Who Blogs in 2010?
An Updated Look at Individual Differences in Blogging

Bradley M. Okdie, Ohio State University at Newark, USA
Rosanna E. Guadagno, University of Alabama, USA
Daniel M. Rempala, University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA
Cassie A. Eno, Waldorf College, USA

ABSTRACT

Research suggests gender and personality differences are predictive of general Internet use. Specifically, people high in openness and women high in neuroticism are more likely to keep a blog. Given the rapidity of change owing to technological advances, the authors sought to re-examine the validity of these findings in an era where other forms of online interaction are prevalent. Specifically, the authors sought to replicate and expand on these findings and to examine other individual difference factors that may predict who is likely to maintain a blog. Participants filled out multiple personality measures, demographic characteristics, and reported on their blogging behavior (e.g., writing blog entries and reading blogs). Results replicated the prior research, indicating that openness predicted blogging to a greater degree than any other personality trait. Moreover, results also revealed that individuals high in self-consciousness and those who saw more of their “true self” on the Internet were more likely to blog. These findings suggest that in addition to openness, individual differences, such as self-focus and personality, predict who is likely to blog.

Keywords: Blogging Behavior, Blogs, Gender, Individual Differences, Online Self-Expression, Social Interaction, Weblogs

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the basic ways in which individuals express themselves. With the advent of the Internet and other forms of new media, individuals now have other avenues to express themselves through writing, such as keeping a blog. Weblogs (or “blogs” as they are colloquially known) are personalized web pages, typically maintained by a single author, that contain entries listed in reverse chronological order (Herring, Scheidt, Wright, & Bonus, 2005). The first reported blog appeared in 1997 (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004). Since then, the number of blogs online has continued to rise as more blogging platforms have become available, making it easier to create and maintain blogs through which people describe anything, from movies to politics to sports to personal issues (Guadagno, Eno, &
Okdie, 2009). Owing to this steady increase in blogging, researchers have begun to examine the question: Who is likely to blog?

In a recent study by Guadagno, Okdie, and Eno (2008), the authors examined the personality traits (as measured by the Big Five Inventory-Short Form; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998) of bloggers compared to non-bloggers. They found that men and women high in the Big Five personality trait of openness and women high in neuroticism were more likely to report engaging in blogging. These results suggest individuals engage in blogging behavior due to (1) the relative anonymity that blogging provides as a comfortable form of social interaction, made necessary by their high neuroticism, and (2) their openness to new technology.

Owing to the rapidity of change common with any new technology, contemporary trends in online communication are changing. The current study attempted to replicate the findings of the relationship between the Big Five constructs and blogging, but also look at more specific motivations associated with openness or neuroticism that may provide a plausible and more specific explanation for why a person would engage in behavior as labor-intensive as blogging. Thus, the current study examined other potential personality moderators that have been hypothesized to predict blogging (Amichai-Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2003; Guadagno et al., 2009).

BLOGGING AND ONLINE SELF-EXPRESSION

Individuals are increasingly using the Internet as a means of self-expression and interpersonal communication as opposed to a place for solely gathering information (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002). This increase has led to more personalization and a decreased sense of anonymity for those using the Internet for interpersonal means (see Bargh & McKenna, 2004; McKenna & Bargh, 2000 for a review). One form of online self-expression following this changing trend is blogging. Most blogging platforms allow users with little technological savvy to create blogs with ease by providing templates to individuals so that they can begin posting almost immediately. Additionally, most blogging platforms afford individuals the opportunity to upload pictures of themselves and their families to their blog page (i.e., increasing personalization) and provide authors control over the size of their readership.

Much of the research that has examined blogging as a form of online self-expression has taken place in the United States and suggests that a high percentage of the world’s bloggers reside in the United States (Herring et al., 2005). While the growth of blogging is slower outside the United States (Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006), Japanese is the most commonly used language for writing blogs, with English a close second (Sifry, 2007). Moreover, research examining blogging trends across countries suggests similar patterns of behavior to that reported of the United States (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007).

While bloggers across countries appear to behave similarly, research suggests that individuals who blog may have different characteristics than the general Internet population. Specifically, in the United States, bloggers are more likely to be young, urban, educated, and Caucasian, and are more likely to engage in e-commerce (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Within the United States, 57 million individuals report reading blogs and eight million US citizens report keeping a blog (Lenhart & Fox). Outside of the U.S., research identifies the presence of 70 million blogs (Sifry, 2007), indicating that over 100 million blogs have been created worldwide. The high number of blogs worldwide begs the question: Are there individual differences that make some individuals more likely to blog than others?
ConnectTV: Share the Experience
www.igi-global.com/chapter/connecttv-share-experience/29206?camid=4v1a