"Blogging- A Powerful Public Relation Marketing tool, A study of public awareness with reference to Nagpur City."

Ms. Minal Kashyap

minal_kashyap@yahoo.co.in

Ms. Kamal Satija

kamalsatija.s@gmail.com

Abstract- one of the latest innovation currently having an impact on public relation is BLOG. Blogging is very popular marketing tool of today's era because it allows people to interact with each other. Blogging has also become a popular search engine optimization (SEO) tool because search engines like Google and Yahoo know that a blog is frequently updated with content or visitor comments, so their spiders visit blogs frequently looking for new content to include in their index. Visitors subscribe to a blog's feeds in order to stay up to date with content that's being posted on subjects that interest them. There are many different types of blogs, differing not only in the type of content, but also in the way that content is delivered or written. Some blogs are such that which indirectly influences the mind of consumer's towards buying the product. Weblogs have become increasingly popular over the last two years, spreading gregariously to all spheres of the net: private, academic, cultural, professional and commercial. This paper will elaborate over the different types of blogs and extent of awareness among consumers with reference to Nagpur city.

Keywords- Marketing tool, Blogging, Search Engine, Beauty blogs, visitors, weblog

Introduction-

A **blog** is a shortened version of "Web log". Blogs are essentially sites on the Web that may cover news and events, the interests, hobbies or business of the person writing the blog or virtually any subject. It acts as an online journal. Blog content can be delivered automatically via electronic RSS (Really Simple Syndication) data feeds and these are widely used by users as per their interest.

Blog marketing is the process of reaching a business' prospects through the use of a blog. These efforts may be conducted for the primary purpose of promoting the company's Website or they may comprise the only online presence and be used for direct promotion of a small business. Blogs can be relatively inexpensive and highly effective marketing tools. Blog marketing may also help improve a Website's rankings in search results and is often used for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes.

Popularity of blogs can be explained with the following points

- **Search Engines prefer blogs** – Search engines prefer web pages that are rich in content, links and are updated regularly. All of these are defining features of blogs. Also, blogs use tags to facilitate searches within the blog sites, and search engines tend to pick up these tags very quickly. Thus, blogs are indexed faster and this drives more traffic to the company's website.

- **Blogs establish credibility**- Blogs can establish credibility for a business if informative content on relevant topics are posted regularly.

- **Blogs build trust with prospects and clients**- As an instant communication forum; blogs allow open dialogue with clients and prospect and in the long run play a crucial role in building trust.

- **Blogs enhance website stickiness**– People enjoy fresh, interesting, and relevant content. A well-maintained blog ensures repeat visits to the linked website.

- **Blogs attract media attention**

Many different types of blogs are used by companies to market a product and services which can be as under

❖ **Personal blogs**

The personal blog is an ongoing diary or commentary written by an individual.

❖ **Micro blogging**

Micro blogging is the practice of posting small pieces of digital content—which could be text, pictures, links, short videos, or other media—on the Internet. For eg, micro blog about concert dates, lectures, book releases, or tour schedules.

❖ **Corporate and organizational blogs**

Blogs used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or externally for marketing, branding or public relations purposes are called corporate blogs.

❖ **By genre**

Some blogs focus on a particular subject, such as political blogs, health blogs, travel blogs gardening blogs, house blogs, fashion blogs, project blogs, education blogs,

niche blogs, classical music blogs, quizzing blogs and legal blogs How To/Tutorial blogs art blogs and music blogs.

❖ **By media type**

A blog comprising videos is called a vlog, one comprising links is called a linklog, a site containing a portfolio of sketches is called a sketchblog or one comprising photos is called a photoblog.

❖ **By device**

A blog written by a mobile device like a mobile phone or PDA could be called a moblog.

❖ **Reverse blog**

A Reverse Blog is composed by its users rather than a single blogger. This system has the characteristics of a blog, and the writing of several authors.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study blogging and its essence as a public relational marketing tool.
2. To study the demographic profile of blog followers.
3. To study major drivers of bogging.

1. Review of Literature

Blogs are been used by organisations for everything from revolutionary marketing and attacking the competition (Barbaro,2006. Lyons, 2005.), to creating identification with publics, sharing scientific break thoughts and knowledge management (Dearstync,2005. Saulny, 2006. Sccko,2005). Blogging is rapidly becoming as pervasive as the internet itself but almost no critical analysis on blogging has been conducted. Little discussion in public relations has examined the many claims made by practitioners and Pundits about blog being powerful.

Using blogs as a way to influence individuals and publics is one of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of blogs by public relations professionals (cf., Edelman & Intelliseek, 2005; Neilson Buzz Metrics, 2006). Allowing or encouraging visitors to an organization's Web site to participate in how online news and information is framed is possibly the greatest strength of blogs and the feature of the most importance to public relations practitioners. Research on framing and agenda setting has shown that the ability to control what individuals see, is the first step to controlling what people think (Baran & Davis, 2000; Cohen, 1963; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs & Shaw, 1976).

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Designs and Methods

This study is basically an exploratory research to give an insight into the trends that has increased the purchasing through blogging. The research has been carried out in two stages. In stage I, literature review has been done to study variables impacting consumer's buying behaviour. In second stage, data were gathered by primary data collection method through personally administered questionnaires. An exploratory questionnaire has been designed on parameters concerning consumer's blog choice and a survey has been conducted to study the

scope to which consumer demographics and psychographics has an impact on purchasing though blogging.

2.2 Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is a relation between the individual's age and frequency of blogging.

2. There is relation between the individual's gender and visits to type of blog.

2.3 Sampling Technique

The technique of sampling used in this study was non-probability convenience sampling method because it was a feasible alternative, due to the limitation of time, costs, and conveniences in order to find adequate respondents.

2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaire has been distributed to 50 respondents; the information collected can be depicted by the following graphs and tables.

Table 1: Distribution of Individual Respondents by Demographic Factors

Respondents Particulars		Number of Respondents	
Parameter	**Variables**	**Total (50)**	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	23	46
	female	27	54
Total		50	100
			0

Marital status	Married	17	34
	Unmarried	33	66
Total		50	100
Income (in lacs)			
	1.5- 2.5	14	28
	2.5- 3.5	17	34
	3.5-4.5	13	26
	4.5 and above	6	12
Total		50	100
occupation	Service	20	40
	Self Owned business	18	36
	housewives	12	24
Total		50	100
Age	18-22	9	18
	22-26	8	16
	26-30	16	32
	30-35	10	20
	35 and above	7	14
Total		50	100

Profile of Respondents- The above table provides the insights of the demographic profile of

the respondents. The sample size chosen for the study was of 50 respondents which includes

23 males and 27 females. Major population of the sample lies in the income group of 2.5 to 3.5 lacs and 50% of the sample belongs to the age group of 26- 35 years.

❖ **Factors driving traffic to blogs**

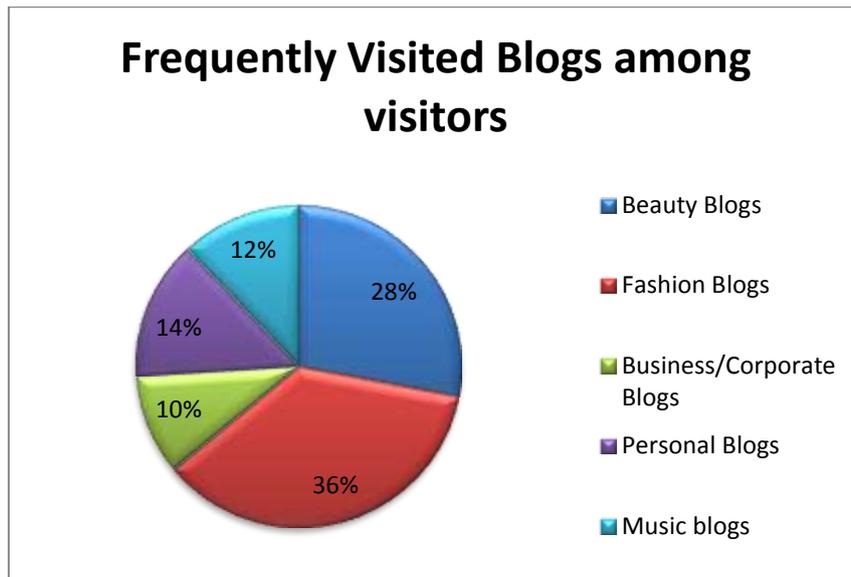| Appearance of blogs	Popularity of blogs	Trend awareness	Attractive Deals
16	36	28	20
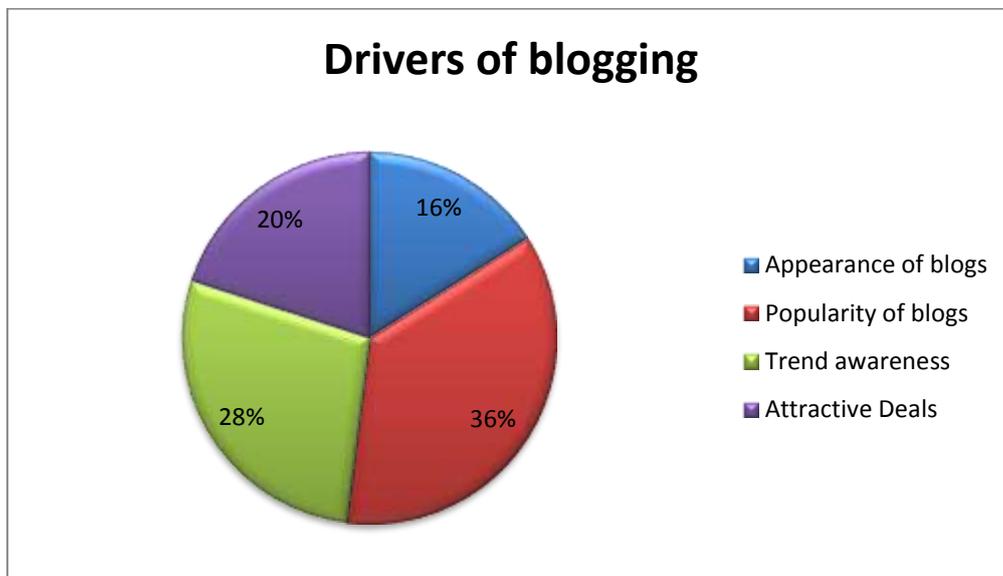
Figure 1:- Drivers of Blogging

Interpretation- The above pie charts depicts that popularity of blog is the major driver of blog traffic.
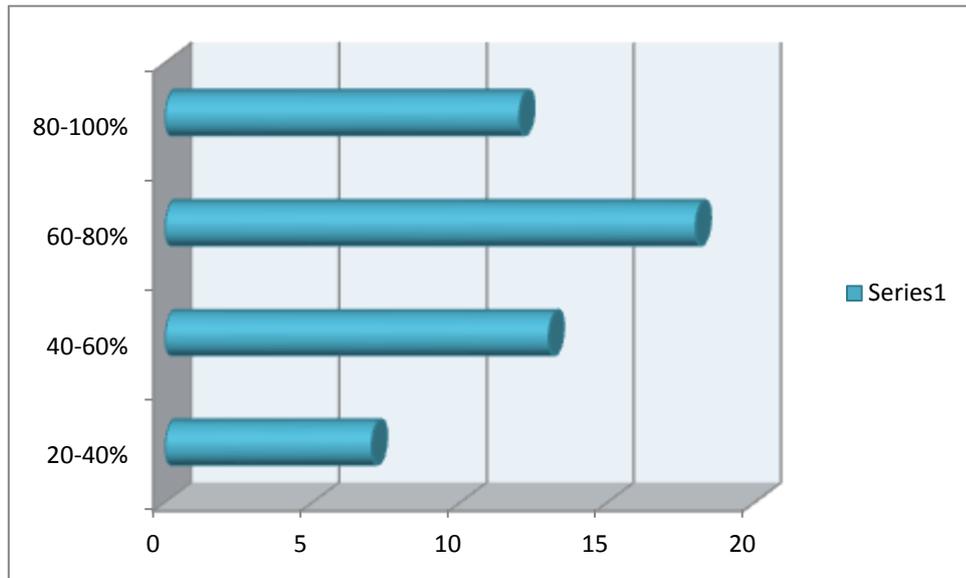
❖ **Popularity of blogs among customers**

Beauty Blogs	Fashion Blogs	Business/Corporate Blogs	Personal Blogs	Education blogs
14	18	5	7	6

Figure 2:- Frequently visited blogs

Interpretation- It can be interpreted from the above pie chart that major portion of visitors frequently visits fashion blog and beauty blogs.

Figure 3:- Extent of persuasion by blogs on visitors' behaviour

Interpretation- It can be inferred by the above candle chart that almost 36% of visitors opine that blogs persuade their mindset till the extent of 60-80% while 24% of visitors believe that they get influenced by blogs up to 100% also.

Hypotheses Testing

➢ **Test of significance for the relationship between the individual's age and frequency of visiting the blogs.**

Table 2: Co-relation between Ages and Frequency of Visits

Variable- I	Variable II	Co-relation
9	4	
8	13	
16	14	
10	12	0.542516658

7	7	

Variable I- Ages of visitors, variable II- Frequency of visits

From the above table it is inferred that the co-relation between ages and frequency of visits is more than 50% i.e. 54% hence there is a moderate degree of co-relation lies between the two variables.

> **Test of significance for the relationship between the individual's gender and influence towards different blog**

Table 2: Co-relation between Gender and Influence towards different blogs

Variable I	Variable II	Co-relation
23	13	
27	21	
0	9	
0	4	
0	3	1

Variable I- Gender, Variable II- Frequency of influence to different blogs

From the above table it is inferred that the co-relation between gender and influence towards types of blogs is 1 hence there is a high degree of co-relation exist between the two variables.

3. Conclusion to the Study

As per the study it is analysed that blogs have become the popular tool of marketing and various types of blogs are there which provides the insights into the varied need of people in general. Today, various companies use blogs to market their products and services and which in turn leads to build the goodwill amongst blog followers. It is also been evaluated that there is a relationship between age of an individual and frequency of visiting the blogs, similarly there is a relation between gender and influence towards the type of blog. Public in general are of the opinion that popularity of blog drives more traffic towards blog. Beauty and fashion blogs are have higher visitors traffic. Blog readers already come to blogs with information and views of their own. Self-persuasion and influence are more easily accomplished when individuals and public already have knowledge of issues and important events. Blogs bring homogenous groups of individuals and public together, allowing the power of the enthymeme and self-persuasion to be used.

 A lot more scholarly research needs to be conducted before most organizations start blogging. Public relations professionals should not get trampled by the blogging stampede until scholars, researchers, and especially professionals actually understand them better. A blog will only be useful to an organization if it has someone to maintain it, someone trained in effective dialogic communication, and someone who has the trust of individuals and publics. Posting anonymously to blogs is not a viable option for any organization nor are attempts to manipulate blog audience members with self-serving propaganda or thinly disguised news releases. Blogs are currently great research tools, but scholars need to critically examine blogs and understand a lot more about how blogs function as persuasive/informative tools and how they fit in with organizational initiatives before jumping on the blog bandwagon.

3.1 Limitations of the Study

- Sample size limited to 50 respondents in the city of Nagpur and individual responses may be biased at times.

- Time and Resources constraints.

- Research is not been carried out for the extended period of time.

References

[1] Albrycht, E. (2004). Turning blogs into useful communication tools. Tactics, <ringblog.typepad.com/corporative/ albrycht blog article in prsatactics.pdf>

[2] Madeline L. Moore,(August 2012) B.S. Exploring U.S. Agricultural Commodity Organizations' Use of Blogs as a Communications Tool

[3] Michael L. Kent (March 2002) Critical analysis of blogging in public relations ()

[4] Jay Bhatt, (Engineering Librarian at Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.) (2005) Blogging as a Tool: Innovative Approaches to Information Access; Library Hi Tech News, Vol. 22 Iss: 9, pp.28 - 3

[5] Jeremy B Williams, Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector; Australasian Journal of Educational Technology 2004, 20(2), 232-247.

[6] Bridges, J. A. (2000). Issues management: A relational approach. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations (pp. 95–115). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.