

Bloggers' Intrinsic Motivation and Electronic Word-of-Mouth Marketing

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This paper investigates associations with bloggers' intrinsic motivation and its marketing potential in terms of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). A total of 282 Korean bloggers participated in an online survey. Data were analyzed using two approaches: factor and path analysis. Based on the factor analysis, intrinsic motivation was divided into three subfactors, "enthusiasm for work," "need for uniqueness," and "pioneering spirit." Path analysis indicated that the "need for uniqueness" factor was significantly influential to posting behavior. Bloggers post their thoughts, ideas, and reviews because they want to be different from others. This finding gives an implication to setting up eWOM strategies on the web because the intrinsic motivation affects bloggers behavior both directly and indirectly. As a result, practitioners need to focus on a specific segment of bloggers with motivations by attracting their "need for uniqueness."

Field of Research: E-Marketing, Electronic Word-of-Mouth Marketing

1. Introduction

Compared to offline word-of-mouth, the range and speed of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is extremely wide and rapid. It is because consumers actively generate and share opinions on products and services on the Internet. A variety of media services deliver their messages on the web and blogging became one of the most influential channels among them. Through blogging, company can build goodwill, discover new business areas, improve customer relations, enhance their brand, recruit competent employees, weather a crisis, and build customer support (Andersson et al., 2007).

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Bloggers nowadays are new powerful opinion leaders in the market, and they already have been treated as an important target group especially in the film industry (Mishne & Glance, 2006). Even though bloggers are important communicators, only limited research on them has been done. Bloggers are much like market mavens because they both are eager to gather information on something and willing to share it with others. Bloggers can be seen as web mavens, and they might have the potential to become influential segmentation for eWOM. Thus, without understanding bloggers' characteristics and motives, it would be difficult to operate proper eWOM marketing strategies. The purpose of this study is to determine if bloggers have similar intrinsic motivations as market mavens and what kinds of hidden motives bloggers have. Consequently, we want to know if bloggers' intrinsic motivations influence their blog-posting behaviors. We began the literature review on blogs, eWOM, and bloggers' intrinsic motivation. Based on the theories of opinion leaders and market mavens, we developed a scale measuring intrinsic motivation and identified three potential motives for bloggers' intrinsic motivation. The importance of the motives for bloggers' intrinsic motivation was tested by a factor score and path analysis with a sample of 282 correspondents. Finally, we discuss the findings, implications and future research direction for bloggers and eWOM marketing. Hence, the findings will be useful to practitioners to understand bloggers' psychological mechanism and eventually offer them meaningful implications building up successful strategies for eWOM.

2. Literature review

2.1 Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Traditional word-of-mouth is defined as a type of informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Richins & Root-Shaffer (1998) claims traditional word-of-mouth has been played a

vital role for customers' buying decisions. Internet has transformed our lifestyle in many ways. Ordering products and services on the web is such common activity nowadays. Word-of-mouth not only happens offline but also in online. When buying products on the Internet, consumers read others' opinion, reviews and experiences on them. In this process, many consumers automatically reveal themselves in eWOM. Existing eWOM studies mainly discuss influential factors (Hsu, 2007), motivations (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2004), and impacts of eWOM (Gruen et al., 2006; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2003). Park *et al.* (2008) mentioned that the online consumer review, one type of eWOM involves positive or negative statements made by consumers about a product for sale in Internet Shopping Malls. Not only product reviews in Internet Shopping Malls, but also comments on film review sites, restaurants, and digital gadgets are posted on personal blogs. Based on the blog's attributes, openness, sharing, and networking, it shows blogs potential of becoming a powerful tool for eWOM. Despite the important association between eWOM and blogging, not many researches have been conducted yet.

2.2 Bloggers' Intrinsic Motivation

Freick *et al.* (1987) segmented a group of consumers and suggested a concept of 'market maven'. While opinion leaders and early adopters generate opinions on products or services they buy, market mavens are eager to gather and accept information on products regardless of purchasing them. Also they are very willing to pass information out to other consumers. Basically mavens are people who have higher intrinsic motivation than average consumers. For example, programmers develop and share open source software because it is just as interesting, enjoyable or sometimes challenging as hobby. Mavens also gather useful information and tell other consumers. This somewhat altruistic characteristic and behavior can be appreciated based on intrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000),

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external products, pressures, or rewards.

Goldsmith *et al.* (2006) mentioned that mavens are some consumers who have tendency to be especially involved in the marketplace. We assumed that bloggers might have similar characteristics of market mavens. They both like to gather information and are willing to spread it one another. In a sense, we could name bloggers' as web mavens. An aim of the study is to characterize intrinsic motivation of bloggers who are willing to produce information on their blogs. We started this paper with one question. Are bloggers' can be described as web mavens? To answer the question, we developed a set of questionnaire asking that bloggers' intrinsic motivation. In this study, intrinsic motivation specifically means bloggers' engaging in an activity without obvious external incentives. Clark and Goldsmith (2005) identified the tendency to conform, global self-esteem, consumer susceptibility to normative interpersonal influence, and consumer need for uniqueness as antecedents to market mavenism. When designing the factor analysis, new questionnaire items of intrinsic motivation of bloggers were constructed.

2.3 Information Sharing and Blog-Posting Frequency

We assumed that bloggers' intrinsic motivation will be positively related to online information sharing, major purpose of using blogs. And the more they were willing to share them, the more writings they tended to post on their blogs. One part of questionnaire is about bloggers' blog usage behavior. We tried to find out how often they post their opinions, ideas, and information on something. We named the cycle, blog-posting frequency. We suggest the following basic hypotheses:

H1: Bloggers' intrinsic motivation will be positively related to online information sharing.

H2: Online information sharing will be positively related to blog-posting frequency.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

The data were collected from March 6 to April 6, 2007. During a month 350 people participated in an online survey, in which they were required to complete a questionnaire. The average time to complete a questionnaire was under 15 minutes. Of the 350 respondents, only those with blogging experience were included for data analysis. Of the final 282 respondents, 130 were male (49%) and 145 were female (51%). Sixty-six percent of the sample reported that they were in their 20's and twenty-four percent were in their 30's. Forty percent of the sample reported that they graduated from college and twenty-nine percent were undergraduates. Based on the sample's usage profile, 46% reported that they had 1 blog, and 37% had 2 blogs. Half of them have experienced blogging between 1 to 3 years and 29 percent from 3 to 5 years. The average time spent blogging per week was mostly between 30 to 60 minutes (30%) and less than 30 minutes (29%). Blogging took place mostly at home and at work.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire consists of four parts: usage behavior, usage motivation, intrinsic motivation, and demographics. Since there was no established scale for bloggers' intrinsic motivation, new items to measure different motives based on the theories of opinion leaders and market mavens were developed. A total of 30 items were initially developed and verified three times by experts, users, and two authors. Fifteen items

were deemed suitable and were chosen for the survey. The scale used a five-point Likert response format ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) in which a higher motive score means stronger motive agreement.

4. Results

4.1 Analysis for Intrinsic Motivation Structure

According to a principle components analysis (PCA), 15 items were examined. Since PCA considers exploratory state of the typology of bloggers' intrinsic motivation, it is a necessary procedure to verify the set of items. Kaiser's eigenvalue criterion indicated that three factors were greater than one drawn out with a Varimax rotation. Table 1 indicates the factors loadings of PCA and Cronbach's α values. We named three sub factors based on the theoretical background we discussed earlier in the literature review: enthusiasm for the work (Factor 1), need for uniqueness (Factor 2), and pioneering spirit (Factor 3).

Table 1. Factor Structure and Item Stability

Factor (Cronbach's α)	Indicator	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1 Enthusiasm for the work ($\alpha = .836$)	I am willing to work overtime if my talents are recognized by others.	.784		
	I enjoy my work.	.685		
	I can take another job in smaller company if it allows me to show more of my talents.	.656		
	My work comes before everything else..	.647		
	I want to be evaluated by my capabilities, not by my seniority, age, or gender.	.616		
	I am a goal-oriented person.	.616		
	I want more challenges.	.451		
Factor 2 Need for uniqueness ($\alpha = .617$)	I am pressured by hierarchical organization.		.762	
	I prefer an outfit which can express me than a formal suit.		.648	
	I will choose a job I enjoy even if it pays less.		.620	
Factor 3 Pioneering spirit ($\alpha = .633$)	I will choose an unstable job with more money than a stable job with less money.			.657
	I like adventures.			.577
	I speak up when I feel something needs to be said regardless of who it is.			.539
	I tend to be different from others.			.498
	When I do something, I always want to contribute something meaningful.			.379

4.2 Analysis for Intrinsic Motivation

We investigated what kinds of intrinsic motivation influence online information sharing. Previously Bloggers' intrinsic motivation was analyzed by factor analysis and we found three sub factors. Further, we also performed path analysis to determine whether online information sharing is positively associated with blog-posting frequency. If the hypothesis is positive, we can assume that blog-posting frequency is drawn out by certain intrinsic motivation. Thus, this study advances the following hypotheses:

H1: Bloggers' intrinsic motivation will be positively related to online information sharing.

H1a: "Enthusiasm for the work" will be positively related to online information sharing.

H1b: "Need for uniqueness" will be positively related to online information sharing.

H1c: "Pioneering spirit" will be positively related to online information sharing.

H2: Online information sharing will be positively related to blog-posting frequency.

To test the structural model of the relationships among the variables, path analysis was performed via AMOS 6.0. Path analysis is a type of multiple regression analysis which has been used to refer to the analysis of causal models when single indicators are employed for each of the variables in the model. To test our hypotheses, intrinsic motivation factors are substituted into the model. Table 2 presents the relationships among intrinsic motivation, information-sharing, and blog-posting frequency. In this analysis, path coefficients are needed for each path and standardized regression

coefficients: beta were fit into the model by regression analysis. All the path coefficient and significance are shown in Table 2.

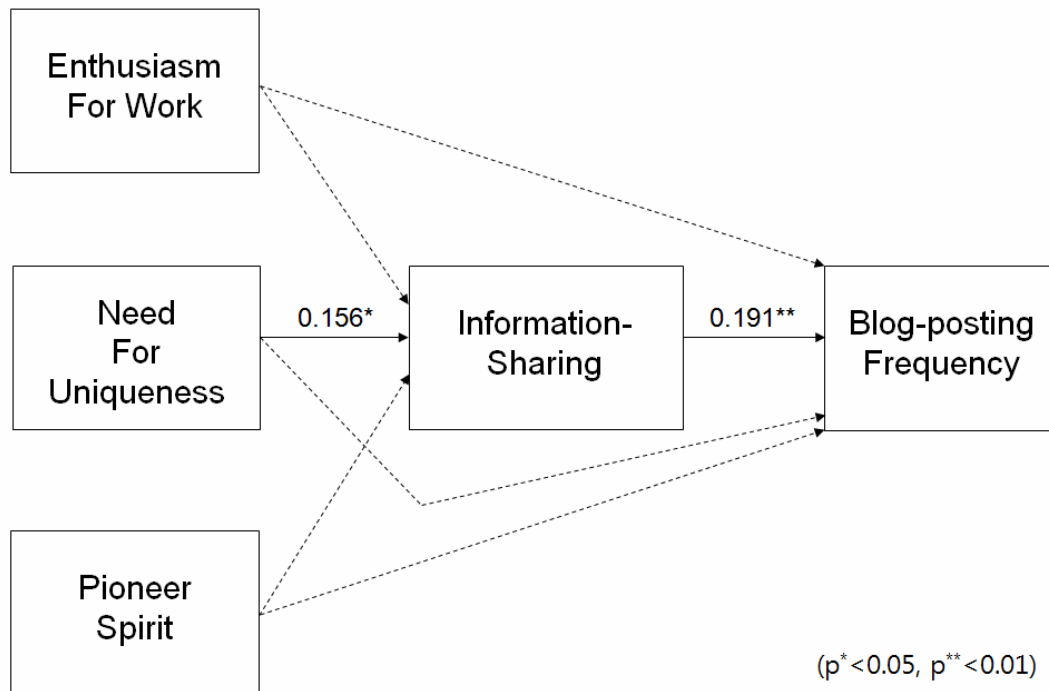
Table 2. Path coefficients for causal paths ($P^* < 0.05$, $p^{**} < 0.01$)

Dependent Variable \ Independent Variable	Information-sharing (D)		Blog-posting frequency (B)	
	Path Coefficient	Significant Level	Path Coefficient	Significant Level
Enthusiasm for the work	0.117	0.114	0.098	0.199
Need for uniqueness	0.156*	0.017	-0.030	0.661
Pioneer spirit	0.120	0.107	-0.008	0.920
Information-sharing (D)	-		0.191**	0.002
R ²	0.101		0.050	

Figure 1 is a path analysis model of intrinsic motivation, e-WOM, and blog-posting behavior. It indicates the relationships among bloggers' intrinsic motivation, online information sharing, and blog-posting frequency. Table 2 is the parameter estimates for paths. In Figure 1, the paths represented by solid lines are statistically significant and the paths represented by dotted lines are not significant. H1a through H1c stated that enthusiasm for work, need for uniqueness, and pioneering spirit would be related to information-sharing. H1 and H2 stated that information-sharing would be related to blog-posting frequency. As expected, the results show that the need for uniqueness is related to information-sharing. Also, Information-sharing had a significant effect on blog-posting frequency. However, enthusiasm for work, need for uniqueness, and pioneering spirit were found to have no direct effect on blog-posting frequency. The findings provide strong support for H1b and H2, while H1a and H1c

were not supported by the data. Thus, path analysis implies that the more bloggers are motivated by a need for uniqueness, the more likely they are to share information.

Figure 1. Path Analysis Model of Intrinsic Motivation, e-WOM, Blog-posting Behavior



5. Implications

5.1 Blog as a new eWOM channel

In terms of today's Web 2.0 environments, eWOM study needs to be considered in a broader range of view. Web 2.0 is all about participation, sharing, openness, user control, and networking. Along with Wikipedia and UGC, blogs have become a powerful source of information on the Internet. When bloggers review cultural contents like movies on the Web, many people share the information and interact with others to create more information. Today, blogs are new media and they can be

used as e-WOM marketing tools. Blog content is diverse, ranging from daily activities to serious issues, proving that blogging is a versatile medium. Even though the importance of the eWOM and blogging has increased, not much research has been conducted. In previous studies on blogs, researchers measure the role of blogs as a new kind of media and studied people's blog-using behavior. Consumers were found mainly writing in the blogs when they had knowledge to contribute with or when they needed information that they could not find in the blogs (Andersson et al., 2007). However, there was no explanation what kinds of intrinsic motivation trigger bloggers to post their blogs. Intrinsic motivation has been studied for psychology but not in the digital environment. Therefore, we analyzed blogger's characteristic, intrinsic motivation, and relationship to their posting behavior. This study identified a positive relationship between a need for uniqueness and information-sharing, suggesting that different personality traits can be a reward for bloggers to open their experiences and to share new information or ideas. Blog readers are often bloggers themselves, which may increase participation in online communities. The blogosphere not only helps individuals to develop social network in their virtual and real life, but also enables companies to promote their product information. However, enthusiasm for work and pioneering spirit were found to have no positive relationship to online information-sharing. It seems that bloggers with strong enthusiasm for work and a pioneer spirit trigger intrinsic motivation for other social behavior. An exploration of the dynamic interactions in blogging would contribute to understanding the online market leaders with hidden motives.

5.2 Limitations and future research

Some limitations of this study provide a basis for further investigation of bloggers' intrinsic motivation and posting behavior. This study identified a positive relationship between a need for uniqueness and information-sharing. Another finding in the path

analysis was a positive relationship between information-sharing and blog-posting frequency. However, this study could not explain why there was no significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and blog-posting frequency directly. It is most likely that different segment of bloggers use blogs with different intrinsic motivations. Due to the regional condition of sample of blogger, this study did not cover general social status and demographic characteristics, under the assumption that bloggers have small variance in these attributes. Thus, this question can further be developed to see if there are differences amongst nationalities, different age spans, etc. Nevertheless, the study disentangled differential relationships among bloggers' personality traits, intrinsic motivation, and posting behavior. Regarding a blogger's intrinsic motivation, it would be valuable to apply in e-WOM marketing to give bloggers more incentives to post and share useful information. This might help to develop new kinds of Internet advertisement and promotion using blogs. To facilitate various uses of blogs, bloggers with different profiles need to be further investigated and find out new ways to suggest incentives for their contribution. Previous researchers (Nardi et al., 2004) have discovered five major motivations for blogging: documenting one's life; providing commentary and opinions; expressing deeply felt emotions; articulating ideas. However, these are obvious external motivations and they can only provide new functions for a blog. This suggests further researches about blogger's intrinsic motivation and behavior are needed to develop new blog marketing strategy. Segmenting bloggers with intrinsic motivation and identifying opinion leaders who are expected to have more influence on other's interests, choices, and buying behaviors can provide information to explore peoples' needs. Future researchers should explore more relationships between bloggers' motivation and marketing strategy in order to strengthen online social ties and to enhance real-life marketplace, attracting more bloggers to the future network.

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