Chapter 13
Consumer Generated Advertising in Blogs

Dilip Mutum
University of Warwick, UK

Qing Wang
University of Warwick, UK

ABSTRACT

Blogs are the newest and potentially most attractive online media available to marketers. This chapter discusses the unique nature of blogs and the growing power of consumer generated content. This raises a number of questions as well as new opportunities. As the authors point out that existing literature on blog marketing only discusses the possible advantages of using blogs as a marketing tool and the addition of blogs into the marketing mix. However, the problem is that these studies totally ignored consumers' perception towards blogs that carry advertisements. The rise of advertising companies that have stepped in to fill the gap between companies and bloggers, are discussed. Some examples of successful blog advertising campaigns are also provided. This chapter also presents a conceptual model that examines the salient factors that are likely to influence consumer attitude towards blogs and towards advertising in blogs, and more specifically on sponsored posts on blogs. It is hoped that this chapter would encourage other researchers to take a look at this unique media which in turn will help shed new light on how blogs are enabling a new model of consumer collaboration and consumer generated advertising.

INTRODUCTION

The Advent of Blogs as a New Online Media

Of the various online media available to marketers, "Blogs" are the newest and potentially the most attractive. They have become a part of what Deighton and Kornfeld (2007) describes as a "digital interactive transformation in marketing." This revolution shows no signs of slowing down and according to a report by Universal-McCann (2009) on the impact of social media, 71 percent of active internet users read blogs. Blog participation has also increased with more people leaving comments (an increase to over 50 percent in 2009). The report also shows that over 29 percent of Internet users have blogged about a product or brand. Furthermore, according to Technorati's State of the Blogosphere 2008 report, approximately 133 million blogs (Winn, 2009) were indexed by Technorati, as compared to approximately 70 million blogs in 2007 (Sifry, 2007). Interestingly, the 2008 Technorati report also mentions that a majority of bloggers (54 percent) had advertising on their blogs (White, 2009). Another report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project in 2008 (Smith, 2008), reveals that 12 percent of internet users have created or work on their own online journal or blog, while about 33 percent of all American internet users read blogs. In Europe, around three percent or four million Internet users actively write blogs (Forrester, 2006). Blogging has also gained wide acceptance in Asia. Take a look at Malaysia for example. A survey by Microsoft Malaysia revealed that nearly half (41 percent) of people online are actively blogging (Microsoft, 2006). While in China, the number of bloggers is expected to cross the 100 million mark (SinoCast, 2006). It is no wonder that the word "Blog" was chosen as the top word of 2004 by Merriam-Webster (BBC, 2004).

The term "weblog", was first coined by Jorn Barger on his *Robot Wisdom* website on 17 December 1997 (Kottke, 2003). A few years later, in the mid of 1999, Peter Merholz, came up with the word "blog" after breaking the word weblog into the phrase "we blog" in the sidebar of his blog Peterme.com (Kottke, 2003). Though some authors argue that the word is not a *portmanteau* of the word web and log, the terms 'blog', 'weblog' and 'web log' are often used interchangeably (Economist, 2006; Kottke, 2003). Various authors have also defined the word 'blog' differently. The popular belief that blogs are "personal online journals" (BBC, 2004) may not be accurate as most blogs are "public" and interactive in nature (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Kelleher, 2006; Marken, 2005). A number of blogs focus on specific topics ranging from politics and sports to entertainment and technology. It is also not uncommon for bloggers (person who write blogs) to have more than one blog with multiple themes. Some of the well-known blogs like Slashdot (http://slashdot.org/), Engadget (http://www.engadget.com/) and Boing Boing (http://boingboing.net/), have multiple contributors as well.

A better definition of the word 'Blog' was given by Wright (2006) who defines it as a web page that contains regularly posted inlays that are archived and arranged in reverse chronological order. *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang* defines it as 'an Internet website containing an eclectic and frequently updated assortment of items of interest to its author' (Ayto & Simpson, 2005). Our definition of blog recognises their interactive nature and the fact that there may be more than one author. Thus, we define a blog as an "interactive website with posts that are updated frequently and may contain links, images, video or music clips, of interest to its author or authors that are archived and arranged in reverse chronological order."

Brad L. Grahamon was the first person to use the term "Blogosphere" on his blog on September 10, 1999. It was re-coined by William Quick later in 2002. He wrote "I propose a name for the intellectual cyberspace we bloggers occupy: the

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