

## THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF BLOGGING BEHAVIOR

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The rapid growth of weblog (blog) services has induced Internet users to share their feelings and information via blogs. Few researchers are currently investigating why people blog. In this study, we explored the antecedents and consequences of blogging behaviors. We collected 613 valid responses to an online survey from blog users. Factor analysis was conducted to confirm 3 antecedents of using blogs as social motivations, goal orientation, and entertainment orientation. We identified 3 key blogging behaviors of basic journaling, more advanced publishing, and interactive feedback. Social and information return were identified as the 2 major effects of blogging behaviors. The results of structural equation modeling showed that social motivations and entertainment orientation had significant impacts on all 3 blogging behaviors and goal orientation positively influenced advanced publishing and interactive feedback. Implications and limitations are discussed.

*Keywords:* blog, blogging behavior, social networking.

The popularization of weblogs (blogs) has led to the development of the so-called blogosphere. Blogs have not only changed the way people communicate, but have also allowed for the rapid spread of mutual social identification. The aim in this study was to explore the contributing factors in web users' blogging

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behavior. We hope that the framework we developed in this study will lead to a better understanding of blog use and its perceived benefits.

### Literature Review

Past researchers have shown that blog users' motivations are diverse (Huang, Chou, & Lin, 2008; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004). We classified the antecedents of blogging into three main motivations of social orientation, goal orientation, and recreation orientation.

Social motivations can lead to self-expression (Nardi et al., 2004) or to maintaining a social network. Moreover, social networking on the Internet is not limited to the people whom the user has met in the real world, but rather, new social networks can develop out of the blogosphere itself (Rheingold, 1993). Thus, an interactive community of knowledge sharers and developers may emerge in the blogosphere from an amorphous group of strangers. The term *goal orientation* refers to *bloggers having an implicit or explicit filter in place whereby only topics that fit their fixed demands are passed on to the blog*. Researchers have shown that for goal-oriented readers, that is, readers who are seeking information in order to help them complete a task, their end goal is utilitarian benefits (Nadkarni & Gupta, 2007). *Entertainment orientation* refers to *those bloggers whose main goal is simply to enjoy the process of blogging* (Nadkarni & Gupta, 2007). Blogs provide such activities, but also serve as a channel where potentially popular topics gain exposure to a large audience.

We characterized actual *blog behavior* as being manifested in three major forms of *basic journaling*, *more advanced publishing*, and *interactive feedback*. Publishing articles is the most obvious and basic feature of blogs (Blood, 2004; Huang et al., 2008). Another activity is basic journaling or leaving comments. Advanced publishing is the result of Internet-specific capabilities that allow for activities like automatic citation notices and syndication. Gill (2004) observed that blogrolls could be used to measure the influence of blogs. Social bookmarking sites take blogrolls one step further and create an online network based upon favorite blogs, allowing for people with similar interests to share references.

We ourselves also observed that interactive feedback is a less obvious yet quite influential component in the blogosphere. One example is the message board feature, which all social networking sites and online forums must have. Recommendations and ratings are also powerful tools, not only enlivening blogosphere content and providing a useful source of information to blog readers, but also establishing a set of social values. Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Social motivations will increase basic journaling behavior on blogs.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Social motivations will increase advanced publishing behavior on blogs.

**Hypothesis 1c:** Social motivations will increase interactive feedback on blogs.

**Hypothesis 2a:** Goal orientation will increase basic journaling behavior on blogs.

**Hypothesis 2b:** Goal orientation will increase advanced publishing behavior on blogs.

**Hypothesis 2c:** Goal orientation will increase interactive feedback on blogs.

**Hypothesis 3a:** Entertainment orientation will increase basic journaling behavior on blogs.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Entertainment orientation will increase advanced publishing behavior on blogs.

**Hypothesis 3c:** Entertainment orientation will increase interactive feedback on blogs.

Finally, we analyzed how the antecedents work through the behavioral variables to create the overall perception of the experience, which we also classified into two constituent parts of social and informational return. Miura and Yamashita (2007) found that keeping online journals brought social rewards to bloggers, which, in turn, motivated them to continue blogging. Aside from being ways to provide exposure to other posts or bloggers, trackbacks, blogrolls, and really simple syndication (RSS), are ways of establishing a relationship (Blood, 2004). Wang, Tang, and Tang (2001) found that information reward has an influence on product satisfaction. Information reward, in turn, comes from information that is easy to use and provides support for consumer decision making. This should hold true for blogs, as many blog readers find reliable product information online, thus the blogosphere creates an environment where consumers get information satisfaction from communication. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4:** Basic journaling behavior on blogs will increase social reward and information reward.

**Hypothesis 5:** Advanced publishing behavior on blogs will increase social reward and information reward.

**Hypothesis 6:** Interactive feedback on blogs will increase social reward and information reward.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey that targeted Internet users who owned a blog and who used a blog at least once a month. Quotas on sex and

age were put in place to ensure the sample reflected known Internet population demographics. We received 613 valid survey forms, of which 304 (49.7%) were from men and 309 (49.7%) were from women. All questions in the survey were answered on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*.

## Results

The Cronbach's alpha for all factors was between .728 and .881, showing that the questionnaire had good reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results showed that the standardized factor loading was between .62 and .90, composite reliabilities (CR) were all greater than .70, and average variances extracted (AVE) were all above .50, which suggests good convergent validity. In addition, the indexes of normed fit (NFI), nonnormed fit (NNFI), comparative fit (CFI), goodness of fit (GFI), and adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were as follows: NFI = .96, NNFI = .97, CFI = .97, GFI = .90, AGFI = .87, RMSEA = .61, which showed that the proposed model had a very good fit.

We used structural equation modeling to test the hypothesized relationships among the research variables (see Figure 1). Our results showed that social motivations had significant effects on advanced publishing and interactive feedback ( $\gamma_{12} = .24, t = 3.50, p < .01$ ;  $\gamma_{13} = .12, t = 1.98, p < .05$ ). This result supports our hypotheses 1b and 1c. However, social motivations had no direct effect on basic journaling behavior ( $\gamma_{11} = -.03, t = -.50, p > .05$ ), so that hypothesis 1a was not supported. Goal orientation had significant effects on advanced publishing and interactive feedback ( $\gamma_{22} = .09, t = 1.80, p < .05$ ;  $\gamma_{23} = .20, t = 3.28, p < .01$ ), which supported hypotheses 2b and 2c. Goal orientation had no direct effect on basic journaling behavior ( $\gamma_{21} = -.07, t = -.95, p > .05$ ), so that hypothesis 2a was not supported. Entertainment orientation had significant effects on basic journaling behavior, advanced publishing, and interactive feedback ( $\gamma_{31} = .53, t = .80, p < .01$ ;  $\gamma_{32} = .11, t = 2.25, p < .05$ ;  $\gamma_{33} = .28, t = 4.62, p < .01$ ), supporting hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Basic journaling behavior significantly increased social reward and informational reward ( $\beta_{11} = .61, t = 4.58, p < .001$ ;  $\beta_{12} = .20, t = 2.98, p < .01$ ), and this result supported hypothesis 4. Advanced publishing had significant effects on social reward and information reward ( $\beta_{21} = .24, t = 3.87, p < .001, = .69, p < .001$ ), supporting hypothesis 5. Unexpectedly, interactive feedback had no direct effect on social reward ( $\beta_{31} = -.28, t = -1.20, p > .05$ ), but significantly affected information reward ( $\beta_{32} = .28, t = 3.52, p < .01$ ). Thus, hypothesis 6 was partially supported.

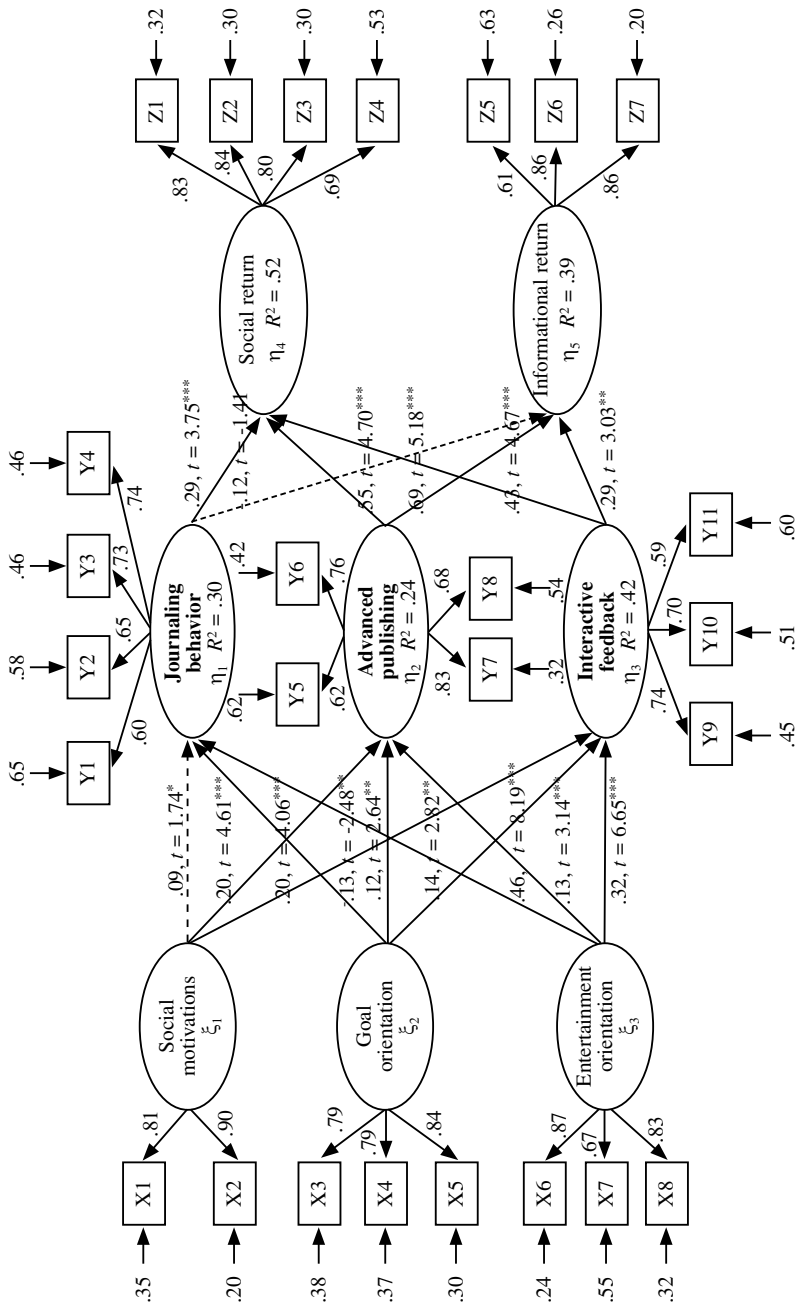


Figure 1. The results of the proposed structural equation model.

## Discussion

### Specifying the Antecedents of Blogging Behavior

The results we obtained in this study show that social motivations, goal orientation, and entertainment orientation all influenced blogging behavior and its perceived outcome. Furthermore, the results suggest that users who are socially motivated or goal oriented prefer to use more advanced publishing methods or interactive feedback rather than basic journaling to communicate online. Entertainment orientation had a significant relationship with all three blog behaviors, meaning that users were seeking out all three types of blogging in order to entertain themselves. The natural outcome of this kind of motivation in blog use is that the fresh and alluring topics people view become popular.

### Blog Uses

The most important original contribution of this research is our classifying of blog behaviors into basic journaling, advanced publishing, and interactive feedback. Overall, our results in this study show that the proposed classification is useful for the measurement of blogging motives and results.

Aside from the most fundamental activities of publishing articles and commenting, basic journaling also involves following the blogs of friends and looking for updates. Advanced publishing is a feature that must be enabled by the blog operator and, as such, bloggers engage in this behavior less often than they do in the other blog behaviors. Thus, the use of trackbacks, social bookmarking, blogrolls, and RSS feeds has more indicative power and, therefore, their influence is easier to estimate. Lastly, interactive feedback comes from the characteristic interactivity of blogs, which encourages users to participate actively by leaving messages on message boards and recommending preferred articles.

### Blog Consequences

Based on our findings people prefer to leave messages and make recommendations about sites that are within their realm of interest, such as the blogs of friends or people with similar interests. In addition we found that our participants received obvious social reward and information reward by constantly doing basic journaling and advanced publishing on their own blogs. A finding that we found interesting was that, regardless of the blogger's motivations, interactive feedback was a very influential blog characteristic for our participant bloggers, especially for information reward. Bloggers may concentrate on interaction among the readers of their blogs, in order to get more feedback and exchange more information.

A limitation in our study was the preference of our participants to leave messages and make recommendations about blogs of friends or people with

similar interests. This could have caused some respondents to give conservative responses and this is, therefore, a factor that future researchers should be aware of and take into account in the design of any future research.

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