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Bitching, bouncing and brawling - How backchannels brought colour to conference calls

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BLOGGING TO EXPRESS SELF AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES, ANY ONE?

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Abstract

Blogging has fast emerged as an unparalleled social computing phenomenon not to be ignored. This paper begins by reviewing the motivation factors for blogging identified in the extant literature. These factors can be broadly classified as either activities-based or behavioral-based. We then propose that a root motivation factor based on the theoretical underpinnings of self identity and social identity can better explain blogging motivation compared to the existing factors. Specifically, we posit that individuals could be receptive toward a migration of their real world self and social identities to the online virtual blog environment and thereby cumulates in the formation of blogger virtual identities. Blogger virtual identities is conceptualized as a second order formative construct formulated through two first-order reflective subconstructs, namely the virtual self identities and virtual social identities. Drawing on the theory of planned behavior, we propose a virtual identities model of blogging intention to investigate how the blogger virtual identities can lead to blogging intention and actual blogging behaviour. A two-stage research methodology consisting of a qualitative content analysis and followed by a survey is also proposed. We conclude with a brief discussion on the potential theoretical and practical contributions of this paper.

Keywords: Blogging, Virtual identity, Social computing, Theory Building.

1 INTRODUCTION

Many would have agreed that one of the most exciting online activities in recent years has been blogging, i.e., writing on individual's web page with reverse chronological sequence of dated entries (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus & Wright 2004; Sifry 2007). Research on blogging has become increasingly important and popular with significant amount of effort expended on identifying various motivation factors leading to a person embraces blogging and examining the social network of blogger (Gumbrecht 2004; Li 2005; Nardi, Schiano & Gumbrecht 2004a; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht & Swarth 2004b; Schiano, Nardi, Gumbrecht & Swarth 2004; Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmohl & Sapp 2006). More recently, other researchers have also investigated the motivation factors underlying microblogging, a relatively new derivation of blogging that allows bloggers to write short entries while on the move (see Java, Song, Finin & Tseng 2007). However, we believe that the extant literature does not adequately explain the root motivation factor of blogging (Nardi et al. 2004b).

This research in progress paper attempts to use the self and social identity notions as theoretical lens to address the knowledge gap. The rationale is that personal web pages have been known to be used by individuals to create their online identities as a mean of self presentation (Schau & Gilly 2003). Indeed, information provided on personal web pages pertaining to how the author would like to be regarded by others, i.e. identity claims, can portray the author's personality accurately (Vazire & Gosling 2004). In other words, the need to project certain impression of oneself to others in the online world could plausibly explain why an individual could be motivated to blog (Schlenker 2005). To this extent, we contrive the theoretical notion of *blogger virtual identities*, which encompasses the online virtual self and social identities of an individual blogger, as the root motivation factor of blogging. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1985; Ajzen 1991), we further propose a preliminary research model termed as the *Virtual Identities Model of Blogging Intention* to explain how blogger virtual identities can affect blogging intention and actual blogging behavior.

Understanding the root motivation factor of blogging from the identity perspective is important for several reasons. In particular, when individuals present themselves to others in the online world, it could either be a deception attempt or sincere portrayal of one's self, regardless of whether it is done intentionally or unconsciously (Schlenker 2005). Our present study has the potential to demonstrate that bloggers are generally inclined towards a sincere portrayal of themselves to others. Furthermore, blogging is not only a popular online activity but has increasingly been incorporated as a pertinent feature of online social networking sites such as Friendster, Facebook and MySpace¹. The identity-based motivation factor can not only explain the use of blog but also be extended to examine the use of social networking sites beyond making friends to expressing one's identity. In addition, the identity notion provides a theoretical basis for enhancing the functional design of blog tools to increase adoption and usage.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Motivation Factors of Blogging

There are two interrelated fields of thoughts pertaining to the underlying motivation factors for a person to blog. The first field of thoughts posits that blogging arises as a form of social activity whereby bloggers create postings with their readers in mind and readers respond to the postings with

¹ <http://www.friendster.com>, <http://www.facebook.com> and <http://www.myspace.com>.

anticipation for more correspondents (Nardi et al. 2004a). This view is consistent with the notion of having a blog as a medium of communication between a blogger and the intended audiences (Gumbrecht 2004). In addition to the purpose of communication, five other object-oriented activities identified as blogging motivations are: 1) to maintain online personal journal; 2) to convey and convince others about one's opinions; 3) to express emotions; 4) to develop one's thinking process through blogging; and 5) to build an online community (Nardi et al. 2004a; Nardi et al. 2004b; Schiano et al. 2004). Similarly, from the microblogging perspective, people blog to talk about daily routine, converse with other bloggers, share information and report news (Java et al. 2007). Another field of thoughts anchors on the uses and gratifications (i.e., behavioral) perspective. This field of thoughts suggests that self-documentation of key life events, cultivating good writing habit and style, articulating one's personality, acquiring information, passing time, socializing with other people, seeking personal entertainment and achieving professional advancement are the underlying motivation factors to blog (Li 2005; Trammell et al. 2006).

In our view, the two perspectives of blogging, i.e. activities and behavioral, could well complement each other to offer a more holistic perspective on a blogger's motivation to blog. For instances, the desire to express one's personality or life, i.e. self documentation, could account for the use of blog as personal journal and both opinions and emotions outlets. Additionally, the socialization perspective could shed insights as to why people use blogs as a communication tool and build community. However, the uses and gratifications framework primarily focuses on the motives for media use (Papacharissi 2002). It does not provide sufficient fundamental explanation for the causes and effects of categories of motivation that are chosen a priori for empirical investigation (Li 2005; Papacharissi 2002; Trammell et al. 2006). Thus, while we know that self expression and socialization have been repeatedly identified as important motivations for blogging (Li 2005; Trammell et al. 2006), the existing knowledge gap impede a fuller understanding of why bloggers would want to tell readers about themselves or develop an affinity for part of a community. Examining the two perspectives deeper, we suggest that both perspectives share a common underlying root of motivation: identity formation. We conceive that identity, in the forms of self identity and social identity, could synergize the existing two perspectives and serve as the theoretical lens to explain for why bloggers develop a particular behavior (e.g., expressing political viewpoints) or participate in a particular blogging activity (e.g., writing journal). We reason that the notion of virtual identity presents a concise and strong theoretical underpinning governing the examination of the motivation factors to use social computing applications, such as blog. These include social networking site and virtualization world that both emphasize the user's online identity and the associated relationship with other people.

2.2 Self Identity and Social Identity

Identity of an individual could come in two forms: self identity and social identity (Hogg, Terry & White 1995; Lee, Lee & Lee 2001; Stets and Burke 2000; Thoits & Virshup 1997). The notion of self identity builds on the role identity theory (McCall & Simmons 1978) and the identity theory (Stryker 1980) to denote that one's identity can be perceived as the expressive behavior of an individual's role in society (Conner & Armitage 1998; Lee et al. 2001). For instance, an individual could have the identity of a doctor, a managing director, a housewife, an undergraduate student depending on his/her role played in the society. It is important to note that self identity refers to a collection of socially accepted behaviors constructed from the role in which an individual occupies in society. For instance, a doctor (role) who is engaging in a medical treatment of a patient (behavior) would be perceived to have the identity of a medical doctor. Given that there could exist a reciprocal link between an individual (i.e., self) and the society, an individual's identity is likely to affect his/her social behavior (Hogg et al. 1995). Consequently, an individual is very likely to adjust his/her behavior in a manner that is in accordance with one's existing/goal identity (Gecas & Burke 1995).

Social identity refers to the characteristics of the social category in which an individual perceives to belong to. According to the social identity theory, the acquired social identity prescribes one's

attributes as a member of that group, i.e., what one should think and feel, and how one should behave. In other words, an individual regulates his/her behavior in a manner that is in compliance with the goal or image of a whole group or category of people with which the individual belongs to (Hogg & Abrams 1988). The evaluative nature of the social identity provides a strong motivation for groups and their members to adopt strategies for achieving or maintaining in-group/out-group comparisons that favors the in-group and individuals. Two sociocognitive processes may be used to achieve this objective, namely categorization and self-enhancement (see Hogg et al. 1995). The former is concerned with producing stereotypical and normative actions and perceptions that are unique to a particular group thus differentiating it from other categories. The latter suggests that people tend to view members within the same group or category more favorably along the stereotypical dimensions compared to external individuals.

The two theoretical perspectives differ in one critical aspect: the self identity perspective describes individual's role-related behaviors; comparatively, the social identity perspective focuses on group process and intergroup relations (Hogg et al. 1995). In terms of similarities, both perspectives of identities (i.e., self identity and social identity) demonstrate that the structure and function of the self is constructed socially. In other words, individual behavior is affected by the social structure and that this relationship is mediated by a multi-faceted and dynamic self (Hogg et al. 1995). Furthermore, both perspectives predict that the resulting identity mediates the relationship between society and individual social behavior (Hogg et al. 1995). Taking a holistic view of the two identity perspectives, people are organically linked to their groups through social identities and mechanically linked within groups through their role identities (Durkheim 1983). Consequently, it is necessary to consider both self identity and social identity in tandem so as to yield a holistic view and individual's identity. Indeed, an individual's membership in any social group or assumed role includes two important aspects, namely one's identification with a category and the behaviors that he/she associates with the category; both of which are emphasized by depersonalization in the social identity theory and self-verification in the identity theory respectively (Stets & Burke 2000). Hence, individual could simultaneously assume a role and be affiliated to a group to influence one's perception, affection and behavior (Stets & Burke 2000). This concept is best summarized by Thoits and Virshup's (1997) analogy on group behavior. The authors observed that decision making committee could differentiate activities among members. Thus, it is possible that people may be simultaneously aware of themselves occupying a particular role identity, e.g. committee members occupying different positions, and as group members working for a collective identity, i.e. the committee as a whole.

Whether behavior driven by self identity or social identity is exhibited depends on both the fit of the identity to the situation, as posited by the social identity theory, as well as the structural embeddedness or commitment of the individual, as posited by the self identity theory (Stets & Burke 2000). An individual who identifies with a group need not always behave in accordance with the social identity (Van Knippenberg 2000). The same argument could also apply to self identity. Thus, understanding the antecedent of identity salience is critical to comprehend the behavior of individual. It has been empirically verified that the salience of an individual's self identity is positively affected by the degree of commitment (*vis-à-vis* the number and strength of important social relationships associated with the particular identity) and evaluation (Hoelter 1983). If an individual is strongly committed to a role and evaluates his/her performance in that role positively, then he/she is likely to exhibit the behavior associated with that role. Additionally, role contingencies and identity prominence are also predictors of identity salience (Nuttbrock & Freudiger 1991). In the case of social identity salience, a "fit" between social categorization and subjectively relevant features of reality is likely to lead to social identity salience (see Haslam, Powell & Turner 2000). This "fit" consists of both "comparative fit" and "normative fit". In addition, social identification itself also plays a role in social identity salience through the manifestation of perceiver readiness (Haslam et al. 2000).

It is also important to note that an individual may possess multiple self identities and multiple social identities since people may have different roles in society and be affiliated with different social groups (Hogg et al. 1995). However, it is likely that people may only exhibit behavior that is consistent with a

single identity at any one time depending on which identity is more relevant. This reasoning is consistent with the identity salience notion (Haslam et al. 2000; Hoelter 1983). With an understanding of the notion of identity, we apply the theoretical underpinning of identity to the blogging context.

2.3 Blogger Virtual Identities

Researchers have found that bloggers, in particular teenagers and women, are inclined towards expressing their identity on their blogs (Van Doorn, Van Zoonen & Wyatt 2007; Huffaker & Calvert 2005). Beyond personal information such as age and location (Huffaker & Calvert 2005), bloggers also express their gender identity through: 1) the use of emoticons and language styles (e.g., males are more direct and forceful whereas females are more indirect and intimate) (Huffaker & Calvert 2005); and 2) “representational domains” (e.g., males prefer occupation domain whereas females prefer domestic interests or hobbies) (Van Doorn et al. 2007, pp. 151). Clearly, it is possible for bloggers to develop some form of *virtual self identities* through blogs. New communication technologies have also been observed to exercise an impact on the formation and development of online communities and the resulting virtual social identity (Cerulo 1997). Specifically, it has been suggested that social identity can be developed in both virtual and real world (Bergami & Bagozzi 2000; Dholakia, Bagozzi & Pearo 2004). Consistent with the general rationale of the social identity theory, socialized bloggers will develop *virtual social identities* as the commitment to their blog communities, i.e., consisting of the bloggers and readers, increases gradually (Moon, Li & Sanders 2006).

Building on the virtual identities concept, we posit that *individual could be receptive toward a migration of their real world identities to the online virtual environment and thereby cumulates in the formation of **blogger virtual identities***. In other words, individual possesses various role and group identities in their real life and are likely to extend these identities into the online world as virtual self and social identities manifested through their blogs. For instances, a college student might blog about his/her college life from the perspective of his/her role identity as a college student as well as a social identity acquired through his/her interaction with peers and teachers in the college environment. At the same time, the same student may wish to use the blog to express his/her opinion of current affairs or political issues as emanated from his/her self identity as an avid current affairs observer. Likewise, perhaps he/she routinely watches soccer matches on television with his/her friends and may have an urge to blog about the proceedings and outcomes of the matches. In the last example, the student brings the in-group behavior online to form a virtual social network based on soccer matches discussion. Collectively, we term such identities as ***virtual self and social identities*** in which the virtual identities resemble the real world offline identities.

Similar to most types of computer mediated communication medium, blog can provide bloggers with anonymity instead of using their real names (Huffaker & Calvert 2005). To this extent, bloggers may be inclined towards expressing covert self or social identities that they do not openly exhibit in their real life; but which they seek certain outlet such as blog to express these identities. We illustrate this view with examples of covert social and self identities. For instance, a computer programmer acquires a role identity of an expert programmer by virtue of his/her structural job position in society. Building on this role identity, he/she develops a covert virtual social identity with the predisposition to help other programmers in a blog community of programmers. As an illustration of a covert self identity, the same computer programmer could also be a computer hacker who frequents hacking blog community and discusses about hacking on his/her own blog. Regardless, it should be clear that the virtual social identity of expert programmer in a community and virtual self identity of computer hacker both arise from the real world offline identities possessed by the computer programmer.

In gist, we contrive ***blogger virtual identities*** as a second order formative emergent construct with each of the two separate virtual identities, namely *virtual self identities* and *virtual social identities*, as reflective first order factors. This qualifies our blogger virtual identities construct as a Type II second-order factor in Jarvis, Mackenzie & Podsakoff (2003) specifications. Our present construct exhibits several formative indicators properties suggested by Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer (2001). For

instances, omitting either of the two formative indicators would not completely represent the virtual identities of a blogger while the magnitude of the correlations among the two constituent identities cannot be precisely predicted given that an individual may possess none, one or both and the identities may or not may be related.

With the above definition of blogger virtual identities in perspective, we proceed to discuss its salience. Briefly, we anchor on the same salience notions of the offline world and propose that the salience of virtual identities is dependent on the same set of factors (Hoelter 1983; Nuttbrock & Freudiger 1991; Haslam et al. 2000) except that they apply to the likelihood of extending their real world identities online in the manifestation of blog. For instance, a positive commitment toward extending a role identity online and its positive evaluation should result in virtual self identity salience.

In summary, our present conceptualization of the blogger virtual identities construct is different from the notions of virtual identity proposed in the extant literature. For instance, Moon et al. (2006) anchored their virtual social identity construct upon the three aspects of social identity, namely cognitive, affective and evaluative. Other researchers such as Gross and Acquisti (2005), and Stutzman (2006) have examined the virtual identity of online social network communities' members using demographic and personal information, including images. However, our present endeavor emphasizes the expression of the blogger real world offline identities to the online blog environment as reflected in the blog contents. To this extent, the blogger virtual identities construct is a more holistic one that both extends and complements the self-identity expressiveness advocated by Thorbjørnsen, Pedersen & Nysveen (2007) as well as identity claims proposed by Vazire and Gosling (2004).

3 RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

We postulate that the blogger virtual identities construct could account for the various “activities-based” and “behavioral-based” blogging motivations identified by prior researchers (Gumbrecht 2004; Herring et al. 2004; Java et al. 2007; Li 2005; Nardi et al. 2004a; Nardi et al. 2004b; Schiano et al., 2004; Trammell et al. 2006) through the explication of the self and social identities. For instance, a college student’s positive attitude toward explicating his/her self identities as a college student and current affairs observer should lead to blogging behaviors such as self-documentation and self expression respectively. These behaviors should then activate blogging activities such as writing online journal and expression self-opinion. Additionally, his/her social identity as part of an expert programmers group induces socialization behavior that leads to online community building activity. To this extent, blogger virtual identity presents a plausible theoretical predictor for blogging intention.

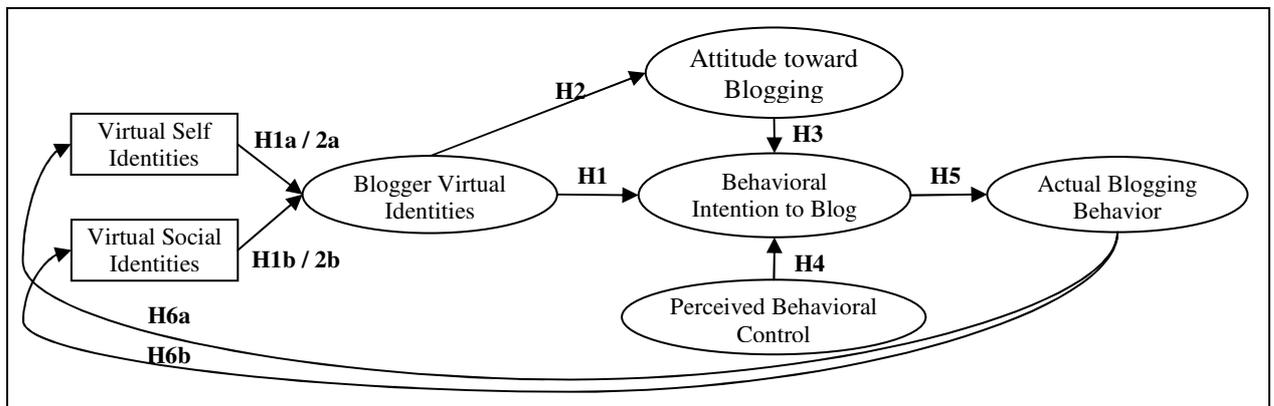


Figure 1 The research model – virtual identities model of blogging intention.

Our research model, termed as the Virtual Identities Model of Blogging Intention, is depicted in Figure 1. In the broadest sense, it is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that

individual behavior is driven by behavioral intentions (Ajzen 1985; Ajzen 1991). Behavioral intentions themselves are affected by the individual's attitude toward the behaviour. Thus, we posit that behavioral intention to blog is determined by the individual's attitude toward their blogger virtual identities. In turn, behavioral intention should lead to actual blog usage thus explaining the various "activities-based" and "behavioral-based" motivations. Although blogging may not always be a planned and rational behavior, the identity salience notion (Hoelter 1983; Nuttbrock & Freudiger 1991) does suggest that an individual regularly exhibits behavior corresponding to a particular self or social identity that is relevant to them. We reason that over a period of time, it is plausible for the blogger to consistently exhibit the same relevant virtual identities in his/her blog.

Prior researchers have examined the effects of self identity and social identity on behavioral intention using TPB as the theoretical lens. Self identity was found to be a significant predictor of behavioral intention, i.e. when the behavioral role constitutes an important part of one's self identity, an individual could be motivated to engage in the behavior (Sparks & Shepherd 1992; Terry, Hogg & White 1999). In addition, group norm is observed to have a significant effect on behavioral intention for participants with high group identification while a strong correlation exists between self identity and group norm among participants who identified strongly with the group (Terry et al. 1999). More closely relevant to our context, an individual with high self-identity expressiveness and social identity expressiveness could express a high intention to blog (Thorbjørnsen et al. 2007). In another study conducted by Dholakia et al. (2004) to examine the social influence model of consumers in virtual communities, the authors found significant direct relationship between group norms and we-intention to engage in joint behavioral action, such as a blogger posts blog entries and readers respond. This could suggest that virtual social identity might also serve as a mediator to explain for the effect on blog usage on future intention of bloggers. Specifically, as observed by Moon et al. (2006), social interaction through blog and its enjoyment could lead to the development of strong virtual social identity while the resulting identity is expected to lead to a strong intention to expand the participants' online social network and increase satisfaction with their life. The later finding provides partial support to our conjecture of a direct relationship between blogger virtual identities and intention to blog. Overall, these findings suggest the presence of a causal link between blogger virtual identities and intention to blog. Accordingly, we hypothesize a direct causality between blogger virtual identities and behavioral intention to blog:

H1: The blogger virtual identities construct is positively related to behavioral intention to blog.

(a) The virtual self identities subconstruct is positively related to behavioral intention to blog.

(b) The virtual social identities subconstruct is positively related to behavioral intention to blog.

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen 1975) and TPB, attitude serves as an important antecedent of behavioral intention and has an indirect effect on actual behavior mediated by intention. In a similar vein, we posit that blogger virtual identities can also function as an attitudinal factor exercising a separate and indirect effect on intention. Prior study has found that stronger social identity leads to stronger desires to participate in virtual community (Dholakia et al. 2004). In other words, the relationship between social identity and desire was found to mediate a separate significant and indirect relationship between group norms and we-intentions. To the extent that desire has been defined as the motivations to decide in favor of acting as part of a virtual community (Dholakia et al. 2004) and that desire functions as a mediator between attitudes, anticipated emotions and subjective norms with intention (Bagozzi & Dholakia 2002), we believe desire and attitude are similar. Support for this line of reasoning can be found in their similar operationalization in prior studies. For instances, one can compare the operationalization of desire in Dholakia et al. (2004, pp. 252, Table 2) with the operationalization of attitude in Terry et al. (1999, pp. 232). Furthermore, self-identify expressiveness has been found to have an indirect effect on intention through attitude (Thorbjørnsen et al. 2007). Accordingly, we present the second set of hypotheses between blogger virtual identities and attitude toward blogging:

H2: The blogger virtual identities construct is positively related to attitude toward blogging.

(a) The virtual self identities subconstruct is positively related to attitude toward blogging.

(b) The virtual social identities subconstruct is positively related to attitude toward blogging.

The extent literature consists of numerous empirical studies that validated the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention (Sparks & Shepherd 1992; Terry et al. 1999). Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H3: *Attitude toward blogging is positively related to behavioral intention to blog.*

According to TPB, whether behavioral intention leads to actual behavior is conditional upon individual's control over the behavior (Ajzen 1985; Ajzen 1991). Along this line of reasoning, we posit that an individual's behavioral intention to blog is also conditional upon his/her perceived ability and extent to blog at will. In particular, perceived behavioral control has been found to be a significant distinctive predictor of behavioral intention (Terry et al. 1999). Thus we further hypothesize that:

H4: *Perceived behavioral control is positively related to behavioral intention to blog.*

Both TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein 1980) and TPB (Ajzen 1985; Ajzen 1991) posit that behavioral intention is a key predictor of usage behavior. Within the technology acceptance literature, this has also been a well researched area with strong empirical supports (see Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis 2003 for a comprehensive review). In particular, an expanded version of the Technology Acceptance Model which incorporates two crucial social factors examined in our present study, namely self identity and social identity, has presumed the relationship between intention and behavior (Lee et al. 2001). Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H5: *Behavioral intention to blog is positively related to actual blogging behavior.*

Finally, it is important to consider the effect of actual blog usage behavior on blogger virtual identities. Prior study has established that blog usage, i.e. social interaction through the blog and enjoyment of blog, could lead to the development of a strong virtual social identity (Moon et al. 2006). In particular, virtual social identity develops from the trust of and commitment to the blog community when there are intense social interactions within the blog community (Ridings, Gefen & Arinze 2002). Moreover, as the bloggers express themselves and are viewed by others as such over an extended period of time, their blogger virtual identities could further crystallize. This is consistent with the internalization of the bloggers' self-presentation whereby the bloggers' behaviors to create certain impression of themselves to others could ultimately influence how they viewed themselves (Schlenker, Britt & Pennington 1996). Accordingly, we present our final hypotheses to complete our proposed research model:

H6: *Actual blogging behavior is positively related to the blogger virtual identities construct.*

(a) Actual blogging behavior is positively related to the virtual self identities subconstruct.

(b) Actual blogging behavior is positively related to the virtual social identities subconstruct.

4 PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We propose a two-stage methodology to investigate the blogger virtual identities phenomenon. In the exploratory first stage, we propose a qualitative content analysis similar to the technique used by Van Doorn et al. (2007). The qualitative data to be collected will be subjected to an interpretive analysis to understand how and why bloggers express their real world offline identities to their online virtual identities. The details of the process are outlined as follow. We begin by selecting 500 blogs at random using local blog directories, and then codify both the bloggers' demographic and information about the blog to establish a profile for a typical blogger. Key demographic variables to consider include age, gender, occupation and ethnic group while key blog variables include age of the blog, update frequency, update recency and language (Herring et al. 2004). We then review these 500 blogs and select 6 typical blogs and 4 atypical blogs for the actual content analysis. The later will involve

examining the blogger's profile and all postings, both textual and non-textual contents such as images, made in the last 6 months.

The results from the first stage study should enlighten us on the viability of the blogger virtual identities construct. If the findings are consistent with our conceptualization, we may then proceed to the second stage to empirically validate our proposed research model shown in Figure 1. The findings from the second stage study will reveal insights as to whether expressing blogger virtual identities does indeed leads to blogging intention and actual blogging behaviour. A survey research methodology will be used for the second stage study. The target population will consist of two groups: 1) existing bloggers recruited through local blog directories; and 2) internet users who have yet to start a blog to be recruited through local lifestyle-related internet forums. The objective of such a design is to investigate any systematic difference in behavioral intention to blog between existing bloggers and potential new bloggers. This also allows for better generalizability within each sample. To ensure that the non-bloggers are able to understand the terms used in the survey, participants from both samples will be given a simple factsheet on blog to read prior to answering the survey.

Construct	Items
Virtual Self Identities [Adapted from Callero 1985; Lee et al. 2001; Thorbjørnsen et al. 2007]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am willing to blog about characteristics that are an important part of who I am. 2. I am likely to blog about characteristics that represent who I want to be. 3. I find that blogging about personalities that truly reflect who am I is very meaningful. 4. I am happy to blog about life experiences related to my work responsibility. 5. Blogging about events related to my job position is something I will do enthusiastically.
Virtual Social Identities [Adapted from Lee et al. 2001; Mael & Ashforth 1992]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am willing to blog about characteristics that are an important part of my social groups. 2. I am likely to blog about characteristics that are representative of people who I associate with. 3. I find it meaningful to blog about personalities that truly reflect my social groups. 4. I am happy to blog about experiences related to others in my social groups. 5. Blogging about events related to my social groups is something I will do enthusiastically.
Attitude Toward Blogging [Adapted from Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; George 2004; Terry et al. 1999] (7-point evaluative semantic differential)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blogging to reflect my online character would be: Unpleasant – Pleasant 2. Blogging to reflect my virtual personality is a: Bad idea – Good idea 3. Creating a blog to display my online character would be: Unfavorable – Favorable 4. Creating a blog to display my virtual personality is a: Foolish idea – Wise idea 5. Starting a blog to exhibit my character on the internet is an idea I: Dislike – Like
Perceived Behavioral Control [Adapted from Ajzen & Madden 1986; George 2004; Terry et al. 1999]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If I wanted to, it would be easy for me to engage in blogging. 2. How much control do you have over whether you engage in blogging? 3. I am capable of blogging on the internet. 4. Blogging on the internet is entirely within my control. 5. I have the resources, knowledge and ability to blog on the internet.
Behavioral Intention to Blog [Adapted from Terry et al. 1999] (7-point Likert Like)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I intend to engage in blogging within the next 12 months: Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely. 2. I intend to blog on the internet within the next 12 months: Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely. 3. I am going to blog within the next 12 months: Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely. 4. I plan to blog within the next 12 months: Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely.
Actual Blogging Behavior [Self-developed] (5-point scale)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I update my blog: Not At All (Stopped blogging), Once in a while (less frequent than monthly), Monthly, Weekly, Daily 2. On average, the number of posting(s) that I made on my blog in a week is: 0, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10 or more. 3. On average, the number of lines of text per posting that I made on my blog is approximately: 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, More than 20.

Table 1 Instrument scales used to measure constructs.

Except for the blogger virtual identities and actual blogging behavior constructs, the remaining three constructs in our research model are operationalized based on validated instrument scales from the extant literature. The instrument scales for all the constructs are listed in Table 1. Unless otherwise stated, the scale type is 7-point Likert (1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree). The instrument scales will be validated through a formal procedure as described in Moore and Benbasat (1991). Emphasis will be placed on the instrument testing phase which includes pilot and field tests.

Specifically, the pilot tests will be used to assess the construct validity of blogger virtual identities using a second-order factor analysis in LISREL.

5 CONCLUSION

A substantial amount of research efforts are required to implement the proposed two-stage methodology. However, there are several potential contributions that can be realized in addition to the noteworthy achievement of a better understanding of the blogging phenomenon. Theoretically, the blogger virtual identities construct may be extended to examine other social computing applications, tools or phenomenon that emphasize the user's online identity and the associated relationship with other people. For instance, online social networks such as Friendster, Facebook, MySpace and virtual world such as Second Life². Practically, this paper provides a theoretical basis for refining the current design layouts and elements of blog to explicate or facilitate the development of both self and social identity in a blog environment. Specifically, design principles or elements that improve explicating of an individual's virtual identities should lead to greater use of blog and potentially other social computing applications.

In conclusion, this paper summarizes the activities-based and behavioral-based blogging motivation factors found in the extant literature. We further highlight the inadequacies of these factors in providing a good understanding of why people would want to blog. Accordingly, we put forth the notion of blogger virtual identities that is based on the theoretical underpinnings of self and social identity. We reason that the propensity for an individual to extend both his/her real world self and social identities to the online blog environment cumulating in the formation of blogger virtual identities can explain why a person would want to blog. More specifically, we put forth the Virtual Identities Model of Blogging Intention, which is based on TPB, for investigating the effect of blogger virtual identities on blogging intention and actual blogging behavior.

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² <http://www.secondlife.com>.

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