Digital Journalism

Balancing Between Open and Closed

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BALANCING BETWEEN OPEN AND CLOSED
Co-creation in magazine journalism

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This study examines the impact of co-creation on magazine journalism by drawing on data from a structured, sequenced online co-creation process in an established consumer magazine. Co-creation is examined as a method for open journalism. Co-creation surprises and even shocks journalists, as they face the "real" reader, in intensive online reader engagement, instead of the imagined "ideal reader." Journalists compromise quality, feature journalism to comply with readers' wishes, thus breaking the reader contract and consistency in the magazine concept. Co-creation created a strong feeling of ownership over the magazine among readers; however, the end result was disappointment for both journalists and readers due to the failed content-integration process. Co-creation established a connection between the readers, which strengthened the magazines' community-creator function. The findings indicate that co-creation is a more challenging method in journalism than crowdsourcing. This article contributes to the study of open journalism and the digital future of magazines.

Introduction

Participatory culture is pervading society, as long since predicted by theorists (Jenkins 1992; Toffler 1980), empowering users and audiences to be more active producers and participants. In journalism, the participatory paradigm is manifest in institutionally independent citizen journalism sites (Bruns 2005, 2008; Domingo 2011; Gillmor 2004) and in user-generated content integrated by established news outlets (Hermida and Thurman 2008; Jönsson and Örnebring 2010). Thus far, these open journalistic practices have been examined mainly in newspaper contexts; however, magazines are also increasingly employing these participatory methods (Holmes and Nice 2012), with co-creation being one of them. Co-creation refers to an online process, in which experts and amateurs work together online to produce a new product or to improve existing ones (Piller, Ihl, and Vossen 2011; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000, 2004). Magazine publishers are experimenting in the digital realm by launching applications on tablet devices, setting up online forums and blogs, and creating social media presence (Ellonen, Tarkiainen, and Kuivalainen 2010; Holmes and Nice 2012). Thus, magazines are seeking pointers for the future, which is accompanied by challenges ranging from

keeping subscribers when readerships are declining (Federation of International Periodicals and Publications 2012; MPA: The Association of Magazine Media 2012) and finding new revenue streams to adjusting to readers' changing habits (Aitamurto and Lewis 2012).

This article examines the implications of co-creation for magazine journalism by drawing on a co-creation process at an established women's magazine, which co-created a print issue with their readers in a structured, sequenced online process. This study examines the impact of open practices on magazine journalism and discusses the implications of co-creation for the future of digital journalism.

Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts

Open Journalism and Magazines

Open journalism holds the promise of reconfiguration of the conventional "we write, you read" dogma of journalism (Boczkowski 2004; Deuze 2003, 2007) by turning readers and users into co-producers. Newspapers and magazines are increasingly employing open journalistic practices by inviting reader comments or content (Holmes and Nice 2012; Singer et al. 2011; Wardle and Williams 2010).[1] As a part of the open practices, deliberate tools for participation, such as crowdsourcing (Muthukumaraswamy 2010) and co-creation (Aitamurto and Könkkölä 2012), are becoming more common in journalism. Co-creation is online activity, in which the process is shared with the "crowd" and the organization (Piller, Ihl, and Vossen 2011), "the crowd" referring to anybody willing to participate in the process. Co-creation involves peer-to-peer communication among customers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000), and results in a shared experience (Boczkowski 2004; Banks and Deuze 2009; Hatch and Schultz 2010). These participatory mechanisms are poised to address the consumers' growing demand for personalized experiences, including interactive dialogues. Moreover, co-creation is a step toward customization, a scheme in which customers customize and personalize products to better meet their needs (Salvador, Holan, and Piller 2009; Toffler 1980), thus reflecting the user-centric approach in journalism (Hujanen 2008).

Crowdsourcing, instead, refers to a more restricted mode of collaboration (Brabham 2008; Howe 2008). In crowdsourcing, a task initiator invites readers to conduct deliberately defined tasks online. For instance, in 2009, the British newspaper The Guardian deployed crowdsourcing to examine hundreds of thousands of documents relating to the MPs' expenses scandal in Britain (Aitamurto 2011; Daniel and Flew 2010). Crowdsourcing refers to a one-time act from the participants' side aimed at responding to a task (Afuah and Tucci 2012). In crowdsourcing, there is very little interaction between journalists and readers. The openness of the process typically stalls when the participant submits the requested information. Co-creation, instead, emphasizes the open process rather than the end product. Thus, co-creation is a step ahead of crowdsourcing in the degree of openness, as the process is open at a variety of points, as illustrated in Figure 1. Moreover, in co-creation, the input from the participation and the dialogues are typically open in public, whereas in crowdsourcing, the submissions are often not shared openly.

Open journalistic practices

Crowdsourcing → Customization → Co-Creation

Closed   Open
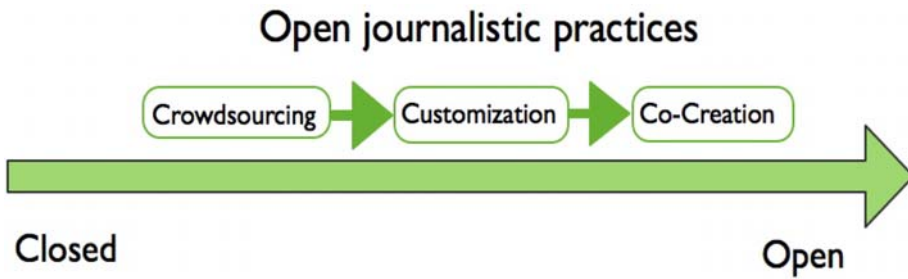
FIGURE 1

Open journalistic practices as tools for open journalism. Crowdsourcing, customization and co-creation are methods to deploy open journalism. These methods are placed on a continuum of journalistic process. The continuum starts from the more traditional, closed practice and moves towards the more open practice. The process is not fully closed or fully open at either end of the continuum, rather the open practices create gradual openness to journalistic process

Reader-participation has traditionally been a part of magazine publishing. Prior to digitalization, magazines published readers' letters, photographs, and stories (Korinek 2000; Nice 2007). Reader participation is a tool used to pursue the reader–magazine relationship, which is a core competency in magazine publishing. In that relationship the magazine wants to become the reader's friend and "speak to the reader" (Ferguson 1983; Morrish 2003). The closer the relationship is, the better the magazine knows its readers, and the better the magazine can meet their needs, which increases appeal to advertisers (Gough-Yates 2003). Women's magazine concepts are based on lifestyle segmentation, and the concepts are targeted for researched readership (Barrell and Braithwaite 1988; Winship 1987). Readership profiles are created based on customer research, and the magazine concept is designed to serve specific reader profiles. Readers are then sold as an exclusive audience to the advertiser (Gough-Yates 2003). Thus, magazine concepts are very defined by nature, following a deliberate commercial logic based on strictly defined concepts.

Co-creation requires opening up the journalistic process, and the deployment of open journalistic practices represents a shift toward open journalism in magazine publishing. Moreover, co-creation extends these open and participatory practices to the pre-publication process in journalism and therefore adds another dimension to the notion of journalism as a process (Jarvis 2009). Rather than examining the process *after* the publication (cf. Robinson 2011a), this study focuses on the open process *prior* to the stories being published. Open journalistic practices pose a basis for scholarly inquiry: How can magazines include readers in the process and customize the magazine according to their wishes, yet maintain the consistency of the deliberately designed concept and the attractiveness to advertisers? Accordingly, this study seeks understanding about the impact of open journalism on magazine publishing by addressing the following research questions: (1) How does co-creation impact on the reader–magazine relationship? (2) What are the implications of "open" for what the magazine experience could be online, and how is the gap between print and digital best bridged? In the case study in this article, an established consumer magazine co-created a print issue in a systematic sequenced online co-creation.

Methods, Data and Case Profile

Case Profile

A case study methodology was chosen to gain understanding of the phenomenon and emphasize discovery (Miles and Huberman 1994; Yin 2009). This study examines an online co-creation process within a magazine brand of the Bonnier Group, a global media group. The brand, *Olivia*, is an established women's magazine in Finland with a readership of 131,000. In 2011, *Olivia* launched its co-creation platform, MyOwnOlivia (Oma Olivia, www.omaolivia.fi), on which readers and journalists collaborate to produce feature journalism in a sequenced, systematic process. Readers and journalists pursue stories together, and those stories are published in the print issue of the *Olivia* magazine. The "open" is applied in early editorial stages: in finding a story topic, angle, and interviewees; sharing experiences and expertise as content for the stories; and ideating the scene for pictures. The journalists then write the stories based on the readers' choices and wishes.

The co-creation process is structured as each story being its own "challenge." These challenges are divided into phases following the journalistic process: the challenges start from the ideation stage, proceed to choosing the story topic, then to refining the angle, choosing the questions for interviewees, choosing the headline, and so on. The hosting journalist customizes the process in each challenge. Online users participate by doing tasks ranging from submitting story ideas and sharing experiences related to a story topic. The magazine staff writers have constant dialogue with the readers. Based on the readers' input in the previous stage, the journalists build the following phases. The story process can be followed from a progress bar. (See Appendix A for the user interface of the co-creation platform.) The users are rewarded by points and prizes based on the level and quality of their engagement.

Each magazine issue has about 50 story slots, of which 15 were conducted in a co-created fashion in this examined case. The full list of the challenges is available in Appendix B. The co-created stories were published in a print issue of *Olivia* in January 2012. In the examined four-month period, the co-creation platform had about 5000 unique weekly visitors, of which about 900 registered to the site and participated in the process. The participants and the journalists left 5726 comments on the platform. Since this pioneering period, co-creation has remained a constantly used tool in the magazine.

Methods and Data

This study examines the co-creation process from the beginning to the publication of the magazine issue. The author participated in the planning process of the co-creation platform by leading the design work as a hired contractor by the magazine, thus applying the approach of action research. In action research, the field is not something to be observed; rather, the researcher is producing and interacting actively to create research sites (Gustavsen 2001; Ladkin 2004). The researcher's role in the process shifted from that of a designer to observer when co-creation began. The participatory role of the researcher helped to achieve insights about the journalistic process and building rapport with the interviewees. The following methods were used for data gathering (see Appendix C for detailed data presentation).

Interviews with key informants. Online participants and the magazine staff were interviewed, resulting in 56 in-depth interviews with 26 individuals, of which 25 interviews were conducted with magazine staffers and 31 online participants. Among the magazine staffers, the interviewees were chosen for their expertise, in line with the key informant approach (Kumar, Stern, and Anderson, 1993). The publisher, the editor-in-chief and the editor were interviewed four times during the process, and the three journalists who hosted challenges were interviewed three times. The magazine's art director and the head of development were interviewed once during the process, and two bloggers who hosted a challenge each were interviewed once. Sixteen online participants, who were all *Olivia* readers, yet not all subscribers, were interviewed twice: in the midst of the process, and again when the issue was published in January 2012, resulting in 31 interviews. One participant did not respond to the second interview request. The online participants were recruited by email by sending an interview request to 50 randomly selected active (commenting on the online platform) participants. The sample was biased to active participants, because the focus of the inquiry was in engagement and participation. The questions in the semi-structured interview scheme for magazine staff focused on the challenges and import of the open process and the reader-relationship. The interview scheme for readers inquired about readers' experience in co-creation and the relationship to the magazine. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Netnography. Data were gathered by netnography, which is ethnography adapted to the study of online communities (Kozinets 2002; Lindlof and Shatzer 1998). Applying the method of participant observation (Lofland et al. 2006; Machin 2002), the author spent at least an hour five times a week observing and recording the interactions on the co-creation platform. In total, 5726 comments were recorded, and the field notes (Spradley 1979) were incorporated into weekly memos, resulting in 16 memos.

Fieldwork and observations. The author participated in four meetings with the editorial team in which the co-creation platform and process were planned. Additionally, the author participated in an event in which members of the editorial staff gave presentations about the magazine concept. The author made field notes from the meetings and the event.

Diaries. The journalists who were hosting co-creation challenges kept diaries in which they reported about the process. They answered three questions weekly, which were sent by the author of the present study by email. Twenty-five diary entries were gathered.

Email feedback from the readers. The magazine organized an online reader-contest to survey the readers' opinions about the co-created issue. The contest resulted in 60 messages. The respondents were asked to share their opinion about the co-created issue in an open-ended fashion. The magazine did not ask the respondents if they participated in co-creation or not; nevertheless, most of the respondents specify if they participated or not. The readers who did not participate in the co-creation process are referred to in this article as "non-participant readers."

Data were analyzed following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) analytical coding system. In the first round, open coding was used, allowing key themes and patterns to emerge from the data and thus guide further analysis, guided by the practices of grounded theory (Lindlof and Taylor 2002, 214; Strauss and Corbin 1998, 101). In the next coding round, axial coding was used to relate the emerging categories to subcate-

gories (Saldana 2009, 159; Strauss and Corbin 1998, 123). Finally, selective coding was applied to integrate and synthesize the subcategories (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 143) into three main categories: (1) the inclusion and exclusion process of the crowd, (2) reconfiguration of the reader–magazine relationship, and (3) balancing between open and closed framed by the magazine concept. Qualitative data analysis software was used in coding, and analytic memos were written to support the analysis. In the following, the findings are crafted into a loosely timeline-based narrative to reflect the process-like nature of co-creation. The numbers in the article refer to individual interviewees: the magazine staff members are referred to by numbers 1–10 and the online participants by 11–26.

Findings

A Shock for the Journalists: Facing the Real Reader

The editorial staff at *Olivia* magazine came up with the idea of deploying co-creation in the journalistic process. The magazine's art director (7) presented the idea as she was pondering what would happen if the readers were asked to share their views about stories before publishing. This was the first time the magazine employed a structured, open online reader-engagement. Previously, the online interactions with readers have included email feedback, engagement on Facebook, and gathering online survey responses from the magazine's reader panel. Co-creation is motivated by the potential of impacting the reader–magazine relationship, which the staff calls "a reader contract." As described by the magazine's editor-in-chief (2): "The contract defines what this magazine is about and what you can expect from this magazine. It says that these are our values; this is our language, and our view of the world." A stronger reader contract is perceived to increase subscribers' loyalty and lengthen the subscriber period, "the living time of a subscriber," as described by the publisher (1). In recent years, the magazine's subscriber period has been shortening.

The magazine is designed for an ideal reader, a construct, which represents a typical and a desired reader of the magazine (Gough-Yates 2003; Winship 1987). The ideal reader is based on the consumer profile, derived from market research. The magazine addresses the ideal reader, choosing story topics that match their (imagined) needs (Barrell and Braithwaite 1988).[2] This magazine is designed for an educated urban professional woman in her late twenties to early forties, paying attention to ethical consumption. In co-creation, the journalists face the real reader instead of the ideal reader, and this leads to "a shock" among the journalists, as elaborated in the following. As co-creation begins, the distance between journalists and readers[3] diminishes, reflecting their online encounters. In these interactions, the journalists learn about the readers and the realities in which they live. The journalists are concerned about the consequences of listening to the "crowd," which might not be "the right crowd," the crowd of ideal readers. The concern is based on the information they learn about the readers, their ages and occupations, and on the readers' wishes. The users suggest story topics that—according to journalists—do not fit into the magazine concept. The readers ask for service-oriented stories and introductions to inexpensive products instead of luxury items, which the magazine often portrays. The journalists perceive readers' input as too

mundane, worn out, too mainstream. For example, in the food story, the participants suggest "boring" recipes, which are too simple compared to the recipes typically introduced in the article series. Journalists perceive readers' disappointing input as a sign of the users not belonging to the magazine's target group and as disapproval of the magazine concept. The editor (3) describes this in the following excerpt:

> We don't have to please everyone. We have a clearly defined target group for which we make the magazine. Based on the online feedback the crowd—at least not all of them—doesn't belong to that group. So if they want to have clothes from Prisma [store similar to Wal-Mart or Tesco], that doesn't fit our fashion ideology. And then they have to read another magazine, not ours.

The journalists think the magazine would "be worse and more boring" if they followed the users' wishes. Furthermore, the journalists are disappointed with the readers' lack of knowledge about the professional terms used by journalists, such as "the story angle." It is only at the end of the process when a survey reveals that most of the online users are the magazine's readers. The journalists also perceive the readers as too amateur to contribute to the stories, as described by a journalist (6): "I can't have a dialogue about fashion with the readers. They just don't know enough about fashion." The crowd behaves unlike the ideal reader, and unlike the journalists, who are trained to think the reader resembles them. Therefore, from the beginning of co-creation, the crowd is excluded from the journalistic process, and the amateur readers are pushed to the periphery in the process due to the knowledge asymmetry. The readers' knowledge differs from the journalistic expertise, which is topical expertise about fashion, beauty—and journalism. Readers' expertise, instead, is everyday-life experience based on their lives as consumers and citizens.

The "open" leads into a crisis in the reader contract: the crowd wants something other than what the magazine concept allows. This magazine, typical of women's magazines, pursues a space for dreaming and refuge from the mundane to a glossy fashion world, thus blurring the boundaries between fantasy and reality, particularly with their fashion stories (Hermes 1995; Stevens and Mclaran 2005). The goal of the reader–magazine relationship is to become the readers' friend, who listens to the readers' concerns and joys, and gives advice for coping in everyday life (Moeran 2006; Whitehorne 2010). The utility service function and spaces for an ideal self-creation (Gough-Yates 2003; McCracken 1993; Ytre-Arne 2011) are the offering from the magazines' side in the reader contract. In co-creation, the mundaneness in the reader's input collides with the magazine's concept and purpose, and the journalists perceive the input as something that would "break the concept." If the journalists listened to the crowd, they would abandon consistency in the concept, and thus break the reader contract. The stories would not follow the promise to the readers: to write stories that are in the intersection of dreams and reality, providing refuge from the mundane.

Balancing Between Open and Closed

The "open" in co-creation is forced into the framework of the concept: the co-created stories have to be aligned with the concept so that the result does not deviate too much from a regular issue. Thus, the co-creation process is "open" only to a certain

degree. The degree of openness in co-creation generates tension between control and letting the crowd decide. The journalists are afraid of letting too much of the control go, as described by the editor-in-chief (2), when she pondered the choices provided to readers in the cover challenge and whether to display traditional models as choices or something more exotic: "I will be in trouble if they choose somebody ugly, so what shall I do then?" The readers are wondering if the process could be more open, for instance, for atypical choices for the magazine, such as a picture of a beautiful shoe on the cover instead of the traditional picture of a beautiful woman. However, the readers perceive the magazine concept as restrictive, and they do not expect the co-created stories to differ so much from traditional ones, as described by a reader (26): "The magazine always looks pretty much the same, and I don't think it will be radically different this time [referring to the co-created issue] either." They also doubt that their individual voice has a great impact on the magazine and perceive the possibility to impact, in part, as illusory as described in the following excerpt from a reader (24):

> One person has only restricted power over the choices. If I want something, it won't be realized exactly the way I want it to be. And in the end, it is the editorial staff that decides what will be in the magazine … They won't be punished if they don't follow the will of the crowd.

The journalists are worried about creating only an illusion of participation, and they are afraid of the readers getting angry if their input does not appear in the stories, as a journalist (5) describes in the following:

> We have a fear about the process exploding. What is the promise to the readers that you can comment and we will edit, and then it will explode so that the input is not the kind we would want. And in the magazine, there should be something in which they feel they have had a say.

The chance to impact on the magazine has become a "plausible promise" in co-creation, which, if not kept, will let the participants down, harming the reader contract. For instance, in the beauty story the readers want to read about inexpensive cosmetics. This is a disconcerting topic for the magazine, because, "at the end, cosmetics companies are our advertisers," as the editor (3) says. The plausible promise turns into a risk to the reader–magazine relationship. Moreover, the journalists are concerned about those readers who do not participate in the online platform, who are the majority. Since they are not voicing their opinions in co-creation, how can the co-created stories address them?

Absence of Journalists Makes Readers React

In the beginning of co-creation, the journalists do not actively participate in the discussions on the online platform. The nature of constant online engagement with the readers is new to the journalists, and they find it hard to fit the engagement to their regular workflow, a notion similar to studies about new practices in newsrooms (cf. Robinson 2011b). The print issue is the focus of their operations. Moreover, the journalists perceive it as difficult to find "the right tone" in their comments, as described by the editor (3):

> I am a straightforward person, so it is hard for me to coddle people with comments such as "How fantastic, great!" It feels fake, and I don't want to do that.

This difficulty demonstrates the challenge of co-creation to traditional practices: online, constant presence is needed. The readers want to interact more with the journalists, and they are asking why the journalists are not more active. This mood is evident in a reader (12) comment in her blog post:

> All in all, there is a feeling that the journalists are not present. You can't see them in conversations and you can't connect with them. The readers have been left among themselves to discuss with each other. (Blog post at http://outi.posterous.com/olivia–sorsastaa, September 13, 2011)

As the journalists are absent, the readers moderate the online space. They quickly create behavioral norms for the site: they do not tolerate negative tone or comments about people's outlooks but correct those who behave in an inappropriate fashion. They also guide each other on what is suitable to the magazine concept. If somebody suggests a story topic beyond the concept, the other readers say that it is not "*Olivia*-style," and that "it doesn't fit into the concept." The readers describe strong feelings over the concept, as illustrated in the following excerpt from a reader (22). She describes her reaction against suggestions that do not fit into the magazine's concept: "I felt a bit protective of the magazine … I felt like saying 'You and your topics need to stay away; they don't belong here…'" Thus, the readers guard the concept just like the journalists do. The participants begin to act like an online community, and they call themselves MyOwnOlivians.

Breakthroughs: From Exclusion to Inclusion

As the process continues, the journalists begin to engage more in the online conversations. They facilitate the interactions more actively by posing questions and encouraging good responses. This breakthrough derives from the journalists' initiation: they want to make co-creation work. The right methods are discussed in meetings and daily email exchanges. The following is an example of a journalist (5) encouraging others to join the dialogue on the platform:

> So how about if, from now on, all of us hostesses would comment on the platform, acknowledge the readers, and ask questions from the readers. Let's do that? … And let's not get anxious; there is no point in going there for the sake of talking, but because we are reading them [the readers' input] anyway, we can type away our thoughts to them. Let's have the bar low, sisters!

As a result of these efforts, the journalists start to identify more value in readers' submissions. This represents a new skill required in co-creation: to gain useful input from readers, the journalists have to be actively present on the platform and to engage. Journalists have to act as facilitators rather than just observers. Moreover, the journalists begin to perceive readers' input as "raw material," as building blocks that can be used in the story but not necessarily as they are. Arriving at this realization requires additional effort. The journalists have to modify their typical workflow and to rethink the story process to find ways to integrate readers' input. The journalists, who alter the

typical story process, succeed in utilizing readers' input in a manner that leads to quality journalism. For example, in the relationship story, the journalist (5) planned the open story process along her typical workflow. In that practice, the journalist identifies people through her networks, interviews them, and writes the story. Similarly, she expects the users to share experiences in co-creation. However, co-creation does not proceed as anticipated. The readers are not sharing sensitive experiences online; rather they are discussing the problems in "an uncandid, shallow way," as the journalist describes it.

Due to this disappointment, the journalist considers that co-creation is useless in journalism. She describes herself as being "deep down under" and "half-panicky" with the story, and she is afraid that the story will be a failure and cannot be published at all. Driven to despair, as she describes the situation, the journalist changes her method. She analyzes the readers' submissions, creates three scenarios demonstrating problems in workplaces and asks readers to provide solutions. With this method the journalist (5) receives the outcome she needs for the story.

The journalist managed to create a task with which the participants could identify. This resulted in emotional and candid responses that were useful. The more concrete and clear the task is the more useful the reader input. In order to successfully customize the tasks, the journalist has to identify herself with the readers' position and thus apply an empathetic approach to the readers, similar to user-centric design practices (cf. McDonagh-Philp and Lebbon 2000). It is evident that the typical journalistic work flow does not function seamlessly when working with the crowd. The journalists have less control in the process, because they cannot predict the quality and amount of readers' input; instead, they have to constantly iterate their story process, as described in the following excerpt from a journalist (5):

> It is a happy ending: now afterwards I have realized that absolutely the greatest thing in Oma Olivia is how everything goes differently than I had planned or anticipated. It felt upsetting at the moment, but already, the next day, it feels better when you realize that this is the way it should go.

Collaboration with the crowd adds complexity to the story process, a challenge noted in studies about participatory activity, such as crowdsourcing (cf. Jain 2010). In journalism, this is due to several iterations, time spent in sorting the readers' comments, and dealing with the variety of angles and voices. Co-created stories take longer to produce than traditional stories. The open process appears fragmented, and it feels like "compiling a puzzle," as a journalist described (6). The most challenging stories were the five multi-page feature stories, which were co-created in up to seven stages. These stories were the ones that were initially planned to be co-created. During the process, the editorial staff increased the number of challenges from the original 5 to 15, because the online participation was stronger than expected. The remaining 10 challenges were one-stage challenges, in which the readers were asked to conduct simple tasks such as to submit a list of their favorite songs, invent a new word, and share the name of their favorite book. These one-stage challenges are crowdsourcing, not co-creation, as they are one-time shots, calling for a defined piece of content rather than a process with a dialogue. The crowdsourced pieces are more easily integrated into the magazine, as they are short, separate pieces comprising of a couple of sentences, and can be published almost as they are.

Forced Inclusion: Breaking the Reader Contract

When writing the stories, the journalists highlight the readers' input in the stories even though they are aware that the result will be lower-quality journalism, which contradicts the magazine's style. For example, the celebrity feature was written in a question–answer format, even though the magazine has never used that format before in a lead feature interview. The exceptional decisions are explained by the pressure to highlight the readers' input so that the readers can see their impact on the story.

The co-created stories are a disappointment for both journalists and readers. The readers' submissions are represented as excerpts and snippets, which are not integrated into a larger narrative. For example, instead of providing a narrative of one travel destination, there is a list of readers' tips to five destinations in the travel story. In this *forced inclusion* process, the journalists force readers' input into the story. They do not *build upon* the readers' input but treat readers' input as ready-made content, which has to be forced into the story as is. Therefore in the end, the magazine issue differs from a typical issue: there are fewer stories with narratives. The journalists are not content with the result: they consider the stories too shallow and fragmented. Nor are the readers pleased with the stories. The readers describe the co-created stories as "too light" and "shallow," just as the journalists do. The reaction reflects that of those readers who did not participate in the process. In their feedback, the non-participant readers criticize the issue for being "scattered."

The readers want to be listened to; however, they want the journalists not to report about the online discussions, but to *use that input* to build a great feature article. The readers do not expect their input to be highlighted separately in the article if it does not add value to the story. They want the journalists to *synthesize* their input, so that it is woven into the narrative of a feature story, as described in the following excerpt from a reader (16):

> I'd rather see the stories being done in collaboration with the journalists … I mean, they are done in collaboration even now, but so that the reader content wouldn't be segregated in terms of reader input and journalists' writing.

Just as the readers understand the concept and guard it on the online platform, they expect consistency in the concept, even in co-created issues. The issue appears as "thin" for the readers who have participated in the process, and they long for something surprising in the stories.

Renegotiated Reader Contract

After the co-creation process, the readers describe the magazine as "closer" to them than before, stating that the magazine is theirs and it belongs to them, as described in the following (20):

> I feel like I belong to the magazine somehow. Now that I have participated and shared my thoughts, it feels like it is my own magazine more than any other magazine.

The ensuing feeling of ownership made two informants renew their subscription to the magazine and one who had never subscribed, to do so for the first time. The

readers identify their influence in stories by tracking "the touch of their own hands," as a reader describes it (19). Similarly, the fact they have been part of the process makes the readers anticipate the magazine and more eager to read it.

The readers are delighted to see their input and their names mentioned in the stories, and the ones whose pictures were published are proud about that.[4] They share the news about their name appearing in the magazine on social media (reader 13):

> I was childishly delighted about seeing my name in the magazine, kind of "mommy mommy, look, my name is in the magazine." So I had to post on Facebook, asking my friends to go to the magazine and see my name there.

The excerpt describes the readers' feeling of "the pride of authorship" in their participation, an effect noted in studies about user participation in new product development (cf. Franke and Piller 2004; Preece et al. 1994; Preece, Rogers, and Sharp 2002). Moreover, the opinions and lifestyle choices of others make the readers feel that the other readers are "ordinary people," just like they are, compared to the image of living in a dream world, which the magazine—in part—pursues. Seeing the other readers' opinions and perspectives makes the magazine feel like one's "own" magazine:

> it feels it's closer to readers and more of my own magazine. So typically, the picture of a woman in women's magazines is a career tycoon with designer handbags and expensive make-up. I realized that many of *Olivia*'s readers are just ordinary people. (16)

Co-creation reveals the ordinariness of other readers, and that makes it easier for the readers to identify themselves with the magazine. Readers feel a sense of closeness to the magazine that listens to their—the ordinary people's—wishes, comments, and perspectives, rather than addressing an ideal, imaginary goal. By observing the other readers' opinions and views, co-creation pushes the readers away from the mold of the ideal reader that that they are questioning. Furthermore, the readers perceive the other readers' input as giving depth and credibility to the story, as a reader (25) describes:

> The beauty story feels deeper, as the story tells how the matter really is. It is more honest … there is ordinary people's input there. One can believe in the story, as it is not fake or some sort of advertising gimmick.

As a result of co-creation, a new dimension in the magazine experience occurs to the readers: a relationship among readers, as illustrated in Figure 2. The magazine is no longer the only friend in the reader–magazine relationship, but so are the other readers, as described in the following excerpt from a reader (20):

> Many people were of the same spirit. Some of them felt a bit familiar, even though I had never met them, but they started to feel like acquaintances that I would have met…

The readers felt that there was something "of the same" in the other readers; even though they would disagree about subject matters, they felt that they were "of a similar spirit" and "almost like friends." The readers wanted to learn from the other readers' lifestyles and values. Thus, a magazine takes a role as a community builder. The feelings of belonging and sameness have also been noted in fan-community studies (Jenkins 2006). Magazines have traditionally fostered reader-to-reader relationships by face-to-face reader meeting groups and independent meetings under the magazine
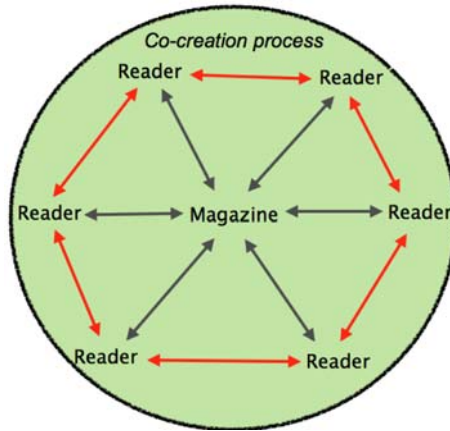
FIGURE 2

New dimension in reader–magazine relationships: reader–reader relationships online. The inner arrows refer to traditional relations in the reader–magazine relationships. The outer arrows refer to new relations in the relationship. The co-creation process initiates the reconfiguration of the relationship and functions as a space for the re-negotiations in the reader–magazine relationship

brand and, more recently, in online relationships (Johnson and Prijatel 2007). When transported to a digital environment, those relationships become more visible and more accessible to a larger set of people than in the offline world. In addition, the readers appreciated the tips and hints for everyday life from other readers. Hence, peer support among the readers strengthens the magazine's service function, similar to other online communities (Jenkins 2006). Moreover, after the co-creation process, the readers felt that the journalists were closer to them, because the journalists were interacting on the online platform. Notably, the participant readers' feeling of belonging and ownership are distinct from those of non-participant readers. For some of the non-participants, the magazine issue appears as an insiders' project, as reflected in the following excerpt from a non-participant readers' e-mail:

> Maybe in the future readers' participation could be highlighted less, however excited they are about the participation. As a reader I'm not interested in knowing what idea came from whom. An ongoing insiders' joke of 900 people is eventually an alienating experience.

Co-creation has created a nascent online community of readers, which poses a threat of alienating the rest of the readers, who are not part of the community. This dichotomy between the two reader-groups breaks the reader contract, as the non-participants are left outside from the new level of closeness between the magazine and the participant readers.

Furthermore, co-creation builds a connection between the journalist and the reader. After the process, the journalists know their readers better, as they know better the readers' realities, the concrete life situations they are facing, and so on. This deeper connection makes the journalists question the magazine concept, whether it addresses the readers' needs, and whether the concept is too distant from the readers' lives. Co-creation revealed needs to develop the concept. To cite one example, the readers' strong need for

stories about work life was recognized. A journalist (6) describes the balance between communicating dreams and the readers' realities after the co-creation process: "We can be further away in the level of ideas, but when portraying products closer to readers, keep them better in mind." Toward the end of the process, the magazine staff begin to perceive the online community as a huge focus group in which they can sense the readers' values. Journalists begin to perceive value in readers' input, and they describe the co-creation platform as "a storage of ideas." However, the journalists do not think that the readers can actually write stories in a commons-based peer-production type of collaboration (Benkler 2002). Journalists perceive the readers as incapable of withstanding the demanding editing process that would be needed for their content.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates how traditional roles in journalism are, partially, exchanged in open journalism. In co-creation, the readers are "employing" the journalists to follow their requests; as for journalists, the open process appears as an obligation to comply with the readers' wishes. This reflects journalists' fear of breaking the plausible promise given to the readers: a chance to impact on the magazine by participating, thus customizing the content to match their needs. Co-creation generates a constant tension between "the open" and "the closed," "the closed" referring to the incumbent journalistic process. The journalists are controlled by the magazine concept, to which the readers' input does not fit, and which restricts the customizing of the magazine. When faced with the real reader instead of the (imaginary) ideal reader, the familiar framework of concept and ideal reader collides with the wilderness of the unknown and uncontrolled crowd and its unpredictable input. Co-creation leads to a crisis in the reader–magazine relationship, and makes the journalists break the reader contract by using forced inclusion, thus compromising high-quality journalism to highlight readers' participation, and thus emphasizing the symbolic (rather than the instrumental) role of reader participation. This results in disappointment among the readers, who expect journalists to integrate their input into quality narratives, rather than use the input as is. Thus, in co-creation, the conventional "we write, you read" dogma of journalism and the reader's and journalist's roles are renegotiated into a new order: "We ask, you respond, we listen, we write, you read."

The co-creation process creates a bridge from online to offline, and both realms have their distinguished roles. The role of online engagement is to listen to the readers and sense their needs. Co-creation functions as a space for interactions between the readers and the journalists. Co-creation becomes a part of the journalistic process and novel dimension in readers' magazine experience. The readers perceive the online co-creation as a valuable experience, nevertheless they expect the magazine reading to be another, yet somewhat separate experience from co-creation. The print magazine keeps its role as a sense-maker and storyteller, in which the professional, familiar narrative voice of the magazine still talks to the readers, rather than other readers to a large extent. These two worlds interact, and contribute to each other; thus, a bridge between the online and the print is created.

Co-creation becomes a novel dimension in readers' magazine experience. That experience builds a strong sense of ownership among the readers; a feeling that the mag-

azine is "of them." Co-creation also creates a sense of closeness between journalists and readers. Moreover, a new dimension in the reader contract is formed for the readers online: a relationship from a reader to another reader. Co-creation makes the reader relationship live, dynamic, and discursive, which is born in reader–journalist and reader–reader online interactions. In the co-creation process, the reader–magazine relationship is redefined in a constant interaction with the readers, the journalists, and the online community. As a result of that interaction, the construct of the ideal reader moves closer to the real reader, while remaining in the framework of the magazine concept. For the magazine, co-creation provides a channel to tap into the reader's needs on a large scale; as a result of the process, the concept is iterated to better match the readers' needs.

The findings provide magazine publishing pointers in their exploration of the digital future yet create another conundrum: given the findings about reader loyalty impact, online engagement may be a worthwhile method to use, however, it is a laborious tool and requires organizational changes. This quandary is particularly challenging, as co-creation was not directly useful for feature journalism, rather it caused complications in the journalistic process. The process-like nature of co-creation is a hard fit for journalism, because it requires reconfiguration of the conventional workflow, strong presence in the online interactions, curating the dialogue with readers, and constant iteration of the process.

Moreover, co-creation is a more challenging open journalistic practice than crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing results in submissions that can be published in the magazine as is, and thus is an easier method to fit into journalistic practices, without a laborious dialogue with the readers. Furthermore, co-creation holds a potential to alienate the non-participant readers, if the "insiders' spirit and stories" from closely knit online communities is spread into the print magazine. However, the alienation might be avoided by deploying more developed methods in integrating the readers' submissions, and reducing the highlighting of the readers, as hoped by both participant and non-participant readers. Nevertheless, the alienation can, eventually, turn out to be too strong an effect, which overrides the potential benefits of co-creation, and questions the suitability of the tool on a larger scale. Furthermore, maintaining the delicate balance between the magazine concept's dream world and the more mundane utility service function is challenging in the interplay of co-creation and journalism.

This study contributes to the study of open journalism, being a pioneer case study of co-creation in magazine journalism. The study is limited to one case with a small sample, and cross-case comparisons in co-creation usage are needed. Furthermore, the reader-sample has to be extended to those readers who are less active in co-creation and who do not participate at all, in order to examine the impact of co-creation on those groups. Finally, after the pioneering phase, if co-creation becomes a more widely used method in magazine journalism, longitudinal, quantifying research is needed to analyze the potential long-term trends and effects in both journalism and readerships, to test the loyalty outcomes this study indicates.

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NOTES

1. Open journalistic practices have received scholarly criticism from the division of labor perspective, a common argument being the abuse of free labor as a result of user participation (cf. Hesmondhalgh 2010). Due to the chosen framing, this article does not examine this aspect, leaving the motivation and reward aspect to the forthcoming publications of the author.
2. The reader contract is similar to the author–reader contract and author–reader relationship noted in literature theory, in which rhetorical roles for author and reader are constructed (Iser 1974; Sherman 1998).
3. The online participants are referred to as "users" and "readers" interchangeably.
4. Pictures of the nine most active participants were published in a magazine, featured as the "magazine's reader staff."

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Appendix A

FIGURE A1
The user interface of the co-creation platform. The journalist (on the right bar) posts updates to the blog, and engages in conversations with the readers. The task for the readers is described below the main picture of the site

FIGURE A2
The progress bar demonstrates the current stage in the story process

FIGURE A3
The leaderboard shows the participants' activity ranking, earned points and badges

Appendix B

List of Challenges in OmaOlivia

1. Relationship story.
2. The cover.
3. Beauty story.
4. Fashion story.
5. Celebrity feature.
6. Food story.
7. Travel story.
8. Fashion story with a blogger.
9. Fashion story with a blogger.
10. Development ideas: how to improve the magazine?
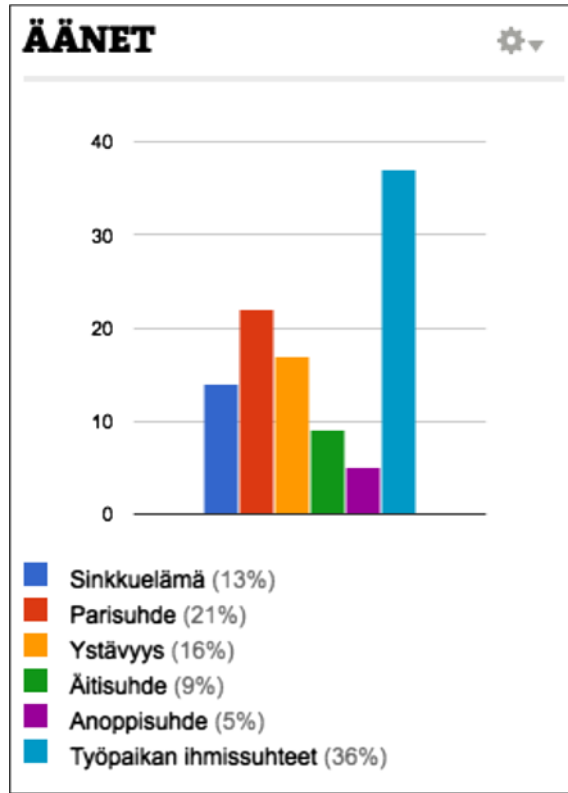11. Invent new words.

FIGURE A4
The polling results show the readers' support for story topics and other choices

12. Your favorite playlist.
13. Culture story: your favorite books.
14. Questions for the person of the month.
15. Fashion story.

Appendix C

Data Presentation
Table 1

TABLE 1
for Appendix C

Context	Type of informant (number of interviews) and description	Type of participant observation (total number of observations)	Type of informants' self-reported data	Type of other data
Magazine (magazine staff members and writers). The numbers in the article refer to an individual interviewee: 1–10	Magazine editor (4); magazine writers (9); editor-in-chief (4); publisher (4). The publisher, the editor-in-chief, and the editor were interviewed four times during the process, and three staff writers were interviewed three times. Furthermore, the following people were interviewed once during co-creation: art director (1); two of the magazine's bloggers, who were invited to host a challenge on the co-creation platform (2); head of development (1).	Planning meetings for the co-creation platform development process (4). Listening to a presentation about the magazine concept development in an industry seminar (1).	Magazine journalists' diary entries (25)	
Participants on the co-creation platform. The numbers in the article refer to an individual interviewee: 11–26	Participants on the co-creation platform (31). Participants on the online platform were interviewed twice during the co-creation process. The same 16 informants were interviewed twice, except for one participant, who did not respond to the second interview request.	Netnographic recordings of interactions on the co-creation platform. Altogether 5726 written comments were recorded during the four-month research period.		
Participants on a magazine's survey on the magazine's website				The magazine organized a contest for the readers to comment the co-created issue. The respondents' feedback to the magazine comprises 60 messages.