

FASHION BLOGGING AND CONSUMERS: EXAMINING THE USES AND
GRATIFICATIONS OF READERS OF FASHION BLOGS

by

ARIEL FINK

REGINA LEWIS, COMMITTEE CHAIR
MARGOT OPDYCKE LAMME
MATTHEW D. BUNKER

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on the motivations consumers have for accessing fashion blogs.

This study is important due to the limited scope of research that exists regarding consumer motivations, particularly for accessing specific types of blogs. Most existing research focuses more on the relationship between blogs and advertisers.

Using a survey with measures adapted from previous research on social media motivations, the researcher was able to discover that the main reasons for accessing fashion blogs matched the main reasons for accessing blogs in general. The most important motivations were social surveillance and entertainment. Additionally, this research indicated that the Millennial generation is more invested in blogs than most other demographics. These findings can help bloggers and advertisers better tailor their content to fit this demographic and their needs, something marketers are currently striving to achieve in a time when Millennials influence spending. Further research should focus on qualitative methods that can allow the researcher to delve deeper into consumer needs.

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Introduction

Blogs have become an extremely important part of the Internet. What started mostly as a way for people to keep others up-to-date on their lives has shifted entirely into a new category altogether. With over 110 million blogs currently existing, and an estimated 175,000 new blogs being launched every day (Chu and Kamal, 2008), bloggers have built communities and reputations based on their knowledge and their dedication to sharing it through their desired blog pages.

History of Blogs

Prior to the advent of blogging, online communities were possible through the existence of bulletin board systems and electronic mail listings, although online journals have existed for quite some time (Woan, 2008). These sites escalated in popularity with technophiles, who then developed easier ways to create and maintain blogs. Andrew Smales was a pioneer in July 1999, when he became the first to launch a do-it-yourself blog. Just a month later, Evan Williams, Paul Bausch, and Meg Hourihan launched Blogger.com, which has evolved into the largest and one of the best-known blogging websites.

According to a 2008 report by the Pew Research Center Internet & American Life

Project, 33 percent of Internet users, or 24 percent of all adults, read blogs, with 11 percent doing so daily (Smith, 2008). Two years later, Pew found that 43 percent of Millennial generation adults ages 18 to 33 read blogs, which made them the second highest demographic, only behind teens, ages 12 to 17. These figures showed a decline in blog readership among Millennials, but a three percent increase among older generations. Despite these changes, Millennials are still much more likely to read blogs and use other social media sites. Pew's research also points out an interesting change - while traditional blogging may have peaked, internet users are still doing blog-like things, such as posting updates about their outfits, thoughts and lives, through other social networking sites, and through micro-blogging sites like Twitter (Zickuhr, 2010). Though other platforms may be popular, this same 2010 report showed that 18 percent of Millennials work on their own blog, which is the highest percentage among demographics.

Main Types of Blogs

As the growth of blogs has expanded, the way they are used has, as well. A 2006 report was conducted by Pew Research to determine the ways in which blogging was growing. Their survey found that the majority of bloggers use it as an online personal journal, and don't consider it a form of journalism.

One interesting finding from this study was the range of topics covered by bloggers.

Survey results indicated that when asked to choose one main topic, 37 percent cited “my life and experiences” as their primary topic. The second most popular was politics, with only 11 percent of bloggers. Other popular topics included entertainment (7%), sports (6%), news and current events (5%), business (5%), technology (4%), religion, spirituality or faith (2%), niche hobbies (1%), specific health problems or illness (1%), as well as opinions, volunteering, education, photography, causes and passions, and organizations. These results clearly demonstrate the wide variety of topics that are covered by bloggers.

Currently, there is a divide among bloggers, with some considering themselves professional while others consider it a hobby. In 2006, 84 percent reported that they considered it a hobby. This number has likely decreased in recent years as blogs have proved to have substantial followings, though there is no research yet to support this. Moreover, according to Pew, 52 percent say they blog mostly for themselves, while 32 percent say they blog mostly for their audience. Additionally, this report indicated that 55% of bloggers used a pseudonym while 46% used their real name. This is particularly interesting, when compared to executives in other industries. Research indicates the majority of CEOs shy away from social media, with only six Fortune 500 CEOs contributing to blogs, and only one of the six CEOs, John Mackey of Whole Foods, maintains his own blog (Press Release, 2012). This is despite the fact that 81 percent of employees believe that CEOs who are engaged on social media are better equipped

to lead companies in the modern world, and 82 percent of customers are more likely to trust a company whose CEO and leadership team are active on these channels. Thus, bloggers are at an advantage with consumers due to their increased levels of transparency and interaction (Bennet, 2013).

Style Blogs and Fashion

Today, high-end designers and reputable brands are turning to social media channels as a way to keep in touch with their consumer base as well as increase it through brand exposure (Thornley, 2014). One manifestation of this is partnerships with blogs. Currently, the largest categories of the blogs are fashion blogs, or blogs that focus on fashion brands, fashion products, street style, and personal style (Halvorsen, Hoffmann, Coste-Manière, & Stankeviciute, 2013).

Fashion blogs, or style blogs, are blogs that focus on fashion and beauty and are produced by bloggers who self-identify as stylists. As time has progressed, these blogs have emerged as some of the most trusted influencers in fashion and provide a more personal way for designers to not only showcase their products and brand, but also inform and interact with a larger and more global audience through these channels (Thornley, 2014). Although the majority of fashion houses and designers are on the Internet and are interacting with consumers, the posts of self-identified fashion stylists offer a different and more personal

approach. “Fashion marketing uses common techniques of advertising and market research with the addition of tools specialized for the fashion industry such as product development, branding, pricing and forecasting” (Sedeke & Arora, 2013).

One advantage that fashion blogs offer is their timeliness; bloggers generally post new updates at least once a day, making their sites ideal sources for public relations outreach in such a fast-paced industry (Thornley, 2014). Additionally, fashion blogs provide a reference point for consumers, as they can see a product as it is meant to be in the real world, rather than on the runway (Thornley, 2014). Despite these advantages, there has been some push back from the industry, from people like Anna Wintour, and Joe Zee, creative director of Elle. When asked about fashion bloggers and the fashion industry, Zee said: "...if you don't know what you're talking about, then do you have the credibility to talk about it?" Although most bloggers are considered untrained professionals by the industry, “consumers believe more in the product-related content or information created which other consumers generate on social networking sites, multimedia sites, blogs and so on than producer or company produced related content” (Mir & Zaheer, 2012). As such, the majority of the fashion industry has adapted to the evolution of fashion blogs. Now, bloggers are granted front-row seats at fashion shows, profiled by the New York Times, photographed for Vogue, and one even had a bag named after him by Marc Jacobs.

One major component of fashion marketing is maintaining a distinct and desirable brand image as the main source of differentiation (Sedeke & Arora, 2013). As such, it is vital for brands “to know and be able to influence the ‘what’ and ‘how’ people talk about the product or brand, and what influences their buying decisions” (Guzelis, 2010). Social media, and more specifically blogs, can act as a mediator between the fashion industry and its consumers (Sedeke & Arora, 2013). This allows a more global audience to be connected to the fashion industry. With the Internet and social media, fashion houses are able to listen to these consumer voices “in order to be informed not only about changing consumer needs and trends, but also to hear the customer’s opinion about competitors or products” (Gilfoil, 2010).

Additionally, being “fashionable” requires a certain level of involvement, through interaction with the right people in the right places about the right brands (Sedeke & Arora, 2013). However, fashion blogs have made fashion more accessible, as there are really not material limitations to enjoying fashion and style advice from the Internet. They are another source of information during the pre-purchasing phase of products, which makes them crucial to any marketing strategy (Park, Ahn & Kim, 2010) and they are perceived by the general public as another channel for fashion, as well as a source of authenticity and a display of the actual use of fashion (Sedeke & Arora, 2013). According to Thornley (2014),

When done in a manner worthy of audience attention, a blogger's personal style allows

the industry to be more transparent, relatable and available to the masses in a unique, interactive manner, thus, contributing to the significant conversations that blogs provide. Not only important to consumers around the world, but also to new designers who must compete with seasoned professionals, bloggers provide an outlet for the fashion industry to be accessible (p. 13).

Previous research has delved into the idea of authenticity in regards to fashion blogs and has discovered its importance. A study done by Alice Marwick (2013) defined authenticity as, an invaluable, yet ineffable quality which differentiates fashion blogging from its mainstream media counterparts, like fashion magazines and runway shows, in two ways. First, authenticity describes a set of affective relations between bloggers and their readers. Second, despite previous studies which have positioned “authenticity” as antithetical to branding and commodification, fashion bloggers see authenticity and commercial interests as potentially, but not necessarily, consistent (p. 1).

Moreover, a study by Edward McQuarrie, Jessica Miller and Barbara Phillips (2013) looks at the concept of the megaphone effect, “the fact that the web makes a mass audience potentially available to ordinary consumers.” An important aspect of their research revolves around the idea that the megaphone effect has an absence of institutional mediation - fashion bloggers acquired their initial audiences through their own work (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013).

Thus, fashion blogs are an important yet nontraditional source of information that can reach a variety of audiences.

Style Blogs and Advertising

Many bloggers were able to achieve success by fulfilling a need for a hobby of interest (Thornley, 2014). Although most began with photos of their personal style, these blogs have evolved and expanded, with some having audience numbers in the millions, forcing the industry to realize the apparent “influence of fashion bloggers that take on many roles; including advertiser, promoter and stylist — not just editorial” (Gibbon, 2011). Both fashion designers and bloggers benefit from partnerships between the two groups. The results of a study in Norway indicate that blog advertisements provide companies with a unique opportunity for market communication, in which aspects of the blogger’s credibility and influence can be viewed as superior to traditional advertising (Halvorsen et al, 2013) and can be more effective due to the heightened ability for targeting. Additionally, fashion blogs can indeed affect consumer behavior, due to their ability to create strong relationships between the author and readers, resulting in the advertisements being perceived as part of a continued, personal dialogue rather than intrusive (Halvorsen et al, 2013). Though blogs and influencers don’t get a large portion of brands’ digital spend, they rank high with consumers for trust, popularity and influence. When making overall purchase decisions, for consumers, blogs trail

only behind retail and brand sites. With regard to overall sources for information on the Internet, blogs rank among the top five “most trustworthy” sources. As an example, according to consumers, blogs are more influential in shaping opinion than Twitter, and when it comes to affecting purchase decisions, more important than Facebook (Technorati, 2013).

In addition to the fashion industry identifying influential bloggers, Technorati’s 2013 Digital Influence Survey found that bloggers are also seeking productive relationships with those Fashion houses that can benefit the bloggers’ readership. Nearly half of influencers report having been paid for a sponsored post or article (Technorati, 2013), but there are other forms of involvement between bloggers and the fashion industry, such as ecommerce, affiliate links, banners, text ads, brand-sponsored content and product reviews, all of which are listed among desired revenue methods by influencers (Technorati, 2013). One of the main reasons (61%) bloggers decide to work with a brand is because they have access to an audience the brand would want to reach. Other reasons for partnerships include the blogger’s affinity for the brand (68%), as well as affinity for the category (60%). As would be expected, successful branding opportunities for bloggers tend to come from public relations agencies that understand the industry, the bloggers’ needs and interests and those of their readers, and that accurately represent the time required of the blogger to engage in that partnership (Technorati, 2013).

In terms of benefits for bloggers, there are many different aspects to consider. First, in terms of the social setting of the blogosphere, interactions involving brands typically generate more audience members. Additionally, each time a viewer clicks on embedded content or advertising on a blog, bloggers are paid (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). But bloggers do not solely rely on advertisers; they're also making money from "affiliate" deals with major shopping sites, such as Net-a-Porter. In November 2009, their founder Natalie Massenet discussed how bloggers and affiliate sites represented 5 percent of the company's sales (Wilkinson, 2010). In recent years, bloggers are starting to make more money through affiliate sales than through advertising. One blogger reported that 65 percent of her revenue came through commissions on affiliate sales and 35 percent from advertisers (Wilkinson, 2010). The benefits for fashion bloggers do not stop there, however, as other bloggers have used their blogs as launching pads for more lucrative deals (Wilkinson, 2010). For example, some bloggers have earned writing gigs with popular fashion magazines, launched shoe and clothing collections and even been paid by Target to do a video promoting Rodarte's line for the store (Wilkinson, 2010).

It is clear that bloggers play an important role in the marketing and fashion industry. One study, conducted by Sun and Zhu (2013), aimed to see if popular content might be excessively supplied by bloggers when incentivized by ad revenue. To do this, they launched an ad-revenue- sharing program initiated by a major Chinese portal. Participating blogs

allowed the site to run ads on their blogs and received 50 percent of the revenue generated by these ads. After analyzing 4.4 million blog posts, Sun and Zhu (2013) discovered that after this program took effect, current popular topics were increased by about 13 percent compared to posts of blogs not participating in this program. The authors additionally claimed that the quality of posts increased as well (Sedeke & Arora, 2013).

Despite clear evidence supporting the importance of blogs, the majority of brands' overall digital spend goes to display advertising, search and video (Technorati, 2013). Only 10 percent of their media mix is spent on social, including influencer outreach (Technorati, 2013). Within their social budget, more than half goes to Facebook, followed by YouTube and Twitter, with the remaining 11 percent of their social spend going to blogs and influencers (Technorati, 2013). While spending on influencers is not the top priority for marketers, it is important to note that 65 percent of brands participate in influencer-based marketing (Technorati, 2013). Survey findings also indicate that many of those consumers are turning to blogs when looking to make a purchase; blogs were found to be the third-most influential digital resource (31%) when making overall purchases, behind only retail sites (56%) and brand sites (34%) (Technorati, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Why Individuals Create Blogs

There are a plethora of reasons for why people partake in blogging, either as the writers or the readers. Bonnie A. Nardi, Diane J. Schiano and Michelle Gumbrecht (2004) researched what compelled bloggers to post online. First, the authors suggest the importance of blogging as a social activity. Blogging is a unique situation because “blogs create the audience, but the audience also creates the blog” (Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004). Many bloggers stated that the primary reason for creating a blog was because their friends had suggested it and encouraged them. Moreover, bloggers write with their audiences in mind, and this attracts more people of similar opinions (Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004). Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) discovered that “blogging is as much about reading as writing, as much about listening as talking,” and provided the five following different motivations for participation.

1. Update others on activities and whereabouts
2. Express opinions to influence others
3. Seek others’ opinions and feedback
4. “Think by writing”
5. Release emotional tension

Why Consumers Use Blogs

As blogs expand to cover more markets, readers have become more involved. Rather than just reading blogs, consumers are now participating in dialogues, sharing their personal experiences and even contributing to other consumers' activities (Heinonen, 2011). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media can be categorized into collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (Heinonen, 2011).

Compared to corporate websites, blogs have several advantages in the eyes of the consumer. Corporate websites tend to primarily rely on graphics, while blogs focus more on text, which acts as an indicator of the veracity of the site as well as providing information (Menzie & Keyton, 2007). As previously mentioned, blogs also tend to be timelier in their content than corporate pages. Additionally, bloggers infuse their blog with their personalities and their names, which create a more credible environment compared to corporate web pages that do not identify the source. "Blogs restore a degree of individuality lost in corporate-owned media" (O'Brien, 2004, p. 4, Blogging America). Based on information activities, other researchers established six different virtual community membership types based on their communication and participation patterns:

1. Core members who contributed to the community the most by finding, supplying,

and discussing information.

2. Conversationalists, who solely discussed information.
3. Informationalists who both retrieved and supplied information.
4. Hobbyists, who maintained and updated their personal information on the website.
5. Functionalists who were interested in retrieving information.
6. Opportunists, who only retrieved marginal content from the website. (De Valck, Van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009)

Uses and gratifications

Another way to consider the reasoning behind blog usage is through uses and gratifications, a classic theory of mass communication first developed in 1940 that continues to have relevance to today's media landscape. The uses and gratifications perspective has been extremely useful throughout time for its contributions to understanding motivations of traditional media use such as radio (Herzog, 1940, 1944), television (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1981), newspapers (Berelson, 1949), books and magazines (Lichtenstein & Rosenfeld, 1984). Morris and Ogan's (1996) research was the pivotal turning point for research regarding the Internet. They argued that the Internet had evolved into a mass medium and deserved scholarly attention, specifically through the application of the uses and gratifications theory (Li, 2005). Uses and gratifications sets forth several assumptions: (a) individuals seek out

media, (b) media use is goal directed, (c) media exposure fulfills a variety of human needs, and (d) individuals seek out media that will gratify those needs (McLeod & Becker, 1981; Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985; Kaye, 2009). As such, this perspective is appropriate to apply to new media because of the presuppositions the theory makes. It is particularly important to study Internet and online media sources as they evolve as they are changing media choices for consumers. Online sources tend to be flexible, allowing for varying levels of activity because users are not equally active at all times (Ruggiero, 2000). Early studies involving the Internet treated it as a single mass medium (Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). However, a study by Johnson and Yang proposed the notion that the Internet is rather a medium of *multiple* mass media, as it offers access to a variety of forms of media, including traditional media with online streaming of radio programs and online newspaper editions. Other channels include instant messaging, blogs, and social media and networking site (Johnson & Yang, 2009).

When examining blogs, there are several dimensions to consider. First, blogs differ from other online sources because they allow varying levels of activity (Kaye, 2010). Though blog users can simply read posts, they are also able to interact with the blog, through clicking on links provided by others or sending in comments and links. Thus, readers are able to control their own level of participation, which may vary from one blog session to another and

from blog to blog (Kaye, 2010). It is important to note that blogs may differ among themselves. While the earliest blogs were online diaries, they evolved into general information blogs, which in turn became niche blogs, such as gardening and dog breeding blogs, and blogs hosted by various organizations and entities, such as the media and the military (Kaye, 2010). Blogs provide readers an opportunity to start a public dialogue, either by leaving comments, or sending feedback through email. Moreover, blogs generally do not exist in isolation, but rather in the blogosphere as part of this unique community; interconnectivity among blogs is highly valued and connections proliferate in the form of hyperlinks, trackbacks, and blogrolls. T. F. Stafford and M. R. Stafford pointed out that these motivations, as representatives of three levels of gratifications, were by all means related and thus should be taken into account simultaneously (Li, 2005).

According to research done by Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004), there are three main motives behind consumer participation in social media: information, entertainment, and social aspects (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade 2004). This has been further backed up by research on user-generated media (Shao, 2009; Courtois, Mechant, De Marez, & Verleye, 2009), which has identified information, entertainment, social interaction and community development, self-actualization, and self-expression as motives (Shao, 2009; Courtois et al., 2009). Additionally, Krishnamurthy and Dou (2008) categorized motivations into two

groups: rational motives and emotional motives. Rational motives include sharing knowledge and advocacy, while emotional motives include social connection and self-expression. Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009) discovered four motives for social networking sites: socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information. Barbara Kaye (2005) initially offered three motives identified through casual observation: community, convenience, and information seeking. However, her research indicated that there were six motivations for accessing weblogs: information seeking, convenience, personal fulfillment, political surveillance, social surveillance, and expression and affiliation. Kaye points out that the wide range of motivations are indicative of the eclectic nature of weblogs and how they are able to serve a variety of needs (Kaye, 2005). By interacting with or reading blogs, readers are able to gratify excitement, entertainment, and relaxation needs (Kaye, 2005). Additionally, they provide a sense of belonging to the blogosphere community, as they offer a way for individuals to publicly express their own opinions and to interact with like-minded individuals (Kaye, 2005). In a follow-up study in 2010, Barbara Kaye analyzed motivations for accessing blogs once more and found nine motivational factors: Convenient

Information Seeking, Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment, Expression/Affiliation, Guidance/Opinion Seeking, Blog Ambiance, Personal Fulfillment, Political Debate, Variety of Opinion, and Specific Inquiry. The following table indicates the previous motivations listed.

Clearly, blogging and accessing blogs are important topics to understand, but the research that exists is limited to examining the Internet or blogs as a whole. This paper aims to examine the motivations of the consumer and what drives them to follow style and fashion blogs, specifically. As indicated in the introduction, understanding consumer motivations is bound to be of interest to advertisers due to the magnitude of business implications. Despite this, prior research mostly focuses on the bloggers and the advertising. This leaves the understanding of consumers largely ignored, although there is some insight into consumer relations with social media. Thus, this study very practically builds on prior theoretical research and aims to fill a gap in consumer understanding.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research presented, the author has come up with two research questions as well as one hypothesis.

RQ1: What are the main gratifications sought by users of fashion and style blogs?

H1: Based on previous research findings as well as the author's research regarding fashion in particular, it is hypothesized that the following gratifications will be labeled as most important for users of fashion blogs: socialization, entertainment, social surveillance, and expression/affiliation. These gratifications have been purposefully selected from the motivations discussed in the previous pages. Please see Appendix A for a highlighted list of these motivations.

RQ2: Are the gratifications sought by users of style blogs different from those sought by users of blogs in general?

METHOD

Sample

The sample size consisted of 122 people recruited through Amazon mTurk and other University sources of convenience samples. To be eligible for the study, participants identified themselves as blog readers (n=90). A certain proportion of the sample consisted of those who specifically identified as fashion blog readers (n=55).

Data Collection

Data was collected through mTurk as well as Qualtrics Online Survey Software. Data collection took place during May and June of 2015. Respondents completed an electronic survey that was between 10 and 15 minutes in length.

Measures

The survey measures focused on the motivations for using fashion blogs as well as the motivations for blog use in general. The questions used in this research study build on the research previously discussed in the Literature Review. Although prior research focuses on social media and blogging in general, the measures used in these studies were easily adaptable in order to better understand consumer relations with fashion blogs.

To ensure proper participant recruitment, a series of screening questions was asked at the beginning of the survey. These questions asked the respondent to describe their Internet habits, and to indicate whether they read blogs and more specifically fashion blogs, amongst other types. As a second way to ensure the survey reached an audience with an appropriate level of Internet sophistication, a battery of psychographic questions were asked. Responses to the items indicated that respondents enjoy browsing on the Internet, and actively use the Internet for product information. For a full summary of these measures, see Appendix A. If they indicated they do not read blogs, they were asked for their demographics and the survey then ended. If they indicated that they do not read fashion blogs, they were sent to a set of questions regarding their motivations for using blogs in general. If they indicated they do read fashion blogs, they also completed a section regarding their motivations for using fashion blogs specifically. The scales used in this study have been adapted from previous research studies.

ANALYSIS

In order to understand the respondent pool as fully as possible, frequencies were conducted on demographic variables such as age, gender and ethnicity. To address the research questions and hypothesis posed in this research, the dataset was examined using t-tests to determine which motivations were the most important to those who read fashion blogs compared to those who read blogs in general. To be included in the analysis, the respondent must have answered each of the questions presented to them about blogs and fashion blogs.

RESULTS

At the time of this research being submitted, there were a total of 122 complete responses to the survey. Of the 122, 90 answered that they read blogs. Of the 98 who read blogs, 55 (62%) said they read fashion, style and beauty blogs. Of the total respondents, there were 63 females and 25 males who completed the survey. This distribution can be seen in Figure 1. In Figure 2, the race of respondents is displayed. The age range is 20 to 69, with the mean age being about 30 years old. Additionally, crosstabs were created, allowing the researcher to look at the age breakdown of the motivations for accessing fashion blogs. The majority of total responses for fashion blog motivations came from those who fall under the category of Millennials, with the most frequent result being from those aged 24. This corresponds with previous research that the main age group for accessing blogs is Millennials, those aged 18 to 33.

Figure 1

What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	24	19.4	27.6	27.6
	Female	63	50.8	72.4	100.0
	Total	87	70.2	100.0	
Missing	System	37	29.8		
	Total	124	100.0		

Figure 2

What is your ethnicity?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Asian	36	29.0	40.9	40.9
	African American	3	2.4	3.4	44.3
	Native American	1	.8	1.1	45.5
	White/Caucasian	45	36.3	51.1	96.6
	Other	3	2.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	88	71.0	100.0	
	System	36	29.0		
Missing	Total	124	100.0		

As noted above, to determine the main gratifications sought by users of fashion and style blogs, the researcher used a one-sample t-test to compare the means. The results for all items included in the questionnaire regarding fashion blog motivations are displayed in Figure 3. Means are based on a five-point scale.

Statistic	to get product information	for a wide variety of Information on fashion, style and beauty	to keep up with current events and trends in fashion	because blogs provide the most up-to-date information on fashion	for specific product information	because I want to learn something new about fashion or beauty
Min Value	2	1	2	2	3	2
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.18	4.16	4.13	3.89	4.27	4.16
Variance	0.63	0.62	0.63	0.65	0.39	0.51
Standard Deviation	0.80	0.79	0.79	0.81	0.62	0.71
Total Responses	55	55	55	55	55	55
Statistic	to relieve boredom	because I'm addicted to them	because they help me relax	to compare my opinions to others	to keep up with fashion news and trends	because fashion blogs are exciting
Min Value	2	1	1	1	2	2
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.04	3.18	3.91	3.84	4.24	4.07
Variance	0.70	1.82	0.90	0.77	0.59	0.81
Standard Deviation	0.84	1.35	0.95	0.88	0.77	0.90
Total Responses	55	55	55	55	55	55
Statistic	for links to more information sources	for access to style and fashion experts	to communicate with friends who have fashion blogs	for information for my own style blog	to express my opinions about styles, fashion and trends	
Min Value	2	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	3.98	3.96	3.38	3.24	3.29	3.29
Variance	0.65	0.85	1.76	2.00	1.80	1.80
Standard Deviation	0.80	0.92	1.33	1.41	1.34	1.34
Total Responses	55	55	55	55	55	55
Statistic	to make a social connection with others	to be in contact with like-minded people	to feel involved in the fashion industry	because fashion blogs are independent of traditional media	for credible information (not found in traditional media)	
Min Value	1	1	2	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	3.56	3.71	3.80	3.60	3.58	3.58
Variance	1.47	0.99	0.87	1.24	1.06	1.06
Standard Deviation	1.21	0.99	0.93	1.12	1.03	1.03
Total Responses	55	55	55	55	55	55

Based on these data, the main gratifications sought by users of fashion blogs are as follows:

1. For specific product information (mean = 4.27)
2. To keep up fashion news and trends (mean = 4.24)
3. To get product information (mean = 4.18)
4. For a wide variety of information on fashion, style and beauty (mean = 4.16)
5. Because I want to learn something new about fashion or beauty (mean = 4.16)
6. To keep up with current events and trends in fashion (mean = 4.13)
7. Because fashion blogs are exciting (mean = 4.07)
8. To relieve boredom (mean = 4.04)

Due to the sample size, as well as the closeness in means across some of the variables, the researcher cannot report that the eight items above received higher scores at a statistically significant level. However, these results mostly confirm the researcher's hypothesis that socialization, entertainment, social surveillance, and expression/affiliation would be labeled as most important for users of fashion blogs. Social surveillance appears to be the most important gratification, as looking for general information on fashion, style and beauty as well as looking

for product information and keeping up with current events and trends fall under this gratification. Entertainment was also important, as participants said that blogs are exciting to them and relieve boredom. However, socialization (e.g. to make a social connection with others), as well as expression/affiliation (e.g. to be in contact with like-minded people) did not seem to be as important to fashion blog readers.

In order to determine if the gratifications sought by users of style blogs differ from those sought by users of blogs in general, t-tests were conducted to compare the means on general blog items and fashion blog items. The main reasons for accessing blogs in general are as follows:

1. For specific information of interest (mean = 4.25)
2. Because I want to learn something new (4.13)
3. To get information (mean = 4.12)
4. To relieve boredom (4.03)
5. Because its easy access to information (mean = 4.02)
6. For a wide variety of information (mean = 4.01)

Based on these results, there are a few differences in the motivations for accessing blogs versus fashion blogs. Respondents look to blogs in general because it is easy access to information, while they look specifically at fashion blogs because they are exciting. However, the majority of main motivations for accessing blogs are the same motivations for accessing fashion blogs. Once again, it was not possible to list the six items above due to statistical significance; therefore, the researcher decided that scores above four, which represents solid agreement are

noteworthy.

DISCUSSION

The impetus for this research comes from the knowledge that the fashion industry spends a significant amount of money on blogs in a variety of different ways. Brands send bloggers samples, invite them to shows and events and even sometimes name their products after them. This is a symbiotic relationship, as bloggers in return receive more credibility and notoriety from their audiences. Moreover, it is clear that fashion blogs make up a significant portion of the blogosphere. Despite this, research has never looked at what the audience receives from fashion blogs, and as such their motivations for visiting fashion blogs have never been determined. While motivations for accessing blogs in general have been discussed, fashion and style blogs are a niche of the blogosphere that has captivated a majority of people and advertising dollars.

As such, discovering that social surveillance and entertainment are the biggest reasons for audiences to access fashion blogs helps bloggers and brands alike determine what kind of content is more likely to garner attention. It is interesting to see that the main gratifications for accessing blogs in general and the main gratifications for accessing fashion blogs are almost identical.

Another interesting aspect of the results regards the most prominent age group. This research found that the most common people who read fashion blogs are those aged 18 to

33, or Millennials. This is a particularly important discovery because the Millennials are becoming the most important group to market to. An article in the New York Times explains that although Millennials have less spending power and more debt than other generations, they are influencing more spending (Stout, 2015). This is due to the fact that they are headed away from the more infantile stages of adulthood to more mature aspirations. Additionally, this demographic is enormous, with about 80 million Millennials in the United States alone, which is larger than any other demographic. There are also more Millennials in the American workforce than either Generation Xers or baby boomers. As such, “businesses are terrified that if they don’t snare them now, they’ll miss the chance” (Stout, 2015). Thus, this research provides some insight that fits practically into the current marketing trends.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a few limitations to this research. The sample size was not as large as the researcher wanted. Additionally, the researcher used convenience samples, which limits generalization. Moreover, there were some time restrictions around the period of data collections that caused seasonality to become a factor and may have precluded a large data set.

Future research should look employ qualitative methods to find out more about the product information consumers are primarily seeking. One-on-one interviews would allow researchers to delve deeper into the needs of fashion blog readers. Additionally, research with focus groups could allow bloggers to determine ways to make their content and their partnerships more compelling to consumers.

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Appendix A

Motivations for Using Social Media Chart

Motivations	Authors
1. Information 2. Entertainment 3. Social aspects	Stafford, Stafford and Schkade, 2004
1. Information seeking 2. Convenience 3. Personal fulfillment 4. Political surveillance 5. Social surveillance 6. Expression and affiliation	Kaye, 2005

1. Rational motives 2. Emotional motives	Krishnamurthy and Dou, 2008
1. Socializing 2. Entertainment 3. Self-status seeking 4. Information	Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information, 2. Entertainment 3. Social interaction and community development 4. Self-actualization 5. Self-expression 	<p>Shao, 2009; Courtois, Mechant, De Marez, & Verleye, 2009</p>
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<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Convenient Information Seeking2. Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment3. Expression/Affiliation4. Guidance/Opinion Seeking5. Blog Ambiance6. Personal Fulfillment7. Political Debate8. Variety of Opinion9. Specific Inquiry	Kaye, 2010
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Appendix B

Sample Survey

Section 1: Please answer the following questions about your Internet habits.

1. How often do you use social media?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Never

2. What forms of social media are you likely to use?
 - a. Blogs
 - b. Facebook
 - c. Twitter
 - d. Instagram
 - e. Pinterest

3. Do you read blogs?

a. Yes

b. No

4. How often do you read blogs?

a. Daily

- b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Never
5. What type of blogs do you read?
- a. Hobby
 - i. Please describe
 - b. Fashion/beauty
 - c. DIY
 - d. Food/Cooking
 - e. Other
 - i. Please describe

Section 2: Psychographics

Below is a series of statements. Please indicate the extent to which you feel they describe you.

1. I often am the first amongst my family and friends to try new things.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

2. The Internet is the best place to get information about products and services

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

3. I consider myself computer-savvy

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

4. I like browsing on the Internet.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

5. I often go to the Internet to preview products.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

6. I often go to the Internet for product reviews or recommendations.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

7. I like to go shopping with my friends.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

8. I'd have a hard time searching the Internet to find what I need.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

9. I enjoy buying things on the Internet.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

10. Friends and family members often come to me when they have questions

relating to the Internet.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Section 3: Below is a series of statements about blogs. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the statements.

I typically access blogs...

1. to get information

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

2. to access information at any time

- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
3. because it's easy to access information
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
4. for a wide variety of information
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
5. to keep up with current events
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
6. because blogs provide the most up-to-date information
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
7. for specific information of interest
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
8. because I want to learn something new
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
9. for links to more information sources
- Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
10. for depth of information

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

11. for access to experts

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

12. because bloggers save me time looking around for important news

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

13. to communicate with friends who have blogs

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

14. for information for my own blog

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

15. to express my opinions

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

16. to make a social connection with others

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

17. to be in contact with like-minded people

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

18. to feel involved

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

19. because blogs are independent of traditional media

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

20. for credible information (not found in traditional media)

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

21. to relieve boredom

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

22. because I'm addicted to them

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

23. because they help me relax

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

24. to compare my opinions to others

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

25. to keep up with social issues and trends

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

26. because blogs are exciting

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Section 4: For the following please indicate the extent to which the following statements reflect how you feel about fashion blogs?

I typically use fashion blogs...

1. to get product information

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

2. for a wide variety of information on fashion, style and beauty

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

3. to keep up with current events and trends in fashion

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

4. because blogs provide the most up-to-date information on fashion

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

5. for specific product information

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

6. because I want to learn something new about fashion or beauty

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

7. for links to more information sources

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

8. for access to style and fashion experts

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

9. to communicate with friends who have fashion blogs

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

10. for information for my own style blog

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

11. to express my opinions about styles, fashion and trends

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

12. to make a social connection with others

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

13. to be in contact with like-minded people

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

14. to feel involved in the fashion industry

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

15. because blogs are independent of traditional media

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

16. for credible information (not found in traditional media)

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

17. to relieve boredom

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

18. because I'm addicted to them

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

19. because they help me relax

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

20. to compare my opinions to others

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

21. to keep up with fashion news and trends

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

22. because fashion blogs are exciting

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Section 5: The following questions ask for basic information about you. Please be assured that your information will be kept confidential.

1. Please enter your age in the space provided. _____
2. What is your gender?

- a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your race?
- a. Asian
 - b. African American

- c. Native American
- d. White/Caucasian
- e. Other