

A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS INQUIRY INTO BLOGGING AND BLOG USE

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ABSTRACT

The study analyses bloggers' motivations for blogging and blog use through uses and gratification approach and also explores the patterns of blogging prevalent among bloggers. The purpose of the study is to obtain an overview on pattern of blogging and to find out the underlying motivations for blogging and blog use. The study adopts qualitative approach and uses in-depth interview, descriptive questions through Google form and content analysis to gather data for examination and thus meet the objectives of the study and also to get deeper insight into blogging activity. The two aspects that the descriptive questions focus on are motivations for blogging and motivations for reading blogs. The interview with the bloggers stresses on academic value of blogging, motivations to start a blog, gratifications met through blogging or blog use and reasons for inactiveness in blogs. Content analysis of blogs takes six factors into consideration, namely, interactivity, author information, blog format, number of categories, frequency of updating and main focus of blogs. The findings from this research support the view that the blogs presents self-involved uses than socially oriented benefits. Individual's motivations for blogging signifies the use of blogs and it differs from person to person.

Keywords: Blogging, Blogosphere, Blog Use, Motivations For Blogging, Uses And Gratifications

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past several years, blogs have garnered immense popularity due to its very nature and the ways in which it differs from other websites. A weblog or blog is defined as "a website containing a writer's or group of writers' own experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other websites," according to Dictionary.com.

The brief etymology of the term 'blog' goes back to the late 1990s and can be represented as the following: web journal -> web log -> weblog -> wee blogs -> blogs (Blood, 2000, Tremayne, 2007). The term 'bloggers' refers primarily to those who write them as opposed to those who read them. On the other hand, 'blog use' refers to the act of reading blogs. Many blogs give the option for readers to comment in response to the author's posts. This too is considered as blog use.

Blogs are known for its dynamism since the content is frequently updated or modified. Publishing format and frequency are among the driving factors in blog's popularity (Turnbull, 2002; Miller and Shepherd, 2003). A blog consists of dated entries listed in reverse chronological sequence and there is a dominant use of first person. A blog is more of a personal website. Blogs are seen as a platform which enables self-publication of content in an easy, flexible, interactive and inexpensive way for a vast audience on the World Wide Web.

Blogging has profoundly influenced not only the nature of the internet today, but also the nature of modern computer mediated communication (Rettberg, 2008).

According Rebecca Blood, an early blogger herself, blogs help the writers to hone their skills, filter news and serve as a platform for intelligent reaction to current events and provide a counter voice to the words of media pundits (2000). Blogging presents a unique and fascinating world for eager content creators.

1.1 History of Blogs

Although it is difficult to point out the exact origin of blogs, most seem to agree that blogs originated as a way to share information of interest (Miller and Shepherd, 2003). At first, originally a blog was an online record of websites a person visit, when there existed only a dozen blogs (Jensen 2003). That is, they were link-driven sites. During these early stages weblogs could only be created by people who already knew how to make a website. Some of these blogs contained a mixture of links, commentary, and personal thoughts and essays.

It was Andrew Smales, a programmer in Toronto who launched the first do-it-yourself blog tool, Pitas.com, in July 1999. He envisaged an online diary community where people could not only write their own blogs with great ease but read what other people are saying through their blogs without the difficulty of clueless surfing for their sites and most of these personal websites won't be listed prominently on internet search engines. He introduced tools like Diaryland, Smales's diary site to ease this whole process for the blogging community. Such tools and software had become a necessity because there were enough people online writing blogs and wanting to read them.

Another most popular of these tools was Blogger.com, developed by Evan Williams, Paul Bausch, and Meg Houriha which was launched in August 1999. It quickly became the largest and best-known of its kind since it allowed people to store blogs on their own servers, rather than on a remote base. Thus it was possible for the blogger to have a personalized address (like www.yourname.com), whereas with other blogging tools the blog address starts with the name of the remote server.

All of these kind of services developed to help bloggers are free, and are designed to enable individuals to publish their own weblogs quickly and easily. Since then, the number of blog portals and bloggers has increased dramatically: a 2003 survey found that new blogs on eight popular blog hosting sites increased by more than six hundred percent between 2000 and 2001, with over four million blogs by the time of the survey and 10 million projected by the end of 2004 (Henning, 2003).

Rebecca Blood's widely cited blog entry on the history of weblogs offers a classification of blogs into two styles based largely on content: an original filter-style, where the blogger is primarily an editor and reviewer of links, and a later, more personal blog-style, where bloggers engage in an outbreak of self-expression (2000). These two major types are based primarily on different in focus: the earlier type blogs emphasized on information access, with links to other sites of interest, and the later type emphasized on personal, diary-like writing.

1.2 Features of Blogs

The basics of the blogs are consistent across portals and individual blogs. Now there are numerous blog hosting services that make it so easy to customize your personal blog with a domain name. Bloggers can choose from the varied number of templates available or customize their own pages. Blogging platforms have also

introduced the option for multi-author blogs. In other words, several people could post to a single blog using different usernames, passwords, biographies, and photos.

The online accessibility of blogs satisfies needs for retrieving information anywhere and anytime. The reverse chronological sequencing method of publishing emphasizes the “freshness” of blogs by showing “what’s new” in the first place.

Blogs can also help people to become more thoughtful and critical observers of the world around them (Blood, 2002) and, due to their simplicity technically speaking, offer an attractive medium for promoting literacy skills. The potential of interactivity is exhibited through the use of hypertext, which facilitates connections to related content, and the use of comments, which provide a space for reactions from readers. Blog entries as well as comments are archived for later access. Godwin-Jones (2006, p. 13) describes blogs as ‘one, large, loosely interwoven net of information, as blog entries are linked, referenced, and debated’. They can also be rich sources of collaborative activity as readers have options to reference, link, react to, or add information, thus shaping the content of the blog while at the same time creating a type of virtual community.

Williams and Jacobs (2004) explore the potential of blogs as learning spaces for students and point to their potential as a transformational technology for teaching and learning. Blogs can assist students in becoming regular readers and/or writers, thus hone both interpretive and presentational skills. Blogging act as a vehicle for self-expression and self-empowerment (Blood, 2002).

Blogging has also turned to several methods of monetization such as creating affiliate relationships with businesses and writing sponsored posts. Programs like Google AdSense has transformed the blogging landscape where the automated monetization program facilitates to earn money by placing automatic text, image, video, or interactive media advertisements, on your website that are targeted to the site’s audience.

1.3 Need for the Study

While early researchers concentrated on internet as a whole, later on the focus was shifted to specific components such as the web, e-mail, bulletin boards and chat rooms. Now that Interest in blogs and blogging has increased dramatically in recent years, it is important to do a detailed research on blogs and blogging which are creating new dimensions to communication and also creating a whole new phenomenon on the internet like the social networking sites. “...the blog as a form of mediated human expression and blogging as a human activity is of interest to academics from a variety of scientific disciplines” (Larsson and Stefan, 2010).

The advent of new technologies, specifically personalized publishing has provided communication researchers with the opportunity to examine media audiences not just as consumers, but also as producers of mass media. Numerous aspects of creative online activity have thus been unveiled, focusing on self-expression and socialization.

“While there are many studies that have examined internet users and uses, there is a dearth of academic research why blog users use blogs. The few explanations of blog use available are generally based on casual observation and conversation among blog users, journalists and bloggers” (Kaye, 2005).

If we want to know in depth about blogging, what blogging is all about and why it is garnering so much popularity on the World Wide Web, primarily we need to know why people blog and why people read blogs.

People might be blogging and using blogs for various reasons. Blogging and blog use may gratify many needs. The uses and gratifications approach will be ideal for uncovering those needs. It is also important to analyse the content of blogs to determine the focus of blogs, structure, purpose and style of writing followed. Among these what is more important is to know what the blog is predominantly about.

1.4 Uses and Gratifications Approach

In the 1990s, uses and gratifications researchers began looking beyond traditional media to the internet. The uses and gratifications inquiry has been used for many years to gain an understanding of motivations for using media, and researchers have advocated applying the approach to new communication technologies and specifically to the internet. From examining online content and describing internet users, researchers have moved to explaining why users are attracted to the medium.

Uses and gratifications studies investigate how the audience uses the media rather than how media use the audience (Blumler& Katz, 1974). Furthermore the approach is based on the assumptions that individuals actively seek out media, media use is goal directed and media consumption satisfies a wide variety of needs. The uses and gratifications approach is designed to address the needs a particular mass medium fulfils for its users (Blumler& Katz, 1974). That is uses and gratifications studies assumes that individuals are aware of their reasons for using media and selecting specific content and they use the media to gratify these needs (Kaye, 2005).

Blogs are a combination of one-way and two-way forms of communication. Bloggers and blog users may be as actively engaged as they wish. Bloggers may simply post an article or they might respond to the comments for the post and give clarification if asked. On the other hand, readers may simply read what another blogger has posted, they may click on links, they may send the blogger their analyses and opinions along with links to additional information and they may engage in dialogue with the blogger and other blog readers. The amount of participation varies from session to session and blog to blog, but is determined by the user, not the technology. Because blogs are one- and two-way methods of communicating where the users choose the level of participation, they may gratify different needs from those met by the other internet resources. Here, lies the importance of conducting a uses and gratifications study into blogging and blog use.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Though blogs are increasingly becoming popular among the general public with more and more people turning to blogging and increased readership, the question remains as to why internet users are attracted to blogs. This study aims to answer this question by finding the major motivations for internet users to write blogs and access them by investigating the gratifications they receive from blogging and blog use. The study also focuses on the content of the blogs to know what majority of blogs are mainly about and how the bloggers present the content. So altogether the objective of the study is to find out why people blog, why people read blogs, what do they blog and how do they blog.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous research works on blogging practices, uses and gratification perspective to blogging motivations and blog use motivations and research papers focusing on the content of blogs are reviewed. The

main source for accessing previous literature on blogs is mainly through web and also books and journals consolidating essays and research works on blogging.

2.1 Uses and Gratifications Perspective

Studies with uses and gratifications perspective mainly look into either of the two aspects: gratifications fulfilled through blogging or reasons for reading blogs. Therefore, research papers on blogging that followed gratifications approach were reviewed and classified under two categories: those papers that investigate on bloggers' motivations to blog and those that studies on bloggers' motivations to read blogs.

2.1.1 Blogging Motivations (Why people blog?)

In a research pertaining to uses and gratifications inquiry into bloggers motivations to blog, Li Dan (2005) found seven motivations for blogging from a sample of 500 bloggers and analysing 180 blogs. The motivations found were self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time, and socialization. The research also located gender differences in many aspects of blogging. As per this study, men claim higher approval of information motivation while women endorse self-documentation, self-expression, and passing time more. Other than gender, the study found that age also plays a role in motivating people to blog and educational level was found no connection with specific blogging motivations. Furthermore the study revealed that motivations such as self-documentation, self-expression, and passing time have a negative relationship with age.

Sepp et.al (2005) in their research paper on blogger's motivation to produce content, studied perceived gratifications of 12 experienced bloggers (6 men, 6 female) from Estonia found that they sought process, content, and social gratifications from blogging activities. The study also found several new categories of motivations such as the content gratifications of enlightening others, advertising and promotion, the social gratifications of communication, image management, and vanity, which were not identified in previous research works. Bloggers' gratifications were also found to evolve over time, leading to blog changes. The study also proposes that by understanding blogger motivations, marketers can address the bloggers in a more relevant and efficient way to get their products or services advertised or promoted through blogs.

The number of scholarly blogs on the Web is increasing and Kjellberg (2010) in her article describes the motivations for researchers to blog and the functions their blogs serve for them. The author, from a group of researchers who blog, found that their blogging is motivated by the possibility to share knowledge and that it provides a feeling of being connected in their work as researchers. The study further revealed that, in particular, the blog serves as a creative catalyst in the work of the researchers, where writing forms a large part. The analysis also brings out the other important motivating factors for the researches to blog such as the blog's combination of functions and the possibility it offers to reach multiple audiences that makes the blog different from other kinds of communication in scholarly contexts.

2.1.2 Blog Use Motivations (Why people read blogs?)

Kaye (2007), in his exploratory study on blog use motivations with uses and gratifications perspective gathered 4880 responses with an open-ended question yielding 62 motivational items which were then grouped into 10 broader motivational blocks: Blog Presentation/Characteristics, Personal Fulfilment, Expression/Affiliation with bloggers and blog users, Information Seeking, Intellectual/Aesthetic Fulfilment,

Anti-Traditional-Media Sentiment, Guidance/Opinion Seeking, Convenience, Political Surveillance, and Fact Checking. The study further revealed that blogs are popular because they provide a sense of community with like-minded people. The study also found that people are attracted to blogs for many of the same reasons as other internet resources since blogs fulfil entertainment, escape, relaxation and social interaction needs as does the Internet in general and the web specifically.

Kornejeva (2012) in her study to explore why and how young women in Sweden are reading blogs discovered that young women in Sweden are reading blogs because of the following reasons: personal interest in the topic; seeking inspiration and knowledge; personality of the blogger; seeking information; seeking opinions and recommendations; affiliation; personal fulfilment; complement to traditional media and books; presentation of the blog; and specific features of the blog. The subjects of the study reported reading blogs on many topics, but the two most popular categories were fashion blogs and friends' blogs. The study also found that the respondents were reading several blogs every day or several times a week.

2.3 Content Analysis

A study by Schler et al. (2005) that has analysed content of 71,000 blogs indicated significant differences in writing style and content between male and female bloggers as well as among authors of different ages. The study also found that there exists a pattern of more “personal” writing by female bloggers than male bloggers. This study also revealed that male blogging is characterized by far more references to politics and technology. It was also found that when it comes to male bloggers there is increase in blogging content with age, while female bloggers tend to blog less with increase in age.

Herring et al. (in press 2007) in their research on blogging conducted through longitudinal content analysis of blogs: 2003 – 2004, found that blogs in their corpus (N=914) was increasingly text based in terms of structural characteristics of the entries, despite the general expectation of the web generating more multimedia content. The study also revealed that anonymity of blog authors have decreased steadily over the time and the tendency to use first names and indicate their occupation has increased. In contrary to the popular characterization of the blogosphere as interconnected and conversational, the study found that most blogs are single-authored, personal diaries where frequency of links and comments in blog entries remained low. The findings of the study which revealed an overall predominance of personal over news content, together with low incidence of links to news sources, argues that blogging cannot be equated with citizen journalism.

The study conducted by Papacharissi (in press, 2007) focusing on the audiences as media producers, by analysing the content of 260 blogs, revealed that in most cases blogs resembled an electronic version of a diary, with links to bloggers interests, other blogs and archives of previous postings which is open and available to mass potential audiences. The study found that most blogs adopted a diary, self-reflective format and were overwhelmingly informal. As found in the previously mentioned study by Herring et al., this study too found that blogs tend to be rather textual, relating to its design features, with little or no presence of graphical interface or graphics. The study found that majority of bloggers' (83%) primary motivations for blogging was self-fulfilment obtained from the ability to express themselves freely online. Furthermore the study also revealed that female bloggers were slightly more likely to be expressive than male bloggers.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon, i.e., phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind. Mostly employed when investigating the reasons for human behaviour (i.e., why people think or do certain things) and therefore motivation research is an important type of qualitative research (Kothari, 2004).

3.1.1 Descriptive answers

Qualitative approach was employed in the study with the aim of discovering the motivations for blogging and blog use. Bloggers were contacted through their blogs on a random basis using the contact or comment section and were provided a link to a google form where they have to answer two open-ended questions as to why do they blog and why do they read blogs.

3.1.2 Interview

Another research technique used in this study to collect qualitative data was by conducting structured, face-to-face as well as telephonic interviews with five bloggers. “The information secured through interviews is likely to be more correct compared to that secured through other techniques,” (Vijayalakshmi and Sivapragasam, 2008). Interviews can probe for deeper meaning and respondents can further explore their motivation for blogging and blog use. The interview covered mainly the following points: academic value of blogging; motivations for starting the blog; gratifications met through blogging and blog use; and regarding change in level of participation over the time.

3.1.3 Content Analysis

In proposing a framework for analysing blogs, Trammell and Gasser (2004) suggest content analysis as a primary means for understanding blogs. A brief content analysis of blogs was employed to gain a deeper understanding as to how people blog and what do they blog, thus to enhance the dimension of the study making it more relevant. Content analysis was carried out by analysing 32 blog sites to know how people blog and what they blog.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The main objective of the study was to identify the motivations for blogging and blog use in the uses and gratification perspective and also to analyse how people blog and what they blog. All the information that is gathered for the study to answer the research questions and to meet the objectives of the study, are thoroughly analysed and interpreted. This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered through interviews and content analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Answers

While examining blogging and blog use motivations with pre-defined motivational items, respondents were also given the option to describe other gratifications that they get fulfilled through blogging. This may throw more light into blogging and blog use motivations. The results are summarized as follows.

4.1.1 Why People Blog?

17 respondents described various other reasons as to why they blog. Many of the respondents emphasised their passion for writing and most of them said that blogs give ample scope and freedom for writers than social networking sites, and also help them create an identity. "It is more personal to me, like a space all for myself to write. It's like my home, my address and it doesn't feel that way when I write on social networking sites," says one of the respondents. Respondents have also said that they aim to refine their writing skills through blogging. "I want to keep writing while I can and never let the talent I hold die down," explains another respondent. For some others writing makes them "feel certain" and hence they have turned to blogging.

Another stressed reason was to "easily earn by many views through google ads". It was also found that some blog to promote faith while others "to promote atheism". Respondents also have said that they blog to inspire others by providing a picture of past events "from first-hand experience of myself or others I have interviewed", by sharing "life experiences and lessons with others", "to create an impact" and help others "especially people with common interests and experiences." Some also have said that they blog to get inspired from others. Some have said that blogging is a means to express themselves and also "to gain a balanced perspective about various things." For few people blogging was a stress relieving activity. Many of them blog to build an authority in a specified niche and drive traffic to their blogsite.

From the responses got, it can be concluded that people blog because of their 1) passion for writing; 2) to create an identity; 3) to build self-confidence; 4) to earn, 5) to promote one's beliefs; 6) to inspire others; 7) to get inspired by others; 8) to reduce stress; 9) to build authority in a specified niche; 10) to express oneself and; 11) to get a balanced perspective about life

4.1.2 Why People Read Blogs?

As to why people read blogs, only three of the respondents have shared their personal reasons. One among the respondents has mentioned that the main reason for reading blogs is out of love for writing and to get more ideas for one's own blog. Another respondent has mentioned that reading blogs by others helps to know about "others' experiences and random things in life." For another respondent reading blogs is a means to find inspiration and encouragement.

From the above reasons stated by respondents, it may be concluded that people read blogs 1) for getting ideas for one's own blog; 2) to know more about life from others' experiences and 3) to find inspiration.

4.2 Interview with Bloggers

To get more specific information regarding various aspects of blogging especially those that were not covered by survey or contents analysis, five bloggers were specially interviewed. The major points that were stressed include academic value of blogging, motivations to start a blog, gratifications met through blogging/blog use and reasons as to why bloggers end up updating their blog less frequently over the time. The results are summarized as follows.

4.2.1 Academic Value of Blogging

During the interview it was asked that whether the blogger has blogged/used blogs as part of any academic course. Two of the interviewees said that they have blogged for academic purposes. Questions were

asked regarding their opinion on academic value of blogging and whether students should be insisted to start blogs.

Response from one interviewee was that writing a blog should be more of a personal choice than something to be forced upon the students. Teachers can suggest blogging to their students since it will improve their creative skills but need not make it a compulsory academic discipline. According to another blogger academic value depends on the content of blogs. It was stated that students definitely need to be insisted to start a blog, “as that will be like a practice for their writing skill, and with time they can acquire knowledge on a variety of subjects and thus widen their thinking horizon.” Another interviewee too has told more or less the same opinion adding that “there are really good blogs that aid students in academics.”

“Insisting all students to start a blog may bring intended results, as some students may not be keen to write or maintain a blog,” opined one of the interviewees. Even another blogger has mentioned almost same point that first of all students need to be interested to start one or else there is no point in insisting them to start one.

4.2.2. Motivations to Start the Blog

One of the main questions that was asked during the interview was to state the reasons for starting the blog, thus to know what motivated bloggers to start a blog. One of the interviewees told, “I wanted to improve my language skills, both writing and reading. I went through many blogs and saw the beautiful flow of words in a simple language that everyone can easily understand. Also a good blog will be a perfect way to exhibit yourself for a job portfolio.”

Another blogger learnt about blogging in school, out of curiousness started one and later on it served as a platform to express her stand on several issues. “It was more like ears to my thoughts,” the blogger adds. Another interesting response given by one of the interviewers is that the blogger started the blog on December 2013 at the thought of congratulating Sreebala Menon, a Film Director, after hearing about her first debutant movie, “but what happened was that, after starting my blog to write my first post, it suddenly rained and there my first post happened, ‘Mazha’ (rain).”

One among the interviewees started a blog since it served as a platform to upload few articles for class assignments. For another blogger the reason for starting a blog was mainly to inspire others. “I get inspired by blogs so I want to give the same to others,” the blogger adds.

4.2.3 Gratifications met through Blogging/Blog Use

Another main question that was asked during the interview, inquired as to what all gratifications are being met through the activity of blogging/blog use. One of the interviewees said that blog use brings back or inculcate the habit of reading and helps to get the flow in writing. “Since I could not find many books to read, I read blogs and it gives a sort of satisfaction,” the blogger adds. For the blogger it was also a platform to improve writing skills.

“My blog is like a book of personal thoughts, more or less like a scrap book,” said another blogger. “I used to write on a variety of topics like from the first ray of sun light to subjects dealing with existentialism,” the blogger adds.

Access to articles publishes by authors from around the world was the main motivation for one among the interviewees to read blogs. Blogging as a platform that gives vast opportunity for people who loves writing, even though he/she may not be a published writer, was the interviewee's reason for blogging. "Sometimes it amazes me when it comes to how different people in the world think about the same topic," the blogger adds.

Another blogger said that blogs give people a platform to express themselves creatively, if they are really into it. For another interviewee blog serves as a platform to express personal views. "I want to break taboos and share my views and experience in every step I take," the blogger adds.

4.2.4 Reasons for Inactiveness in Blogs

Some bloggers would have been frequently posting content during the time they have started the blog and eventually the frequency of updating the blog site would have come down. During the interview reasons as to why bloggers end up updating their blog less frequently over the time, were asked.

One of the interviewees told that most people start a blog to relax themselves, but later on they lose interest or get caught up in something else that interests them. "At a certain point I just ran out of words. I jot down things I wanted to blog but couldn't complete them. It is just a pause; I will definitely continue blogging and will reduce the time gap that comes between posts in future," the blogger adds.

Another blogger says that though she used to post almost on a daily basis initially, later on it turned to weekly, monthly and now to a stage where she is least bothered to update the blog. The blogger says that loss of interest is the main reason for that.

Another interviewee thinks that people quit blogging within 3 or 4 years may be because the popularity of blog has come down. Another blogger opines that if you are really interested you will find time for it. According to another interviewee, it may be because of personal reasons and if the community is strong it will push the limit of the blogger to author more posts each time. "...but if the community lacks connection then it demotivates a person and sometimes indolence too would be a reason," the blogger adds.

4.2.5 Inferences from the Interviews

From the interview conducted with bloggers, it may be concluded that blogs do have significant academic value as it improves students' creativity and writing skills, but it should not be enforced upon them because it is something that need to be done out of interest.

1) To express oneself, 2) to refine writing skills, 3) to enhance creativity, 4) to create a portfolio, 5) to inspire others by sharing one's life experiences, 6) for academic purposes, 7) to relax, and 8) to write on various topics were the main motivations for bloggers to start a blog as well as these were the main gratifications met through blogging.

1) To get inspired, 2) to inculcate reading habit, 3) to get different view on the same topic, 4) to improve writing skills, 5) accessibility to articles by authors from around the world and 6) simple language being used were the main motivations for bloggers to read blogs.

1) Loss of interest, 2) presuming popularity of blogging has come down and 3) weak community ties in blogosphere were the main reasons found for inactiveness by the bloggers.

4.3 Content Analysis of Blogs

Content analysis can be useful for discovering and gaining insights into users' preferences and behaviours as well as into complex, social and communicational trends and patterns generated by users (Kim and Kuljis, 2010). Therefore, content analysis was done with 32 blogs to know the general usage pattern of blogging, by examining how people blog and what they mainly blog about. The blogs were analysed based on six blog variables, which are interactivity, author information, blog format, number of categories, frequency of updating and focus of blogs. The blogs were also analysed to see all those aspects or feature they have in common. The results are depicted as follows.

4.3.1 Interactivity

By analysing the feedback level of the blogs, it was found that most of the blogs were interactive to a certain extent. It was also found that most of the comments posted in response to the posts were often appreciations for the works and rarely suggestions were made or clarifications were asked. Most of the comments would be from the same bloggers for almost all posts in a blog.

It was also noted that about page was taken seriously by many bloggers and the number of comments or responses for the about page is comparatively more. Some of the blogs do have a separate contact page and lengthy conversations by more number bloggers take place on the about page. There were also blogs with no level of interactivity at the same time blogs having great number of responses to a single post. It was felt that many of the bloggers comment on others blogs as a means to promote their own blog. Hence, it was found that commenting was also a means to share one's blog with other bloggers, to make known that such a blog exists and attract visitors to your blog. There was also a sense of community which was evident from the comments and may be it is because like-minded and creative people with the same intentions are coming together on the same platform.

4.3.2 Author Information

It was found that almost all blogs contained profile of the blog author. Most of the profiles consisted of photograph of the author and real name was also mentioned. There were rarely blogs with no information about the author. The profile mostly presented in the about page, often contained age, profession, interests and hobbies of the author along with the introduction to their blog or personal reasons as to why they have started the blog. Most of the blogs contained links to author's profiles on various social networking sites and thus making it possible for readers to connect with the author as well as to know more about him/her.

4.3.3 Blog Format

It was observed that most of the bloggers followed a common pattern of blogging in text with picture format. Very rarely bloggers used animated pictures or videos in their blog. Mostly a post contains a single picture, more often taken from the web with source mentioned, to supplement the text. Those blogs that focus on photography, travel, food and restaurants give multiple pictures within a single post and here number of words will be comparatively less and pictures will more highlighted.

4.3.4 Number of Categories

There was no common pattern identified in terms of number of categories created on blogs to organize posts by topic. There were blogs with not even a single category, to blogs that consisted of over 14 categories.

Since the posts are archived and are sorted month wise and year wise, and displayed on the main blog site along with recent posts, it is easy for the readers to access all posts by the author. But giving categories makes it easier for readers to find what that interests them and also gives an idea of the different topics that the blog covers.

4.3.5 Frequency of Updating

There were blogs that gets updated very frequently on a daily or weekly basis, some of them which were updated on a monthly basis, those that were updated only once in couple of months and blogs those were not updated for more than a year. Therefore it can be said that there were blogs which can be termed as less dynamic as well as which were highly dynamic. Highly active blogs were found to gather more responses from the readers.

4.3.6 Focus of Blogs

It was found that, most of the blogs were highly informal, narrative and always followed a unique presentation or writing style already established by the author. Even though focus of blogs varies from one blog to other, the author always conveys his/her personal views to the readers through the blogs. It was also found that most of the blogs dealt with more than one topic. Some bloggers have posted their hobbies, creative write-ups, as well as incidents in life in their blogs. Some have combined creative writing and photography, some travel and photography, Only a small number of blogs were found that specifically focused on one select area such as photography, travel, food, disseminating the word of God, on social issues, creative writing and so on.

4.3.7 Inferences from Content Analysis

Through content analysis of blogs it was found that, most of the blogs were interactive to a certain level and commenting on others' blogs was also a means to promote one's own blog. It was also found that interacting with fellow bloggers inculcated a feeling of being part of a community. It was also noted that about page was taken seriously by many bloggers and the number of comments or responses for the about page was comparatively more.

Regarding author information, it was found that most of the blogs contained detailed 'about page' containing personal information about the blogger and also it was found that links to bloggers' profile on various social networking sites were provided to better connect with the readers. In terms of format used for blogging, it was found that text with was the most widely used format wherein pictures are used to supplement the text.

It was found that there was no common pattern identified in terms of number of categories created on blogs to organize posts by topic. Though all posts are archived, creating categories makes it easier for readers to find what that interests them and also gives an idea of the different topics that the blog covers. In terms of frequency, it was observed that there were less dynamic as well as highly dynamic blogs. Regarding focus of blogs, it was found that blogs mainly presents the personal views of its authors in a narrative, informal tone and also through unique presentation styles. It was also found that most of the blogs deals with more than one topic.

V. MAJOR FINDINGS

- 5.1. Reasons as to why people blog are; 1) to create an identity; 2) to build self-confidence; 3) to earn, 4) to promote one's beliefs; 5) to inspire others; 6) to get inspired by others; 7) to reduce stress; 8) to build authority in a *specified niche*; 9) *to get a balanced perspective about life*; 10) to enhance creativity; 11) for academic purposes, 12) to relax, and 13) to write on various topics.
- 5.2. Reasons as to why people read blogs are; 1) for getting ideas for one's own blog; 2) to know more about life from others' experiences, 3) to find inspiration, 4) to inculcate reading habit, 5) to improve writing skills, 6) accessibility to articles by authors from around the world and 7) simple language being used in blogs.
- 5.3. Loss of interest, 2) presuming popularity of blogging has come down and 3) weak community ties in blogosphere were the main reasons found for inactiveness by the bloggers over the time.
- 5.4. It was found that blogs do have significant academic value as it improves students' creativity and writing skills, but it should not be enforced upon them because it is something that need to be done out of interest.
- 5.5. It was observed that commenting on others' blogs was also a means to promote one's own blog and interacting with fellow bloggers inculcated a feeling of being part of a community among bloggers.
- 5.6. It was observed that links to bloggers' profile on various social networking sites were provided on many of the blogs to better connect with the readers.
- 5.7. It was also noted that about page was taken seriously by many bloggers and the number of comments or responses for the about page was comparatively more.
- 5.8. It was observed that blogs have a degree of informality and are narrative when we take into account the presentation style of its content.
- 5.9. Though all posts are archived, creating categories makes it easier for readers to find what that interests them and also gives an idea of the different topics that the blog covers.

VI. CONCLUSION

“Viewed as the latest trend in online use and publishing, blogs present a personalized, self-referential and self-serving use of the internet...” (Papacharissi, in press 2007). The findings from this research also support that the blogs presents self-involved uses than socially oriented benefits. The blogs serve a variety of needs for people and the research findings indicate that bloggers can satisfy their unique motivations by taking advantage of characteristics of blogs as an “open, free, and social venue for intrapersonal, interpersonal, and mass communication” (Li Dan, 2005). The use of blogs is completely associated with an individual's motivations for blogging.

6.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Researchers can measure bloggers' agreeableness towards the motivational items found in this study through the open-ended questions and interviews. An increased sample size can be taken to generate more generalizable data for the blogger population. Additionally, researchers can investigate on the influence of demographic variables on blogging and blog use motivations and usage pattern of blogs. Researchers can also study as to why people don't blog by referring to the diffusion of innovation perspective and find out differences in characteristics of people who adopt blogging and those who do not.

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