



Who blogs creative people?

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ABSTRACT

Blogging is gaining increasing attention as a useful personal and scientific knowledge sharing media in social network technology. Many studies have been done on the personal characteristics of bloggers; who blogs and who does not? (Chai & Kim, 2010; Hollenbaugh, 2010; Smith, 2010). But empirical research addressing bloggers' level of creativity as their personal characteristic has been scant. In this study we try to investigate whether bloggers are creative people or not. Accordingly, a questionnaire survey was distributed between 30 Iranian bloggers and 30 other non- bloggers aged 15-30. The results of the study tend to shed light on the impact of creativity on the likelihood of being a blogger.

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Introduction

Dominant form of communication changes as rapidly as new technologies develop. The printing press, telegraph, radio, television, and then internet were the big innovations for communication. One of the tools used on the Internet to communicate is a blog. Technorati is an Internet search engine for finding blogs. Since 2004, it has reported on the State of the Blogsphere yearly. In 2010, Technorati surveyed almost 7200 bloggers. It found that 65% of bloggers blog because they enjoy it, 51% blog to express their personal musings, and 74% to measure the success of their blog on the level of their personal satisfaction. The blogger's primary motivators are self-expression and sharing expertise. Blogging has become a way to communication across the world.

Weblogs are commonly called blogs. They are increasing in number each year. Technorati (2008) reported that most people did not know what a blog was or its purpose when they first started working in 2004. Now millions of people post and/or read blogs each day (Technorati, 2008). These have caused many researchers implement many research studies of the weblogs and the characteristics of the bloggers. They all wanted to know what motivates a blogger to make a blog when the others don't. Many studies have been done on the personal characteristics of bloggers; who blogs and who does not? Why some people make their own weblogs and the others do not? (Guadagno et al., 2008; Chai & Kim, 2010; Zhang, 2009; Hollenbaugh, 2010; Yarkoni, 2010; Smith, 2010; Child et al., 2010). But empirical research addressing bloggers' level of creativity as their personal characteristic has been scant. Although the interest in creativity, creative people (creative bloggers), and creative blogs never wanes but is ever growing. Torrance (1988) discussed the multi-faceted nature of creativity, defining creativity as "the process of sensing difficulties, problems, gaps in information, missing elements, something askew; making guesses and formulating hypotheses about these deficiencies; evaluating and testing these guesses and hypotheses; possibly revising and retesting them; and finally communicating the results" (p. 47). Compared with blog's rapid development, research on its adoption and diffusion is rare

(Zhang, et al., 2009). Many studies have focused on different characteristics of the blogger, some of them mentioned before. And at the same time several studies have been implemented on creativity and creative people. But in spite of the fast growth of blogging, no study has studied whether bloggers are creative people as a personal characteristic. In this study we tried to investigate whether bloggers are more creative people than others or not.

Review of literature

Who Blogs?

All types of people including students, teachers, writers, politicians and service people keep blogs. Retired people and self-employed people also blog (Technorati, 2008). Forty-three percent of the bloggers (n=7,205) surveyed by Technorati in 2010 have a graduate degree and one-third have an income of \$75,000 or higher. Two-thirds are male and 65% are between the ages of 18-44. Eighty-one percent have been blogging more than two years (Technorati, 2010). ComScore (2005) conducted a survey on global Internet usage and showed that the term "bloggers" covers a wide scope of interest, and that bloggers devote more time and money than other Internet users. Bloggers are mostly educated people. Teachers and students are a part of this group. They are highly educated and communicate about the things they care about: students, instruction, and learning (Huang et al., 2010). The evolution of the Internet and blogging affords organizations an opportunity to frame messages as they like and deliver those messages directly to their audiences. Another key benefit is that blogs allow access to people and information that were accessible only to obscure groups or not at all before the advent of the Internet. Because blogs typically attract groups of like-minded people, they also offer public relations practitioners the ability to easily segment their publics.

Purpose of Blogs

The purpose or the content of the blog varies according to the purpose or interest of the blogger. Blogs may take the form of a diary or journal, project updates, fiction or non-fiction work. The key to their popularity is due to the simplicity to construct and maintain them. The blogger simply types his or her thoughts and clicks "post". The blog handles the rest

automatically, with the new post appearing at the top of the blog web page. Different blogs can be easily connected to one another. This convenient network helps to rapidly spread information, or form an issue discussion group (Huang et. al, 2010). A weblog is a flexible online forum that can be adapted for multiple purposes: public diaries, literary journalism, and forums for professional organizations or hobby enthusiasts (Tougaw, J., 2009)

What is a Blog?

Blogs are gaining attention as useful knowledge sharing platforms for knowledge management. A blog is defined as a chronological publication of personal thoughts and web links. Blogs have gained a lot of popularity among Internet users as a useful communication tool. 40% of adult Internet users in the United States have blogs (Brady, 2005). On the most personal level, blogs play a significant role in sharing information, knowledge and photos among extended family members (Tee, Brush, & Inkpen, 2009).

Bloggging is integrated as an online education tool in the education field. It encourages them to share their knowledge (Farmer & Bartlett-Bragg, 2005). The availability of free blogging software and no special skills or knowledge needed to use such software allows blogs to provide new opportunities for bloggers (Lang, 2005). Early blogs did not seem to fit into an organizational knowledge management system. They have focused on personal usage such as personal journals advocating personal political views or chronicling personal daily events (Ojala, 2005). However, blogs have been receiving attention as a useful knowledge sharing tool in the context of knowledge management work environment. Blogs can encourage members to share their knowledge (Farmer & Bartlett-Bragg, 2005). "Blogs are suitable tools for supporting lifelong learning. Learners can record thoughts and experiences over time, build and maintain connection with peers, compile resources, post useful memos and create a body of knowledge representative of personal growth and achievement by blogging" (Cameron & Anderson, 2006; cited in Chai et al., 2010).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary lists "blog" as one of 10 new words in 2004. Here, blog is defined as "a website that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer." The published content is called a "post." Typically, there is little or no external editing with posts, and they appear in reverse chronological order. (Blogs are websites that are frequently updated and organized in reverse chronological order (Hollenbaugh, 2010) Blogs possess features such as interactivity, no limitations in distance and time, low setup costs, global coverage, and ease of entry (Berthon, Pitt, & Watson, 1996; cited in Huang et. al, 2010).

As for the success of blogs, Du and Wagner (2006) postulated a core value model, which identified that blog value lies in multiple elements and that its popularity is associated with content value, technology value, and social value (shown in Fig. 1). In this model, the building technology of blogs directly influences their content and social function. Blog technology (such as data storage, hyperlinks, link creation, and the like), helps bloggers to focus on their text and shortens publishing time via online writing and updating. Through automated link technology provided by blog software, a new social circle can be created. Therefore, content value, connection creation technology value, and social value are essential elements complementing one another to promote blog popularity.

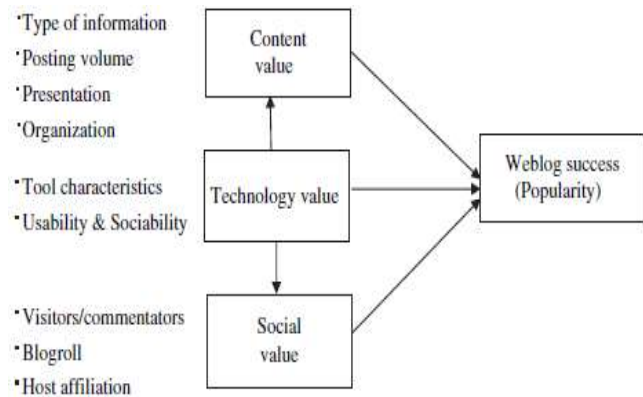


Fig. 1. Weblog success model proposed Du and Wagner (2006).

A blog, or weblog, is an on line diary. Typically, a blog is used to either document the writer's life, or a topic that the writer has an interest in. Most blogs can be categorized either as a personal blog, which concerns the blogger's life, or a knowledge blog (k-blog) which concerns a topic; although the distinction is blurred as the two are often intertwined (Chesney et al., 2010). A blog, or weblog, is an online diary whose writer is known as a blogger. Many bloggers choose to publish anonymously (Chesney et al., 2010).

Many studies have focused on different characteristics of the blogger, some of them mentioned before. Personal journal blogs, which are primarily about bloggers' selves and inner states, are often characterized by high amounts of self-disclosure. So self-disclosure is one of the bloggers attributes as well. Hollenbaugh, E., 2010 contends that the most disclosive bloggers are women who were generally disclosive in their offline lives as well.

Increasingly, blogging disclosures have become an important aspect of interpersonal communication, especially among today's young adults. As many as four million young adults maintain their own blog and readily disclose personal information on their websites (Lenhart & Madden, 2005; cited in Child et al., 2010).

In a study communication privacy management (CPM) theory was utilized to examine how individuals' blogging privacy management rules are related to their communication-based personality dispositions (self-monitoring skills and concern for enacting socially appropriate interactions). The study also explored relationships between the same dispositions and blogging frequency. Overall, 356 bloggers completed an online survey instrument. Regression analysis provided support for both hypotheses. Bloggers with higher self-monitoring skills had a more private orientation towards their blogging privacy management practices. High self-monitors was positively related to blogging frequency (Child et al., 2010).

Creativity Definition

Some earlier definitions of creativity focused on the creativity as a thought process while the others defined it as a product. Amabile (1983a; cited in Koestler, 1964), defined process as "the displacement of attention to something not previously noted, which was irrelevant in the old and is relevant in the new context; the discovery of hidden analogies as a result". Anything resulting from this thought process was called creative by process advocates.

Other researches have focused on the creative product as the distinguishing sign in defining and measuring creativity.

Table 1. Comparison between the mean and standard deviation of bloggers and non-bloggers. Group Statistics

	blogger	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
creativity	yes	30	45.6000	6.27310	1.14531
	no	30	32.5333	7.22416	1.31895

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
creativity	.565	.455	7.480	58	.000	13.06667	1.74681	9.57005	16.56328
Equal variances assumed									
Equal variances not assumed			7.480	56.881	.000	13.06667	1.74681	9.56858	16.56475

Amabile (1983a) defines creativity as a dichotomous variable including both process and product. He defines creativity as "a product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic."

From another perspective Weisberg (1993) views creativity in two ways: the "genius" view, assuming creativity caused by "extraordinary thought processes"; and the "ordinary" view, which defines creativity as a thought process belonging to all the people when solving problems.

Multi-faceted Nature and Definition of Creativity

Multi-faceted nature of creativity has been approved by different researches aiming to define this concept. Torrance (1988) discussed the multi-faceted nature of creativity, defining creativity as "the process of sensing difficulties, problems, gaps in information, missing elements, something askew; making guesses and formulating hypotheses about these deficiencies; evaluating and testing these guesses and hypotheses; possibly revising and retesting them; and finally communicating the results" (p. 47).

Guilford (1950) claimed that several factors are involved in creative thinking: (a) sensitivity to the problem, (b) fluency, (c) novelty, (d) flexibility, (e) synthesizing ability, (f) analyzing ability, (g) reorganization or redefinition, (h) complexity, and (i) evaluation. of these, fluency, flexibility, and novelty are sub-factors of divergent thinking in his structure of Intellect (SI) Model in which he suggested that divergent thinking is highly correlated with creativity.

Amabile (1983a; 1983b) suggested a componential model of creative performance which is influenced by the social context and the environment rather than a single cognitive factor of creativity. Amabile (1983b) proposed three components involved in the framework of creative performance: Domain-relevant skills, Creativity-relevant skills, and Task motivation. Domain-relevant skills include factual knowledge, technique required, and "talent" of the specific domain. Creativity-relevant skills refer to thinking and working styles and implicit or explicit knowledge for generating novel ideas and working styles. Task motivation includes the motivation and the perception of motivation toward the task.

1 DOMAIN-RELEVANT SKILLS INCLUDES:

- KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE DOMAIN

- TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED
- SPECIAL DOMAIN-RELEVANT "TALENT"
DEPENDS ON:
- INNATE COGNITIVE ABILITIES
- INNATE PERCEPTUAL AND MOTOR SKILLS
- FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

2
CREATIVE-RELEVANT SKILLS
INCLUDES:
- APPROPRIATE COGNITIVE STYLE
- IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE OF HEURISTICS FOR GENERATING NOVEL IDEAS
- CONDUCTIVE WORK STYLE

DEPENDS ON:
- TRAINING
- EXPERIENCE IN IDEA GENERATION
- PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

3
TASK MOTIVATION
INCLUDES:
- ATTITUDES TOWARD THE TASK
- PERCEPTIONS OF OWN MOTIVATION FOR UNDERTAKING THE TASK
DEPENDS ON:
- INITIAL LEVEL OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION TOWARD THE TASK
- PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF SALIENT EXTRINSIC CONSTRAINTS ON THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
- INDIVIDUAL ABILITY TO COGNITIVELY MINIMIZE EXTRINSIC CONSTRAINTS

Research questions
The study has been motivated by the following research question:

1. Is there any difference between blogger's creativity and non-bloggers'?

Null hypothesis
N1: There is no difference between blogger's creativity and non-bloggers'.

Method
Participants

The participants in the study were 30 Iranian bloggers aged 15-30 and 30 other Iranian non-bloggers at the same range of age. The participants were selected through convenient (availability) sampling procedure. The study was designed in a way to include both males and females.

Materials

In this research, CREE has been used to measure the blogger's creativity. In 1954, CREE was developed by the supervision of T. J. Toreston and J. J. Milenjer, sponsored by General Motors Company. This scale is translated and revalidated by Dr. A. Krarmi, AlameTabatabaai University in Iran.

Procedure

The creativity questionnaire was handed out between 60 participants in the study to fill in. Since questionnaire had 80 items, there was a concern that the sample participants got tired and hence three of my friends helped me in the process of data collection. By the time the data were gathered, they were analyzed by means of independent sample t-test in order to answer the research question of this study.

Results

The null hypothesis stated that there is no difference between blogger's creativity and non-bloggers'. In order to test this hypothesis, 30 blogger participants were compared with 30 non-blogger participants taking the creativity scale. The comparison of the means was done through independent sample t-test since the two groups were separate from each other. The results showed that there was significant difference between the means of the two groups ($\text{sig}=.000 \leq .05$).

The results of the simple comparison between the means and standard deviations and the independent sample t-test are shown in table 1 below:

Discussion

In recent years blog has become an increasingly popular form of social networking technology. Bloggers can easily establish and maintain their blogs through many world famous web sites (e.g., Microsoft, Yahoo!, and Google) which are providing blog services on the Internet. A user can easily create a blog and post the first entry within minutes. Also, it is possible to control visitors' permissions to read or comment on the blog (Zhang, et al., 2009). In this regard many studies have been implemented on the blogs and the characteristics of bloggers. Creativity as a prerequisite of many domains of recent technology and development has also been studied in recent decades. Many definitions and different models have been proposed for it. Some define it as a process and the others define it as a product while others define it as both. As an example Amabile (1983a) defines creativity as a dichotomous variable including both process and product. He defines creativity as "a product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic."

Although the literature on blogs is a bulky one, there is still a dire scarcity of research on the blogger's characteristics and creativity as one of them. Consequently, it seems quite plausible and necessary for researchers to embark on research projects that investigate this research area. In pursuit of shedding some light on this less discussed area of research, blogger's creativity, this research project intends to see the possible difference between bloggers' creativity and non-bloggers'.

In order to test this hypothesis, 30 blogger participants were compared with 30 non-blogger participants taking the creativity scale. The comparison of the means was done through independent sample t-test since the two groups were separate from each other. The results showed that there was significant difference between the means of the two groups ($\text{sig}=.000 \leq .05$). So the null hypothesis was rejected. In fact bloggers are more creative than others. So the impact of personality factors such as

creativity on the likelihood of being a blogger has been proved. It will have implications for understanding who blogs while the others don't.

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