

Dynamics of Marital Status and Information Search through Consumer Generated Media: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract—The study examines the influence of marital status on consumers of products and services using blogs as a source of information. A pre-designed questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from the respondents (experiences). Data were collected from one hundred and eighty seven respondents residing in and around the Emirates of Sharjah and Dubai of the United Arab Emirates. The collected data was analyzed with the help of statistical tools such as averages, percentages, factor analysis, Student's t-test and Structural Equation Modelling Technique.

Objectives of the study are to know the reasons how married and unmarried or single consumers of products and services are motivated to use blogs as a source of information, to know whether the consumers of products and services irrespective of their marital status share their views and experiences with other bloggers and to know the respondents' future intentions towards blogging.

The study revealed the following: Majority of the respondents have the motivation to blog because they are willing to receive comments on what they post about services, convenience of blogs to search for information about services and products, by blogging respondents share information on the symptoms of a disease/ disorder that may be experienced by someone, helps to share information about ready to cook mix products and are keen to spend more time blogging in the future.

Keywords—Blog, consumer, information, marital status.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN today's world, our society no longer solely relies on the traditional sources of information. Internet trends such as blogging and social networking are a growing phenomenon. Blogging in particular heralded as the 'new big thing' in publishing and marketing, is a part of an important trend; the trend of communicating and marketing through social networking.

A blog is a user generated website, where entries are made in journal style, that is, each entry is time and date stamped and displayed in reverse chronological order. A typical blog combines text, images and links to other websites or blogs and allows users to share their opinions, insights, experiences, feelings and perspectives with each other through many different forms, including text, images, audio and video. Readers are able to leave comments in an interactive format. Blogs have not only changed the way people seek or share information; but have also allowed for the rapid spread of

mutual social identification. Blogs are valued for the strength and quality of its content, as well as people's opinions. They provide information on a particular subject, while some function as more personal online diaries.

The increased popularization of blogs has put forth some interesting questions. Who are the people who blog? Why do they blog? Does marital status have an influence on the blogging behavior of people and their intention to blog in future?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The accelerated pace of evolution of the Internet and the progression of CGM, has resulted in the increased usage of blogs as one of the trusted sources of information. Is blogging a silly diversion or a major competitive trend? Blogging is a new metric for corporate leadership, now at the same level as the latest increase of your market share or how substantial your corporate return on investment is. Blogging is not something that would be nice to think about, but something you have to think about [1].

A few studies have been undertaken to understand the experiences and motivations of consumers using blogs as a source of information. Past researchers have shown that blog user's motivations are diverse [2]. Bloggers seek process, content, and social gratifications from blogging activities. The content gratifications of enlightening others, advertising and promotion, and the social gratifications of communication, image management, and vanity, were new to blogging. Bloggers' gratifications evolve over time, leading to blog changes [3]. Social motivations can lead to self-expression or to maintaining a social network [4]. Researchers have shown that goal oriented readers that are readers who are seeking information in order to help them complete a task; their end goal is utilitarian benefits [5]. Demographic variables have an effect on the use of social networking sites (SNSs) and SNS users' internet skills. For both SNS use and the Internet skills, education, monthly income and smartphone use affect SNS use positively, whereas age affects them negatively [6]. Do demographic variables like marital status have an effect on blogging behavior? No present study examines its effect on blogging behavior. Thus, the present study was undertaken to examine the influence of marital status on the bloggers in UAE.

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III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of marital status on the motivational factors of the bloggers, the bloggers behavior depicted by its usage as a trusted source of information for products and /or services, and their future intentions towards blogging.

To develop a holistic analysis of the stated research problem, following objectives have been developed for the study. The objectives of the study include:

- To know to what extent married and single consumers of products and services use blogs as a source of information.
- To know whether the married and single consumers of products and services share their opinions and experiences with other bloggers
- To know the respondents future intentions towards blogging

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A pre-designed questionnaire on a five point scale was used to collect the primary data from the respondents (experiences) residing in around the Emirates of Dubai and Sharjah. The questionnaire was framed to elicit the experiences of the respondents. Respondents were chosen using convenience sampling. Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 187 respondents provided complete information and were taken as sample for this study.

A. Sample Profile

Demographic information reported on the study indicated the following: Male respondents represented 43% of the sample, while female respondents represented the remaining 57%, with 35% percent being under 25 years of age, 54% between 25 to 40 years of age and 11% over 40 years. The report also indicated that 69% of the respondents to be married and the remaining 31% to be single.

About 19% of the respondents reported to have studied up to school level, while 45% of the sample has done a bachelor degree and about 18% have done their masters and the remaining 18% of the respondents are diploma holders. The income levels of the respondents were 36% of the sample getting up to AED 5000 per month, while 44% earned between AED 5001 and 10, 000, and 20% of the respondents earned over AED 10000 per month.

Blogging habits of Respondents reported on the study indicated the following: Majority of the respondents appear to be moderately connected to social networks: Forty six percent of the respondents' blog at least once a week: About three-fifth of the surveyed respondents indicated that they spend an hour blogging during each session.

B. Results of Factor Analysis

To identify and analyze blogs as consumers' source of information 25 variables were identified for this study at the time of initial finalization of the questionnaire. In order to extract the various factors, that indicated the motivational factors of the bloggers, the bloggers behavior depicted by its

usage as a trusted source of information for products and services, and the intention of continuing to blog, a Principal Component analysis was applied on all the 25 statements included in the interval scale. Retaining only such of those factors which had Eigen values greater than one (as suggested by Kaiser), we can infer that in total five factors have emerged. These five factors put together have explained 78.94 % of total variance. The results are presented in Table I.

C. Factor Dimensions

Only such of those variables that had loadings > 0.50 have been included in the process of extracting individual factors from the analytical results. The results are presented in Table II. Thus, variables A to F constituted factor I. A close look at all the variables in the Factor I impelled the researchers to identify a common name. The factor was then conceptualized as "Motivation to blog – Related Factor". Variables G to N constituted factor II. A close look at the item in Factor II guided the researcher to conceptualize this factor as Search for Information –Related Factor. In a similar way, variables O to R formed factor III. This was grouped under the heading "Sharing products information –Related Factor". Factor IV is related to "Sharing service information – Related Factor" and comprised variables S to V. Finally, variables W, X and Y were all grouped under the heading "Interest to continue blogging and motivate others to blog – Related Factor

Loading (0.799) appear to be the primary reasons which motivate the respondents to blog: Convenience of blogs to search for information about services (Factor loading 0.903), and products (Factor loading 0.832), seem to be the primary reasons for the surveyed respondents to use blogs as a source of information before they buy products or services. By Blogging respondents are able to share information about ready to cook mix products (Factor loading 0.793), useful personal products (Factor loading 0.785), and family products (Factor loading 0.765). It is also by blogging respondents share information on the symptoms of a disease/ disorder that may be experienced by someone (Factor loading 0.833), and information on how elderly people get good results from going to Health Club (Factor loading 0.825). Keen to spend more time blogging in the future (Factor loading (0.839) recommend others to join blogging (Factor loading 0.823), and intend to continue blogging (Factor loading 0.818) indicate the interest of the respondents not only to continue blogging but also motivate others to blog.

D. Hypotheses Testing

In order to test whether blogging behavior of the sample respondents differs according to marital status, an independent t-test was applied on all the 25 variables (of the interval scale). Significant differences were noticed among the married and single respondents in six out of the twenty-five variables on which the test was applied. The results where significant differences have been noticed are presented in the Table III.

H1: The blog is the space where I express what I feel about services is independent of the Marital Status. Interpretation: The analytical results of the t test on Item B (The blog is the

space where I express what I feel about services.) shows a mean value of 3.61 for married and 3.65 for single respondents which signifies that there exists a difference in their opinion towards the blog is the space where I express what I feel about services. Since the P-value $-0.048 < 0.01$ (at 5% level of significance), hypothesis 1 is rejected.

H2: Blogging helps me to explore more information about services is independent of the Marital Status. Interpretation: The analytical results of the t test on Item H (blogging helps me to explore more information about services) shows a mean value of 3.80 for married and 3.82 for single respondents which signifies that there exists a difference in their opinion with regard to blogging helps me to explore more information about services. Since the P-value $-0.023 < 0.01$ (at 5% level of significance), hypothesis 2 is rejected.

H3: Blogging helps me to extract information behind services that interests me is independent of the Marital Status. Interpretation: The analytical results of the t test on Item L (Blogging helps me to extract information behind services that interests me) shows a mean value of 3.76 for married and 3.71 for single respondents which signifies that there exists a difference in their opinion with regard to blogging helps me to extract information behind services that interests me. Since the P-value $.048 < 0.01$ (at 5% level of significance), hypothesis 3 is rejected.

H4: Used to look for information on services by looking at blog articles those are frequently quoted is independent of the Marital Status. Interpretation: The analytical results of the t test on Item N (Used to look for information on services by looking at blog articles those are frequently quoted) shows a mean value of 3.48 for married and 3.51 for single respondents which signifies that there exists a difference in their opinion with regard to looking for information on services at blog articles those are frequently quoted. Since the P-value $-0.032 < 0.01$ (at 5% level of significance), hypothesis 4 is rejected.

H5: I like to share information and my views on the positive outcomes of a medical treatment are independent of the Marital Status. Interpretation: The analytical results of the t test on Item T (like to share information and my views on the positive outcomes of a medical treatment) shows a mean value of 3.63 for married and 3.65 for single respondents which signifies that there exists a difference in their opinion with regard to like to share information and view on the positive outcomes of a medical treatment. Since the P-value $-0.026 < 0.01$ (at 5% level of significance), hypothesis 5 is rejected.

E. Future Intentions of Respondents towards Blogging

In order to test the respondents' future intentions towards blogging, Structural Equation Modeling technique with help of SAS software (9.0 Version) was applied. Four hypotheses: Motivation to blog predicts the future intentions towards blogging, Search for information predicts the future intentions towards blogging, Sharing product information predicts the future intentions towards blogging and sharing service information predicts the future intentions towards blogging were tested. The factors correlation matrix was used as an

input in the model. The model is estimated using maximum likelihood method. H2 Search for information with t – value > 6.4073 , H3 Sharing product information with t- value 2.3752 and H4 sharing service information with t- value 3.6545 are found to be significant in predicting the future intentions of respondents towards blogging. The results are presented in Table IV.

F. Discussion

On the basis of different analysis that was carried out, the following picture emerges: Majority of the respondents appears to be moderately connected to social networks: Fifty eight percent of the respondents' blog at least once a week: About three-fourth of the surveyed respondents indicated that they spend an hour blogging during each session.

Factor analysis of the data clearly grouped the statements included in the interval scale into the following five factors: Motivation to blog– Related Factors, Search for Information – Related Factors, Sharing Product Information – Related Factors, Sharing Service Information – Related Factors and Interest to continue and motivate others to blog –Related Factors. These five factors put together have explained 78.939% of total variance and further analysis of the five factors (based on factor loading) gave an insight about the importance attached to the variables within the factors by the respondents in the following manner: Willingness to receive comments on what the respondents post about services (Factor loading 0.823) Receive peoples' comment on what the respondents post (Factor loading 0.820), and the blog is the space which provides a platform for the respondents to express what they feel about services (Factor loading 0.799) appear to be the primary reasons which motivate the respondents to blog: Convenience of blogs to search for information about services (Factor loading 0.903) , and products (Factor loading 0.832), seem to be the primary reasons for the surveyed respondents to use blogs as a source of information before they buy services or products. By Blogging respondents are able to share information about ready to cook mix products (Factor loading 0.793), useful personal products (Factor loading 0.785), and family products (Factor loading 0.765). It is also by blogging respondents share information on the symptoms of a disease/ disorder that may be experienced by someone (Factor loading 0.833), and information on how elderly people get good results from going to Health Club (Factor loading 0.825). Keen to spend more time blogging in the future (Factor loading 0.839) recommend others to join blogging (Factor loading 0.823), and intend to continue blogging (Factor loading 0.818) indicate the interest of the respondents not only to continue blogging but also motivate others to blog.

Application of the t-test on all the 25 variables (of the interval scale) to test whether the blogging behavior of the sample respondents differs according to Marital Status, showed significant differences among the married and single respondents in five out of the 25 variables on which the test was applied. On the basis of the t-test it can be concluded that the respondents find Blog to be the space where they express

what they feel about services, Blogging helps the respondents to explore more information about services. Further it is convenient to search for information about products by blogging, respondents look for information on services by looking at blog articles those are frequently quoted and like to share information and views on the positive outcomes of a medical treatment.

Hence, it is suggested that in this competitive environment, it will be profitable if the organizations segment their market on the basis of marital status to get a better understanding as to how and to what extent their consumers use blogs as a trusted source of information. This will help the organizations to provide the relevant information about their products and services to their consumers for their consideration before purchase and can get the views and reactions of their consumers. Additionally, this will help the organizations to know the areas where they need to improve and also avoid whatever flaws or shortcomings that are expressed by their consumers be it in their offerings or customer service.

V. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, any survey based method, including that adopted in this study, involves measurement error. In other words, the elicitation of a scale measurement, respondent's ability to

accurately report their level of agreement with the survey statements [7]. However, efforts were made to design the administered tool to be simple, easy to understand and respond. Convenient sampling was used to collect the data from one hundred and eighty seven respondents living in and around the Emirates of Dubai and Sharjah.

Regarding future research, it is suggested that more samples from other Emirates can be taken for study. Further, separate studies can be undertaken on specific products and or services

VI. CONCLUSION

The study clearly shows that consumers irrespective of their marital status have started to use blogs to not only search for information about products and services before making a purchase but are also keen to share information and views about products and services with fellow bloggers and have expressed keenness to continue blogging more in the future. This gives an effective platform for organizations to be informative and disclose all possible details about their products and services to their consumers to enable the consumers to consider and evaluate their offerings before buying and also gives an opportunity to the consumers to motivate fellow bloggers by sharing information and experiences with them.

APPENDIX

TABLE I
PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS FOR THE VARIABLES

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.263	57.052	57.052	14.263	57.052	57.052
2	1.664	6.655	63.706	1.664	6.655	63.706
3	1.479	5.916	69.622	1.479	5.916	69.622
4	1.298	5.192	74.814	1.298	5.192	74.814
5	1.031	4.126	78.939	1.031	4.126	78.939
6	.834	3.334	82.273			
7	.573	2.293	84.566			
8	.535	2.139	86.705			
9	.436	1.744	88.449			
10	.420	1.680	90.129			
11	.381	1.524	91.653			
12	.333	1.331	92.984			
13	.289	1.156	94.140			
14	.233	.932	95.072			
15	.216	.862	95.934			
16	.180	.719	96.653			
17	.155	.622	97.274			
18	.140	.560	97.834			
19	.129	.515	98.349			
20	.112	.449	98.798			
21	.088	.352	99.149			
22	.067	.267	99.417			
23	.057	.229	99.645			
24	.048	.192	99.837			
25	.041	.163	100.000			

TABLE II
IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS RELATED TO CONSUMERS BLOGGING BEHAVIOR

Factor Name	Item Number	Variables	Factor Loadings
Factor-I Motivation to Blog - Related Factors	F	I would like to receive people's comments on what I post on my blog about services.	0.823
	E	Receive peoples' comments on what I post	0.820
	B	The blog is the space where I express what I feel about services	0.799
	C	Willing to comment on what other bloggers say about products	0.767
	D	I am willing to comment on what other bloggers say about services.	0.733
	A	The blog is the space where I express what I feel about products.	0.703
Factor-II - Search for Information Related Factors	J	It is convenient to search for information about services by blogging.	0.903
	I	It is convenient to search for information about products by blogging	0.832
	H	Blogging helps me to explore more information about services	0.807
	G	Blogging helps me to explore more information about products.	0.805
	K	Blogging helps me to extract information behind products that interest me.	0.796
	N	Used to look for information on services by looking at blog articles those are frequently quoted.	0.759
Factor III-Sharing products information - Related Factor	M	I Used to looking for information on products by looking at blog articles those are frequently quoted.	0.728
	L	Blogging helps me to extract information behind services that interest me	0.709
	R	I like to share information on ready to cook mix that I find useful.	0.793
	O	I like to share information about a personal product that I find useful.	0.785
	P	I like to share information about a particular family product that I find useful	0.765
	Q	I like to share information about a health product that I find useful	0.671
Factor IV-Sharing Services information - Related Factor	S	Share information and my views on the symptoms of a disease/ disorder that may be experienced by someone.	0.833
	V	Share information on how elderly people are getting good results from going to Health Club.	0.825
	U	.I like to share information on how to better control a disease or disorder that might be experienced by someone	0.767
Factor V -To continue and motivate others to blog - Related Factor	T	I like to share information and my views on the positive outcomes of a medical treatment	0.732
	X	I am keen to spend more time blogging in the future	0.839
	Y	I wish to recommend others to join and blog.	0.823
	W	I intend to continue blogging	0.818

TABLE III
RESULTS OF STUDENTS T-TEST- MARITAL STATUS

ITEM	Marital Status	N	MEAN	S.D	P
B	Married	132	3.61	1.047	-.048
	Single	55	3.65	1.004	
H	Married	132	3.80	1.047	-.023
	Single	55	3.82	.964	
L	Married	132	3.76	1.005	.048
	Single	55	3.71	1.100	
N	Married	132	3.48	1.129	-.032
	Single	55	3.51	1.086	
T	Married	132	3.63	1.115	-.026
	Single	55	3.65	1.075	

TABLE IV
RESULTS OF THE STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING TECHNIQUE

Hypothesis	Statement	Standard Error	Coefficient	t-value	Significance in predicting the Respondents future Intentions towards blogging
H1	Motivation to Blog predicts the future intentions of the respondents towards blogging	-0.1027	0.0855	-1.2010	Not significant
H2	Search for Information predicts the future intentions of the respondents towards blogging	0.5170	0.0807	6.4073	Significant
H3	Sharing product Information predicts the future intentions of the respondents towards blogging	0.1913	0.0805	2.3752	Significant
H4	Sharing Service Information predicts the future intentions of the respondents towards blogging	0.2830	0.0774	3.6545	Significant

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