"I Am Blogging…":
A Qualitative Study of Bloggers' Motivations of Writing Blogs

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INTRODUCTION

Statistics shows that the last decade has witnessed the rapid proliferation of Weblogs. Deriving from Uses and Gratifications theory, this study is trying to explore the users' uses and gratifications of blogging and the impacts of blogging on other media use. In-depth interviews discovered seven gratifications generated in the process of blogging: self-presentation, information, socialization, social attention, medium appeal, entertainment, and habit. Reasons and implications of these motives and gratifications are analyzed. However, the relationship between the use of blog and other media is more complicated than previous scholars have expected and it is too hasty to draw the conclusion that blogging acts as a functional alternative to other types of media use.

"Weblogs" (quickly abbreviated as blogs) are distinguished by their format and have developed quickly since its introduction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). On blogs, posts or entries are organized chronologically and updated regularly, the latest post appearing at the top of the page with back entries archived by date. Promoted by the calendar structure of posts, Webloggers (or bloggers) can develop their sites into a form of online journal or diary (Sepp & Estonia, 2011).

Until recently, this activity was the preserve of those with the necessary coding and design skills to construct and maintain their own sites. However, in 1999, the first automated blog-publishing systems emerged, which allowed unskilled individuals to run blogs easily and free of charge. Since then, blog has experienced unprecedented proliferation. More importantly, statistics show that 81% of U.S. online consumers trust information and advice from blogs (Collins, 2012) and 92% of companies who blog multiple times a day have acquired a customer from blog (Miller, 2012).

The present paper aims to explore the uses and gratifications of blogging. More specifically, drawing on the theory of Uses and Gratifications, I attempt to investigate the questions about the patterns of blogging, why people write blog, and the impacts of using blogs on the use of other media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Motives of Media Use

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory proposes to explore the predispositions and needs that the media audience and users may have, highlighting "mediated communication as being socially and psychologically constrained" (Rubin, 2002) and the fact that the media audiences and users are not pas-

sive "receivers" of mediated messages but rather active users and participants. It focuses on the needs of individuals which they seek to gratify through media use. It views individuals as purposive, active participants who select media based on social and psychological needs (Katz, Blumer & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 2002).

As a psychological communication perspective, U&G theory assumes people communicate or use media to gratify needs or wants (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1986, 1993). It begins with "the individuals' biological and psychological human needs that interact with societal structure and personality and social characteristics" (Rubin & Rubin, 1985). This interaction results in the perception of problems and solutions that vary in intensity for the individual and constitute motives for problem-solving or gratification-seeking behavior. The various motives of people also result in different patterns of media selection and consumption (Rubin & Rubin, 1985). Therefore, the objectives of U&G research are to understand media use motives, to explain how media satisfy needs, and to explore outcomes stemming from use (Flanagin, 2005).

Sources of Gratifications

Some scholars have categorized the sources of gratifications into several types. Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1974) thought audiences' gratifications of media use could be derived from media content, media exposure and the typical social context. They argued that each medium offers a unique combination of characteristic contents and typical attributes and it is difficult to disentangle perceptions of the media from their intrinsic qualities. A good case in point is that prints and broadcasting have different modes of transmission while reading and audio-visual modes can provide people with different ways of reception. Thus, the combinations of attributes may render different media more or less adequate for the satisfaction of needs. In the same vein, Rosengren (1972) suggested that uses and gratifications research may be profitably connected with the long-established tradition of enquiry into public perceptions of the various media and the dimensions according to which their images and qualities are differentiated. More recently, Kim et al's (2005) study about people's use of Knowledge-search website in South Korea discovered that users' gratifications can be divided into channel gratification, content gratification and relational gratification, which are significantly related to the intensity of knowledge-search website, information-seeking efficacy and generalized social trust respectively.

U&G Theory Meets New Communication Technology

Given the specific technical attributes, scholars have suggested that U&G perspective may help provide a useful framework from which to begin the work on online communication (Rafaeli, 1986; Morris & Organ, 1996). For instance, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) examined audiences' use of the Internet and found five gratifications: interpersonal utility, pass time, information seeking, convenience and entertainment motives for using the Internet. Ebersole's (2000) study about college students' usage of Web arrived at a list of "gratifications": research and learning, communicating with other people, having access to material otherwise unavailable, finding something fun and exciting, and receiving shopping and consumer information. Staford and Staford (2001) identified five dimensions of commercial Web use motivations: searching, cognition, new and unique, socialization and entertainment. Later, Park et al. (2004) found that four motives, convenience, socialization, entertainment/diversion and information, were strong predictors of young people's usage of Internet movie sites in South Korea.

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