

Public Relations and New Media: Stakeholders' Perspective on Corporate Credibility through Blogging

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to analyze blogs as a medium of building company's credibility with the stakeholders. The study attempted to examine the usage of blogs as a communication mode by the companies as well as the stakeholders' responses to blogs and the consecutive belief of corporate credibility that is built as a result of referring to the blogs. A mixed method of compilation of online survey among 101 respondents, who are stakeholders of different companies and a content analysis on communication modes of five prominent companies while they communicate through blogs, was the methodology of research. The results indicate that stakeholders perceive the blogs as credible because of direct contact with other stakeholders of the company. They accept blogs as good platform for personal interaction with top management and for discussion/dialogue with the company. Though stakeholders believe their opinions are more visible when they blog, it is evident that Indian corporates have to put in more efforts to better involve them and make blogs an effective tool for building corporate credibility.

Key words: Blogs, Stakeholders, Corporate Credibility

Operational Definition of Key Terms

Blogs: short for weblogs, are periodically updated journals, providing online commentary with minimal or no external editing. They are usually presented as a set of ‘posts’, individual entries of news or commentary, in reverse chronological order (Drezner and Farrell, 2004).

For this study there is a differentiation established between general blogs written on external links and company blogs that are official blogspots maintained by the company as a platform for communication and dissemination of information with their audiences. The latter has been selected for conducting the survey and for content analysis.

Stakeholders: “In modern corporate world, a stakeholder is the term used for public. The concept of stakeholders has come from the term ‘stockholders’ which means people who have bought the shares & have vested interest in the company. Similarly, there are others with similar vested interests in an organization such as employees; customers who may or may not own the company’s stock” (Reddi, 2009). The author lists the following as key stakeholders: employees, customers, media, financial publics, opinion leaders, government and general community.

Corporate credibility: Credibility has been understood as a multi-dimensional construct comprising of believability, fairness, accuracy, and depth of information (Bichard, Johnson, Kaye, Wong, 2007). Webster’s 1913 dictionary defines credibility as the quality of being believable or trustworthy. Corporate credibility is therefore the trustworthiness of the company/organization.

Introduction

There has been much discussion about the role of public relations in building brand image and company's credibility. PR has the benefit of third party endorsement which gives it an upper hand in persuading people and providing a believability factor that is necessary for any organization to sustain its positive image and build brand equity.

According to Guth and Marsh (2006), "The appearance in an uncontrolled news medium lends credibility to a story, because the media are neither the sender nor the receiver but an independent third party". What it suggests is that instead of the company talking about itself (as in advertising), a third neutral party endorsing a company lends it more credibility in the opinion of the audience. Al and Laura Ries in their book (*The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*, 2002) have also proved that advertising lacks credibility, the crucial ingredient in brand building, and that PR can supply that credibility effectively.

With the mode of everyday communication becoming more interactive, all advertisers are jumping on to the new media advertising bandwagon. The field of PR has also undergone a tremendous change with practitioners adopting new media tools for effective PR. *Deirdre K Breakenridge, author of New Media, New Tools, New Audience* comments, "Internet changes everything; how you view your role as a PR professional, your delivery of effective communication and the way your brand interacts with its customers."

Along with the traditional tools such as press releases, press conferences, newsletters, the practitioners of PR are adopting the new media tools of PR such as blogs, interactive company websites, e-testimonials, virtual communities, etc. to communicate and build relationship with the public. This trend is on the rise because both the organizations as well their PR departments have realized that audience are no longer passive receivers of information, today they are also

creators and disseminators of information. The platform that has empowered them is the new media and its most discussed segment, the social media.

After considering the different platforms of social media, blogs have been selected for the purpose of the study because with regards to medium and source credibility they have been rated more than Twitter and Facebook (Kang, 2010). Also since the purpose of the study is to understand the effects of direct interaction by organization on its audience and their perception of credibility, it is necessary to analyze a platform like blog which is a direct manifestation of the company's communication efforts.

Blogs have been much researched as a marketing tool. New research by eMarketer reveals that corporate blogging has gone mainstream with 34% of U.S. companies using blogs for marketing purposes — a number that is predicted to grow to 43% by the end of 2012 as against 16% back in 2007 (newstex.com). In India, though the trend is of slower pace, number of companies are using blogs as a part of their marketing mix: The Castrol Power Blogging Contest, The Kissan 100% Real Blogger Contest, The Lakme Diva Blogger are some examples of this trend

Much research has been done on blogs as indicators of 'what matters' and also channels of political change as in the case of Arab Spring. In the matters of global affairs, blogs function as a combination of "distributed expertise, real-time collective response to breaking news and public opinion barometer" (Drezner and Farrell, 2004).

A survey by PR Week and PR Newswire conducted in April 2010 revealed that over 30% of journalists use company blogs when conducting research for a story, and nearly 30% use general blogs in their research efforts (newstex.com).

Analyzing blogs as a PR tool, there are definitely number of studies done to prove that blogs are one of the best ways for companies to build a solid reputation. It has been proven that those

organizations that are actively blogging communicate with their audience much more effectively than those that do not. They are also channels of direct contact without gatekeepers or editors, the company can have a one-to-one conversation with their stakeholders. This can be used for communication, crisis management or simply getting back at your critics as in the case of General Motors using its Fastlane blog to comment on Thomas Friedman's article (Gillin, 2007). Use of social media by public relations also is investigated by significant studies like *Adoption of social media for public relations by nonprofit organizations*, (Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquist, Thornton, Sweetser, 2009) which concluded that credibility in the particular social media tool is necessary for its adoption.

There have been some studies that analyze whether PR is more effective compared to advertising in building credibility or not (David Michelson & Don W Stacks, 2007). Also the area of blog credibility with regards to political news has been analyzed (Johnson, Kaye, Bichard and Wong, 2007). But measuring credibility of a social media platform like blog is complicated due to multiple senders and its subsequent effect on receiver's perception of credibility. Also blog credibility cannot be evaluated using general credibility measures used to assess traditional media (Kang, 2010).

The Indian scenario with regards to the role of the new media tool-Blog and its role in building credibility has not been extensively explored. Corporate blogging marked its presence in India only from 2005 and only a handful of corporates have effectively utilized blogs for internal and external communication. Kamala Bhat, a researcher in her article, '*A Different Blogosphere in India*', lists companies like Infosys and Wipro who have at least forayed into blogging. The article quotes Kiruba Shankar, a prominent Indian blogger. Shankar says, "Corporate blogging is still in its infancy in India" (www.financialexpress.com).

With this background it would be interesting to see how stakeholders in India react to the new media tools of PR such as blogs with regards to perceiving it as a credible channel to provide the complete corporate picture; especially since the new media platform itself is accused of lacking credibility in comparison to traditional media. The study attempts to find out the stakeholders' responses to blogs and the consecutive belief of credibility that is built as a result of referring to the blogs.

Literature Review

The credibility that public relations build in the audience is something that advertising lacks (Ries and Ries, 2002). People are fed up of advertising due to overkill, the more intrusive ads get the more people shut off. Through case studies, facts & figures in their book *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*, the authors argued that the role played by PR in nurturing a brand was much greater. They championed the use of PR as an important marketing tool but in the era of ROI, how can the value of PR be measured?

The authors state that companies should not equate the value of PR coverage with the cost of space in terms of advertising but value the total cost of PR campaign with the total value gained for the company on a long term. It is the trust that is built in the minds of the public that gives the brand its equity.

Is PR actually more effective than advertising? Michaelson and Stacks (2009) in their paper, *Exploring the Comparative Communications Effectiveness of Advertising and Public Relations: A Replication and Extension of Prior Experiments*, discuss the two experiments done-pilot study in 2004 and second study in 2006 the results of which fail to establish a clear higher effectiveness of PR over advertising. The researchers found that “both the editorial and advertisements were equally effective in promoting the product, but no statistically significant differences existed the editorial and advertisement across measures of awareness, information, intent to purchase and product credibility” (Michaelson and Stacks, 2009). The study is significant because unlike the previous research that employed surveys and content analysis, this used an experimental method to scientifically analyze the comparative effectiveness of PR and advertising. It also has given the audiences’ perspective on product credibility via PR.

Breakenridge (2008) deliberates on the collaboration of PR and social media which has brought back Ivy Lee's 'two-way' approach to PR. In her book, *PR 2.0 New Media, New Tools, New Audience*, she states that the emergence of social media can provide one of the best venues for new public relations, which can function as the hub of dialogic, participatory communications between publics and organizations. (Breakenridge, 2008). The new media tools such as blogs, social networking, online newswires, RSS technology, podcasts, and the rest of today's Web 2.0 tools can be used to establish this dialogic communications. Though the author states that all the information available on the new media might not be "credible third-party endorsements", nonetheless they do enhance brand communications. PR 2.0 has the ability to monitor the "communication of citizen journalists and influencers" that includes numerous bloggers.

Researchers Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquist, Thornton and Sweetser (2009), in their study *Adoption of Social Media for Public Relations by Non-Profit Organizations*, try to understand how PR practitioners in non-profit organizations adopted social media tools and if they found them credible. An online survey was done employing the UTAUT (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology) to explain adoption and organizational use of social media. The survey also employed a credibility scale based on Johnson and Kaye (2004) media credibility items to determine how credible respondents feel toward social media. Respondents answered questions on a 5-point Likert scale to describe degree of fairness, accuracy, and depth of social media. In addition to exploring the current use of social media, the study wanted to determine whether public relations professionals found such tools reliable (Sweetser, 2009).

The results showed that of the 409 respondents nearly all (404) used some form of social media in their communication. It is important to note that 48.4% of respondents used blogs for PR. Findings indicate that women consider social media to be beneficial, whereas men exhibit

more confidence in actively utilizing social media. Organizations with specified public relations departments were more likely to adopt social media. Positive correlations between UTAUT factors and credibility indicated a greater likelihood to adopt social media.

Blogs are the sources of news and political opinion, (Drezner and Farrell, 2004) and therefore have they become the new channel for the companies to place press releases or interesting news for publicity? The article *Web of Influence* defines blogs and gives various examples of news that appeared on blogs that went on to create headlines in traditional media because increasingly journalists take their cues about “what matters” in the world from weblogs. The blogs therefore become “public barometer” (Drezner and Farrell, 2004) and unlike traditional media which act as the transmitter of news, blogs have the ability to assimilate public opinion through posts and comments. Therefore blogs are excellent means for organizations to communicate with their publics. In connection to benefits of blogging the researchers are of the opinion that “accessibility” is the greatest advantage of blogosphere. To reiterate the point, the example of poll commissioned by the public relations firm Edelman is mentioned. As per the results of the poll, Americans and Europeans trust the opinions of ‘average people’ more than most authorities. This is significant because it in turn reiterates that people place credibility in a dialogic medium like blog because they perceive it as free from authoritative gatekeepers.

How are companies using the blogs and what is the response of the stakeholders? With regards to understanding stakeholders’ reaction to company blogs researchers Jackson, Yates and Orlikowski, (2007) studied the role of blogs within the company and benefits to the users, in their study, *Corporate Blogging: Building community through persistent digital talk*. The paper reports on a preliminary exploration of why and how individuals engaged in internal corporate blogging within one large, global IT company (Mega, a pseudonym). The results throw light on

some interesting facts. With regards to blogging and posting comments, the differences suggest that technical experts provide content and marketing and communications experts provide commentary and linkages.

Three general types of benefits of blogging seem evident: informational (getting information, feedback, problem-solving), social (engaging in dialogue, building community, understanding company pulse), and others (self-expression). There were also differences in the benefit sought by different degree of users. Both heavy users and low users came onto BlogSite expecting significant social benefits, while medium users expected both social and informational benefits.

Johnson, Kaye, Bichard and Wong (2007) did a prominent study in area of users' perception of blog credibility. In their study titled *Every Blog Has Its Day: Politically-interested Internet Users' Perceptions of Blog Credibility*, they employed an online survey to examine U.S. politically-interested internet users' perceptions of the credibility of blogs. It focused on the influence of blog reliance compared to motivations for visiting blogs in determining blog credibility. Based on previous research, credibility is measured as a multidimensional construct. Believability, fairness, accuracy, and depth of information are the four measures used to gauge media credibility.

The study found that blogs were judged as moderately credible, but as more credible than any mainstream media or online source. Also people who relied heavily on blogs for news perceived the blogs to be more credible. Respondents evaluated blogs as highly credible for depth of information, while judging them as weaker on credibility for fairness of information. The study also points out that users may rely on blogs to search for information that appears to be missing from more traditional media coverage or may be covered too lightly, therefore blogs give an

opportunity for in-depth analysis. The significance of this study is in its final verdict that while “internet users are increasingly flocking to blogs as a source of political news and information, the moderate scores for credibility indicate that users also realize that blogs are not the final word” (Johnson et. al., 2007)

Credibility of social media is one of the key factors that initiates and further increases public involvement and effectiveness of communication in the social media, (Kang 2010). The researcher is of the opinion that blog credibility cannot be evaluated using general credibility measures used to assess traditional media. In his study, *Measuring Social Media Credibility: A Study on a Measure of Blog Credibility*, he has developed and validated a 14-item measure of blog credibility by the usage of focus groups and a survey.

The key function of public relations is building of credibility for the organization in the opinion of its stakeholders. Therefore to manage organizational communication effectively, credibility is a crucial factor. With the mode of communication changing to interactive, more and more PR professionals are depending on social media as the channel of communication between the organization and their publics. But how effective are these new tools? The answer to this question depends on how credible do the users perceive the medium. Credibility has three perspectives: medium, source & content. Since there have been number of comparative studies on medium credibility, the study focuses on source credibility and message/content credibility. Focus groups were asked to list key attributes of blog credibility and rate them. One of the findings that is significant for the current study is that the respondents placed blogs higher than Twitter and Facebook in relation to credibility. In the study the researcher has listed a 9-item measure of blog message/content credibility: authentic, insightful, informative, consistent, fair, focused, accurate, timely and popular.

According to key results of this study, authority (to be “influential”) and reliability of the blogger are highlighted in the blogger credibility factor, and that accuracy and focus (as “the niche” of personal interests and experience) are key indicators of the blog content credibility.

In her article *A Different Blogosphere in India*, researcher Kamla Bhatt talks about the blogosphere in India which is still in a nascent stage with only a handful of companies using blogs effectively to communicate with their stakeholders. She compares the fast growing interest in corporate blogging in the US to the rate of slow adoption in India. The article quotes Rajesh Lalwani of Blogworks who categorizes the Indian companies actively blogging, into companies with deep pockets and entrepreneurs of tech startups. As per the division Bhatt lists Indian companies: ones with deep pockets include Infosys, Wipro, Accenture, Frito Lay, and the startup blogs like Cleartrip (<http://blog.cleartrip.com/>) AskLaila (<http://blog.fourint.com/>) and others.

Each of these companies are using blogs for different purpose ranging from as a marketing tool (Frito Lay) to education and sharing of knowledge (Infosys) to providing service information (Cleartrip). Bhatt comments that there is a need to create awareness and reach out to the employees and customers, but considering the demographics of Indian workplaceshe suggests alternatives to corporate blogging in India such as Twitter and Facebook.

Methodology

Statement of the Problem

The role of blogs in building the perspective of stakeholders regarding how credible the company's image or reputation is. The paper will be discussing on how stakeholders see blogs as an effective medium of building corporate credibility.

Hypotheses

1. Stakeholders perceive the blog posts credible because of direct contact with other stakeholders of the company.
2. Stakeholders accept blogs as a good platform for personal interaction with top management.
3. Stakeholders accept blogs as a better platform for discussion and analysis of issues with the company.
4. Stakeholders believe that their opinions are more visible when they post their comments on blogs.

Methodology

A mixed method which is a compilation of online survey among 101 respondents, who are stakeholders of different companies and a content analysis on communication modes of companies while they communicate through blogs, will be the methodology of research. Five official blogs of five major companies will be brought under content analysis.

Survey Analysis

The key purpose of the survey was to understand the stakeholders' opinion of corporate credibility when they posted, read or commented on blogs. The survey was conducted for a period of two weeks in April and May, 2012. Participants completed a self-administered online questionnaire. The link to the questionnaire was posted to the users/audience of various company blogs.

Random selection of samples was done owing to no clear way to define the total users of the selected blogs. The questionnaire was sent to 200 respondents, the total completed ones were 101, and therefore the final sample size is 101. The survey data was entered into SPSS software for tabulation and a percentage analysis was done. The frequencies for each of the variables (independent and dependent) and cross tabulation of variables were conducted for the purpose of analysis and interpretation.

As per the percentage analysis, the results of independent variable 'age' indicated that majority i.e. 58 out of 101 (57.4%) of the users were in the age group of 25-29 years, 30 (29.7%) belonged to 20-24 and the remaining 13 (12.9%) belonged 30-34 age group. The other independent variable was type of audience, the results indicated that the maximum number of blog audience, 42 out of 101 (41.6%) were employees, 33 (32.7%) and 26 (25.7%) were general interest viewers. There were no respondents in the fourth category-media person. The results indicate that the blogosphere's population is young and the more frequent users are the employees

A number of dependent variables were tested in order to gauge the audience credibility: frequency of visit, preferred mode of information, reason for seeking information in blogs, extent

of management control over content, trustworthiness, frequency of comparison with other media, input reliability, opportunity for in-depth analysis, frequency of passing on blog information, objectivity of content, opportunity for direct contact with company, frequency of posting comments and the benefit gained from posting comments.

In the result for frequency of visiting the blog per week 72 out of 101 (71.3%) respondents indicated that they visit once a week, 15 (14.9%) visited 2-4 times a week and 13 (12.9%) responded that they visited the blogs every day.

Reliability was the reason more number of people preferred the information provided by the blogs 34.7% of respondents selected reliability, the preferred information variable. The rest of the categories got percentages with minor difference, 22.8% for quicker/instant availability of news in comparison to other media, 21.8% for easy accessibility and 20.8% for regular updation.

In the preferred content category, the results indicated that majority of the stakeholders look for information on latest events, 29.7%. Company information was sought by 27.7% and discussion/dialogue by 23.8%. The least preferred was product details with 18.8%.

The results of stakeholder perception of management control over content indicated that maximum number of respondents 35.6% felt that it was high with only 8.9% indicating low control. 29.7% said neutral and 25.7% were of the opinion that it was very high i.e. complete control over blog content.

The content of the blog was found to be highly trustworthy by 46.5% respondents and only 3% indicated low trust. 29.7% were neutral and 20.8% felt the trustworthiness was very high. 38.6% rarely compared the information received by blogs with the traditional media like newspapers or television. 19.8% never compared, 16.8% often, 14.9% sometimes. A very less percentage of respondents, 3%, said they compared 'very often'. A majority of 40.6% respondents indicated

that they 'sometimes' pass on the information received from blogs. 30.7% said often, 21.8% very often, 4% rarely and 1% indicated never.

The inputs by the consumers-37.6% make the blog more reliable, CEO's inputs 26.7%, and employee's inputs 19.8%. The least inputs in connection to reliability factor are of the company spokesperson (15.8%). 38.6% respondents indicated that the opportunity for personal interaction with management was 'neutral'. 37.6% responded high, 10.9% low, 7.8% very low, only a minority of 4% said the level of personal contact was 'very high'.

Blogs are seen as a platform for in-depth analysis with 50.5% selecting 'often' and 36.6% indicating sometimes. 7.9% of the respondents chose rarely, 5% very often, there were no respondents in the 'never' category indicating none disagreed. However with regards to objectivity of the content 61.4% indicated that 'sometimes' blogs presented unbiased view, 20.8% often, 8.9% rarely, 6.9% never and only 1% very often.

To gauge the active involvement of the stakeholders, the frequency of commenting on blogs was measured. 46.5% never posted their comments, 45.5% posted once a week, only a low 7.9% indicated a high frequency of posting comments, 2-4 times a week. In spite of majority not posting comments, 36.6% were of the opinion that feedback was the main benefit, 23.3% indicated self-expression, 15.8% engaging in dialogue and 14.9% for sharing information.

Analysis of cross-tabulation

A cross tabulation of independent variables (age and type of audience) with the dependent variables was done for further analysis. The results present a better understanding of the inter-relationships.

T1: Frequency of blog visit vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			Total
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	
How often do you visit the company blog in a week?	2-4 times	Count	2	8	5	15
		% within Type of Audience	6.1%	19.0%	19.2%	14.9%
	Everyday	Count	1	12	1	14
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	28.6%	3.8%	13.9%
	Once	Count	30	22	20	72
		% within Type of Audience	90.9%	52.4%	76.9%	71.3%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T2: Frequency of blog visit vs. Age						
			Age			Total
			20-24	25-29	30-34	
How often do you visit the company blog in a week?	2-4 times	Count	10	2	3	15
		% within Age	33.3%	3.4%	23.1%	14.9%
	Everyday	Count	6	8	0	14
		% within Age	20.0%	13.8%	.0%	13.9%
	Once	Count	14	48	10	72
		% within Age	46.7%	82.8%	76.9%	71.3%

Total	Count	30	58	13	101
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results of frequency of blog visit and type of audience cross-tabulation (T1) indicated a clear majority for 'once a week' visit with 30 out of 33 (90.9%) consumers, 22 out of 42 (52.4%) employees and 20 out of 26 (76.9%) general interest viewers indicating it. The same result is for frequency and age cross-tabulation (T2). 14 out of 30 (46.7%) in the 20-24 age group, 48 out of 58 (82.8%) in 25-29 age group and 10 out of 13 (76.9%) in 30-34 age group indicated that they visited the company blogs once a week.

T3: Reason for blog as preferred mode of information vs. Type of Audience						
		Type of Audience			Total	
		Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer		
You prefer the information provided by the blog because of	Easy Accessibility	Count	10	9	3	22
		% within Type of Audience	30.3%	21.4%	11.5%	21.8%
	Quicker/Instant Availability in comparison to other media	Count	9	1	13	23
		% within Type of Audience	27.3%	2.4%	50.0%	22.8%
	Regular Updation	Count	0	12	9	21
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	28.6%	34.6%	20.8%

	Reliability	Count	14	20	1	35
		% within Type of Audience	42.4%	47.6%	3.8%	34.7%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results of reason for blog as preferred mode of information cross-tabulated with type of audience (T3) indicated that ‘reliability’ which was the most dominant reason for preferring blog information is the reason for most employees 20 out of 42 (47.6%) and most consumers 14 out of 33 (42.4%), to choose it over other media. The general interest viewers chose blogs because of quicker availability, 13 out of 26 (50%), in comparison to other media.

T4: Reason for blog as preferred mode of information vs. Age						
			Age			Total
			20-24	25-29	30-34	
You prefer the information provided by the blog because of	Easy Accessibility	Count	6	16	0	22
		% within Age	20.0%	27.6%	.0%	21.8%
	Quicker/Instant Availability in comparison to other media	Count	1	13	9	23
		% within Age	3.3%	22.4%	69.2%	22.8%
	Regular Updation	Count	13	7	1	21
		% within	43.3%	12.1%	7.7%	20.8%

		Age				
	Reliability	Count	10	22	3	35
		% within Age	33.3%	37.9%	23.1%	34.7%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross-tabulation with age (T4) indicated 22 out of 58 (37.9%) in the age group of 25-29 considered reliability as the dominant reason for choosing blog information. For the younger respondents in the age group of 20-24, regular updation of blog content was the reason- 13 out of 30 (43.3%). 9 out of 13 (69.2%) of the respondents in 30-34 category preferred blogs due to quicker availability of information, reliability with 23.1% was secondary for this age group.

T5: Most sought out information vs. Type of Audience						
			Type of Audience			
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	Total
Which information do you seek the most in a company blog?	Company Information	Count	19	8	1	28
		% within Type of Audience	57.6%	19.0%	3.8%	27.7%
	Discussion/Dialogue	Count	3	15	6	24

		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	35.7%	23.1%	23.8%
	Latest Events	Count	3	16	11	30
		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	38.1%	42.3%	29.7%
	Product Details	Count	8	3	8	19
		% within Type of Audience	24.2%	7.1%	30.8%	18.8%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results of most sought out information cross-tabulated with type of audience (T5) indicated that 'latest events' which was the most sought out information on the blog is what most employees 16 out of 42 (38.1%) and general interest viewers 11 out of 26 (42.3%) are looking for. Employees who comprise the majority of visitors also seek out discussion/dialogue, 35.7% indicated so. Most consumers are looking for company information 19 out of 33 (57.6%) or for product details 8 out of 33 (24.2%) indicated so.

T6: Most sought out information vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
Which information do you seek the most in a company blog?	Company Information	Count	7	15	6	28
		% within	23.3%	25.9%	46.2%	27.7%

		Age				
	Discussion/Dialogue	Count	10	14	0	24
		% within Age	33.3%	24.1%	.0%	23.8%
	Latest Events	Count	6	19	5	30
		% within Age	20.0%	32.8%	38.5%	29.7%
	Product Details	Count	7	10	2	19
	% within Age	23.3%	17.2%	15.4%	18.8%	
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross-tabulation of age (T6) indicated 19 out of 58 (32.8%) respondents in the age group of 25-29 sought out blogs for latest events. The age group of 20-24 sought out discussion/dialogue, 10 out of 30 (33.3%) indicated so. 5 out of 13 (38.5%) respondents in 30-34 category looked for company information in the blogs.

T7: Extent of management control over content vs. Type of Audience						
			Type of Audience			
					General Interest	
			Consumer	Employee	Viewer	Total
What is the extent of control over blog content that the company/management has, according to you? []	High	Count	12	8	16	36
		% within Type of	36.4%	19.0%	61.5%	35.6%

		Audience				
	Low	Count	3	3	3	9
		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	7.1%	11.5%	8.9%
	Neutral	Count	8	19	3	30
		% within Type of Audience	24.2%	45.2%	11.5%	29.7%
	Very High	Count	10	12	4	26
		% within Type of Audience	30.3%	28.6%	15.4%	25.7%
	Total	Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T8: Extent of management control over content vs. Age						
			Age			Total
			20-24	25-29	30-34	
What is the extent of control over blog content that the company/management has, according to you? []	High	Count	13	18	5	36
		% within Age	43.3%	31.0%	38.5%	35.6%
	Low	Count	3	6	0	9
		% within Age	10.0%	10.3%	.0%	8.9%
	Neutral	Count	8	17	5	30
		% within Age				

		% within Age	26.7%	29.3%	38.5%	29.7%
	Very High	Count	6	17	3	26
		% within Age	20.0%	29.3%	23.1%	25.7%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross-tabulation results of extent of management control over content with type of audience (T7) indicated the external stakeholders i.e. consumers 12 out of 33 (36.4%) and general interest viewers 16 out of 26 (61.5%) considered content control to be high. The internal stakeholders i.e. employees 19 out of 42 (45.2%) perceived the content control to be neutral. The age cross-tabulation (T8) indicated the following results. In the age group of 20-24, 13 out of 30 (43.3%) and in 25-29 age group, 18 out of 58 (31%) perceived the control to be high. The 30-34 age group respondents gave mixed results, 5 out of 13 (35.6%) perceived high control and an equal 35.6% perceived the control to be neutral.

T9: Trustworthiness of blog content vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			Total
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	
How trustworthy is the content of the blog, according to you? []	High	Count	16	15	16	47
		% within Type of Audience	48.5%	35.7%	61.5%	46.5%

	Low	Count	3	0	0	3
		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	.0%	.0%	3.0%
	Neutral	Count	4	16	10	30
		% within Type of Audience	12.1%	38.1%	38.5%	29.7%
	Very High	Count	10	11	0	21
		% within Type of Audience	30.3%	26.2%	.0%	20.8%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T10: Trustworthiness of blog content vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
How trustworthy is the content of the blog, according to you? []	High	Count	19	20	8	47
		% within Age	63.3%	34.5%	61.5%	46.5%
	Low	Count	3	0	0	3
		% within Age	10.0%	.0%	.0%	3.0%
	Neutral	Count	7	19	4	30
		% within Age	23.3%	32.8%	30.8%	29.7%

	Very High	Count	1	19	1	21
		% within Age	3.3%	32.8%	7.7%	20.8%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross-tabulation results of content trustworthiness with type of audience (T9) indicated that 16 out of 33 (48.5%) consumers and 16 out of 26 (61.5%) general interest viewers considered trustworthiness to be 'high'. 16 out of 42 (38.1%) employees perceived the trustworthiness to be neutral, closely followed by 35.7% employees who indicated high trustworthiness. The age cross tabulation (T10) with the same variable indicated that majority in all the age groups perceived the trustworthiness of blog content as 'high'. The result of 19 out of 30 (63.3%) in 20-24 age group, 20 out of 58 (34.5%) in 25-29 age group and 8 out of 13 (61.5%) in 30-34 age group indicated the same.

T11: Frequency of comparing blog information with other media vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			Total
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	
How often do you compare the information received from blogs with other media? []		Count	0	7	0	7
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	16.7%	.0%	6.9%
	Never	Count	3	15	2	20

		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	35.7%	7.7%	19.8%
	Often	Count	6	3	8	17
		% within Type of Audience	18.2%	7.1%	30.8%	16.8%
	Rarely	Count	20	13	6	39
		% within Type of Audience	60.6%	31.0%	23.1%	38.6%
	Sometimes	Count	3	3	9	15
		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	7.1%	34.6%	14.9%
	Very Often	Count	1	1	1	3
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	2.4%	3.8%	3.0%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T12: Frequency of comparing blog information with other media vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
How often do you compare the information received from blogs with other media? []		Count	0	7	0	7
		% within Age	.0%	12.1%	.0%	6.9%
	Never	Count	4	15	1	20

		% within Age	13.3%	25.9%	7.7%	19.8%
	Often	Count	12	4	1	17
		% within Age	40.0%	6.9%	7.7%	16.8%
	Rarely	Count	6	28	5	39
		% within Age	20.0%	48.3%	38.5%	38.6%
	Sometimes	Count	7	3	5	15
		% within Age	23.3%	5.2%	38.5%	14.9%
	Very Often	Count	1	1	1	3
		% within Age	3.3%	1.7%	7.7%	3.0%
	Total	Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The frequency of comparing blog information with other media cross tabulated with type of audience (T11) indicated that a majority of respondents ‘rarely’ compared, 20 out of 33 (60.6%) consumers primarily belonged to this category. 15 out of 42 (35.7%) employees indicated that they never compared placing their trust in the company blog. 9 out of 26 (34.6%) of general interest viewers sometimes compared blog information with other media. The age cross-tabulation (T12) results indicated that 12 out of 30 (40%) younger respondents in the age group 20-24 ‘often’

compared the blog information. 28 out of 58 (48.3%) in 25-29 age group and 5 out of 13 (38.5%) in 30-34 age group 'rarely' compared the blog information with other media.

T13: Frequency of passing on blog information vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			
					General Interest Viewer	
			Consumer	Employee		Total
Do you pass on the information received from the company blogs to people you know? []		Count	1	0	1	2
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	.0%	3.8%	2.0%
Never		Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	2.4%	.0%	1.0%
Often		Count	17	4	10	31
		% within Type of Audience	51.5%	9.5%	38.5%	30.7%
Rarely		Count	0	1	3	4
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	2.4%	11.5%	4.0%
Sometimes		Count	13	21	7	41
		% within Type of Audience	39.4%	50.0%	26.9%	40.6%
Very Often		Count	2	15	5	22
		% within Type of Audience	6.1%	35.7%	19.2%	21.8%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T14: Frequency of passing on blog information vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
Do you pass on the information received from the company blogs to people you know? []		Count	0	2	0	2
		% within Age	.0%	3.4%	.0%	2.0%
	Never	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Age	.0%	1.7%	.0%	1.0%
	Often	Count	8	13	10	31
		% within Age	26.7%	22.4%	76.9%	30.7%
	Rarely	Count	0	4	0	4
		% within Age	.0%	6.9%	.0%	4.0%
	Sometimes	Count	10	30	1	41
		% within Age	33.3%	51.7%	7.7%	40.6%
	Very Often	Count	12	8	2	22
		% within Age	40.0%	13.8%	15.4%	21.8%
	Total	Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results of passing on blog information to others variable with type of audience cross-tabulation (T13) indicated that most employees, 21 out of 42 (50%) and most general interest viewers, 7 out of 26 (26.9%) chose the dominant option 'sometimes'. Whereas most consumers, 17 out of 33 (51.5%) indicated that they 'often' pass on the information received through blogs. The age cross tabulation (T14) indicated that 30 out of 58 (51.7%) in the age group 25-29 passed on the information 'sometimes'. 12 out of 30 (40%) in 20-24 age group indicated 'very often' and 10 out of 13 (76.9%) in the age group of 30-34 passed on the information 'often'.

T15: Input reliability vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	Total
The inputs of which of the following people, makes the company blog most trustworthy/reliable?	CEO	Count	12	9	6	27
		% within Type of Audience	36.4%	21.4%	23.1%	26.7%
	Company Spokesperson	Count	3	13	0	16
		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	31.0%	.0%	15.8%
	Consumer	Count	17	11	10	38
		% within Type of Audience	51.5%	26.2%	38.5%	37.6%
	Employee	Count	1	9	10	20
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	21.4%	38.5%	19.8%

Total	Count	33	42	26	101
	% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T16: Input reliability vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
The inputs of which of the following people, makes the company blog most trustworthy/reliable?	CEO	Count	15	5	7	27
		% within Age	50.0%	8.6%	53.8%	26.7%
	Company Spokesperson	Count	3	12	1	16
		% within Age	10.0%	20.7%	7.7%	15.8%
	Consumer	Count	11	23	4	38
		% within Age	36.7%	39.7%	30.8%	37.6%
	Employee	Count	1	18	1	20
		% within Age	3.3%	31.0%	7.7%	19.8%
	Total	Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross tabulation results of input reliability and type of audience (T15) indicates that most audience perceive that inputs by consumers in the blogs make it most reliable. 17 out of 33

(51.5%) consumers and 10 out of 26 (38.5%) general interest viewers preferred consumer inputs. The employees were divided in their reply, 13 out of 42 (31%) employees indicated company spokesperson closely followed by 26.2% who perceived consumer input to increase reliability. The results of age cross tabulation (T16) indicated that 23 out of 58 (39.7%) in the 25-29 age group connected consumer inputs to reliability. 15 out of 30 (50%) in 20-24 age group and 7 out of 13 (53.8%) in 30-34 age group perceived that inputs by CEO made the company blog most reliable.

T17: Extent of personal interaction vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			Total
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	
What is the extent of personal interaction with the company/management that you can have via blogs? []		Count	0	0	1	1
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	.0%	3.8%	1.0%
	High	Count	6	16	16	38
		% within Type of Audience	18.2%	38.1%	61.5%	37.6%
	Low	Count	0	7	4	11
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	16.7%	15.4%	10.9%
	Neutral	Count	17	17	5	39
		% within Type of Audience	51.5%	40.5%	19.2%	38.6%
	Very	Count	3	1	0	4
		% within Type of Audience				

	High	% within Type of Audience	9.1%	2.4%	.0%	4.0%
	Very Low	Count	7	1	0	8
		% within Type of Audience	21.2%	2.4%	.0%	7.9%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T18: Extent of personal interaction vs. Age						
			Age			Total
			20-24	25-29	30-34	
What is the extent of personal interaction with the company/management that you can have via blogs? []		Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Age	3.3%	.0%	.0%	1.0%
	High	Count	15	16	7	38
		% within Age	50.0%	27.6%	53.8%	37.6%
	Low	Count	0	11	0	11
		% within Age	.0%	19.0%	.0%	10.9%
	Neutral	Count	14	20	5	39
		% within Age	46.7%	34.5%	38.5%	38.6%
	Very	Count	0	3	1	4

	High	% within Age	.0%	5.2%	7.7%	4.0%
	Very Low	Count	0	8	0	8
		% within Age	.0%	13.8%	.0%	7.9%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The extent of personal interaction with the company was cross tabulated with type of audience (T17), the results indicated 17 out of 33 (51.5%) consumers and 17 out of 42 (40.5) employees perceived the personal interaction to be neutral which was the dominant reply. The general interest viewer considered the personal interaction with company to be high with 61.5% i.e. 16 out of 26 indicated so. The age cross-tabulation (T18) results indicated a majority of 20 out 58 (34.5%) in the age group of 25-29 went with the dominant answer 'neutral'. Both 20-24 age group with 15 out of 30 (50%) and 30-34 age group with 7 out of 13 (53.8%) perceived the direct interaction to be 'high'.

T19: Opportunity for discussion and analysis vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			Total
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	
Do you think the company blog provides an opportunity for in-depth analysis & discussion of topics/issues? []	Often	Count	18	18	15	51
		% within Type of Audience	54.5%	42.9%	57.7%	50.5%

	Rarely	Count	0	2	6	8
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	4.8%	23.1%	7.9%
	Sometimes	Count	15	17	5	37
		% within Type of Audience	45.5%	40.5%	19.2%	36.6%
	Very Often	Count	0	5	0	5
		% within Type of Audience	.0%	11.9%	.0%	5.0%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T20: Opportunity for discussion and analysis vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
Do you think the company blog provides an opportunity for in-depth analysis & discussion of topics/issues? []	Often	Count	20	24	7	51
		% within Age	66.7%	41.4%	53.8%	50.5%
	Rarely	Count	3	5	0	8
		% within Age	10.0%	8.6%	.0%	7.9%
	Sometimes	Count	7	24	6	37
		% within Age	23.3%	41.4%	46.2%	36.6%
	Very Often	Count	0	5	0	5

		% within Age	.0%	8.6%	.0%	5.0%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The opportunity for in-depth analysis (T19) was cross tabulated with type of audience, the results showed a concurrence among all the categories. 18 out of 33 (54.5%) consumers, 18 out of 42 (42.9%) employees and 15 out of 26 (57.7%) general interest viewers perceived that blogs ‘often’ provided opportunity for in-depth discussion of topics. The age cross tabulation (T20) also presented similar results. 20 out of 30 (66.7%) in 20-24 age group, 24 out of 58 (41.4%) in 25-29 age group and 7 out of 13 (53.8%) in 30-34 age group indicated that company blogs ‘often’ provided platform for in-depth analysis.

T21: Objectivity of content vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	Total
Do you think the company blogs present an unbiased view (favorable & unfavorable) of a topic/issue under discussion? []		Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	.0%	.0%	1.0%
	Never	Count	7	0	0	7
		% within Type of Audience	21.2%	.0%	.0%	6.9%
	Often	Count	8	9	4	21
		% within Type of Audience	24.2%	21.4%	15.4%	20.8%

	Rarely	Count	3	2	4	9
		% within Type of Audience	9.1%	4.8%	15.4%	8.9%
	Sometimes	Count	13	31	18	62
		% within Type of Audience	39.4%	73.8%	69.2%	61.4%
	Very Often	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	.0%	.0%	1.0%
Total	Count	33	42	26	101	
	% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

T22: Objectivity of content vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
Do you think the company blogs present an unbiased view (favorable & unfavorable) of a topic/issue under discussion? []		Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Age	.0%	1.7%	.0%	1.0%
	Never	Count	0	7	0	7
		% within Age	.0%	12.1%	.0%	6.9%
	Often	Count	0	20	1	21
		% within Age	.0%	34.5%	7.7%	20.8%
	Rarely	Count	0	4	5	9
		% within Age	.0%	6.9%	38.5%	8.9%

	Sometimes	Count	30	25	7	62
		% within Age	100.0%	43.1%	53.8%	61.4%
	Very Often	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Age	.0%	1.7%	.0%	1.0%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results of objectivity of content cross tabulated with type of audience (T21) indicated that 13 out of 33 (39.4%) consumers, 31 out of 42 (73.8%) employees and 18 out of 26 (69.2%) general interest viewers felt that ‘sometimes’ company blogs present an unbiased view. The age, cross tabulation (T22) also indicated similar results. 30 out of 30 (100%) in 20-24 age group, 25 out of 58 (43.1%) in 25-29 age group and 7 out of 13 (53.8%) in 30-34 age group considered that company blogs are ‘sometimes’ objective in discussing topics.

T23: Frequency of posting comments vs. Type of audience						
			Type of Audience			Total
			Consumer	Employee	General Interest Viewer	
How often do you post your comments on the blog?	2-4 times a week	Count	1	3	4	8
		% within Type of Audience	3.0%	7.1%	15.4%	7.9%
	Never	Count	23	17	7	47
		% within Type of Audience	69.7%	40.5%	26.9%	46.5%

	Once a week	Count	9	22	15	46
		% within Type of Audience	27.3%	52.4%	57.7%	45.5%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The percentage analysis of frequency of posting comments indicated that 47% respondents never posted comments. A cross tabulation of frequency of posting comments and type of audience (T23) indicated that 23 out of 33 (69.7%) consumers said never. 22 out of 42 (52.4%) employees and 15 out of 26 (57.7%) general interest viewers indicated 'once a week' as their comment posting frequency.

T24: Frequency of posting comments vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
How often do you post your comments on the blog?	2-4 times a week	Count	6	1	1	8
		% within Age	20.0%	1.7%	7.7%	7.9%
	Never	Count	6	33	8	47
		% within Age	20.0%	56.9%	61.5%	46.5%
	Once a week	Count	18	24	4	46
		% within Age	60.0%	41.4%	30.8%	45.5%
Total		Count	30	58	13	101

	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The age cross tabulation results (T24) showed that 33 out of 58 (56.9%) in 25-29 age group and 8 out of 13 (61.5%) in 30-34 age group indicated ‘never’. Whereas 18 out of 30, 60% of the younger age group of 20-24 posted their comments ‘once a week’.

T25: Benefit of posting comment vs. Type of audience						
		Type of Audience				
				General Interest		
		Consumer	Employee	Viewer		Total
What is the benefit of posting your comments in the blog, according to you?	Count	8	1	0		9
	% within Type of Audience	24.2%	2.4%	.0%		8.9%
	Engaging in Dialogue	Count	4	7	5	16
	% within Type of Audience	12.1%	16.7%	19.2%		15.8%
	Feedback	Count	10	16	11	37
	% within Type of Audience	30.3%	38.1%	42.3%		36.6%
	Self-Expression	Count	3	16	5	24
	% within Type of Audience	9.1%	38.1%	19.2%		23.8%
	Sharing	Count	8	2	5	15

	Information	% within Type of Audience	24.2%	4.8%	19.2%	14.9%
Total		Count	33	42	26	101
		% within Type of Audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

T26: Benefit of posting comment vs. Age						
			Age			
			20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
What is the benefit of posting your comments in the blog, according to you?		Count	1	8	0	9
		% within Age	3.3%	13.8%	.0%	8.9%
	Engaging in Dialogue	Count	4	11	1	16
		% within Age	13.3%	19.0%	7.7%	15.8%
	Feedback	Count	13	15	9	37
		% within Age	43.3%	25.9%	69.2%	36.6%
	Self-Expression	Count	12	10	2	24
		% within Age	40.0%	17.2%	15.4%	23.8%
	Sharing Information	Count	0	14	1	15
		% within Age	.0%	24.1%	7.7%	14.9%
	Total	Count	30	58	13	101
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross tabulation results of benefits of posting comments with type of audience (T25) confirmed the dominant choice 'feedback' across all types. 10 out of 33 (30.3%) consumers, 16 out of 42 (38.1%) employees and 11 out of 26 (42.3%) general interest viewers considered 'feedback' as the chief benefit of posting comments. The age, cross tabulation (T26) with the same variable showed similar concurrence. 13 out of 30 (43.3%) in 20-24 age group, 15 out of 58 (25.9%) in 25-29 age group and 9 out of 13 (69.2%) in 30-34 age group indicated 'feedback' as the main benefit.

Content Analysis

In order to analyze the communication modes of the corporates, five company blogs were subjected to content analysis for a period of 2 weeks (23 April-7 May 2012). Based on review of articles written on Indian blogs as well as self-analysis of content and frequency of updation the blogs of following companies were selected: Infosys, HCL Technologies, Wipro, Mahindra Rise and MakeMyTrip. The parameters considered for content analysis are: categories of information (product details/company information/latest events/discussion or dialogue), type of information (technical/specific area of interest/general interest), blogger profile (CEO or top management/industry expert/employee/consumer) and frequency of feedback (number of comments and tweets).

Infosys(<http://www.infosysblogs.com/>)

Infosys has a very active blogspot with 38 different sections or sub-blogs under which blogs are posted and regularly updated. The design of the blog is user friendly and presents clarity with regards to selection of different topics. The archive and blogger profiles are well maintained and updated. There is also link to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter encouraging the users to follow Infosys on these sites as well. There is also option to subscribe to web feeds and a special mention has to be made on the clarity with which this process is explained in the blog.

Some of the sections had opinion polls that invited active involvement of the stakeholders.

The content analysis of Infosys blog indicated the following under ‘category of information’; in the specified time period, maximum blogs were under the category of discussion/dialogue with 31 posts out of the total 56, followed by 16 on product details, five on latest events and four on company information. The ‘type of information’ was dominated by specific area of interest such as banking, procurement and BPO with 22 posts out of 56 closely followed by general interest

topics ranging from education to sustaining the planet with 21 posts. The least were technical information with 13 posts. The most frequent bloggers on Infosys blogs were the employees, 49 posts out of 56. The posts by top management were four and three by industry experts. There were no blogs by consumers. It is clear that the company has developed a culture of information sharing among their internal stakeholders. The comments/tweets were not regularly posted for many posts; the blog had a total of 29 tweets and 22 comments for the specified period of time. The post, “Experience Tomorrow’s Enterprise” that was on Infosys Experience Centre posted by B. G. Srinivas, the member of board had the highest tweets (13) and comments (five). On an average the posts by top management had the highest response, 20 out of total 29 tweets and eight out of total 22 comments.

HCL Technologies(<http://ers.hclblogs.com/>)

HCL’s blog is moderately active, the number of posts in the period of analysis were five only. The design is basic with not many categories; the page shows the most recent posts with no subdivisions. The archive is well maintained and updated. There are links to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. There is a page for HCL product and services information videos and a ‘Resources’ page which has archives of HCL whitepapers. The blog has a link to ‘HCL ERS in Media’ the page that has all the recent as well as archived press releases, it is a quick and reliable source to access company information.

The content analysis of the HCL blog indicated the following under ‘category of information’; in the specified time period, maximum blogs were under the category of product details with three posts out of the total five, followed by two under discussion/dialogue. There were no posts on latest events and company information. The ‘type of information’ had equal number of posts on specific area of interest and technical information with two posts each. There were no posts on general interest. All the five blogs were written by HCL employees. There were no blogs by

industry experts, top management or consumers. It can be deduced that HCL encourages its employees to blog regularly with the CEO of the company Mr. VineetNayar, considered one of the top Indian CEO bloggers, setting the example. The comments/tweets were regularly posted on this blog, four out of five posts had comments. The blog had a total of five comments for the specified period of time.

Wipro (<http://www.wipro.com/blog/>)

Wipro's blog is moderately active, the number of posts in the period of analysis were five only. The design is basic but the categories are structured well; the main page has categories like top posts, latest posts and archives. The archive is well maintained and updated. There is also the search option called 'Blog Roster' where posts can be searched as per topics. There are links to Twitter and LinkedIn. The blog also provides a platform for the users to send their suggestions and feedback via e-mail.

The content analysis of the Wipro blog indicated the following under 'category of information'; in the specified time period, maximum blogs were under the category of product details with three posts out of the total five, followed by two under discussion/dialogue. There were no posts on company information and latest events. The 'type of information' had three out of five posts on specific area of interest and two posts on general interest. There were no posts on technical information. All the five blogs were written by HCL employees. There were no blogs by industry experts, top management or consumers. None of the five blogs has any comments posted.

Mahindra Rise(<http://rise.mahindra.com/>)

The Mahindra Rise blog was the official honoree at the 2012 Webby awards, the international award honoring excellence in internet. The blog has high aesthetic appeal with great design and high level of interactivity. The blogs have video blogs, opinion polls, option to subscribe to Rise e-magazines. With regards to interactivity it provides platform for stakeholders to give their

opinions and suggestions, it also invites stories and nominations on person/organization who are the examples of 'rise'. There are also links to questions posted on their Facebook and Twitter sites. The archives and blogger profiles are well maintained and updated. With regard to frequency of blogs posted, it is moderately active. The number of posts in the period of analysis was four only.

The content analysis of the Mahindra Rise blog indicated the following under 'category of information'; in the specified time period, maximum blogs were under the category of discussion/dialogue with three posts out of the total four, followed by one under latest events. There were no posts in the category of company information and product details. The 'type of information' had all the four posts on general interest dealing with different issues. There were no posts on specific areas of interest and technical information. Three blogs were written by employees and two by industry experts. There were no blogs by top management or consumers. The comments/tweets were regularly posted on this blog, three out of four posts had comments. The blog had a total of seven tweets and three comments for the specified period of time.

MakeMyTrip(<http://blog.makemytrip.com/>)

The MakeMyTrip blog is moderately active, the number of posts during the period of analysis were four only. The design is good with images and the categories are structured well; the main page has categories like recent posts, posts divided on the basis of topics, search option and archives. The archive is well maintained, it is divided on monthly basis and on the basis of topics. There are links to Twitter and LinkedIn. The blog has contests to encourage active stakeholder involvement and also provides a platform for the users to send their suggestions and feedback via e-mail.

The content analysis of the MakeMyTrip blog indicated the following under 'category of information'; in the specified time period, maximum blogs were under the category of latest

events with two posts out of the total four, followed by one each under discussion/dialogue and product/service details. There were no posts in the category of company information. The ‘type of information’ had all the four posts on general interest. There were no posts on specific areas of interest and technical information. Three blogs were written by employees and one by consumer. There were no blogs by top management or industry experts. The comments/tweets posted were moderately regular on this blog, two out of four posts had comments.

T27: Categories of Information				
Companies	Product details	Company Information	Latest Events	Discussion/Dialogue
Infosys	16	4	5	31
HCL	3			2
Wipro	3			2
Mahindra Rise			1	3
MakeMyTrip	1		2	1
Total	23	4	8	39

T28: Type of Information			
Companies	Technical	Specific Area of Interest	General Interest
Infosys	13	22	21
HCL	2	2	1
Wipro		2	3
Mahindra Rise			4
MakeMyTrip			4
Total	15	26	33

The final analysis of all the five blogs together shows maximum posts in the ‘category of information’ (T27) is under discussion/dialogue, 39 out of 74 posts, followed by product details,

23 out of 74 posts. In the ‘type of information’ (T28), maximum are general interest posts that can be read and discussed by all the stakeholders, 33 out of 74.

	T29: Blogger Profile			
Companies	CEO/Top Management	Industry Experts	Employees	Consumers
Infosys	4	3	49	
HCL			5	
Wipro			5	
Mahindra Rise		1	3	
MakeMyTrip			3	1
Total	4	4	65	1

	T30: Feedback	
Companies	Tweets	Comments
Infosys	29	22
HCL		5
Wipro		
Mahindra Rise	7	3
MakeMyTrip		2
Total	36	32

Employees comprise the biggest share of bloggers (T29), 65 out of 74 posts are by employees; consumers are the least in this category, 1 out of 74. The total number of comments and tweets (T30) added together is 68.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to analyze blogs as a medium of building company's credibility with the stakeholders. The study attempts to examine the usage of blogs as a communication mode by the companies as well as the stakeholders' responses to blogs and the consecutive belief of corporate credibility that is built as a result of referring to the blogs. It tries to analyze if the stakeholders are more likely to believe information provided by the blogs because they see it as a platform for direct contact & interaction with the company.

The study used content analysis of five prominent company blogs and percentage analysis of online survey data. The key results in relation to previous studies are discussed.

Several previous studies on credibility of social media tools in general and blogging in specific have stated certain observations. Credibility is the key factor in the adoption of the new social media tools by PR professionals (Curtis et. al., 2009). If the person perceives the medium as credible then he is more likely to use it for communication. This view is supported by Kang (2010), according to him credibility of the social media tool is key for increasing public involvement in the digital space. Another observation is that increase in reliance increased perception of credibility. People who relied heavily on blogs for news perceived the blogs to be more credible (Johnson et. al., 2007).

The results of the study support these findings; a majority of 37.4% respondents preferred the medium of blog because they perceive it to be reliable source of information. Employees who comprise 41.6% of total respondents are the highest users of blogs. The reliability factor is also perceived more by the employees (47.6%) in comparison to other stakeholders (T3). The results of the content analysis (T29) also show that 65 out of the 74 blogs were posted by

employees. Also a majority of 35.7% employees indicated that they never compared the information received from the blogs with other media (T11).

If credibility is the key factor then how is it measured? Johnson et.al (2007), in their study, use believability, fairness, accuracy, and depth of information as the four measures used to gauge media credibility. Respondents evaluated blogs as highly credible for depth of information, while judging them as weaker on credibility for fairness of information. This is in concurrence with the results of the current study; a majority of 50.5% respondents were of the opinion that company blogs provide an opportunity for in-depth analysis and discussion. In response to objectivity of information, 61.4% indicated that 'sometimes' the blogs present an unbiased view.

Measuring credibility of a social media platform like blog is complicated due to multiple senders and its subsequent effect on receiver's perception of credibility. Also blog credibility cannot be evaluated using general credibility measures used to assess traditional media (Kang, 2010).

The complex reaction to blog content can be observed in the cross tabulation results of the study. The majority of external stakeholders i.e. 36.4% consumers and 61.5% general interest viewers perceived the management control over blog content as 'high' (T7) but this does not affect their perception of blog content credibility. 48.5% consumers and 61.5% general interest viewers considered trustworthiness also to be 'high' (T9). For the internal stakeholders however control over content and trustworthiness appears to be inter-related. The majority of employees perceive both the control over content (45.2%) and trustworthiness (38.1%) to be 'neutral' (T7, T9).

The observations made by Jackson, Yates and Orlikowski (2007), with regards to blogging and posting comments, suggest that technical experts provide content whereas marketing and communications experts provide commentary and linkages. The content analysis indicated that

technical blogs-Infosys, HCL and Wipro were better in terms of blog content and regular updation in comparison to the non-technical blogs of Mahindra Rise and MakeMyTrip.

The key results in relation to the hypotheses proposed by the study are discussed.

1. Stakeholders perceive the blog posts credible because of direct contact with other stakeholders of the company

The company blog is a place where all the stakeholders congregate and share their opinion which can be viewed, discussed and commented on. The observations of content analysis support the hypotheses; the blogs are posted by top management of the company, industry experts, employees and customers. Though the identity of people in the comments/tweets is not clear, the blogs encourage all stakeholders to give their opinion. Though the content analysis shows that the number of employee bloggers is more the survey analysis indicates that most blog users are of the opinion that consumer inputs make the blog more reliable. 51.5% consumers, 38.5% general interest viewers and 26.2% employees indicated so (T15). This can be attributed to the general opinion that employees are bound to the company hence may not voice out their critique of the company whereas consumers are independent of the company therefore their opinions present the true image of the company.

2. Stakeholders accept blogs as a good platform for personal interaction with top management

Blogs can provide direct access to the top management without having to cross levels of hierarchy to put across ideas, opinions and feedback. The survey analysis results indicate moderate agreement with the hypotheses. 51.5% consumers and 40.5% employees perceived the level of personal interaction to be 'neutral'. The general interest viewers however perceived the

blogs to be a good platform for personal interaction, 61.5% indicated the level of interaction to be 'high' (T17). 50% in 20-24 age group and 53.3% in 30-34 age group who perceived the level of personal interaction to be high (T18) also preferred the blogs posted by CEO/top management and connected them to increased blog reliability. The content analysis observations prove the hypotheses; the result shows that on an average the posts by top management had the highest total response, 20 out of total 36 tweets and 8 out of total 32 comments (T30) indicating that stakeholders use blogs as a medium of interaction with the top management.

3. Stakeholders accept blogs as a better platform for discussion and analysis of issues with the company

The key function of PR is to engage the public with the company on a long term basis to build credibility. The effective way is to involve the stakeholders in two-way discussion and dialogue. This aspect of communication that is multi-directional and involves in-depth analysis is usually missing in the traditional media. Blogs therefore are perceived as a better platform for discussion and analysis of various topics ranging from industry specific to general interest. Both content analysis and survey analysis results prove the hypotheses. The final analysis of all the five blogs together shows maximum posts under the category of 'discussion/dialogue', 39 out of 74 posts (T27). Also a majority of 33 out of 74 are general interest posts that can be read and discussed by all the stakeholders (T28). The survey analysis indicated that 23.8% of respondents look for discussion/dialogue in blogs. Also majority of all stakeholders, 54.5% consumers, 42.9% employees and 57.7% general interest viewers across all age groups perceived that blogs 'often' provided opportunity for in-depth analysis and discussion (T19, T20). These results also support the previous research (Johnson et. al., 2007).

4. Stakeholders believe that their opinions are more visible when they post their comments on blogs

Blogs act as “public barometer” (Drezner and Farrell, 2004) and unlike traditional media which act as the transmitter of news, blogs have the ability to assimilate public opinion through posts and comments. Though the percentage analysis of comment posting frequency indicates that 47% respondents never posted comments, the younger respondents (20-24) were more active in comparison to others. 60% posted comments once a week and 20% posted comments 2-4 times a week (T24). The content analysis indicated that a total of 74 blogs posted during the period of analysis had 36 tweets and 32 comments (T30). With exception of Wipro blogs which had no comments, the blogs of other companies (Infosys, HCL, Mahindra Rise and MakeMyTrip) had moderate number of tweets/comments.

With regards to benefits of posting comments all the stakeholders perceived ‘feedback’ to be chief advantage. 30.3% consumers, 38.1% employees and 42.3% general interest viewers, across all age groups indicated so (T25, T26), proving the hypotheses. This result confirms previous assessment of the strength of new media tools - the opportunity to provide feedback which the new audience expect from communication channels (Breakenridge, 2008).

Other findings and observations

Blogosphere’s population is definitely young, 87% of the respondents were below 30 years (T2). The younger respondents i.e. 20-24 exhibit certain interesting behavior in relation to blogs. A majority of them, 63.3% perceive the trustworthiness of blog content to be high (T10) but they also often compare the information with other media, 40% indicated so (T12). They pass on the information ‘very often’ to people they know, this can be reiterated by the number of tweets on the blogs. Though they primarily prefer blogs due to regular updation, 33.3% indicated that they

seek discussion/dialogue when they read or post blogs (T6). Their adoption doesn't stop at reading and considering blogs as credible sources of information; they also comprise the majority of respondents (60%) who post comments at least once a week.

Blogs as a mode of corporate communication works best with the internal stakeholders, the employees. 42% of the respondents were employees and 65 out of 74 blogs were posted by them. Though they perceive the trustworthiness of blogs to be neutral, they do accept it as a platform for discussion and providing feedback to the company. The corporates could work on engaging the other stakeholders, especially the consumers to actively involve in company blogs so that it works as an effective tool of consumer PR as well. Though a majority of 37.6% respondents perceived that consumer input made the blogs more reliable, the content analysis presented an opposite picture, only one out of 74 posts was by consumer.

Blogosphere in India is still in a nascent stage with only a handful of companies using blogs effectively to communicate with their stakeholders. Especially in comparison to the fast growing interest in corporate blogging in the US, the rate of adoption is slow in India. This is evident in the frequency of posting comments; though 72% said they visit blogs once a week, 47% respondents indicated that they never posted comments. The companies who want to stay connected to their audiences have to take social media tools like blogs seriously and explore ways to engage not only internal but also external stakeholders more actively.

Researcher Kamla Bhatt, in her article on Indian blogging scenario comments that considering a large majority of Indian working class is young, fast paced social media tools like Facebook or Twitter could prove more effective. But to build long lasting rapport and reputation, it is important to not only to give them a platform for direct interaction with company and all its stakeholders but also engage them in dialogue which is best possible through blogs. The

companies can use other social media tools to establish contact and then encourage the stakeholders to actively involve in company blogs. Until then blogs will only be moderately successful as PR tools for building corporate credibility.

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