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Handbook of Research on Digital Media and Advertising: User Generated Content Consumption

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Chapter 13

Consumer Generated Advertising in Blogs

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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

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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', 'we-blog' 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 Blogosphere." It later gained popular usage and is now commonly used to refer to the community of blogs, bloggers and blog posts (Wright, 2006).

The fact that a huge number of companies including Google, General Motors and a host of others, have started their own corporate blogs, is an indication of this growing realisation of the importance of blogs (Lee, Hwang, & Lee, 2006; Moulds, 2007). Blogging among CEOs have also becoming increasingly popular and the list includes Jonathan Schwartz, CEO of Sun Microsystems (<http://blogs.sun.com/jonathan/>) and Guy Kawasaki, CEO of Fog city Software (<http://blog.guykawasaki.com/>). It is estimated that 58 (11.6%) of the Fortune 500 companies have business blogs (Socialtext.net, 2008).

Most previous blog studies have focussed on bloggers and their motivations for blogging (Kumar, Novak, Raghavan, & Tomkins, 2004; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Other studies have focussed on the credibility of blogs as a source of information, especially with reference to news blogs, while others look at ways in which companies can set up and the benefits of having a corporate blog.

Though online advertising has been researched extensively, especially in the Western countries, very limited lifestyle or attitudinal studies, has been carried out on consumers concerning their perception of advertising on blogs. Some of the literature that exists on blog marketing only discusses the possible advantages of using blogs as a marketing tool and the addition of blogs into the marketing mix (Koeppel, 2007; Ron & Tasra, 2007). However, the problem is that these studies totally ignore the perception of consumers towards blogs that carry advertisements and sponsored posts. There is still not sufficient evidence to show that blogs are better or worse than other media concerning their effectiveness as an advertising medium.

Businesses are naturally wary of investing in such a new medium when its long-term development prospect remains largely unknown. The existing research has not addressed the issue of the motivations that drive consumers to visit blogs nor linked it to the consumer attitudes towards blogs. Furthermore, credibility of blogs that carry sponsored posts, promoting a company, their products and/ or services remain largely un-researched.

Consumer Generated Advertising

Blogs are consumer generated, digital ‘word of mouth’ transmission of information. They are also interactive in nature allowing bloggers and visitors to exchange ideas. This conversational nature of blogs makes them ideal for building and maintaining computer-mediated relationships (Kelleher, 2006; Marken, 2005). Most scholars recognise

the importance of interpersonal influence and word-of-mouth (WOM) communications in this process (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Looking at it from the marketing perspective, WOM was initially defined as “face-to-face communication about products or companies among those people who were not commercial entities” (Litvin et al., 2008). Later Westbrook (1987) differentiated WOM from other mass-media channels to define it as: “all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers.” WOM is one of the mechanisms that customers use to evaluate alternatives in the overall consumer decision process. Review of literature indicates that, WOM might actually be the major driver of the diffusion or adoption of new products or services (Bass, 1969; Hu, Pavlou, & Zhang, 2006).

The advent of the Internet and computer-mediated communication has given rise to what is known as electronic word-of-mouth or eWOM (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006) and bloggers are part of this. Research has indicated that eWOM may be a more credible source of information to customers than other sources of information created by marketers (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Bloggers are opinion leaders and they recommend products when they like them – “almost 70% of them tell their friends” (Forrester, 2006). This conversational nature of blogs makes them ideal for building and maintaining computer-mediated relationships (Kelleher, 2006; Marken, 2005).

All these developments have given rise to some issues of concern. Despite the rapid growth of blogs and their potential to revolutionise the media and advertising industry, many conflicting views exist as to whether and how such potential, if any, may be realised. People’s attitudes towards using blogs for commercial activity also differ vastly, some believe that it enables the shift of locus and control of marketing communication from companies to consumers, facilitates open participation

and hence is a positive progress towards democratisation. On the other hand, others believe that using blogs for any form of commercial activity like consumer generated advertising will destroy the blogosphere's credibility (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Therefore, the objective of this chapter is not only to provide a relatively comprehensive review of the advent of blogs as a new online media, but more importantly to conceptually examine the salient factors which are likely to influence consumer attitude towards blogs and towards advertising in blogs, i.e. the "consumer generated advertising."

A NEW MODEL OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Consumer Decision Making Model

When we talk about marketing communications, we need to firstly consider the classic hierarchy-of-effects (HOE) model. The model is widely-used to explain consumer decision making process. The classic traditional hierarchy framework asserts that a consumer goes through a three-stage process: *cognitive*, which refers to the awareness or learning something new; *affective*, when they develop feeling, interest or desire; and finally *behavioural*, when the customer takes action. There are so many different HOE models in marketing literature but the most cited is the one that was initially developed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961) who stated that advertising effects occur over a period of time and in specific stages. According to them, consumers go through six steps before the actual purchase, namely, 1) Awareness, 2) Knowledge, 3) Liking, 4) Preference, 5) Conviction and finally 6) Purchase. This traditional hierarchy of advertising effects models has been widely debated and even attacked by a number of scholars (Barry, 2002; Barry & Howard, 1990; Weilbacher, 2001), with some questioning the linear progression as well as the sequence of steps. Despite these criticisms, this model does

provide a framework for marketing academics and practitioners to understand consumer's responses to marketing communication.

The advent of consumer generated content including blogs raises a number of questions as well as new opportunities. There is a need to examine how consumers react to different advertising formats in this new medium. The results of an experiment by Bruner & Kumar (2000) indicate that the advertising hierarchy-of-effects as seen in the traditional media can be transferred to websites as well. However, it is still unclear as to how the concept of online interactivity can be readily incorporated into this model.

In the traditional consumer decision making model, consumers are assumed to go through five stages in decision process in a linear fashion (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001). This involves an increase in complexity as you go along the steps in the decision process and in the process needing more cognitive effort. Thus, they start with 'problem or need recognition' followed by 'search'. Consumers would then evaluate the available alternatives and finally make a choice. They will then go for an evaluation of their decision (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994:566-580; Solomon, 1996:268). There have been a number of alternative models that are extensions or modifications of the traditional linear model. However, the problem with this model was that it assumes the consumer as living in a vacuum and looks at them as problem solvers. The fact is that consumers live in a community and interact with other consumers. With the advent of online communities including blogs, such communication and interaction become not less but more prominent and are in real time. For example, consumers may suddenly come across a new gadget that has just been launched on a gadget blog. While going through the specifications and deciding whether to buy it, the reviews and comments or other customers regarding this gadget is readily available and can be used to help make the decision there and then.

On the other hand, traditional marketing communication is mostly one way information flow from the companies to the customers. Advertising agencies usually plan, create and implement advertising campaigns or other forms of promotion for their clients. The clients dictate their objectives and usually have a role in shaping the campaign. However, the creative work is left up to the agencies. Now, with online media such as blogs, companies can interact directly with customers in their corporate blogs or by providing incentives for bloggers to review or write about their products and services. This may be in line with McKenna's (1991) strategic view of relationship marketing where the customer is placed first and which involves genuine customer involvement. Blogs are enabling a new model of consumer collaboration, and in turn, they are affecting the locus of control of marketing communication. In other words, consumer generated advertising has created a new commercial path for business to consumers.

Marketing Communication in Blogs

The earliest forms of advertising to appear on blogs were the graphical banner or text ads. In this respect, Google or more specifically the Google adsense program is the market leader for contextual advertising solutions, whereby targeted advertisements are automatically displayed based on the content on the blog. A few companies later started to sponsor content on blogs to create awareness and/or to promote their products and services. This led to the growth of a new branch of marketing communication known as 'Consumer Generated Advertising' (Walker 2006), which refers to sponsored content on blogs, wikis, forums, etc. Based on the presence of advertising, blogs can be broadly categorised into those with graphical advertisements and those with sponsored content. The differentiation between the graphical advertisements and sponsored content is quite important. As opposed to the graphical

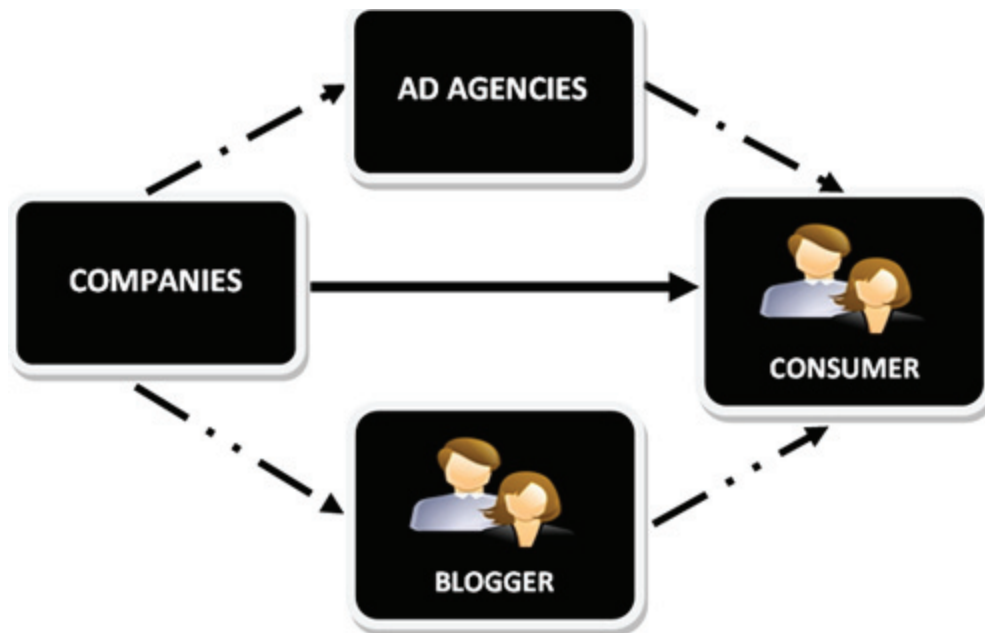
ads which have been around on websites for quite some time, sponsored content on blogs is a relatively new development in online advertising. It refers to blog entries or posts and may be in the form of feedbacks, reviews, opinion, videos, etc. and usually contain a link back to the desired site using a keyword.

Two main questions arise, namely how would the blog visitors react to these posts and whether carrying the advertisements and/ or sponsored posts would lower the credibility of the blogs carrying them. Researchers have just begun to examine these issues.

As mentioned earlier, one of the major implications of the advent of consumer generated advertising has been the reduction of intermediaries between companies and their customers. Companies that traditionally used advertising agencies to reach out to their customers can now instead approach consumers directly using corporate blogs or via bloggers, who are consumers themselves (see Figure 1).

To some, the idea that bloggers would take over campaigns normally run by ad agencies with million dollar budgets, may seem like pipe dream but some companies have actually gone ahead and are actively working with bloggers. This disintermediation has resulted in the breakdown of the traditional advertising model where the advertising agencies were usually the only interface with the customer. For instance in the UK, when British mobile company Hutchison 3G UK Limited launched the 3 Skypephone, the company contacted prominent bloggers throughout the country. The bloggers were given free samples and then asked to review the mobile phones. News and reviews of the phones around the web were then carried on the 3mobilebuzz blog (<http://www.3mobilebuzz.com>). This could have backfired if the bloggers had written negative reviews but it was a calculated risk. As it turns out, most of the reviews were positive. Boeing is another example of a company that used blogs to create a dialogue with their potential customers. During

Figure 1. Advertising routes and emergence of consumer generated advertising



the development of their 787 Dreamliner plane, they actively used blogs to spread information about the plane mainly through the blog of Randy Baseler, the vice president of marketing (<http://boeingblogs.com/randy/>). He also responded to posts about the plane on other blogs as well.

Of course, it would be wrong to assume that there has been a complete disintermediation between businesses and the consumers. Despite the fact that traditional advertising firms have been slow to adopt this new medium, several start-up companies specialised in consumer generated advertising on blogs have stepped in to fill this vacuum. Blogitive, which started in early 2006, was the first online service to pay bloggers on a per-post basis (Shull, 2006). However, the present market leader for consumer generated advertising is Izea (formerly known as PayPerPost.com), an Orlando based startup. The company has been going from strength to strength (Hof, 2006) and have even secured funding from investors. This is a clear indication that some companies have realised the importance of the role that blogs play

in the new model of marketing communication (Economist, 2006; D. Kirkpatrick & Roth, 2005; Wright, 2006).

CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS BLOGS AND ADVERTISING IN BLOGS: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Before we can even start to understand the consumers' attitude toward sponsored posts or what is called "consumer generated advertising", we need to understand why they like to visit blogs in the first place and in particular, why they prefer some blogs more than others. According to Chang & Wang (2008), consumer attitude and behavioural intention toward online media is affected by users' internal and external motivation and perceived interactivity, such as ease of use, usefulness and flow experience. In an experimental study looking at perceived interactivity of three websites, the need for cognition was shown to be

an antecedent of perceived interactivity and it was the significant predictor that influenced perceptions of high or low interactivity of websites (Jee & Lee, 2002). In addition, credibility perceptions with regards to the blogger are likely to moderate the effect of perceived interactivity on consumer attitude toward blogs. Consumer attitude toward the blogs in turn is likely to affect their attitude toward the sponsored posts carried by the blogs. Next we provide more detailed discussion of the factors as the drivers of consumer attitude toward consumer generated advertising.

Motivations for Blog Usage

As already discussed, blogs are a relatively new development on the web involving a different way in which people interact with each other online. The fact that a large number of internet users read blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006) indicates that, there are some underlying motivations for blog usage. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) showed that consumers used the web for a number of reasons besides retrieving information and *intrinsic motivations* play a greater role than demographic factors in web usage behaviour. Their research further indicates that individuals' need for cognition may be one of the reasons why people seek out and visit blogs. The need for cognition (NFC) scale was developed by Cacioppo & Petty (1982) and reflects the extent to which people engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activities. It is defined as an individual's tendency to engage in and enjoy cognitive endeavours. Studies have shown that individuals with a high NFC are intrinsically motivated while those with lower NFC require extrinsic motivation to involve in cognitive activities. Those with a lower NFC are sometimes referred to as cognitive misers (Taylor, 1981). While describing motivations of consumers to using information services in the Internet, Kaynar & Amichai-Hamburger (Kaynar & Amichai-Hamburger, 2008) showed that there

was a correlation between NFC and professional services use, with people high in NFC using information services in the Internet relatively more than those low in NFC.

Perceived Interactivity of Blogs

Despite the fact that various authors acknowledge the importance of the concept of interactivity, a clear and valid framework is still lacking (Jee & Lee, 2002). While some authors use it to mean the human interaction with the web, such as speed of interaction (Campbell & Wright, 2008; Novak et al., 2000; Steuer, 1992), others focussed on the social exchanges (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2007).

Deighton & Kornfeld (2007) categorised three types of interaction in social exchange of relevance to marketing. These are, communal, instrumental and voyeuristic.

Communal interaction refers to those active participants in the online community while instrumental interaction refers to the use of the community for some temporary advantage. Finally voyeuristic interaction refers to observing others participants' communal activities. It was pointed out that most of those interactions involved in digital communities are voyeuristic, while communal and instrumental interactions are only present to a small extent. Considering the fact that blogs are a form of digital community, it would be important to see whether this holds true for blogs as well.

In marketing literature, most authors have focussed on perceived interactivity rather than the actual interactivity facilitated by interactive technologies (Wu, 1999, McMillan and Hwang, 2002, Sohn and Lee, 2005). Perceived interactivity is thus subjective or experiential and differs from the actual, objective or structural interactivity (Wu, 2006). In the context of the conceptual framework that we are developing in this paper, we use the construct of perceived interactivity developed and verified by Liu (2003). Liu developed this scale to measure the interactivity of websites,

which is thus more relevant to blogs than other existing interactivity measures. This construct is composed of three correlated but distinct dimensions: active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity. Even though it leads to affective or behavioural responses, it is separated from those consequences and the fact that it considers the interactivity of websites. Perceived interactivity of the blogs should be an important driver for blog usage, because bloggers are early adopters of technology; are active, multitasking Internet surfers, they trust other bloggers and are more open-minded than the average online consumer does (Forrester, 2006). Having discussed the effect of perceived interactivity on blog users' attitude toward blogs, next, we will discuss the effect of credibility perceptions of the blogs/bloggers on blog users' attitude toward blogs.

Credibility of Blogs and Attitude Towards Blogs

The conversational and interactive nature of blogs makes them ideal for building and maintaining computer-mediated relationships and trust (Kelleher, 2006). However, the few studies that have examined blogs have focused mainly on them as sources of news, especially politics (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Johnson, Kaye, Bichard, & Wong, 2007; Yang, 2007), little is known about how consumers perceive the credibility of blogs and how their credibility perceptions may interact with perceived interactivity of blogs to influence their attitude towards blogs. Bloggers and their users become part of a community and form bonds. The question is whether the trust that develops between members of this digital community translates into credibility of the blogs.

Regarding the concept of credibility itself, there exists a debate among various scholars in literature who view the concept of credibility from different perspectives (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann,

2003). Most authors define credibility of a source or information as believability (Fogg et al., 2001; Fogg & Tseng, 1999) and seen as a perceived quality (Fogg & Tseng, 1999; Self, 1996). Fogg and Tseng (1999) identified trustworthiness and expertise, as the two components of credibility. In other words, highly credible sources are perceived to have high levels of trustworthiness and expertise. It should be noted that recent studies have empirically shown that information credibility is distinct from trust (McKnight & Kacmar, 2007). An increase in the perceived credibility of a source or information will ultimately lead to trust by the receivers of that information.

In addition, there have been a number of studies on media credibility (Hardin, 2002; Metzger et al., 2003). Walther et al., (2004) identified three dimensions of credibility, namely, safety, trustworthiness, and dynamism. Related to trustworthiness, site authorship and sponsorship were also identified as important criteria of web site credibility (Lynch, Vernon, & Smith, 2001). They showed that the attributes and trustworthiness of the source author relates to source credibility.

Among the various scales used to measure source credibility in marketing communication, Harmon and Coney's (1982) credibility scales have been among the most widely adapted. They measured credibility of a source using adjectives with seven point semantic differential scales. The adjectives were: trustworthy/not trustworthy, good/bad, open-minded/close-minded, trained/untrained, experienced/ not experienced, and expert/not expert. More recently, '*webbelievability*' is another term that has been introduced into the credibility literature. Johnson and Kaye (2002) coined the term to refer to "the degree to which people judge online information as credible." This differs from source credibility as it looks at the information presented. So the question is how the uptake of information presented by a blogger is affected by their perceived credibility?

Attitude Towards Advertising in Blogs

If a blog/blogger is perceived as credible, will this perceived credibility be transferred to products and services recommended by that blog/blogger? Credibility as conceptualised by Flanagin & Metzger (2000) have assessed it in three ways, namely, *message credibility*, which is the perceived credibility of information presented on the website; *sponsor credibility*, the perceived credibility of the blogger and finally, *site credibility*, the perceived credibility of the blog as a whole.

A experimental study of students in the US and Korea (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005) investigating the motivations and consequences of interactivity in the online context and found that different types of interaction had a positive effect on attitude towards site, which in turn leads to a positive attitude towards brand and purchase intentions. Relating this to blogs, it remains to be tested whether consumers who have a positive perception towards blogs would have a positive attitude towards sponsored posts as well. Nevertheless, we have reason to believe that attitude towards blogs is closely correlated to attitude towards sponsored posts carried in that blogs. This is because that bloggers ultimately get to decide what to post, and they are keenly aware that whatever they post will affect their credibility and ultimately their popularity. Therefore they act as the guardian for the type of posts put on their blogs to ensure that their own credibility is not adversely affected.

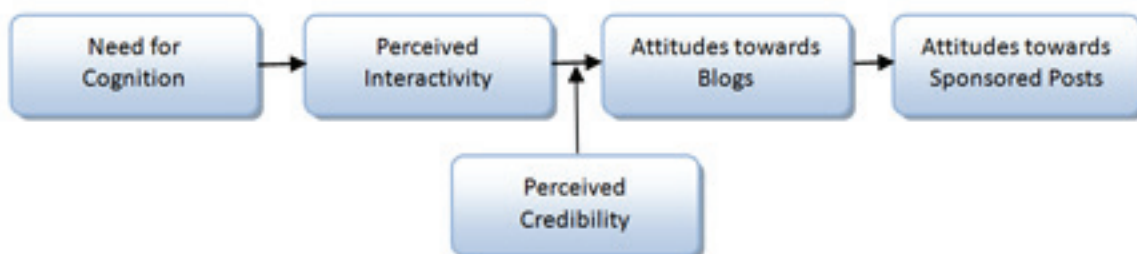
The fact that bloggers “don’t pretend to be neutral” may be another reason why their credibility is closely linked to the credibility of the sponsored posts they carry in their blogs. In fact blog users may even view the biased tone of bloggers positively (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). Research has shown that bloggers are opinionated and open people, often revealing personal information on their blogs, even revealing intimate details of their life (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004; Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004; Nowson & Oberlander, 2006). Blog users judged blogs to be even more credible than traditional media (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). They point out that “users may find weblogs more credible because they are independent rather than controlled by corporate interests.”

Based on the discussion in this chapter, Figure 2 presents the conceptual model of consumer attitude towards blogs and sponsored posts, which can be further tested empirically.

DISCUSSION

Blogs have the potential to change the competitive landscape and companies who understand the impact of such new technologies are likely to dominate the industry and the future marketplace. For marketers, blogs are the “non-marketing” communication paths, or new traffic lanes not built for “the convenience of marketers but for consumers” (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2007). This

Figure 2. Conceptual model: consumer attitude towards blogs and sponsored posts



has created new and unexpected challenges and opportunities for marketers to influence, participate or even fit in the social world of consumers. However, given the profound implication of blogs for consumers and for company, it is surprising that there exist very little theoretical and empirical studies, if any, on this emerging social phenomenon. Understanding such radically new technologies is extremely difficult for the users themselves due to the high uncertainty regarding cost and benefit trade-offs, which in turn makes it hard for marketers to measure adequately the potential impact of these new technologies for the business. This chapter sets out the first step to meet this challenge by conceptually examining factors that may influence consumer attitude towards blogs as well as advertising in blogs.

Our conceptual development as presented in the model identified consumer motivation, particularly need for cognition, perceived interactivity of blogs and perceived credibility of blogs as the salient factors that are likely to influence consumer attitude towards blogs and advertising in blogs. The transferability of attitude towards blogs to attitude towards sponsored content in blogs is also proposed, although empirical study will be required to test this proposition. The implication of this proposed transferability of attitude from blogs to advertising in blogs for the companies is that they need to understand the concerns of the bloggers and the ways they can be active players in the emerging environment of “consumer generated advertising.” This is because in the new model of marketing communication, the concerns of the bloggers become the concerns of the companies as well.

This chapter attempts to gauge the potential that blogs offers as a marketing and communication tool by understanding how blog users engage with blogs and how they perceive blogs as an advertising medium. Empirical testing of the conceptual model developed in this chapter would help shed some light on how blogs are enabling a new model of consumer collaboration, and in turn, how this

new model of consumer collaboration affects the locus of control of marketing communication.

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