

9 July 2011

What Kinds Of Social Support Does The Audience Offer To A-List Journal-Type Bloggers?

Hsiu-Chia Ko

Chaoyang University of Technology, hcko@cyut.edu.tw

Li-Ling Wang

Chaoyang University of Technology, lilly0521@gmail.com

Yi-Ting Xu

Chaoyang University of Technology, s9814607@cyut.edu.tw

ISBN: [978-1-86435-644-1]; Full paper

Recommended Citation

Ko, Hsiu-Chia; Wang, Li-Ling; and Xu, Yi-Ting, "What Kinds Of Social Support Does The Audience Offer To A-List Journal-Type Bloggers?" (2011). *PACIS 2011 Proceedings*. 99.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2011/99>

This material is brought to you by the Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in PACIS 2011 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

WHAT KINDS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT DOES THE AUDIENCE OFFER TO A-LIST JOURNAL-TYPE BLOGGERS?

Hsiu-Chia Ko, Department of Information Management, Chaoyang University of Technology, Taichung, Taiwan, R.O.C., hcko@cyut.edu.tw

Li-Ling Wang, Department of Information Management, Chaoyang University of Technology, Taichung, Taiwan, R.O.C., lilly0521@gmail.com

Yi-Ting Xu, Department of Information Management, Chaoyang University of Technology, Taichung, Taiwan, R.O.C., s9814607@cyut.edu.tw

Abstract

A journal-type blog offers audiences a venue, through which to exchange ideas about bloggers' feelings and provide feedback, which could be regarded as a kind of social support. Based on a social support category system proposed by Cutrona and Suhr (1992), this study aims to identify the kinds of social support offered by audiences to continuous popular journal-type bloggers(A-list), as well as explore the possible benefits bloggers may obtain from these kinds of social support. Content analysis was used to analyze the feedback or comments of 479 members of the audiences of highly popular journal-type blog posts. The research results revealed that "validation, encouragement, and compliment" are the most common types of social support given by the audience to A-list journal-type bloggers, implying that the audience often conveys validation and support to bloggers, encourages them to continue writing, and confirms their abilities through their responses. Such types of social support may help bloggers obtain the benefits of social validation and relationship development, which in turn encourage bloggers to commit continuous self-disclosure.

Keywords: Blog, Social Support, Self-disclosure, Social Validation, Relationship Development

1 INTRODUCTION

The use of social networking sites (SNSs) has recently become a global trend. Blogs comprise one of the most popular social networking media, highlighting users' participation in online content creation and mutual interaction. Based on the survey report released by Nelson Marketing Research in January 2010, Internet users around the world spent a total monthly average of five and a half hours on social networking sites by the end of December 2009, up by 82% from three hours in the same period in 2008. Moreover, the traffic of social networking sites has continued to grow in the past three years (Nielsen, 2010a). The same report also points out that Internet users engaging in social network sites and blogging activities topped their Internet activities in December 2009 (Nielsen, 2010a). In addition, according to the latest survey report released by the same group in August 2010, American netizens spent a monthly average of six hours in using social networking sites and blogs by June 2010, the popularity of which had exceeded e-mail and traditional portal sites (Nielsen, 2010b). Similarly, in Taiwan, based on a survey report released by Pollster in 2010, 82.39% of Internet users have the habit of using blogs (Pollster, 2010). Meanwhile, "sharing personal blog" has ranked third in Internet users' participation in social network service activities in Taiwan (Hsieh, 2010). The above survey results clearly reveal that blogs have attracted a great deal of attention in Taiwan as well as other countries; thus, their impact on people's everyday lives cannot be ignored.

Bloggers play two roles when engaging in blogging activities: (1) the active provider of information in their blogs and (2) the reader of others' blogs. Based on the survey report on Internet users entertainment behavior released by Market Intelligence Center (MIC) in November 2008, on average, 70.2% of Taiwanese netizens engage in social activities through blogs, some of which include reading friends' posts, chatting or exchanging ideas with friends, leaving messages, and getting to know other bloggers by responding to posts (MIC, 2009). Moreover, a survey report released by Technorati (White, 2009) in October 2009 showed that netizens used blogs more actively than before because these have positive impact on their social life and because they enjoy interacting with other bloggers and audiences. In sum, according to the above survey results, sharing lives, providing information on blogs, browsing the blog posts, as well as interacting with other bloggers or audiences by leaving messages or replying to posts comprise the major activities that bloggers engage in.

However, previous studies on blogger behaviors often focus on the role of information provider. For example, many studies examine the motivations of blog use or knowledge sharing (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lu & Hsiao, 2007; Wei, 2009; Yu et al., 2009). A few studies analyze why individuals visited and read the articles of other bloggers (Huang et al., 2008) or explored blog functions through content analysis (Fullwood et al., 2009). Only few studies examine the interaction between bloggers and the audience. In blogs, the response to blog posts is the most common way for audiences to interact with bloggers. Although prior studies prove that bloggers can obtain many benefits from blogging, such as enhance the relationship between bloggers and others (Ellison et al., 2007; IP & Wagner, 2008; Miura, 2007; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Stefanone & Jang, 2008), promote individuals' social capital (Ko & Kuo, 2009), alleviate emotional distress and help bloggers obtain social support (Baker & Moore, 2008), few of them examine what responses the audience offers to bloggers, as well as the relationship between such responses and the benefits obtained by bloggers. Therefore, examining audience responses and their influence on bloggers is a vital research topic.

Currently, 53.4% of bloggers in Taiwan publish mostly "journal-type" blogs, including family journals, love journals, student journals, and work journals (InsightXplorer, 2007). Individual journal-type blogs mainly describe the inner worlds of the bloggers. In these sites, the bloggers share their lives with others by voluntarily writing about their thoughts, which is called self-disclosure. Self-disclosure refers to an individuals' act of sharing their inner feelings, thoughts, experiences, or information with others (Derlega et al., 1993; Gibbs et al., 2006; Norberg et al., 2007; White, 2004). Given that most posts in journal-type blogs are about personal feelings, and many prior studies have proven that journal-type blogs serve as a venue where bloggers to relieve stress (Baker & Moore, 2008; Stefanone & Jang, 2008), it is clear that expressing personal problems or pressure often appear in the journal-

type blogs posts. This study assumes that the audience reads such articles and gives feedback or comments as a type of social support. Unlike previous studies, the present study aims to examine the types of social support the audiences offer to continuous popular journal-type bloggers (A-list) based on Cutrona and Suhr's (1992) social support category system through the content analysis method. This study also aims to explore the benefits that bloggers may obtain from the social support they receive. The research results may enhance the public's understanding of the interaction between A-list journal-type bloggers and the audience, as well as the potential benefits of their interaction.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Blog

Herring et al. (2004) defines a "blog" as a web page frequently updated by users, in which data are entered and arranged in a reverse-chronological order. Blogs have many features, such as personal editorship, a hyperlinked post structure, frequent updates, and free public access to the contents and archives (Yu et al., 2009). In general, blogs are abundant and diversified in both content and form, ranging from private diaries, personal memos, and message boards to cooperative platforms, political stages for temporary performance, or press release stations. Blood (2002) classifies blogs into three basic categories: filters, personal journals, and notebooks. Filters feature the outer world, such as great events in the world and important online affairs. Personal journals focus on the inner world (e.g., the bloggers' thoughts), while notebooks cover both the outer and inner worlds and are characterized by long articles, each revolving around one topic. According to Blood (2002), in the beginning, most blogs belonged to the filters category, but personal journals have come to prevail at present.

Nowadays, research topics on blogs are varied. Some researchers focus on exploring the factors influencing blogging intention (Baker & Moore, 2008; Guadagno et al., 2008; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Shin & Kim, 2008; Stefanone & Jang, 2008), such as social influence, perceived usefulness, perceived playfulness, perceived involvement, and personal characteristics. Some target understanding the factors that influence continuous blogging behavior (Lu & Hsiao, 2007; Miura, 2007; Miura & Yamashita, 2007), such as reciprocity, social norms, feedback, and self-efficacy. Moreover, many scholars examine the differences in blogging behavior between females and males (Guadagno et al., 2008; Harp & Tremayne, 2006; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Liu & Mihalcea, 2007; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007). For example, Guadagno et al. (2008) find that women who are high in neuroticism are likely to become bloggers. In addition, some researchers compare content variation among diverse blog types (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Harper & Harper, 2006; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Wei, 2009), such as the journal-type or filter-type. For example, Wei (2009) employs knowledge gap theory as the basis to explain the difference in political knowledge between filter blogs and personal journals. His results show that although blogs allow individuals to become knowledge producers, bloggers with higher socioeconomic status contribute more political knowledge on the Internet than lower-status segments. Therefore, the knowledge gap phenomenon also exists in the blogosphere. In addition, some scholars discuss bloggers' self-presentation strategies (Bortee, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). For example, after investigating the differences in self-presentation strategies through an avatar for each of three contrasting settings (i.e., blogging, dating, and gaming), Vasalou and Joinson (2009) find that in blogging, many participants use avatars mapped to their physical appearance, lifestyles, and personal preferences. Furthermore, the privacy concerns about blogging have also attracted scholars' attention (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007; Viegas, 2005). For example, according to Fogel and Nehmad (2009), if online social networking Web sites are restricted to a specific user group, rather than open to all Internet users, the users can have greater trust about their profiles on the Web sites. The abovementioned studies rarely focus on investigating the interactions between the bloggers and their audience, as well as the effects of such interaction on bloggers' self-disclosure behavior.

2.2 Social Support

2.2.1 Definition

Albrecht and Adelman (1987) define “social support” as “Verbal and nonverbal communication between recipients and providers that reduces uncertainty about the situation, the self, the other, or the relationship, and functions to enhance a perceptions of personal control in one’s experience.” Moreover, Walther and Boyed (2002) define social support as “The exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages conveying emotion, information, or referral, to help reduce one’s uncertainty or stress.” In sum, social support refers to helping the individual alleviate uncertainty or stress by conveying the emotion, information, or referral to the recipient.

2.2.2 Typology

In the past, scholars propose a diverse classification of framework of social supports. According to Cohen and Syme (1985), social support includes: (1) emotional, (2) informational, and (3) instrumental support. Emotional support refers to love, care and empathy; informational support is related to the act of giving advice, recommendation, information, or feedback to the recipients and helping them to solve problems; and instrumental support is defined as giving physical material assistance to the recipients.

Moreover, Cutrona and Suhr (1992) define another social support category system, which involves five general categories of social support: (1) informational, (2) emotional, (3) esteem, (4) social network support, and (5) tangible support. Informational support refers to messages that include knowledge or facts, such as advice or feedback on actions. Emotional support is related to the expressions that include caring, concern, empathy, and sympathy. Esteem support is defined as the messages that help to promote one’s skills, abilities, and intrinsic value. Social network support is defined as the messages that help to enhance one’s sense of belonging to a specific group with similar interests or situations. Finally, tangible support is conceived as physically providing needed goods and services to recipients. Each of the five categories includes several subcategories. For example, esteem support has three subcategories, namely, compliment, validation, and relief of blame. The complete typology of the social support framework of Cutrona and Suhr (1992) is provided in Table 1 (see Results section).

Many studies adopt the category of social support advanced by Cutrona and Suhr (1992) to examine the types of social support provided during the interaction between netizens in social networking sites, such as forums. For example, Braithwaite et al. (1999) adopt this framework to discuss the type of social support messages received and exchanged by persons with disabilities in Computer-Mediated Groups using the content analysis method. Among 1,472 support messages analyzed, most fall into the category of emotional support, followed by informational support, and esteem support. Types that appear less frequently are social network support and tangible support. Similarly, Coursaris and Liu (2009) also examine the types of social support appearing in an online HIV/AIDS self-help forum based on Cutrona and Suhr’s (1992) category of social support through the content analysis method. Their research results show that informational support is exchanged most frequently, followed by emotional support, social network support, and esteem support; whereas tangible support is quite rare. Other common types of social support include sharing of personal experiences and expression of gratitude or congratulations.

Given that Cutrona and Suhr’s (1992) social support category system provides more abundant information than that of Cohen and Syme (1985), this study used Cutrona and Suhr’s (1992) social support framework to examine the types of social support given by the audience to A-list journal-type bloggers and further inferred the possible benefits that journal-type bloggers’ self-disclosure behaviors may obtain from the social support they received from the audience.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Method

The present study used the content analysis method to analyze the content of the audience's feedback or comments on popular journal-type blog posts. Many studies use content analysis to explore the blogging phenomenon (Fullwood et al., 2009; Herring et al., 2004; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) state that analyzing the content of blog posts is suitable for examining the impressions of bloggers; this is because researchers avoid the possibility of receiving socially desirable answers. Hence, content analysis was chosen for the current work.

3.2 Data collection

Data for this study were collected from 479 audience responses to five journal-type bloggers who are ranked in terms of continuous popularity in Wretch (the largest blog website in Taiwan) from October 2005 to December 2010. In general, this kind of bloggers is called "A-list" bloggers. A report released by Business Next magazine in 2010 in Taiwan indicated that Wretch ranked No. 1 among the Top 100 Taiwan-focused websites (Lo et al., 2010), and its members reached 6.5 million at the end of September 2009. Wretch has become the main blog platform used by bloggers in Taiwan (Pollster, 2010). Thus, this study evaluated Wretch as a suitable blog platform for research. The reason why we have chosen the audience responses from continuous popular journal-type blogs is that such blogs have been running for a long time, attracting many people to visit their blogs regularly and accumulating numerous feedback or comments. Response data were collected by choosing the ten latest posts from the article list of each five blogs, as well as the first ten responses to each posts in the "Comments" area. Due to the fact that some posts had less than ten responses, the researchers collected 50 posts and 479 responses.

3.3 Data analysis

The social support typology proposed by Cutrona and Suhr (1992) was adopted as the framework of this study to analyze the audience's feedback or comments. Prior to conducting the formal coding process, two coders discussed the meaning of the social support typology. Later, these coders independently coded a small portion of audience feedback into five categories and subcategories. To understand the correct meaning of each feedback, the two coders had to read the content of each blog post. As a result, an "other" subcategory was added into the code book because both coders found that several comments were difficult to classify into the social support typology, such as "Great, I'm the first person respond to your post again" and "Good morning." Since these kinds of responses were various, the two coders first reading each response that was classified into other category. Then they discussed what possible subcategories could be added into this category according to their analysis results of all responses in other category. Later, the subcategories of other category were developed and the coders repeated the coding process for coding all responses in other category. After coding, Cohen's Kappa was used to calculate the reliability coefficients for each category. According to Stemler (2001), a Kappa coefficient between 0.81–1.00 represents almost perfect coding results. The classification results show that there are no comments classified in the category of tangible support; thus, the Cohen's Kappa coefficient of this category is not necessary in calculating the values. Finally, the reliability test results show that each Kappa coefficient of the five categories is all above 0.81, implying a significant agreement for all categories between the two coders.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Esteem support

The content analysis results in Table 1 show that esteem support most frequently constituted almost 40% of the total support messages. In this category, the subcategory “validation” accounts for almost 26% of total responses. Validation means expressing agreement with the recipient’s perspective of the situation (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). The results indicated that most of the audience agreed with the bloggers’ opinions as expressed in the journal-type blogs posts. Moreover, emotions, beliefs, and ideas were the most common validation that the audience offered to bloggers. Some examples of responses are presented below.

“I think that even family members need to find a way to cope with each other over time and it will make the life warmer and happier.”

“You should write more articles like this. Let those who want to raise big dogs think it over so that they will not regret and abandon the dog.”

“Looking at photos, I miss my life at the primary school very much. It seems that all primary schools look the same.”

“Compliment” in this category also appeared more often. Compliment is defined as saying positive things about the recipient and emphasizing the recipient’s abilities (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). Many bloggers often talk about their views on something through creative writing or quotations, write down their emotions and feelings, or even share experiences in their blogs. Such descriptions and expressions often help the audience understand the bloggers’ perspective about something better, confirm their writing abilities or creativity, or praise them for things they describe in blog posts. For example:

“Your articles seem to become unadorned. Is that because you get older, experience more and discover the power of simple and plain sentences?”

“I just find that you understand the life philosophy. What a knowledgeable person!”

“Your description of the photo is quite vivid. The second photo is so cute. It is really not easy to take such photos.”

4.2 Emotional support

The second largest category of social support given by the audience to journal-type bloggers is emotional support (N=120, 25.05%). In this category, encouraging responses account for a large percentage. There are 115 such responses, comprising 24.01% of the total. Encouragement refers to providing the recipient with hope and confidence (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). The content analysis results show that when bloggers write about their frustration or adversity, the audience encourages them by conveying inspiring messages, such as the one below:

“You just don’t need to think about them. Cheer up~ maybe inappropriate here. Anyhow, I still feel that I should give you some encouragement. People always put their own ideas onto others. The problem is that you are you and me is me-- individual entities. We shall try our best not to put our ideas onto others.”

Moreover, some audience show their support and loyalty to bloggers through their responses. Common expressions used here include “Go for it,” “tweet,” and so on, to encourage bloggers to continue sharing their life. For example:

“I have been reading your blog posts for a long period and it is my first time to leave a message. ~ go ahead. Reading your journals at work is my happiest moment every day. Keep writing.”

“I like all [the] articles. I read them time and time again. Keep blogging~ Thank you.”

“Tweet! Tweet! [I] hope that two cuties could find their happy home.”

Social Support Category	Frequency	% of Total
Informational	6	1.25
Suggestion/Advice	3	0.63
Situation appraisal	3	0.63
Teaching	0	0.00
Reference	0	0.00
Tangibles assistance	0	0.00
Esteem support	190	39.67
Compliment	67	13.99
Validation	123	25.68
Relief of blame	0	0.00
Network support	7	1.46
Access	0	0.00
Presence	0	0.00
Companionship	7	1.46
Emotional support	120	25.05
Relationship	4	0.84
Physical affection	0	0.00
Confidentiality	0	0.00
Listening	0	0.00
Sympathy	1	0.21
Encouragement	115	24.01
Understanding/Empathy	0	0.00
Prayer	0	0.00
Others	156	32.57
Competing for rank	35	7.30
Asking further questions about the blogger's opinion	40	8.35
Talking with other audiences	18	3.75
Greeting	3	0.61
Expression mark	3	0.62
Talking to themselves	53	11.05
Sharing their own experiences	7	1.46
Asking for help	3	0.62

Note: N = 479 feedback

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Social Support Categories

4.3 Informational support, network support, and tangible assistance

Table 1 shows that the audience seldom gives informational support or network support to bloggers, with each accounting for less than 2% of all responses. The audience seldom gives advice or reference information to journal-type bloggers. However, very few members of the audience emphasize their companionship with bloggers and share the same interests or experiences with bloggers. For instance:

“I can't image that you have also the hobby of collecting old things. Welcome to my blog and see my gramophone collection—We could chat and exchange ideas.”

In addition, Table 1 also shows that no audience gives tangible assistance to bloggers or tangible network support, such as access or presence. This is possibly due to the constraint of the network setting, which limits audiences to give tangible assistance or true companionship to bloggers. However,

audiences spending time responding to bloggers' posts, in fact, could be regarded broadly as kind of network support to bloggers.

4.4 Others

Finally, the researchers found that a large portion of responses cannot be classified into Cutrona and Suhr's (1992) social support typology. These kinds of responses were collectively placed into an "other" category in Table 1 and further classified into several sub-categories, such as "competing for rank," "asking further questions about the blogger's opinion," and "talking with other audiences" or "talking to themselves." "Talking to themselves" has the largest percentage, comprising 11.05% of all responses, followed by "asking further questions about the blogger's opinion" (N=40, 8.35%), and "competing for rank" (N=35, 7.3%). Responses classified under "talking to themselves" refer to those that did not relate to the article published by the blogger but about other emotions triggered by things described by the blogger. Additionally, the researchers found that some of members of the audience asked further questions about the blogger's opinion on things described by the blogger and promote further interactions with the author. Finally, some members of the audience intend to "compete for rank" when responding to bloggers' articles and express their support to bloggers by writing such expressions as "one-upmanship."

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion

Given that the Positive Net perspective is gradually emphasized more by scholars, the issue of how to provide the whole story, revealing the positive implications of the Internet on people's everyday lives becomes imperative (Amichai-Hamburger & Furnham, 2007). Ferretti et al. (Ferretti et al., 2010) also pointed out that there are more valuable potential of Web 2.0 yet be exploited. Based on the Positive Net perspective (Amichai-Hamburger & Furnham, 2007) and echoing the results of Ferretti et al. (Ferretti et al., 2010), the present study examines the possible benefits that bloggers may obtain from the analysis of online audience responses to journal-type bloggers. Several significant findings are discussed below.

5.1.1 Social support

This study found that the common types of social support that the audience offers to journal-type bloggers are esteem support and emotional support. Informational and network support as well as tangible support are extremely rare. These results are slightly different from those presented in past studies. In specific Bulletin Board System (BBS) forum settings, such as an online forum for people with disabilities (1999) and in an online HIV/AIDS self-help forum (2009), informational support accounts for a large percentage of interactive messages. One possible reason for this difference between blog setting and specific-topic online forum setting is that, in general, Internet users participating in the interaction of a specific-topic forum have the same interests or face similar problems or situations with each other. As a result, members in a specific-topic forum may share their experiences and give advices or references regarding the similar problems they all face. On the contrary, blogs are more personal. Although journal-type bloggers focus on sharing their thoughts, inner feelings or experiences, most content of their blog posts have diverse topics. As a result, the audience might not have the same experiences as the bloggers, making them unable to provide informational support to these bloggers. Instead, the audience offers more esteem support to journal-type bloggers rather than informational support.

Moreover, tangible support is rare among responses in blogs or special forums. This finding indicates that it is difficult for netizens to provide tangible assistance to others in the network setting. However,

the audience of personal journal-type blogs include family members and real-life friends (Stefanone & Jang, 2008) who may give tangible support to bloggers after reading journal-type blog posts. Future researchers can further examine the influence of self-disclosure in blogs on gaining tangible social support.

The research results also show that the percentage of others category reaches to 32.75%. This may indicate that the contents of audience responses are various in blogging setting and not limited to social support. Many interesting response such as “Talking to themselves,” “Competing for rank,” and “Asking further questions about the blogger’s opinion” also appear frequently. Future researchers can further extend the Cutrona and Suhr’s (1992) social support typology and try to develop a meaningful categories for understanding the audiences response in online social network setting.

5.1.2 *The benefits of social support on self-disclosure*

Petronio (1991) mentions five reasons for people’s self-disclosure: (1) Expression: the need to talk about feelings or thoughts to others; (2) Self-clarification: the expectation to communicate their opinions and their position to be acknowledged by others; (3) Social validation: the wish to receive confirmation about their esteem; (4) Relationship development: the expectation to receive the reciprocal private information in return, and (5) Social control: the need for the recipient to comply with their opinions. Due to the fact that the sharing of lives, feelings, or thoughts made by bloggers with their audiences can be regarded as a self-disclosure behavior, bloggers may obtain some benefits, such as expression, social validation as well as relationship development of their self-disclosure in blogs. This study further discusses the possible relationship between the social support the bloggers receive from audience and the benefits they obtain from their self-disclosure.

As a whole, the present study shows that validation, encouragement, and compliments are the major types of social support given by the audience to journal-type bloggers. This implies that journal-type bloggers with continuous popularity may feel that many people have the same thoughts and feelings towards their situation/perspective, thereby enhancing their self-recognition and self-understanding from the validation support given by the audience. Moreover, the compliments, encouragement, and supportive responses may help bloggers believe in their own abilities, boost their confidence, and confirm their self-esteem.

Moreover, asking further questions about blog posts or discussions with other audience show that the dialogue occurs between bloggers and the audience. The responses that the audience provides to blog posts could also be regarded as a kind of companionship and network support. Laurenceau, Barrett, and Pietromonaco (1998) demonstrates that feedback perceived by an individual from a recipient could promote his/her self-disclosure and enhance the development of intimate relationship. Therefore, audience responses may make the blogger feel that many people care about his/her life that, in turn, helps develop the relationship between bloggers and the audience, extends and bonds the social network, and motivates bloggers to continue writing.

In conclusion, journal-type bloggers who express their inner feelings or thoughts in blogs gain the positive effects of expression and self-clarification. Our research findings further highlight that audience response helps bloggers obtain the benefits of social validation and relationship development that, in turn, motivate bloggers to make more self-disclosure on blogs, thereby forming a positive cycle.

5.2 **Limitations and future research**

The research has several limitations. First, the study focuses on journal-type bloggers with continuous popularity, and randomly chose published articles and audience responses for data analysis. The relationship between the different types of articles and audience responses has not been fully

considered. Although articles published by journal-type bloggers are mostly about their personal lives and feelings, the topics of each journal-type blogger are still varied. Moreover, the responses offered by audience to journal-type bloggers may differ as well due to the popularity of bloggers. Future researchers could examine the relationship between the different types of articles and audience responses, as well as explore the difference of audience responses between the top journal-type bloggers and non-top journal-type bloggers. Second, the results of this study are limited to interpreting journal-type blog posts and audience responses, and cannot be generalized to all types of blogs. Future researchers could examine the relationship between different types of blog and audience responses. Finally, this study was conducted in Taiwan, and the result might differ if conducted elsewhere since the social factors will differ in other countries. Hence, generalizing the results of this study to other countries or cultures should be carefully conducted.

6 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by the National Science Council of Taiwan, Republic of China, under grant NSC NSC 99-2410-H-324 -016 -

References

- Adamic, L., & Glance, N. (2005). The political blogosphere and the 2004 u.S. Election: Divided they blog.
- Albrecht, T. L., & Adelman, M. B. (1987). *Communicating social support*: Sage Publications.
- Amichai-Hamburger, Y., & Furnham, A. (2007). The positive net. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(2), 1033-1045.
- Baker, J. S., & Moore, S. M. (2008). Distress, coping, and blogging: Comparing new Myspace users by their intention to blog. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(1), 81-85.
- Blood, R. (2002). *The weblog handbook: Practical advice on creating and maintaining your blog*. Cambridge: Peruses Publishing.
- Bortee, D. S. (2005). Presentation of self on the web: An ethnographic study of teenage girls. *Education, Communication & Information*, 5(1), 25-39.
- Braithwaite, D. O., Waldron, V. R., & Finn, J. (1999). Communication of social support in computer-mediated groups for people with disabilities. *Health Communication*, 11(2), 123-151.
- Cohen, S., & Syme, S. L. (1985). *Social support and health*. Orlando, Florida: Academic Press, Inc.
- Coursaris, C. K., & Liu, M. (2009). An analysis of social support exchange in online HIV/aids self-help groups. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(911-918).
- Cutrona, C. E., & Suhr, J. A. (1992). Controllability of stressful events and satisfaction with spouse support behaviors. *Communication Research*, 19(2), 154-174.
- Derlega, V. J., Metts, S., Sandra, P., & Margulis, S. T. (1993). *Self-disclosure*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of facebook "Friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4).
- Ferretti, S., Furini, M., Palazzi, C. E., Roccetti, M., & Salomoni, P. (2010). WWW recycling for a better world. *Communications of the ACM*, 53(4), 139-143.
- Fogel, J., & Nehmad, E. (2009). Internet social network communities: Risk taking, trust, and privacy concerns. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(1), 153-160.
- Fullwood, C., Sheehan, N., & Nicholls, W. (2009). Blog function revisited: A content analysis of myspace blogs. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 12(6), 685-689.

- Gibbs, J. L., Ellison, N. B., & Heino, R. D. (2006). Self-presentation in online personals. The role of anticipated future interaction, self-disclosure, and perceived success in Internet dating. *Communication Research*, 33(2), 152-177.
- Guadagno, R. E., Okdie, B. M., & Eno, C. A. (2008). Who blogs? Personality predictors of blogging. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(5), 1993-2004.
- Harp, D., & Tremayne, M. (2006). The gendered blogosphere: Examining inequality using network and feminist theory. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83(2), 247-259.
- Harper, V. B., & Harper, E. J. (2006). Understanding student self-disclosure typology through blogging. *The Qualitative Report* 11(2), 251-261.
- Herring, S. C., Scheidt, L. A., Bonus, S., & Wright, E. (2004). *Bridging the gap: A genre analysis of weblogs*. Paper presented at the The 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.
- Hsieh, T.-c. (2010). *Scan of taiwan Internet users' behavior in using social network service (SNS) in 2009*.
- Hsu, C.-L., & Lin, J. C.-C. (2008). Acceptance of blog usage: The roles of technology acceptance, social influence and knowledge sharing motivation. *Information & Management*, 45(1), 65-74.
- Huang, L. S., Chou, Y. J., & Lin, C. H. (2008). The influence of reading motives on the response after reading blogs. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 351-355.
- Huffaker, D. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2005). Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(2).
- InsightXplorer. (2007). Bloggers account for nearly 70% of netizens bloggers are willing to pay for audio-visual uploading. Retrieved 11/30/2007, from http://www.insightxplorer.com/news/news_09_21_07.html
- IP, R. K. F., & Wagner, C. (2008). Weblogging: A study of social computing and its impact on organizations. *Decision Support Systems*, 45, 242-250.
- Kelleher, T., & Miller, B. M. (2006). Organizational blogs and the human voice: Relational strategies and relational outcomes. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2).
- Ko, H.-C., & Kuo, F.-Y. (2009). Can blogging enhance subjective well-being through self-disclosure? *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 12(1), 75-79.
- Laurenceau, J.-P., Barrett, L. F., & Pietromonaco, P. R. (1998). Intimacy as an interpersonal process" The importance of self-disclosure, partner disclosure, and perceived partner responsiveness in interpersonal exchanges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(5), 1238-1251.
- Liu, H., & Mihalcea, R. (2007). *Of men, women, and computers: Data-driven gender modeling for improved user interfaces*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media.
- Lo, C.-Y., Chen, Y.-J., & Li, S.-H. (2010). Top 100 of Taiwan website in 2010. *Business Next*, 190.
- Lu, H., & Hsiao, K. (2007). Understanding intention to continuously share information on weblogs. *Internet Research* 17(4), 345-361.
- MIC. (2009). Online entertainments. In *2009 annual report on informational service industry* (pp. 11-25~29).
- Miura, A. (2007). Can weblogs cause the emergence of social intelligence? Causal model of intention to continue publishing weblog in Japan. *AI & Society* 22(237-251).
- Miura, A., & Yamashita, K. (2007). Psychological and social influences on blog writing: An online survey of blog authors in Japan. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4).
- Nielsen. (2010a). Led by facebook, twitter, global time spent on social media sites up 82% year over year: Nielsen Company.
- Nielsen. (2010b). The us portal website out of favor, social network sites become popular [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 2010/11/25 from http://mag.udn.com/mag/digital/storypage.jsp?f_ART_ID=262660.
- Norberg, P. A., Horne, D. R., & Horne, D. A. (2007). The privacy paradox: Personal information disclosure intentions versus behaviors. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 41(1), 100-126.
- Pedersen, S., & Macafee, C. (2007). Gender differences in British blogging. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4).

- Petronio, S. (1991). Communication boundary management: A theoretical model of managing disclosure of private information between marital couples. *Communication Theory*, 1(4), 311-335.
- Pollster. (2010). A survey on the use of blogs: Wretch, yahoo are the biggest winners. Retrieved 2010/07/29, 2010, from http://www.pollster.com.tw/Aboutlook/lookview_item.aspx?ms_sn=1004
- Shin, D. H., & Kim, W. Y. (2008). Applying the technology acceptance model and flow theory to cyworld user behavior: Implication of the web2.0 user acceptance. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 378-382.
- Stefanone, M. A., & Jang, C. Y. (2008). Writing for friends and family: The interpersonal nature of blogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 123-140.
- Stemler, S. (2001). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(17).
- Trammell, K. D., & Keshelashvili, A. (2005). Examining the new influencers: A self-presentation study of a-list blogs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(4), 968-982.
- Vasalou, A., & Joinson, A. N. (2009). Me, myself and i: The role of interactional context on self-presentation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(2), 510-520.
- Viegas, F. B. (2005). Bloggers' expectations of privacy and accountability: An initial survey. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(3).
- Walther, J. B., & Boyd, S. (2002). Attraction to computer-mediated social support. In C. A. Lin & D. J. Atkin (Eds.), *Communication technology and society: Audience adoption and uses* (pp. 153-188). NJ Cresskill: Hampton Press.
- Wei, L. (2009). Filter blogs vs. Personal journals: Understanding the knowledge production gap on the Internet. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(3), 532-558.
- White, D. (2009, 2009/10/20). Day 2: The what and why of blogging. Retrieved 2009/12/01, from <http://technorati.com/blogging/article/day-2-the-what-and-why/>
- White, T. B. (2004). Consumer disclosure and disclosure avoidance: A motivation framework. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1&2), 41-51.
- Yu, T.-K., Lu, L.-C., & Liu, T.-F. (2009). Exploring factors that influence knowledge sharing behavior via weblogs. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(1), 32-41.