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Mapping Content Creation: A Multi-Method Exploration of User-Generated Content

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Mapping Content Creation: A Multi-Method Exploration of User-Generated Content
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Master of Arts in Communication
San Diego State University, 2010

As the digital platform becomes further embedded into the daily rigors of American society, online mass media entities have integrated a wide array of interactive tools aimed at enabling and encouraging consumer-based content creation. However, little empirical information describing content creation environments, patterns, and potentialities exist. Thus, this study had three primary goals. First, this work examined the dissemination of content creation tools through the utilization of a content analysis. Second, this work investigated user motivations for creating content on 16 college sports-themed blogs. Third, Internet self-efficacy was examined within the context of user-based content generation. Results indicated that content creation tools have been widely integrated into the online landscape and, further, that individuals creating content are actively engaged readers who achieve gratifications through content creation. As this study was exploratory in nature, it concludes by making a number of theoretical and methodological suggestions for future research.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. vii
LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION .........................................................................................................1
   Background ..............................................................................................................1
   Statement of the Problem .........................................................................................2
   Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................3
   Conceptual Underpinning ........................................................................................4

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ...............................................................................6
   Introduction ..............................................................................................................6
   User-Based Participation .........................................................................................7
   The Blogosphere ....................................................................................................10
      Bloggers ...........................................................................................................11
      Sports Blogs .....................................................................................................13
   The Uses and Gratifications Approach ............................................................14
      Motives for Use .................................................................................................16
      Internet Self-Efficacy ........................................................................................17
   The Present Study ..................................................................................................19

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .......................................................22
   Introduction ............................................................................................................22
   Phase I: Content Analysis ......................................................................................22
      Problem and Purpose Overview ........................................................................22
      Research Questions ..........................................................................................23
      Definition of the Sample and Coded Elements ................................................23
      Data Collection and Instrumentation ...............................................................27
Intercoder Reliability .................................................................28
Phase II: Survey ...........................................................................29
Problem and Purpose Overview ......................................................29
Research Questions and Hypotheses ...............................................29
Participants ......................................................................................30
Measures ..........................................................................................32
Statistical Analysis ...........................................................................33
4 RESULTS ...........................................................................................37
5 DISCUSSION .......................................................................................42
Limitations .........................................................................................46
Implications for Future Research .....................................................48
Conclusion .........................................................................................50
REFERENCES .......................................................................................52
APPENDICES
A INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .........................................................68
B QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS .................................................................70
C INFORMED CONSENT WAIVER .........................................................74
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Coded Websites .........................................................................................................25
Table 2. Intercoder Reliability .................................................................................................29
Table 3. Blog Websites Facilitating Survey Response ...........................................................31
Table 4 Factor Analysis Loadings for Motivation and Frequency of Use Variables ..........34
Table 5. Factor Loadings for Internet Self-Efficacy Variables ..............................................36
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Scales .................................................................................36
Table 7. Content Creation Tool Appearance Frequency ..........................................................37
Table 8. Use of Moderation .....................................................................................................38
Table 9. Correlation Between Scale Items ..............................................................................40
LIST OF FIGURES

PAGE

Figure 1. Basic Theorized Model for Content Creation .................................................20
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe Dr. Valerie Barker immeasurably for her significant guidance on this project.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This section contextualizes user-generated content creation by offering discussion on
the phenomena’s background. Upon such delineation, a statement regarding the on-hand
problem is provided, the purpose of the study is furnished, and the conceptual underpinning
is topically discussed.

BACKGROUND

In his 1956 work, *The Power Elite*, American sociologist C. Wright Mills noted that
democracies must possess “public communications [that] are so organized that there is a
chance immediately and effectively to answer back any opinion expressed in public” (p. 304). Matthews (1994) echoed this sentiment, stating that opportunities to talk and think
collectively allow the public to be empowered with greater political legitimacy. Democracy,
however, transcends political discourse. While previous works have focused on policy issues
because of their nature as “problems of collective action” (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw,
2006, p. 401), democracy can, and perhaps should, be considered in a wider spectrum.
Recognizing that the democratic potential of online discussion is limited because it often
does not provide direct feedback to policy makers (e.g. Hacker & van Dijk, 2000; Jankowski
& Van Selm, 2000), democracy is the process that facilitates deep-seated norm evolution as
opposed to simply policy reconfiguration. Taken in its whole, democracy is the system that
allows for inclusion and, subsequently, purposeful public deliberation.

Scholars have long noted that the quality of public discussion is associated with
accessibility (e.g. Fraser, 1992; Matthews, 1994; Witschge, 2008; Young, 2002). Very
obviously, the Internet exists as a previously unimaginable inclusionary force. Papacharissi
(2004) stated that proponents of the Internet envision cyberspace as a tool with the potential
to “pave the road for a democratic utopia” (p. 260). This potential is explicitly apparent in
the interactive online tools that allow user-generated content creation. However, despite the
significant integration of user-generated content creation tools by online entities, relatively
little research has examined the topic from an overarching perspective. Instead, only vague definitions of phrases such as “Web 2.0” (e.g. Leung, 2009; Luckin et al, 2009; O’Reilly, 2007) and context-specific usage (e.g. Bachen, Raphael, Lynn, McKee, & Philippi, 2008; Bergström, 2008; Leung, 2009; Livingston, 2008) have been tendered.

Recognizing the interactive potential of the Internet and its resultant ramifications for social, political, and economic institutions, the study of online interactivity is worthwhile. However, significant knowledge gaps exist. The present study involved centralizing extant research on user-generated content, establishing a general understanding of how content creation tools have been diffused, and investigating access and motivation factors as they relate to user generated content on online blogs. In doing so, it is noted that current research on user-generated content is problematically inconsistent. While a number of researchers recognize user-generated content’s potential to positively affect democratic and deliberative processes, actual understanding of the topic’s potential is limited. Some works describe a largely disinterested audience (Bergström, 2008) while others have noted young, active participants (Courtois, Mechant, De Marez, & Verleye, 2009). Further complicating matters, little definition of what constitutes online interactivity actually exists (e.g. Bucy, 2004; McMillian & Hwang, 2002).

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Two primary issues relating to the current understanding of user-generated content exist. First, the study of user-generated content has, to-date, been remarkably singular in focus. Researchers frequently investigate specified behavioral patterns as they relate to a narrow participatory environment (e.g. civic engagement on messageboards associated appearing on political op-ed websites) without examining what environments exists in a broader, more general web context. That is, no current research efforts have attempted to identify what participation environments are available to users and if the appearance and functionality of participation environments significantly vary across topical website conglomerates (e.g. institutional news websites, blogs, social networking sites). Without infusion of the broader perspective into the contemporary body of knowledge, attempts to identify content-creation trends are inherently limited. Second, a lack of research transposing motivation and access factors, in regards to actual content generation, was identified. Some
studies regarding context-specific content creation were identified (e.g. Aikat, 2009; DeSouza & Dutta, 2008; Roberts-Miller, 2004; Stromer-Galley, 2003), however, much of this research failed to adequately address how motivations to create content are impacted by the ability (here conceived as Internet self-efficacy) to actually create content.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study’s purpose was to further explore the topic of user-based content creation. Two primary methodological tools were employed for the purposes of empirical investigation. First, a content analysis was used to identify what type of participation tools are available to users and if those participation tools vary significantly across web contexts. Topical survey of popular websites indicates that generally the same types of participation tools are offered to users but no empirical evidence exists to formally support such observation. The content analysis subsisted of 46 websites selected for coding. These websites were selected on the following bases: (1) Pool 1 was composed of the ten most popular blog sites, as identified by the blog-specific traffic indexing site, Technorati; (2) Pool 2 was composed of the ten most popular newspaper websites, as identified by the web traffic indexing site, Alexa; (3) Pool 3 was composed of the ten most popular general use websites, as identified by the web traffic indexing site, Alexa; (4) Pool 4 was composed of 16 college-sports themed blogs with varying web traffic levels. The following research questions were posed:

RQ1: Are content creation tools employed differently across blogs, news, and general use websites?

RQ2: Which content creation tools are most commonly employed?

RQ3: How is moderation employed?

The second component of this study utilized a survey methodology to identify content creation patterns among blog users. Specifically, patterns of use, motivations for content creation, and existing Internet self-efficacy levels were focused on. The 16 blogs named in Pool 4 of the content analysis description hosted a hyperlink to a 47-item survey and nearly 2,000 total responses were obtained. The following hypotheses and research questions were posed:

RQ4: Will motivation for use scales correlate with each other?
RQ5: Will content generation motivations have a relationship with frequency of blog readership?
RQ6: Will content generation motivations have a relationship with the frequency that users read content created by other blog users?
RQ7: Will frequency of content generation have a relationship with frequency of readership of content created by other users?
RQ8: Will frequency of content generation and blog readership have a relationship?

H1: There will be a positive relationship between generation of user-content and self-identified motivations will be observed; that is, content generators will indicate active engagement as possessing a discernable correlation to content creation.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between Internet self-efficacy levels and content generation frequency.

H3: User-identified motivations and Internet self-efficacy will function together as positive predictors of content creation.

H4: There will be a positive relationship between reading blogs and reading content created by other blog users.

The above hypotheses and research questions were developed from the below-discussed conceptual underpinning.

**CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNING**

As discussed above, the present study was divided into two phases. Phase I consisted of a descriptive content analysis with a quasi-theoretical underpinning. Little to-date research has discussed which content creation tools are generally available to web users and, furthermore, if availability of those tools differs between online contexts. Therefore, contemporary literature on content creation tools was identified, explored, and ultimately, categorized. Then, popular websites were examined. Together, these two methods functioned as the baseline for general expectations of observed results. Given the lack of contemporary research on the topic of user-based content creation, three research questions were posited. Results gathered from the content analysis were used to develop operational definitions in Phase II of the study, a survey which sought to examine psychological factors associated with content generation.

Phase II of the present study conceived user-based content generation as requiring users to be both motivated to use content creation tools and possessing the psychological
ability to access such tools. Thus, two primary conceptual approaches were used to describe these antecedent variables:

For motivation, the uses and gratifications platform (e.g. Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rubin, 1981) was used to describe a goal-seeking audience which is actively engaged in content generation. The uses and gratifications approach is primarily used to examine how individuals use mass media to gratify specific needs, to explore underlying motives for mass media use, and to identify the positive and negative consequences of individual media use. The present study predicted that significantly motivated users would be more likely to create content than less motivated users.

For access, Internet self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) was used to describe an audience capable of using online tools to create content. Internet self-efficacy is a context specific application of self-efficacy, or individual perceptions of capability to succeed in specified situations. As discussed by Bandura (1997), self-efficacy levels often play a definitional role in how people approach tasks and set goals for themselves. The present study predicted that those with higher Internet self-efficacy levels would be more likely to generate online content.

As it was suggested that the proposed theoretical bodies would individually play a role in affecting content creation, the present study predicted that they would together result in a model predicting content creation. That is, it was hypothesized psychological motivations and Internet self-efficacy would work in concert with each other as antecedents of user-based content generation.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section introduces, discusses, and compartmentalizes the literature used to establish the conceptual underpinning discussed in Chapter 1 of this document.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet offers limitless opportunities for both individual expression and collective discussion. Perhaps nowhere is this fact more apparent than in the user-oriented content creation tools that exist on blogs, news sites, and social networking sites. User-based participation tools exist in a variety of forms, including sections attached to specific content items (articles, video clips, audio slideshows, and podcasts) and messageboards/web forums which allow for interpersonal discourse on user-determined topics. However, little effort to empirically categorize the types of user-based content generation tools currently employed on the Internet exists. Furthermore, few researchers have investigated the motivations and gratifications underscoring content creation and even fewer have sought to examine the impact that Internet self-efficacy plays on users’ ability to generate online content. Without a more thorough understanding of available content creation tools and how and those tools are used, researchers cannot fully appraise the potential applications of content creation in contemporary society.

This literature review organized as follows: The first chapter subsection, titled “User-Based Participation,” identifies trends and literature relevant to creating a broad overview of user-based participation tools currently employed on the Internet. As discussed above, the ability to functionally explore user-based content generation relies heavily on the ability to define current practices in use. The “User-Based Participation” subsection serves as a basis for Phase I of this study, a content analysis which developed categorical definitions and patterns of distribution relating to available content creation tools. Subsequently, observed data was used for of Phase II, a survey concerned with motivation and access factors associated with content generation on blog sites. Thus, this Chapter’s second subsection,
titled “The Blogosphere,” delineates existing, relevant research on blog use demographics, blog trends, and outcomes associated with blogging. Subsections three and four, respectively titled “Uses and Gratifications,” and “Internet Self-Efficacy,” detail literature relevant to Phase II’s theoretical approach to user-based content generation. This chapter’s final subsection, titled “The Present Study,” provides a summary of the current study’s theoretical components and brief discussion of how Phase I and Phase II interact with each other.

**User-Based Participation**

As characterized by Nip (2004), the study of online institutions has noted the significant presence of interactive, consumer-based participation tools, but few works have sought to thoroughly describe such tools. Online, user-based content creation tools have been categorized under a variety of non-standardized monikers that include “Web 2.0” (Miller, 2008; Solomon & Schrum, 2007) utilities, “user-generated content” (Örnebring, 2008; Thurman, 2008) tools and initiatives, and, in a broadened context, online “citizen journalism” (Reich, 2008) tools. However, each of the above characterizations inadequately handles the comprehensive breadth of the user-generated content tools. That is, user-generated content operates in a context that expands beyond the simple classification of journalism and non-journalism institutions, especially as the line of demarcation between these two entities becomes increasingly unclear.

Recognizing a lack of comprehensive, to-date definition relating to user-based content creation tools, this study sought to further define and categorize user-based content creation types. The current approach consisted of two primary tasks. First, an overview of extant commentary and research on various participation types was acquired. Additionally, contemporary news publications, blogs, and general use websites were topically examined. These elements were used to arrive at definitions describing content participation tools and, further, trend-based expectations relating the availability of participation tools. The second task was to test those expectations using an empirical content analysis.

In Thurman’s 2008 study of user-generated participation gateways on web-based UK news services, he identified the following seven types of consumer-based content creation tools: polls, have your says (reader diaries), chat rooms, Q&As, blogs with comments enabled, pre-moderated message boards, and post–moderated message boards. Several
issues negatively impact Thurman’s generalization of content-creation archetypes. First, Thurman’s conception of Q&A and chat room tools boards are a derivative of institutionally-created content, not consumer-based content creation. Second, Thurman does not directly handle the idea of comment sections tied to specific sender-side content. As such article comment tools have been thoroughly implemented by online media entities – and especially so by online news sites, blogs, and social network sites- they must be incorporated into any study seeking to characterize consumer-based content creation. Third, Thurman’s perspective on blogs as a primarily institutionally-inclusive format does not account for the recent and explosive growth of the blogosphere as an element disparate from institutional news sites. Fourth, and finally, Thurman’s model is inherently limited. He investigates only a single, culturally-specific media context (UK News sites) during a period where content creation gateways were, perhaps clumsily, still being integrated into the newspapers’ normalized content regimen.

Using an amended version of Thurman’s study, three forms of content tools were perceived: message boards, reader diaries (called “have your says” by Thurman), and user polls. Amongst others, Reich (2009) identified article comments as a significant user-generated content format. Berstrom (2008) suggested that wikis, or textual bodies that allow for editing by multiple individuals, be conceived as a user-based content tool. Finally, Wales and Weckerle (2009) noted that status updates, or brief, personal updates of day-to-day life, should be considered under the user-generated umbrella.

In order to better investigate existing scholarly research on the various forms of user-generated content, an analysis of available scholarly works was undertaken. The following keywords and associated studies were identified: “Internet message board” (Fung & Chen, 2008; Kleinke, 2008; Macias, Lewis, & Smith, 2005; Rice, 2009; Woo, An, & Cho, 2008); “electronic bulletin board” (Garramone, Harris, & Anderson, 1986; Hyuhn-Suhck & Lee, 2004; James & Wotring, 1995; Lee, Cheng, & Abbott, 2008; Nip, 2004; Roberts, Wanda, & Dzwo, 2002); “Internet forum” (DeSouza & Dutton, 2008; Kaigo & Watanabe, 2007; Scodari, 1998; Shubo, 2010; Tanner, 2001; Wu, 2008; Zheng & Detenber, 2009); “reader polls” (Thurman, 2008); “article comment section” (Bergström, 2008; Blood, 2002; Dahlberg, 2001; Papacharissi, 2001; Roberts-Miller, 2004; Strome-Galley, 2003; Zheng, Tremayne, Lee, & Jeong, 2008); “wiki” (Aikat, 2009; Black, Wesler, DeGroot, & Cosely,
Additionally, broader descriptive terms such as “user-generated content” (Bingqi & Han, 2009; Brand & Finn, 2009; Chen, 2008; Hartley, 2008; Leung, 2009; Singer & Ashman, 2009; Storm, 2007; Thurman, 2008; van Dijck, 2009; Wales & Weckerle, 2009; Wilson, 2006) and “web 2.0” (Beer, 2009; Bughin-Mckinsey, 2008; Cammaerts, 2008; Gauntlett, 2009; Harrison & Barthel, 2009; Howard, 2008; Massanari, 2009; Paus-Hasebrink, Wijen, & Jachen, 2010) were identified.

Furthermore, a peripheral survey of major news and information websites, blog sites, and other websites indicates that user-generated participation tools have been widely implemented. For example, forms of consumer-generated participatory gateways exist on the website of every US-based national news organization, including (among a much larger list of national and regional news sources): www.nytimes.com (the online edition of The New York Times), www.washingtonpost.com (the online edition of The Washington Post), www.latimes.com (the online edition of The Los Angeles Times), www.online.wsj.com (the online edition of The Wall Street Journal), www.usatoday.com (the online edition of USA Today), www.cnn.com (the online home of CNN), www.msnbc.nbc.com (the online home of MSNBC), and www.foxnews.com (the online home of Fox News). Major blogging platforms available from Wordpress (www.wordpress.com), Blogger (www.blogger.com), and Blogspot (www.blogspot.com) all come with simplistic commenting systems as default publishing feature while popular content websites such Youtube (www.youtube.com), Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com), QQ (www.qq.com) all prominently feature tools allowing user participation.

An initial examination of user-based content generation tools indicates relatively little variance in the ways such tools are employed by individual websites. However, almost no empirical evidence supporting this observation exists. Additionally, very little is known about the frequency in which specific content creation tools are offered by website owners. Bergström (2008) anecdotally suggested that article comment tools and messageboards appear most frequently. Certainly, the claim that article comments and messageboards are the most frequently observed content creation tools holds face validity, it is nonetheless important to empirically verify it. Given this lack of reliable data, an integral part of this
study was to identify - for the basis of subsequent definition, scale construction, and trend-mapping - the application of user-based content creation regimens within a broad, Internet-wide context. The question at hand, of course, is basic but nonetheless important: what web-based tools are available for content creation?

**The Blogosphere**

Blogs subsist under an array of definitions and modalities (Thompson, 2003). As defined by Nanno, Yasuhiro, Toshiaki, and Manabu (2004), blogs were initially understood to be personal or non-commercial web pages produced using web publishing tools; however, recent trends have seen corporate entities increasingly incorporate blogs into their communication regimens (e.g. Cho & Huh, 2007; Dearstyne, 2005; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Menzie & Keyton, 2007; Will & Porak, 2000). Most blog sites display content in chronological order and feature dynamic information updates by the blog owner or other participating individuals (Weil, 2003). Other features of blogs include incorporation of links to other blog sites, news articles, and online content (Singer, 2005), archive-oriented structure (Cho & Huh, 2007) which allows for functionally straightforward response to posted content (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005), frequent multimedia content updates (Li & Walejko, 2008; Schmidt, 2007), instant publishing mechanisms which work both cohesively and disparately with the mainstream media (Weil, 2003; Li & Walejko, 2008), and community-oriented commenting and content creation futures (e.g. Aikat, 2009; Doring, 2002; Ellcessor, 2009; Hodkinson, 2006; MacDougall, 2005; Nardi et al, 2004; Schmidt, 2007; Wei, 2004). Unlike traditional news entities, blogs tend to have a pronounced focus on comparatively esoteric topics and, as noted by Drezner and Farrell (2004), play host to number of topical interests, including political commentary and analysis, sports commentary, celebrity gossip, technical discussion, and personal narratives.

Given their topical breadth, it is perhaps unsurprising that blogs occupy an increasingly significant portion of the online spectrum. A 2004 Pew Internet and American Life Project estimated that over 8 million Americans had created blogs and more than 32 million Americans read blogs (Rainie, 2005). Lanosaga (2008) noted that the New York Times first mentioned blogging in 2000; in the 2007 calendar year, the newspaper carried over 500 stories on blogs and blogging technology. In 2008, Technocrati
(www.technocrati.com), a blog search and meta-index engine, tracked and estimated 133 million blogs worldwide, totaling approximately 900,000 daily posts. The diffusion of blogs has been assisted, in part, by a number of factors, including ease of creation (Dearstyne, 2005), reduced formality and the lack of expense associated with site maintenance (Drezner & Farrell, 2004). These factors, in combination, have led to the blogosphere’s rapid growth (Thompson, 2003). Nearly all to-date empirical blog research has focused on the blogosphere’s broadcasting role (Doring, 2002). However, the current research has clearly identified that the presence of reader-based content creation tools is a primary characteristic of blogs (e.g. Aikat, 2009; Ellcessor, 2009; Schmidt, 2007; Wei, 2004). Thus, the lack of knowledge regarding user-based content generation inhibits wider understanding of both the blogosphere and the potentiality of user-based content to positively impact public discourse. Amongst others, Lee (2006) and Kaye (2005) have suggested that those creating content on blogs may share similar characteristics, both demographically and psychologically, with blog owners. Thus, in order to profile users of content creation tools on blogs, characteristics of blog owners have been identified.

**Bloggers**

According to a 2009 Pew Internet Report on Social Media and Young Adults, 14 percent of online teens in America own blogs, 15 percent of online 18 – 30 year olds own blogs, and 11 percent of those 30 and over own blogs. Taken as a whole, blog owners tend to be younger and digitally connected (Fox, 2004) with over 54 percent of bloggers aged 30 or younger (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). However, with the Internet’s thorough integration into society, an increasing proportion of older adults have adopted blogging (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2009; Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Hargittai and Walejko (2008) found that level of education is positively related to creative content generation and web posting. Kaye (2005) noted that bloggers tend to be young, male, and have high incomes and high levels of self-efficacy. Additionally, Kovic, Lulic, and Brumini (2008) profiled bloggers as white, male, highly educated, and heavily invested in their blogs.

Regarding personal blog importance, the 2009 Technocrati State of the Blogosphere report indicated that a vast majority of bloggers self-identify themselves as “hobbyists” who neither make money from their blog nor have strong motivations to turn their blogging into a
money-generating enterprise and instead actively seek personal satisfaction and personal expression as capital. Moreover, the Technocrati report noted that bloggers were invested in blogging about current events; were likely to describe their blogging tone as sincere, conversational, expert, humorous, and/or journalistic; and that bloggers “blogged” in order to meet and connect with like-minded people, in order to share their expertise with others, and in order to speak their mind in an area of interest.

Nardi, Schiano, Gumbright, and Swartz (2004) found that blog owners are motivated to both articulate ideas through writing and form/maintain community forums for ongoing discussion. Huffaker and Calvert (2005) theorized that blog owners are cognitively active in their primary state. Research has, further, indicated that blog owners place significant emotional value in user-generated commentary (Haas, Trump, Gerhards, & Klingler, 2007; Haferkamp & Krämer 2008); that blog owners value sub-cultural community participation (Hodkinson, 2006; Wei, 2004); and that blog owners tend to be consumers of other blogs within the blogosphere (Miura & Yamashita, 2007). In fact, Meraz (2006) posited that blog networks function as interpersonal communication devices.

As noted, little research relating to user-generated content on blogs exists. Trammel (2005), as part of a broader study, noticed that commenters were active participants in hierarchical communities. Ellcessor (2009) posited that blog community members were likely to mimic the tone and perspective of the blog owner. Nonetheless, significant knowledge gaps persist. Given that research on blog commenters is limited, an exploratory model of blogosphere-oriented user-generated content participants and their motivations can be built through the inductive ad hoc utilization of extant knowledge regarding blog owners as producers. Therefore, in the current study, the expectation is that those creating content on blogs will tend to be white, male, comparatively younger, actively invested in content creation, and in possession of high levels of Internet self-efficacy.

Sport fandom, as represented in the mass media, is generally understudied as researchers primarily tend to focus on issues perceived to have greater social implications. Indeed, current blog-oriented research focuses primarily on political subjects (Ekdale, Kang, Fung, & Perlmutter, 2010). However, sport occupies significant space in the public conscious (Cummins, 2009) and has a far-reaching impact on cultural and economic arenas (e.g. Fast, Heath, & Wu, 2009; Gamache, 2009; Wenner, 2007) and thus merits substantive
examination. The study of sport fandom in contemporary media is also meaningful from psychological perspectives. Stewart and Lacassagne (2005) perceived strong group identifications among international sports fan groups while Kassing and Sanderson (2009) identified a host of parasocial interactions in fan postings on a website devoted to professional cyclist, Floyd Landis. Therefore, there exists a strong impetus for the ongoing study of sports fandom, especially in digitally emergent contexts such as blogging.

**Sports Blogs**

Sports are a popular blog subject. In fact, approximately 720,000 Americans maintain sports blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Oates and Pauly (2007) argued that sports coverage does not fundamentally differ from other forms of reporting and, indeed, impacts the moral and ethical discourse underlying democratic culture. Although Oates and Pauly do not specifically identify sports bloggers as journalistic agents, a number of researchers have previously connected blogging and journalism roles. For example, Macias, Hilyard, and Freimuth’s 2009 study of post-Hurricane Katrina media coverage found that blogs performed four functions often attributed to newspapers: communication, information, political, and helping. While Fiedler (2009) rightly commented that bloggers have a diminished emphasis on objectivity when compared to their journalist counterparts, he also noted that high profile blogs are increasingly striving for increased standards of professionalism. To wit, review of high-profile sports blogs, such as MGoBlog.com (a high traffic sports blog which covers University of Michigan athletics), indicates an emphasis on factual integrity. News coverage on MGoBlog frequently “outscoops” large regional newspapers also charged with covering University of Michigan athletics such as the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News, resulting in these newspapers occasionally “sourcing” MGoBlog. Moreover, MGoBlog’s coverage often takes the traditional media to task, offering fact-based analysis aimed at correcting problematic statements made by the mainstream media. While, certainly, MGoBlog’s tone is less formal than its newspaper counterparts, this is a difference in practice rather than function.

A second, but perhaps equally important dimension of sports blogging lies in its facilitation of community development and discussion. Sports fandom, in a general sense, lends itself to community participation and the formation of group relationships (Eastman &
Riggs, 1994). Since fan bases are often geographically disparate, Internet-oriented platforms – especially user communities on sports blogs - offer an ideal way to connect with other fans. In Hugenberg, Haradakis, and Earnheardt’s 2008 examination of sports’ fans identity construction on messageboards, fans used screen names, avatars, and signature lines to both identify themselves as fans and differentiate themselves from members of opposing fan bases. Furthermore, within identified fan groups, hierarchical elements emerged. Fans attempted to gain credibility by presenting themselves as longstanding fans and disparaged “bandwagon” fans who were perceived as less loyal and, thus, less vital members of the fan community. Using MGoBlog again as an example, community members are allowed to positively or negatively assign points to other members on the basis of their created content. Thus, those with higher point totals take on a more significant communal role while those with low or negative point values are clearly identified as less valuable members of the community.

In sum, available research indicates that sports blogs are a place for news and information. Fans turn to sports blogs to read both informational and persuasive pieces written about their rooting interests. Accordingly, it is theorized here that fans use available content-generation tools to form and maintain fan communities, which are defined by both members’ common rooting interest and hierarchical community roles.

The Uses and Gratifications Approach

The uses and gratifications approach is generally attributed to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch’s 1974a “Uses and Gratifications Research,” which suggested that media users play an active role in identifying and using media to fulfill social or psychological needs. However, as noted by McQuail (1983), inquiry into the motivations that propel media consumption is almost as old as the study of mass communication itself. The uses and gratifications approach, as formal body of theory, began to gain traction during the 1930’s (Ruggiero, 2000) as part of the motives research paradigm (White, 1994). The approach was further developed in the 1940’s (e.g. Lasswell, 1948) as researchers retrospectively analyzed the various propagandized media techniques employed during the Second World War (Ruggiero, 2000).
Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch’s (1974b) discussions established five constructs which delineated the relationship between the media and the media consumer. In their summarized form, the researchers conceived an active audience which identifies specific media for the purposes of gratifications achievement; that the audience, through its initiative in making media consumption choices, has vis-à-vis power with the media; that the media and non-mediated sources compete for individual gratifications achievement; that methodologies employing audience self-identification of data are useful in the achievement of research goals; and that value judgments regarding levels of cultural significance resultant from media functions are not always immediately apparent. Quite obviously, the uses and gratifications approach was and continues to exist in direct contrast to the hypodermic needle paradigm (e.g. Berger, 1995; Casmir, 1994; Katz & Lazarsfield, 1955; Schramm, 1963), which suggests that media have the ability to directly manipulate a mostly passive audience.

Because the uses and gratifications approach does not focus solely on exposure, it offers a useful framework for evaluating media use by audiences. As discussed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974b) uses and gratifications focuses on “(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media…which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure…resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences” (p. 20). Subsequently, Rubin (1984) identified two types of media use: ritualized and instrumental. Rubin posited that ritualized use indicated less selectivity and involvement than instrumental use thereby suggesting that audience activity is a crucial “intervening variable in media uses and effects” (Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006, p. 760). Moreover, researchers have posited a differential link between audience disposition, media activities, and realized media effects (e.g. Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Haridakis & Rubin, 2003). Today, the uses and gratifications approach functions as a psychological perspective that examines how people use mass media, focusing on both factors for use and outcomes of use (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2004).

Uses and gratifications research has been applied heuristically. In fact, researchers have employed the uses and gratifications perspective to explore nearly every media type, including music/radio listening (e.g. Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson & Schiller, 1978; Hall, 2007; Koneci, Wanic & Brown, 2007; Morton & Koufteros, 2008; Rubin & Step, 2000),
television (e.g. Hill, 2005; Perse, 1990; Perse, 1996; Rubin, 1981; Roe & Minnebo, 2007), literature (e.g. Green, Garst & Brock, 2004; Pramswarn, 1999), cellular phones (e.g. Leung and Wei, 2000) and the Internet (e.g. Coleman, Lieber, Mendelson, & Kurpius, 2008; Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Kink & Hess, 2008; Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008; Rains, 2007; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008). Due to the Internet’s diverse array of content and presentation availability, the uses and gratifications approach is an especially useful investigative perspective in the current study.

**Motives for Use**

The uses and gratifications approach dictates that individuals use Internet-based media to fulfill a range of psychological needs (e.g. Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). In their multivariate analysis of Internet usage, Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) postulated that seven factors influence the use of Internet: escapism, transactional security and privacy, surveillance, interactive control, socialization, non-transactional privacy, and economic motivation. Within this set of seven influence variables, the authors further discerned that information seeking and socialization/escapism are the two primary factors that most influence Internet usage. Similarly, a study of adolescents and young adults, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) identified five motives for use of the Internet: interpersonal utility, passing time, convenience, information seeking, and entertainment. As the application of the uses and gratifications approach within the online context has matured, some of the most frequently discerned motivations for use include enjoyment (e.g. Hwang, 2005; LaRose & Eastin, 2002; Lee, 2004; Leung, 2009), passing time (e.g. Beatty, 2006; Sheldon, 2008; Strizhakova, 2006) information-giving and information acquisition (e.g. Chung & Kim, 2007; Sweester & Kaid, 2008; Tustin, 2010; Wei, 2009) parasocial functions (e.g. Beatty, 2006; Stern, 2004; Thorson & Rodgers, 2005), interpersonal functions (e.g. Beaudoin, 2008; Keaten & Kelly, 2008; Ramirez, Dimmick, Feaster, & Shu-Fang, 2008) community participation (e.g. Choi, Watt, Dekkers, & Park, 2004; Farquhar & Meeds, 2007; Ginossar, 2005; Nambisan & Watt, 2004), and self-expression (e.g. Li, 2007; Trammell, 2005; Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006).

In fact, community participation motives have emerged as an important component of online uses and gratifications research. For example, LaRose and Eastin (2002) found that
social outcomes served as a predictor of Internet use. In a study of Internet addiction, Song, LaRose, Eastin, & Lin (2004) identified the “virtual community” (p. 384) gratification and causally linked such gratification to addiction levels among heavy Internet users. Similarly, Raack and Bonds-Raake (2008) examined the gratifications received by college students utilizing social networking sites and discerned a tangible body of gratification achievement. Rafeali, Ariel, and Hayat’s 2007 study of Wikipedia’s community aspects found that knowledge sharing, reputation as a subject matter expert, intellectual engagement, and enjoyment motives all played a role in online community congealment. In their study of why users read, write, and comment on blogs, Haferkamp and Krämer (2008) noted that users employ interactive tools on blogs in order to provide feedback, or furnish expressive commentary on producer-side content.

Significantly, Sun, Rubin and Haridakis (2008) posited that character traits and, subsequently, motivation for gratifications acquisition play a more significant role in explaining Internet use than demographic factors. However, examination of online activity has identified a set of prohibitive factors, which impact the ability to actually pursue Internet-based gratification achievement. Bronson and Lee (1998), in their international analysis of gender differences relating to Internet use, argued that the lack of computer self-efficacy (confidence in using computers to accomplish tasks) and computer anxiety (anxiety and negative feelings towards computers) have negative impacts on computer use and web-based participation. LaRose and Eastin (2002) further developed the role of Internet self-efficacy in online participation when they discerned that self-efficacy levels functioned as a predictor of online attendance.

**Internet Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy has historically been considered a component of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory primarily seeks to relate learning mechanisms to effects-side mediated outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Bandura 1986; Bandura, 1989). Specifically, social cognitive theory posits a discernable and reciprocal relationship among individuals, behavior, and environment (LaRose & Eastin, 2002). Extrapolated, observation of others’ behavior codifies individual behavioral outcomes, thereby overlaying personal experiences with observed experiences. In their aggregate, Bandura’s numerous iterations of the social
cognitive theory enable the theory to be construed, in part, as an accessibility framework. Specifically, self-efficacy – defined as an individual’s confidence in his or her ability to execute courses of action necessary to affect given attainments (Bandura, 1997) – theorizes that individuals are significantly more motivated to behaviorally engage in activities in which they feel they have a high probability for success.

Four primary variables directly impact self-efficacy, including experience within the specified modality, modeling, social persuasion, and physiological function (Bandura, 1996). Each component underlying self-efficacy plays a substantive role in resultant cognitive, metacognitive, and psycho-motor mechanisms (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998). As noted by Erikson (1970), individuals with substantiated mastery experience have higher material levels of self-efficacy and tend to incur long term ego accrual through meaningful accomplishment. Moreover, as an affective force, self-efficacy is inherently tied to motivation. Bandura (1997) postulated that motivation is likely to be stronger if the individual believes he or she can attain their goals.

Self-efficacy exists in both general and context-specific forms. Internet self-efficacy is fundamentally concerned with the specific outcomes that an individual user believes he or she can accomplish via the Internet. Eastin and LaRose (2000) noted that Internet self-efficacy does not refer to the individual’s ability to perform Internet related tasks (e.g. writing HTML or transferring files) but instead assesses his or her judgment of their ability to perform tasks such as finding information or troubleshooting search engine problems. High self-efficacy levels have primarily been discerned in younger users (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). A number of researchers, including Bandura (1997), Eastin and LaRose (2000) and Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), have posited that Internet self-efficacy is a substantive predictor of Internet use. Likewise, previous research (e.g. Atkin, Jeffries, & Neuendorf, 1998; Donthu, 1999; Sun et al., 2008) has also concluded that the absence of Internet self-efficacy inhibits computer use, and can thus be seen as limiting forces when it comes to Internet involvement.

Internet self-efficacy has been applied within a number of investigative frameworks, including learning-based technologies (e.g. Chou & Tsai, 2002; Chu & Tsai, 2009; Coffin & MacIntyre, 1999; Dinet, Marguet & Nissen, 2003; Lane, Lane & Kyprianou, 2004; Metzger, Flanagan, Zwarun, 2003; Peng, Tsai & Wu, 2006; Simmering, Posey & Piccoli, 2009), news
and information seeking activities (e.g. Curry, 2007; Kaye, 2005; Ford, Miller, Moss, 2005; Hals & Tewksbury, 2006; Hargittai, 2009), and parasocial activities (e.g. Cheong, 2008; Ho, Lee & Hameed, 2008; Mishra, Nicholson, & Wojcikiewicz, 2001). Generally speaking, to-date research has indicated a relationship between goal-oriented behavior and Internet self-efficacy (e.g. Bandura, 1995; Bandura, 2001; Pajares & Schunk, 2002).

Some disagreement exists on whether Internet self-efficacy is an antecedent variable or a moderating variable (Bucy & Tao, 2006). As an antecedent variable, there exists the expectation that Internet self-efficacy plays a significant role in determining goal setting and motivation to obtain expected outcomes (LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001). Conversely, as a moderating variable, Internet self-efficacy is theorized as organizing the ways that the individual responds to “environmental stimuli rather than to predict outcomes” (Bucy & Tao, 2006, p.8). Stated more succinctly, moderator variables, still conceived as independent variables, are primarily concerned with the conditions under which a hypothesized relationship will vary in strength or direction (Tao & Bucy, 2005). Current research perspectives suggest that Internet self-efficacy is mostly seen as an antecedent variable; nonetheless, some extant research indicates that the moderating outlook has empirical validity (e.g. Eveland, Marton, & Seo, 2004; Tremayne & Dunwoody, 2001). Keeping with the thrust of contemporary research, Internet self-efficacy is here conceptualized as an antecedent variable. However, acceptance of Internet self-efficacy as an antecedent variable is not tacit rejection of it as a conditional variable. Instead, as a nascent study, the current effort sought to keep with the thrust of current research on self-efficacy and employ it as a predecessor variable.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study consisted of two primary components. Phase I sought to empirically identify the deployment of user-based content generation tools. As noted, researchers have studied content creation tools in isolation but have otherwise failed to examine their general availability. Phase I therefore had three primary goals: (1) to determine which content generation tools were most readily available; (2) to determine how generated content was moderated by website owners; and (3) to compare the availability of content generation tools across website types (e.g. blogs, news sites). Phase I of this study was
necessitated for two reasons. First, asking content creators to indicate their creation patterns without first having a substantive understanding of what content creation tools are actually available limits the value associated with the present study. Second, establishing whether the deployment of content generation tools differs between site types determined the scope of this study. If, for instance, blogs were identified as deploying content-generation tools in a manner disparate from news sites, results observed in Phase II would be primarily applicable to the blogosphere. However, if it can be established that websites generally use content creation in the same manner and function, a more “global” scope is assumed. In connection with Phase I, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: Are content creation tools employed differently across blogs, news, and general use websites?
RQ2: Which content creation tools are most commonly employed?
RQ3: How is moderation employed?

Phase II of the present study involved examination of the antecedent variables associated with content generation of college sports-themed blog sites. As described in Figure 1, two basic constructs were identified: the uses and gratifications approach was used to identify motivations for creation while Internet self-efficacy was used to describe access to content creation tools.

Figure 1. Basic Theorized Model for Content Creation.
In connection with Phase II, the following research questions and hypotheses were posed:

RQ4: Will motivation for use scales correlate with each other?

RQ5: Will content generation motivations have a relationship with frequency of blog readership?

RQ6: Will content generation motivations have a relationship with the frequency that users read content created by other blog users?

RQ7: Will frequency of content generation have a relationship with frequency of readership of content created by other users?

RQ8: Will frequency of content generation and blog readership have a relationship?

H1: There will be a positive relationship between generation of user-content and self-identified motivations will be observed; that is, content generators will indicate active engagement as possessing a discernable correlation to content creation.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between Internet self-efficacy levels and content generation frequency.

H3: User-identified motivations and Internet self-efficacy will function together as positive predictors of content creation.

H4: There will be a positive relationship between reading blogs and reading content created by other blog users.

Chapter 3 provides discussion relating to the operationalization of Research Questions 1 through and 8 and Hypothesis 1 through 4.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section introduces and discusses the methodology employed by the current study. Notably, two empirical designs were used – a content analysis and a survey. Accordingly, the Phase I subsection discusses the content analysis employed by the current study and the Phase II subsection discusses the survey employed by the current study.

INTRODUCTION

As the current study utilized both a descriptive content analysis and a psychometric-item survey, this Chapter 3, “Research Design and Methodology,” discusses two distinct methodological procedures. Phase I sought to describe participatory gateways currently present on websites via empirical content analysis. Phase II used a survey to identify psychological motivations and barriers for content creation on participatory gateways such as those identified in Phase I. As such, this chapter is divided into two primary sections: Phase I, which describes the methodological operationalization underlying this study’s use of content analysis and Phase II, which describes the methodological operationalization underlying this study’s use of a survey tool.

PHASE I: CONTENT ANALYSIS

In order to further investigate the current availability of user-generated content creation tools, a content analysis was undertaken.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Content creation tools such as article comments, messageboards, reader diaries, and wikis allow readers to directly and explicitly participate in mediated conversations which they may have been historically unable to, thereby empowering average citizens to share their voices (Leung, 2009). However, prior research has failed to arrive at any empirical understanding of what content creation tools are actually available to media consumers and, further, if these content creation tools differ significantly across website modalities.
Accordingly, Phase I of this study compared the uses and availability of content generation tools across website types, discerned those content creation tools which appear most frequently, and explored how moderation of user-generated commentary is managed.

**Research Questions**

Three research questions associated with Phase I were identified. These research questions are stated below:

- **RQ1**: Are content creation tools employed differently across blogs, news, and general use websites?
- **RQ2**: Which content creation tools are most commonly employed?
- **RQ3**: How is moderation employed?

Since the problem elucidated by Phase I of the current study lacked clear theoretical relevancy and was primarily descriptive in nature, no hypotheses were posited.

**Definition of the Sample and Coded Elements**

As the ways that content generation tools are used on different website configurations was of great interest to the present study, three categorical definitions were used to define blogs, news sites, and general use sites. Using available literature, the following definitions were established: News sites were identified as those sites which function as the online arm of an established news organization and outwardly feature “facticity and neutrality” (Lowrey & Mackay, 2008, p.67) as a primary professional ideology (McQuail, 2005; Soloski, 1997); Blogs were identified as those sites that display content in chronological order (Gil de Zuniga, 2009) and feature dynamic information updates by the blog owner or other participating individuals (Weil, 2003); General use sites were identified as those sites that do not fit into institutional media, blog, or social networking site categories. General use sites encompass a number of subjects ranging from corporate interest to online shopping to topical/informational. Included in the general use category were social networking sites. Social networking sites were identified as those sites that allow users to create a profile and connect with other users in order to form a social network (Pew Research, 2007).

The sample of newspaper websites was identified using Alexa (www.alexa.com), a popular web traffic ranking source. The 10 most popular newspaper websites (companions
to print-based media) were selected. Newspaper websites were defined as those “sites which function as the online arm of an established news organization and outwardly feature “facticity and neutrality” (Lowrey & Mackay, 2008, p.67) as a primary professional ideology (McQuail, 2005; Soloski, 1997).”

The sample of general use websites included was selected using Alexa to identify the 10 most popular general use websites. General use websites were defined as those sites that do not fit into institutional newspaper or blog site categories. General use sites encompass a number of subjects ranging from corporate interest to online shopping to topical/informational. This sample included popular social network sites such as Facebook and Myspace. Notably, websites such as blogger.com and wordpress.com were also included in the general use category as they functioned as general use websites rather than independently operated blogs.

The sample of popular blogs to study was selected using Technocrati (www.technocrati.com), a blog traffic ranking resource, to identify the ten most popular blog sites. Blogs were defined as those sites “sites which display content in chronological order (Gil de Zuniga, 2009) and feature dynamic information updates by the blog owner or other participating individuals (Weil, 2003). Traffic rankings, as culled from Technocrati, were based upon data reported on January 31, 2010.

Finally, 52 college sports blogs were contacted with inquires relating to participation in the study. 26 blogs initially expressed interest in participation and terms of the study were negotiated over a three week period. After discussing the terms and conditions of study participation, 16 blogs provided final, written interest to take part in the survey portion (Phase II) of the study. College sports blog which agreed to participate in Phase II of the study were included in Phase I analysis in order to investigate whether or not the content creation tools employed by the surveyed college sports blogs were similar, in archetypal availability, to those content creation tools generally made available to readers of other popular news, web and blog sites.

In sum, 46 blogs and websites were identified for coding. Using available research, six primary content creation tools were identified: messageboards, article comment sections, reader diaries, wikis, and status updates. A complete listing of the blogs and websites coded as Part of Phase I of this study are presented in Table 1.
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Additionally, the explicit, site-provided ability to place broadcasted content on social networking sites (including the increasingly popular www.twitter.com) was identified as a discussion facilitator and therefore coded. Definitions for each coded content creation tool are offered below:

Messageboards: Also referred to as “online forums,” “forums,” or “electronic bulletin boards,” messageboards were defined as “interactive” (Bachen et al, 2008, p. 294) tools that allow for unprompted, user-generated topical text generation for the purposes of encouraging subsequent, topical conversation (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009) between users.

Article comment sections: Article comment sections were defined as interactive (Zheng et al, 2008) access portals which allow for conversational discourse (Blood, 2002) in response to producer-side content.

Reader diaries: Reader diaries were defined as tools which allow unprompted text generation on topical bodies of the user’s choice. Reader diaries are designed to encourage longer forms of text generation than other access portals. Reader diaries may or may not allow other users to comment on posted content.

Wikis: Wikis were defined as access portals which allow text construction and subsequent multi-user text editing (Rachel & Stephens, 2007) and/or text generation via a web interface.

Status updates: Status update tools were defined as those tools which allow users to post short, often informal “updates” regarding an array of topics, including personal observations, activities, and items of interest. Status updates were primarily conceived as a social networking component and, thus, provided content was defined as primarily personal in nature.
User surveys: User survey tools were defined as non-scientific opinion polling tools which allow for topical questions to be posed by the producing entity to readers. Response categories to these questions include either a binary or multiple choice response categories.

Links to external social networking sites: Although not an internal content creation tool, links to external social networking sites (Myspace, Facebook, and Twitter), were judged as relevant to the current study because they allowed for users to discuss produced content. Thus, links to external social networking sites were defined as tools which allowed for readers to directly link articles to their profiles on Myspace, Facebook, and/or Twitter for discussion purposes.

Upon defining content creation tools, moderation of content created via those tools was examined. Through the reduction of harmful or repetitive messages (Wise, Hamman, & Thorson, 2006), moderators can create an environment that encourages a specific type or types of participation (Nonnecke, Preece, & Andrews 2006). Two primary moderation types were identified:

Pre-moderation: User content is not published until it has been manually approved by an entity representative. May or may not contain flagging tools allowing users to subsequently mark material as inappropriate.

Post-moderation: User content is published without any prior, active moderation by entity representatives. Flagging tools, used for “flagging” offensive or otherwise harmful content (Berge & Collins, 2000), are present.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Each of the following items were coded: type of site, whether users needed a static username to participate/whether users could participate anonymously, whether user surveys were present on the coded site, whether messageboards were present on the coded site, whether article comments were allowed for on the coded site, whether reader diaries were present on the coded site, whether wikis were present on the coded site, whether status updates were allowed for on the coded site, and whether the coded site encouraged users to share articles on Facebook, Myspace, or Twitter.

Due to their practical availability on websites, three content creation tools were specifically coded for moderation type (pre-moderated or post-moderated): article comments,
messageboards, and reader diaries. Coding accounted only for instance observed (coded as 1) or non-instance observed (coded as 0); number of times items were present on a given site was not coded for.

Two graduate students at San Diego State University performed all coding procedures. In order to ensure consistent and reliable coding of the population selected, researchers conducted approximately five hours of training sessions. First, researchers gathered and determined the coding parameters, which included creating the coding tally sheets, determining the operational definitions for each coded categories, and identifying what demographic information would be recorded for each piece of content. As suggested by Neundorf (2002) and Lacy and Riffe (1996), intercoder reliability was conducted on 3 separate items, comprising 42 units. While average pairwise agreement (89.8 percent), Scott’s Pi (77.8 percent), Krippendorf’s Alpha (78.1 percent) and Cohen’s Kappa (71.9 percent) were judged as moderately reliable (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002), problematic items were identified, discussed and operationally redefined in the final application of the coding rules.

**Intercoder Reliability**

As prescribed by Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998), final intercoder reliability was assessed by overlapping approximately 10 percent \( n = 5 \) of the coded sample \( n = 46 \) wherein the two coders each coded a common subset of the data. 70 total units were analyzed. Items were randomly selected from the sample. Intercoder reliability levels were calculated by conducting comparative analysis on each individual artifact and then calculating the average percent agreement. Online software ReCal was used to determine intercoder reliability levels. Intercoder reliability levels are presented in Table 2. Regarding acceptable reliability levels, Lombard (2004) noted that coefficients above .90 are almost always acceptable, coefficients above .80 are acceptable in most situations, and coefficients above .70 are acceptable for exploratory work. Further, as suggested by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2002), higher criteria (e.g. pairwise agreement) should be used for liberal items while lower criteria (e.g. Scott’s Pi, Krippendorf’s Alpha, Cohen’s Kappa) should be used for conservative items. All demonstrated reliability levels were judged to be acceptable as even more conservative measures still possessed coefficients above .90.
Table 2. Intercoder Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Number</th>
<th>Average Pairwise Agreement</th>
<th>Scott’s Pi</th>
<th>Krippendorf's Alpha</th>
<th>Cohen’s Kappa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PHASE II: SURVEY

The second phase of the present study involved the operationalization, distribution, and analysis of a quantitative survey. As described below, the survey was distributed to readers of 16 college sports-themed blogs.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Despite the widespread availability of content creation tools, psychological aspects associated with the utilization of these tools has been understudied. Therefore Phase II of the present study employed an online survey to accomplish three primary goals: First, demographic characteristics and frequency of use patterns were identified. Second, self-reported motivations for using content creation tools were acquired. Third, the present study measured the Internet self-efficacy levels of blog readers who described themselves as both content and non-content creators. In sum, it was theorized that motivations and the psychological ability to mechanically use content creation tools – here conceived as Internet self-efficacy – would function together as antecedent variables predicting content creation frequency.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Utilizing the above-described theoretical perspectives, the following research questions and hypotheses were posited in conjunction with Phase II of the present study:
RQ4: Will motivation for use scales correlate with each other?
RQ5: Will content generation motivations have a relationship with frequency of blog readership?
RQ6: Will content generation motivations have a relationship with the frequency that users read content created by other blog users?
RQ7: Will frequency of content generation have a relationship with frequency of readership of content created by other users?
RQ8: Will frequency of content generation and blog readership have a relationship?

H1: There will be a positive relationship between generation of user-content and self-identified motivations will be observed; that is, content generators will indicate active engagement as possessing a discernable correlation to content creation.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between Internet self-efficacy levels and content generation frequency.

H3: User-identified motivations and Internet self-efficacy will function together as positive predictors of content creation.

H4: There will be a positive relationship between reading blogs and reading content created by other blog users.

Participants

The data for this study was collected via online survey. Prior to survey deployment, the San Diego State Institutional Review Board granted project approval. The online tool SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) was used. 52 blogs were contacted for participation in this study. 27 blogs provided initial interest regarding to participation. After the terms and conditions of the study were thoroughly discussed with interested participants, 16 blogs agreed to participate. Each of the participating blogs was a college-sports themed blog as the principal investigator had pre-existing access to the community and could ensure significant levels of participation by both blog owners and blog readers. Table 3 lists the blog sites which facilitated survey delivery.

Blog owners agreed to post a link to the survey on their front page, along with a brief memo to readers describing the study, on Monday, December 14, 2009. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, blog owners were asked to make at least one reference to the survey as part of their regular content broadcast regimen. The survey was active for a seven-day period from December 14, 2009 to December 21, 2009.
Table 3. Blog Websites Facilitating Survey Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog Name</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barking Carnival</td>
<td><a href="http://barkingcarnival.fantake.com/">http://barkingcarnival.fantake.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnt Orange Nation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.burntorangenation.com/">http://www.burntorangenation.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clone Chronicles</td>
<td><a href="http://www.clonechronicles.com/">http://www.clonechronicles.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest Chronicles</td>
<td><a href="http://www.conquestchronicles.com/">http://www.conquestchronicles.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Nation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cornnation.com/">http://www.cornnation.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CougCenter</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cougcenter.com/">http://www.cougcenter.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawg Sports</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dawgsports.com/">http://www.dawgsports.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGoBlog</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mgoblog.com/">http://www.mgoblog.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgofootball</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mgofootball.com/">http://www.mgofootball.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange and Brown</td>
<td><a href="http://orangeandbrown.blogspot.com">http://orangeandbrown.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Auburner</td>
<td><a href="http://theauburner.com/">http://theauburner.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ralphie Report</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ralphiereport.com/">http://www.ralphiereport.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomahawk Nation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tomahawknation.com/">http://www.tomahawknation.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Nunes is an Absolute Magician</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nunesmagician.com/">http://www.nunesmagician.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Will Always Have Tempe</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wewillalwayshavetempe.com/">http://www.wewillalwayshavetempe.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolverine Liberation Army</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wewillalwayshavetempe.com/">http://www.wewillalwayshavetempe.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total, 1,994 surveys were started or partially completed. After the survey’s close date, surveys missing four or more responses were deleted to form the sample, resulting in a total of 1,778 survey responses. Respondents who indicated that they did not create content did not answer questions relating to content creation motivations; however, these cases were not coded as missing responses when culling incomplete surveys. Each of the participating blogs facilitated at least one response. MGoBlog readers provided the most survey responses, comprising 57.3 percent (n = 1,018) of the sample. More than 93 percent (n = 1,657) of the participants were male. Respondents were aged between 15 and 85.

The average age of the sample was 32.1 (SD = 10.56) and 49.4 percent (n = 878) of the sample was between 23 and 33 years old. 87.9 percent (n = 1,563) of respondents identified themselves as white. Overall, 66.4 percent (n = 1,180) of the sample classified themselves as full-time professionals while 20.8 percent (n = 369) of the sample classified themselves as full-time students. 49.4 percent (n = 879) of the sample reported earning $60,000.00 or less per year while 15.2 percent (n = 270) reported making over $120,000.00.
per year. Regarding education level, 90.2 percent \( (n = 1,604) \) of the sample reported possessing a bachelor’s degree or higher. Finally, 54.6 percent \( (n = 971) \) of the sample reported creating content at least one day per week, and 97.9 percent \( (n = 1,740) \) of the sample reported reading user-generated content at least once a week.

**Measures**

The survey instrument contained eight questions relating to demographics and patterns of use, 25 questions on motivations for use, and 10 questions relating to Internet self-efficacy. The survey instrument was pilot tested before actual deployment. The pilot test group consisted of the blog moderators/authors who hosted the survey link. Those who participated in the pilot test were asked to identify questions which were ambiguous, repetitive, or generally unclear. As a result of pilot testing, no questions were removed; however two questions relating to motivational factors and one question relating to Internet self-efficacy were modified for clarity. Before taking the survey, respondents read a short introduction to the study. Text comprising the introduction to the study has been provided as Appendix A. Questionnaire Items are provided as Appendix B. Respondent’s scores were the overall means of the items comprising the scales. The stated informed consent waiver is included as Appendix C to this study. The following items were included in the questionnaire:

Motives for use: All questions relating to motivations for use employed a five-point Likert scale where 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 = ‘strongly agree.’ A combination of interpersonal, media, and computer mediated communication motives were utilized. Dimensions included entertainment (e.g. I create content because it’s entertaining), pass time (e.g. I create content when I have nothing better to do), social outcomes (e.g. When I create content I feel like I belong to a group), and critical participation motives (e.g. I often create content to express my disagreements with other users). Since prior research indicates that blog ownership and use possesses parasocial dimensions, an additional, exploratory scale examining respondent’s perceived relationship with and perception of the blog/blog author was incorporated. Dimensions included perception of value (e.g. I feel the author of the blog that referred me to this survey values my creation of content), perception of blog author accessibility (e.g. I feel the author of the blog that referred me to this study is accessible by e-
mail), and comparative blog quality (e.g. I feel that the blog that referred me to this study offers better content than similar coverage offered in the newspaper).

Frequency of Use: Respondents were asked to estimate the number of days they create content a week (e.g. How many days a week do you create content?). Next, a dependency scale was employed which asked respondents to discuss their personal vestment in content creation (e.g. I think about creating content when I’m offline; Creating content on the Internet is part of my usual routine).

Internet Self-Efficacy: All questions relating to Internet self-efficacy employed a five-point Likert scale where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree.” Respondents were asked to respond to an amended, 8 part scale measuring their confidence explaining Internet-related issues (e.g. I feel confident troubleshooting Internet problems), using Internet resources to fix issues (e.g. I feel confident turning to an online discussion group to seek help on Internet-related topics) and understanding of root causes of Internet problems (e.g. I am confident explaining why a task will not run on the Internet).

**Statistical Analysis**

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 16.0. Due to the large sample size, a 99 percent decision rule ($p < .01$) was employed to avoid Type 1 errors. Research in this domain is in its infancy and few reliable measures exist; therefore, for the most part the scales used in the present study were constructed based on a review of extant research and commentary in this area of interest. To test the reliability of these scales both factor analysis and cronbach alpha were employed. Typically, items that significantly decreased reliability were deleted from the analysis but in some cases items were retained because of their theoretical value. Motivations for use and frequency of use variables were analyzed separately from Internet self-efficacy variables in the factor analysis.

Based on Costello and Osborne’s (2005) suggestions for best practices for factor analysis, three analyses for all proposed scales were performed. The first analysis consisted of maximum likelihood extraction, promax rotation, with scree plot for factor retention. Due to the fact that the sample violated the principles of “multivariate normality” (p.2), a principal axis factors analysis consisting of promax rotation plus scree plot for factor inclusion was also employed. A third test consisting of principal component extraction,
varimax rotation, and scree plot for factor inclusion was conducted. In each case, all retained factors had eigen values greater than 1. Despite some criticism of the principal component extraction method (e.g. Bentler & Kano, 1990; Floyd & Widaman, 1995; Ford, MacCallum & Tait, 1986), test three returned the largest number of theoretically consistent factors and was therefore utilized as a guide for scale construction. All subsequent scales were also subject to reliability testing.

The factor analysis run for content creation motivations and frequency of use was exploratory in nature and revealed six factors explaining 47.1 percent of the variance. Factor loadings are provided in Table 4. The social outcomes, critical assessment, perceived author relationship, gatekeeping response, and enjoyment scales were consistent with previous scale constructions (e.g. LaRose & Eastin, 2002) and previous literature. The factor analysis did, however, unexpectedly reveal a personal utility item comprised of frequency-of-use dimensions.

**Table 4 Factor Analysis Loadings for Motivation and Frequency of Use Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Social Outcomes</th>
<th>Critical Assessment</th>
<th>Personal Value</th>
<th>Perceived Relationship with Author</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I create content as a way to get support from others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I create content, I feel like I belong to a group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I create content, I feel like I’m an important part of a community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I create content to maintain relationships I value.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I post content on blogs because it is dramatic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Factor Load</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I create content, I often find myself expressing negative opinions.</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often find myself creating content that has an angry tone.</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often post content on blogs to show my disagreement with other users.</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating content is part of my usual routine.</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many times a week do you create content?</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find myself creating content during the same general time period each day.</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about creating content when I’m not online.</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I create content so that I can pass information on to other people.</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the author of this blog values my readership.</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the author of this blog values my creation of content.</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the author of this blog is available by e-mail.</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I create content because it’s often entertaining.</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I create content on blogs because it’s enjoyable.</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This personal utility item included frequency of use dimensions (e.g. Creating content is part of my usual routine), frequency of use dimensions (e.g. How many times a week do you create content?) and information giving dimensions (e.g. I create content on blogs so that
I can pass information on to other people). In addition, entertainment was as a two-item measurement ($r = .42$). The factor analysis for Internet self-efficacy was confirmatory in nature and resulted in 1 factor which explained 61.2 percent of the variance. Factor loadings are provided in Table 5.

**Table 5. Factor Loadings for Internet Self-Efficacy Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident using words/terms relating to Internet hardware.</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident understanding words/terms relating to Internet software.</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident explaining why a task will not run on the Internet.</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident troubleshooting Internet problems.</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident turning to an online discussion group to seek help on Internet-related topics.</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident using the advanced features of websites I visit.</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All scales were then subjected to reliability testing. Two, pre-existing scales were used: LaRose & Eastin’s (2002) Internet self-efficacy scale had high levels of reliability ($\alpha = .93$) while the social outcomes scale (Eastin & LaRose, 2000) had moderate reliability ($\alpha = .64$). Descriptive statistics for all scales are included in Table 6.

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Scales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean/(SD)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s $\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Outcomes</td>
<td>14.27/(2.89)</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Assessment</td>
<td>7.81/(2.04)</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Value</td>
<td>15.52/(3.85)</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Relationship with Blog Owner</td>
<td>11.78/(3.54)</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>21.18 /(5.53)</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Phase I of the current study used a content analysis to investigate how content creation tools are currently being employed. Using a 95 percent decision rule ($p < .05$), cross tabulations were used to investigate the relationship between participatory gateways and site types (RQ1). Analysis of these relationships yielded only two statistically significant relationships. First, blogs (88.5 percent) were comparatively slightly less likely than news sites (100 percent) to feature links to social networking sites ($\chi^2 = 18.06, d.f. = 2, p < .01$). Second, 20 percent of general use sites had pre-moderated content commenting systems while none of the coded blogs or news sites pre-moderated user comments ($\chi^2 = 7.53, d.f. = 2, p < .05$). The frequency of content creation tool appearance was also investigated (RQ2). Article comments had the highest frequency of occurrence, with nearly 94 percent ($n = 43$) of all sites allowing users to comment on content. Status updates were the least commonly employed as only two sites – social networking sites Facebook.com and Myspace.com – allowed for users to post status updates (4.3 percent of all sites). Content creation tool appearance frequency by site is depicted in Table 7.

Table 7. Content Creation Tool Appearance Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation Tool</th>
<th>% of Sites in Possession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Comment</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to SNS</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader Diary</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messageboard</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Update</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final component of Phase I included examination of how content moderation was employed (RQ3). Specifically, 3 content creation tools were coded for pre-moderation and post-moderation: article comment sections, messageboards, and reader diaries. As depicted in Table 8, post-moderation was overwhelmingly favored.

However, it was recognized that sites can moderate who creates content, to a lesser degree, by requiring that users create a static, traceable username in order to create content. When coding the data, 2 categories were created for username requirements: static username required to post content and static username not required to post content. Of the 46 sites coded, 45 allowed users to create content while 45 sites, 82.2 percent (n = 37) required users to create a static username while only 17.8 percent (n = 8) allowed users to create content without a static username.

Table 8. Use of Moderation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation Tool</th>
<th>Post-Moderation</th>
<th>Pre-Moderation</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Post-Moderation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Comment</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messageboard</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader Diary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>94.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase II of this study involved surveying blog users for frequency of content creation. H1 predicted a positive relationship between motivations for content generation and content generation. This hypothesis was generally supported. Using zero-order Pearson correlations, all scales except for perceived relationship with blog owner showed some statistically significant correlation with content generation frequency. Correlations are provided in Table 9. Notably, the original conception of the personal value scale item included content creation frequency as a scale item. In order to test personal value with content creation, an amended scale composed of five items was created (Creating content is part of my usual routine; I find
myself creating content during the same general time period each day; I think about creating content when I'm not online; I create content so that I can pass information on to other people). Despite posting low reliability ($\alpha = .55$), the personal value scale was retained in the analysis because content creation frequency was theorized as representing the manifest outcome of a personal emphasis on content generation, whether on or offline.

The second hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between Internet-self efficacy and content generation (H2). This hypothesis was supported. To test the hypothesis, correlations between content creation frequency and the Internet self-efficacy scale were obtained. Results indicated that Internet self-efficacy levels increased, content creation frequency also increased ($r = .14, p < .01; n = 1,736$).

Synthesizing H1 and H2, H3 then predicted that content creation motivations and Internet-self efficacy would function together as positive predictors of content creation (H3). This hypothesis was not supported. To test H3, multiple linear regression analysis was used. Variables in the model included the amended personal value scale, the perceived relationship with author scale, the enjoyment measure, the critical assessment scale, the social outcomes scale, and the Internet self-efficacy scale. Additionally, two variables measuring Internet use and blog readership frequency were included. Exploratory multiple regression analysis, using stepwise selection, identified the best predictors of content creation on blog sites. Four variables accounted for 30.5 percent for the variance in content creation frequency ($F (4, 833) = 92.37; p < .01$). Predictive variables in order of inclusion were personal value, enjoyment, blog readership frequency, and Internet use. A fifth variable, critical assessment, was excluded from the model due to a significance level greater than $p < .01$ ($p = .014$).

Finally, H4 posited that readership of created content and overall blog readership would be positively correlated. A fairly strong relationship between reading content and reading blogs emerged ($r = .48, p < .01, n = 1,675$), thus indicating that readers read both content produced by the blog owner and content produced by fellow blog readers.

Next, Phase II of the study posed five research questions. First, RQ4 was used to investigate the correlations between motivations for use scales. Results indicate a fair level of interplay between motivations for use scales. Zero-order Pearson correlations are shown in Table 6. Each of the five scales had some levels of interactivity with each other. Overall, the personal value scale had the highest correlations, interacting moderately high with social
outcomes ($r = .36$) and enjoyment ($r = .33$). Social outcomes and enjoyment had a moderate relationship with each other ($r = .26$). Additionally there was a very small negative relationship between perceived relationship with blog owner and critical assessment ($r = -.09$). A complete summary of observed correlations is shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Correlation Between Scale Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Critical Assessment</th>
<th>Perceived Relationship with Blog Owner</th>
<th>Personal Value</th>
<th>Social Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Relationship with Blog Owner</td>
<td>-.09**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 945$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Value</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 944$</td>
<td>$n = 931$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Outcome</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 945$</td>
<td>$n = 943$</td>
<td>$n = 930$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 956$</td>
<td>$n = 940$</td>
<td>$n = 940$</td>
<td>$n = 943$</td>
</tr>
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**p < .01

Second, two research questions investigated the role of content creation motivations with regard to the readership of blog content. RQ5 examined the relationship between content creation motivations and frequency of blog readership. 3 relatively weak relationships between content generation motivations and blog readership frequency were observed: social outcomes and blog readership had the weakest relationship ($r = .09$, $p < .01$; $n = 888$), enjoyment and blog readership had a similarly weak relationship ($r = .10$, $p < .01$; $n = 901$), and personal value and blog readership had a moderate relationship ($r = .18$, $p < .01$;
Motivation for content generation was not judged to have a significant impact on blog readership frequency. Secondly, the relationship between content creation motivations and readership frequency of content created by other users (RQ6) was explored. Three relationships between content generation motivations and reading content created by others were observed. Social outcomes and content reading frequency had the weakest relationship ($r = .12, p < .01; n = 940$), enjoyment and content reading frequency had the second weakest relationship ($r = .16, p < .01; n = 950$), and personal value and content reading frequency had the strongest relationship ($r = .23, p < .01; n = 950$).

Third and finally, two research questions profiled blog readership activities engaged in by content creators. Specifically, RQ7 explored the relationship between content creation and readership of content created by other readers. A moderate relationship between content creation and reading created content was observed ($r = .27, p < .01; n = 1,751$). RQ8 was used to investigate the relationship between frequency of content creation and overall blog readership. A moderate relationship between the two variables ($r = .20, p < .01; n = 1,777$) was observed.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Results from Phase I of study indicated that content creation tools are widely available to media users. Of the 46 websites coded, only one website did not offer at least one content generation tool. In fact, an overwhelming majority of websites offered two or more content creation tools to readers. Article comments were the most commonly observed content creation gateway, with all but 3 coded websites allowing users to comment directly on broadcasted comment. Additionally, the majority of websites encouraged readers to directly link content to their Facebook, Twitter, or Myspace profiles for the purposes of interpersonal discussion.

The content creation tools available on the college sports blogs used in Phase II of this study demonstrated the same general characteristics as the larger sample. Article comments were the most frequently observed, followed by reader diaries, messageboards and user surveys, respectively. While messageboards appeared only somewhat frequently in the college sports blog sample, it should be noted that the largest blog (and thus the largest facilitator of survey responses), MGoBlog, hosts a message board. Using the above results, Phase II respondents were asked to consider user-generated content as comment sections, messageboards, reader diaries, and polls.

Based upon non-empirical overview of currently available content generation tools, it was expected that deployments of content creation regimens would not generally vary greatly across site categories. The verification of this assumption allows for the scope of the present study to be expanded for greater external validity. Specifically, given that content creation environments are not utilized in remarkably different fashions by different website categories and that content generation motivation findings resultant of Phase II of this study were largely in line with previous, non-blog specific research, we can predict that people generally create content in order to achieve a basic set of gratifications described in the present study. Because the content analysis indicated little difference between the ways that blogs and websites deploy content creation tools, findings may very possibly have implications across
both blog genres and website types in general. To wit, researchers can begin subsequent investigations by making the assumption that since content creation tools are generally used in the same way by website owners, they are also used in the same general way by content creators. If comparative differences emerge between either blog genres or website types, researchers will be able to therefore ascertain a more comprehensive understanding of the various applications associated with use of content creation tools by various groups of media users.

Phase I of this study also focused on how moderation was employed by site owners. Overwhelmingly, content was post-moderated, allowing for after-the-fact removal of offensive or otherwise distasteful content. Importantly, post-moderation gives users a sense of freedom regarding what they post. In most, if not all, cases, site administrators provide users with language specifying cause for removal. For example, the New York Times’ User Agreement regarding user-generated content states:

You are solely responsible for the content of your Submissions. However, while NYTimes.com does not and cannot review every Submission and is not responsible for the content of these messages, NYTimes.com reserves the right to delete, move, or edit Submissions that it, in its sole discretion, deems abusive, defamatory, obscene, in violation of copyright or trademark laws, or otherwise unacceptable.

Through their provision of user-generated content creation tools, and the significant use of these tools, producers clearly recognize that consumers, to varying degrees, find the ability to create content beneficial. Given the public’s ongoing disdain for both unnecessary censure (Kenix, 2009) and offensive content, post-moderation allows for sites to maintain control over what is posted without being construed as overtly draconian. Furthermore, regarding the distribution of post-moderation, results support the notion that the application of content creation tools is fairly homogenous and that website types (e.g. blogs, news sites, general use sites) do not significantly vary in their application of moderation.

As the sample included both highly popular sites and niche websites across multiple consumer categories, this study concluded that the observed distribution of online content creation tools is pervasive in nature. Given the extensive nature of content generation tools, the topic is curiously understudied and, therefore, inquiry in this area is worthwhile. The verification that blog readers view both producer and user-based content adds a further value
dimension to content creation tools. Interestingly, the correlations between those who read blogs and read created content was stronger than the correlations between those who create content and read created content, indicating that content creation possesses psychological value beyond simple interpersonal communication. Transposed with the widespread dispersion of user-based content capabilities, it is apparent that those who read blogs also read content created by other users. Thus, two producer entities emerge: blog owner and blog reader.

Similar to blog owners, those creating content on blogs were judged to be actively engaged with content generation. Those who associated personal value with content generation were the most likely to actually create content. In keeping with previous research on blog owners, enjoyment motives, community and interpersonal motives, and expression (critical assessment) motives all held positive relationships with tangible content creation. From this, we can conclude that content creators share a number of qualities previously attributed to only to blog owners. In and of itself, content generation on blog sites can, perhaps, be considered a form of blogging. Like the “traditional” conception of blogging, content generation allows for writers to discuss issues, including decidedly niche issues, in an informal tone, to maintain ongoing discussion, and to maintain a sense of community. When considering audience dimensions, it should be noted that blog owners often, if not always, create blogs with no existing audience and must rely on their content and their ability to market that content to develop readerships. Those creating content on blog sites already have an in-place audience or may be more likely to create content when a larger audience is perceived. However, survey respondents were asked to evaluate the following phrase “I am more likely to create content if a number of other readers are also creating content.” This item showed no correlation with the frequency of content generation, which seemed to indicate that while expression is certainly a motivation to generate content, perceived distribution of created content is not significantly related to creation.

As discussed, Phase II of the present study employed traits previously attributed to blog owners to describe blog readers who generate content. Specific motivating factors such as social interaction, entertainment, (Ferdig & Trammel, 2004), opinion-giving, and a sense of community (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbright, & Swartz, 2004) were identified. Content creators were found to be active in nature and to be motivated by social outcomes,
enjoyment, and critical assessment, a form of personal and emotional expression (Lieberman & Goldstein, 2006). The perception that generating content was personally valuable, perhaps unsurprisingly, had the strongest correlation to actual content generation. Moreover, this personal value factor held the strongest correlations with other motivating variables, indicating that personal value in content creation was significantly related to community belongingness, critical assessment, and enjoyment motivations. The moderately strong correlation between personal value and social outcome indicates that users create content, in part, to find a sense of group belonging. The weakest discerned interrelationship between personal value and a motivational factor was the relationship between personal value and perceived relationship with the blog owner. However, given previous parasocial research done in the uses and gratifications arena, it was interesting to note that the only negative relationship between motivational scales emerged between critical assessment and perceived relationship with blog owner. This link, although weak, indicates that liking the producing author impacts subsequent behavior on the website itself. The scale employed to test the perceived relationship with the blog owner was concerned primarily with the value placed on individual participation by the broadcasting author yet it nonetheless appeared to constrain critical or negative assessment of other content creators.

Next, the relationship between Internet self-efficacy and content creation was explored. Internet self-efficacy perceptions may distinguish “those who are and are not able to achieve positive outcomes from the Internet” (Rains, 2008, p. 14). Low levels of Internet self-efficacy are particularly discerned among older Internet users, who demonstrate difficulties using both computers and the Internet (Adams, Stubbs, & Woods, 2005). Accordingly, Internet self-efficacy was conceptualized as an access variable necessary for content creation. Results indicated that Internet self-efficacy had a positive relationship with content generation. Although the correlations between the Internet self-efficacy scale and content generation were moderately weak, the results suggest that it is worthwhile to consider Internet self-efficacy in contemporary models describing online content creation. The current study investigated Internet self-efficacy and content creation from a vis-à-vis perspective: higher levels of self-efficacy were compared against increased frequency of content creation. However, investigating Internet self-efficacy levels against time-related rubrics (e.g. how long it takes an individual user to create a messageboard post or write an article comment) or
skill-related perspectives (e.g. ability to insert a hyperlink or embed a picture file), would offer richer, more sophisticated data on cognitive access, frequency of use, and ability to assimilate and/or obtain community status rankings.

Given that both motivations for use and Internet self-efficacy positively impact content creation, it was theorized that these two variables would function as positive antecedent variables predictive of user-based content generation. Using multiple linear regression, the final model did not indicate that motivations for use and Internet self-efficacy were, together, predictive of content generation. Instead, two motivational factors and two frequency of use factors comprised the model. Interestingly, the two motivations for use dimensions – the amended personal value scale and enjoyment – represented the two largest explanations of variance, further corroborating that content generators are, in fact, actively engaged participants. The final two items included in the predictive model were frequency of blog readership and frequency of Internet use. While Internet-self efficacy did not remain in the model, it should be noted that Internet use did. Given that prior research indicates correlation amongst these two variables (LaRose & Eastin, 2002) and the fact that the present study perceived a positive, moderately weak relationship between Internet self-efficacy and Internet use, there exists reasonable impetus to investigate Internet self-efficacy as a conditional or “moderating” variable. As suggested by Tao and Bucy (2005), considering Internet self-efficacy as an independent variable (as opposed to a conditional one) may cause the effects of online interactivity on different groups cancel each other out, “resulting in no significant differences” (p. 16).

LIMITATIONS

Three primary limitations are associated with the present study. First, regarding Phase I, the sample was culled from the following four areas: the ten most popular blogs, as ranked by Technocrati; the 16 blogs that participated in Phase II; the ten most popular news sites, as ranked by Alexa; and the ten most popular general use websites, as ranked by Alexa. In the latter category, popular search engine sites were removed. This study sought to examine the distribution of content generation tools from the top-down; that is, it was assumed that since these content creation sites appeared on the most popular web sites, they would also exist, in similar, on less popular websites. While this view is supported by the diffusions of
innovation perspective, analyzing a more comprehensive sample would add further descriptive value.

Second, the sample analyzed in Phase II of the present study violated multivariate normality. This lack of heterogeneity within the sample may have negatively impacted the Internet self-efficacy findings. While the sample was chosen, in part, to be representative of the blog readership population as a whole, approximately 71 percent of the sample was between 18 and 35, nearly 94 percent of the sample was male, 84 percent were either pursuing or held a bachelor’s degree or higher, and approximately 88 percent were white. Although the young, white, educated male profile generally fits the profile traditionally assumed for both Internet self-efficacy levels (LaRose & Eastin, 2002) and blog ownership (e.g. Fox, 2004; Kovi et al, 2008), the sample lacked the diversity necessary for sensitive statistical analysis. Moreover, given that most respondents indicated that they were white collar, working professionals, it can be concluded that the population included a number of highly educated individuals who use computers and the Internet as an instrumental part of their professional, daily routine. Despite the Internet self-efficacy scale’s high reliability, the scale was developed and tested on a far less homogenous group of college-aged students (\(M = 21\)) with a significantly different gender makeup. Further, given that the Internet and its uses have changed dramatically since the scale was developed and the contextual differences between the tested group and the sample used in the present study, it stands to reason that phrases such “advanced features of the websites I visit,” “comfortable using words/terms relating to Internet hardware,” and “troubleshooting Internet problems” may have taken on different practical meanings. Difficulties in measuring Internet self-efficacy were noted by Bucy and Tao (2005), who stated that “despite several attempts at scale construction there is no currently accepted Internet self-efficacy scale” (p. 11).

Indeed, measurement item issues comprise the third, and perhaps most significant, set of limitations associated with the present study. Notably, several scales demonstrated relatively low levels of reliability, including the personal value scale. The scale, in its original form, had a marginally acceptable alpha of .60; however, given that exploratory factor analysis suggested the scale include a dependent variable (content creation frequency), that scale was altered for relationship testing and regression analysis by simply removing the
content creation measure. Although extraction of the content creation variable did not alter the theoretical underpinning of the scale, it did diminish overall reliability levels to .55. Notably, the initial personal value measure combined a single ratio item (content creation frequency) with a series of ordinal items. Thus, the original conception of the personal value scale was not only strongly collinear with the dependent variable but problematically inconsistent as a scale item. Future research should be vigilant in ensuring consistency among intra-scale variable types. Nonetheless, the personal value item was theoretically meaningful to the study and held moderately high levels of interactivity with other motivation for use scales, importantly indicating a goal-oriented user. Additionally, the enjoyment measure consisted of two items; given that enjoyment has been significantly recognized by previous research as a motivation for use, the measure was retained. Since the present research is still in a nascent state, few reliable scales were identified. A number of extant scales deal with consumption of media (e.g. television viewing, gathering information on the internet), but very few available measures account for both media consumption and subsequent generation of tangible content. These existing scales were heavily modified in order to measure to content creation. Thus, future research should develop and validate reliable, multi-item scales specifically designed to test content creation.

**Implications for Future Research**

The present study provides four implications for future research. First, and perhaps most importantly, results indicate that content creation is resultant of cognitively-engaged users who acquire gratifications through content generation. Further research should elaborate upon this finding by further exploring the range of motivations underlying content creation. For example, transposing the popularity of article comments with personal expression and value scales, researchers should explore whether or not users generate content in order to circumvent gatekeeping. Moreover, given the significant correlation between personal value and the other motivations for use scales (and, subsequently, content generation), researchers should explore variables which positively impact personal value acquired through content generation. Better understanding why users value creating content will help define environments most conducive to content creation.
Second, researchers should explore the role of Internet self-efficacy within the content generation continuum in greater detail. As noted, the sample used in the present study failed to meet acceptable levels of respondent variance. Thus, examining media sources with more “normalized” readership demographics, such as mainstream news sites or op-ed blogs, may reveal a more pronounced interactivity between Internet self-efficacy and content generation. As Internet self-efficacy is a derivative of Bandura’s social cognitive theory, exploration of content creation and Internet self-efficacy in an educational context should be explored, especially in consideration of online instruction’s explosive recent growth. Finally, a separate Internet self-efficacy model should be explored. In this model, Internet self-efficacy should exist as a moderating or condition variable where it would specify the ways that individuals respond to stimuli rather than predict effects. Generally speaking, individuals with high self-efficacy levels will be most cognitively engaged by difficult tasks and become bored by tasks that require little acquisition of new skills. For users with lower levels of self-efficacy, such relationship would be reversed.

Third, future research should focus on discerning context-specific utilizations of user-based content creation tools. The present study indicates that deployment of content creation tools is fairly similar regardless of website type. However, users could very well interact differently with different types of content (e.g. sports, news, opinion-editorial). As no research comparing contexts exist, the instant results can be used as a basis for comparing the different ways that users use the same array of content generation tools to acquire gratifications. Therein, researchers should examine whether gratification achievement is specifically impacted by site content.

Fourth, and finally, researchers should compare the ways that users interact with specific tools. For example, an array of research has discerned that messageboards foster social outcomes and community relationships. However, the current results indicate that article comments were the most diffused content generation tool and that users indicated a general sense of community when asked to consider “content creation tools” as messageboards, article comments, user diaries, wikis, and the like. The operative question, thus, revolves around whether specific content creation tools allow for certain needs to best be fulfilled. Thorough handling of this issue could allow site owners and administrators to offer tools which will be most beneficial to participation and subsequent deliberation.
CONCLUSION

The present study adds to our current understanding of online, user-based content creation in four primary ways. First, results indicate that, in a general sense, content creation tools are widely available to users and that the deployment of these tools is fairly standardized across web contexts, with article comments appearing the most frequently. Second, this study’s results indicate that readers creating content on weblogs are motivated, active media participants who demographically mirror the population subset most likely to actually start blogs. Generally discerned motivations for generating content included social motivations, self-expression motivations, parasocial motivations, and entertainment motivations. Therein, these motivations for use scales held moderately high correlations with an additional measure representing personal value associated with content generation, further indicating a motivated subset of content creators. Third, the present study identified a moderate relationship between Internet self-efficacy and content creation frequency. However, when testing if Internet self-efficacy and motivations for use together functioned as predictors of content generation, it was noted that motivation and Internet use patterns functioned as the best predictive model for content creation. Fourth, this study indicated that those who reads blogs also read content created by other readers, hence suggesting that content creation tools allow for a departure from previous mediated models subsisting of austerely defined producers and consumers.

Results from this study indicate that content creation tools have been widely diffused and, further, support previous research positing an active, goal-oriented media consumer. However, the current effort exists merely as a first step in a broader course of study on user-based content generation. As noted, observed results may have been hampered by a lack or previously employed scale items with which to measure motivations. To date, uses and gratifications research has primarily focused on media consumption or media creation; however, the instant case of content creation requires measurement of both items simultaneously. Surprisingly, Internet self-efficacy, though positively correlated to content creation frequency, functioned awkwardly when used in models designed to actually predict content creation. Therein, further research on self-efficacy as a conditional influence on content generation should be included as part of subsequent attempts at model development.
Taken in its whole, user-generated content creation has a number of potential consequences relating to mediated communication. In ways previously unimagined, individuals can discuss, deliberate, and disagree with each other. And, as the Internet continues to facilitate rapid rearrangement of communication patterns and capabilities, participatory environments afforded by interactive technologies have assumed an increasingly consequential role in day-to-day life. Strangely, especially given its widespread diffusion and omnipresence in the contemporary media, user-based content generation remains understudied by communication researchers. By recognizing the existence of such a knowledge gap, it is thus of equal importance to recognize that the full realization of the psychological, political, and social potential of user-based content creation hinges upon further topical investigation.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY
My name is Toby Hopp and I’m a longtime college sports blogger/blog reader. I’m also a graduate communications student at San Diego State University who is interested in studying how and why Internet users generate content online. What precisely, you may be asking, is “user-generated content?” Well, “user-generated content” includes comment sections at the end of news/blog articles, messageboards, diaries, polls, and the like.

To me, one of the great parts of the blogosphere is the interaction it enables between readers. As a community, we’re able to provide feedback and discuss issues in real time. However, the concept of “user-generated content” and its subsequent social applications has not, at this point, been thoroughly studied by communications researchers and is, in my estimation, completely misunderstood by the mass media.

So, if you have 10-15 minutes to spare and support empirical media research (and the social sciences in general), please click the survey link below. Even if you NEVER create/read content on blog or newspaper websites, PLEASE consider taking the survey as your answers are as important to me as the answers supplied by individuals who DO regularly create content. Rest assured that all answers and provided information will be strictly anonymous and kept totally confidential.

Survey Link: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WSQGPZ2](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WSQGPZ2)

For those of you interested in statistics, all collected information will be scientifically analyzed and utilized to create an inherently unique structural equation model. To that end, I’ll send a report out to each participating blog which details general trends and reader utilization issues of note.

Again, please consider taking this survey (Survey Link: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WSQGPZ2](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WSQGPZ2)) whether or not you ever create or read “user – generated content” on blogs or newspaper sites. The survey itself will take 10 – 15 minutes and, I promise, will be quite painless. As stated above, research on the topic of “user-generated content” is incredibly sparse and your participation will go a long way in understanding the environmental factors that encourage meaningful intra-community participation. And, of course, you’ll be doing me a great and immeasurable favor.

The survey will be active from Monday, December 14 through Monday, December 21. Please feel free to e-mail me at thopp@mail.sdsu.edu if you have any questions relating to the survey or my over-arching methodology/conceptual framework (obviously, there’s a lot more to the study that can be reasonably described here).

Thank you for your time and please know that your participation really does mean a great deal to me on both a professional and personal level.

Survey Link: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WSQGPZ2](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WSQGPZ2)
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS
1. **What is your sex?**
   - Male
   - Female

2. **Which of the following blogs referred you to this survey?**
   - Barking Carnival
   - Burnt Orange Nation
   - Clone Chronicles
   - Conquest Chronicles
   - Corn Nation
   - CougCenter
   - Dawg Sports
   - MGoBlog
   - Mgofootball
   - Orange and Brown
   - The Auburner
   - The Ralphie Report
   - Tomahawk Nation
   - Troy Nunes is an Absolute Magician
   - We Will Always Have Tempe
   - Wolverine Liberation Army

3. **Please select the following occupational category that best describes you.**
   - Full Time Student
   - Full Time Professional
   - Part Time Student
   - Part Time Professional
   - Part Time Student/Part Time Employee
   - Other

4. **How old are you (in years)?**

5. **Please select all of the following types/genres of blogs you generally visit during the course of a week (please select all that apply).**
   - Sports Blogs
   - Opinion-based Political Blogs
   - News Blogs
   - Entertainment Blogs
   - Food Blogs
   - Career-Oriented Blogs

6. **In general, how many hours a day do you estimate that you spend on the Internet?**

7. **In general, how many days a week do you read blogs?**

8. **In general, how many days a week do you post content on blogs or news sites?**
Questions 9 through 33 possessed a 5 point Likert response mechanism consisting of the following response categories: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Neutral (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5)

9. I create content on blogs because it’s a way to bring attention to topics I feel are important.
10. I often post content on blogs to express my disagreements with other users posting content.
11. I create content on blogs because it’s often entertaining.
12. When I create content, I feel like I’m an important part of a community.
13. I would miss creating content if I was no longer afforded the opportunity to do so.
14. I post content on blogs because it’s dramatic.
15. I create content in order to maintain a relationship or relationships I value.
16. I create content on blogs because it’s a way to express my viewpoints to other people.
17. I create content as a way to get support from others.
18. When I create content, I feel like I belong to a group.
19. I find myself creating content during the same general time period each day.
20. When I create content, I find myself often expressing negative opinions.
21. I create content on blogs because it’s enjoyable.
22. I create content on blogs because it’s a way to voice my agreement with opinions expressed by the author.
23. I often think about creating content when I’m not online.
24. I create content on blogs when I have nothing better to do.
25. Creating content on the Internet is part of my usual routine.
26. I create content on blogs so that I can pass information on to other people.
27. I create content on blogs because it’s a way to voice my displeasure with opinions expressed by the author.
28. I create content on blogs to get away from what I should be doing.
29. I feel the author of the blog that referred me to this site is accessible by e-mail.
30. I feel that the author of the blog that referred me to this survey values my readership.
31. I often find myself creating content that has an angry tone.
32. I am more likely to create content if a number of other readers are also creating content.
33. I feel that the author of the blog that referred me values my creation of content on his/her blog site.
34. In general, how many days a week do you read content created by other blog readers?

Questions 36 through 44 possessed a 5 point Likert response mechanism consisting of the following response categories: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Neutral (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5)
36. I feel that the blog that referred me to this survey offers better content than similar coverage offered in the newspaper.
37. I feel confident using the advanced features of the web sites I visit.
38. I feel confident describing functions of Internet hardware.
39. I feel confident turning to an online discussion group to seek help on Internet-related topics.
40. I feel confident understanding words/terms relating to Internet software.
41. I feel confident troubleshooting Internet problems.
42. I feel confident using the Internet to gather data.
43. I feel confident understanding words/terms relating to Internet hardware.
44. I feel confident explaining why a task will not run on the Internet.
45. Which of the following best describes your race?
   - American Indian or Alaska Native
   - Asian; Black or African American
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - White; Hispanic/Latino
   - Other
   - I would prefer not to disclose my race
46. Please list highest degree obtained or in progress.
   - Less than High School
   - High School or Equivalent
   - Associate’s Degree or Equivalent
   - Bachelor’s Degree
   - Master’s Degree or Equivalent
   - Doctorate or Equivalent
47. Please select the category that best reflects your annual income.
   - 30,000 or less
   - 30,000 – 60,000
   - 60,000 – 90,000
   - 90,000 – 120,000
   - 120,000 or Greater
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT WAIVER
Toby Hopp, a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at San Diego State University, is conducting a study to learn more about how readers use content creation tools on Internet blog sites. Please complete the survey by selecting the response that best fits how you feel. All responses are completely anonymous. Additionally, all participation is completely voluntary and you may terminate your participation at any time. Specific responses will not be shared with anyone under any circumstances.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact Toby Hopp at thopp@mail.sdsu.edu. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the San Diego State University Institutional Review Board at 619-594-6622 or irb@mail.sdsu.edu.

This survey should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is greatly appreciated.