Rather than seeing the emergence of active participatory audiences solely as a challenge, companies should recognize productive audiences offer new models for generating value around media properties.

A value network provides a more nuanced way to account for the value audiences add to media properties, as well as a more detailed way to understand the relationship between the respective participants contributing to the success of media. The value network is an alternative to traditional value chains, which struggle to account for the value produced by contemporary audiences. In a conventional value chain, the entire productive sequence “from raw materials to final consumers” (Saloner, Shepard, & Podolny 128) is represented as a linear series of one-way transactions that begin with the producer and end with the consumption of the good, as shown in Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1: Conventional Value Chain (packed goods)](image)

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4 See particularly the papers If It Doesn’t Spread, It’s Dead: Creating Value in a Spreadable Marketplace, YouTube: Online Video and Co-Created Value, Fanning the Audience's Flames: Ten Ways to Embrace and Cultivate Fan Communities, and How to Turn Pirates into Loyalists: The Moral Economy and an Alternative Response to File Sharing.
Adapting this model for the broadcast space results in something like the value chain represented in Figure 2 below, taken from a presentation by Bear Stearns Analyst Spencer Wang.

Figure 2: Media (Broadcast) Value Chain (source: Bear Stearns)

Wang maps key elements of the broadcast space onto this model, as represented in Figure 3, showing where the respective agents in the production of broadcast content fit into the chain. Looking at the flow of production in such a fashion, the shortcomings of the value chain as a way to account for dynamic cultural production begins to become apparent. The links in such a model have fixed dependencies and work towards one predetermined outcome, generally excluding end users from the production process.

Figure 3: Value chain of content expanded (source: Bear Stearns)
Value chain models like this struggle to imagine a role for consumers other than as an end point. Indeed, in accounting for "user-created content", Wang's model transforms "Consumers" into "Producers," placing them at the head of the chain, rather than creating multi-directional flows or imagining Consumers as agents circulating content. Their major contribution, then, seems to be to return value (in the form of revenue) back up the chain, as we can see in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Value flows along the Value Chain

Confronting this problem, media scholar Axel Bruns describes the way content flows through networks of 'produsage' -- networks that see consumers ("users" in Bruns' work) as both 'producer' and 'user.' Bruns argues that increasingly users and consumers are contributing to the production of both the content they enjoy and the networks through which it circulates. Thinking about online news services such as Slashdot, social networking platforms such as MySpace and Facebook, or online content sharing sites such as Flickr or YouTube, the activities of users don't comprise consumption, or 'use,' in the traditional sense. Rather, we can see that each of these spaces is co-created through the activities of the users -- their use of these platforms (contributing content, making certain content popular, and creating links between different parts of these networks) constitute acts of 'production' that build out the very networks they are participating in. These spaces are richer because of the participation of a diversity of users, each
of whom plays some productive role. Beyond highlighting the need to rethink the position of the audience within contemporary creative industries, Bruns makes it apparent we need to rethink the way different parts of the networks that circulate creative product work together. As Bruns argues, produsage "does not yet undermine the industrial production value chain, of course; it merely presents the possibility of having producer/consumer relationships reversed and duplicated to the point where multiple such relationships describe the interconnection between any two nodes in the network" (Bruns 26).

Rather than a traditional value chain, then, a value network proves a more illuminating analytical tool, making it possible to locate, if not to quantify, the value generated by all of the agents involved in the circulation of media content. Figure 5 overleaf shows what a value network for Tecnobrega might look like. The network is a dynamic concept, able to account for greater agency from each of its nodes; a value network retains the basic idea that value increases as products circulate through it, but the paths are not necessarily preordained and value might not be set on the product but on the process of circulation itself. As author and business consultant Verna Allee suggests "value networks are complex. They encompass much more than the flow of products, services and revenue of the traditional value chain" (Allee 36). In other words, none of the nodes in a value network necessarily represent the beginning or the end of the generation of value, and, as such, it is possible to locate the multidirectional exchanges between different actors in the network, exchanges that at times reverse the flow a traditional value chain may depict.

A value network approach also accounts for elements crucial to the success of the creative industries such as non-monetary transactions and the work of consumers as grassroots intermediaries building fan communities and evangelizing about programs -- activities that add value to the products and efforts of content producers.

5 For more discussion of this point, see the C3 white paper YouTube: Online Video and Co-Created Value by Joshua Green.

6 Granted that this value network that I’m suggesting doesn’t operate in the conventional sense as it does not describe one particular firm’s process as some of the business management literature proposes (BStabell & DFjeldstad; Kothandaraman & Wilson) but it describes the Tecnobrega ecosystem as a whole.
Applying a value network to Tecnobrega provides a way to account for the value generated by the audience. As the above diagram indicates, Tecnobrega is supported by monetary and non-monetary flows of value between the respective elements of the network. The first involves monetary transactions, bringing to light the commercial potential of Tecnobrega in spite of its refusal to enforce copyright as a means for revenue generation. The second network is comprised of symbolic transactions, exchanges that increase the social and cultural value of Tecnobrega in turn making the monetary transactions that take place within the network more successful.

These two overlapping networks share many of the same actors, and often rely on each other -- the super fans who make up Tecnobrega teams increase the social worth of the DJs by

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7 These concepts are further developed in the section *The Audience: Doing Tecnobrega* below

proselytizing for them amongst those who make up the casual audience. These teams are comprised of fans with particular reputation and pull amongst the larger community, and their supporting of a certain DJ can ensure larger, more engaged crowds during their sets. This in-turn allows these DJs to command more bookings, higher fees, or better slots from event producers. These two transactions, one in social capital and one in economic capital, are interlinked. Both are reliant upon the DJ "producing" creative content for audiences to "consume," but the flows of value between the "producer" and the "consumer" is far from a one-way relationship. While this example describes the common way that demand (popularity) makes scarce goods (popular DJs) worth more, it also points to the role active audiences play in creating the very networks for content distribution (in this case, the vibrant Tecnobrega scene) they participate in.

The productive activities of audiences in this instance parallel other ways fans add-value to content. Consider, for instance, the Lostpedia, the fan created, written and supported online encyclopedia for the Lost television series. Compiling the Lostpedia, audiences use their collective knowledge to make sense of the show’s intricate storyline, documenting events in the series, and testing out theories about future plot twists. Despite not having an official relationship with the program’s producers, ABC Studios, Lostpedia has turned into a valuable ancillary product for both fans and ABC. It is a useful tool, for example, for new viewers to catch up on the intricacies of the show’s plot before diving into new episodes, or for returning fans to remind themselves of what’s happening when a new season begins.

Fans adding value through ancillary products is not a new or rare phenomenon. As Sam Ford has argued in the C3 White paper Fandemonium: A Tag Team Approach to Enabling and Mobilizing Fans, the video collections and archival documents collected by wrestling fans “are often important resources that enable fan proselytizing, both to seek new fans and to deepen the engagement of casual fans with a media property” (Ford 10). Ford’s case study of the way the wrestling industry, and particularly World Wrestling Entertainment, had capitalized on the evangelism of fans provides a useful precedent for thinking through the value audiences provide which will be discussed in this paper.

The next sections will examine the Tecnobrega value network in more detail, discussing the genre's origins before focusing more directly on the audience, exploring the currencies used to sustain this value network, and the distribution mechanisms that enable Tecnobrega to exists as both a commercial and community enterprise. Finally, this paper will detail the interactions
between different systems of value within the network, pointing to the links between different nodes and discussing the way value is created through their interactions.

**TAKEAWAYS**

The contemporary media landscape requires a re-conceptualization of the way producers, distributors and consumers relate.

A value network allows for a more nuanced and flexible analysis of the relationship between producers and audiences, one in which the dependencies aren’t fixed and the nodes are dynamic.

Audiences offer new models for generating value around media properties.

Placing audience production within an industry’s productive network acknowledges how they add both monetary and non-monetary value.
Tecnobrega: "Lights, fire, everything"

Tecnobrega comes from the periphery of Brazilian culture, and its circulation is relegated to peripheral channels, but through sheer popularity and the passion of its fans it is rapidly becoming a significant center. Developed outside mainstream media, Tecnobrega has innovated its forms of production, distribution, promotion, and its relationship with audiences. It has, as a grassroots industry, addressed many of the challenges that concern globalized media industries today. This section explores how the Tecnobrega industry works, who some of main actors are, and how the industry has evolved to embrace and incorporate many of the practices of its audience. It will describe the business model employed and discuss the way Tecnobrega DJs engage their audiences.

The Roots

Tecnobrega has its origin in Brega, a romantic-pop style popularized by the mid-1960s television show Jovem Guarda, a program featuring young singers heavily influenced by American Rock n’ Roll. Tecnobrega was recognized as a genre in the mid-1980s when, pop star Eduardo Dusek released his hit album "Brega-chique, chique-brega" -- literally translated as "Tacky-Chic, Chic-Tacky" -- an apparent dichotomy that Dusek tried to confront. Tecnobrega itself translates as "Tacky (or Cheesy) Techno," and within the Tecnobrega community, understanding the "hipness" behind the genre's tackiness is important to being part of the "in" crowd.

Though Tecnobrega sounds nothing like its predecessor it maintains many of Brega's defining characteristics, notably the romantic lyrics (See Table 2 below). The greatest differences between Tecnobrega and brega are the electronic beats and the remixes that give it the name "Tecno." Tecnobrega is the evolving product of constant innovation, and by now it can be considered an

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9 The poor outskirts of Brazilian cities are known as “the periphery”
umbrella term that encapsulates various rhythms and aesthetics: Cyber Tecnobrega, Brega Melody, and Electro Melody to name a few. Despite their differences, audiences define all of these styles as "contagious," "animated," and above all "danceable."

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exaggerated and/or naively romantic textual content.</td>
<td>Same as Brega with the addition of sexually explicit lyrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of large ensembles, usually employing full string sections, brass instruments, and relatively new developments in the field of electronic/digital instruments.</td>
<td>Computers, sampling techniques and spectacular mise-en-scènes, have replaced large ensembles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced by, or merging with, international tendencies resulting in either the development of hybrid musical styles or the adoption of exogenous genres.</td>
<td>Tecnobrega is in constant dialogue with current transnational musical trends. New genres are created regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brega circulated all over Brazil and was a mainstream trend.</td>
<td>Primarily a local (Paraense) grassroots development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2: From Cheesy to Cheesy Tecno

The Tecnobrega Model

As much as a musical genre, Tecnobrega describes the subculture and industry that has emerged around it. The genre and it's business practices became widely known outside of Brazil in 2007 when it was featured in Danish documentary *Good Copy, Bad Copy* and after the initial publication of research conducted by research group "Open Business Models-Latin America." Both of these projects focused on Tecnobrega’s production and distribution mechanisms, emphasizing local artists’ refusal to enforce copyright restrictions on their music. Under this model, artists circulate their music through what could be thought of as a “pirate” network, which they utilize as a promotional mechanism. Tecnobrega has therefore been portrayed as

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10 The entire film is available at: [http://www.goodcopybadcopy.net/](http://www.goodcopybadcopy.net/)

11 This research would later become the book: Tecnobrega: o Pará reinventando o negócio da música by Ronaldo Lemos and Oona Castro released in 2008.
“free music” built on the back of an “open business model,”\textsuperscript{12} features that highlight the importance of adaptability and innovation in the genre’s success (“Tecno Brega”).

Tecnobrega is an audience-centric industry. Rather than imposing restrictions on the audience’s relationship with content, Tecnobrega capitalizes on the desire for control users are increasingly demanding in their relationships with media. At no point is the audience chastised for the way they choose to relate to content. Within Tecnobrega:

\begin{itemize}
  \item "Pirates" and street vendors are integrated into its legitimate structure, bypassing "official" stores and labels almost completely;
  \item Musicians willingly forgo royalties from their recorded music, favoring live concerts as their main source of income;
  \item Albums from musicians and DJs have been replaced by "pirate" compilations sold on the street, or selections promoted by MP3 blogs;
  \item CDs are seen primarily as a promotional tool, not considered the industry’s main revenue source; and music is produced almost exclusively at home-studios. There are no “official” labels that work with a variety of artists.
\end{itemize}

This model emerged in response to the way audiences were already behaving. Piracy was already rampant in Belém, the local artists had neither the interest nor the resources to criminalize their potential public -- a public who generally couldn’t afford to pay $15 for an original CD. In response, musicians chose to follow the path of least resistance (and more profitability) by embracing piracy as a promotional tool, refusing to criminalize the ‘unauthorized’ reproduction of their music. Musicians and DJs formed a natural collaboration with the street vendors and fans already either selling or sharing their music. Through these collaborations the bands became better known and were given more opportunities to perform at live shows. This model has proven sustainable, if not for individual artists - who have a relatively short life span - for the industry itself, and the logic under which it is organized has created loyal fans of the Tecnobrega value network as a whole.

**The Parties and The DJs**

Tecnobrega's main product is the “sound system party,” a live music event whose roots lie in the street parties featuring small, homemade sound systems that were the mainstay of Brega music. While Brega street parties featured small, homemade sound systems, Tecnobrega's sound system

\textsuperscript{12} A concept that takes the philosophy behind open source software and applies it to the structure of a business model.
parties are large spectacles -- smaller venues host parties featuring more than 1000 people, and parties can be several times larger (see Image 3 above). These events are called 'parties' to differentiate them from the performances of particular bands. Pará’s capital, Belém is a city of only about 1.5 million people, yet it hosts approximately 4300 parties and 1700 concerts each month (Lemos & Castro 162). Despite this success, however, Tecnobrega remains on the periphery, and is not often represented in conventional promotional channels, such as commercial radio and TV.

At the center of the sound system party and the Tecnobrega ecosystem is the DJ, who remixes tracks created by domestic and foreign bands and, to a lesser extent, creates their own pieces. Musically, Tecnobrega incorporates a diverse mix of styles and traditions -- the majority of the music comes from the region, but invariably there are remixes of American popular music, re-recorded with Portuguese lyrics. The underlying rhythm is always Tecnobrega, but there is fusion and appropriation.

The DJs command the Tecnobrega world atop the aparelhagem, their sound system (see Image 4 right). In Tecnobrega everything has a name, and while each DJ has a stage name, so too do the actual aparelhagens whose names are picked to enhance their almost supernatural qualities. While I was in Belém, the most popular sound systems were Principe Negro (Black Prince) and Super Pop. The Principe Negro sits upon "The Electronic Crown," a platform of speakers and

13 While there are few accurate figures that give a sense of average attendance, there were roughly 10,000 people at the party I attended in April 2009.

14 Calypso, a Paraense Brega band is now considered the most popular in all of Brazil. They promoted their work through the same channels as Tecnobrega.

15 Sound system parties are a main source of income for the original musicians.

16 Though literally translated, aparelhagem means “apparatus”

17 Each sound system has at least two DJs.
pyrotechnics, which rises above the crowd and spews fire at the end of the show. Super Pop's "Air Wolf" has similar capabilities, but is bigger and more spectacular, and at the end of the show fire comes out of the instruments. When the fire and sparks burst forth, the DJs are magicians.

The size of the *aparelhagem* is of significant importance to the audience; the bigger a sound system is, the more expensive it is, and this expense is a key way those who operate the *aparelhagens* signal their respect for the Tecnobrega audiences. The sound systems that are willing to pour money into their spectacle are more likely to draw a larger crowd. As Brunna, a 21 year-old fan pointed out: "Tecnobrega has become highly modernized. It has lights, fire, everything! It's a first class event, for the low class, but it's first rate." These theatrics are very important to some fans, who see "fire and lights" as a particularly significant marker of the DJs commitment to their audience.

For other fans, however, the most important indicator of a DJ’s worth is their exchange of loyalties. Throughout the show, DJs will mention individual fans by name, occasionally displaying their names on the enormous LED screens that are part of their *aparelhagens*. The DJ’s power doesn't only reside in the spectacle they create, but also in their ability to call out to the fans from that higher plane. The most popular DJs are those that are kindest to their fans, the ones that call out their names more often to the audience. It is those “loyal” DJs that deserve their fans attention.

The DJs role in Tecnobrega is two-fold. On the one hand, they are responsible for creating the ‘content’ -- remixing the tracks audiences want to come, hear and dance to, producing the spectacle they come to witness. On the other hand, DJs are responsible for opening spaces for audiences to participate in these events. Each DJ has a way encouraging audiences to participate and display their loyalty, usually by acting out the first letter of a DJs *aparelhagem*. For instance, DJs playing for the Tupinambá sound system encourage audiences to "do the 'T'”, and for Super Pop’s show, audiences are told to "do the 'S'” (see Image 5). From the moment audiences arrive they are invited to be part of a
Tecnobrega show, to "do" their part in the event.

Encouraging the audience to participate, DJs call attention to Tenobrega’s “producerly” characteristics. As we argued in If It Doesn’t Spread It’s Dead: Creating Value in a Spreadable Marketplace, producerly culture encourages audiences to spread it around by creating gaps for audiences to write in their own experiences -- not just to consume, but to make something of the media they are engaging with. In such a way, spreadable media “introduces the general guiding principle for transforming cultural commodities into cultural resources: open, loose ends and gaps that allow the viewer to introduce their own background and experiences” (Jenkins, Li, & Domb 66). Tecnobrega sound parties are an incredibly "producerly" environment - with spectacle and regular sites for participation, DJs encourage audiences to contribute to the success of the event - audiences don’t just come to listen, they are invited to generate their own “meaning and pleasure” (Fiske 95) out of their experience with the content. As we will see in the following sections, which explore the activities of fans, this participation and meaning generation extends beyond partying and dancing to content circulation.

**TAKEAWAYS**

Tecnobrega created a business model that fit existing audience practices rather than trying to implement a structure that was not compatible with them.

Audience practices are considered legitimate in the Tecnobrega value network. This generates a more, collaborative relationship with the audience.

Producerly culture encourages audience engagement by leaving gaps for audiences to fill with their own interpretations and identities.
The Audience: Doing Tecnobrega

The Audience’s Place

Tecnobrega audiences are composed primarily of working class young people in their 20s, an unsurprising fact given that 38% of Brazil's population are between the ages of 15 and 29.¹⁸ The music and parties serve an important function for the young people growing up in Pará. Unlike other forms of media, Tecnobrega puts them on stage, making them visible as members of a vibrant and important local community. As a significant leisure activity for these youth, Tecnobrega becomes a crucial mirror. Much like sociologist Sarah Thornton (19) describes of British youth in Club Cultures, the Paraenses feel much more inclined to support their apparatuses than to see a film from a cinema that almost certainly won't portray them. This radically differs from the experience of young people in the United States who are continuously and diversely depicted by their local cinema.

For many of the young people from Belém, Tecnobrega provides a significant space for them to become members of a locally specific community. When fans discussed the Tecnobrega scene with me, they would rapidly abandon talk about music to focus solely on social aspects of the culture. It could be argued, in fact, that the music is used as the energizing background (and excuse) for the social experience itself. This isn’t to suggest fans don’t enjoy the music, but unlike other music fandoms where participants may obsess over every nuance of a song, within Tecnobrega the social aspects of fandom take precedent. The driving motivator for participation within Tecnobrega seems not to be the music itself but the social experience; Tecnobrega audiences use the party environment to connect with each other.

Tecnobrega's most visible function is offering a space that allows audiences to develop, cement and perform their social relations. At many parties, vendors roam the floor taking pictures of party-goers which are then printed out with a frame around them and the DJ’s logo stamped over the top. While audiences use digital cameras to capture the events, party-goers don’t hesitate to pay the rather steep price of US$ 5 for these "official" photographs (see picture 7 below). The pictures are then carefully archived in scrapbooks or posted online individually. Some DJs and party promoters capitalize on this, inviting audiences to upload their picture to “official” online sites. For instance Super Pop, one of Belém’s largest sound systems, operates an online radio site

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¹⁸ These figures are based on the 2000 census, which reported an increase in the youth demographic. This data can be found at: http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/primeiros_resultados_amoastra/tabela_brasil.shtm
where people can their photos to be streamed alongside the music, creating a photomontage you can watch while listening to their music.

These pictures are valuable because they function as markers of status and participation. These artifacts are especially valuable because of the social standing they enable audiences to achieve. This status is a form of commodity we might think of as "social capital," a term French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu uses to describe a type of credential that comes from significance and participation within a community. As Bourdieu defines it:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition--or in other words, to membership in a group--which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu 102)

Social capital is important, he argues, because it provides us with a way to think about the “structure and functioning of the social world” beyond merely accounting for the types of value traded and recognized by economic theory (Bourdieu 97). The music of Tecnobrega is valuable as much as an “experience” or an “event” that enables socializing as it is a commodity with a revenue stream. Much of the Tecnobrega audience obtain their music through low-cost means, either via street vendors selling unofficial CDs, or through computer or cell-phone downloads. Recordings of an evening’s party -- often a low-quality, live mix of the event recorded from a sound board including crowd-noise -- are a key way the music is obtained (see Image 8 below). Party recordings, like the “branded” photographs, document the audience’s involvement in the event. This is where its principal value comes from -- the most valuable party recording might include not only the music of that night, but also the DJ calling out your name, cementing you as a key member of the Tecnobrega audience. In the case of party photographs or live event
recordings, the value of such artifacts comes from their status as markers of participation, rather than necessarily their fidelity as recordings.

**Teams**

In pursuit of social capital, some members of the Tecnobrega audience create quasi-formal associations. The most invested and engaged members of the Tecnobrega scene separate themselves from the undifferentiated mass Tecnobrega “audience” through the creation of distinct “equipes” - “teams” of friends who attend Tecnobrega parties together. In a city where drugs and violence have become an increasing problem, teams also provide safe spaces, where members treat each other with care and patience. Acácio, my 21-year-old assistant, is a Belém native, but, coming from the upper middle-class, he had never hung out in the Tecnobrega circuit. By the end of our interviews he still wasn't sure about the music, but he envied the way that these groups of friends treated each other.

I asked several members what was necessary to have an “equipe.” Rather than material, quantifiable criteria, such as a minimum number of associates, or a place to meet, or access to a car to attend shows that were far away, all of the teams referred to the importance of their social bonds: solidarity, friendship, passion, trust, constancy. During my stay in Belém, I met with four Tecnobrega teams and aside from a general commitment to solidarity and friendship, there were a few common characteristics:

- Members generally knew each other outside of Tecnobrega before becoming a team. The Tecnobrega environment either justified the institutionalization of their relationship or it gave them a platform to perform their status as a group. Soccer teammates turned dance mavens, a motorcycle gang that loves music, a group of neighborhood friends who compete for women's kisses -- Each of these communities of fans has carved their own specific place on the Tecnobrega dance floor, this also means that different teams have different objectives within the scene;

- As teams gain popularity and status they become part of the attraction for the parties and are often offered the opportunity to co-host the events along with the
aparelhagens. Like VIPs in the American club-scene, these teams are courted by DJs, musicians, and even party organizers, who explicitly recognize a team’s importance through sponsorships, shout-outs or free passes;

• Their team affiliations tend to influence the way they present themselves elsewhere in their lives. For instance, all members of one team changed their last name in their social network profiles to “S.Coelho” the group’s name. Likewise another team, the Psychopaths, has written a manifesto that is in all of their “about me” sections in their profiles as well;

• The majority of the teams creatively appropriate American popular culture icons to identify themselves -- horror film character Freddy Krueger, for instance, ends up in the Psychopaths” coat of arms.

By virtue of forming an equipe, members of a Tecnobrega team gain access to (and collectively create) social capital within the Tecnobrega scene. Through their use of logos, displayed on banners, t-shirts and decals, teams mark themselves out as special participants within Tecnobrega. Their status as some of the most ardent and committed Tecnobrega participants is also signaled through their ownership and display of a dual purpose team 'bucket.' While carrying the team's beers throughout the night, these buckets announce the presence of 'super-fans' at these events -- they hold them aloft as they parade through the parties and use them to attract the attention of a friendly DJ who will acknowledge their presence and give them a shout out over the loud speaker (see Image 9 right). Some teams also have t-shirts banners and even songs, but the bucket is the first step towards becoming visible in the Tecnobrega circuit. The Super Amigos, the smallest team I met with, only had four members and two buckets. But it was because of those buckets that they could “officially” call themselves a team.

Image 9: The Super Friends’ team (the Super Amigos) first beer bucket. The Super Friends was a vintage cartoon series about the Justice League. In this case, though, the images on the bucket are from the Cartoon Network’s more recent animated series.
Being acknowledged by a DJ at a sound system party establishes an individual as an especially significant participant within the Tecnobrega community. As a team’s popularity and status increases they become part of the attraction themselves, and are often offered the opportunity to co-host parties along with the aparelhagens. Brunna’s team, As Coelhetes, usually receives 5\% of the party’s profit when they are asked to co-host. Opportunities like these raise their visibility as well, earning them both economic and social gain.

DJ Claudemir, who runs one of the most popular Tecnobrega MP3 blogs, considers these groups to be the most important means of promotion and distribution for Tecnobrega, more so than street vendors. They are the super fans, the greatest proselytizers for the genre and the community. Through activities like promoting Tecnobrega on Orkut\(^{19}\) -- where Brazilians make up 49.8\% of the user-base -- Teams are integral to promoting parties. They post updates about previous parties, and advertise forthcoming events.

Teams are the style leaders within the Tecnobrega community. Emerson, 20, who loves Tecnobrega but doesn't belong to any team, describes the team as "very important to Tecnobrega because they bring the heat to the parties." They might show up ahead of time with a soundsystem in the back of a car and hold an impromptu party, blasting the music of their favorite DJs. It’s with these super fans that DJs test out new music, and promote new dance moves. Teams are the first ones to learn these new dance moves, many of which might be tied to a particular song, which they might practice at home a few times a week. On the dance floor, they're the ones others look to. They show up at the parties with banners supporting their favorite DJs, or they incorporate them into the designs on their beer buckets, which they parade around the dance floor. They draw attention to, and root for, the DJs they like the best. Teams serve the same function as wrestling super fans who draw other audience members into the spectacularity of the event. They are paying the admission not only to be spectators, but to be “an active and vital part of the show” (Ford 20 \textit{Pinning}).

Luiz, who belongs to one of Belém’s oldest equipes, S.Coelho, described the teams as a “a wonder” for the DJs -- they're the ones who drive excitement and enthusiasm for a particular DJ. Some of the largest sound system parties include multiple aparelhagens and DJs. Luiz and Brunna, a member of the As Coelhetes team, described a sound system "duel" that took place one

\(^{19}\) Orkut's own statistics show that, as of June 2009, Brazilian users are the single largest group of users the system supports. Statistics are available here: \url{http://www.orkut.co.in/Main#MembersAll.aspx}, though an Orkut membership is required.
night. Two *aparelhagens* were set up facing each other, while thousands of Tecnobrega fans danced between them. The sound systems battled for the audience's attention, trying to out-spectacle each other. At the end of the show (which Luiz and Brunna describe as one of the best they ever attended) one of the two *aparelhagens* "won."

"But how?" I asked.
"Well, the best one wins of course," Brunna explains.
"But how do you know?" I inquired.
"Well, the crowd decides and the crowd knows," Brunna replied.
"Oh, I see."

Exactly how one of these sound systems "won" is not entirely clear, and quite clearly something understood only to those who are participating in the event. What is clear, however, is that whichever sound system "won" did so with the help of a team (or two). And winning is important to DJs, where a successful Tecnobrega DJ can earn $800 a month, more than twice the average monthly wage in Belém. Teams, Tecnobrega's super-fans, contribute to this success, and DJs work with them to stay on top.

The following section will describe the ways media circulates in Tecnobrega, both on and off-line. The final section will present everything that has been discussed thus far within the value network.

**TAKEAWAYS**

Tecnobrega provides a platform for the construction of social capital.

Entertainment properties may not be an end in themselves, but a vehicle for socializing.

Both audiences and content producers trade on social capital, both as an end in itself and as a way of achieving their individual objectives.

The construction of social capital between audiences and content producers can be converted into economic gain.

Tecnobrega courts communities and leaves open spaces for them to add their own markers to their experience of the music.
Speeding on the Sound Bike:
The circulation of content

Audiences are passionate about sharing the music of Tecnobrega -- it is a solid example of spreadable media, though examining how this content spreads allows us to refine the idea even further. The discussion of spreadable media in the 2008 C3 white paper *If It Doesn’t Spread It’s Dead: Creating Value in a Spreadable Marketplace*, was motivated by a desire to move away from describing popular content that circulates through social networks as “viral.” Even though we talked about the spread of rumors as a way to conceptualize how content spreads, our understanding of spreadable media is still predominantly located in discussions of online distribution. Tecnobrega reveals the way diverse communications channels are used to spread information and culture through value networks.

As noted earlier, mainstream media doesn't play an especially significant role in the diffusion of Tecnobrega, and this has forced party promoters, content creators, and the community to develop a range of alternatives to ensure that the music and details about the parties will reach the widest audience possible. For instance, the Tecnobrega community makes use of 4 types of radio distribution channels:

- Conventional radio stations, depending on the size of the event;
- Pirate radios, created when coveted Hertzian waves are high-jacked by DJs or fans for short periods of time;
- Online radio stations, which are rapidly increasing in numbers. As mentioned above, Super Pop has its own online radio, as does nearly every relatively popular DJ;
- “Community radios,” which are basically neighborhood-based, closed circuit systems with speakers attached to light posts to play popular music during the day. (see Image 10 right).

![Image 10: “Community radio” in Belém](image)

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20 Practices from old media tend to make their way into new media. For instance Radio Amazonia ([http://www.amazoniafm.com](http://www.amazoniafm.com)) has a tool for users to “dedicate” songs by clicking on them and essentially emailing a link, but culturally it is read as if it was a live radio dedication.
Similarly, in Belém the pre-modern and modern live simultaneously, and the distinctions between online and offline practices are incredibly blurred. Media spreads through whatever channels are available, from social networks, and direct Bluetooth connections, to radio and burnt CDs. While a party might be announced through instant messaging, people are also likely to find out about it through hand-painted banners hanging across the road, or announcements made through a loudspeaker attached to a bicycle (see Image 11 left and 12 below). This diversity of avenues are all equally responsible for Tecnobrega's success.

People choose the mode of access most relevant to their immediate context and level of literacy. Raimundo, a middle aged taxi driver who heard us talking about the Principe Negro sound-system and confessed his passion for Tecnobrega, doesn’t get his music from street vendors or online. He goes to a “studio” where he can choose from thousands of songs and pays for a custom MP3 collection. This means he can have up to 10 hours of music on one CD; this is a format that fits very well with his long shifts. Because he doesn’t have a computer at home, the “studio” closes the gap between access to technology and literacy, much the same way a scribe would have written a letter in the time before widespread written literacy.

Increasingly widespread Internet access is changing Brazil’s media landscape. According to the Center of Studies on Information and Communication Technologies, 21 17% of Brazilian households owned a computer in 2005, by 2008 this number had increased to 27%. Internet

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21 The Center is a Government entity dedicated to tracking and promoting digital inclusion in Brazil.
access within the household has increased from 13% to 20% in the same period. While in 2005 the majority of households with Internet used a dial-up connection (65%), today 58% are using broadband (Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil). As in many other countries, mobile web penetration is ahead of computers per household. By 2008, 70% of the population used cell phones (up from 55% in 2005) and 24% of them were already using them to download music or videos. (Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil)

Raimundo also uses his cell phone to receive and share music, as do the other members of the Justice League team. These fans were in fact surprised at my lack of knowledge about mobile downloads - a necessity for someone whose most readily available connection to the Internet has always been via mobile phone. The rest of the respondents I spoke with had access to a private Internet connection, either at home or available at a friend’s house. It is also common for middle-to-lower class users to visit Internet cafés, though none of my respondents used these facilities.

Online, Tecnobrega is everywhere and nowhere at the same time, distributed across a variety of sites in ways similar to the “quasi-coherent networked fashion” media scholar Nancy Baym describes when discussing the distribution of Swedish music online (Baym 1). While MP3 blogs are very popular, they are not aggregated anywhere -- a simple keyword search won’t necessarily point people to music that is an amalgam of multiple rhythms and styles. Tecnobrega content may be accessible to anyone online, but to fully enjoy it one must be part of the scene, know the latest rhythms, DJs, bands and songs. In the same way that references may be inscribed into texts, they are present in these home-brewed, seemingly disconnected sites navigated and created by Tecnobrega communities. Like the Swedish rock bands described by Baym, “these audiences are creating a form of online social organization in which members move amongst a complex ecosystem of sites, building connections amongst themselves and their sites as they do” (Baym 3).

While buying music on the street is still a popular and effective way of obtaining the latest Tecnobrega hits, downloading songs has become an increasingly common. Because Tecnobrega’s distribution system was built to make use of the infrastructure that was already in place, not only for unauthorized street vendors, but for online file sharing as well, content producers and fans continue to employ many of the same tools they had previously used to share music online. For instance, MP3 blogs will link to documents in file-hosting sites like 4Shared and MediaFire instead of hosting the files themselves, even when their activity is completely legitimate and sanctioned by the rights holders.
Social networks and instant messaging (particularly MSN Messenger, Microsoft’s web-based instant messaging service) do provide nerve center of sorts for Tecnobrega. Many users share music via MSN, and DJs regularly publicize their instant messaging addresses so fans can connect with them directly. Orkut is used mainly to announce events and for fans to proclaim their current favorite DJ or sound system. Artists have started to measure their popularity in terms of MSN contacts or Orkut friends. Orkut has a cap set at 1000 contacts per profile, so DJs have begun to use the number of profiles they have created to keep up with the audience demand. Gabi Amarantos, one of Tecnobrega’s better known singers, proudly informed me that she currently has 4 Orkut profiles and over 1000 contacts in her MSN.

It is the desire to communicate and share that has encouraged so many paraenses to make creative use of “new” and “old” media. By effectively harnessing the technologies they have, in fact, set the groundwork for the Tecnobrega industry.

**TAKEAWAYS**

Spreadable media models can be implemented both on and off-line.

Tecnobrega’s spreadable media models is effective because it offers users diverse points of entry in correspondence to the different levels of media literacy and access to technology.
Charting the Tecnobrega Value Network

Earlier in this paper, I outlined the concept of the value network as a useful way to understand how value circulates through and around Tecnobrega. In this section, I will tie back the discussion of participants within the industry to the value network itself.

As discussed in the second section, the Tecnobrega network is made up of two complementary sub-networks, one dedicated to monetary transactions and a second one where symbolic exchanges take place. The latter sub-network is where social capital circulates. There is a synergistic relationship between the two. When Teams proselytize for DJs, or friends promote the music by sharing it online -- both non-monetary forms of exchange -- the parties are larger and better attended, more recordings are sold at events, and more money circulates through the market exchanges that support Tecnobrega. Figure 6 below (the same as Figure 5 on pg.13) maps of the variety of agents in Tecnobrega's network, their relationships and the respective flows of monetary and non-monetary transactions.

Figure 6: Tecnobrega’s value network (again)
We will now look at how different forms of value are dealt with by some of Tecnobrega’s key actors:

- DJs
- Musicians
- Audience
- Event producers
- Street vendors
- Sponsors

**DJs**

The DJs are normally hired by those who own the sound systems, who are themselves hired by event producers. The fee DJs receive for their shows is the primary monetary transaction in which DJs are involved. Nevertheless, DJs remain at the center of this network because they are its greatest social capital promoters; they decide who is worthy of appearing on the LED screen, or who is privileged enough to join them on the *aparelhagem*.

One of social capital’s characteristics is that it depends on sustained engagement and development. If it is not adequately cared for, its value will rapidly diminish. DJs are aware of this. In fact, one of the fans interviewed by Lemos and Castro commented that when she stopped going to parties, the DJ called to check on her (Lemos & Castro 118). It was important for the social standing of the DJ that their super-fans continued to attend parties. Both DJs and sound system promoters capitalize on the audience's desire to be linked to them and their own ability to raise a fan's visibility. The online radio site mentioned earlier, where Tecnobrega fans can upload photos to be streamed alongside the music, is operated by Super Pop as a further way for it to continue the audience's connection with Tecnobrega events. Offering services such as this provides ties between the event and the audience that benefit both the sound system promoter and the fans.

**Musicians**

Despite being the producers of much of Tecnobrega’s content, the most fragile stakeholders in the network are probably the musicians. The popularity of any given song may last between two and three months, resulting in an industry that requires constant production and constant renewal. Concurrently, the demand for live shows (as opposed to sound system parties) has decreased substantially. Given that live shows are the musicians’ main source of income, it is not unusual
for groups to disband and form new groups to attract the audiences’ fleeting attention. In fact, 70% of musicians complement their income with other jobs, many of them also related with the Tecnobrega industry (Lemos & Castro 94).

As discussed above, audiences consider socializing the most significant mode of engagement within the Tecnobrega community. This has put some strains on the musicians who create the tracks that DJs remix. Music comes and goes -- an average “hit” song might be around for two or three months. This has caused many musicians, whose work is remixed and played at parties, to be concerned that their music is considered disposable. Within the Tecnobrega community the social and cultural ties between audience members are meticulously documented and recorded for prosperity and the content tends to disappear.

The exchanges between musicians and audiences occur primarily through monetary transactions, when audiences purchase tickets for shows. Nevertheless, through instant messaging or social networks musicians do try to develop more personal relationships. Given that the CDs and even the MP3s found online don’t necessarily have the bands’ credit, musicians have opted to include their names in the actual recording, in the hopes that when these tracks are remixed the DJs will play the section that identifies them. They also tend to record songs about the DJs themselves in order to gain their attention and to associate themselves with popular DJs. In spite of these challenges, Tecnobrega bands tend to be grateful towards the system that has granted them a notoriety that they feel they couldn’t otherwise have achieved.

**Audience**

The casual audience doesn’t tend to have as many strong relationships with other actors in the network, but they play a key role by sharing the music, attending the parties and purchasing photos and music at these events. Their strongest allegiance is with the DJs, who are careful to support those relationships. For the casual audiences, the teams represent an indicator of the quality and style of a particular party. Depending on which teams are in attendance a party may be “hip” or not. The teams are cultural leaders for the rest of the audience.
It is important to realize Tecnobrega audiences don’t see themselves as consumers but as an integral part of the industry. This perspective seems justified -- given the promotion they provide for DJs, and the way they help boost the monetary value of materials through their non-monetary exchanges, they are part of what defines Tecnobrega, especially given it's home in Pará on the periphery of Brazil. Tecnobrega audiences are perhaps analogous with Deadheads, the fans of the American band The Grateful Dead. Deadheads were a key part of the Grateful Dead experience, and engaged by the band as proselytizers for the act. While the Grateful Dead did operate to a certain extent under traditional copyright norms, they also encouraged their fans to copy and share their music freely. Their encouragement went far beyond ‘turning a blind eye’ -- during the concerts the arena was purposely divided to support those looking to share the music of the Grateful Dead. Three sections were provided: seated, standing, and tapers. Many Grateful Dead fans made “bootleg” tapes to later share them with other Deadheads (Pattacini 7) and this was a key way the band's music was distributed. This area set aside at concerts for "tapers" was deemed safe for use of equipment and it was where the band could ensure optimal sound for these “tapers.”

Today, long after the band ceased to exist in 1995, Grateful Dead “bootleggers” share the music all over the Deadhead communities online, not to drive profit, but to further their relationships and standing within the Deadhead community. As Melissa McCray Pattacini, from the American Studies program at Trinity College discovered in her ethnography of Grateful Dead fans, many of them won't charge for recordings because they believe these “bootleg” tapes should circulate outside of a money-driven economy. The Grateful Dead business model, which was somewhat similar to Tecnobrega's, found value in the live experience, the fundamental scarce thing that cannot be recorded, replicated and sold. Making tapes of the events wasn't about profiting on the back of the band's creativity, but about promoting how exciting being part of the community was -- accessible by attending live shows. As one Deadhead told her, within Grateful Dead fandom “[t]here is no 'industry' and we actively try to destroy anyone's chances of profiting off of Grateful Dead tapes. [These recordings] are a gift from the band.” (Pattacini 7).

**Teams/Equipes**

The teams are very careful in branding themselves. Once a team is formed, their “brand” identity is immediately created: first, they choose their logo, most of which are derived from popular culture icons: Freddy Krueger, the Playboy Bunny, the Justice League, and then they manufacture their dual-purpose bucket with this logo. These buckets play a crucial role in
making real the cultural status of the teams, and they are used as currency to obtain the DJs attention and recognition, thus increasing their social capital.

While still having a stronger emotional attachment to the DJs, teams do develop relationships with bands, mostly through monetary transactions. Most interestingly, when teams achieve a certain level of status as an "institution" they hire bands to help to write and record songs about them. These “theme-songs” can cost anywhere between $70 and $250 and are usually recorded in the musician’s home studio. The teams provide the musician with a theme or rhythm that they think represents them, and the team and the band produce the track together. For instance, As Coelhetes, an all women team, hired the band AR-15 to write their song, which then became incredibly popular at parties, providing a strong boost for both the band and the team. As Coelhetes came up with the song’s narrative, and in true Tecnobrega style it’s the love story between a coelhete (a female bunny) and S.Coelho, their male counterpart. The lyrics are below in both Portuguese and English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sou das Coelhetes</th>
<th>I am from As Coelhetes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meu amor</td>
<td>My love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te amo tanto</td>
<td>I love you so much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Você nasceu pra mim</td>
<td>You were born for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meu S. Coelho</td>
<td>My S. Coelho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I LOVE YOU</td>
<td>I LOVE YOU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These songs provide an interesting example of how specific commodities transit from the monetary to the non-monetary environment. While the original transaction with the musician was strictly monetary, its objective was to produce cultural capital for the team. Once the team takes the songs and gives it to the DJ, it becomes exclusive domain of the non-monetary sub-network and its initial diffusion depends on the team’s social capital -- its success relies significantly on the relationship between the DJ and the team being strong enough for him to play their song.

Teams also create social capital for themselves. Most of them live under very limited economic conditions, but belonging to a team, even if the team’s sole material possession might be a beer bucket with their logo, already gives them something.
Street Vendors

While there are only two “proper” CD stores in Belém (Lemos & Castro 127), there are hundreds of street vendors. The two that appear in the image below were located at the popular Praça da República during its weekly market. While the “original” (second-hand) CD stand remained painfully empty (in the picture on the left), the pirate stands surrounding it were booming with activity (in the picture on the right). Tecnobrega (Lemos & Castro 129) is the highest seller for street vendors. Given that they bypass labels completely, there is no such thing as an original CD and the object is clearly not this industry’s main commodity. Street vendors then sell them at very low prices (as low as $2 US), making their profits through volume.

![Image 14: The bleak reality for original CDs in Belém](image)

Both DJs and musicians develop strong social relationships with the street vendors encouraging them to feature their music and mixes at their stands or to include them in Tecnobrega collections. There are no monetary exchanges between these actors, but it’s through their strong social bonds that they create the basic distribution infrastructure for Tecnobrega.

Sponsors

Sponsors play a small role within the Tecnobrega value network. A local grains and pasta company, for instance, might pay for the printing of CD sleeves for the party recordings sold, or local restaurants will advertise on the sides of stands present at the shows. The absence of national and transnational brands is noticeable. Whether this occurs due to a lack of interest in the market or lack of knowledge about the audience is unclear, yet it serves to maintain Tecnobrega’s grassroots feel. Given the relatively few sponsors participating in the Tecnobrega
scene, it does provide those who do participate a useful venue to reach their consumers. In return they infuse the industry with much needed cash flow or services.

**Event Producers**

According to Lemos and Castro’s research, the stakeholder that receives the greatest economic benefit from this industry is the event producer: they perform the largest number of monetary transactions, and are able to generate the steadiest income through Tecnobrega. Their role is also potentially more stable since they are able to offer the novelty that Tecnobrega audiences seem to crave. Further, as they are not authoring the content, they are not subject to the volatile tastes of the Tecnobrega audience.

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**TAKEAWAYS**

It is possible to place audience production within an industry’s productive network.

By overlaying monetary and non-monetary transactions in the network, the notion of who and how is value generated is expanded.

Symbolic and economic value sustain and foment each other within the Tecnobrega value network.

Social capital depends on sustained engagement and development. If it is not adequately cared for, its value will rapidly diminish.

Audiences are much more than spectators; their activities extend beyond just “watching,” “consuming,” or “experiencing.”
Beyond Tecnobrega

Looking beyond the Tecnobrega scene, it is possible to apply the value network approach to many media industries, revealing the work performed, and value added by, media audiences. In fact, since the advent of participatory culture and what is commonly described as Web 2.0, audiences have been frequently invited to generate the value for the sites they “consume.” This is clearly the case for social networking services but is also increasingly the case when audiences participate in particular branded environments constructed around media properties.

In the US, the collaboration between Tecnobrega's industry and audience resembles in some respects the way Comedy Central's satirical late night television program The Colbert Report has harnessed its productive audience. As Colbert explained on his first show:

This show is not about me. No, this program is dedicated to you, the heroes. And who are the heroes? The people who watch this show, average hard-working Americans. You’re not the elites. You’re not the country club crowd. I know for a fact my country club would never let you in…You’re the folks who say something has to be done. And you’re doing something. You’re watching TV. (qtd in: Burwell & Boler)

While initially chastising them in satirical fashion, The Colbert Report has since worked to harness the engagement of these viewers, inviting them to mash-up, remix and rework elements from the program, deepening their engagement and promoting the show. Recognizing the value of uniting these fans as a community, the show has recently launched a website branded as the meeting place of the 'Colbert Nation,' where viewers can watch every episode of the Report, upload their mashups and interact with each other. As Colbert explained it: “you’ll feel like you have a time machine, a DVR and friends,” (The Colbert Report: Mon, Jun 22, 2009).

While the program's producers exert more control over the Colbert Nation than Tecnobrega producers do the activities of their fans, there are some similarities between the two strategies. Members of the 'Nation' -- active, loyal, Colbert fans -- have both helped Colbert become successful and become part of the experience the program offers. Mashing up content, posting clips of the program to social news sites such as Reddit and Digg, and supporting Colbert's efforts to hijack national and international competitions (such as the 2006 attempt to have a Hungarian bridge named after him), Colbert fans have enhanced their own enjoyment of
watching *The Colbert Report* in much the same way Tecnobrega fans do when they share party tracks. These fans strengthen the cultural experiences they are participating in through their promotion and participation -- they not only contribute to building attendance or audiences, they provide some of the resources that are used in the performances/programs. Sharing songs to make them hits can play a role in determining what gets played at a party the same way voting up a particular mash-up or news story can influence what Colbert himself satirizes on the program. Applying the value network to *The Colbert Report* might produce something like figure 7 below.

![Figure 7: The Colbert Report’s value network](image-url)
While undoubtedly simplified, this value network reveals that while the actors in this network are obviously different from those we find in Tecnobrega, many of the relationships remain the same. Host Stephen Colbert, for instance, like the DJs, sits at the center of all of these interactions and his role is to produce the entertainment along with abundant symbolic capital for audiences to draw upon. While well-known "Colbertisms" such as “truthiness” have entered popular parlance, Colbert offers regular phrases and causes the audience can pick up on to declare their affiliation with the program. Colbert's fascination with the danger of bears, or his imploring the US census recognize vampires (see Image 15 below) provide resources for in-jokes audiences can engage with to signal their status as part of the Colbert audience.

While The Colbert Report relies on a conventional broadcast model, it also embraces other forms of content delivery and of interacting with fans. These additional modes of interaction, which primarily harness online services, address the audience where they are, and in the fashion in which they desire. They also serve as important invitations for them to be part of the greater, thoroughly branded, Colbert Nation. So when Colbert fans “re-tweet” one of his messages, they are strengthening their relationship with Colbert, but also appropriating his message and the capital he has developed and making it their own. These fans become valuable proselytizers of The Colbert Report. As content passes through the audience nodes, the value of the content

Image 15: Colbert effectively reaches his fans through Twitter. They respond by spreading his plea

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increases and expands to incorporate “the meaning and pleasure” (Fiske 95) that the fans’ add. For instance, once a person sends, embeds or recommends a Colbert video, the layer of meaning that they attach to it becomes part of its value. It is, in a sense, a seal of approval, much like a politician stating his or her connection with a promotional spot, if said advertisement lacked the official connection with the politician, it might be perceived of as less valuable for some of its recipients.

Members of the Colbert Nation (and other Colbert fan groups) fill the niche occupied by Tecnobrega teams. Sites such as the Colbert Nation are made up of the super-fans of the show. Participants here not only generate symbolic value for themselves, but also for other audience members by promoting the show and rewarding the sort of experiments in audience participation Colbert has made his own (such as the 'Green Screen Challenge' or the efforts to have a module of the International Space Station named after him).

While the Comedy Central cable channel might fill the role of the musician -- the core underlying agent responsible for the raw materials that are remixed by Colbert and the audience in their interactions -- sites such as Hulu, Comedy Central online and YouTube fill the "street vendor" role. These are the sites where a diverse range of audiences can access content outside of the initial broadcast. Embedding services allow them to move this content around, while commenting functions allow audiences to articulate the way this content is meaningful to them personally. The idea behind the “street vendor” node is not to necessarily include un-authorized distribution into the value network, though it is that as well, but to represent gateways where audiences already are and where they can access the content in the way they want it. In Belém, prior (and during) the emergence of Tecnobrega, the favored means of obtaining music was the street vendors. This happened because of monetary constraints, but also because it was a way of acquiring music that was otherwise unavailable in their remote region. In The Report’s case, Hulu and YouTube both represent the spaces that audiences are shifting towards in their television consumption. So, in both cases, it’s about reaching audiences where they already are.

The sponsors are the advertisers in the case of The Colbert Report and while they deal with many more distribution windows than in Tecnobrega, they also don’t relate directly with the audiences. The producers, which really is Comedy Central’s executive production arm, also rarely interacts with the fans. This means that aside from the rare sponsored fan site, Colbert fans trade exclusively in symbolic capital and Stephen Colbert’s interactions with the fans is aimed at cementing and enriching their social capital.
When Colbert broadcasts an audience submission for the “Green Screen Challenge” he is promoting the same kind of social bond that the Tecnobrega DJ does when he calls out audience members from atop the aparelhagem. As fans appropriate The Report’s content and further circulate it amongst their own social networks, these audience “shout-outs” serve as incentive to attract more viewers to the show and result in a slow conversion of symbolic capital into economic capital for all of the other actors in The Report’s value network.

**TAKEAWAYS**

The value network is applicable to other media industries.

Not all media industries would include the same actors within their network, but in all networks it would be possible to account for audience as part of the value generating process and not as its end.

Offering audiences mechanism for them to express their loyalty is a powerful means of enhancing the relationship between content producers and audiences. It also provides fans with means of increasing their own social standing.
Conclusions

As the discussion of *The Colbert Report* above demonstrates, many media properties today, could acknowledge their audience as active participants in the value generation process. Recognizing a role for audience beyond “consumers” is a key step towards being able to locate the different forms of value that today’s creative and engaged audiences produce. Furthermore, entertainment properties, at times, are not an end in themselves, but a vehicle for socializing. In *Fanning the Audience’s Flames: Ten Ways to Embrace and Cultivate Fan Communities*, the Consortium offered the following ten ways to think of fans -- some of the most engaged audiences -- beyond notions of consumers:

1. Fans are loyal, constituting some of the most valuable audience segments;
2. Fans form collective intelligence communities who support the extension of media properties across platforms;
3. Fans represent grassroots intermediaries who spread the word about programs;
4. Fans are lead users;
5. Fan communities often include important surplus audiences who illustrate potential new markets for brands;
6. Fans identify, promote and revalue back-listed materials, increasingly important activities in an era of Long Tail (or abundance) economics;
7. Fans often become tourists, identifying and visiting locations from texts, providing opportunities for partnerships between entertainment and tourism industries;
8. Fans perform their affiliations with brands publicly, often helping intensify the emotional experience of other consumers;
9. Fans create new materials which can become secondary sources of value and can help to refine products for audiences;
10. Fan communities can be a training and recruiting ground for new talent.

Even if we understand fandom as an inherently social activity -- that people identify as fans because it provides them with resources for constructing an identity, a process which by it's very nature requires socializing -- six of the ten perspectives above directly describe ways audiences socialize around media properties. The actions of fans as a community employing collective intelligence, as grassroots intermediaries, promoting the wonder of older media properties,
touring production sites and locations, and as public advocates for their favorite media brands are all activities where the principal activity is grounded in social experiences built around media properties. The new materials created around programs are circulated, discussed and critiqued within communities of like-minded individuals; socializing is an inherent motivation for the production of these works.

While fandom cannot be created through top-down strategies, providing audiences with recognition and the space to perform their own identities alongside that of media properties is a way of embracing communities. *Super Pop* does this by streaming photographs uploaded by Tecnobrega fans on their online radio station, recognizing that for Tecnobrega audiences the experience is as much about being with their friends as it is listening to the music. Tecnobrega audiences value this recognition and the social bonds that they are building, at times more than the musical content itself. This drives them to document their participation and consumption, both as an archive and as a way of obtaining proof of their social standing within specific communities. It is so that content becomes ephemeral and, through fan production and documentation, reception is permanent.

Moving beyond a prohibitionist stance allows companies to start to incorporate much of the value audiences create. If companies deem audience practices such as file-sharing and remixing illicit, they must also see the value these practices generate as illicit. If they move to embrace fan production, or simple fan enthusiasm, this can then be incorporated into the industry’s value generating process. Such a strategy must acknowledge value flows as multidirectional, extending far beyond the original works. Rather than seeing this as a loss of control, it instead means companies have expanded the range of actors creating value around properties. Writing in *Fanning the Audience's Flames*, Sam Ford discusses such a strategy as the adoption of “a collaborationist stance” which “strengthens the sense that producers and consumers are part of the same community and thus have mutual obligations to take actions which sustain rather than damage that relationship” (Ford 11). A collaborationist stance means companies can spend their time, energy and money uncovering new strategies to benefit from the value provided by all the agents in the value network around a property, rather than expending these resources trying to enforce one-way value flows. Those at the core of Tecnobrega realized there was more benefit from finding ways to use the audience's activities as tools for promotion than spending their time trying to stomp out 'piracy.' Consequently, they built an industry which derives its income from
activities that make valuable things which can't be easily copied and exchanged, such as the live experiences and properties which record these experiences audiences find valuable.

To consider the importance of audience participation it is necessary to understand value beyond its monetary sense and pay attention to the complex, yet productive, relationship between symbolic and monetary value. For instance, it is possible to imagine that if it weren’t for the DJs’ constant recognition of their audience, the social capital that sustains Tecnobrega would diminish substantially and the now massive parties may loose part of their appeal. In that same manner, if the equipes ceased to bring their buckets, banners, t-shirts and songs the parties could also loose some of their “heat”. But, in the absence of a mainstream promotion and distribution system, the audience’s most important contributions to Tecnobrega are file-sharing and fan proselytizing; without them the genre’s content distribution network would certainly collapse. All of the actors involved in the Tecnobrega network operate with diverse motivations, but their transactions all contribute to strengthening the industry as a whole.

Adopting a value network approach provides insights into the way value is generated around media properties or industries, and the contributing roles different actors play. By overlaying monetary and non-monetary relations in the network, it is possible to account for different types of value and also identify their interactions. In a value network, as opposed to the fixed dependencies of a value chain, the nodes don’t play one exclusive role -- the audience may be consumer, producer and distributor all at once, which more accurately reflects the current participatory media landscape.

Whether for Tecnobrega or The Colbert Report, audiences have already engaged with content by adding their own contributions. Content owners now need to understand what motivates their behavior and decide if and how they will recognize audiences as both consumers and collaborators.
Works Cited


