

A Study on the Influence of the Characteristics of Power Blogs and the User's Trust on the Purchasing Intention¹

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Abstract. This study focused on the analysis of the factors influencing trust of power blog users, and the effect of trust on the user's purchasing intention. The research model of this study is based on the process of establishing trust. The quality of information (scope, accuracy, currency, uniqueness, links made to other resources, and the quality of writing) and the reputation of power blogs (recognized reputation and size) were established as the factors related to the level of trust for power blogs. The analysis was carried out through the survey based on 122 respondents with the experience of using power blogs. According to the result of the study, it was found that the quality of information and the reputation of power blogs had a considerable influence on trust. Such factors as scope, uniqueness and links made to other resources had an influence on trust, while the recognized size was recognized as the factor behind the reputation of power blogs. Also, trust was found to have a significant influence on the user's attitude and Behavioral Intention. It is expected that the result of this study will provide practical issues in terms of the marketing method based on the utilization of power blogs.

Keywords: Power Blog, Information Quality, Reputation, Trust, Attitude, Behavioral Intention

1. Introduction

Power blogs are referred as the blogs which have a strong level of specialization and influence in a specific field and have a lot of visitors or subscribers, having a great level of influence on other people's ideas and actions [11]. According to the research report provided by DMC Media [11], 48.5% of the Internet users had the experience of using power blogs. In particular, such blogs were found to have a high level of influence on the user's purchasing intention through the feedback and evaluations provided by the subscribers. Also, it seems that companies are greatly interested in the marketing method based on blogs, providing a great amount of investment in the field. As a result, more and more people are considering the use of blogs in a commercial way.

However, even if the social influence and the size of each blog have increased in an explosive way, there have not been many detailed studies regarding blogs. In particular, there has been almost no study about power blogs [8].

The objective of this study is to understand the organic causal relationship between the establishment of trust by power blogs and the user's Behavioral Intention. Through this study, it will be possible to establish the trust-related factors for the users of power blogs and predict their purchasing intention, making a great contribution to the utilization of power blogs by the operators of power blogs and companies which consider such blogs as a strong and effective marketing tool.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Power Blogs

The term 'Blog' originates from 'Weblog' consisting of 'Web' which means the Internet and 'Log' which means a journal [13]. Also, the term 'Power Blog' is used to refer to the blog which has a high level of

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specialization and influence in a specific field with a lot of visitors or subscribers, influencing other people's ideas and actions [11]. Although the websites for making acquaintances (including www.friendster.com) and specialized blogs seem to exist separately in the US, it seems that there are various websites combining blogs and those for making friends in Korea [1]. Because of such a characteristic shown by the blogs in Korea, the blogs operated by companies could have advantageous conditions in terms of marketing. As a result, blogs have become the most efficient strategic marketing medium faster than any other object [3].

2.2. A Study on the Online Trust

The online trust is related to the activities executed through the electronic medium of a website on the Internet. Such factors as technologies and the Internet itself become the subjects of the online trust. It would be necessary for the online trust to be reflected on the offline one based on the technological factors and the characteristics of the Internet. Also, at the same time, it can be said that there is a difference between the process of establishing trust which could lead to the user's re-purchasing intention and the previous one executed in the traditional physical space [4].

Regarding the process for the establishment of the online trust, Doney and Cannon [12] said that the establishment of trust would depend entirely on the user's level of expectation towards the motives and actions of those subject to trust. They suggested five processes (including calculative process, prediction process, capability process, intentional process, and transference process) for the establishment of trust in terms of businesses.

Since the objective of this study was to find the influential factors regarding the establishment of trust for power blogs, it focused on the level of trust recognized by the users of power blogs towards such a type of blog. Also, it focused on the establishment of analyzing factors through the level of trust between power blogs and their users.

The factors which influence the establishment of trust for power blogs can be classified into two categories. One of them is the quality of information, while the other is the recognized reputation and size. Throughout this study, the factors related to the quality of information included scope, accuracy, currency, uniqueness, links made to other resources, and the quality of writing, which have been extracted from the study suggested by Smith, Alastair G. [19] in regard to the evaluation of the Internet information resources.

Jarvenpaa et al. [20] defined the level of trust towards the online stores as 'consumers' action based on their intention to depend on sellers in the environment where consumers can be easily deceived by sellers'. They found that such influential factors as the recognized size and reputation had a significant influence on the establishment of trust.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Research Model

In order to provide an answer for the question 'What are the factors which influence the Behavioral Intention shown by the users of power blogs?', this study suggested the research model consisting of five hypotheses as shown in [Figure 1] based on the studies carried out by Doney and Cannon [12], Sulim Ba [18], and Smith, Alastair G. [19]. The operational definition for each variable is shown in [Table 1], while the discussion for the justification of the detailed hypotheses will be dealt in the next chapter.

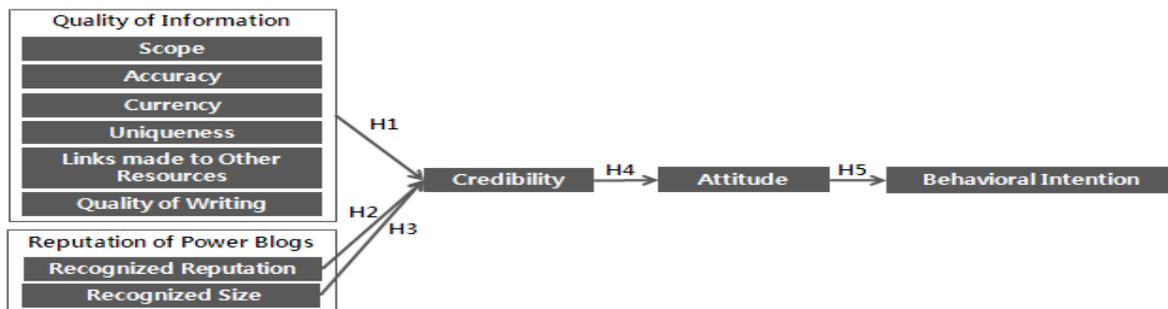


Fig. 1: Research Model

Table 1: Operational Definition of Variables

Variable		Operational Definition	Reference
Quality of Information	Scope	The amount and level of information for power blogs	[19]
	Accuracy	The level of accuracy for power blogs	[19]
	Currency	The amount of the latest information provided by power blogs on time	[19]
	Uniqueness	The originality of information for power blogs	[19]
	Links made to Other Resources	The quality of the links related to the information of power blogs	[19]
Reputation of Power Blogs	Quality of Writing	The grammatical quality of the information of power blogs and the number of spelling errors	[19]
	Recognized Reputation	The level of user's recognition towards the reputation and awareness of power blogs	[10,21]
	Recognized Size	The level of user's recognition towards the size of power blogs and their share in the related market	[10,21]
	Trust	The level of honesty and trust shown by the information of power blogs	[12,14]
	Attitude	The level of interest and preference towards the information of power blogs	[14]
	Behavioral Intention	The user's purchasing intention and the level of recommendation based on the acceptance of the information of power blogs	[14]

3.2. Hypotheses

This model assumed that the quality of information and the reputation of power blogs could influence the level of trust with a significant level of influence given by the trust-related factors on the user's purchasing intention.

3.2.1. Quality of Information and Credibility

Kim, Song, Braynov and Rao [15] established a multi-dimensional model of trust in regard to the establishment of the consumers' online trust for the websites in the B2C environment, while suggesting such dimensions as actions, systems, information, products, technologies, and business transactions for the establishment of the online trust. Also, regarding the dimensions related to the online information influencing the establishment of the online trust, they suggested accuracy, usefulness, understandability, completeness, honesty, practicality, and neutrality. Mukherjee and Nath [16] suggested the value of sharing and the communicative and opportunistic actions as the factors which had to be considered for the establishment of the online trust for the Internet banking websites, while saying that the constant communication between consumers and online websites consisted of openness, responding speed and the quality of information. In a similar way, Lee Chunyeol, Jeong Seungryeol and Shin Gilhwan [7] suggested such factors as the consistency, usefulness, understandability, and clarity of the online contents as the determining factors behind the online trust for the Internet users. Meanwhile, Lee Gukyong [6] said that such factors as the accuracy and variety of the online contents in any online community could influence the consumers' online trust. Therefore, the following hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 1. The quality of information for power blogs could have a positive influence on the level of trust.

3.2.2. Reputation and Credibility

The online reputation can be regarded as an important factor for the establishment of trust. Since consumers do not have any personal experience of contacting the online merchants, the reputation of the online stores could become a main factor which could be used to induce consumers towards the Internet shopping malls. Because of such characteristics shown by the online stores, the reputation of power blogs (including the recognized reputation and size) could have a significant influence on the establishment of trust by the users of the online stores. Therefore, the following hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 2. The recognized reputation of power blogs could have a positive influence on the establishment of trust.

Hypothesis 3. The recognized size of power blogs could have a positive influence on the establishment of trust.

3.2.3. Attitude and Behavioral Intention

Various studies were carried out in regard to the user's purchasing intention, Behavioral Intention and using intention following the establishment of the online trust. According to the 'Theory of Rational Actions

(TRA) and the 'Theory of Planned Actions' suggested by Fishbein and Ajzen [14], voluntary actions were known to be determined by the intention to carry out actions. Also, by measuring one's purchasing intention, it would be possible to predict one's purchasing action in the future [17, 20].

Domestically, many studies were carried out regarding the establishment between the process of establishing trust and the Behavioral Intention by targeting the potential customers visiting online shopping malls. As the factors influencing the level of trust, benefits, recognition of danger, brands (reputation), purchasing experience, and oral recommendations were suggested, which had a significant influence on the user's purchasing intention following the establishment of trust [5]. As the factors influencing the establishment of trust towards in any online community, the reputation of a community, the sense of social existence, and pleasure were suggested. Also, the relationship between the trust of a community and the user's purchasing intention was studied [2].

It can be predicted that the factors influencing the establishment of trust through power blogs could have an influence on the Behavioral Intention shown by those who personally purchase products or visit sightseeing spots or famous restaurants. Therefore, the following hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 4. The trust could have a positive influence on one's attitude.

Hypothesis 5. The attitude could have a positive influence on one's Behavioral Intention.

4. Research Method

4.1. Development of a Measurement

The variables used in this study were adjusted by the researcher suitably for the study environment based on the measuring tools with verified trust and validity shown by the previous studies. Every variable was measured with five survey categories by using the five-point Likert scale. Also, the measuring tools with verified effectiveness were adjusted suitably according to the study environment for power blogs. Throughout this study, a total number of 35 categories were formed for the measurement of variables. The subordinate factors required for the measurement of the quality of information for power blogs included scope, accuracy, uniqueness, and links made to other resources, which consisted of three categories respectively, and the quality of writing, which consisted of four categories. The subordinate factors required to measure the reputation of power blogs included the recognized reputation and size, which consisted of three categories respectively. Also, in order to measure the trust and attitude of power blogs, each factor consisted of three categories respectively, while the Behavioral Intention consisted of four categories [11, 12, 21].

4.2. Collection of Data and the Characteristics of Respondents

An online survey was carried out by targeting those who had the experience of using power blogs for at least two weeks after May, 2010. Regarding the power blogs handled through the survey, the blogs certified as power blogs for different categories of various portal blogs (including DAUM and NAVER) were chosen as targets. A total number of 135 questionnaires were completed and returned by the individuals using such blogs. The overlapping answers based on errors and those without having clear names of the power blogs which were often visited were excluded. As a result, a total number of 122 questionnaires were finally used for the analysis.

By using the statistical analysis based on SPSS 12.0, this study analyzed validity and trust, while measuring the appropriateness of the study model through the multiple regression analysis and verifying various hypotheses. The demographic characteristics of the 122 respondents who were the targets of this study consisted of genders, ages, academic backgrounds, and occupations. Based on such characteristics, it was found that the respondents included 59 men and 63 women, showing the rates of 48.4% and 51.6% respectively. Based on ages, it was found that there were 25 people under 19, 56 people between 20 and 29, 30 people between 30 and 39, 9 people between 40 and 49, and 2 people above the age of 50, showing 20.5%, 45.9%, 24.6%, 7.4%, and 1.6% respectively. Based on academic backgrounds, there were 34 high-school graduates, 27 university students, 53 university graduates, 6 graduate-school students, and 2 graduate-school graduates, showing 27.9%, 22.1%, 43.4%, 4.9%, and 1.6% respectively. Regarding occupations, there were

35 university students (including undergraduate and graduate-school students), 11 sole proprietors, 11 professionals, 6 housewives, 23 middle and high-school students, 27 office workers, and 9 others, showing 28.7%, 9.0%, 9.0%, 4.9%, 18.9%, 22.1%, and 7.4% respectively.

5. Results

5.1. Validity and Reliability Analysis

Validity represents the accurate level of measurement regarding the concepts and attributes to be measured through a survey. Throughout this study, the Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) method and the EquaMax Rotational Method were used for the verification of validity. The variables with verified validity based on the analysis of the related factors could be used to prevent any possible problem regarding multicollinearity which could occur when the correlation between different variables is high regarding the execution of the regression analysis, and increase the utility of such an analysis. Throughout this study, a total number of 35 categories were used for the analysis of the related factors in order to measure each factor.

According to the results of the analysis, among the 35 categories, those subject to Accuracy 1, Accuracy 2, Accuracy 3, Currency 3, Quality of Writing 3, and Recognized Reputation 1 showed the factor loadings less than 0.6. Through such a process, all the categories of accuracy, which is the subordinate variable for the quality of information, were disqualified and excluded from the subject variables. The remaining 30 categories showed the factor loadings above 0.6. As a result, they could be regarded as appropriate categories for the measurement of the composing concepts.

Trust is related to the internal consistency, which is the ability to measure a specific phenomenon consistently by using a certain measuring tool. Throughout this study, various categories were used to measure each composing concept. Also, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were used to verify trust in regard to the influence of each category on the internal consistency.

According to the results of the analysis, the factors chosen for the measurement of the composing concepts showed the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.6 in regard to the level of trust for each factor. As a result, it can be said that each measured category has internal consistency.

5.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses of this study, SPSS 12.0 was used to carry out the regression analysis based on the collected data.

According to the results of the analysis, the adjusted R square coefficient, which is the criteria used to measure the level of appropriateness for the values observed through the regression lines, showed the values of 0.409, 0.246 and 0.394 respectively. According to the results of the regression analysis, about 40.9%, 24.6% and 39.4% of the changes related to such dependent variables as trust, attitude and Behavioral Intention could be explained by the leading factors. Also, the regression model showed such significant F values as 11.271, 39.188 and 77.857 (Sig=.000) respectively.

According to the results of the regression analysis which was carried out to verify the hypotheses related to various parameters, such factors as scope ($t=3.383$, $p\text{-value}=0.001$), uniqueness ($t=2.261$, $p\text{-value}=0.026$), links made to other resources ($t=2.113$, $p\text{-value}=0.037$), and the recognized reputation ($t=2.556$, $p\text{-value}=0.037$) had an influence on the establishment of trust. Meanwhile, such factors as currency ($t=0.296$, $p\text{-value}=0.768$), quality of writing ($t=-1.761$, $p\text{-value}=0.081$), and the recognized size ($t=-0.159$, $p\text{-value}=0.012$) did not have any influence on the establishment of trust. Therefore, such hypotheses as H1-1, H1-3, H1-4, and H2 were chosen, while H1-2, H1-5, and H3 were refused. Next, it was found that the trust ($t=6.260$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) had a positive influence on one's attitude, while the attitude ($t=8.824$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) had a positive influence on one's Behavioral Intention. Therefore, such hypotheses as H4 and H5 were chosen. The results of the verification of such hypotheses could be organized in Table 2

Table 2: Verified Results of the Hypotheses of the Study

Hypothesis	Route	Route Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
H1-1	Scope→Trust	.281	3.383	.001	Supported
H1-2	Currency→Trust	.023	.296	.768	Rejected
H1-3	Uniqueness→Trust	.180	2.261	.025	Supported

H1-4	Links made to other resources→Trust	.189	2.113	.037	Supported
H1-5	Quality of writing→Trust	-.129	-1.761	.081	Rejected
H2	Recognized reputation→Trust	.221	2.556	.012	Supported
H3	Recognized size→Trust	-.013	-.159	.874	Rejected
H4	Trust→Attitude	.496	6.260	.000	Supported
H5	Attitude→Behavioral Intention	.627	8.824	.000	Supported

6. Conclusion

The objective of this study is to secure the factors related to the establishment of trust for the users of power blogs, and to predict the user's Behavioral Intention, providing the issues related to the utilization of power blogs. For such a purpose, a study model was created based on the process of establishing trust. Also, a survey was carried out by targeting the users of power blogs. The results of this study and the related issues could be organized as follows.

First, it was found that such factors as scope, links made to other resources, and uniqueness, which determine the quality of information for power blogs, had a significant influence on the trust of power blogs. The scope, depth or level of information for power blogs determines the differences between ordinary and power blogs, having a significant influence on the level of trust. Also, the links made to other resources in regard to the information provided by power blogs not only provide objective and specific reviews by operators, but also any additional information, playing an important role in the process of establishing trust for power blogs. The uniqueness of power blogs helps the users of power blogs to establish trust towards power blogs with the reviews and introduction for the products and services which cannot be shown through other blogs. Meanwhile, as more users become accustomed to the Internet culture, such factors as the quality of writing and currency of information for power blogs are considered less important than the scope, links made to other resources, and uniqueness.

Secondly, among the determining factors of the reputation of power blogs, the recognized reputation was found to have a significant influence on the establishment of trust for power blogs. Even if certain power blogs were known well in specific fields and those with good images could be easily trusted by users, it was found that it was not that easy for any large-sized or representative blog to obtain users' trust. It was shown that users showed their sympathy and trust towards the information of the power blogs which posted good articles regardless of the size.

Thirdly, the quality of information and the reputation of power blogs had a significant influence on such factors as the user's trust, attitude and Behavioral Intention. The trust of power blogs had a significant influence on one's attitude, while the user's attitude had a considerable influence on one's Behavioral Intention. Such results were also shown by various other studies.

Fourthly, it was found that the factors with the biggest influence among those related to the quality of information and the reputation of power blogs included the scope, recognized reputation, uniqueness and links made to other resources in order. When choosing power blogs and establishing trust towards them, users carefully considered such factors as the scope and depth of information, while considering the images of the subject power blogs. Other than the scope of information, the remaining factors related to the quality of information had a lower influence than the recognized reputation. Such a fact could be regarded as one of the issues related to the oral reputation in the Internet environment. According to the results of the study, users could establish their trust for power blogs based on the depth of information. If it is impossible to trust the reputation of power blogs, such other factors as the uniqueness of information and the links made to other resources could not be trusted either.

According to the results of this study, the quality of information and the reputation of power blogs had a significant influence on the establishment of trust. The level of trust had a considerable influence on the users' attitude and Behavioral Intention. In terms of the critical point, it was impossible to generalize the entire results of the study, since there were not enough answers made for the survey. It would be necessary to try hard to secure proper ground data by spending enough time.

7. Reference

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