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Dan Li

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WHY DO YOU BLOG:  
A USES-AND-GRATIFICATIONS INQUIRY  
INTO BLOGGERS' MOTIVATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the patterns of blogging, blogging motivations, and the roles of motivations as well as demographics as predictors for blogging behaviors. Six aspects of blogging behaviors are examined: 1) how bloggers cover topics in writing; 2) how bloggers manage feedbacks from readers; 3) how bloggers use hyperlinks; 4) how bloggers present themselves; 5) how bloggers expect readership; 6) how bloggers use design elements.

Seven motivations for blogging emerge in this research: self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time, and socialization. Except for passing time, all the other six motivations were highly approved by bloggers. Most of those motivations are moderately correlated.

Overall, certain motivations are found to be related with specific usage of blogs. Self-documentation is a predictor of feedback management, self-presentation, and readership expectation. Improving writing motivation works as a predictor for self-presentation and readership expectation. Self-expression predicts self-presentation, readership expectation, and design elements use. Medium appeal motivation predicts self-presentation. Information motivation predicts feedback management, use of hyperlinks, self-presentation, readership expectation, and design elements. Passing time motivation predicts self-presentation, design elements, and readership expectation.

Socialization motivation predicts use of hyperlinks, self-presentation, and readership expectation.

Gender differences were located in many aspects of blogging. Men claim higher approval of information motivation while women endorse self-documentation, self-expression, and passing time more.

Other than gender, age also plays a role in motivating people to blog. Motivations as self-documentation, self-expression, and passing time have a negative relationship with age. Educational level was found no connection with specific blogging motivations.

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1.	Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2.	Review of Literature .....	5
2.1.	Uses-and-gratifications Perspective.....	6
2.1.1.	Uses-and-gratifications Tenets.....	6
2.1.2.	The Internet and Audience Activity.....	8
2.1.3.	Uses-and-gratifications in CMC .....	11
2.1.4.	Uses-and-gratifications of Personal Home Pages .....	18
2.1.5.	Uses and Gratifications of Blogs .....	20
2.1.6.	Previous Studies on Blogging Motivations.....	22
2.1.7.	Summary .....	26
2.2.	The Nature of Blog .....	26
2.2.1.	Definitions of Blog .....	27
2.2.2.	Blogging Tools and Services .....	29
2.2.3.	Basic Structure of Blog.....	30
2.2.3.1.	Blog posts.....	31
2.2.3.2.	Archives .....	33
2.2.3.3.	Hyperlinks.....	33
2.2.3.4.	Comments and Trackbacks .....	34
2.2.3.5.	Templates .....	36
2.2.4.	Topics of Blogs.....	38
2.2.5.	Feedback Mechanism of Blogs.....	40
2.2.6.	Hyperlinks of Blogs .....	43
2.2.7.	Self-presentation on Blogs.....	44
2.2.8.	Readership Expectation .....	47
2.2.9.	Design Elements of Blogs.....	48
2.3.	Review .....	50
Chapter 3.	Methodology .....	51
3.1.	Sample.....	51
3.1.1.	Sampling Criteria .....	51
3.1.2.	Sampling Strategy.....	54

3.2.	Response Rate.....	56
3.3.	Sample Demographics .....	56
3.4.	Questionnaire Design.....	59
3.5.	Instrumentation .....	62
3.6.	Variables .....	62
3.7.	Statistical Analyses .....	65
3.8.	Review .....	66
Chapter 4.	Results.....	67
4.1.	Usage Pattern of Blogs.....	67
4.1.1.	General Pattern of Blogging .....	67
4.1.2.	Topics of Blogs.....	70
4.1.3.	Feedback Mechanism of Blogs.....	74
4.1.4.	Hyperlinks on Blogs .....	77
4.1.5.	Self-Presentation on Blogs.....	79
4.1.6.	Readership Expectation .....	83
4.1.7.	Design Elements of Blogs.....	86
4.2.	Overall analysis of Blogging Motivations .....	88
4.2.1.	Factor Structure.....	88
4.2.2.	Factor Strength.....	92
4.2.3.	Demographic Differences in Blogging Motivations.....	96
4.3.	Predictors of Blogging Behaviors.....	98
4.3.1.	Predictors of Topics Choice on Blogs .....	98
4.3.2.	Predictors of Bloggers' Feedback Management.....	98
4.3.3.	Predictors of Hyperlinks Use on Blogs.....	101
4.3.4.	Predictors of Self-Presentation .....	104
4.3.5.	Predictors of Readership Expectations .....	110
4.3.6.	Predictors of Design Elements Usage.....	113
4.4.	Summary.....	115
Chapter 5.	Discussion.....	121
5.1.	Profile of Bloggers: Who are Blogging .....	121
5.2.	Pattern of Blogging: How People Blog .....	123

5.2.1. Blog Topic Preferences.....	124
5.2.2. Feedback Management .....	125
5.2.3. Hyperlinks Uses .....	126
5.2.4. Self-presentation on Blogs.....	127
5.2.5. Readership Expectation .....	128
5.2.6. Uses of Design Elements .....	129
5.3. Motivations for Blogging: Why People Blog.....	129
5.4. Predicting Blogging Behaviors.....	135
5.5. Strengths and Limitations .....	140
5.5.1. Strengths .....	140
5.5.2. Limitations .....	142
5.6. Future Research Directions.....	143
5.7. Summary .....	145
References.....	146
Appendix A.....	156

## List of Tables and Figures

Table 1.1 Selected New Media Uses and Gratifications Typologies 1995-2005 .....	14
Figure 2.1 Blog Post .....	32
Figure 2.2 Blogroll.....	35
Figure 2.3 Blogging.....	35
Figure 2.4 Blog Comments.....	37
Table 3.1 Demographics of Respondents .....	58
Table 3.2 A Priori Motivations for Blogging and Sample Statements .....	61
Table 4.1 General Pattern of Blogging .....	68
Table 4.2 Topics of Blogging .....	71
Table 4.3 Gender Differences for Blog Topics.....	73
Table 4.4 Feedback Mechanism Management on Blogs .....	75
Table 4.5 Gender Differences for Perception on Importance of Feedback .....	76
Table 4.6 Use of Hyperlinks on Blogs.....	78
Table 4.7 Self-Presentation on Blogs.....	80
Table 4.8 Contact Information on Blogs.....	82
Table 4.9 Targeted Readers for blogs.....	84
Table 4.10 Promotion of Blogs.....	87
Table 4.11 Factor Analysis for Blogging Motivations .....	91
Table 4.12 Blogging Motivations Scale.....	93
Table 4.13 Blogging Motivation Correlation Matrix.....	95
Table 4.14 Gender Differences for Blogging Motivations .....	97
Table 4.15 Correlations among Blog Topics and Blogging Motivations .....	99
Table 4.16 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Trackback Use.....	100

Table 4.17 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Bloggers' Perceptions of Feedback Importance .....	102
Table 4.18 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for in-text Hyperlinks on Blogs .....	103
Table 4.19 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Hyperlinks in blogrolls	105
Table 4.20 Predictors for Identification with Bloggers' Own Photos .....	107
Table 4.21 Predictors for Identification with Others' Photos .....	108
Table 4.22 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Personal Content Disclosure .....	109
Table 4.23 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Promotion Channels....	111
Table 4.24 T-test Results of Motivations and Targeted Readers.....	112
Table 4.25 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Server Log Use.....	114
Table 4.26 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Add-on Applications Use .....	116

## Chapter 1. Introduction

A blog, also known as weblog, in its most basic form can be defined as “a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first” (J. Walker, 2003). The formal concept of blog was initially implemented in the website titled “Scripting News” created by Dave Winer in 1996 (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz, 2004). Deemed as the “newest trend in Internet communication” (Goldsborough, 2003), blogs have attained prominent popularity since the end of 20th century. Technorati, one of the most important real-time search engines, which exclusively indexes blogs, claims to monitor more than 10 million blogs with over 38,000 new sources added daily (2005). According to The Pew Internet and American Life Project’s recent report on state of blogging, over eight million Americans declare to have ever created a blog or web diary (Rainie, 2005). This latest number exhibits a striking contrast with the 1.1 million drawn from a similar survey conducted by the same institution one year ago (Lenhar, Horrigan, and Fallows, 2004).

In addition to the popularity in terms of augment of blog authors, also known as bloggers, blogs have emerged as “hot spot” in average people’s media agenda. Mass media hail blogs as a revolutionary form of “citizen journalism” (L. Walker, 2004) and hype the democratizing power inherent in blogs. Big names in the blogosphere have gone beyond the scope of cyberspace and entered into the field of traditional media. Names of influential bloggers start to show up on news stories and be mentioned by news anchors. Despite the

predicted challenge blogs bring to the authority of traditional journalism, news organizations start to adopt both the form and content of blogs (Ruggiero & Winch, 2004). On Merriam-Webster's list of the top 10 words of 2004, "blog" ranked the first (Merriam-Webster Online, 2004). People's inquiry for the definition of blog signifies the ubiquity of blogs they encounter in media environment while also suggests the conception is still new to the majority of population. Undeniably, blogs are hitting the mainstream.

As a flexible channel of online communication, blogs serve people with different purposes. A blog can be as mundane as a teenage girl's "secret garden" in which she rambles about school and dating. It might be as lofty as an online community's efforts to call for disaster relief for victims who suffered seriously from tsunami. As purposive as a political blogger's campaign camp, a blog can be something he or she intends to be persuasive and thus influence decision-making (Kahn & Kellner, 2004). The content of blogs is subject to a bloggers' free will. Rebecca Blood, one of the most famous bloggers, well known for her "Rebecca's Pocket," pointed out that "(Blogs are) so very malleable that people are doing with it what they want to do" (as cited in Beeson, 2005, p. 16). Technically, since anybody with access to the Internet is able to publish their own blog, there is great variety in the "quality, content, and ambition" of blogs (J. Walker, 2003). Simply put, bloggers' distinct needs can be accommodated in the identical venue of personal publication.

Within traditional mediated communication channels audiences usually play the role of passive message receivers. Conventional media exposure such as television viewing, radio listening, and newspapers reading does not require complex skills to perform those activities. The interactive feature of the Internet renders users not only information

consumers but also message producers. Blogs require bloggers to devote much more time and effort to produce messages than to simply obtain them from media. Generally speaking, writing requires higher level of cognitive involvement than reading or viewing activity. Equity theory (Adams, 1965) helps to explain the gap of effort between blogging behavior and normal media consumption. Adams (1965) suggested that the outcomes (rewards) people expect should be proportional to the inputs (efforts). Therefore, the active publishing process presupposes that bloggers have specific motives to conduct the act and seek certain gratifications from the activity. Reciprocally, bloggers have complete control over nearly every aspect of their blogs given the boundless characteristics of blogs in respect to blog content and form. Bloggers are free to add or change everything on blogs--the only constraints are information technology and imagination.

Blogs' popularity and versatility prompt two overarching research questions: Why do people blog? How do they blog? Researchers have embarked on exploring bloggers' motivations, whereas a study based on bloggers' self-reports is still absent. This thesis project aims to fill in the blank by surveying bloggers to get the first-hand information on their motivations as well as the ways in which people blog. Moreover, the study examines relationships between blogging motivations and blogging behavior, especially focusing on the roles of motivations and other demographics as predictors for certain blogging behavior. Particularly, this study investigates the following issues associated with blogging: 1) how bloggers cover certain topics in writing; 2) how bloggers manage feedbacks from readers; 3) how bloggers use hyperlinks; 4) how bloggers present themselves on blogs; 5) how bloggers expect readership; 6) how bloggers use design elements of blogs.

Answers to the questions lead to a clear understanding of the new communication tool and its application in the wired world. Knowledge about the reasons for blogging will be helpful in academic development on social behavior as well as technology innovation on information and communication technology. Understanding how people blog will add to the knowledge of characteristics and demographics of adult bloggers. From the perspective of practical implications, the knowledge will lead to the advancement of more user-friendly blogging services and authoring tools thus offer bloggers better user experience. This study draws on the uses and gratification approach of media use to explore the reasons why people author personal blogs and how those reasons are translated into their specific patterns of creating and maintaining blogs. The theoretical applicability of the uses-and-gratifications perspective in new communication technology will be further assessed in this thesis project.

The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter Two reviews relevant literature and research on the uses-and-gratifications framework, including its applications in conventional media and computer-mediated communication studies. Previous research on blogs is reviewed and appropriate research questions and hypotheses are proposed. Chapter Three discusses the process of data collection and analysis, as well as an operationalization of variables in question. Chapter Four presents results of the survey to answer research questions and test hypotheses. Chapter Five explains the research results and offers a discussion of the data and hypotheses. It also concludes the thesis project with a summary and offers recommendations for further research on blogs.

## Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Since the introduction of the uses-and-gratifications framework into communication research, nearly all the media and communication technologies have been scrutinized under this lens. Understanding functions and gratifications provided by media helps to explain the interaction between the media and audience, thus leading to a more complete knowledge of media effects. The emergence of interactive media, such as the Internet, cast new challenges to the media effect studies. The interactivity and seemingly omnipresence of the Internet has attracted attention from communication scholars. The Internet per se and Internet-based communication technologies have been the subjects of a large number of studies. Now it is time for blogs. As a new form of computer-mediated communication (CMC), blogs inherit the principal characteristics of CMC while exhibiting some interesting new patterns by presenting the combination of online self-representation, community building, and interpersonal communication in a new way. Therefore, the investigation of literature on uses-and-gratifications of similar CMC contexts such as personal homepages will aid the study of blogs.

This chapter will examine the theoretical framework of the uses-and-gratifications approach first. In addition, certain conceptual revisions are suggested to improve its applicability in blog studies. Current literature concerning uses and gratifications within several CMC contexts such as the World Wide Web, online communities, and personal homepages are also reviewed. Blogs are defined and introduced in the later part. Various

aspects of blogs are explored, including authoring tools, genres, interactivity, and other specific attributes unique in blogs.

## **2.1. USES-AND-GRATIFICATIONS PERSPECTIVE**

Prior to the proliferation of Internet research in academia, the uses-and-gratifications perspective has been fruitful for its remarkable contribution to understand motivations of conventional media use such as radio (Herzog, 1940, 1944), television (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1981), newspapers (Berelson, 1949), books and magazines (Lichtenstein & Rosenfeld, 1984), VCR (Cohen, Levy, and Golden, 1988; Rubin & Bantz, 1989), and telephone (Dimmick, Sikand, and Patterson, 1994). An intellectual “gold rush” in Internet research burst out since Morris and Ogan’s (1996) enlightenment that the Internet had evolved into a mass medium and thus deserved scholarly attention. In terms of the applicability of established communication theories to the new medium, Morris and Ogan (1996) deemed the uses-and-gratifications approach as advantageous: it presupposes audience activity and is capable of covering both mass and interpersonal communication. The suitability of uses and gratifications for new media research has been echoed in a series of studies (December, 1996; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Williams, Strover, and Grant, 1994).

### **2.1.1. Uses-and-gratifications Tenets**

The uses-and-gratifications approach shifts the emphasis of communication research from answering the question “what do the media do to people?” (Katz, as cited in Swanson, 1979, p. 4) to “what active audience members do with the media” (Swanson, 1979, p.4). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) speculated the logic of the

uses-and-gratifications approach and outlined it as one that looks at “(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media and other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones” (p. 20). Rubin and Bantz (1989) summarized the five principal elements of the uses-and-gratifications model: a person’s social and psychological environment, an individual’s needs or motives to communicate, functional alternatives to media selection, communication behaviors, and the consequences or effects of such behavior (p. 182).

In light of the seminal work of Rosengren (1974), Katz et al. (1974) and a series of studies about media audiences (Palmgreen, 1984; Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rosengren, 1985; Rubin, 1986, 1993, 1994), Rubin (2002) summarized and proposed five assumptions intrinsic in uses-and-gratifications paradigm: (a) people’s communication behavior is functional and goal-directed which implies individual and social consequences; (b) people select and use specific communication vehicles variously in purpose of satisfying their unique needs or desires; (c) expectations about the media and media content are shaped by individual’s such social and psychological factors as personalities, social environment, interpersonal interactions, and communication channel availability; (d) availability of competing communication channels renders audiences freedom to choose the most appropriate media for gratifications. The extent to which people’s motives are satisfied by certain media is determined by the media attributes as well as individual’s social and psychological circumstances; (e) an individual’s media use and subsequent media effects are mainly (though not completely) a function of the individual’s purpose for using the

media (Sherry, Lucas, Greenberg, and Lachlan, in press). In this sense, media use patterns and consequences are more typically influenced by people than by the media attributes.

### **2.1.2. The Internet and Audience Activity**

Drawing on the preceding assumptions, it is clear that the underlying belief of uses-and-gratifications perspective focuses on the presumption: media audience play the role as active communicator (Ruggiero, 2000). Katz and his colleagues (1974) elaborated the role of active audience: in the process of media choice and use, audience perceive specific communication goals, evaluate the potential gratifications possibly obtained from exposure to certain communication channels and contents, then select the appropriate channels to satisfy the communicative needs. More succinctly, the audience member makes a conscious and goal-directed choice among media channels and content (McQuail, 1994).

It was a theoretical leap to overcome the long-held misconception that audience had no resistance to the media effects and would be totally subject to the manipulation of mass media. However, the question “what active audience members do with the media” (Swanson, 1979, p. 4) might overemphasize the objectification attribute of mass media; it runs the risk of overestimating the level of audience activity in various communication contexts. Rubin (1994) called the presupposition of universal audience activity into question and contended that all audience members are not equally active at all times.

Indeed, a myriad of external and internal factors can affect the extent to which audience actively use the media. In the days exclusively dominated by conventional media such as newspaper, radio, and television, audience activity had been established by audience’s free will to participate in certain communication processes as well as their

autonomy to choose among available media channels and content. The level of activity was seemingly augmented by the myriads of trade magazines, radio programs, and cable channels available to media consumers. However, the “audience activity” was subject to media resources mostly manipulated by the elite class. In this sense, the extent to which audience can be active has been seriously attenuated. Granted the ostensible autonomy to ample media options, audience still cannot escape the overall constraints set by the powerful as long as they use the media. Additionally, due to the limitations of available channels through which audience can reach those who have control over the media, the activity was confined to the user level and greater impact cannot be achieved. For instance, a television audience has power over personal choice: he or she can decide which channel or what program to watch. Nonetheless, the subjective activity is constrained by the objective circumstances that the individual’s inability to control the value and ideology conveyed by the content. To respond to the media actively, audience has to resort to other channels of interpersonal communication such as telephone and mail. The interaction between audience and the media was confined to interpersonal level by the lack of inherent feedback mechanism. In this regard, the audience activity has been seriously limited by the one-way communication of traditional media.

The emergence of new communication technology changes the prevalent one-way flow of information from media to audience. The two-way trait of the Internet makes the instant interaction between the media and audience possible. The Internet combines the mass communication and interpersonal communication in a single channel—Internet users can obtain information and send feedback without having to leave the same communication context. Interactivity, assumed as the inherent attribute of the Internet from

the very beginning, contributes tremendously to the promotion of audience activity to a higher level. Moreover, the way audiences use media transforms from selecting over available resources to intentionally and actively searching for information useful to them. The new media has overcome the temporal and spatial limits of traditional media. Audiences do not have to change their schedule to follow the agenda set by the media; instead, they have access to the information they need whenever and wherever Internet access is present. Still, like its precedents, the audience activity of Internet users can be influenced by a set of factors and thus it may cause various levels of activeness. For example, a broadband Internet user may devote more leisure time online because of the enjoyable experience enriched by audio and video content that takes advantage of the high data transfer rate. Contrastively, a dial-up user may prefer more text-based information to avoid the extra time needed for downloading larger data files. Due to their unique user experience, the two types of users consequently exhibit various saliencies towards the Internet media. The information, similar in essence though, could elicit different reactions from audiences. Hence, the variety in audience activity should suggest different patterns of media use and thus lead to diverse media effects.

The active role of audience on the Internet is key to the understanding of Internet use. In their discussion of the Internet as a mass medium, Morris and Ogan (1996) posited that the concept of active audience, whether instrumental or ritualized, should continue to be included in current and future Internet research. Charney and Greenberg (2002) reiterated the active role of audience by stating that “the Internet, however, would seem to allow little passivity on the parts of its users” (p. 381). Exploring the role of Internet user as “author” as well as “audience” opens up new avenues of research.

### **2.1.3. Uses-and-gratifications in CMC**

The uses-and-gratifications approach was considered as one of the most appropriate theoretical frameworks to gain insight for media audiences' psychology and behaviors (Lin, 1996). Ruggiero (2000) suggested the uses-and-gratifications as a cutting edge approach for research on the future direction of mass communication, especially the initial stages of new media. In this sense, the perspective will be an appropriate lens to investigate blog, a promising medium still in its infancy.

CMC is regarded as a representative media channel in which media user's role has been transformed from passive message recipients to active information seekers. Correspondingly, the Internet is viewed as the ultimate in individualism, "a medium with the capability to empower the individual in terms of both the information he or she seeks and the information he or she creates" (Singer, 1998, p. 10). Quite different from traditional audiences who have to rely on mass media's schedule and agenda for specific content, information seekers can make advantage of availability of tremendous information on the Internet and actively look for messages that of use or interest to them. Moreover, the proliferation of the Internet-based interpersonal communication channels such as e-mail and instant messenger, along with online forms of self-presentation, such as personal homepages and blogs, revolutionizes people's role as traditional message consumers into message producers.

Back in the era of print media, unaffordable production and distribution costs of self-presentation on the media are a significant barrier to the general public's involvement in self-publication (Cheung, 2000). As a result, publication used to be seen as a privilege of intellectual elites such as celebrities, politicians, media magnates, and advertisers

(Dominick, 1999) and thus was rigorously restricted to those processing sufficient resources. Technical advantages of the Internet help to break the barriers and make publication an activity that everyone can have a hand in. Needless of printing press, a digital publication can be produced, stored, transferred, and distributed on the Internet with merely a cost of computer facilities and Internet access. A mastery of the basic word-processing skill is sufficient for editing work. The absence of gatekeepers grants people full control over the content they create—their freedom of speech is guaranteed. The relatively inexpensive cost of online publication compared to its conventional offline counterparts, low level of entry along with technical possibility that the publication can reach anyone with Internet connection globally, renders personal publication no longer an elite's privilege but democratizing voices from grass root sources (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). In this sense, new communication technologies not only change the ways information is collected and disseminated, but also alter the prevalent power relationship existing between media and their users.

Attempts at clarifying individuals' uses and functions of the media have been one major task of the uses-and-gratifications studies. The previous research has shown that the uses-and-gratifications approach is capable of effectively explaining questions like why people choose what media to satisfy what social and psychological needs and what consequences, either intended or unintended, will be caused (Katz et al., 1974). In the early stage, the uses-and-gratification research mostly focused on descriptive media motivations. Those research results have paved the road for the subsequent systematic development of media-use typologies.

Studies focusing on audience motivation of media use are theoretically guided by the notion that “an object is best defined by its use” (Rubin, 2002, p. 527). To answer the core question “why people used certain media”, scholars have examined conventional media such as radio (e.g., Cantril, 1942; Herzog, 1940, 1944; Mendelsohn, 1964), newspapers (e.g., Berelson, 1949; Kimball, 1959; Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993), telephone (e.g., Dimmick et al., 1994; O’Keefe & Sulanowski, 1995), VCR (e.g., Rubin & Bantz, 1987), and television (e.g., Bantz, 1982; Conway & Rubin, 1991; Ostman & Jeffers, 1980; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1982; Rubin, 1984; S.W. Stanford, 1984). With the emergence of new communication technologies, people are presented with more media options than ever and thus motivation and satisfaction become more crucial components of audience analysis. In response to the increasing academic demands, gratifications of computer-mediated technologies have been explored in the context of home computers (Perse & Dunn, 1998); the World Wide Web (Ebersole, 2000; Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Niekamp, 2003; Stafford & Stafford, 2001), the Internet (Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Cho, De Zuniga, Rojas, and Shah, 2003; Choi & Haque, 2002; Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Parker & Plank, 2000; Stafford & Gonier, 2004), electronic bulletin boards (James, Wotring, and Forrest, 1995), ICQ (Leung, 2003), virtual community (Sangwan, 2005), and personal home pages (Noh, 1998; Papacharissi, 2002). Certain motivations of using those new communication technologies have been elicited by previous new media studies over the past decade (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Selected New Media Uses and Gratifications Typologies 1995-2005**

<b>Author(s) and Year</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Uses-and-gratifications Typologies</b>
Charney & Greenberg (2002)	The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Keep informed</li> <li>▪ Diversion-Entertainment</li> <li>▪ Peer identity</li> <li>▪ Good feelings</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> <li>▪ Sights and sounds</li> <li>▪ Career</li> <li>▪ Coolness</li> </ul>
Choi & Haque (2002)	Internet Use of Koreans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anonymity</li> <li>▪ Fantasy proneness</li> <li>▪ Online transaction</li> <li>▪ Sexuality</li> </ul>
Ebersole (2000)	World Wide Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research and learning</li> <li>▪ Easy access to entertainment</li> <li>▪ Communication and social interaction</li> <li>▪ Sometimes to do when bored</li> <li>▪ Access to material otherwise unavailable</li> <li>▪ Product information and technical support</li> <li>▪ Games and sexually explicit sites</li> <li>▪ Consumer transactions</li> </ul>
Flanagin & Metzger (2001)	The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information</li> <li>▪ Learn</li> <li>▪ Play</li> <li>▪ Leisure</li> <li>▪ Persuasion</li> <li>▪ Social binding</li> <li>▪ Relationship maintenance</li> <li>▪ Problem-solving</li> <li>▪ Status</li> <li>▪ Insight</li> </ul>
Kaye & Johnson (2002)	World Wide Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance</li> <li>▪ Information seeking/surveillance</li> <li>▪ Entertainment</li> <li>▪ Social utility</li> </ul>
Korgaonkar & Wolin (1999)	World Wide Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social escapism motivation</li> <li>▪ Transaction-based security and privacy concerns</li> <li>▪ Information motivation</li> <li>▪ Interactive control motivation,</li> <li>▪ Socialization</li> <li>▪ Non-transactional privacy concerns</li> <li>▪ Economic motivation</li> </ul>
James, Wotring, and Forrest (1995)	Electronic bulletin board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transmission of information and education</li> <li>▪ Socializing</li> <li>▪ Medium appeal</li> <li>▪ Computer or other business</li> <li>▪ Entertainment</li> </ul>

**Table 1.1 (continued)**

<b>Author(s) and Year</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Uses-and-gratifications Typologies</b>
Leung (2001)	ICQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Affection</li><li>▪ Entertainment</li><li>▪ Relaxation</li><li>▪ Fashion</li><li>▪ Inclusion</li><li>▪ Sociability</li><li>▪ Escape</li></ul>
Noh (1998)	Personal homepages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Escape</li><li>▪ Promotion</li><li>▪ Pleasure</li><li>▪ Contribution</li><li>▪ Communication</li><li>▪ family</li></ul>
Papacharissi & Rubin (2000)	The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Interpersonal utility</li><li>▪ Pass time</li><li>▪ Information seeking</li><li>▪ Convenience</li><li>▪ Entertainment</li></ul>
Papacharissi (2002)	Personal home pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Passing time</li><li>▪ Entertainment</li><li>▪ Information</li><li>▪ Self-expression</li><li>▪ Professional advancement</li><li>▪ Communication with friends and family</li></ul>
Parker & Plank (2000)	The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Companionship and social relationships</li><li>▪ Surveillance and excitements</li><li>▪ Relaxation and escape</li></ul>
Perse & Dunn (1998)	Home computers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Entertainment</li><li>▪ Escape</li><li>▪ Habit</li><li>▪ Passing time</li></ul>
Sangwan (2005)	Virtual Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Information Need</li><li>▪ Personal uses</li><li>▪ Self expression uses</li><li>▪ Entertainment</li><li>▪ Host</li></ul>
Stafford & Gonier (2004)	The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Searching</li><li>▪ Information</li><li>▪ Communication</li><li>▪ Socialization</li></ul>
Stafford & Stafford (2001)	Commercial Web sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Searching</li><li>▪ Cognition</li><li>▪ New and Unique</li><li>▪ Socialization</li><li>▪ Entertainment</li></ul>

Despite the distinctive traits inherent in those media, most of the broad motivations found by previous CMC studies still fall into the five-part typology of audience needs derived from conventional media such as television, radio, newspapers, books and film (Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass, 1973). A few exceptions include those motivations that are exclusively elicited by some specific new media attributes. The discrepancies are unsurprising in that new media may outperform these conventional counterparts even though they serve similar ends. The technical characteristics work as a catalyst for audiences' selection of one medium over another. For instance, an individual who wants to get the latest news on international affairs has options of print newspapers and online newspapers. A user may choose to visit the online versions simply because the workplace has access to the Internet. The online information is thus only a few mouse clicks away while the exactly same content on hardcopy can be obtained by walking to a newsstand only. By the same token, one may choose to read news online for its faster response to latest news. The needs form a new category termed "medium appeal."

*Cognitive needs*: needs related to strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding. This is possibly the most important motivation for Internet users in that the huge storage of information and searchable feature enable the information retrieval at unparalleled levels of convenience and speed. Though termed differently, the cognitive needs can be located in almost all the Internet-based media: keep informed, communication, career, information, learn, problem-solving, insight, guidance, information/surveillance, transmission of information and education, professional advancement, and searching.

*Affective needs*: needs related to strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable, and emotional experience. The Internet use is overall evaluated as a pleasurable experience for users can actively seek for aesthetic information: good feelings, coolness, relaxation, fantasy proneness, pleasure, play, leisure, fashion, convenience, and affection.

*Personal integrative needs*: needs related to strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status—a combination of cognitive and affective needs. Motivations in this category include status, economic motivation, promotion, and persuasion.

*Social integrative needs*: needs related to strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world. These needs also reflect the role of the Internet as an interpersonal communication channel: peer identity, self-expression, family, social binding, relationship maintenance, social utility, socialization, inclusion, contribution, interpersonal utility, and companionship and social relationships.

*Tension release needs*: needs related to escape or tension-release, which was defined in terms of the weakening of contact with self and one's social roles, including Diversion-Entertainment, social escapism motivation, escape, and pass time.

*Medium appeal*: needs emerged as the distinguishing motivations users can obtain from the Internet activity while not available from conventional media: sights and sounds, anonymity, online transaction, transaction-based security and privacy concerns, interactive control motivation, non-transactional privacy concerns, computer or other business.

Television was defined as the “least specialized medium” for the capability of “serving many different personal and political needs” (Katz, et al., p. 164). In this sense, the Internet is even less specialized than television for its multimedia attributes—the

Internet integrates the characteristic of print and broadcast media as well as interpersonal channel.

#### **2.1.4. Uses-and-gratifications of Personal Home Pages**

Cheung's assertion that a personal homepage is "the only medium in which most people are truly able to become 'authors'" (2000, p. 51) needs to be revised to accommodate blogs. A personal homepage was defined as "a website produced by an individual (or couple, or family) which is centred around the personality and identity of its author(s)" (Cheung, 2000, p. 44). By this definition, a personal homepage shares a great deal with a personal journal, which is about the blogger's experience and psychological states (Blood, 2000).

The statement that blog is a "descendant of the personal homepage" (McKinnon, 2001, p. 67) is debatable for it focuses on the self-expression purpose of blog while overlooks its emphasis on community-constructing function. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there is a strong resemblance between personal home pages and blogs in terms of content and form. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) posit that two media serving similar needs can act as functional alternatives. Therefore, the uses-and-gratifications on home pages can serve as enlightening references for studies on blogs.

At first glance, a typical text-based personal blog looks like an ordinary personal homepage prevalent in the 1990s. Both have titles representing the name of the website. Brief biographies of the authors indicate the identity in cyberspace or real world. In some cases, photographs of the authors may be available. Links to other websites are offered indicating the author's interests or memberships. Readers can reach the authors with email

links or flash icons like “drop me a line.” In respect of content, blog and homepage can be the venue for author’s original ideas or some “copy-and-paste” evaluated as useful or interesting to readers.

In a list of categories of information presented on personal homepages, “diary, journal, or autobiography” is the one that is closest to blogs conceptually (Cheung, 2000, p. 44). Cheung points out that these forms “are more suitable for making an immediate record of spontaneous thoughts, random ideas and notes about recent encounters or events” (p. 46). Interestingly, a homepage highlighted by Cheung as a stylish homepage ([www.spacegirl.org](http://www.spacegirl.org)) now has two blogs, each of which serves a unique purpose. One is more like a regular personal blog that the author collects some interesting links and writes about what is happening about her. The other focuses on her practices of knitting and presents works completed and being in progress. The coexistence of blogs and home pages connotes the different ends they serve respectively.

The investigations on homepage authoring (Noh, 1998; Papacharissi, 2002) reported following motivations: affective needs as pleasure and entertainment; cognitive needs as information; personal integrative needs as promotion, self-expression, and professional; social integrative needs as contribution and communication with friends and family, and tension release need as escape and passing time. All these motivations can be assumed in blogs and thus supplement the motivations possible neglected in blog studies.

Noh (1998) characterized the motive pattern of personal home page authoring as multi-media, that is, the six motives extracted for home page authors fell into three existing motive dimensions that derived from mass media, interpersonal communication, and telecommunication functions respectively. Among the six motives, escape and pleasure

paralleled the entertainment dimension, which has been regarded has been reported in most mass media studies. The social relationship dimension, a significant aspect of interpersonal communication, was represented by the communication and family motives. The promotion and contribution motives suggested a distinctive instrumental dimension of personal homepage use, which has been discovered in telephone and e-mail research.

### **2.1.5. Uses and Gratifications of Blogs**

The predisposition of audience activity inherent in the uses-and-gratifications perspective should be reiterated in blog studies. However, it is inappropriate to merely replicate the notion of audience in that the term audience implies the role as receiver of information. Indeed, one thing that separates bloggers from audience is the action as a source of information for mass audience.

Blumler (1979) summarized four aspects as to the notion of an active audience: utility (people can make use of the media), intentionality (media uses are driven by audiences' priori perceived motivations), selectivity (people are free to choose media channels and content they prefer to best meet their needs), and imperviousness to influence (people are resistant to media effects) (p. 13). He called for improved research means to measure the degree of "audience activeness" as a variable at different stages of communication instead of oversimplifying the role of audience dichotomously as active or inactive all along. In the context of blog, bloggers actively use blogs to satisfy their own needs. They have full control over the content and are persuasive to influence others. The role of blogger fits into the four aspects described above and goes beyond them. As Heeter (1989) proposed that when a user can act as a source of information for a mass audience,

the traditional user behavior is substantially changed. If a scale of audience activeness on a variety of media is available, bloggers will undoubtedly be among those in top ranks.

Bearing the notion of active blogger in mind, researchers should explore the reasons of blogging thus answers to the question are expected to serve as the cornerstone for future studies on blogging behaviors. Quite different from traditional media use such as television watching or radio listening, blogging is effort-consuming and thus cannot be conducted as a ritualized activity. In the passive communication contexts, audience can leave television or radio on while do not pay too much attention to them (Rubin, 1984, 1994). Nevertheless, as an active media, blogs cannot be left on and posts will not be produced without blogger's active participation. Blogging, as intentional media use, is "purposive and planned" (Rubin & Perse, 1987, p. 61). Regardless of the degree to which the content is perceived important or trivial, bloggers need to organize their thinking and words to produce the content. Inasmuch as this is the case, blogging suggests bloggers' higher cognitive consciousness of the expected gratifications and subjective intentionality to create content.

Research on blogs has just started. Some researchers have explored different aspects of blogs: online community (Asyikin, 2003); large-scale public conversation on the Internet (Halavais, 2002); presidential campaigning (Williams et al., 2004), and political messages in celebrity blogs (Trammell, 2004). Since blog research is still in its infancy, it should be noted that there have been a few attempts at developing sets of blog uses-and-gratifications traits. A brief review of the three studies regarding blogging motivations (Nardi et al., 2004; Papacharissi, 2004; Trammell, Tarkowski, and Hofmohl, 2004) suggests direction for studies examining bloggers' uses and gratifications. Previous

studies on the World Wide Web and personal home pages are examined to shed light on the research question.

#### **2.1.6. Previous Studies on Blogging Motivations**

The research led by Nardi (2004) employed the ethnographic interviews with bloggers as well as textual analysis of blog posts as complement. The 23 informants were recruited by convenient sampling and thus exhibited unsurprisingly uniform demographic structure by being well educated and middle class. The subsequent quantitative analysis on the informants' blogs included counting the number of characters, words, and links in every post. Numbers of links identified as external and internal ones were also examined. Five motivations for blogging were discovered in this study: documenting the blogger's life, expressing commentary and opinions towards interested issues, releasing emotions, organizing minds through writing, and building community (p. 5).

Based on dichotomous motivations for using the media as process gratifications and content gratifications, T. F. Stafford and M. R. Stafford (2001) proposed socialization as a new sort of Internet-specific motivation, which falls into neither the process nor the content gratifications. The self-documentation, self-expression, and emotion outlet motivations for blogging are content-specific gratifications. These three gratifications are satisfied by the topics bloggers intend to cover, say, something closely with personal experience and feelings. The fourth motivation, labeled as "thinking by writing" (Nardi et al., p. 9), posited a process-level gratification. Bloggers achieve this gratification from the general practice of composing a post and thus the gratification can be separated from the characteristic of particular content. The last motivation falls into the category of medium-level gratification for blog's inherent characteristic to community construction.

Blogs provide readers an opportunity to start a public dialogue with other bloggers by means of leaving comments. Given the absence of comments, readers still can send feedback to bloggers through email or instant messenger. Furthermore, deemed as an individualistic representation of self, blogs do not necessarily exist in insulation but rather in the blogosphere that resembles a natural ecology. In the holistic blogosphere, interconnectivity among blogs is highly valued and community-like connection proliferates in forms of hyperlinks, trackbacks, and blogrolls. T. F. Stafford and M. R. Stafford pointed out that these motivations, as representatives of the three levels of gratifications, were by all means related and thus should be taken into account simultaneously. Since blogging is an activity involved in the interaction of content-process-medium, the motivations are assumed to be entangled and cautions should be paid to sort them out.

Papacharissi's (2004) content analysis of a random blog sample revealed their personal and social utility as well as uses-and-gratifications obtained from blogs. The results suggest that blogs, on average, "feature personalized accounts of information that resemble the diary format" (p. 20). An average blog is a self-reflective account that serves the purpose of personal expression and provides the perceived gratification of self-fulfillment. The study also showed that an average blog is primarily not creative and is a low-tech affair of a self-referential nature.

The other study carried out by Trammel et al. (2004) was based on the supposition that "blog speak for themselves." To investigate the motivations of Polish bloggers, researchers employed quantitative content analysis of front pages in 358 Polish-language blogs. Six a priori motivations were identified from literature: self-expression, social

interaction, entertainment, passing time, information, and professional advancement.

Coders checked the analysis units to determine if any of those six motivations was present on the blogs.

By combining social interaction and self-expression to create a social utility scale, the results supported the hypothesis that social utility was the primary motivations for Polish bloggers. The diversion motivation formed by uniting entertainment and passing time was presented in two thirds of the sample. Self-expression as an internal-level motivation was found to outweigh the external-level social interaction motivation.

Though having contributed insightful exploration to blogging motivations, these studies still left blank for future studies to fill in. Self-reported blogging motivations can circumvent the criticism that researchers may have subjectively imposed the pre-defined motivations to bloggers and thus disguised the self-conscious gratifications. Since blogs are particularly attractive to adolescents for the potential to satisfy teenagers' growing self-consciousness and self-awareness (Steinberg, 2002), it is assumed that dissimilarity in motivations exist among bloggers in adolescence and adulthood. Hence, it is suggested that studies on blogging motivations should examine age groups respectively. Some empirical studies attempting to draw profiles for bloggers (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, and Wright, 2004; Trammell et al., 2004) discovered that teenage female bloggers constitute the majority of bloggers. However, so far there are few studies focusing on studying adult bloggers' behaviors. In current study, the major research questions are proposed as follows:

**RQ1:** What patterns, if any, are associated with adult blogging?

Pattern of blogging is a broad notion that needs to be specified in some measurable ways. In this study, six aspects of blogging behavior are examined: 1) how bloggers cover various topics in writing; 2) how bloggers manage feedbacks from readers; 3) how bloggers use hyperlinks; 4) how bloggers present themselves on blogs; 5) how bloggers expect readership; 6) how bloggers use design elements of blogs.

**RQ2:** What motivates individual adults to participate in blogging activities?

Based on observations of the blogosphere, it is presumed that reading blogs is closely integrated into the activities of bloggers. It should be noted that here by “blogging activities,” the study intends to inspect bloggers’ writing process exclusively, though a large number of bloggers get involved in reading blogs as well.

**RQ2a:** How are demographics related with blogging motivations?

**RQ3:** How are adult bloggers’ motivations, along with other demographics, related with their blogging behavior?

The pattern of blogging behavior is the result of a combination of social and psychological factors. As uses-and-gratifications paradigm posits, motivation, which reflects the different reasons people have for engaging in communication, influences people’s patterns of use in terms of media selection, attention, active interpretation of content, and, ultimately, effects (Perse, 1990; Rubin, 2002). Therefore, some motivations are assumed to be related with specific usage of blogs.

Demographic characteristics are suggested to influence the motivations and media usage. VCR use was affected by users’ gender and age. Moreover, users’ education level, income, and ethnic background would affect their use of VCR as well (Rubin & Rubin, 1989). Noh (1998) found the negative relationship between educational level and home

page authors' web design concept. Other than blogging motivations, demographics such as age, gender, and usage of the Internet should play a role in influencing usage of blogs.

### **2.1.7. Summary**

In the previous sections, the theoretical framework of the uses-and-gratifications perspective was reviewed. The applicability of the approach on blog studies was discussed. Related studies in the context of CMC especially those focusing on personal home pages worked as special reference to blog studies. Two previous blogging motivations research, either quantitative or qualitative, provide theoretical and methodological enlightenment for this study. Three overarching research questions were introduced in previous text. In the next section, features and structure of blogs along with pattern of usage based on those characteristics will be explained. Sub research questions and hypotheses aiming to reify the core three ones will be proposed.

## **2.2. THE NATURE OF BLOG**

Blogs are constructing a subculture in cyberspace. Given the facilitation offered by blog authoring tools, people with mediocre Internet savvy can create a blog. The process of authoring a blog is as simple as writing emails. Famous bloggers are becoming not only idols in virtual space but also celebrities in real life. "Blog" has been the term encountered by people numerously in the media and aroused myriads of inquiries (Merriam-Webster Online, 2004). In addition to journalists, blogs also attract the attention from academics. However, studies on blogs are still in early stage and academic publications on the subject are disproportionately scarce given the popularity of blogs on the Internet. To better

understand the way people use blogs to publish information, structure and characteristics of blogs are discussed in the following sections.

### **2.2.1. Definitions of Blog**

By and large, blogs are online journals with archived entries presented in a chronological order. Yet, with the evolution of blogging technology, the form, content, and functions of blogs have been expanded dramatically. Scholars, bloggers, and journalists have composed various definitions of blogs with emphases on different aspects of the media:

Blogs are a series of archived Internet posts typically characterized by brief texts entered in reverse chronological order and generally containing hypertext links to other sites recommended by the author (Nardi et al.'s, 2004).

A weblog, web log or simply a blog, is a web application, which contains periodic time-stamped posts on a common webpage (Wikipedia, 2005).

A frequently updated Web site consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first - typically published by individuals and having personal and informal style (J. Walker, 2003).

A weblog or blog is a website that's designed to be updated with items in a linear, time-based fashion, similar to a personal journal or diary, except that the contents are meant specifically for public consumption. Often implemented using special software, weblogs contain articles or entries that are grouped primarily by the date and time when they are posted (Todd Stauffer, as cited in Scheidt, in press).

Blogs are Web-based journals in which entries are displayed in reverse chronological sequence (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, and Wright, in press).

Despite minor distinctions, a consensus emerges from the concepts above. First, blog posts are identified by the time when they are created and accordingly organized in the chronological order. The emphasis on temporal linearity suggests that archival feature is idiosyncratic to blogs as a documental tool, as their offline precedents dairies or journals are. Indeed, people have fully exploited this feature by using blogs as Content Management System (CMS) or knowledge management tool. Useful information is collected and posted to blog for future reference. The online accessibility of blogs satisfies needs for retrieving information anywhere and anytime.

Second, blog posts are usually though not necessarily displayed in reverse chronological sequence<sup>1</sup>. The feature emphasizes the “freshness” of blogs by showing “what’s new” in the first place. In addition to the recording function, blogs value updating information and the propensity is fully supported by blog authoring tools. It is worth mentioning that a negative relationship exists between the efforts required to update a blog and the frequency of updating. Simply put, the easier it is for bloggers to post entries to blog, the more likely they will do it.

The definition advocated by Wikipedia equals blogs to a web application (2005). Though the definition effaces the distinction between the front end (website) and back end (blogging tool) of blogs, it does bring up an important aspect of blogs that sets them apart from personal home pages. Blogs are products of blogging tools or platforms, which automate the process of publishing. In the old days when blogging tools were not present, the normal procedures of updating a website include editing the code with a HTML editor and then using FTP software to upload new files to web space. However the update is

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<sup>1</sup> Some blog authoring tools as well as blog service providers offer bloggers the option to display blog entries in ascending (oldest at top) or descending (newest at top) order.

minor, the processes cannot be skipped. With the aid of blogging tools, updating a blog becomes a matter of a few clicks: open a webpage, log into an account, type text into a text box, click Submit, and the update is done. Jung and Youn (2004) posited that the major difference between blogs and regular personal homepages was the result of the software used to produce them. Though running the risk of being criticized as technological determinism, I would argue that it is worthwhile to embody the emancipatory role of blogging technology in the definition of blogs.

### **2.2.2. Blogging Tools and Services**

Stauffer's (as cited in Scheidt, in press) definition of blogs points out that blogs are implemented with special software to publish. The special software includes web-based platforms provided by blog service providers (e.g. Blogger.com, Livejournal.com, Xanga.com...etc) and personal publishing platforms set up and maintained by bloggers themselves (e.g. MovableType, Word Press, Drupal...etc). The two types of blogging tools differentiate in terms of flexibility, technology, and difficulty of maintenance. Blog service provider-hosted tools are usually easier to use in that most functions have been preinstalled and configured. It is no surprising that the majority of blogs are built upon blog service providers. Self-hosted blogging tools require a certain level of technical savvy—bloggers need to manually install and run the software. The extra efforts are rewarding for bloggers would have complete control over blogs and can expand the functions unavailable from blog service providers.

Whichever blogging tools bloggers choose, those tools all automate the process of publishing so that bloggers can focus on content creation. If online writing is compared to the traditional writing on paper, a home page author has to prepare the “electronic paper”

by designing web pages and finding a web space host to store all the files. A blogger can take advantage of the ready-to-wear “paper,” blogging platforms indeed, set by blog service providers (e.g., Blogger and Livejournal). The lack of knowledge on HTML will not prevent bloggers from writing; bloggers can enjoy the process of creating content with hassle-free blogging software. The ease of creation resulted in the blog growth in recent years (Herring et al., in press).

### **2.2.3. Basic Structure of Blog**

Blogs are web-based and richly featured. As a new member of CMC, blogs do resemble an earlier form of CMC--personal home page. Despite the similarity of authorship, blogs implant new concepts and features into the primitive form. Compared with their online counterparts, the inherent characteristics of blogs imply that they can satisfy some specific motivations of bloggers.

Since blogs are still in the early adopting stage, it is difficult to estimate the total number of all the active blogs. Some institutions attempted to measure the size of the blogosphere by adding up the numbers of users from major blog service providers. It is certain that the number runs the risk of underestimating the number of blogs since the list of blogging tools and platforms cannot be exhaustive. Furthermore, the approach is also arguable in that it possibly overlooks the evolving feature of the blogosphere. The evolution of the blogosphere can be likened to the metabolism: new blogs are being created every day while old ones are being abandoned as well.

Even so, the number of blogs is constantly growing and blogging is becoming a trend in Internet community. More and more people are being involved into blogging with great creative imagination. By taking advantage of technical expansibility of blogs,

bloggers maintain blogs to serve various ends. Blog content include but is not limited to links to online resources, creative works, pictures, and even audio and video clips.

Bloggers are also creative in personalizing the appearance of blogs. In spite of the diversity of both blog forms and contents, the basic structure of blogs is constant and described below.

#### **2.2.3.1. Blog posts**

Blog posts are the most fundamental elements of blogs. A typical blog post includes a title, a text message, and a time stamp indicating when the post is written (see Figure 2.1). Bloggers have full control over the content of subject title and full text. No limits are set on the length of the post—it can be as long as a term paper or as brief as a few words. The content can be anything that can be stored and transferred online: text, images, animations, audio files, video clips, and any other multimedia interactive programs. By this token blog posts are the main stage for bloggers to present themselves.

Time stamps are usually automatically added to the posts by blog authoring tools when they are published. Some blogging tools also offer bloggers options to set the date and time of blog posts. In this way bloggers can make up posts they should have written in the past or blog for the future. As stated in previous section, the temporal linearity in blogs is highly valued and time stamps work as excellent evidence for this propensity.

Figure 2.1 Blog Post

01:51 | **WHY I BLOG?** » Thought

JAN  
19  
2005

I'm studying why people blog. Before I ask every blogger I run into the question "why do you blog?", it's wise to think over the question myself beforehand. So, why I blog? The following reasons are not in a particular order.

**1. Tweaking Movable Type is fun. I feel like "queen of the blog".**

I used to work as a web editor and hated the awkward CMS to death. Whenever I tried to change some configurations [ without evil I swear! ], a pop-up with a huge BANG would freak me out. That is absolutely unbearable for a person who usually explores the "options" or "preferences" whenever she installs a new app. For the sake of reason I gave up Blogger.com too after realizing I can't change it the way I like. MovableType suits me best in that it's powerful and compliant--now I have full control over everything on my blog. It's a good toy I play with my HTML+CSS practices. Nothing is cooler than changing the looks of two hundred pages in seconds, eh? [Continue reading "Why I Blog?"](#)

7 comments   0 trackbacks   519 words

### **2.2.3.2. Archives**

The index page of a blog usually displays a limited number of posts. The posts on index page are limited to a fixed number or those posted during a period of time. When new posts are published, old posts will be no longer shown on index page but stored into archives. The most common way to organize the archives is to sort them by chronological order. Readers can access past posts by clicking links to certain months or weeks. To help readers locate post of interest, bloggers set up categories and assign posts to a category when writing them. Readers can thus gain access to a collection of posts within a common topic or theme.

### **2.2.3.3. Hyperlinks**

The prototype of blogs is a website on which the blogger presents links to online resources along with their brief commentaries on the links (Blood, 2002). The hyperlink-laden feature grows into a pattern of hyperlinks: links are used to give credits to sources, offer background information, and show affiliation with online community or fellow bloggers.

Hyperlinks in blogs can be classified into three types: in-text links, blogrolls (see Figure 2.2) and blogrings (see Figure 2.3). In-text links are the most common form of hyperlinks and usually embedded in body text of blog posts. Blogroll is “a collection of links to other weblogs” (Wikipedia, 2005). Bloggers maintain a blogroll by adding blogs or websites they find interesting and would like to recommend to readers. Blogring allows a group of blogs or websites with similar interests or subject material to point to each other, forming a type of ring. Clicking next or previous or random links on the blogring button

will direct readers to the next site in the ring and so on. Bloggers can have their blogs listed in the blogring and reciprocally place a badge or button of the blogring to exhibit their membership. To sum up, hyperlinking is a mechanism that serves two-folded ends in terms of content and community-building.

Besides ordinary hyperlinks, another newly emerging and easier way of linking similar blogs together is the “tag” function proposed by Technoarti. Technoarti defines tag “a simple category name. People can categorize their posts, photos, and links with any tag that makes sense” (2005). Bloggers are free to attach Technoarti tags to have their blog posts linked with other blogs sharing the same tags. The basic linking function, inherent in blogs, has been expanded to many other uses, which can form a community based on mutual interests.

#### **2.2.3.4. Comments and Trackbacks**

Comments are a feedback tool by which readers can respond to blog posts that interest them. Nowadays nearly all the mainstream blogging tools have commenting system preinstalled for bloggers. Comments work not only as a channel through which bloggers and readers communication but also add perspectives to blog posts to enrich the content.

When posting a comment, readers are usually required to submit a name for identification (see Figure 2.4). Other personal information like emails or Uniform Resource Locators (URL) of readers’ websites is usually optional. From the perspective of bloggers, commentators’ information may work as a way to track readers. Bloggers can start an interpersonal communication with readers by sending emails or visit their blogs to know they can supplement the blog post. Moreover, it is also a special to promote their own

Figure 2.2 Blogroll

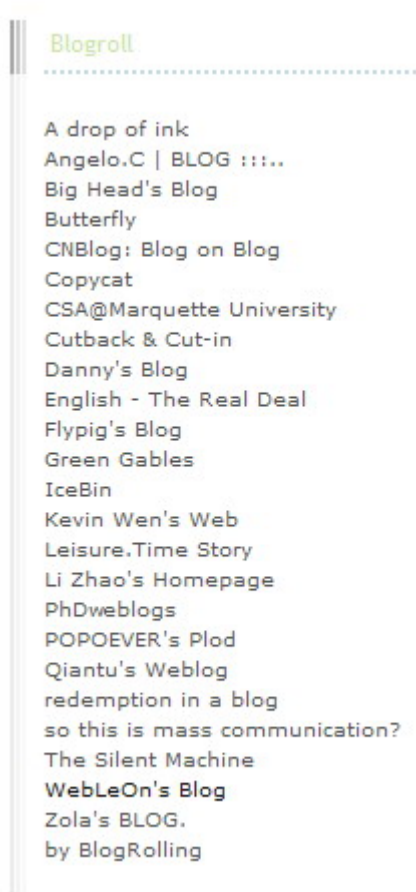
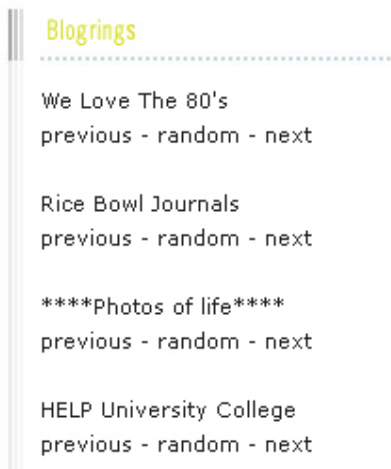


Figure 2.3 Blogring




blogs since not only bloggers, but also other readers can be directed to their blogs by clicking on links left in comments.

Another special way of hyperlinking is *trackback*. Trackback is one of the most idiosyncratic features of blog that does not exist in the preceding online media. Trackback is defined as “a ping in this context means a small message sent from one web server to another” (Trott & Trott, 2003). When a blogger writes a post relevant to another blogger’s post, the blogger can send a trackback to the other’s blog to inform the existence of similar or derivate content. Trackback usually appears in the form of a URL linking to the sequent post on other blogs. By checking out trackbacks listed below certain blog posts, blog readers can follow the thread and be directed to other blogs concerning the same or similar topic. Quite the opposite from outgoing in-text links and blogrolls/blogrings discussed above, trackbacks are incoming links sent by other bloggers.


#### **2.2.3.5. Templates**

Templates are preexisting layouts provided by blogging tools for bloggers to apply. Besides the default templates predefined when bloggers set up their blogs, they can choose alternative templates offered by blogging tools or third party. Moreover, bloggers with technical savvy can personalize the templates by changing layout, typology, and color schemes. Alternatively they can also design their own templates from scratch. Usage of templates makes it possible for non-technically orientated bloggers to have professional-look blog interfaces. In the same breadth, templates offer a venue for bloggers with advanced computer skills to present their creativity and personality via design.


## Figure 2.4 Blog Comments

 LILIAN commented at April 5, 2005 03:57 AM

can i have the pestel analysis of KFC as well as five forces. as soon as possible pls..... 😊

 azwa commented at May 20, 2005 09:02 AM

hye,i want to know about effects by the KFC as a fast food that can cause an obesity to people and whatever information relates to health issues..thanks very much...

 Salahuddin Khan commented at June 16, 2005 12:40 PM


hey thats an excellent article, but can anyone help me find the same kind of article relating to PAKISTAN ?? i have to develop a marketing strategy along with a presentation including the topic "Cultural Factor" and the "Buyer decision Process" so pleaseee helpp meee...

POST A COMMENT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

URL: \_\_\_\_\_ ( optional )



#### **2.2.4. Topics of Blogs**

Posts are the most fundamental component of a blog. They are also vehicles of the major content on blogs. Topics bloggers cover vary within blogs and among blogs. Given the absence of constraints on content, bloggers are free to post anything they would like. Topics covered by blogs reflect nearly every aspect of the world that bloggers observe and live in: politics, entertainment, culture, technology, personal experience...etc. On the basis of the three basic blog types proposed by Blood (2000), Herring et al. (in press) developed a typology of blogs according to the overall content of the blog: filters, personal journals, and k-logs (also termed as knowledge blogs).

Filter blogs are those “primarily containing observations and evaluations of external, typically public events” (p. 7). Filter blog authors are usually exposed to a large quantity of information provided by the media. They consume, evaluate, and select to respond to those they regard as worthy commenting. As the name suggests, those bloggers “filter” the information flow and extract that they think valuable. The typical post on filter blogs contains a link to the information source. Bloggers would provide a brief description of the link and usually express their own standpoints on the issues. The links can be either special topic-centered or simple fun but mostly they are external to the blogger’s own life. In this sense, bloggers serve as an informational funnel and they usually care for things outside of their own life. Such typical topics as politics, entertainment, sports, education or academics, business, technology and science, arts and culture were mostly covered by filter blogs.

Personal journals are defined as “primarily reporting events in the blogger's life and the blogger's internal states and/or reflections” (p. 7). This type of blog resembles the

dairies and journals of the print era in terms of self-centered content. Quite different from filter blogs, which usually focus on public events or issues, content on personal journals can be trivial and private. Posts usually focus on bloggers' interests or hobbies, their family and friends, their own creative work, and personal experience.

K-logs are identified as those blogs whose "primary content was information and observations focused around a(n external) topic, project or product" (p. 7). Quite different from filter and personal blogs whose topics change randomly, the k-logs are more theme-based and aim to concentrate on a few topics. Depending on the themes, the content can be external or internal to the blogger.

One aspect of RQ1 aims to investigate how bloggers cover certain topics in their writing. RQ3 seeks to find the relationship between blogging motivations along with demographics and the way people blog. Therefore, two sub questions were proposed to examine bloggers' topic preference:

**RQ1a:** How are external topics (politics, entertainment, sports, education or academics, business, technology and science, arts and culture) and internal topics (interests or hobbies, family and friends, own creative work, and personal experience) covered on blogs?

**RQ3a:** How are adult bloggers' motivations, along with other demographics, related with bloggers' choice of topics?

Uses-and-gratifications suggest that knowing people's motives for using certain media helps predict the media content they will choose (Rayburn, Palmgreen, and Acker, 1984; Rubin, 1984). Applied in the context of blogs, knowledge about motive for blogging may predict the content blogger choose to write about. According to the supposition that

motivations can be topic-specific, it would be logical to postulate that different motivations will lead to diverse topic preferences.

McNeill (2003) indicated that the stereotype of a diarist is an adolescent girl. Consistent with this finding, Herring et al. (in press) concluded that a journal-style blogger is more likely to be a woman or teenager than to be a man and adult. As a result, filter blogs, k-logs, and those mixing the two, were created almost exclusively by adult males. Given the gender difference detected in the context of blogs, the following is posited as hypothesis:

**H1:** Men blog about external topics (politics, entertainment, sports, education or academics, business, technology and science, arts and culture) more often than women.

**H2:** Women blog about internal topics (interests or hobbies, family and friends, own creative work, and personal experience) more of than men.

### **2.2.5. Feedback Mechanism of Blogs**

There have been a variety of definitions of interactivity proposed by researchers in diverse contexts (Aoki, 2000). In addition, those definitions focus on different aspects of communication process. In the blogosphere, interactivity is a two-folded concept that includes two major aspects of interactions. On the one hand, the interactivity of blogs emphasizes the interaction between bloggers and content. On the other hand, it underlies the two-way communication among bloggers and their readers. Hence, blogs have the capability to construct a community (Asyikin, 2003). The construction of community is achieved through the flexible channels of either informational or interpersonal connection. In this section, one of the interactive features, feedback mechanism, is discussed.

*Comments.* Comment system has been regarded as the indispensable feedback mechanism of blogs though it is not presented on the definition of blog. Comment systems, embedded in almost all the extant blogging tools and services, invite responses from readers on each dated entry. This is also the distinctive feature setting blogs apart from personal home pages. In the setting of home pages, interpersonal responses are usually encouraged by the email link titled “contact me” while the public feedback is elicited by the presence of guestbook. Guestbook, as its name implies, serves as a place for visitors to leave comments. Generally, content of a guestbook is a collection of discrete posts or one-to-one conversations between home page authors and visitors. The comment link on blogs is usually located on the bottom of every post, with a number indicating how many comments have been posted concerning the post. The comments added are listed in the chronological order below the post. In this sense, comments are integrated into the post, suggesting a themed conversation between the blogger and readers starts. In the case of some extremely intriguing posts, a long thread of comments can be produced, forming an interesting supplement to the post per se. Steuer (1992) defined interactivity as “the degree to which users of a medium can influence the form or content of the mediated environment in real time” (p. 80). The definition suggested the flow of power exclusively possessed by content publishers is being distributed to content consumers. The concept thus can be applied to blogs reasonably due to the characteristics that readers are granted the power to participate in the content construct.

A blog post with an aggregation of comments bears a resemblance to a discussion on electronic bulletin board or a thread on Usenet. Inasmuch as electronic bulletin boards and Usenet imply a sense of community, blogs possess the potential to develop a

topic-centered or blogger-centered community, depending on the themes of blogs. It is assumed that the way bloggers manage comments reflect their affinity with readers.

*Trackbacks.* In addition to the interpersonal bonds built upon comment systems and other contact methods like email, instant messenger, guestbook...etc, trackbacks contribute to weaving a web of relevant information by linking posts sharing the same topics on different blogs. Trackbacks offer an innovative solution to aggregate blog posts dispersed in the blogosphere. Like comments, an insightful post may arouse numbers of echoes in cyberspace and the corresponding trackbacks contribute to the post reciprocally. It is noticeable that comments construct a vertical community within a blog while trackbacks form a horizontal community among blogs. However, since some popular blogging tools and services do not include the trackback as a default function, it takes extra efforts for bloggers to utilize some third-party trackback systems. Furthermore, since understanding the concept of trackbacks demands relatively higher level of computer literacy, it is not expected to be used as widely as other linking strategies.

Rafaeli and Sudweeks's (1997) definition of interactivity highlighted the interrelation of messages and the process in which messages are exchanged. They referred to interactivity as "the extent to which messages in a sequence relate to each other, and especially the extent to which later messages recount the relatedness of earlier messages" (Interactivity section, ¶ 2). With feedback means as comments and trackbacks, blogs provide not only an outlet for bloggers to "rant" but a venue for readers to respond to bloggers' thoughts by leaving comments or sending trackbacks. Bloggers are able to react to the feedbacks in turn and thus a two-way communication is formed. As the discussion

process goes on, “conversational interaction as an iterative process leads to jointly produced meaning” (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997, Interactivity section, ¶ 2).

To answer RQ1 and RQ3 in terms of the way bloggers manage feedbacks to their blogs, two sub questions were proposed as following:

**RQ1b:** How do bloggers perceive, use, and respond to comments and trackbacks?

**RQ3b:** How are adult bloggers’ motivations, along with other demographics, related with bloggers management of comments and trackbacks?

Trackbacks require better computer skills and extra technical efforts. Previous research on home page authorship indicated that men tend to incorporate more complex net technology into home pages while women prefer technologically simpler design (Döring, 2002). As such, use of trackbacks can be more of a challenge to women than men. Moreover, men are more interested than women in experimenting and playing with technology (Roper Center, 1998). Hence, a hypothesis on gender difference in use of trackbacks is proposed:

**H3:** Men utilize trackbacks more frequently than women.

### **2.2.6. Hyperlinks of Blogs**

The early forms of blogs, defined as filter blogs by Blood (2002), are those “focused around links to other sites of interest (or other blogs) on the Web, with blogger commentary for added value” (Herring et al., in press). The in-text links, embedded in post text, not only give credit where it is due but also enhance the interactivity and media richness of the posts. By linking to the relevant online resources, bloggers provide readers more background information in order to improve their reading experience.

Whatever content blogs present, they usually maintain a sidebar on which links to other websites or blogs are presented. Usually, but not necessarily, blogs that are linked first will link back reciprocally. The so-called blogroll helps to build up a community sharing similar interests. Erickson (1996) examined the social aspects of the World Wide Web then concluded that the World Wide Web is a social hypertext: “the links, as well as the page itself, participate in the personal portrayal; in a sense, they embody a sort of social logic, providing us with a view of that person's network of friends, colleagues, and concerns” (p. 15).

Another example of blog community is blogring. Blogring aggregates blogs sharing the same topics and organizes them by linking. Electronic badges and icons indicating membership or companion with blogrings frequently appear on the sidebar. By clicking the badges, readers will be directed to another member blog on the blogring.

Answering RQ1 and RQ3 in terms of how bloggers use hyperlinks to help better understanding the usage of community-building strategies in the blogosphere. Two sub research questions are posited:

**RQ1c:** How do bloggers use in-text links, blogrolls, and blogrings?

**RQ3c:** How are adult bloggers' motivations, along with other demographics, related with blogger's uses of in-text links, blogrolls, and blogrings?

### **2.2.7. Self-presentation on Blogs**

Kitzmann (2003) held that diary is a place or medium in which self examines, interprets, and remembers the world. In the online context, the notion has been confirmed by the presence of blogs. Undoubtedly, the journal-style blogs are the exemplary entity of the self-center statement: bloggers observe and record the world from his or her eyes and

with heart. Filter blogs, as a representation of bloggers' evaluation and commentary of the external world, indeed reinforce the central role of bloggers in the process of content construction. K-logs seemingly attempt to weaken the subjective side of blogs by intentionally isolating the identity of bloggers from the content. That is, the self image of K-log bloggers is attenuated by the content focusing on themes. However, Kitzmann's self-center notion is as well applicable in K-logs since the act of selecting and editing content does expose the blogger's identity in an implicit way.

Anonymity is regarded as an important attribute of online activity. The Internet grants users an option to manipulate the identity they present online. As a result, Internet user's true identity in real life can be separated from online identity. In virtual communities such as MOOs<sup>2</sup>, the simulated identity was assumed and accepted by the game rule (Kitzmann, 2003). The significance of online anonymity is much more than joy of "being someone else." Anonymous speech allows marginalized groups or unpopular views to be heard by the public and thus is essential to the democratic process (Ekstrand, 2003). On the Internet anonymous speech can be easily distributed and possess the potential to reach the same accessibility as established new sources. However, the credibility of anonymous speech has aroused attentions from Internet users. Generally speaking, attributed online speech is more credible than its anonymous counterpart. In the blogosphere, the benefits of maintaining a consistent identity both offline and online seem to overweight the advantage of being anonymous. The image of blogger is proposed to be reflective of the true person at least partly if not totally. Needless to doubt, the blogger's true identity disclosed on blogs

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<sup>2</sup> Online environments that grew out of text-based shared role playing games. They generally allow people to interact in real time in a virtual environment, where it is possible to create your environment--rooms, objects, and descriptions of characters.

will lead to a higher level of trustworthiness and the influential force, if not augmented, will at least remain.

Even for journal-style bloggers, who do not intend to have an impact on reader's opinions, but simply tell one's story, find that information regarding their own identity might bring a sense of empathy to readers. Knowing the blogger better would make readers feel closer to the person behind the computer screen.

Huffaker and Calvert (2005) observed that a real name, age, location and other personal information are often presented on blogs. They put forward that the disclosure of personal information demonstrates how bloggers manage self-presentation online. To know the way bloggers set up self-identity, two research questions are composed as following:

**RQ1d:** How do adult bloggers present themselves by disclosing personal information, such as real names, pictures of self and others, as well as contact information?

**RQ3d:** How are adult bloggers' motivations, along with other demographics, related with their disclosure of personal information?

Presenting one's self online runs the risk of privacy invasion. Besides possible harms as identity fraud or theft, women are more vulnerable to potential intrusions brought by exposing enough personal information to be located by others. Kehoe, Pitkow, and Morton (1997) found that women are more concerned about privacy. Moreover, women are likely than men to provide false information to web sites to protect their privacy on-line.

Given the gender differences in perception of online privacy and behaviors of protecting privacy, I hypothesize gender differences exist in bloggers' online presence:

**H4:** Men are more likely to present personal information than women.

### **2.2.8. Readership Expectation**

Before the electronic self-publishing era, diary was deemed as a private place where an individual records, reflects, and confesses. In most cases, diary implies confidentiality. Except for the diarist per se, no other audience is assumed and allowed. Blogs, the seemingly electronic replication of diary, are indeed publication—something intentionally composed to be read by others. Kitzmann (2003) elaborated the anticipation of online writers:

For the Web diary writer, and indeed any Web self-documenter, the audience is not only anticipated, but expected, and thus influences and structures the very manner in which the writer articulates, composes, and distributes the self-document. Web diarists and “camers” can actually become media objects—self-styled celebrities to be distributed, evaluated, and ranked. (p.56)

To sum up, mostly bloggers intend to blog for certain readers, whom they sometimes do not realize explicitly<sup>3</sup>. Sometimes like diarists, “I” can be also the intended reader, that is, bloggers may write for themselves. Technically, blogs open to the public can reach anyone with the Internet connection and many bloggers are excited with the possibility. However this is not always practically the case. It is noteworthy that audience here is a three-folded concept: targeted readers, expected readers, and actual readers. A blogger intends to write for some specific readers. However, due to the openness of the

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<sup>3</sup> Some bloggers use blogs as a convenient online medium for personal use and keep blogs from the public domain. They usually keep the URL of blogs private. In case of being accessed by unsolicited readers, bloggers usually set a password for authorization. Since bloggers of private blogs might exhibit different motivations from those who maintain public blogs, this type of blogs is not included in this study.

Internet, the blogger should expect some untargeted readers to be reached. In addition, the finally reached audience can be another group of people. To identify the actual audience, bloggers can resort to reviewing server logs or site counters that offer basic information about visitors and their browsing patterns. It is logical to suppose various blogging motivations are related with different audience expectation since different blog content would attract various groups of readers. Thus, two research questions elaborating RQ1 and RQ3 in terms of blogger's perception of readership are proposed:

**RQ1e:** How do adult bloggers expect potential readers and track actual readership?

**RQ3e:** How are adult bloggers' motivations, along with other demographics, related with their expectation of future readers and perception of actual readers?

Server logs are not usually provided by blogging tools and services. To install counters on blogs, bloggers need to seek for online counter services and then paste code to the template of blogs. By the same token as many other technology requiring above-the-average computer literacy, gender differences is hypothesized in the process of tracking blog readers:

**H5:** Men more often track readers by referring to server logs than women.

### **2.2.9. Design Elements of Blogs**

Undeniably, the looks of most blogs are similar. The layout is usually divided into several parts to accommodate the basic blog components such as post text, archive links, online sources links, calendars, and other additional content. The uniformity of appearance can be accounted for by the fact that most blogs are built upon preexisting templates provided by blogging tools and services.

The template feature offers solution to bloggers who have no knowledge of web development technology such as HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) or CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). They can personalize the appearance of blogs by selecting and applying the alternative templates by blogging tools and platforms. Some bloggers and designers with design capability also develop some third-party templates for bloggers to use. A small portion of bloggers use unique templates developed from scratch.

Sometimes bloggers use existing web applications developed by others to enrich the content or function of their own blogs. Those web applications termed as “add-ons” may increase the media richness and interactivity of blogs by presenting poll/vote, weather, wish list, and some other accessories. Without knowledge about programming language, bloggers can install those add-ons by pasting the code into corresponding place of templates.

Huffaker and Calvert (2005) proposed that customizing blog templates enhances the self-identity of teenage bloggers. Scheidt and Wright (2004) examined visual design elements of blogs and found demographics such as gender and age affect the usage of blog templates. Generally men and young bloggers tend to modify blog templates to make it more “individual.” Moreover, seasoned bloggers are more likely to use customized templates than novices are.

Education may play a role in bloggers’ choice of using certain design elements. Noh (1998) found the more educated the homepage author is, the less likely he or she uses diverse design elements or methods to enrich his/her homepage. Noh attributed the deficiency of creativity to the constraints set by routine education and pointed out that person with high education “do not seem to easily adopt diverse and advanced interactive

functions.” Will the pattern be duplicated in the context of blogs? A hypothesis will be composed to answer the question.

To explore blog design and its relationship with blogging motivations and blog design, the following research questions and hypotheses are proposed:

**RQ1f:** How do adult bloggers use design elements of blogs?

**RQ3f:** How are adult bloggers’ motivations, along with other demographics, related with their use of design elements of blogs?

**H6:** Men more often use personalized blog templates than do women.

**H7:** Male more often use add-ons on blogs than do women.

**H8:** Bloggers with higher levels of formal educational use personalized blog templates less often than those with lower levels of formal education.

### **2.3. REVIEW**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of the uses-and-gratifications approach and its application in CMC studies are discussed. The nature of blogs is introduced and features of blogs are also analyzed. Three core research questions are proposed to examine bloggers’ behaviors, motivations and the relationship between the two. Sub research questions along with hypotheses, which drew on previous studies, were composed to study the overarching questions. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methods utilized to answer those questions and test the hypotheses.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

The following section describes the research methods that were employed to answer the research questions and test hypotheses presented in the previous section. As stated earlier, one of the purposes of this study is to investigate blogging motivations. A web-based survey on bloggers' self-reports regarding reasons of blogging was undertaken. The unit of analysis was the individual adult blogger. The ubiquity of survey research in uses-and-gratifications studies has been confirmed (Rubin, 1981). Additionally, bloggers' patterns of use were examined in the questionnaire.

### **3.1. SAMPLE**

#### **3.1.1. Sampling Criteria**

The practical impossibility of probability sampling on the Internet is noted as a serious potential problem facing uses-and-gratifications researchers (Ruggiero, 2000). Likewise, the unavailability of a single and comprehensive directory of blogs as well as the technical difficulty to estimate the total number of blogs in use renders assembling a representative sample a tough task (Halavais, 2002). Ruggiero (2000) suggested a solution that studies may only be able to generalize tentatively a very specific population. In view of the proposition, a set of sampling criteria were specified in this study aiming to establish a sampling frame.

*Personal blogs.* As a flexible publishing tool, blogs can be created independently by single author or maintained collaboratively by multiple authors. The former type refers to personal blogs, which constitute the majority of the blogosphere. The latter one, namely community blog or collaborative blog, usually presents posts on a specific topic created by a group of bloggers. Selection of membership in a community blog is determined by rules spontaneously set by the community. Therefore, the contributors to community blogs can be as broad as any Internet user or confined to certain selected bloggers. In this regard, personal blogs are much like newspaper columns authored by single commentator while community blogs resemble magazines with approved contributors.

Insomuch as personal blogs and community blogs are different in terms of forms and ends, dissimilar motivations and patterns of use are presumed to exist. In consideration of purpose of the study, only personal blogs were included. Herring's definition of blogs was used as a criterion to facilitate judging the qualification of sample: a frequently updated website in which messages are posted in reverse chronological sequence, typically by a single author (Herring et al., in press).

*Active bloggers.* Blog's proliferation may be partly explained by its relative ease of creation: even average web user with merely basic computer literacy can start and maintain a blog without effort (Kahn & Kellner, 2004). However, the simplicity of establishment does not guarantee commitment to persistence. Like any other leisure time activity, blogging has to be subject to practitioner's schedule. As a result, blogs run the risk of being abandoned if they fail to develop into blogger's routines (Entlich, 2004). In addition to that, blogs might be shut down due to such external social and personal reasons as inability to get access to the Internet, health problems, loss of interests, or blogger's burnout

(Terdiman, 2004). The voluntary nature of blogs seems reasonable to justify the startlingly high proportion of abandoned blogs. The Perseus Blog Survey (Henning, 2003) released that about two thirds of over 4.1 million blogs built on eight popular blog hosting services may have not been updated within the past two months. Based on the criterion set by the survey, those blogs were referred as “either permanently or temporarily abandoned.”

Another one million-plus blogs consisted of only one initial post with meaningless content like “This is a test” or “My first post.” This type of blog was presumably created to satisfy the curiosity towards the novelty of blogs or to “test drive” the service of blog service providers. Obviously, it is necessary to exclude abandoned and test blogs from the sample to make the study more focus on the active group of bloggers. In this case, blogs that contain fewer than two entries were not included in this study. This strategy works to eliminate the possible bias caused by the practices of “one-day wonders” (Henning, 2003).

To sum up, active blogs should be updated on a relatively regular rate. Perseus Blog Survey (2003) discovered that the average updating cycle of active blog are 14 days. The criterion had been employed in Herring et al.’s study (2004) and was utilized in the study that all the blogs whose latest update was older than 14 days were eliminated.

*English-speaking bloggers.* Despite the lack of authoritative statistics on the languages used by bloggers, English is assumed the dominant language in the blogosphere in light of its predominance on the Internet. Though the number of bloggers in non-English speaking countries such as France (Wolff, 2005a), Korea (Wolff, 2005b), and Poland (Trammell et al., 2004) is growing at a high rate, English-speaking bloggers are estimated to constitute the majority of the blogosphere. According to a report on “The State of Blogging” (Rainie, 2005), more than 8 million American adults surveyed claim to have

created a blog or web-based diary. It is noticeable that the sample in the report excluded Internet users under the age of 18, who are believed to constitute a substantial proportion of bloggers (Herring et al., 2004; Orłowski, 2003). Due to the ubiquity of English blogs in the blogosphere and the need to conduct survey in English with bloggers, only English-language blogs were included in the research.

*Adult bloggers.* Results of many surveys on the blogosphere have demonstrated that young bloggers have constituted a significant portion of the whole blog population (Henning, 2003; Herring et al., 2004). In the study focusing on female and teenage bloggers (Herring, et al., 2004), certain patterns of blogging were found to be related with their demographics. In this regard, it is logical to anticipate demographics play a role in bloggers' motivations for motivations are sensitive to social and psychological factors. Papacharissi (2004) and Trammell et al. (2004) investigated motivations of bloggers at all ages in their empirical studies. In this research, only bloggers above the age of 18 were studied given the postulation that teenage bloggers obtain different gratifications from blogging. Some bloggers provide basic demographic information on their blogs such as name, gender, and age. Those indicating age below 18 were not included in the sample.

### **3.1.2. Sampling Strategy**

In light of a series of studies on blogs conducted by Herring and her colleagues (2004), the "largest available blog tracking site" blo.gs (<http://blo.gs>) was used as the pool from which sample was drawn. The blo.gs website defines a blog as "a type of web site (or page) that is organized much like a diary or journal—short nuggets of writing added regularly (or not) as a running commentary on almost any subject." The definition is consistent with the conceptualization of blog in the precedent content. The website

currently tracks 5,176,423 blogs from several sources including blogger.com (retrieved on Jan 28, 2005 1:11pm), which is regarded as the most popular blogging software in use at the present time (Herring et al., in press). In addition, bloggers have their blogs listed on the website by sending pings to the blo.gs. According to blo.gs, it is now processing about 10 updates per second (<http://blo.gs/news.php>, 2005).

Since the website's "random" selection feature, which has been widely used in previous studies (Herring et al., 2004; Scheidt & Wright, 2004), is temporarily unavailable, an alternative computer-assisted randomization was used as a substitute. The rationale of randomizing function of blo.gs is that each blog listed on blo.gs is specified a unique ID made up of numbers. The numbers can be obtained by mouse pointing to the small icon on the right side of the blog links. The URL in the form of "http://blo.gs/info.php?id =" followed by the number links to a webpage that presents such information as name and address of the blog and when is the last time it is updated. In this study, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to generate random numbers as IDs to sample blogs systematically.

Randomly selected blogs were reviewed to check whether they met the criteria. Since respondents were to be recruited via emails, blogs without any contact information had to be removed from the sample. After screening random blogs generated by blo.gs, only those active English-language blogs created by bloggers older than 18 were taken in the survey<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Since not all bloggers present age on blogs, only those who indicate age under 18 explicitly were eliminated from the sample. Therefore, adolescent bloggers might be included in the sample though they were not intentionally recruited.

### **3.2. RESPONSE RATE**

Based on the criteria discussed above, 500 bloggers were sampled. A two-wave data collection procedure was employed. Invitations to complete the survey were distributed via email. The purpose, methodology, and confidentiality of the study were included in the email. The first wave was followed by a second wave with a reminder message one week later. Of these 500 invitations, 24 (4.8%) were returned as undeliverable for some reasons. Of the remaining 476 samples, 207 responses were collected at the first wave and 81 at the second wave. In total, 288 responses were obtained, yielding a gross satisfactory response rate of 60.5%.

In addition to other possible factors as effective contact strategy, an important cause accounting for the high response rate is speculated as the sampled bloggers' high issue salience. Issue salience, defined by Martin (1994) as the association of importance and/or timeliness with a specific topic, has been found to be strongly positive correlated with response rate for email and WWW-based surveys (Sheehan & Hoy, 1999). According to my observations of the blogosphere, bloggers maintain relatively high salience on blog studies. Therefore, the high rate of response can be attributed to the survey population's high degree of interest in the topic.

### **3.3. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS**

The demographics of this sample are as follows (see Table 3.1).

*Age, gender, and education.* Of the 280 respondents, male bloggers (54%) slightly outnumbered female bloggers (46%). Ranging from 18 through 65 years, the average age of the participants was 32.6 years (SD = 9.79) while the median age was 31 years. Adult bloggers under the age of 45 (87.2%) formed the majority of the sample. As for the

educational attainment, those respondents were quite highly educated with nearly three fourths (71.4%) having at least college experience.

*Years of Internet use.* Most respondents claimed to have been using the Internet for at least three years, with only 1.1% ( $n = 3$ ) within one to three years. In this regard, bloggers are experienced Internet users. Over half of them (51.1%) had a history of Internet use for no less than 10 years. Men tended to have a longer history of Internet use than women ( $t(278) = -2.82, p < .01$ ).

*Frequency of Internet use and time spent on the Internet daily.* All respondents had been using the Internet at least once a day. Indeed, as high as 96.4% ( $n = 270$ ) reported to use the Internet several times a day, indicating they were regular Internet users. Time spent on the Internet weekly ranged from two hours to 116 hours. The extreme 116 hours suggested more than 16 hours online daily. The average online time in a week was 30.26 hours ( $SD = 20.25$ ), equal to nearly 4.3 online hours per day. 19.3% of the respondents reported to be online for more than 40 hours a week. What is worth mentioning is that some of the respondents' occupations are Internet-related. The characteristics of their jobs suggest mandatory online time of at least 40 hours in a typical week. No gender gap on frequency and intensity of Internet use was found in the sample. The result was consistent with Odell and her colleagues' research on Internet use among college students (Odell, Korgen, Schumacher, and Delucchi, 2000).

**Table 3.1 Demographics of Respondents**

<b>Group (N = 280)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	151	53.9
Female	129	46.1
<b>Age (M = 32.6, SD = 9.8)</b>		
18 - 24	65	23.2
25 - 34	106	37.9
35 - 44	73	26.1
45 - 54	27	9.6
55 and more	9	3.2
<b>Education</b>		
Elementary School	1	.4
High School or equivalent	61	21.8
College/university	139	49.6
Masters/professional. degree	69	24.6
Ph.D.	10	3.6
<b>Years of Internet Use</b>		
1 - 3 years	3	1.1
4 - 6 years	40	14.3
7 - 9 years	94	33.6
10 years or more	143	51.1
<b>Frequency of Internet Use Per Day</b>		
Once a day	10	3.6
Several times a day	270	96.4
<b>Online Time Per Day (M = 30.3, SD = 20.3)</b>		
Less than 10 hours	38	13.6
11 – 20 hours	93	33.2
21 – 30 hours	60	21.4
21 – 40 hours	35	12.5
More than 40 hours	54	19.3
<b>Computer Skills</b>		
Novice	11	3.9
Average	143	51.1
Expert	126	45.0

Computer literacy. Nearly half of the respondents (50.4%,  $n = 141$ ) reported to have advanced computer expertise, followed closely by 45% ( $n = 126$ ) claiming to have an intermediate computer literacy. Only 11 respondents (3.9%) evaluated themselves as novice computer users. Men reported higher computer skills than women ( $t(278) = -4.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### **3.4. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

In prior studies, researchers have proposed a number of a priori gratifications for most forms of communication. Those a priori gratifications have been largely replicated and complemented in subsequent research. Nevertheless, the inheritances of research from the past were referred to as one of the reasons that accounted for methodological inadequacies in the uses-and-gratifications approach (Lometti, Reeves, and Bybee, 1977). Lometti et al. posited that the predefined gratifications proposed by researchers could overestimate the operative gratifications and overlook those that could have been derived more originally from subjects' spontaneous responses. Due to the paucity of previous systematic research specifically on blogger' motivations (Nardi et al., 2004; Papacharissi, 2004; Trammell et al., 2004), preliminary work was conducted using a qualitative method aiming to provide clues for questionnaire design. Qualitative analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). In proposing a framework for analyzing blogs, Trammell and Gasser (2004) suggest content analysis as a primary means for understanding blogs.

The preliminary evidence on the motivations of blogging had been obtained by adopting the similar pretesting method used in Greenberg's study (1974). In the seminal

study of British children's motives and gratifications of television, Greenberg collected students' essays on the subject "Why I like to Watch Television." Those answers in essays were collated and reviewed to sort out eight potential motivations for watching TV.

A two-step pilot study was carried out to sort out the possible reasons for blogging to construct a motivation scale. A brief content analysis of blogs was employed to offer possible questions for the following survey. By searching "Why I blog" and similar phrases in search engines, I briefly browsed over 180 blogs to inspect bloggers' self-confessions on the reasons why they blog. This information was used to complement and adapt items used in previous gratifications research on blogs (see Table 3.2). All the reasons were categorized into eight specific motivations: (1) self-expression, (2) social interaction, (3) information, (4) passing time, (5) entertainment, (6) personal advancement, (7) self-documentation, and (8) medium appeal.

The first five motivations were obtained directly from Trammell et al.'s research on Polish bloggers' motivations (2004). Personal advancement motivation was adapted from the precedent motivation "professional advancement." Self-documentation was suggested by Nardi et al.'s qualitative study (2004). The remaining category –medium appeal –was adopted from James et al.'s (1995) study on electronic bulletin board. Each motivation was measured by three questions. For each item, respondents were asked how much their own reasons for blogging are like those suggested by other bloggers. A seven-point Likert scale was used to rate the endorsements, with "1" indicating strongly disagree and "7" strongly agree with those a priori reasons.

**Table 3.2 A Priori Motivations for Blogging and Sample Statements**

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**Self-expression**

- My blog is now very much an expression of myself.
- I felt much more comfortable on the Internet where I could express my deepest feelings.
- You can express yourself with this tool unlike any other.

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**Social interaction**

- I blog to connect with persons who share some (if not all) of my values.
- It's a way of dragging me out of my very private shell and meeting new people.
- To maintain a daily, personal connection with the friends and family.

---

**Information**

- It provides me with a vehicle for sharing with others those things I find interesting and hopefully in doing so find someone else who shares an interest or create an interest in someone else for what I find interesting.
- I blog because information is energy. I absorb it, maybe add to it and pass it on.
- I'd like to have a really smart blog that directs you to all the fabulous internet sites I've reviewed for you.

---

**Passing time**

- I blog because I have nothing better to do.
- It's something to do.
- I thought maybe it was something I could do to relieve the boredom of my day job (which is not very fulfilling), to do some writing (which I missed since college) and hopefully entertain.

---

**Entertainment**

- Well I tell myself, often, that I do this just for the fun.
- I love to write. Just love it. And this is a great vehicle for doing just that.
- Well, I blog for the enjoyment.

---

**Personal advancement**

- To practice my writing skills.
- I like the technology and it give me an excuse to learn some new things.
- I blog refine my thinking.

---

**Self-documentation**

- I have no long term memory :-)! I need a backup brain!
- I blog to keep track of my research - both its content and process.
- I blog to remember.

---

**Medium appeal**

- I blog because I like a place where I can post things I want to say immediately
  - I blog because it's the easiest, most cost-effective way to publish.
  - Blogging software worked easier than the old phpBB bulletin board software that used to form the core of my website. It's better organized, easier for readers to navigate, easier for visitors to interact and easier for me to maintain.
-

The questionnaire consists of three sections (see Appendix A). The first section sought to look into the specific patterns of blog use. Questions include the general use of blogs, topics of blogs, feedback mechanism management, use of hyperlinks, self-presentation, and readership expectation. The second part was composed of 24 questions to explore motivations of blogging. Respondents indicated the extent to which the listed blogging reasons could be applied to them. The third component was concerning respondent's demographics.

### **3.5. INSTRUMENTATION**

The questionnaire was designed with survey software "Professional Quest," which supports exporting designed questionnaire to a web form. The web form was saved as a HTML file and uploaded to the Internet. The URL of the webpage was included in survey invitations so respondents can get access to it without any restriction.

The web-based survey was administered from Mar 22, 2005 to April 11, 2005. A webpage detailing introduction and background information about the research had been constructed. An information sheet was presented on the webpage before bloggers agreed to take part in the survey. By clicking the link "I agree," the respondents were directed to the webpage where the survey was presented.

### **3.6. VARIABLES**

*General blogging pattern.* Seven questions were used to explore the general use of blogs. These measurements include: the number of blogs the blogger authors<sup>5</sup>, history of

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<sup>5</sup> It was expected that some bloggers author more than one blog. An instruction on questionnaire prompted respondents to consider only the blog they deemed to be the major one when answering the remain of the questions.

blogging, number of blog entries, frequency of updating the blog, time spent on blogging every time, and location of blogging.

*Topics of blogs.* Content of blogs was measured in this question. With a five-point Likert scale, respondents were asked about the frequency (1 = never, 5 = very often) of writing on certain topics. The topics were adapted from those utilized in Keshelashvili's (2004) study on patterns of self-expression of A-list blogs. Preset topics include entertainment, interests/hobbies, family/friends, sports, education/academics, business, religion/spirituality, politics/politicians, technology/science, arts/culture, creative work, personal experience, and other. An open-ended question aimed to specify the answer if "other" was chosen.

*Feedback mechanism of blogs.* How respondents manage comments was explored. They were asked if comments were allowed on blogs and how often they replied to readers' comments (1 = never, 5 = very often). Respondents were asked about their perception towards importance regarding those following feedback (1 = very unimportant, 5 = very important): numbers of people who read your blog, comments from readers, trackbacks sent from other blogs, number of times you/your blog mentioned by others in their blogs, and being linked by other websites/blogs. Another questions measured how often they send trackbacks to other bloggers (1 = never, 5 = every time when possible).

*Use of hyperlinks on blogs.* Respondents were asked about their use in-text links, blogroll, and blogring. Questions included the frequency they provide links to online resources in blog posts (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often), the number of links to other websites or blogs, membership of blogging community, and links

to those blogging communities (1 = no, I don't link to any of them, 2 = yes, I link to some of them, 3 = yes, I link to all of them),

*Self-presentation on blogs.* Five questions measured the extent to which respondents disclose personal information on blogs: the type of names used to identify bloggers and people they know in person (4 = real name, 3 = variant of real name, 2 = pseudonym, 1 = not available), use of photographs of bloggers and people they know (1 = no, 2 = yes), and the degree of confidentiality of blog content (1 = not private at all, 5 = extremely private). Contact information available on blogs was examined by having respondents choose those they provide on blogs: Email, instant messenger, guestbook, contact form, shoutbox, telephone, mail, none, and other. Respondents were asked to specify the answer if they chose other.

*Readership expectation.* Three questions attempted to illustrate bloggers' expectation of readership: the ways they used to promote blogs (directly tell people about your blog, have blog listed in search engines/directories, join bloggings/communities, leave your blog when comment on others' blogs, print blog address on business card, exchange links with other blogs Include blog in signature of email/account on BBS...etc, using commercial advertising services, none, and other), readers they mainly blog for (myself, family, friends, colleagues, Internet acquaintance, general public, and other), and the frequency of checking server log to track readers (1 = never, 5 = very often).

*Use of design elements.* Blogging tools and services (1 = personal publishing platform, 2 = commercial blogging service, 3 = free blogging service), blog templates (1 = the default or alternative template offered by blogging software, 2 = the template designed by other bloggers or designers, 3 = the template I modified which was based on existing

templates, 4 = the template I designed from scratch), and the number of add-on applications used by respondents were examined.

*Demographics of respondents.* This section seek to measure such demographic characteristics as gender (female = 1; male = 2), age, and level of education. Gender was dummy coded in subsequent regression analyses. Four items were employed to measure the respondents' Internet use patterns, which were presumed to be associated with their blogging patterns. The variables include years of using the Internet, frequency and average time of using the Internet on a weekly basis, and self-reported computer skill level (1 = novice, not technical, 2 = average, somewhat technical, 3 = expert, very technical).

### **3.7. STATISTICAL ANALYSES**

Five statistical procedures were run in SPSS 12 to analyze the data—factor analysis, Pearson's correlations, independent samples t-test, ANOVA (ANalysis Of VAriance), and multiple regressions.

An exploratory principal components factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation was done to extract and interpret possible blogging motivations. An Eigenvalue of at least 1.0 and a cut-off loadings of .50 or greater served as the retention criteria. Responses to the retained items were summed and averaged to form the motivation scales representing each factor. Pearson's correlations were used to investigate the interrelationships among these motivations. Independent samples T-tests were employed to examine gender difference in terms of motivations and blogging behaviors. ANOVAs were run to examine differences in groups like age, education, computer skill, and so on. Multiple regressions were used to try to determine what motivations best predict specific usage patterns such as what topics bloggers tend to cover.

### **3.8. REVIEW**

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology used in the thesis project. Active English-speaking personal blog authors above the age of 18 were randomly sampled from the blogs indexed by blo.gs. An online survey was administered to investigate variables discussed in precedent chapters. In the following section, I will present statistical results of the survey.

## Chapter 4. Results

First, descriptive analysis of the data was conducted to draw a general profile for the use of blogs. The usage pattern of blogs was explored in the aspects discussed in previous chapters. Next, motivations emerging from the factor structure were listed. Strengths of the motivations were calculated and the inter-item correlations were examined. To examine the possible gender differences, results of chi-square analysis and independent-samples t-test among the above variables were reported in each section respectively. Finally, multiple regressions were run to find out the relationship between demographics, motivations, and blogging behaviors.

### 4.1. USAGE PATTERN OF BLOGS

#### 4.1.1. General Pattern of Blogging

The general pattern of blogging drew on descriptive data on blogger's time allocation, frequency of blogging, and locations of blogging. The results were summarized in Table 4.1.

*Number of blogs authored.* The number of blogs maintained by the respondents ranged from one to 15 ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ). Nearly half of the respondents (49.6%,  $n = 139$ ) authored one blog and the other half ( $n = 141$ ) were multiple-blog authors. Male and female bloggers maintained almost the same number of blogs.

**Table 4.1 General Pattern of Blogging**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Number of blogs authored (<math>M = 1.9, SD = 1.4</math>)</b>		
One	139	49.6
More than one	141	50.4
<b>Length of time blogging</b>		
Less than 3 months	31	11.1
3 - 6 months	25	8.9
7 - 12 months	64	22.9
1 - 2 years	93	33.2
3 - 4 years	56	20.0
5 years or more	11	3.9
<b>Frequency of blogging</b>		
Every few weeks	45	16.1
1 - 2 times a week	89	31.8
3 - 5 times a week	81	28.9
About once a day	65	23.2
<b>Number of blog entries</b>		
Less than 100 entries	115	41.1
101 – 200 entries	34	12.1
201 – 300 entries	35	12.5
More than 300 entries	96	34.3
<b>Time of updating blogs</b>		
Less than 30 minutes	90	32.1
0.5 - 1 hour	119	42.5
1 - 2 hours	64	22.9
3 - 4 hours	6	2.1
5 hours or more	1	0.4
<b>Location of blogging</b>		
Home	267	95.4
School	28	10.0
Workplace	93	33.2
Other	11	3.9

*Length of time blogging.* 44% of the respondents reported that they had been blogging for less than one year: 11.1% less than three months, 8.9% for 3-6 months, and 22.9% for 7-12 months. Those bloggers were deemed as new adopters. 30.7% ( $n = 86$ ) had a longer history of 1-2 years and 20% with 3-4 years. Since it was until the end of 20th century did blogs start to be adopted by Internet users, only 3.9% ( $n = 11$ ) claimed to have a history of blogging more than five years. No gender differences were detected in terms of blogging history. In this sense, the lag of adoption of new technology between men and women seemed to be overcome in the blogosphere.

*Number of blog entries.* 41.4% of the respondents ( $n = 115$ ) have posted no more than 100 entries on their main blogs. 24.6% ( $n = 69$ ) have posted 100-300 entries and 34.3% ( $n = 96$ ) had more than 300 posts. No gender differences were found in this aspect.

*Frequency of blogging in a week.* 52% of the respondents ( $n = 145$ ) were avid bloggers who claimed to blog daily or more often (28.6% blogged about once a day, 23.2% several times a day). For those bloggers, blogging is a routine activity in their lives. 31.8% blogged three to five times weekly and 13.6% blog at least once in a week. Men update blogs more frequently than women,  $t(278) = -3.18, p < .01$ .

*Time of updating blogs.* 32.1% of the respondents ( $n = 90$ ) spent no more than half an hour every time they blogged. 42.5% ( $n = 119$ ) used 30 minutes to one hour. 25.4% invested more than one hour. No gender differences in time spent on blogging every time were detected.

*Locations of blogging.* Home was the most common location where most respondents wrote blogs (94.6%). Workplace was the second commonest place with 32.5% bloggers claimed so and nearly 10% chose to blog at school. Among the 14 responses to

the question other than those a priori answers, it is noteworthy that mobile blogging has getting popular in that 11 bloggers claimed to blog from road via cell phone or coffee shops with Wi-Fi. No gender differences were discovered in terms of places where bloggers wrote.

Women seem to have a shorter history of Internet use than male bloggers while they have similar frequency of Internet use and maintain a close online time on weekly base. Unsurprisingly, they possess lower computer skills than male. In terms of general pattern of blogging, male and female are similar in terms of number of blogs authors, history of blogging, number of posts, and average time spent blogging. However, male tend to update their blogs slightly more frequently than female.

#### **4.1.2. Topics of Blogs**

Descriptive analysis was run to answer Research Question 1a about how bloggers cover certain topics (see Table 4.2). Personal experience was the most frequently written blog topic ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). Topics as interests and hobbies, creative work, as well as arts and culture were the common topics reported by the sample. The mean frequencies of writing about those topics were all above three ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $3.30$ , and  $3.15$ , respectively). Family and friends, entertainment, technology and science, politics and politicians, education and academics, and business were the less commonly covered content. Sports was the least frequently blogged topic ( $M = 1.75$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ). Among the top five topics most frequently blogged about, four topics were about bloggers' life circle or experience. The only exception was the topic on art and culture which falls into the field of external topics.

**Table 4.2 Topics of Blogging**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Personal experience	4.05	1.09
Interests/hobbies	3.63	1.16
Creative work	3.30	1.30
Arts/culture	3.15	1.17
Family/friends	2.91	1.27
Entertainment	2.89	1.14
Technology/science	2.86	1.28
Politics/politicians	2.75	1.34
Education/academics	2.67	1.21
Business	2.20	1.09
Sports	1.75	0.88

Note. \* 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often

Hypothesis 1 offers that men will blog about external topics (politics, entertainment, sports, education and academics, business, technology and science, arts and culture) more often than women. Gender differences were located in three of the seven variables indicating preference to remote content thus the hypothesis was partly supported (see Table 4.3). Male bloggers were more into topics as technology and science,  $t(278) = -5.5$ ,  $p < .001$ ; politics and politicians,  $t(278) = -4.91$ ,  $p < .001$ , and business,  $t(278) = -5.58$ ,  $p < .001$ . Male and female bloggers wrote on the other topics almost equally frequently. Gender preference to such topics is more alike than different as entertainment, education and academics, arts and culture, and sports.

The second hypothesis that women blog about internal topics (interests and hobbies, family and friends, own creative work, and personal experience) more often than men was completely supported (see Table 4.3). Within the internal topic dimension, the prediction was supported by the trends in all the four topics. Women outnumbered men in each of the topics: interests and hobbies,  $t(278) = 3.02$ ,  $p < .01$ ; family and friends,  $t(278) = 7.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ; own creative work,  $t(278) = 2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and personal experience,  $t(278) = 7.22$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Table 4.3 Gender Differences for Blog Topics**

Topics	Female ( <i>n</i> = 129)		Male ( <i>n</i> = 151)		<i>t</i>
	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>External Topics</b>					
Entertainment	2.90	1.12	2.87	1.15	ns
Sports	1.66	0.86	1.83	0.89	ns
Education/academics	2.67	1.23	2.68	1.19	ns
Business	1.83	0.89	2.51	1.15	-5.58***
Politics/politicians	2.34	1.16	3.10	1.38	-4.91***
Technology/science	2.43	1.16	3.23	1.27	-5.46***
Arts/culture	3.19	1.08	3.13	1.25	ns
<b>Internal Topics</b>					
Interests/hobbies	3.84	1.03	3.44	1.23	3.02**
Family/friends	3.47	1.18	2.44	1.14	7.40***
Creative work	3.50	1.21	3.13	1.34	2.45*
Personal experience	4.50	0.85	3.66	1.11	7.22***

Note. 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### 4.1.3. Feedback Mechanism of Blogs

This section answers Research Question 1b on how bloggers management comments and trackbacks (see Table 4.4). Comments were widely used by bloggers in the sample (94.3%,  $n = 265$ ). Among those bloggers who allowed comments on blogs, 39.4% ( $n = 111$ ) reported to respond to readers' comments very often. 33% ( $n = 95$ ) did this often and 20% ( $n = 56$ ) sometimes did it. Only 6.5% ( $n = 18$ ) claimed to rarely or never respond to comments. Hence, comments are a channel through which interactions between bloggers and readers take place.

Trackback is another form of feedback mechanism. Regarded as one of the characteristics of blogs, trackbacks were not as widely used as comments. 23.6% of the respondents claimed no knowledge about how to send trackbacks and 5% reported unavailability of trackbacks on blogging tools and services. Among the remaining 200 respondents can use trackbacks, nearly half of the respondents claimed rare or no use of trackback.

The third hypothesis that men more often send trackbacks than women was supported by the data though the statistical significance of  $t$  test was deemed marginal,  $t(278) = -2.0, p = .052$ .

Bloggers' perception regarding importance of feedback was measured by summing their sensitivity of readership, readers' feedback, and other bloggers' feedback such as trackbacks, being mentioned by others, and links from other blogs ( $\alpha = .844$ ). Men scored 3.65 on this scale while women scored 3.43. Overall, men valued feedback more than women,  $t(278) = -2.1, p < .05$ , while women thought comments from readers were of more importance than men did,  $t(278) = -2.1, p < .05$  (see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.4 Feedback Mechanism Management on Blogs**

<b>Feedback Means</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b><u>Comments Allowed</u></b>		
Yes	265	94.6
No	15	5.4
<b><u>Frequency of replying comments</u></b>		
Never	3	1.1
Rarely	15	5.4
Sometimes	56	20.0
Often	80	28.6
Very often	111	39.6
<b><u>Use of Trackbacks</u></b>		
Never	34	12.1
Rarely	28	10.0
Sometimes	29	10.4
Often	31	11.1
Every time when possible	78	27.9
I don't know how to send trackbacks	66	23.6
Trackback not available	14	5.0

**Table 4.5 Gender Differences for Perception on Importance of Feedback**

	Female ( <i>n</i> = 129)		Male ( <i>n</i> = 151)		<i>t</i>
	M	SD	M	SD	
Numbers of people who read your blog	3.53	1.08	3.79	1.02	-2.13*
Comments from blog readers	4.28	0.88	3.98	1.18	2.38*
Trackbacks from other blogs	2.67	1.26	3.03	1.31	-2.37*
Times you/your blog mentioned by other bloggers	3.10	1.24	3.61	1.19	-3.49***
Being linked by other websites/blogs	3.57	1.20	3.85	1.17	-2.08*
Total	3.43	0.90	3.65	0.92	-2.10*

Note. 1 = Very important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Neither important nor unimportant

4 = Somewhat unimportant 5 = Very unimportant

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

#### 4.1.4. Hyperlinks on Blogs

Research Question 1c asks about the way bloggers use in-text links, blogrolls, and blogrings (see Table 4.6). When writing blog posts, nearly half of the bloggers (49.3%) very frequently included links to available online resources spontaneously. 22.1% followed by stating often offering links and 21.1% sometimes did so. Only 7.5% of the bloggers reported rarely or never linked to other resources. Overall, offering in-text links to supplement post content is a prevalent in blogging behaviors. Furthermore, male bloggers provided links for outside resources more often than women,  $t(278) = -6.48, p < .001$ . This can be partly explained by the fact that male bloggers are more inclined to write filter content (Herring et al., 2004) while external links were regarded as a feature of filter blogs (Blood, 2002). Female bloggers more often narrate their own life stories and thus they do not need linking to online sources for additional background information.

Besides links in the entries, most blogs maintain a collection of links to other web sites or blogs in the sidebar (91.8%). It is noticeable that despite the fact that links are regarded as a characteristic of blogs, there were 23 bloggers claiming no links to any other website. In this sense, those blogs resembles its print precedent—personal journal or diary. Among the respondents who linked, 22.5% linked to no more than 10 web sites, 42.5% with 11 - 50 web sites, 15.4% with 51-100 sites, and 11.4% linked to more than 100 websites. Female bloggers usually maintained a shorter list of links than male bloggers,  $\chi^2(4, N = 257) = 6.1, p < .05$ .

**Table 4.6 Use of Hyperlinks on Blogs**

<b>Use of Hyperlinks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b><u>Frequency of using in-text links</u></b>		
Never	2	0.7
Rarely	19	6.8
Sometimes	59	21.1
Often	62	22.1
Very often	138	49.3
<b><u>Number of Links to Other Web Sites</u></b>		
None	23	8.2
1 - 10	63	22.5
11 - 30	72	25.7
31 - 50	47	16.8
51 - 100	43	15.4
101 or more	32	11.4
<b><u>Membership of Bloggings</u></b>		
Yes	106	37.9
No	174	62.1
<b><u>Links to Bloggings (n = 106)</u></b>		
No, I don't link to any of them	23	20.4
Yes, I link to some of them	18	15.9
Yes, I link to all of them	72	63.7

Most bloggers (62.1%) did not belong to any blogging communities. For those who claimed to be members of bloggings, the number of bloggings ranges from one to 25 and average 3.65. 81.1% belonged to no more than five communities. Links to bloggings were seen as a symbol of membership and usually required to be presented on members' blogs by communities. Even so, 20.5% of the respondents reported no links to any of the blog communities to which he or she belongs.

#### **4.1.5. Self-Presentation on Blogs**

In response to Research Question 1d, the majority of respondents identified themselves on blogs by using real names or variants of real names (see Table 4.7). The result is quite consistent with the conclusion proposed by Viégas (2004). Real names were the most widely used means for bloggers to identify themselves; 52.1% ( $n = 146$ ) of respondents did so. Another 16.8% ( $n = 47$ ) provided some variants of real names. Another 30.4% ( $n = 85$ ) used pseudonym instead and two respondents reported no self-identification on blogs. A photograph of oneself is another way for bloggers to self-identify on blogs. The majority of bloggers (57.5%,  $n = 161$ ) had photographs of themselves on blogs while 42.5% ( $n = 119$ ) claimed not.

Bloggers were more cautious when identifying people they know personally on blogs. 10.7% claimed to never write about people they know personally. 38.9% used real names to identify their acquaintances and 26.1% used variants of real names. 23.9% chose to use pseudonyms instead of clues of true identity. The relatively conservative pattern of presenting others extended to the use of others' photos. The majority of bloggers (53.6%,  $n = 130$ ) did not have photographs of acquaintances while 46.4% ( $n = 150$ ) claimed so.

**Table 4.7 Self-Presentation on Blogs**

<b>Use of Hyperlinks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b><u>Use of Blogger's Own Name (n = 278)</u></b>		
Pseudonym	85	30.4
Variant of real name	47	16.8
Real name	146	52.1
<b><u>Use of Blogger's Own Photo</u></b>		
Yes	161	57.5
No	119	42.5
<b><u>Use of Other's names on Blogs</u></b>		
Pseudonym	67	23.9
Variant of real name	74	26.4
Real name	109	38.9
Never write about people I know personally	30	10.7
<b><u>Use of Others' Photo</u></b>		
Yes	130	46.4
No	150	53.6
<b><u>Degree of Confidentiality of Blog Posts</u></b>		
Not private at all	107	38.2
A little bit private	70	25.0
Somewhat private	73	26.1
Very private	24	8.6
Extremely private	6	2.1

Contact information was another way to present blogger's identity on the Internet. Table 4.8 illustrates the communicative channels bloggers use to interact with readers. Email was still the most prevalent contact channel among the majority of the respondents (90%,  $n = 252$ ). 26.1% ( $n = 73$ ) chose a form of instant messenger to interact with others in a synchronous way. 15% used the contact form, which is more convenient than e-mail in that readers can write and send their messages without having to leave the blog. Popular in the era of home pages, guestbook was used now by only 8.2% bloggers. Postal mail and telephone, the most commonly used contact methods in the offline environment, were used by 4.6% and 3.9% of the respondents respectively. 1.8% claimed that they left no clues to be reached by others. Of those who reported other contact ways other than the above (7.5%,  $n = 21$ ), nearly all indicated the use of comments as a way of contact. The other exceptions include tagboard, voicemail and face-to-face talk.

As for the extent to which blog posts were private or confidential, the majority of bloggers wrote about non-private or marginally personal things (38.2% not private at all, 24.6% a little bit private). 26.1% reported to write somewhat private things and 8.6% wrote about very private affairs. 2.1% claimed to write extremely private things.

The fourth hypothesis predicts that men are more likely to present personal information than women. The prediction was partially supported in terms of self-identification by names. Men were more prone to use real names to identify themselves while women were more inclined with variants of real names or pseudonyms,  $\chi^2(3, N = 278) = 16.4, p < .01$ .

**Table 4.8 Contact Information on Blogs**

<b>Contact means</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Email	252	90.0
Instant Messenger	73	26.1
Contact Form	42	15.0
Guestbook	23	8.2
Other	21	7.5
Postal mail	13	4.6
Telephone	11	3.9
Shoutbox	6	2.1
None	5	1.8

Note: N=280

Contrary to prediction, there were no gender differences for identifying others on blogs. Moreover, women were more likely to present their own photos on blogs than men,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 9.2, p < .01$ . The same pattern can be found in presence of others' photos,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 5.5, p < .01$ . Moreover, women were more inclined to make personal disclosures than men,  $t(278) = 4.0, p < .001$ .

#### **4.1.6. Readership Expectation**

Research Question 1e aims to describe the way in which bloggers expect readership and track readership. Table 4.9 displays the types of readers bloggers intend to reach. Of the targeted readers, "myself" was the most regular reader the respondents blog for (79.6%,  $n = 223$ ). 73.6% ( $n = 206$ ) indicated no specific intended target by stating they blogged for the general public. Friends in real life and cyberspace were intended to be reached by 66.4% ( $n = 186$ ) and 57.5% ( $n = 161$ ) bloggers respectively. 36.4% of the participants blogged for family and 28.9% did it for colleagues. Nearly 10% bloggers claimed no perception toward specific audiences.

5.4% reported other audiences such as people who searched for useful information (e.g. Google searchers, Those in "truth seeking" mode - those looking for the meaning of life, senior business-side executives at large law firms, managing partners, lot's of Google traffic, those who desired first hand, English language info on Ukraine's Orange Revolution), other members of the community they belonged to or worked closely with (e.g., open source community, Other Iaijutsu/Kenjutsu students, Other bloggers, other like crafters, Those working for street children, child care workers), people they knew in life (e.g., my professor and classmates, my students, teachers and students who I visit at schools when I talk about my books), and someone they valued spiritually (e.g. God).

**Table 4.9 Targeted Readers for blogs**

Targeted Readers	Total (N = 280)		Female (n = 129)		Male (n = 151)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Myself	223	79.6	112	86.8	111	73.5
General Public	206	73.6	80	62.0	126	83.4
Friends	186	66.4	93	72.1	93	61.6
Internet acquaintance	161	57.5	78	60.5	83	55.0
Family	102	36.4	46	35.7	56	37.1
Colleagues	81	28.9	29	22.5	52	34.4
Don't know	27	9.6	15	11.6	12	7.9
Others	15	5.4	5	3.9	10	6.6

Though no hypothesis was proposed, information regarded gender differences emerged from bloggers' targeted readers. Women were more prone to write for themselves than men,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 7.6, p < .01$ . A marginal statistical significance ( $p = .06$ ) indicated women were more prone to write for friends than men,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 3.4$ . In contrast, men were more prone to write for the general public,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 16.4, p < .001$ , and colleagues,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 4.8, p < .05$ . Writing for family, Internet acquaintances, and other readers did not indicate any gender differences.

Besides actively communicating with readers via comments, bloggers could refer to other ways to know their readers more. Server log is a means by which bloggers can know where their readers are from, what operating system and web browser they are using, what content they are interested in, how long they stay, how they dig out information, and so on. One third of the respondents did not track their readers by stating rarely or never read server logs or unavailability of logs. 28.5% of those who had access to server logs checked logs very often (4.3%,  $n = 12$ ), often (10.4%,  $n = 29$ ), and sometimes (26.4%,  $n = 74$ ). The fifth hypothesis predicted that men will track readers, more often, by referring to server logs than women. The hypothesis was not supported so no gender differences were found in access to server logs.

Bloggers employ a variety of methods to promote their blogs in expectation of attracting more readers (see Table 4.10). The most widely used way in cyberspace was to leave comments on other blogs with URL pointing to one's own blog. 79.2% of the respondents used this way to spread the word. One characteristic of comments is that they serve not only as a channel for communication between bloggers and readers but a public place to have one's own voice heard by other readers. The secondly most used way was to

directly tell people about blogs—used by 71.1% bloggers. Only 5% bloggers claimed non-use of any specific methods to promote their blogs. Chi-square test results demonstrated that gender differences existed in the employment of submitting to search engines,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 11.25, p < .001$ ; and exchanging links with other web sites,  $\chi^2(2, N = 280) = 4.80, p < .05$ . Men were more likely to broadcast their own blogs in these two ways than women were.

#### **4.1.7. Design Elements of Blogs**

Research Question 1f explores how adult bloggers use design elements of blogs. As for choice of blogging tools and services, personal publishing platforms were the most widely used blogging software (44.3%,  $n = 124$ ). Closely followed is free blogging services used by 33.6% of the respondents ( $n = 94$ ). Nearly 20% invested in commercial blogging services ( $n = 55$ ). 5.4% reported to write blogs by hand-coding or some other desktop application which supports uploading entries to web-hosted space. In terms of template usage, 18.6% of the respondents used the default or alternative templates offered by blogging tools and services. 10.1% chose templates designed by other bloggers or designers. More than half of them (53.2%,  $n = 149$ ) modified existing templates to personalize them and 17.1% designed their own templates from scratch. In regard of uses of add-ons, 75.7% of the respondents used at least one add-on application on their blogs.

**Table 4.10 Promotion of Blogs**

<b>Ways of Promoting Blogs</b>	<b>Total (N = 280)</b>		<b>Female (n = 129)</b>		<b>Male (n = 151)</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Leave URL of blog when comment on others' blogs	222	79.3	105	81.4	117	77.5
Directly tell people about your blog	199	71.1	87	67.4	112	74.2
Join blogrings/communities	188	67.1	44	34.1	48	31.8
Have blog listed in search engines/directories	183	65.4	71	55.0	112	74.2
Include blog in signature of email/account on BBS...etc	116	41.4	46	35.7	70	46.4
Exchange links with other blogs	115	41.1	44	34.1	71	47.0
Other	31	11.1	16	12.4	15	9.9
Print blog address on business card	20	7.1	12	9.3	8	5.3
Using commercial advertising services	8	2.9	2	1.6	6	4.0
None	14	5.0	4	3.1	10	6.6

Chi-square tests were used to test three hypotheses. The sixth and seventh hypothesis respectively state men would more often use personalized blog templates and add-ons than women. Hypothesis 8 proposed that bloggers with higher education would be less likely to use personalized blog templates. The sixth hypothesis was supported that men preferred to modify existing templates or design their own from scratch more than women did,  $\chi^2(4, N = 280) = 21.6, p < .001$ . Correspondingly women were more likely to use templates provided by blogging tools and those designed by others. Contrary to predictions, neither gender differences for use of add-ons nor educational differences for use of personalized templates were supported.

As for gender differences for selection of blogging tools, women were more frequently free blogging software users while men preferred commercial software and personal publishing platform,  $\chi^2(3, N = 280) = 20.2, p < .001$ . Generally speaking, personal publishing platforms require higher levels of computer skills and more efforts than free blogging services and commercial ones. The gender gap on computer literacy should account for women's preference to more user-friendly blogging tools.

## **4.2. OVERALL ANALYSIS OF BLOGGING MOTIVATIONS**

### **4.2.1. Factor Structure**

Principal-components factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation was performed to determine whether the a priori group of motivations really matched those reported by bloggers. Accordingly, eight initial factors were yielded with Eigenvalue greater than 1.0, explaining initially 70.3% of the cumulative variance. Seven of the factors were retained. Cronbach's alpha was computed for each factor to assess reliability.

Six of the twenty-four items did not load on the presumably underlying dimensions. Among those, the item, “to keep in touch with my family/friends” that was originally expected to measure the socialization motivation loaded on self-documentation. Keeping in touch with family and friends via blog suggests writing about what is happening to the blogger and keep that information up-to-date. Therefore, this item was combined under self-documentation because it seemed more suitable to measure that component. The item “because it is a place to publish myself” presupposed to fall into the self-expression dimension failed to load on any factor with a loading higher than 0.50 thus were eliminated from the scale. The item “because it is enjoyable” loaded with two items from socialization and the reliability of the factor was below .6 if the three items were all retained. The “because it is enjoyable” does not seem to correlate well with the other two items and dropping it increases the reliability to .61. Thus, it was dismissed.

Clustered on the third factor were three items “to practice my writing,” “to refine my thinking,” and “because I like writing.” They were expected to load on personal advancement factor and entertainment factors respectively. Since the three items concerned about every aspect of the writing process, the factor was retained.

The item “because it is the thing to do” was expected to load on passing time factor. However, it loaded within the novelty factor along with the other two items “because it is fun to try out new things like blogging” and “to learn about new technology/skills.” Since the overall reliability of the scale was rather low ( $\alpha = .55$ ), the whole factor was dropped from the factor structure.

The rest of the items that loaded on the appropriate components produced seven factors with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from 0.61 through 0.90. Although the reliability of

socialization ( $\alpha = .61$ ) was somewhat below the level of reliability (.70) generally agreed upon (Nunnally, 1978), it is acceptable based on the lower limit (.60) in exploratory research suggested by (Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman, 1991).

This factor analysis process resulted in the identification of seven blogging motivations as follows: (a) self-documentation, (b) improving writing, (c) self-expression, (d) medium appeal, (e) information, (f) passing time, and (g) socialization. The seven retained factors had a cumulative explanation of variance of 65.5%. The factor structure is summarized in Table 4.11.

Three original sets of self-documentation items along with an item from socialization clustered in this factor, “self-documentation.” As stated earlier, “to keep in touch with my family/friends” suggests recording and sharing the latest information about the blogger with family and friends. These variables correspond to the characteristics of a content motivation by focusing on blogging about specific topics. The second factor, “information,” consisted only of those originally postulated as a single factor. Bloggers post to share useful information with others or contribute to the pool of information on the Internet. The factor indicates gratifications obtained from spreading content appropriate to be shared with others. The third factor, “improve writing,” consists of two statements from the original personal advancement (“to practice my writing” and “to refine my thinking”) and one item from entertainment (“because I like writing”). These items indicate purpose of self-advancement that is closely related with writing process and thus should be classified as a process gratification.

**Table 4.11 Factor Analysis for Blogging Motivations**

Blogging Motivation Items “I blog...”	Blogging Motivations						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Factor 1: Self-documentation</b>							
to keep a record of what I learn	.79						
to keep track of what I am doing	.78						
to document my life	.68						
to keep in touch with my family/friends	.65						
<b>Factor 2: Improving Writing</b>							
to practice my writing		.89					
to refine my thinking		.84					
because I like writing		.70					
<b>Factor 3: Self-expression</b>							
to show my personality			.82				
to tell others about myself			.76				
<b>Factor 4: Medium Appeal</b>							
because I can publish at any time				.81			
because it is easy to update				.78			
because I can access it wherever I am				.60			
<b>Factor 5: Information</b>							
to provide information					.83		
to share information useful to other people					.83		
to present information on my interests					.67		
<b>Factor 6: Passing Time</b>							
because it helps pass the time						.93	
when I have nothing better to do						.91	
<b>Factor 7: Socialization</b>							
to feel like I am part of a community							.71
to meet new people							.67
Mean	4.69	5.79	4.93	5.21	5.65	3.57	4.46
Standard Deviation	1.48	1.20	1.52	1.21	1.12	1.68	1.45
$\alpha$	.80	.81	.75	.72	.73	.90	.61
Eigenvalue	5.61	2.74	2.06	1.56	1.44	1.29	1.02
Variance Explained (%)	23.38	11.43	8.60	6.51	6.00	5.35	4.23

“Medium appeal,” the fourth factor, confirmed the presupposed factor by having three items with the highest overall load in this study. The factor describes two medium advantages that bloggers can blog anytime and anywhere as well as ease of updating. “Socialization” is the fifth factor in which two of the three original items were retained. These variables demonstrated bloggers’ aim of socializing with online community and thus they were process-related. Two of the three original items characterized the sixth factor, “passing time.” Bloggers regarded blogging as a channel to pass time and thus this factor was a process gratification. The final factor, “self-expression” emerged as a replicate of the original factor. This factor suggested a process gratification.

#### **4.2.2. Factor Strength**

In addition to investigating the prominence of those blogging motivations in terms of common variance each motivation accounts for, mean scores that were calculated from the primary loadings of the seven factors indicate how much the proposed motivations represent one individual’s reasons for blogging. A scale for each motivation was created by summing up the responses to the items loading on the corresponding factor. The mean scores range from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Table 4.12 displays the blogging motivations and the average score of each motivation.

**Table 4.12 Blogging Motivations Scale**

Blogging Motivation Items "I blog..."	Factor Score	
	Mean	SD
<b>Factor 1: Self-documentation</b>	<b>4.69</b>	<b>1.48</b>
to keep a record of what I learn	4.72	1.79
to keep track of what I am doing	4.89	1.73
to document my life	4.98	1.95
to keep in touch with my family/friends	4.18	2.00
<b>Factor 2: Improving Writing</b>	<b>5.79</b>	<b>1.20</b>
to practice my writing	5.57	1.62
to refine my thinking	5.83	1.41
because I like writing	5.98	1.19
<b>Factor 3: Self-expression</b>	<b>4.93</b>	<b>1.52</b>
to show my personality	5.09	1.65
to tell others about myself	4.77	1.71
<b>Factor 4: Medium Appeal</b>	<b>5.21</b>	<b>1.21</b>
because I can publish at any time	5.75	1.29
because it is easy to update	5.05	1.55
because I can access it wherever I am	4.84	1.67
<b>Factor 5: Information</b>	<b>5.65</b>	<b>1.12</b>
to provide information	5.49	1.54
to share information useful to other people	5.75	1.27
to present information on my interests	5.70	1.35
<b>Factor 6: Passing Time</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>1.68</b>
because it helps pass the time	3.53	1.75
when I have nothing better to do	3.61	1.79
<b>Factor 7: Socialization</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>1.45</b>
to feel like I am part of a community	4.38	1.77
to meet new people	4.53	1.64

Note. 1=Strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Somewhat agree 4=Neither agree nor disagree  
5=Somewhat disagree 6=Disagree 7=Strongly disagree

Nearly all factors had means above four. The only exception was blogging as a way of passing time when bloggers have nothing better to do. The mean score was only 3.56 ( $SD = 1.68$ ), indicating a tendency to slightly disapprove it as a reason for blogging. Improving writing was the most favorable reason,  $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ . The following motivations were information ( $M = 5.65$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) and medium appeal ( $M = 5.21$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ), self-expression ( $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ), self-documentation ( $M = 4.69$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ), and socialization ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ).

*Correlations between blogging motivations.* Rubin and Rubin (1985) posited that motivations for media use were interrelated structures. Pearson's correlation analyses were run to examine the interrelationship among blogging motivations. Table 4.13 depicts the blogging motive correlation matrix.

Most blogging motives are moderately interrelated. The three exceptions included information and self-documentation, information and self-expression, and improving writing with passing time. The most salient correlations were found among the three motives: self-documentation, self-expression, and socialization. Bloggers record what happens to them to use the events as materials for self-expression, and thus achieving socialization with others. Medium appeal had a relatively strong correlation with self-documentation. Bloggers who used blogs as an electronic notebook perceived the convenience brought by the medium.

**Table 4.13 Blogging Motivation Correlation Matrix**

<b>Motivations</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Self-documentation	1.00						
Improving Writing	.24**	1.00					
Self-expression	.50**	.28**	1.00				
Medium Appeal	.38**	.28**	.26**	1.00			
Information	.06	.14*	.09	.23**	1.00		
Passing Time	.24**	-.07	.23**	.14*	-.14*	1.00	
Socialization	.34**	.15**	.38**	.22**	.24**	.19**	1.00

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### 4.2.3. Demographic Differences in Blogging Motivations

Research Question 2a aims to explore the relationship between demographics and blogging motivations. Correlations between age and motivations were examined by Pearson's correlation analysis. Age was found to be negatively related with such motivations as self-documentation,  $r = -.23, p < .01$ , self-expression,  $r = -.26, p < .01$ , and passing time,  $r = -.26, p < .01$ . Younger bloggers would be more likely motivations by documenting their life, expressing themselves, and passing time than the older. ANOVA tests did not discover any differences in motivations in bloggers with diverse educational background.

Independent samples  $t$  tests were run to examine the gender differences in blogging motivations (see Table 4.14). Men and women did not exhibit differences for blogging to improve their writing, blogging for medium appeal, and blogging to socialize. Four of the seven motivations that demonstrated significant gender differences were self-documentation,  $t(278) = 6.20, p < .001$ , self-expression,  $t(278) = 3.49, p < .001$ , information,  $t(278) = -3.07, p < .01$ , and passing time,  $t(278) = 2.34, p < .05$ . Men were more inspired by the motive of providing information to others than women. On the contrary, women were more motivated to blog in order to document their own life, express themselves, and pass time.

**Table 4.14 Gender Differences for Blogging Motivations**

<b>Motivations</b>	<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>		<b>t</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	
Improving writing	5.79	1.20	5.79	1.20	ns
Information	5.43	1.22	5.84	1.00	-3.07**
Medium appeal	5.33	1.22	5.11	1.20	ns
Self-expression	5.26	1.43	4.64	1.54	3.49***
self-documentation	5.24	1.17	4.22	1.56	6.20***
Socialization	4.62	1.41	4.31	1.47	ns
Passing time	3.83	1.68	3.36	1.66	2.34*

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### 4.3. PREDICTORS OF BLOGGING BEHAVIORS

#### 4.3.1. Predictors of Topics Choice on Blogs

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to explore Research Question 3a on the applicability of motivations and demographics as predictors for specific topics covered by blogs (see Table 4.15).

#### 4.3.2. Predictors of Bloggers' Feedback Management

Research Question 3b explores two aspects of feedback management: how bloggers reply to comments and how they use trackbacks (see Table 4.16). Three blocks of independent variables were used in multiple regressions: demographics, use of the Internet, and motivations for blogging.

*Predictors of comment use.* The multiple regression was not statistically significant,  $p = .38$ . The results are not presented here.

*Predictors of trackback use.* The three demographics entered on step one explained 4.9% of the trackback use variance,  $F(3, 264) = 4.44, p = .005$ . Age was detected as a significant positive predictor,  $p < .01$ . The four Internet use variables entered on step two accounted for only 3.5% additional variance and were not significant,  $p = .11$ . The seven motivations entered on step three explained additionally 8.3% of the trackback use variance,  $F(14, 265) = 2.92, p = .001$ . Age remained as a significant predictor. Self-documentation was the only negative predictor,  $p < .001$ . At the conclusion of the analysis, age ( $\beta = .18, p < .05$ ) was the only positive predictor while self-documentation predicated in a negative direction ( $\beta = -.33, p < .001$ ).

**Table 4.15 Correlations among Blog Topics and Blogging Motivations**

Topics	Self-documentation	Improving writing	Self-expression	Medium appeal	Information	Passing time	Socialization
Entertainment	.16**	.02	.20**	.04	.01	.26**	.04
Sports	.07	.05	.08	.06	-.02	.09	-.01
Education/academics	.07	.15*	.04	.08	.05	.01	-.04
Business	-.23**	-.11	-.06	.07	.20**	-.11	-.01
Politics/politicians	-.21**	.13	-.16**	-.05	.09	.05	-.06
Technology/science	.06	-.09	-.05	.08	.24**	.03	-.00
Arts/culture	.14*	.19**	.12*	.08	.04	.04	.01
Interests/hobbies	.43**	.04	.36**	.12*	.11	.16**	.10
Family/friends	.54**	.07	.42**	.10	-.25**	.19**	.16**
Creative work	.32**	.10	.31**	.12*	.16**	.08	.14*
Personal experience	.53**	.12*	.43**	.19**	-.20**	.17**	.16**

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4.16 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Trackback Use**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	.13	.15*	.05
Age	.22**	.27***	.18*
Education	-.02	.03	.05
Internet use history		-.16*	-.12
Frequency of internet use		-.02	-.03
Weekly online hours		.12	.10
Computer skills		.05	.08
Self-documentation			-.33***
Improving writing			.13
Self-expression			-.02
Medium appeal			.07
Information			.04
Passing time			-.03
Socialization			.14
R <sup>2</sup>	.064	.098	.181
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.049	.065	.119
R <sup>2</sup> change	.064	.035	.083
F-value	4.443	2.989	2.918
F-value significance	.005	.005	.001
Sig. of change	.005	.112	.012

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Predictors of bloggers' perceptions of feedback importance.* Bloggers' perception of importance of feedback from readers and other bloggers can be positively predicted by Socialization motivation,  $\beta = .40, p < .001$ , and Information motivation,  $\beta = .17, p < .01$ . Self-documentation motivation predicted negatively,  $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ . The three predictors can explain 26.4% of the variance,  $F(14, 265) = 8.17, p < .001$  (see Table 4.17).

### **4.3.3. Predictors of Hyperlinks Use on Blogs**

Hierarchical multiple regressions were used to explore Research Question 3 on the applicability of motivations as predictors for specific interactive features on blogs.

*Predictors of in-text hyperlinks on blogs.* One aspect of Research Question 3b aims to determine what accounts for usage of in-text hyperlinks. The dependent variable was the frequency of linking to online resources when composing blog posts. The results are shown respectively in Table 4.18.

The final analysis was statistically significant,  $F(14, 265) = 8.27, p < .001$ . Motivational predictors as information ( $\beta = .24, p < .001$ ), socialization ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ) along with gender ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ) and weekly Internet use time ( $\beta = .18, p < .001$ ) predicted positively the frequency of using in-text hyperlinks. Self-expression was the only negative predictor ( $\beta = -.23, p < .001$ ). They explained 26.7% of the variance.

**Table 4.17 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Bloggers' Perceptions of Feedback Importance**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	.11	.12	.04
Age	.11	.12	.05
Education	.05	.06	.04
Internet use history		-.08	.01
Frequency of internet use		.11	.02
Weekly online hours		.06	.03
Computer skills		.03	.04
Self-documentation			-.30***
Improving writing			.10
Self-expression			.12
Medium appeal			.03
Information			.17**
Passing time			-.01
Socialization			.40***
R <sup>2</sup>	.033	.054	.301
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.023	.029	.264
R <sup>2</sup> change	.033	.020	.248
F-value	3.176	2.202	8.165
F-value significance	.025	.034	.000
Sig. of change	.025	.216	.000

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4.18 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for in-text Hyperlinks on Blogs**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	.35***	.32***	.23***
Age	.10	.12*	.03
	.08	.08	.08
Internet use history		.04	.06
Frequency of internet use		.03	.01
Weekly online hours		.14*	.18***
Computer skills		.09	.07
Self-documentation			-.04
Improving writing			.10
Self-expression			-.23***
Medium appeal			-.08
Information			.24***
Passing time			-.04
Socialization			.15*
R <sup>2</sup>	.15	.19	.30
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.14	.17	.27
R <sup>2</sup> change	.15	.04	.11
F-value	16.65	9.16	8.27
F-value significance	.000	.000	.000
Sig. of change	.000	.015	.000

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Predictors of hyperlinks in blogrolls.* The multiple regression using the number of links organized in blogrolls as dependent variable was statistically significant,  $F(14, 265) = 4.45, p < .001$  (see Table 4.19). Socialization ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ) as motivation predictor along with age ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ), education ( $\beta = .12, p < .05$ ) and weekly Internet use time ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ) predicted positively the tendency of including more hyperlinks in blogrolls. Self-expression was the only negative predictor ( $\beta = -.20, p < .01$ ). The predictors combined to account for 13.0% of the variance.

#### **4.3.4. Predictors of Self-Presentation**

Research Question 3d attempts to investigate the relationship between motivations and disclose of personal information on blogs. Independent sample  $t$  tests were run to examine the diverse level of motivations among the groups with different strategies of self-identification and self-revelation.

*Predictors of identification with names.* As for self-identification on blogs, bloggers have options to use real names or such other forms as variants of real names or pseudonyms. 146 respondents claimed to use their real names while the rest did not. The result of  $t$  test indicated no significant differences were detected in such motivations as self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, and socialization. However, bloggers using real names claimed to be more motivated by informational gratifications than those who do not use real names,  $t(280) = -3.32, p < .001$ . As a contrast, bloggers who declined to use real names exhibited higher motivations for passing time than their counterparts,  $t(280) = 2.79, p < .01$ .

**Table 4.19 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Hyperlinks in blogrolls**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	.12*	.13*	.12
Age	.18**	.20**	.13*
Education	.13*	.14*	.12*
Internet use history		-.05	-.03
Frequency of internet use		.07	.07
Weekly online hours		.12*	.14*
Computer skills		.02	.00
Self-documentation			.05
Improving writing			-.01
Self-expression			-.20**
Medium appeal			.03
Information			.05
Passing time			-.07
Socialization			.23***
R <sup>2</sup>	.085	.109	.17
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.075	.086	.13
R <sup>2</sup> change	.085	.025	.07
F-value	8.52	4.77	3.99
F-value significance	.000	.000	.000
Sig. of change	.000	.113	.005

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Same patterns were found when bloggers identified people they know in life. Bloggers using real names to identify others claimed to be more motivated by informational gratifications than those who do not,  $t(280) = -3.83, p < .001$ ; they also exhibited lower motivations for passing time than their counterparts,  $t(280) = 2.23, p < .05$ .

*Predictors of identification with photos.* As for the use of photographs for self-identification, differences on self-documentation, self-expression, and socialization motivations were found (see Table 4.20). Bloggers displaying their own photographs claimed to be more motivated by self-documentation,  $t(280) = -5.03, p < .001$ , self-expression,  $t(280) = -4.28, p < .001$ , and socialization,  $t(280) = -2.54, p < .05$ .

As for presenting others' photographs on blogs, the pattern was duplicated and the medium appeal motivation was also included (see Table 4.21). Bloggers who did this obtained higher gratifications on self-documentation,  $t(280) = -7.18, p < .001$ , self-expression,  $t(280) = -4.59, p < .001$ , medium appeal,  $t(280) = -2.34, p < .05$ , and socialization than those who did not,  $t(280) = -2.75, p < .01$ .

*Predictors of self-revelation on blogs.* Hierarchical multiple regression was run to explore predictors for bloggers' disclosure of private content on blogs. The dependent variable was the extent to which bloggers disclose private or confidential information.

Table 4.22 depicts the results.

The self-documentation ( $\beta = .25, p < .001$ ), improving writing ( $\beta = .12, p < .05$ ), self-expression ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ), all in a positive direction, and information motive ( $\beta = -.32, p < .001$ ) in a negative direction, were predictors for disclosure of private information on blogs. They explained 28.4% of the variance,  $F(14, 264) = 8.91, p < .001$ .

**Table 4.20 Predictors for Identification with Bloggers' Own Photos**

<b>Motivations</b>	<b>Using Photos</b>		<b>No Photos</b>		<b><i>t</i></b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	
Self-documentation	5.07	1.248	4.18	1.615	-5.03***
Improving writing	5.76	1.222	5.83	1.181	ns
Self-expression	5.26	1.287	4.47	1.695	-4.28***
Medium appeal	5.33	1.173	5.06	1.256	ns
Information	5.67	1.115	5.62	1.140	ns
Passing time	3.72	1.668	3.38	1.686	ns
Socialization	4.64	1.447	4.20	1.416	-2.54*

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4.21 Predictors for Identification with Others' Photos**

<b>Motivations</b>	<b>Using Photos</b>		<b>No Photos</b>		<b>t</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	
Self-documentation	5.31	1.119	4.16	1.550	-7.18***
Improving writing	5.81	1.175	5.78	1.231	ns
Self-expression	5.35	1.280	4.56	1.622	-4.59***
Medium appeal	5.39	1.168	5.06	1.235	-2.34*
Information	5.72	1.041	5.59	1.191	ns
Passing time	3.67	1.619	3.49	1.733	ns
Socialization	4.71	1.376	4.24	1.478	-2.75**

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4.22 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Personal Content Disclosure**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	-.22***	-.20***	-.04
Age	-.15*	-.13*	.02
Education	.02	.03	.00
Internet use history		-.08	-.07
Frequency of internet use		-.03	-.03
Weekly online hours		.03	.02
Computer skills		-.02	.04
Self-documentation			.25***
Improving writing			.12*
Self-expression			.18**
Medium appeal			.05
Information			-.32***
Passing time			.09
Socialization			-.02
R <sup>2</sup>	.075	.083	.320
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.064	.059	.284
R <sup>2</sup> change	.075	.008	.238
F-value	7.409	3.498	8.912
F-value significance	.000	.001	.000
Sig. of change	.000	.664	.000

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

#### 4.3.5. Predictors of Readership Expectations

Hierarchical multiple regressions were used to explore Research Question 3e on predictors for bloggers' expectations of audiences.

*Predictors of blog promotion.* In this analysis, the ways of promoting blogs used by the respondents were counted as dependent variable. Table 4.23 demonstrates the results.

The self-documentation ( $\beta = -.17, p < .05$ ) negatively predicted bloggers' tendency to promote blogs. In contrast, age ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ), information ( $\beta = .24, p < .001$ ) and socialization ( $\beta = .21, p < .01$ ), all in a positive direction, were predictors. They explained 16.1% of the total variance.

Independent sample *t* tests were conducted to examine the relationship between motivations and targeted readers (see Table 4.24).

*Blog for myself.* Bloggers indicating "I blog for myself" exhibited more motivated by the following motivations than those who did not: self-documentation,  $t(280) = 4.29, p < .001$ , self-expression,  $t(280) = 3.28, p < .001$ , passing time,  $t(280) = 2.10, p < .05$ , and socialization,  $t(280) = 2.48, p < .05$ . On the contrary, those "for-myself" bloggers had a lower level of information motivation,  $t(280) = -2.36, p < .05$ .

*Blog for family.* Bloggers indicating "I blog for my family" exhibited more motivated by self-documentation,  $t(280) = 5.74, p < .001$ , and self-expression,  $t(280) = -2.30, p < .05$ . Two other motivations had marginally statistical significance: medium appeal,  $t(280) = 1.90, p = .54$ , and information,  $t(280) = 1.94, p = .059$ .

**Table 4.23 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Promotion Channels**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	.09	.07	.00
Age	.19**	.20***	.14*
Education	.01	.00	-.01
Internet use history		.04	.09
Frequency of internet use		.04	-.03
Weekly online hours		.11	.11
Computer skills		.07	.05
Self-documentation			-.17*
Improving writing			.04
Self-expression			.05
Medium appeal			.00
Information			.24***
Passing time			-.05
Socialization			.21**
R <sup>2</sup>	.050	.076	.203
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.040	.052	.161
R <sup>2</sup> change	.050	.026	.127
F-value	4.857	3.197	4.816
F-value significance	.003	.003	.000
Sig. of change	.003	.110	.000

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.24 T-test Results of Motivations and Targeted Readers

	Targeted Readers	Self-documentation	Improving writing	Self-expression	Medium appeal	Information	Passing time	Socialization
<b>Myself</b>								
Yes ( <i>n</i> = 223)	4.90	5.86	5.09	5.24	5.57	3.68	4.56	
No ( <i>n</i> = 57)	3.88	5.54	4.30	5.11	5.96	3.16	4.04	
<i>t</i>	4.29***	ns	3.28***	ns	-2.36*	2.10*	2.48*	
<b>Family</b>								
Yes ( <i>n</i> = 102)	5.29	5.90	5.19	5.40	5.81	3.78	4.60	
No ( <i>n</i> = 178)	4.35	5.73	4.78	5.11	5.55	3.46	4.37	
<i>t</i>	5.74***	ns	2.30*	ns	ns	ns	ns	
<b>Friends</b>								
Yes ( <i>n</i> = 186)	5.12	5.92	5.22	5.32	5.73	3.67	4.57	
No ( <i>n</i> = 94)	3.83	5.54	4.36	5.01	5.48	3.38	4.23	
<i>t</i>	7.55***	2.42*	4.30***	2.01*	ns	ns	ns	
<b>Colleagues</b>								
Yes ( <i>n</i> = 81)	4.80	5.80	5.04	5.23	5.96	3.28	4.64	
No ( <i>n</i> = 199)	4.64	5.79	4.88	5.21	5.52	3.69	4.38	
<i>t</i>	ns	ns	ns	ns	2.99**	ns	ns	
<b>Net acquaintances</b>								
Yes ( <i>n</i> = 161)	5.01	5.82	5.17	5.29	5.69	3.75	4.86	
No ( <i>n</i> = 119)	4.26	5.75	4.60	5.11	5.59	3.34	3.91	
<i>t</i>	4.23***	ns	3.08**	ns	ns	2.04*	5.56***	
<b>General Public</b>								
Yes ( <i>n</i> = 206)	4.62	5.85	4.97	5.27	5.84	3.48	4.59	
No ( <i>n</i> = 74)	4.89	5.64	4.80	5.06	5.11	3.83	4.07	
<i>t</i>	ns	ns	ns	ns	4.36***	ns	2.67**	

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Blog for friends.* Those who deemed friends as intended readers demonstrated more inspiration than those who did not by such motivations as self-documentation,  $t(280) = 7.55, p < .001$ , improving writing,  $t(280) = 2.42, p < .05$ , self-expression,  $t(280) = 4.30, p < .001$ , and medium appeal,  $t(280) = 2.01, p < .05$ .

*Blog for colleagues.* The information motivation was the only one that bloggers writing for colleagues scored higher than those who did not do so specifically,  $t(280) = 2.99, p < .01$ .

*Blog for Internet acquaintances.* People who intentionally blogged for their net friends showed higher motivations for self-documentation,  $t(280) = 4.23, p < .001$ , self-expression,  $t(280) = 3.08, p < .01$ , passing time,  $t(280) = 2.04, p < .05$ , and socialization,  $t(280) = 5.56, p < .001$ .

*Blog for general public.* Bloggers who had no intention to reach specific group of readers but anyone who had access to their blogs exhibited more motivated by information,  $t(280) = 4.36, p < .001$ , and socialization,  $t(280) = 2.67, p < .01$ .

*Predictors of server log use.* Table 4.25 depicted the result of the multiple regressions. It demonstrated self-documentation was the only positive predictor,  $\beta = .21, p < .01$ . Improving writing ( $\beta = -.17, p < .05$ ), information ( $\beta = -.15, p < .05$ ) and socialization motivations ( $\beta = -.16, p < .05$ ) were negative predictors. The four variables accounted for only 5.1% of the variance,  $F(14, 265) = 1.99, p < .05$ .

#### **4.3.6. Predictors of Design Elements Usage**

This part attempts to answer Research Question 3f on predictors for bloggers' use of design elements. Independent sample  $t$  tests and Chi-square were used.

**Table 4.25 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Server Log Use**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	-.02	-.04	.04
Age	-.02	-.03	.02
Education	-.05	-.06	-.07
Internet use history		.03	-.01
Frequency of internet use		-.03	.01
Weekly online hours		-.07	-.08
Computer skills		.02	.01
Self-documentation			.21**
Improving writing			-.17*
Self-expression			-.04
Medium appeal			.03
Information			-.15*
Passing time			-.01
Socialization			-.16*
R <sup>2</sup>	.004	.011	.102
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-.008	-.017	.051
R <sup>2</sup> change	.004	.007	.091
F-value	.356	.389	1.985
F-value significance	.785	.908	.019
Sig. of change	.785	.797	.001

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Use of blogging tools.* Commercial and free blogging services were combined to form a category named “non-self-hosting.” Personal blogging tools were relabeled as self-hosting. Bloggers using self-hosting tools indicated stronger information motivation,  $t(280) = 2.07, p < .05$ . They also tended to have higher computer skills than those using non-self-hosting tools,  $t(280) = -5.36, p < .001$ .

*Use of blog templates.* ANOVA results indicate that the bloggers who used the default or alternative blog templates offered by blogging tools claimed a higher level of passing time motivation than those bloggers who modify or totally redesign templates,  $t(280) = 2.07, p < .05$ . No differences on other motivations were observed.

*Use of Add-on applications.* The results of multiple regression indicated socialization was the only positive predictor for bloggers’ use of web applications to enrich interactivity of blogs,  $\beta = .34, p < .001$ . The predictor explained 11.8% of the variance,  $F(14,265) = 3.65, p < .001$  (see Table 4.26).

#### **4.4. SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I presented descriptive data drawn from the sample and results of statistical analysis, which were used to answer research questions and test hypotheses.

This study discovered seven motivations for blogging. The relationship between those motivations and the pattern of blogging were investigated. Self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time, and socialization are the seven gratifications bloggers obtained from online writing. Except for passing time, all the other six motivations were highly endorsed by bloggers. Most of those motivations are moderately correlated.

**Table 4.26 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors for Add-on Applications Use**

<b>Predictor Variables</b>	<b>Regression 1</b>	<b>Regression 2</b>	<b>Regression 3</b>
Gender	-.01	-.01	.01
Age	.12	.15	.10
Education	.07	.09	.06
Internet use history		-.08	-.03
Frequency of internet use		.05	.03
Weekly online hours		.13	.12
Computer skills		.07	.04
Self-documentation			.01
Improving writing			-.10
Self-expression			-.10
Medium appeal			.07
Information			.02
Passing time			-.02
Socialization			.34***
R <sup>2</sup>	.023	.055	.162
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.013	.031	.117
R <sup>2</sup> change	.023	.032	.107
F-value	2.203	2.262	3.647
F-value significance	.088	.030	.000
Sig. of change	.088	.061	.000

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Self-documentation is the motivation that was found to be a predictor for a number of aspects of blogging behavior. Bloggers claiming to be more motivated by self-documentation are more likely to present photos of their own and of those they know in life. They tend to disclose more private content. In terms of their targeted readers, those bloggers claim higher preference to writing for themselves, family, and friends who are in either real life or cyberspace. They tend to read server logs to know their readers and highly value feedback. Conversely, those bloggers would decline to use trackbacks and specific ways to promote their blogs.

Improving writing motivation works as a positive predictor for disclosure of private content. Bloggers with a higher level of improving writing motivation are more inclined to deem friends in life as targeted readers. They are a group who do not pay much attention to server logs.

Self-expression motivation resembles self-documentation in the way it predicts presence of photos of bloggers and their acquaintances. Likewise, bloggers more inspired by self-expression need focus more on such readers as themselves, family, and friends both online and offline. They are less likely to include hyperlinks in either posts or blogrolls but prefer to use personalized blog templates. In terms of interaction with readers, they prefer to use instant messengers.

Medium appeal motivation predicts the tendency to display others' photos and the intentionality of writing for friends. Bloggers, who regard blogs as a convenient medium, tend to use instant messengers to communicate with their readers.

Bloggers with higher information motivation are more likely to use their own and others' real names for identification. They state a lower tendency to blog for themselves

but a higher inclination for colleagues and general public. As a result, those bloggers are more likely to write impersonal content. They tend to include in-text hyperlinks and employ more channels to promote their blogs. Those bloggers exhibit more concerns for popularity. In terms of technical facilities, they tend to build blogs on their own web hosting instead of services provided by third-party.

Passing time motivation predicts, in a negative direction, presence of real names of oneself and other people. Bloggers who blog to kill time are less likely to use personalized template than those who maintain for more specific purposes. They show a high inclination to blog for themselves and friends in cyberspace. They also tend to be contacted through instant messenger.

Socialization motivation indicates a higher propensity to more often include hyperlinks in posts and maintain a longer list of links in blogrolls. Those bloggers with stronger socialization motivation would be more likely to present their own and friends' photos on blogs. They also tend to use a variety of channels to promote their blogs. The readers they intend to reach are more likely to be themselves, online friends, and anyone who has access to the Internet. They are less likely to read server logs but they use more add-ons to enrich the functions of blogs. In terms of contact information, they show a propensity to use of email and instant messenger.

Gender differences were located in many aspects of blogging. In terms of motivations for blogging, men claim higher approval of motive to provide information to others than women. Conversely, women are more motivated by documenting own lives, expressing themselves, and passing time when they have nothing better to do.

Women tend to write about personal topics while men are more into coverage of public events or remote topics. In terms of particular topics, women write about their interests or hobbies, family and friends, their own creative work, and personal experiences more often than men. Men, on the other hand, are more interested in topics such as technology and science, politics and politicians, and business.

Men are more prone to use their own real names for identification while women prefer a more implicit way by using variants of real names or simply pseudonyms. However, women tend to present their own and others' photos on blogs while men are less likely to do the same. In addition, women would like to disclose more personal content than men.

Men are more likely to offer in-text links and send trackbacks than women. Women use default templates more frequently while men preferred to modify existing templates or design their own from scratch.

Gender gap was also discovered in attitudes towards importance of feedback in the blogosphere. Generally men outnumber women in perception of feedback importance. The only exception is that women value readers' comments more than men.

One of the most important intended readers of a female blogger is herself. She would write for friends too. Men focus more on colleagues. Furthermore they would be more likely to suppose anyone could be their reader while women preferred more specified readers.

Other than gender, age also plays a role in motivating people to blog. Motivations as self-documentation, self-expression, and passing time have a negative relationship with age. Educational level was found no connection with specific blogging motivations.

In the next chapter, the results will be interpreted. The strengths and limitations of this research will be discussed along with directions for future research on blogs.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

The purposes of the study are: (a) obtain an overview on pattern of blogging, (b) find out underlying motivations for bloggers' behaviors, and (c) explore the roles of motivations as well as demographics as predictors for the way people maintain blogs. This chapter is organized as follows: the first section will cover the author's interpretations of the research results and the second half will discuss the significance of the study, strengths and limitations, and suggestion for future studies.

### **5.1. PROFILE OF BLOGGERS: WHO ARE BLOGGING**

During the past five years, the blogosphere has experienced a "population explosion" of bloggers and blog readers. Twenty-seven percent of the 120 million U.S. adults who use the Internet say they read blogs and 7% of them claim to have created a blog (Rainie, 2005). In this sense, blogs can be examined as currently undergoing the diffusion process, as defined and elaborated by Everett Rogers in his seminal work, *The Diffusion of Innovation* (1995).

To better know adult bloggers as a group, descriptive data were gathered to draw profiles for adult bloggers. In this study, men represented the majority of the adult blogger population (54%), but the male prevalence is not as significant as that (71%) drawn from A-list bloggers (Keshelashvili, 2004). The gender ratio of adult bloggers is different from Perseus study's (Henning, 2003) estimation that women mainly maintain blogs. It is noticeable that Perseus study included bloggers from a variety of age groups, with

teenagers forming the majority of the sample. An interesting demographic pattern emerged that female in adolescence and male in adulthood form the greater part of the blogging community within their respective age groups. Also, the results suggest that gender gap among adult bloggers is diminishing but male adults are still much more likely to draw attention from public discourse than women. This can be partially explained by the fact that men tend to blog about such topics as politics, business, and technology, which are deemed by mass media as professional and significant. Moreover, it leaves room for future researchers to study the social and institutional factors accounting for the spotlight on male adult bloggers and offer solutions to eliminate the media bias.

Compared with gender, age may serve as a better clue to predict whether a person is a blogger or not. The age gap in blogging can be partially explained by the extant digital divide on computer use caused by age. However, factors responsible for the relative inactivity of senior adults as bloggers, especially given the technical barriers being removed gradually, should be explored. People in younger age groups have been gaining academic attention gradually (e.g. Herring et al., 2004; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Scheidt, in press) while seniors are still somewhat overlooked by the academy. Studies on what keeps the senior from blogging would inform institutions offering blogging tools and services of solutions to get more senior citizens involved in blogging.

Additionally, a typical adult blogger is supposed to have these characteristics: senior Internet user with regular access to the Internet, college-level education, and above-average computer literacy. These characteristics, along with being male and young, fit well with the stereotypical image of an early adopter of new information and communication technology (Rogers, 1995). Blogs have been hyped as the representative

grass roots medium which has the potential to smash mass media's monopoly and make everybody a publisher. However, blogs are still on their way to obtain popularity among people from all walks of life, especially those who are deemed as digital right have-nots. This study along with other research covering demographic composition of bloggers would help future researchers to analyze the adoption process of blogs.

## **5.2. PATTERN OF BLOGGING: HOW PEOPLE BLOG**

Despite the simplicity of publishing a blog granted by advancement of technology, the process of maintaining a blog is still a complicated manifold activity. Before building up a blog, bloggers should have an anticipation of “what I can do with the blog” and “who will read my blog.” The former question can be translated into blogging motivations, while the latter one indicates expectation for readership. The audience expectation can determine accessibility of blogs that whether the blog is open to the public or access is restricted to authorized readers. On the stage of setting up a blog, bloggers need to make choices on appropriate blogging tools or services, as well as such design elements of blogs as templates. In the process of writing, bloggers write about any topic of interest they have, which determines how the type the blog is classified. Also, bloggers choose to link to online resources for different ends: giving credit where it is due, providing detailed supplementary information, exhibiting membership of online communities, or simply using those links as bookmarks. Since blogs are a venue for presenting oneself, bloggers choose to establish self image by directly tell readers something about themselves or indirectly expressing standpoints towards some issues to give some hints through. To sum up, the use of blogs is a complex act and thus should be explored from multiple perspectives.

The process of blogging was divided into six fields for analysis in this research: 1) how bloggers cover a variety of topics; 2) how bloggers manage readers' feedbacks; 3) how bloggers use hyperlinks; 4) how bloggers present themselves on blogs; 5) how bloggers expect readership; 6) how bloggers use design elements of blogs.

### **5.2.1. Blog Topic Preferences**

In terms of topics discussed on blogs, internal topics, which deliver blogger's experience and work, relationship with friends and family, and intimate feelings are the most popular among adult bloggers. The finding is consistent with topic preferences of teenagers (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005) and A-list bloggers (Keshelashvili, 2004). External topics such as reflections and comments on politics, technology, and other public events were not as popular among adult bloggers as the image formed by mass media. In this sense, blogs resemble diaries while bloggers should be more cautious about the appropriateness of content since public access is available.

Herring et al. (in press) concluded that women more often tend to create journal-style blogs. The statement was translated into two hypotheses in this study that men are more likely to blog about external topics while women prefer internal topics. Gender comparison confirmed the hypotheses. In addition, this serves as partial explanation for frame constructed by media that the prevalence of men as A-list bloggers. However, the gender differences are not strong enough to justify media's overemphasis on coverage of male-authored blogs since men still maintain a relative high level of coverage on internal topics. These results, again, reiterated the needs for future studies on relationship between bloggers and the media to investigate how the media select bloggers to be representatives of the blogosphere.

### 5.2.2. Feedback Management

Feedbacks from readers help to expand the discussion aroused by bloggers, offer broad perspective to examine the certain issue, provide complementary information, show support or disapproval of some viewpoints, and start interpersonal interaction between bloggers and readers. In the blogosphere, feedbacks are highly valued and deemed as indispensable component of a blog. The propensity is supported by the fact that comment function is available on all most blogs and bloggers typically respond to comments frequently and in a timely fashion.

Trackbacks, requiring extra technical efforts to set up and use, are hypothesized to be more likely to be sent out by men than women. The hypothesis was marginally supported but it is worth mentioning that as many as half of the bloggers hardly send trackbacks. Some reasons are suggested to explain the relative unpopularity compared with comments. First, trackback is a relatively complex concept to understand since it moves beyond the level of usage and requires knowledge about server-side operations. Bloggers' computer skills influence their perception of this feature function. The lack of cognition will lead to infrequent use. This is also the rationale underlying the hypothesis since men usually possess higher computer literacy than women. Second, advantages of trackbacks are not as evident as comments, which can be directly displayed right below the post entry and integrated into a part of the discussion. Content of trackbacks can only be obtained by clicking the link and then readers will be redirected to the web page where feedback post entry was stored. Moreover, blogger's response to the trackback has to be posted either on the original post or where the trackback was sent from. Either way cannot form the continuous discussions as those achieved by comments. Nevertheless, trackbacks are

advantageous in aggregating topic-centered discussions and can serve as connectors between blogs. Advancement of trackbacks and studies on its application are needed to explore its function and thus enhance popularity among bloggers.

A scale measuring blogger's perception toward importance of various feedbacks disclosed interesting pattern in gender differences. Though found to be less sensitive to feedbacks than men, women claimed comments from readers outweigh the size of readerships, trackbacks from other blogs, and being linked or mentioned by other bloggers, which were deemed of higher importance by men. Comments imply more interpersonal connections and are regarded more intimate than other feedbacks. While readership and being links or credited suggest popularity among others. These results suggest that women care more about using blogs as a interpersonal communication channel while men emphasizes on the attributes of blogs having potential to be "mass media." This finding can lead to multifold studies on blogs as the combination of interpersonal and mass communication.

### **5.2.3. Hyperlinks Uses**

Findings on use of hyperlinks indicate that in-text linking is becoming a spontaneous and routine activity in blogging. Most bloggers insert in-text links to enrich the interactivity of contents and provide information as much as possible. Linking to external web sites and bloggings also strengthen the connectivity among blogs. However, examination on use of bloggings implies that enrolling into existing blog communities are still acts of a minority of bloggers. Most blogs are not affiliated with any online community in which a group of bloggers with mutual interests or characteristics gather. This could

evoke future research on how a blog coordinates its role as an individual's outlet as well as a member of communities.

#### **5.2.4. Self-presentation on Blogs**

Though blogs as a whole are a venue for self-presentation, self-revelation on blogs is the relatively evident way to indicate blogger's identity. Self-revelation in this research is two-fold: it includes disclosure of own personal information as well as social circle the blogger belongs to. As many as half of all bloggers elected to use their real names and pictures on their blogs. This is contrary to the common-held perception that the cyberspace is anonymous. However, bloggers are more cautious when mentioning about those they know in life so the majority of them choose not to use real names or photos of those in their life circle.

In terms of presenting contact means on blogs, Emails are still the most prevalent contact means and followed by instant messages. It is noteworthy that, though missing from the list of available contact methods, comments as a form of contact were suggested by some bloggers. The most common contact methods used by bloggers are all web-based.

Another aspect of self-presentation is the confidentiality of blog content. Unsurprisingly, most bloggers did not disclose much private information in writing. The publicity of blogs plays an important role in bloggers' decision about the extent to which they write about personal topics.

The hypothesis that men are more likely to present personal information was only partially supported by their use of own real names. Contrary to prediction, women were more likely to display pictures, either their own or of an acquaintance, and write about more private content. The findings seem to be in conflict with the notion that women are

less likely to release private information on the Internet than men (Kehoe et al., 1997). However, gender differences in perception of blogs suggest explanation of the disparities. Female are more likely to deem a blog as an isolated online identity, which is not closely connected with their offline identity. They are more open to readers in terms of what they disclose in posts, while they are more reserved when giving out clues to their offline identities. In contrast, men regard blogs as an extension of their offline identity in the cyberspace. They use offline identity to support their images online and expect the online images would reciprocally enhance offline identity. Future studies can examine the supposition and investigate how perceptions of blogs influence blogging behaviors.

#### **5.2.5. Readership Expectation**

Examination of bloggers' readership expectations is consistent with previous discussions of women' perception of blogs as an interpersonal communication channel, while that of men as "mass media." Women were more likely to deem themselves and friends as targeted readers while men expected the general public and colleagues. The hypothesis that men more often track blog readers by referring to server logs was not supported in that tracking readers is not a frequent act either for men or women. However, gender differences emerged in ways of promoting blogs. Men were more likely to submit blogs to search engines or exchange links with other web sites. These two means are purposely conducted for the mere aim to attract more readers, suggesting male bloggers' stronger intention to be popular in the blogosphere.

### **5.2.6. Uses of Design Elements**

Design elements used on blogs are a visual presentation of bloggers. Despite the notion of popularity of blogging host services and significant size of users, personal hosting tools were found to be the most widely used blogging tools used by adult bloggers. This can be explained by the fact that young bloggers may be more likely to use blogging hosts, as they are easier to set up and maintain. For adults, functions and flexibility outweigh convenience and simplicity as bloggers and readers would deem using personal blogging platforms as more professional. This leaves room for future research on blogs from the perspective of the tools per se: how the technical advantages and requirements shape blogger's choice of blogging tools.

In terms of template usage, originality and uniqueness is valued in that most adults tend to modify templates or design their own. Add-on applications are also widely used by most bloggers to enhance interactivity of blogs. Gender differences were located in usage of personalized template but missed in usage of add-ons. The most possible reason is the difference of computer skills. Attaching add-ons to blogs requires less computer literacy than working with programming codes to change templates. The findings would urge blogging tools developers to develop more user-friendly ways to personalize blogs, which would serve those with minor computer skills while still leave space for those with advanced computer literacy.

### **5.3. MOTIVATIONS FOR BLOGGING: WHY PEOPLE BLOG**

The study takes an initial look at the uses and gratifications of blogs. Uses-and-gratifications approach has been acknowledged as a valuable perspective for studies on audience motivations and behaviors in the context of media users as merely

information consumers. Despite the literal meaning of core notion “audience activity” in the uses-and-gratifications approach, it is expected that the approach can be extended into studies on blogs because bloggers play roles as active medium users. This thesis project followed the previous research on bloggers’ motivations while applied the most widely used methodology in the uses-and-gratifications studies—self reports from bloggers.

Reasons for blogging can be categorized into seven motivations:

self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time, and socialization. Most of the seven motivations are related to each other.

Self-documentation exhibits the function of blog as a combination of diary; notebook and a mailing list for those bloggers want to keep others posted on their up-to-date news. Bloggers, like diarists in print-media-prevalent time, write down what happens to them and ponder things they run into in life. Keeping a diary is a spontaneous activity and works as a way to fill spare time in some occasions. The moderate relationship between self-documentation and passing time motivations can be a proof that blogs resemble writing journals in this aspect. Additionally, blogs are used as a tool of knowledge management—bloggers keep a record of what they learn, what they think, and what they find useful on the Internet. In this case, blogs function as a notebook, a tape recorder, and a bookmark collection. In addition to the functions that focus on self-use, bloggers take advantage of the easy accessibility to keep in touch with friends and family. The dissemination of a blog URL is likened to the more established ways as snail mails, phone calls, and emails. Undoubtedly, blogging about the latest information is more convenient, as the process of duplicating information to reach different subjects is simplified to direct people to where available information can be readily obtained.

In the world that is getting more and more mobile, blogs are becoming a complementary interpersonal communication method by which people stay connected with one another. Blogging about oneself to keep others posted on latest news explains the correlation between self-documentation and socialization motives. It is evident that self-documentation motivation is based on the perception that blogs are a medium, which can facilitate storage and dissemination of information. The correlation between self-documentation and medium appeal ( $r = .38, p < .001$ ) supports the assertion.

Improving writing is developed from the a priori personal advancement motivation. In spite of the development of photo blog, 'podcasting', and video blogs, text-based blogs are still the most pervasive blog form and blogging is still largely equal to writing. Writing is an enjoyable activity for most bloggers. They blog to practice writing, in hopes of refining their thinking process. In this sense, blogging is an instrumental activity combined with interests. Inasmuch as this is the case, improving writing motivation should not correlate with ritual motivation like passing time. The correlation analyses support the presumption that improving writing associates positively with all the motivations other than passing time. Generally blogs are free of access restrictions, so bloggers would expect the writing practice is more a presentation open to evaluation from readers and bloggers than merely a narcissistic action. The relationship between writing advancement, medium appeal, and socialization indicate that bloggers make full use of the instant-publishing characteristics and feedback feature to improve the impact of their writing skills.

Self-expression may be the most prominent feature in the public perception towards blogs. Blogs are acknowledged as venues where online self-identities are created and maintained by individuals. By and large, the extent to which an individual's needs to

express oneself can be satisfied depends on personal and social circumstances around the individual. The concern of being identified, the risk of privacy detriment, limits of expression channels, and other internal and external factors may influence the way people express themselves. It is not exaggerated to state that the introduction of blogs grants individuals the possibility of systematic self-presentation. On blogs, bloggers tell their own stories, discuss hobbies and interests, express opinions towards events and issues of personal interest, and present creative works. In addition to blogging topics, bloggers personalize the look of blogs to make them a unique aspect of self-presentation. In terms of both forms and content, personalities of bloggers are often reflected in their blogs.

Medium appeal is a unique motivation that is getting scholarly attention for the new attributes of new media. Medium appeal of blogs lies on the practical advantage of the Internet and technical innovations of blog tools. Similar to other forms of computer-mediated communication, blogs can be accessed by anyone with Internet access and thus have a huge population of potential readers. The production and publication of blogs are facilitated by blogging tools and require only basic computer skills, which most Internet users have obtained. With the aid of mobile Internet access facilities, bloggers can publish content wherever and whenever they can access the Internet. The inherent comment system of blogs integrates feedback mechanism seamlessly into the blogging process and enables the establishment of online communities connecting bloggers and readers. Hyperlinks in post entries as well as trackbacks connect blogs on a higher level—blogs with topics in common can be connected to form a large scale of community. Since medium appeal associates with all other motivations positively, the motivation

represents the technical advantages of blogs, which facilitate the blogging process in whole.

Information motivation in the use of the Internet or World Wide Web emphasizes the gratifications sought for surveillance from the perspective of audience as information consumers; the information motivation for blogging stresses the satisfaction gained from providing information to others instead. Information needs can be met by sharing one's collection as a byproduct of self-documentation or by presenting information specifically collected and selected in purpose of serving readers. The latter develops to a particular type of blog defined by scholars as filter blogs. Quite different from biographical or personal blogs, which concentrate on down-to-earth topics concerning personal experiences and emotions, filter blogs usually focus on relatively remote and external topics that are generally outside of the bloggers' personal identity. The images of filter bloggers resemble editors in traditional media who filter large quantity of information and extract those of most use to readers. Though filter bloggers' personality and identity can be reflected from blog posts explicitly or implicitly, their personal traits are usually not directly exhibited in blog content. The detachment of self-representation from information motivation-driven blogs can be confirmed by the fact that information motivation does not correlate with self-documentation and self-expression motivation. As an instrumental motivation, information motive is negatively related with passing time.

Passing time, defined as the only ritual motivation, is also the single motivation that was not commonly approved by bloggers. In consideration of the efforts needed to blog, blogging is a far less relaxing activity than watching television, listening to radio, or surfing the World Wide Web.

Socialization exhibits an important aspect of blogs as a platform to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships. The characteristics of the Internet as combination of mass communication and interpersonal communication provide the technical foundation for the establishment of interpersonal channel. The interactivity between bloggers and readers as well as the interconnectivity among blogs pave the way for building topic-based or blog-centered community. Bloggers expect to meet readers who can share interests in common or exchange opinions towards certain issues. Socialization can be deemed as the extension of self-expression motivation in that the presence of oneself on blogs suggests potential audiences as receiver for the expression. The audience expectation can be related with information motivation for its altruistic end. In fact, socialization motive positively correlates with all the other six motivations.

Motivations for media use are presupposed to be affected by personal and social circumstances around media users. In this study, the demographics such as gender, age, and education level were included to examine the relationship between specific motivation and demographical characteristics. Male and female bloggers indicate different level of such motivations as self-documentation, self-expression, information, and passing time. Quite consistent from the image that women tend to be personal blog authors while men are more prone to write filter blogs (Herring et al., in press), women exhibited higher level of self-documentation and self-expression while men prefer information motivation. Additionally, women claimed a higher propensity to blog in purpose of passing time by. Since the two self-serving motives are positively related with passing time motivation while information is negative associated, women express a higher tendency to blog as a way for diversion while men see blogging more an instrumental activity.

Herring et al.'s (in press) findings that teenage bloggers tend to be personal blog authors is extensively supported by the pattern that younger adults approved motivations of self-documentation, self-expression, and passing time more than their senior counterparts. However, no differences of motivations were observed among bloggers with various educational backgrounds. In this sense, blogs can overcome the possible knowledge gap caused by educational attainments and satisfy all levels of bloggers.

#### **5.4. PREDICTING BLOGGING BEHAVIORS**

One research purpose is to investigate the roles of motivations and demographics as predictors for blogging behaviors. Surprisingly, neither the motivations nor demographics work as predictors for bloggers' response to readers' comments. What accounts for this should be an issue for future research. Use of trackbacks is negatively predicated by self-documentation motivation. The negative relationship between trackback use and self-documentation can be partially explained by the feature of trackback. Trackback works as a notice for relevant information and servers to build a collection of blog posts on similar topic. Since bloggers with higher self-documentation usually blog about something they regard useful, they would be less likely to join discussion on certain topics with other bloggers so the function of trackbacks is of less importance to them. Perception towards importance of feedback is an important index to measure how bloggers think of interpersonal communication achieved by blogging. Self-documentation is negatively related, while information and socialization are positively related with bloggers' perception on importance of feedback. The findings are easy to understand in that bloggers write to document about self do not necessarily expect feedback from readers. Blogging is more an individual activity thus does not invite participation of others. Information

motivation implies the end to serve other thus feedback is of importance. Socialization motivation undoubtedly welcomes communication between bloggers and readers.

Bloggers who are more inspired by socialization motivation are more likely to provide links in their blog entries and blogrolls. Hyperlinks, whether embedded in text or listed on blogrolls, are an indication of interconnectivity with external world and affiliation with other people. Links also serve as a sign for bloggers' openness and willing to be interacted. Bloggers who desire socialization would be more inclined to exhibit their communication with other via links. In-text hyperlinks are also positively related with motivation of information. One feature of filter blogs is the links to online resources and this can explain the filter bloggers' preferences for in-text links. Conversely, stronger self-expression motivation implies less likelihood to provide hyperlinks. The possible explanation is that since those bloggers pay more attention to the process of expressing their own opinions, they would be less likely to make efforts to search external links which might not be of importance to supplement the content and even can be distracting to readers.

In terms of self-representation on blogs, bloggers' strategies of self-presence can be predicated by some motivations. Using one's real name and those of people they know in life on blogs is positively associated with information motivation, while negatively related with passing time motivation. Since filter bloggers aim to offer useful information on certain topics, their credibility undoubtedly impact their popularity and authority in the blogosphere. Using real names will offset the distrust caused by the anonymity of the Internet and increase their influence. Conversely, bloggers who blog to kill time may not be so serious about the credibility of the content so they would decline to disclose real

identities, whether their own or some others'. Bloggers displaying photographs of themselves, friends or family members are more likely to be motivated by self-documentation, self-expression, and socialization motivated. Medium appeal works as a positive predictor for use of others' photos as well. Since the self-documentation motivation suggests a need to keep in touch with people bloggers know, the use of photos can be a way to report up-to-date news in addition to words. The similar pattern can be observed from bloggers with more tendencies to express themselves, in that photos sometimes are a more vivid way to present oneself. Socialization motivation suggests disclosure of self-identity to interact with others so their higher likelihood to present photos can be explained. The positive relationship between medium appeal and photos of others suggests the use of blogs as an online family album to show intimacy and connection with people they care for. Bloggers store photos of family and friends so that they can have access to those photos wherever they are.

The extent to which personal or confidential information is released on blogs is positively related with self-documentation, improved writing, and self-expression while negatively correlated with information motivation. Since bloggers with self-documentation motive tend to write about themselves in a diary-like fashion, it is understandable that they tend to write more about secret topics on their blogs. The same reason can be applied to self-expression motive in that by the word "expression," the external and internal of personality is likely to be presented. Filter bloggers decline to write about personal information can be attributed to their efforts to maintain an image of objective observer and commentator. Disclosure of unnecessary personal information will not contribute to the establishment of the image but on the contrary, it runs the risk of

damaging the blogger's "remote" image. It is difficult to postulate the reason why bloggers with more developed writing skills tend to write more personal content. One tentative explanation is that the writing process is a way of self-reflection which suggests disclosure one's intimation emotions.

Bloggers use a variety of ways to promote their blogs and attract more readers. The number of methods they turn to for self-promotion is negatively related with self-documentation while can be positively predicated by information and socialization motivations. The reasons for predictability are relatively evident that self-documentation suggests serving oneself so the content should be limited to the blogger's own interests. In this sense, blog content may not be of use or interest to other readers therefore promotion is of minor importance. Filter bloggers need more readers to better obtain gratifications of information sharing and socialization requires more interactions from other readers and bloggers.

Self-documentation, self-expression, passing time, and socialization can predict a greater likelihood to blog for bloggers themselves and friends online. The negative relationship between information motivation and blogging for oneself confirmed filter bloggers' aim to share information with others. Information motivation as a positive predictor for expectation of colleagues as readers indicated the content of filter blogs is more career-related or professional. Self-documentation and self-expression also predict blogging for family and friends. Those who deemed friends as potential readers demonstrate greater inspiration by improving writing and medium appeal as well. It is not surprising to discover that those motivated more by information and socialization are more

likely to write intentionally for general public since those bloggers anticipate readership as broad as possible.

It is interesting to find that bloggers who deem themselves as readers are more likely to check server logs while those who expect general public to be readers are less likely to do so. The frequency of checking server logs to know the audience better is positively related with self-documentation, but negatively correlated with improving writing, information, and socialization. One possible explanation is that server logs, which are generally supposed to observe/record whether targeted visitors stop by, also serve as a way to check whether untargeted audiences visit. Bloggers with improving writing, information, and socialization motivations would expect a general readership, and as a result do not write for specific readers. Therefore, it is unnecessary to know exactly who read blogs because the content is assumed to be consumed by anyone with Internet connection. In the case of self-documentation, it is evident that the blog content is very individually specific thus it is reasonable to know who read it and whether those readers are targeted.

As for usage of design elements, bloggers more inspired by information are more likely to host blogs on their own servers and use personal publishing platforms. By and large, personal publishing tools require higher level of computer literacy and technical hardware. Bloggers need a server to store blog files and skills to install and manage blogs. The upsides of this kind of blogging tools are evident that bloggers have full control over blogs and they can enrich the functions of blogs by using third-party plug-ins developed specifically for those tools. Bloggers with higher information motivation tend to author filter blogs and they have to deal with more information than journal-style bloggers.

Insomuch as this is true, the flexibility of personal publishing platforms should meet these information management needs better. Moreover, use of personal blogging tools suggests professionalism and expertise in technical context, which help to build the authoritative image as an expert in the field.

Template-based feature offers bloggers opportunity to change the look of blogs without having to master web authoring skills like HTML or CSS markup language. Bloggers can apply alternative templates provided by blogging tools or other designers with a few clicks. Bloggers with minor webpage design knowledge can change the templates by following tutorials and thus personalize the look of blogs. Even so, personalizing templates is still a less common activity for bloggers who blog to pass time. In this case, bloggers pay more attention to the process of writing so changing look of blog can be a redundant task for them.

Only bloggers who show higher socialization motivation are more likely to use add-ons applications to enrich function of blogs. Since most add-ons serve to enhance the interactivity of blogs, the purpose can meet the socialization needs better. Getting readers involved in interaction with the blog can enhance user experience and attract to visit in the future. Stable frequency of visiting suggests a higher chance for bloggers to develop interpersonal relationship with those readers.

## **5.5. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS**

### **5.5.1. Strengths**

First, this research relied on retrospective self-reports of bloggers to examine their motivations, the most widely used methodology in uses-and-gratifications studies. Quite

different from previous qualitative research (Nardi et al., 2004) and content analysis study (Trammell et al, 2004), this empirical study collected data on bloggers' motivations directly from bloggers and avoids researcher's possible subjective bias when content analyzing the data. This offsets the long existing sampling issue among Internet studies. In addition, the sampling criteria were strictly defined to focus on a specific group of bloggers. Moreover, the semi-probability sampling method alleviates the possible bias caused by self-selective surveys. Therefore, the results can be generalized to a wider population.

Self-report is frequently criticized as being "a little simplistic or naive" (Severin & Tankard, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 12) and inherently unreliable (LaRose, Mastro, and Eastin, 2001). The cognitive gap between the individual's actual behavior and awareness and perception of the behavior may weaken the validity of self-reports. However, quite different from other media consumptions as television viewing, radio listening, and even web surfing, blogging is a highly active action, thus it demands higher levels of cognition and motivation. Therefore, self-reports of bloggers offer relatively reliable materials to analyze their gratifications sought. Moreover, some findings from this study also supported findings from previous studies using content analysis approach (Herring et al, in press).

Second, at the questionnaire design stage, a content analysis was conducted to sort out the possible reasons for blogging to construct a motivation scale. For an exploratory study like this project, a preliminary examination of over 180 blog posts on the theme of "why I blog" helps to offer solid foundations to draw possible motivations. Since those bloggers' spontaneous self-confessions on reasons for blogging were not elicited in an experimental setting, they were deemed as closer to the original thoughts. The a priori motivations extracted from those essays were compared to motivations drawn from literary

review and used to complement and adapt items. The data analysis approved the closeness of the scale by the fact that most of the extracting factors matched with a priori motivation.

Third, this study measures the notion of “use” from multiple aspects instead of the time spent on the media, which has been widely studied in previous research. Taking into account of the features of blogs, I examined the blogging behaviors from six aspects, which cover the major activity bloggers get involved. The expansion of usage as a concept was conducted after a through observation and participation of the blogosphere.

### **5.5.2. Limitations**

This exploratory study has several limitations. This study aimed to use a random sample of adult bloggers to increase the generalizability of research findings. However, it is worthwhile to mention that sampling can still be biased due to several complicated factors. First, the blogs website is not an exhaustive collection of all extant blogs. Also, the study excluded bloggers who fail to update blogs in the two weeks prior to the data collection. The criterion was more a subjective judgment of the life period of a blog and was not supported by previous research. Additionally, some characteristics might be shared by the 60% of sampled bloggers who participated in the study and the bias could not be discerned at this point.

Second, examining bloggers’ behaviors by self-reports runs the risk of measuring errors due to inherent design problems in surveys and bloggers’ cognitive gap between their actual behaviors and memories. The recommended way is to do a content analysis to measure corresponding variables as complement to bloggers’ self-reports.

Third, though significant relationships were discovered in motivations and demographics as predictors for patterns of blogging, it is notable that those predictors

usually account for a small portion of variance. What are the other factors responsible for determining bloggers' behaviors? How do those factors influence the way people blog? Those questions need to be explored in a qualitative way to give more clues on empirical studies.

## **5.6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

This exploratory study creates a baseline for future research on impression management employing research of bloggers, as well as investigation of blog readers and their impressions and reasons for reading those blogs. As stated in the previous section, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodology needs to be employed in future studies on blogging motivations. An increased sample size may generate more generalizable data for the blogger population. Moreover, since motivations for media use are influenced by a series of external and internal factors, those forces should be sorted and examined to offer better predictions for blogging behaviors.

Furthermore, as MeLeod and Becker (1974) suggested that negative avoidances deserve equal attention to that of positive gratifications, it is meaningful to find out the reasons why people are not willing to start blogging or why they quit blogging after an initial engagement with the activity. To answer the question "why don't you blog," we could refer to the diffusion of innovation perspective to find out the differences, if any, of characteristics of people who adopt blogging and those who do not.

The reason people discontinue blogging is worth intense attentions due to the prevalence of blog abandonment. Of the 3,634 blogs surveyed by Perseus (Henning, 2003), it is surprising to find that nearly two-thirds of the sample has not been updated in two months, which can lead to the presumption that those blogs have been either temporarily or

permanently abandoned. However, it is noticeable that the abandonment rate may be inappropriate to be generalized to the whole blogosphere since the survey excluded self-hosted blogs, which constitute a significant portion of the blogosphere. Moreover, some abandonment may be caused by such external factors as difficulties accessing the Internet, dissatisfaction with certain blog host providers and thus switch to other blogging software. Therefore, researchers should be more cautious to attribute discontinuation of some blogs to abandonment especially those, which have been maintained for a relatively long period.

Another noticeable phenomenon of blog abandonment is labeled “one-day wonders” (Henning, 2003), namely those blogs that contain only one post in the form of “This is a test” or similar. The ease of blogging is a two-sided sword: on the one hand it eliminates the technology barrier for the novice bloggers as much as possible and requires efforts as little as possible to maintain a blog; on the other hand it causes less commitment to continue the work they start (Henning, 2003).

With the development of blog technology, more and more multimedia elements are imported into text-based blogs. By posting photos taken by digital camera or cameraphone, photo blogs serve as an electronic scrapbook for memories. ‘Podcastings’, known as voice blogs, are emerging as a primitive form of personal radio stations. Video blogs, still in its infancy, are a promising subset of blogs, which can help build up the personal media library and develop to individual TV stations. In this study, only textual blogs were included but it is assumed that motivations of multimedia blogs can be different from those, which mainly rely on textual account. As such, sequent studies on various forms of blogs are necessary to help us better understand the impact brought by multimedia technology to

people's writing behaviors. As such, subsequent studies on various forms of blogs are necessary to help us better understand the impact brought by multimedia technology to people's writing behaviors.

## **5.7. SUMMARY**

Given the multiformity and expansibility of Internet technology, blogs serve a variety of ends for people. The findings of the research indicate that bloggers can consciously satisfy their unique motivations by taking advantage of characteristics of blogs as an open, free, and social venue for intrapersonal, interpersonal, and mass communication. The use of blogs is systematically associated with an individual's motivations for blogging. As such, blogs mostly satisfy instrumental gratifications rather than ritual ones, quite different from its precedent media.

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## Appendix A

### **Web-Survey Questionnaire**

Welcome to the Blogger's Motivations Survey.

The survey is part of my thesis project. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the reasons why people blog and how their motivations affect their blogging behaviors. If you are a blogger and at least 18 years old, you are invited to complete the survey. We are using the information from the survey for research purposes only. The survey form is anonymous. We do not ask for your name or identifying information.

Please read the consent form below. After reading the consent form, if you decide to participate in the study, click the button at the end of this Web page. If you have any questions, please contact me at the phone number or e-mail address provided. Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Yours truly,

Dan Li  
Principal Investigator  
Graduate Student/Research Assistant  
College of Communication  
Marquette University

Scott D'urso, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Communication Studies  
College of Communication  
Marquette University

Agreement of Consent for Research Participants

Marquette University Institutional Review Board

Date: 02/24/2005

Protocol No.: HR-1094

Title of Research Project:

Why Blog: A Uses and Gratifications Inquiry into Bloggers' Motivations

I have been informed by Dan Li, College of Communication, Marquette University, that I have been selected to participate in a study to contribute to the knowledge about blogging in the field of communication. I understand to participate in the study I must be at least 18 years old.

I clearly understand that the purpose of this research study titled, "*Why Blog: A Uses-and-gratifications Inquiry into Bloggers' Motivations*" is to explain why people blog and how their motivations affect their blogging behaviors. I understand that the study has 2 parts: an online questionnaire and a volunteer submission of my blog web address. I understand I will be free to take part in either part or both.

I do not have to answer any questions that I do not want to answer. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. I also understand that there will be approximately 200 participants in this study.

I understand that all information I reveal in this study will be kept confidential. All data collected will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using a specific name or other information that could identify me as an individual. When the results of the study are published, only aggregate level data will be used. I understand that the data will be

destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files 5 years after the completion of the study.

I understand that this study is not expected to involve risks of harm any greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. I also understand that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in any procedure, but that all reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize the potential risks. I also understand that the only benefit of my participation is to help improve scientific understanding of the communication process.

I understand that participating in this study is completely voluntary and that I may stop participating in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that all data collected prior to my terminating participation in the study will not be recorded.

All my questions about this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that if I later have additional questions concerning this project, I can contact Dan Li at 414-736-4553 and/or dan.li@marquette.edu. Additional information about my rights as a research participant can be obtained from Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at 414-288-1479.

Please print a copy of this page for your records. Clicking the link below indicates that you have read the above information and consenting to participate in the survey. You will be taken to the survey by clicking "I agree."

I agree

I don't agree

The survey form will take several seconds to load on your computer. Please be patient.

**Why Do You Blog and How Do You Blog**

Thank you for your time and interest! Please answer questions as they relate to you.

For most answers, check the boxes most applicable to you or fill in the blanks.

**Q1** As a blogger, how many blogs do you administer/author? \_\_\_\_\_

If you have more than one blogs, please answer the following questions based on

*the blog you mainly author.*

**Q2** How long have you been blogging?

\_\_\_ Less than 3 months

\_\_\_ 3 - 6 months

\_\_\_ 7 - 12 months

\_\_\_ 1 - 2 years

\_\_\_ 3 - 4 years

\_\_\_ 5 years or more

**Q3** How many blog entries have you posted on your blog?

\_\_\_ Less than 50

\_\_\_ 51 - 100

\_\_\_ 101 - 200

\_\_\_ 201 - 300

\_\_\_ 301 -500

\_\_\_ 501 or more

**Q4** How frequently do you update the material on your blog?

\_\_\_ Less often

\_\_\_ Every few weeks

\_\_\_ 1 - 2 times a week

\_\_\_ 3 - 5 times a week

\_\_\_ About once a day

\_\_\_ Several times a day

**Q5** On average, how much time do you spend every time you update your blog?

Less than 30 minutes

0.5 - 1 hour

1 - 2 hours

3 - 4 hours

5 hours or more

**Q6** Where do you primarily blog? (Select all that apply)

Home

School

Workplace

Other

**Q7** Please specify the 'other' item you entered above. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q8** How often do you blog on the following topics?

Very often   Often   Sometimes   Rarely   Never

Entertainment

Interests/hobbies

Family/friends

Sports

Education/academics

Business

Religion/spirituality

Politics/politicians

Technology/science

Arts/culture

Humor

Your creative work

Personal experience

Other

**Q9** When you write posts for your blog, how often do you provide links to online resources *in the posts*?

Very often

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

**Q10** What name do you use to identify yourself on your blog?

Real name

Variant of real name

Pseudonym

Not available

**Q11** How do you identify people (i.e. friends, family members) you know personally on blog?

Real name

Variant of real name

Pseudonym

Never write about people I know personally

**Q12** Do you have photographs of yourself on blog?

Yes  No

**Q13** Do you have photographs of people you know personally on your blog?

Yes  No

**Q14** How private are the things you write about on blog? ("Private" means either personal or confidential)

Extremely private

Very private

- Somewhat private
- A little bit private
- Not private at all

**Q15** What blogging software/service/platform are you currently using?

- Free blogging service (e.g., blogger.com, LiveJournal.com, etc.)
- Commercial blogging service (e.g., Typepad.com)
- Personal publishing platform (e.g., MovableType, WordPress, etc.)
- Other

**Q16** Please specify the 'other' item you entered above. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q17** What blog template/interface are you currently using?

- The default or alternative template offered by blogging software
- The template designed by other bloggers or designers
- The template I modified which was based on existing templates
- The template I designed from scratch
- Other

**Q18** Please specify the 'other' item you entered above. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q19** Except for the links in your posts, how many links to other online resources are there on your blog? (e.g. blogroll, links in the side bar)

- None
- 1 - 10
- 11 - 30
- 31 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 or more

**Q20** Add-ons are tools that can expand the functionality of your blog, i.e. Blogroll, site counter, guestbook, poll/vote, weather, wishlist, etc. How many add-ons are you currently using on blog?

- None
- 1 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 9
- 10 or more

**Q21** Do you belong to any blog communities (also known as bloggings)?

- Yes  No (please click here to skip to Q24)

**Q22** How many blog communities/bloggings do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q23** Do you link with the blog communities/bloggings you belong to on your blog?

- Yes, I link to all of them
- Yes, I link to some of them
- No, I don't link to any of them

**Q24** Which of the following ways do you use to promote your blog? (Select all that apply)

- Directly tell people about your blog
- Have blog listed in search engines/directories
- Join bloggings/communities
- Leave your blog when comment on others' blogs
- Print blog address on business card
- Exchange links with other blogs
- Include blog in signature of email/account on BBS...etc
- Using commercial advertising services
- None
- Other

**Q25** Please specify the 'other' item you entered above. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q26** Are people allowed to comment on your blog?

- Yes  No (Please click here to skip to Q28)  Comments not available

**Q27** How often do you reply to your readers' comments?

Very often

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

**Q28** Do you limit access to your blog?

Yes, I'm the only one who can view my blog.

Yes, only some people can view my blog

No, all the people can view my blog

**Q29** Who are among the readers you mainly blog for? (Select all that apply)

Myself

Family

Friends

Colleagues

Internet acquaintance

General Public

Don't know

Other

**Q30** Please specify the 'other' item you entered above. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q31** What options do your readers have when attempting to contact you? (Select

all that apply)

Email

Instant Messenger (e.g., MSN, Yahoo Messenger, ICQ, Skype ...etc)

Guestbook

Contact Form

Shoutbox

Telephone

Mail

None

Other

**Q32** Please specify the 'other' item you entered above. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q33** Do you use trackbacks to inform other bloggers you are writing about them?

Every time when possible

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

Trackback not available

I don't know how to send trackbacks

**Q34** How often do you look at the log of who has accessed your blog?

Very often

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

Logs not available

**Q35** To what extent do you consider the following aspects of your blog to be important?

1=Very important 2=Somewhat important 3=Neither important nor unimportant

4=Somewhat unimportant 5=Very unimportant

Numbers of people who read your blog

Comments from blog readers

Trackbacks from other blogs

Times you/your blog mentioned by other bloggers

Being linked by other websites/blogs

In the next section of the survey, you will find a number of potential reasons regarding why people blog. Please read over each of the potential reasons and then select an appropriate response based on your level of agreement with that statement. "I blog...

1=Strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Somewhat agree 4=Neither agree nor disagree

5=Somewhat disagree 6=Disagree 7=Strongly disagree

\_\_\_ To feel like I am part of a community

\_\_\_ To provide information

\_\_\_ Because it is enjoyable

\_\_\_ Because I can publish at any time

\_\_\_ To document my life

\_\_\_ Because it is the thing to do

\_\_\_ To learn about new technology/skills

\_\_\_ Because it is easy to update

\_\_\_ When I have nothing better to do

\_\_\_ Because it helps pass the time

\_\_\_ To keep in touch with my family/friends

\_\_\_ To keep a record of what I learn

\_\_\_ To share information useful to other people

\_\_\_ To present information on my interests

\_\_\_ Because it is fun to try out new things like blogging

\_\_\_ To show my personality

\_\_\_ To practice my writing

\_\_\_ To refine my thinking

\_\_\_ Because I can access it wherever I am

\_\_\_ To keep track of what I am doing

\_\_\_ Because it is a place to publish myself

\_\_\_ To meet new people

\_\_\_ Because I like writing

\_\_\_ To tell others about myself

**Q39** What is your gender?

Male  Female

**Q40** What is your age? (Please answer numerically, i.e., 19 instead of nineteen)

**Q41** Please indicate the highest level of education completed.

Elementary School

High School or equivalent

College/university

Master/professional degree

Ph.D.

**Q42** About how many years have you had access to the Internet? (including using email, gopher, ftp, etc.)?

Less than 1 year

1 - 3 years

4 - 6 years

7 - 9 years

10 years or more

**Q43** How often do you access the Internet?

Several times a day

About once a day

3 - 5 times a week

1 - 2 times a week

Less often

**Q44** How many hours do you spend on the Internet in a week? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q45** How would you rate your computer skills?

Novice, not technical

Average, somewhat technical

Expert, very technical

This is the second part of the study and it is totally voluntary.

If you'd like to have me look at your blog, please fill in the address of your blog in the following blank. Thank you! \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the questionnaire! If you have questions or suggestions about it, please contact me by phone 414-736-4553 or e-mail [dan.li@marquette.edu](mailto:dan.li@marquette.edu).

Marquette University

This is to certify that we have examined  
this copy of the  
master's thesis by

Dan Li, B.A.

and have found that it is complete  
and satisfactory in all respects.

This thesis has been approved by:

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Approved on \_\_\_\_\_