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BLOGGING FOR PROFIT IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

by

SAMANTHA LEE WARREN
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2018

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric
in the College of Arts & Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct an autoethnographic analysis on my literate activities as a blogger to better understand the content creation and monetization practices of modern bloggers. In Chapter 1, I introduce readers to my blog and discuss some current lines of scholarship on blogging. In Chapter 2, I discuss my research methods and justify my use of autoethnography for my study. In Chapters 3 and 4, I explain my content creation and monetization processes in detail. In Chapter 5, I draw conclusions from my analysis and provide a few further directions for research. My suggestions for future research include to analyze other bloggers' work, use different research methods in addition to autoethnography, and look at different types of blogs instead of just sites in the lifestyle category. One of my key takeaways from my research is that blogging is an interdisciplinary activity that requires skills in not just writing, but design, technology, and marketing.

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF MODERN PROFESSIONAL BLOGGING, MAJOR LINES OF RESEARCH ON MODERN BLOGGING, AND INTRODUCTION TO MY OWN BLOGGING

In this chapter, I discuss some of the current scholarship on blogging and introduce my experiences with my blog, *Style of Change*.

The current state of modern professional blogging

Twenty-first century blogging has turned writers into influencers. Influencers are people who monetize their digital content creation and social media presence. Although the first blogs emerged in the mid-twentieth century as online personal diaries, many modern blogs can affect consumers' purchasing decisions, which makes them valuable assets for businesses (Clark, Gilbert, & Roy, 2016). Today, bloggers help businesses make more personal connections with their consumers and provide avenues for two-way engagement (Clark, Gilbert, & Roy, 2016).

As blogs gained popularity and clout, so did their writers. The power of blogs provides writers with increased exposure and many new ways to monetize their work. Skilled bloggers can earn full-time incomes just from posting on their websites. Historically, writers have struggled to publish or monetize their work, but today's blogs make it easy for them to do both. As blogs and other online publications continue to grow, so will the

power of twenty-first century writers.

Key definitions

Blogging is a form of writing, but it also has technical aspects. Successful bloggers must develop skills in technology, web design, and visual rhetoric. Because blogging involves many different disciplines, there is some blogging-related terminology that would likely confuse people who are not familiar with blogs. Therefore, I have defined some crucial blogging terms that I use throughout the rest of the thesis. The following definitions are crucial for the understanding of how blogs function.

Blog

Simply defined, a “weblog” or “blog” is a digital platform in which one or more users can type and publish short written works called posts. It is a type of website. “Blog” is a broad term that can refer to many different platforms, including personal commentaries, news sources, entertainment websites, or other digital outlets. Writers who publish their work on blogs are called “bloggers.” For many years, “blogger” was the main term used to describe a person who wrote blog posts. However, the term “influencer” is now also used to describe prominent bloggers or social media users who utilize their platforms to help brands reach consumers. Although some influencers use solely their social media accounts to connect with their followers, many also have blogs with engaged readerships. From the perspectives of both social media users and brands, influencers

are new-age celebrities who maintain personal connections with their followers, making them powerful marketers (Kratochvil, 2018).

Comment

Blog posts that allow comments allow readers to provide written feedback on the content. Most social media platforms also allow readers to comment on posts.

Header

The header is at the top of the blog, and it usually includes a navigation bar, logo, and tagline for the blog. The header usually appears at the top of all pages or posts on the blog.

BEAUTY / LIFESTYLE / TRAVEL / CREATIVE / VIDEOS



Style of Change

— beauty, travel, & good vibes —

BLOG VIDEOS GIVEAWAYS SUBSCRIBE CONTACT



Figure 1: Style of Change blog header

Influencer network

An influencer network is a platform that connects bloggers with companies or organizations that are seeking influencers to promote their products or services.

Meta

In Wordpress, which is the blogging platform I use, “meta” refers to administrative information about a blog post. The meta data I pay most attention to are the title and description. I enter custom meta titles and meta descriptions for all of my blog posts so I can customize the information about my blog post that appears in search engine results.

Plugin

In Wordpress, a plugin is an installable function that can extend the capabilities of a theme. I use several plugins to streamline my content creation process, such as Yoast SEO. I discuss my use of plugins in Chapter 3.

Search engine optimization (SEO)

SEO is crucial for bloggers who want to gain more exposure for their content. Bloggers improve their SEO to improve the ranking of their blog posts in relevant search engine results. SEO is one of the most effective free ways for bloggers to increase their page views.

Sponsorship

A company or organization pays a blogger to create a sponsored post, usually to promote a product or service.

Subscribe

When readers want to receive notifications of new blog posts, they can subscribe to the blogger. Usually, subscriptions are processed through RSS feeds or email marketing software.

Tagline

A blog's tagline is its slogan, or the description of the blog's content in a few words.

Theme

On Wordpress, a theme is an interface that provides the visual platform for a blog and organizes its elements. The theme is the main design of a blog site.

Widget

On Wordpress, a widget is a small component that performs a particular function. They act as add-ons to the main theme, and they are usually located in the header, footer, or sidebar of a blog.

Wordpress

Wordpress is a website creation platform that is optimized for bloggers. It is not the main website hosting interface. Instead, it acts like software installed onto the main website. Wordpress serves as an all-in-one platform for bloggers to create, publish, and optimize their content.

Current lines of scholarship on blogging

Bloggers and social media influencers are key players in online word-of-mouth marketing. While blogs are an integral part of marketing strategy today, they were not always so prominent. Since the first blog was created in 1994, the definition of the term “blog” has expanded and evolved. Originally, blogs were simply personal publications or online diaries (Boyd, 2010). However, with the development of social media and the creation of digital communities, blogs suddenly became very social.

Online influencers are now vital to modern marketing schemas. Influencer marketing is similar to the celebrity testimonial, a common form of traditional advertising. In a testimonial, the advertiser chooses a celebrity to promote the product and encourage the target audience to purchase it. Influencers are modern celebrities in their own way because they reach a large number of people, target niche audiences, and have the ability to influence people’s purchasing decisions. Today, influencers can have even more power than traditional celebrities because they build stronger rapport with their

audiences. Often, audiences trust influencers more because they view them as regular people instead of inaccessible celebrities.

Influencer marketing employs a strategy called online word-of-mouth. Online word-of-mouth simply means telling a friend or follower about a product over the internet. In the last decade, it has become a widespread form of advertising. In the past decade, bloggers have become important to the promotion strategies of many businesses, especially those targeting Millennials (Clark, Gilbert, & Roy, 2016). With the expansion of digital environments, blogs gain more influence in academic, business, and personal settings.

Understanding the historical and rhetorical context of blogging is important to fully appreciate its merit. Because the term “blog” is so broad, people have many different motivations for writing blogs. To gain a true understanding of the role blogs play in business, it is crucial to analyze influencer marketing from the perspectives of both bloggers and brands.

The context of blogging

As new forms of literacy emerge with the advancement of technology, scholars revise the definitions of online literacy and digital composing to better fit modern practices. However, Composition Studies still hold prejudices and stereotypes toward the legitimacy of digital literacy (Blackburn, 2010). It is important for educators to

incorporate digital literacies into their curricula. Instead of marginalizing digital literacies, educators should shed the hierarchy that promotes print as the only legitimate form of literacy (Blackburn, 2010). Web surfing is a critical form of literacy for students in the twenty-first century. In the last decade, many schools have integrated online learning management systems into their curricula in attempt to connect with students who engage in digital literacies.

“Blogging” and “being a blogger” are two entirely different concepts (Boyd, 2010). Blogging is simply writing on a blog. Being a blogger means being a part of a community, interacting with others, and sharing ideas with the world. Boyd (2010) recalls her own experience with blogging. Her work began with journaling and writing down her emotions, but her “public” rambles became less personal and more informational as she grew older. Boyd (2010) did not initially think she was a blogger. However, she eventually realized that blogging is a state of mind. Bloggers are people who change the way others read and interact with information (Boyd, 2010). Blogging is a relatively new form of digital literacy, and it is changing the way people learn. The blogger community empowers others to share their own content, knowledge, and ideas with the world.

Blogging began as a form of personal publishing. There were four stages in the evolution of social media, and blogging was the first (Boyd, 2015). However, the first blogs were not very social at all. Instead, they were online collections of feelings,

thoughts, and ideas. People blogged about their personal lives, and they used their platforms as digital journals. The second stage is the introduction of social networks (Boyd, 2015). Social networks bridged the gap between the “personal publishing” blogs and community, enabling creators to inhabit a digital social sphere where they were encouraged to share their opinions and connect with others. Boyd (2015) describes microblogging as the third stage in the evolution of social media. Microblogging created a conversational medium that satisfied the younger generation’s craving for instant gratification while building stronger digital communities. Then, when streams became an important component of modern operating systems, digital communities were far more accessible and popular (Boyd, 2015). The four stages illustrate the interrelatedness of blogging and social media and the evolution of blogging into a social literacy.

Blogging has a broad scope, and some researchers employ a seven-prong typology that ranks the significance of blogging according to personal brand or profession (Clark, Gilbert, & Roy, 2016). Although anyone on the internet can create a blog and use it, some have seized opportunities for success more than others. Successful bloggers use their websites to build a community space for sharing information, promote social change, and improve opportunities for employment. Regardless of whether a blog is for pleasure or for profit, bloggers can use their platforms to enhance their personal and professional lives.

Blogging is a communication platform that is used by both individuals and businesses

(Clark, Gilbert, & Roy, 2016). Brands use blogs to promote their products and create communities surrounding their businesses. Today, blogging is one of the main corporate communication strategies implemented by brands to reach technology-using consumers. Blogging's prevalence came to be for several reasons, including the accessibility of the platform, the trend toward owned media, and Millennials' desire for engagement. Blogging is one effective way to develop a personal brand and build good rapport with a targeted audience in the twenty-first century. Creating a personal brand means to make yourself the face of your brand and build a business around it. Many bloggers choose to build their blogs around their own lifestyles. Lifestyle bloggers who center their content around themselves develop their personal brands with the blog posts they write. Especially for influencers, creating unified personal brands can be useful because it helps other people to recognize them like they would traditional celebrities.

Naturally, blogging is hierarchal, market-driven, and self-promotional (Duffy, 2015). While some people believe bloggers are amateurs and provide no real value to marketing strategy, that perception is distorted. Many bloggers are professionals in their industries, and they are highly educated on the subjects they write about (Duffy, 2015). By being experts in their fields, bloggers provide informational value to their readers. Because bloggers create a sense of community surrounding their platforms, they can build better rapport with their audiences, which helps them to make more sales (Duffy, 2015).

Fashion blogging is very market-driven (Duffy, 2015). Because products are the central focus of fashion blogs, the industry shapes the content that bloggers create. However, the bloggers also act as influencers, and they shape the industry by marketing the products they enjoy to their audience. Bloggers often perform aspirational labor, or work that is mostly unpaid, but that seemingly has the potential to pay off in terms of future economic or social capital (Duffy, 2015). Many fashion bloggers are underpaid for their work, but that brands achieve a favorable return on investment from paying influencers for sponsored content (Duffy, 2015). Blogging is invaluable to modern marketing strategy, and many brands partner with bloggers in order to reach their target audiences.

Bloggers can build good rapport with their audience by creating communities around their platforms (Clark, Gilbert, & Roy, 2016). Because bloggers build such trusting communities with their readers, sponsored campaigns are beneficial for bloggers and brands. In general, brands benefit more from working with influencers than the influencers themselves do (Duffy, 2015).

Blogger, Wordpress.com, and other pseudoblog alternatives greatly impacted evolution of blogging as a literate activity (Lackie & LeMasney, 2007). Blogger and Wordpress are the two most popular platforms for creating blogs. Pseudoblogs are platforms that perform tasks that are blogging-related, but more specialized for a particular purpose (Lackie & LeMasney, 2007). The invention of blogging tools like Blogger and

Wordpress.com facilitated the growth of the popularity of blogging. Instead of hosting blogs on individual websites, Blogger made it easy for people to sign up for its service and create their own blogs with just a few clicks.

Examples of pseudoblogs include social networks, online forums, and microblogs.

Wordpress is the best platform for sophisticated bloggers because of its powerful and complex features, but Blogger is easier to use for beginners (Lackie & LeMasney, 2007). Therefore, for bloggers who want to earn money from their writing, Wordpress is the most appropriate platform.

Motivations for blogging

“Mommy blogging” has emerged as one of the main genres of modern blogs (Archer, Harrigan, & Pettigrew, 2016). Mommy bloggers are writers who create content about their experiences with pregnancy and parenting. Mommy blogs are some of the most popular blogs on the Internet, and the community they created is tight-knit. Mommy bloggers have five primary motivations: “developing connections with others, experiencing heightened levels of mental stimulation, achieving self-validation, contributing to the welfare of others, and extending skills and abilities” (Archer et al., 2016, p. 1026). Regardless of genre, many bloggers write to share their knowledge and be part of a community. However, many mothers use blogging as a creative outlet and coping strategy to deal with the stress of becoming a parent (Archer et al., 2016). The positive outcomes of self-validation, mental stimulation, and enhanced well-being attract

mothers to the practice of blogging and encourage their participation. People write blogs for many different reasons, but mothers in particular appear to have definite intrinsic motivations for blogging.

Blogs were originally online personal publications, similar to digital journals. Blogs can serve as a method of self-care for their writers, and there are psychological benefits to blogging (Carlson, 2015). Blogs provide a form of physically removed self-disclosure, which allows writers to communicate their thoughts and feelings for the purpose of sharing (Carlson, 2015). Because modern blogs create a sense of community, people can use blogs to share their experiences, give or receive advice, and connect with other like-minded individuals. Blogging often helps people to manage their stress, gain social support, and release emotional tension. Carlson (2015) uses her own experience as a graduate student as an example to illustrate how bloggers can benefit from their writing. Blogging allowed Carlson (2015) to connect with other graduate students and professionals in her field, which helped her to advance her career.

There are billions of blogging websites on the internet, and the number increases daily (Carlson, 2015). While some people blog to gain economic or social capital, others use blogging as a self-care practice. Like other forms of writing, blogging can be therapeutic. Every blogger has a unique set of motivations, but almost all bloggers gain psychological benefits from their writing (Carlson, 2015). Blogs give their writers ownership, and the greater blogging community provides them with a sense of

belonging. Unlike writing in a personal diary or a similar private space, the publicness of bloggers' content allows readers to provide feedback. Some bloggers write posts to seek validation or find other like-minded people on the internet. The communities blogs create can provide writers with support and encouragement.

Because many bloggers write to share their knowledge, blogs naturally become useful as informal teaching tools. Blogs are effective environments for informal learning, and they facilitate more enriching and meaningful learning for adults (Heo, Lee, & Park, 2011). Because many blogs share specific information about a niche or topic, people can gain specialized knowledge from reading blogs.

If blogs are practical for adult informal learning, educators could find it useful to incorporate blogs into their curricula in engaging ways. With the advancement of technology and the emergence of digital literacies, blogs are great teaching tools both inside and outside of the classroom.

Students often have both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for writing. Decades of research show that extrinsic motivators, such as the mindset of "what do I need to do to get an A?" can hurt students' abilities when it comes to intellectual writing activities (Reid, 2011). However, blogging is a great way to discover intrinsic motivations for writing (Reid, 2011). Not all students claim to enjoy writing, but many do not realize that literacy is broad enough to include activities they would likely be interested in. Because

blogs can be so personalized, they are great outlets for people, especially students, to make connections between writing and their own goals and interests. School curriculum can limit students from exploring the full scope of literacy. Blogs provide a sense of ownership and control to the writers, so people who blog have more opportunities to explore their own literacies.

Blogs are implemented into classrooms in a variety of ways. Some instructors create class blogs that students collectively contribute to, and others provide more freedom to the students by allowing them to blog on their own individual platforms for assignments. It is important for instructors to provide enough creative freedom to students to give them a sense of autonomy (Reid, 2011). The sense of ownership helps students to develop intrinsic motivations for writing so they can succeed not only in their individualized blogging endeavors, but also in their more structured academic coursework (Reid, 2011). Blogging is beneficial for individual learning and growth, and it can be useful in both academic and informal learning settings.

Success strategies for bloggers

For many bloggers, Pinterest serves as a primary traffic source to their websites. Therefore, some find it helpful to implement Pinterest strategies to drive more traffic to their blogs. “Pinning” is when a user shares a pin, or post, to his or her Pinterest profile. Scheduling pins in advance saves time and automates the process (Cabrera, 2017). Tailwind App is the most powerful and useful Pinterest scheduling tool for bloggers

(Cabrera, 2017). With Tailwind, users can set specific times they want their pinning to occur. They can schedule pins to publish days, weeks, or even months in advance. Tailwind provides users with an efficient way to pin instead of having to manually pin at the times they want their posts to publish.

The Pinterest mobile app is fast and user-friendly, which makes it convenient to use while traveling. Consistent pinning is important to build rapport with followers, so bloggers should use the Pinterest mobile app so they can pin new content frequently (Cabrera, 2017). It is crucial to create aesthetically pleasing images that use the optimal dimensions for Pinterest (Cabrera, 2017). Tools like Photoshop, Canva, and Pablo are useful to create vertical, eye-catching images that are more likely to succeed on the platform (Cabrera, 2017). Aesthetically pleasing Pinterest images often include high-quality photographs, bold and readable text, vertical orientation, and coordinating colors.

One strategic way to drive traffic to blog posts is to promote pins by collaborating with other users on group Pinterest boards (Cabrera, 2017). Because many users follow and contribute to group boards, they help bloggers to show their content to more people than they would be able to by only pinning to their own individual boards. Pinterest is the key to success for many bloggers, and bloggers should invest their time into Pinterest to increase their website traffic. Bloggers often use their platforms to share knowledge with their respective communities. However, not all bloggers utilize

traditional research methods to gather information to include in their posts. Fashion bloggers are not normally associated with libraries or traditional research methods (Detterbeck, LaMoreaux, & Sciangula, 2014). Both technology and the fashion industry advance too quickly for scholarly research to keep up with. In order to maintain an engaged readership, a blog must frequently provide timely information. Fashion bloggers must stay on trend with the industry, but they are also competing with other bloggers for the attention of readers.

Therefore, fashion blogging does not lend itself well to scholarly research. Most fashion bloggers derive their images and blog posts from their own photography and personal experiences (Detterbeck et al., 2014). Fashion blogging values original content over in-depth research. In fact, fashion bloggers often do not consult information professionals for research assistance because they are afraid it will hurt their credibility (Detterbeck et al., 2014). Fashion bloggers want to establish themselves as experts in the industry, so they rely on their own knowledge as the main source of information for their posts.

Unlike scholarly research, niche blogging draws more upon personal experiences and knowledge than on other credible sources.

Bloggers who want to become successful entrepreneurs need to know how to combine their writing skills with modern marketing strategies. Like all businesses, entrepreneurial blogs have sales funnels. A funnel is the consumer purchase process that begins with knowledge of the brand and ends with the sale (Perkins, 2016). A funnel contains five

elements: prospects, contacts, leads, finalists, and clients. It is an ever-narrowing path that potential consumers follow toward the eventual sale. Any blog that sells products or services has a sales funnel.

However, it is crucial to create the funnel with intention (Perkins, 2016). Bloggers should create automated funnels that make sales without the blogger directly interacting with consumers (Perkins, 2016). By generating quality organic traffic, creating an effective landing page, encouraging email opt-ins, and generating an effective follow-up email sequence, bloggers can automatically sell their products and services (Perkins, 2016). Automating a sales funnel is the key to earning a profit as a blogger (Perkins, 2016).

Many bloggers struggle to build audiences. Content marketing strategy is important for bloggers to generate organic traffic to their websites. There are many strategies bloggers can use to earn page views. Bloggers should use a consumer-centered or client-centered approach when creating content (Pophal, 2015). By addressing the needs of readers, bloggers build rapport and establish themselves as useful resources. Bloggers should also optimize search engine optimization (SEO) when writing headlines and body copy for blog posts (Pophal, 2015).

Many factors, including keywords and post length, affect SEO, so it is important for bloggers to educate themselves on how to optimize their posts for search engines (Pophal, 2015). Guest blogging is when a blogger publishes his or her content on

another blogger's platform. It is an effective way to become involved in the blogger community and build readership. If bloggers are able to publish their content on other platforms, they can build their credibility and drive traffic back to their own websites (Pophal, 2015). To better manage their time, bloggers should prioritize platforms that generate the most traffic (Pophal, 2015). Pinterest is one of the most prominent social networks bloggers use to drive traffic. Bloggers who prioritize the most useful outlets, such as Pinterest, can spend more time creating quality content and less time struggling to earn page views.

Writing sponsored posts is one of the main ways bloggers earn profit from their work. There are many ways bloggers can connect with brands and write paid sponsored posts for them. One way is through influencer networks (Ritlop, 2017). Through networks, bloggers can submit pitches for open campaigns and receive notifications whenever they are chosen for opportunities (Ritlop, 2017).

Bloggers should have a media kit ready to send out in case brands pitch them directly (Ritlop, 2017). Bloggers can often make more money by pitching brands directly themselves (Ritlop, 2017). Because influencer networks often take a significant cut from the earnings bloggers make from sponsored posts, it is better to work directly with brands to maximize profit (Ritlop, 2017). Bloggers should rely less on networks and pitch brands themselves.

How brands benefit from blogs

Blogs play an important role in marketing to consumers, especially those that use technology regularly. The main factors “influencing blogging use for marketing include convenience, interactivity, real time conversation, popularity, specialization, and availability of blogs in allowing for quick decision making” (Chiang & Hsieh, 2011, p. 1249).

Popularity and specialization are the two most prominent aspects of blogs that influence consumer purchase decisions (Chiang & Hsieh, 2011). According to the participants surveyed, a blogger’s ethos is crucial in persuading consumers to purchase products. Therefore, prolific and well-known bloggers have incredible influence on consumers. Online word-of-mouth is key to many brands’ digital marketing strategies in the twenty-first century. Brands that connect with high-reaching influencers are able to position their products in targeted markets while maximizing the impact of their campaigns.

Modern technology has transformed word-of-mouth marketing and made it easier for marketers to track the success of word-of-mouth in influencing consumer purchases. The twenty-first century is an age of social media advertising; social networks’ revenue models revolve around advertising. The key to success with online word-of-mouth marketing is to understand the network structure of individual consumers and how to implement viral marketing strategies (Katona, Sarvary, & Zubcsek, 2011). The strength

of an online network is more valuable than the sheer size when it comes to influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Katona et al., 2011).

People with many friends on social media networks have an average lower influence than those with fewer friends (Katona et al., 2011). The quality of connections is more important than quantity. Therefore, it is important for brands to seek influencers who have engaged followings rather than choosing influencers based only on the number of followers in their network.

Efficient online word-of-mouth marketing is based on strong networks and meaningful connections, not only on numbers (Katona et al., 2011). The quality of connections within a network is crucial. Successful online word-of-mouth marketing is based on both qualitative and quantitative factors. High-reaching influencers are likely to provide a more expansive network for promotion, but influencers' engagement rates are also important for brands to consider when deciding who to collaborate with. Therefore, the ideal candidate for sponsorship would be an influencer with strong connections to a large network.

Different types of promotional blogs can provide unique positioning strategies for brands (Padmanabhan, 2008). Positioning is when a brand strives to create a specific position for itself in the market and the mind of the consumer to stand out from competition. There are five main types of promotional blogs: information blogs, image blogs,

experience blogs, relationship blogs, and dialog blogs (Padmanabhan, 2008).

Information blogs provide useful and interesting information to readers.

Blogs that are focused on providing helpful information can use an inbound marketing strategy, or soft sell, to promote a brand. By first giving the reader useful information and then plugging the brand at the end of a post, the blogger uses a less aggressive marketing strategy that is still highly effective. Image blogs target a brand to a particular audience. For example, Toyota branded Scion to have a more youthful image to appeal to a Gen Y audience (Padmanabhan, 2008).

Image blogs are key to the positioning of a brand. Experience blogs share personal experiences. Bloggers who write about their experiences often build strong rapport with their audiences (Padmanabhan, 2008). Because experience bloggers have more credibility, their audiences trust them more when making purchasing decisions.

Relationship blogs focus on making strong connections with consumers. Like experience bloggers, the rapport that relationship bloggers have with their audience helps them to promote brands and make sales.

Dialog blogs provide an open forum for people to discuss their thoughts and opinions. Because dialog blogs allow for open discussion, brands can place themselves at the center of the conversation and form deeper connections with their consumers.

Relationship bloggers are a prime example of how bloggers with strong networks can

be highly influential for consumers' purchasing decisions.

Although word-of-mouth marketing is not a new concept, emerging digital environments and social media amplified it. Today, online word-of-mouth is one of the most prevalent strategies in marketing campaigns. The communal aspect of online word-of-mouth marketing is why it is a successful strategy (Weiss, 2014). Because bloggers create such strong communities with their platforms, they have much more influence on consumers than the non-blogger would.

Social media platforms create large communities centered around location, interests, and other demographics or psychographics. The internet and social media make it much easier for people to communicate with one another, and they also provide brands with a more direct way to reach their consumers. Brand ambassadors share brands' messages and products with others to drive sales and promote awareness (Weiss, 2014). Online brand ambassadors include bloggers and high-reaching social media influencers. It is crucial to relay key brand messages on multiple media to increase reach and impact (Weiss, 2014). Each channel has an entirely different audience, so it is important for the influencer to tailor the method and the message to the channel he or she is communicating on.

My early experiences with literacy

My development as a writer began when I was around five years old. Although I could only write and spell basic words at the time, my creative mind extended far beyond my literate abilities. When I spent time with my grandmother, I would create stories in my mind and tell them to her. She wrote down the words for the story, and I drew pictures to accompany them. Many of my stories were about my dog, Jackson, who I personified in my narratives and turned into a superhero-like character. When I was a child, Jackson was my best friend, and I thought of him like I would a human friend. My stories reflected my attachment to my dog.

Eventually, my storytelling extended beyond just writing and drawing pictures. When I was eight, I received a digital camera as a Christmas gift. I started making short movies that starred Jackson. The character I created in the videos was similar to the character I created in my written and illustrated stories. Jackson was a superhero, and he always saved the day by the end of the movie. I spent time filming the movies, and then I edited them myself using Windows Movie Maker, a video editing software. Finally, I exported the videos and burned them to DVDs so my family could watch them.

In elementary and middle school, my instructors evangelized the basic five-paragraph essay structure. The five-paragraph essay consisted of one introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs each containing a single main idea, and a concluding paragraph.

The early education system restricted students' writing so much that it even obligated them to use specific phrases in their writing. The penalty for not including the designated phrases was a point deduction, resulting in a lower grade on the assignment. In my third grade class, my teacher forced all students to begin their concluding paragraphs with the phrase "as you can see." The strict guidelines teachers imposed on young writers were well-intentioned, but I do not believe they helped me to become a better writer.

As I became a more proficient reader and writer, I began writing my thoughts down myself, filling multiple notebooks per week with my stories. In my adolescent years, my stories became more complex. I read mostly fantasy novels at that age, so I created stories about dragons, wizards, and the supernatural. As a teenager, I wrote fantasy stories that were often dark and sad. The characters in my stories experienced tragedies like poverty, death, and illness. My narratives became so dark because, as a teenager, I felt confused and sad a lot of the time. Writing became a coping mechanism for me, and it helped me through my struggles, even though the stories I wrote seemed depressing to other people.

Even in my college experiences, I have learned that many professors value writers who use a scholarly voice instead of a more conversational one. Using an academic voice is

appropriate for a research paper, but there are many personal and professional settings where using academic language is not as effective.

For example, I worked as an associate at a public relations firm for two years. As a professional in the communications industry, my supervisors encouraged me to cut out all big and obscure words from my writing. Public relations professionals value concise writing over scholarly language. Depending on the context, even conversational writing is appropriate in communications. The writing style I used in my public relations job is a stark contrast from the scholarly voice I developed writing in academic settings.

About *Style of Change*

Style of Change is a lifestyle blog I launched on December 21, 2016. Although I originally began blogging as a hobby, I soon discovered methods to grow my following and monetize my influence. I will use *Style of Change* as the prototype for my autoethnographic analysis of blogging as a literate activity. Through my analysis, I will detail my blogging content creation process, profit earning strategies, and the balance of the personal and professional aspects of the activity. I will also explain how the prominence of blogging provides writers with power and influence in the modern world.

The beginning of my blogging journey

When I learned about blogs for the first time in middle school, I knew I wanted to be a blogger. In my seventh grade English class, my teacher created a discussion forum

where students could post their writing and respond to their peers' work. Although the online forum was much different than what I consider a blog to be today, it was my first experience with sharing my work online. I enjoyed posting my writing and reviewing others' work in the comment section. My teacher appreciated my dedication to the online discussion assignments and encouraged me to continue exploring the world of writing on the internet.

I was fascinated by the concept of writing posts and sharing my ideas on a digital platform. Blogging intrigued me because I wanted to express myself and share my point of view with others online. When thinking about modern literacy, it's important to consider literate activities in their social contexts (Barton, 2007) From childhood, writing was my most prevalent form of self-expression. Naturally, the concept of combining modern digital networking with writing piqued my interest.

For me, the social aspect of blogging was important because I had not engaged in any literate activities that connected me to other people in such a profound way. The blogging community is so diverse that it allowed me to communicate with people from all over the world. It exposed me to new ideas and perspectives that I would not run into in my day-to-day life in Orlando, FL. For example, I could read travel blogs and learn about people's experiences from visiting places all over the world. Alternatively, I could subscribe to a parenting blog and read about the joys and struggles of being a mother. Because there are so many different types of blogs, the blogging community allowed

me to connect with people coming from all different backgrounds. It gave me a more open-minded perspective on life and encouraged me to value others' ideas.

When I created *Style of Change* at the age of 19, I had basic knowledge about blogs and some of the technologies used to create them. I was an avid computer user, I had some previous web design experience, and I had used Adobe Creative Suite programs before. In middle school, I spent my summers attending summer camp to learn Adobe Photoshop, Flash, and Dreamweaver. As an adolescent, I developed basic coding and design skills. I even spent my free time looking up Photoshop tutorials to learn new techniques.

Purchasing my domain name and web hosting was the first major commitment I made to my blog. Then, I installed Wordpress onto my website and began building it. I wrote about 15 posts for my blog before I launched it. I wanted to refine the look and feel of my blog and have some content ready to share before I went live.

However, when I began writing posts for *Style of Change*, I did not realize how relevant and prominent blogs are in modern marketing. My initial blogging goals did not involve monetization. I was more interested in publishing my writing online and sharing my thoughts with my small online network. Then, once I discovered effective promotional strategies, I seized the opportunity to monetize my influence and become a professional blogger.

I started blogging to express myself, share my ideas with others, and engage with my passions through writing. In high school, I became interested in the beauty and fashion world. I taught myself how to apply makeup, and I enjoyed shopping and reading magazines in my spare time. Many of my posts on *Style of Change* reflect my interest in makeup and clothing. However, I did not have a distinct niche or focus for my blog when I started it. I wanted it to be an inclusive platform where I could publish my writing, regardless of what I was writing about. Therefore, my initial content included posts about beauty, fashion, relationships, travel, and lifestyle topics.

Some of my blog posts were long, and others were shorter. Most of my posts were over 300 words, but my first two travel posts were photo galleries with short descriptions of my trips. The types of writing I published were not consistent. I posted tutorials, opinion pieces, self-help guides, outfit posts, makeup product reviews, and travel guides. I wrote what I felt like writing and published it on my blog without taking target audience or rhetorical context into consideration.

After three months of running my own self-hosted blog, I began to explore the relation of blogging to entrepreneurship. My purpose for blogging remained the same, but I utilized my blog more strategically to earn a profit. Blogging taught me the value of writing, improved my viability as a professional, and helped me to develop my authentic voice. My original purpose for blogging was not to earn a profit; instead, I just wanted to write

about my interests and share my work with others online. I knew that some digital influencers turned blogging into full-time careers, but I initially disregarded the potential to earn a profit from my own blog.

For the first two months of blogging, I used my platform solely to express myself. When I first started my blog, I had recently endured a breakup with a serious boyfriend. Instead of moping around, I tried to turn my grief and sadness into productivity. To distract myself from the breakup, I turned my attention to my blog. I used my blog as a way to represent the world to others, which is one way of practicing literacy (Barton, 2007). I did not take strategy or potential financial gain into consideration.

When I first started blogging, I did not talk much about my blog with family and friends. I was afraid that they would not understand my reasons for blogging or view my writing negatively. Some people questioned my authenticity as a writer, especially when they found out I created sponsored content for brands. My fear of being negatively judged prevented me from discussing my blogging activities with the people in my life. I found that strangers online were much more receptive to my work and supportive of my craft.

Bloggers are prominent today, and I expect that their influence will continue to grow in the coming years. Through my research, I have gained insight into the progression of my blogging career. Now, I can move forward and continue to implement new strategies

and explore the world of blogging further. In the next chapter, I will explain and justify my research methods for this study.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND JUSTIFICATION OF MY AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODS

In this brief chapter, I introduce my two key research questions, discuss my methods, and explain why autoethnography is effective for conducting research on modern blogging.

As a writing and rhetoric major in college, I did not initially realize how unique my blogging experiences were until I completed ENC 3502 Researching Writing and Literacy. After I talked about my content creation and monetization strategies in class, my professor and colleagues were interested in how I monetized my work and earned a substantial profit from it. I realized that others could benefit from learning more about my work, so I decided to complete autoethnographic research to share my experiences. I became interested in conducting a more sustained and focused analysis on my blogging activities.

Key Research Questions

- 1. What are the actual textual practices and processes that inform how professional bloggers create content?*
- 2. What are the actual textual practices and processes that inform how professional bloggers monetize their blogging?*

Research Methods

Autoethnography is a research method that utilizes the personal experiences of an individual to explain and understand culture (Adams, Bochner, & Ellis, 2011). It allows me to analyze my blogging experiences and connect them to the greater world of blogging and modern literacy. Because autoethnography is both a “process and a product” (Adams et al., 2011). It allows me to actively analyze my blogging activities and compile my data into a narrative that connects personal experiences to the dynamic field of literacy.

Autoethnography is a an effective method to use for my research because it allows me to fill in the gaps that scholarship does not completely address. The field of blogging is constantly shifting and changing, so it is difficult for published research to keep up with the most recent content creation and monetization practices. Influencer marketing, which blogging plays a significant role in, has become much more prominent in the last two years alone. By utilizing autoethnography to conduct research, I can analyze my current activities as a blogger and contribute my most up-to-date experiences to the scholarly community.

One benefit of autoethnography is it provides rich and detailed qualitative research data that other methods cannot match. Quantitative research methods can measure the impact of modern bloggers to an extent, but autoethnography provides readers with insight into my personal experiences as a blogger and the individual processes that

have brought my success in my professional blogging career. Qualitative methods, such as autoethnography, help scholars to understand a “phenomenon in a given community or setting” that quantitative data cannot express (Méndez, 2013, p. 285).

In the next chapter, I will begin to describe my textual processes for content creation in detail.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF MY TEXTUAL PROCESSES AND PRACTICES FOR CONTENT CREATION

In this chapter, I will provide an in-depth analysis of how I create content for my blog. Every blogger has a different content creation process, but I thought an analysis of mine would be useful to both researchers and people who are interested in becoming bloggers. Starting a blog can seem overwhelming to people who have never done it before. By analyzing my own content creation processes and sharing them, I show others how they can do it themselves. I also provide researchers with an in-depth study of how I engage with blogging.

Before I launched my blog site, I wrote 20 blog posts about different topics that I was interested in. I engaged with my passions by writing about them on my blog. Instead of focusing on one particular topic or niche, I wrote about whatever came to mind. My earliest blog post titles for *Style of Change* included “10 Lessons I Learned in 2016,” “50 Ways You Can Make a Positive Impact in 2017,” and “12 Positive Things to Remind Yourself After a Breakup.”

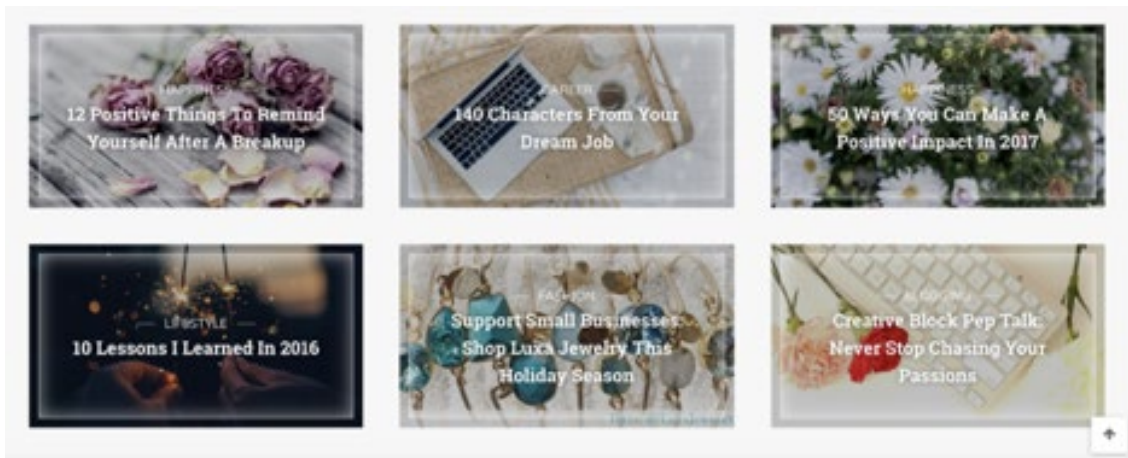


Figure 2: My first six published blog posts on *Style of Change*

I designed *Style of Change* to be a personal website that reflected my own tastes. I included photographs of myself and my interests on the homepage of my website to provide readers with an accurate first impression of who I was and what my blog was about. Print literacy is often intertwined with other modes (Barton, 2007). Visual elements are a crucial part of my blog, so I use multimodality when blogging.

Because the homepage of the blog is usually the first page readers see when they visit my blog, it is important for it to be eye-catching. On my homepage, I display a slider of images that reflect my content. A slider is a slideshow widget that bloggers can use to display multiple images. It is usually used at the top of the home page.

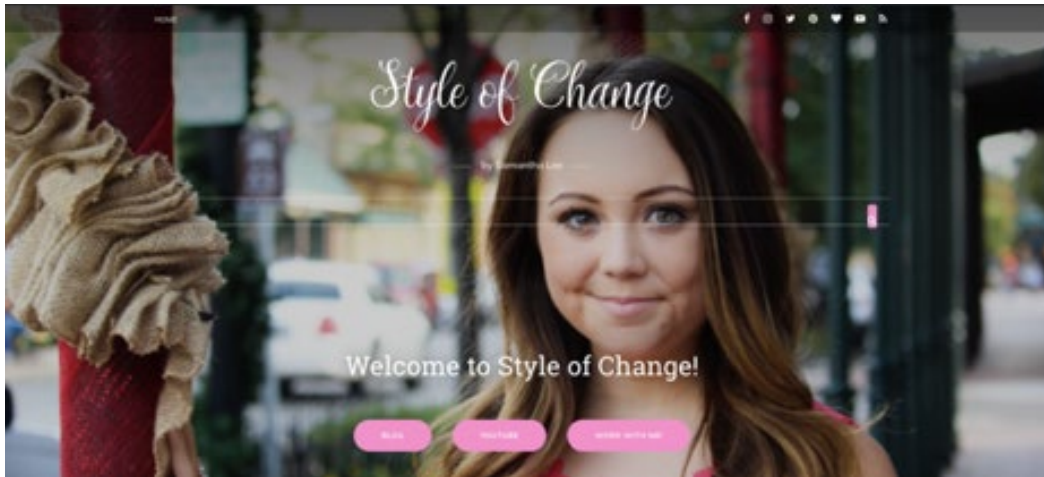


Figure 3: Style of Change's landing page

By writing about my passions like beauty and fashion, I turned my blog into a creative outlet. I used it to express myself and share my ideas. In January 2016, my first full month of blogging, I received just over 1,000 page views. I didn't foresee the exponential growth my blog would experience in the following months.

The importance of feedback

Naturally, blog posts are meant to be shared with others. Although some writers might keep online private journals that they store on a server and never intend to publish, the majority of bloggers post their content on the internet because they want others to read it. I started my blog as a hobby, but I still wanted my family and friends to read my work, even if no one else did. Because blogging is a mostly public literate activity, feedback is more important for bloggers than it would be for writers who keep their work private.

Feedback is especially important for bloggers who want to increase their readership or monetize their work. Because their success is dependent on the sharing and purchasing behavior of readers, they must tailor their content to the right audiences and utilize strategies to promote their content.

Below are different types of feedback I use to shape the content for my blog:

SEO data

Whenever I use the Yoast SEO plugin for a blog post, it gives me a ranking: good, OK, or needs improvement. Then, it provides concrete suggestions for me to improve my SEO for that particular blog post. As a blogger who wants to build a readership, I always take SEO into account when I compose a post.

Sponsorships

If I write a sponsored post for a brand, I sign a contract to complete certain mandatory tasks for the post. For example, I might need to include a certain number of photos of the brand's product in the post, or I might need to use certain phrases to describe the product. Naturally, such strict guidelines affect my content creation process and the eventual outcome of the post.

Reader comments

In terms of qualitative feedback, reader comments are important to me. They provide direct insight into what other people think of my content. Most of the comments I receive are on Instagram and Pinterest, not the blog posts themselves.

Quantitative data

Along with qualitative feedback such as how users respond in comments, quantitative data is important for my blog. I pay close attention to the numbers of page views, numbers of shares or comments, and my overall income from my blog. I check my page view and Google AdSense numbers multiple times per day to monitor how my posts are performing.

My content creation process

Each blogger utilizes his or her own unique process for content creation. Mine begins with the formulation of ideas for my blog posts. Sometimes, ideas come to me naturally and I write them down in a notebook or Word document to ensure I remember them. Other times, I conduct research to find inspiration. I read other blogs that are similar to mine in order to come up with new ideas for posts. For example, if I read a blog post about a topic that interests me, I might decide to write a similar post to provide my own perspective on the topic.

The platform I use to write and publish my blog posts is called Wordpress. I chose to use Wordpress because it is easy to install on a self-hosted website. I knew I wanted to have my own domain name and have ownership my content by publishing it on a self-hosted website. Based on my research, Wordpress was the logical choice.

Just like any other program, I had to learn the many different functions of Wordpress in order to use it effectively. Wordpress is a form of literacy in itself. A literacy is a “stable, coherent, identifiable configuration of practices” (Barton, 2007, p. 43). Wordpress has two different formatting modes: visual and text. The visual mode shows the post exactly as it will appear once it is published, and the text mode shows the editable HTML code of the post. To be completely literate in the Wordpress platform, I need to know how to use both. I use a combination of the visual and text modes whenever I compose my blog posts.

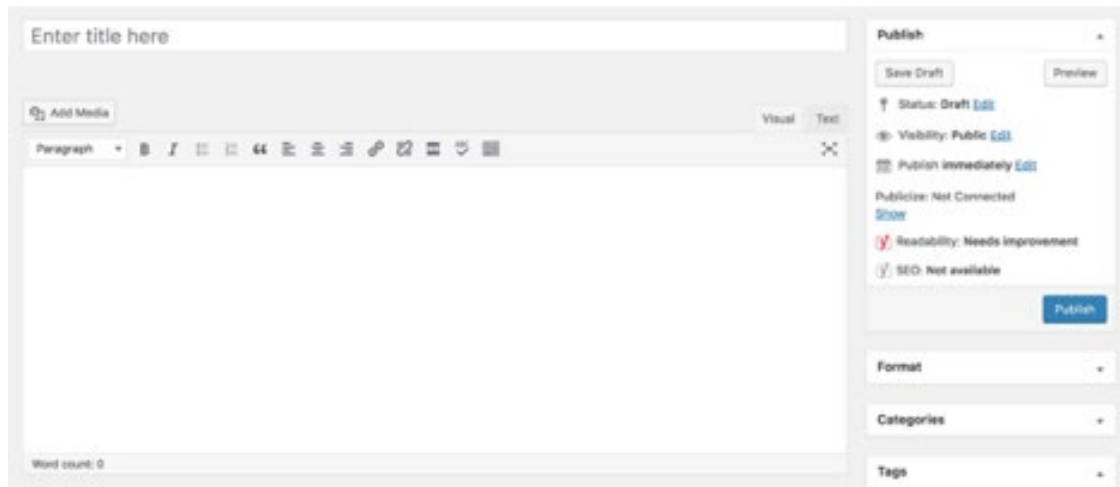


Figure 4: Screenshot showing the Wordpress platform

First, I brainstorm ideas for posts. I either refer back to lists of ideas from previous brainstorming sessions, or I compose entirely new lists. By writing down my ideas, I generate new ones more easily. Once I have a list of ideas, I choose the one I feel the most inspired by. Then, I decide on a title, taking search engine optimization (SEO) into consideration. To help my SEO, I include important keywords in my title and ensure that it is at least ten words long.

I often use Pinterest to search for other blog posts on interesting topics. Because Pinterest is such a powerful traffic driving platform for bloggers, there is always something new to read. On Pinterest, I type topic keywords into the search bar and scroll until I find an eye-catching or interesting post. If I think the topic would be a good fit for my blog content, I take note of it and continue searching.

I write at least 300 words for each blog post to improve my SEO and provide readers with enough engaging content. I structure my blog posts the same each time I write. My introductory sentences are conversational, speaking to my readers as if they are my friends. As I progress into the bulk of the post, I focus on writing rich and informational content to provide my readers with as much value as possible. My final sentences always provide the same call-to-action, inviting my readers to subscribe to my email list and to share my post on social media. The call-to-action is my way of engaging with the discourse communities created by my email list and social media platforms.

At the very end of each post, I include a “Pin Me!” button and a shareable image that is optimized for Pinterest. Aesthetically pleasing vertical images are repinned the most.



20
healthy choices
you can make today



Figure 5: Example of a Pinterest optimized image for one of my blog posts

I receive more repins on Pinterest by making it easy for readers to share my content directly from my website. From an ecological perspective of literacy, all literacy is contextualized (Barton, 2007). To succeed on Pinterest, I had to understand the context of the network and adjust my strategies in order to fit the platform. Because Pinterest is the most important platform in my social media strategy, I do everything I can to encourage Pinterest engagement with every blog post.

If I have time to sit and brainstorm for a while, I eliminate all distractions, sit down with a pen and a notebook, and I write down every idea that comes to mind. I find the distraction-free brainstorming sessions helpful because they allow me to come up with many post ideas in one sitting. Technology can overwhelm me and stifle my creativity sometimes, so I like to use a pen and paper instead of a laptop when I brainstorm.

Once I decide on a post to write, I create a new post in Wordpress. I usually create my post within the Wordpress platform instead of Microsoft Word or another word processor. Wordpress allows me to preview how the post will appear, add images, and save my progress within just a few clicks. The convenience of Wordpress makes it more efficient than an external program.

The first part of the post I create is the title. Posts that follow a “listicle” format, or an article organized into a list, perform the best on my blog.

Below are examples of listicle post titles on my blog:

- 10 Evergreen Tips for Better Health
- 20 Amazing Things to Do in Cuba
- 100 Lifestyle Blog Post Ideas for 2018
- 10 Things That Made Me Happy This Month

After I enter the title into the title box in Wordpress, I modify the permalink, or the URL of the post, to match the title. I try to eliminate extraneous words from the permalink to improve SEO.

Then, I write out the list part of the post. Each item in the list has its own heading, and the content below the heading relates to that list item. By organizing my post into a listicle, I improve the readability of the post and make it more likely to be shared on social media. Readers prefer listicle posts because they can be skimmed quickly for important information.

Once the list is created, I begin writing under each heading. Usually, the copy for each list item is only a paragraph or two. I write in a concise manner to get my point across instead of rambling. Then, I write the rest of the post.

Below is an analysis of how I composed one of my most popular posts, “60 Self Care Ideas to Incorporate Into Your Everyday Life.” It was published in Jan. 2017, and it was the first post on my blog to go viral. The post drew in a lot of traffic to my blog from Pinterest. It follows a “listicle” format, which makes it quick and easy to read.

Content creation process for “60 Self Care Ideas to Incorporate Into Your Everyday Life”:

When I thought of the idea for “60 Self Care Ideas to Incorporate Into Your Everyday Life,” I was going through a phase in my life where I was trying to improve my lifestyle. I was paying more attention to health and wellness. I had recently broken up with my significant other, and I was seeking closure and inner peace for myself after the breakup. I turned to self care to make myself feel better.

Before I wrote the post, I went on Pinterest to find some other self care blog posts to read. Using inspiration from my own thoughts and other bloggers’ ideas, I began to draft out the post. I did not initially know I was going to come up with 60 items for the list.

At first, I typed “xx Self Care Ideas to Incorporate Into Your Everyday Life” into the title bar and then replaced the “xx” with “60” once I was finished writing and knew how many items were in the list.

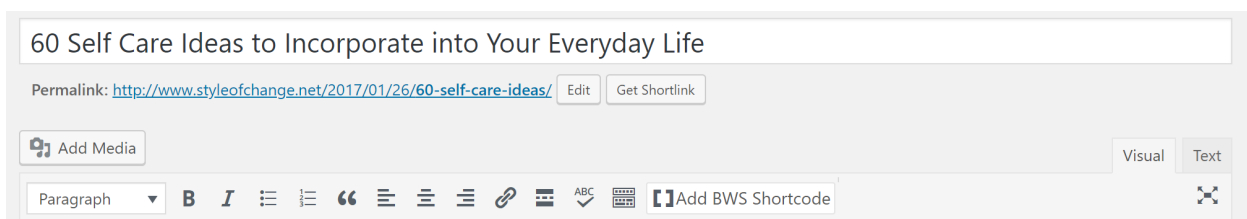


Figure 4: The “Edit Post” panel on the Wordpress platform

Once I wrote my title, I ensured that my post would be published in the correct category on the blog.

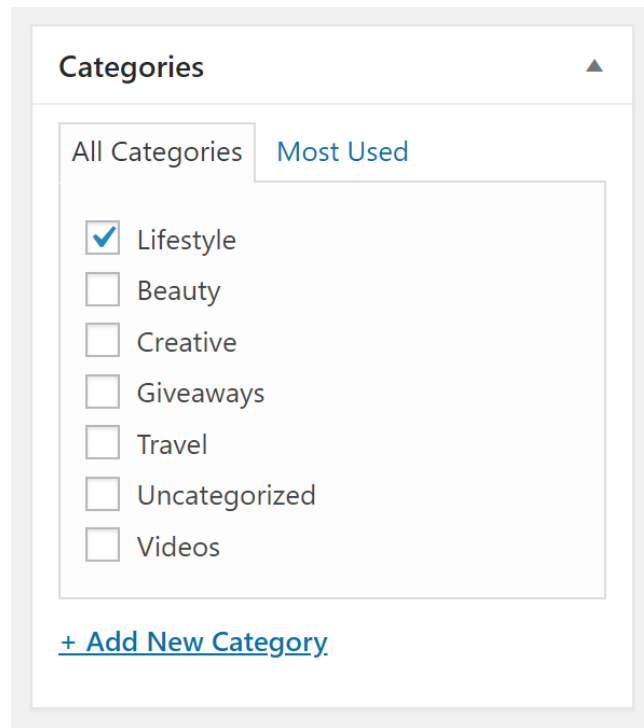


Figure 5: The category selection box on the Wordpress platform

Then, I began composing the actual post.

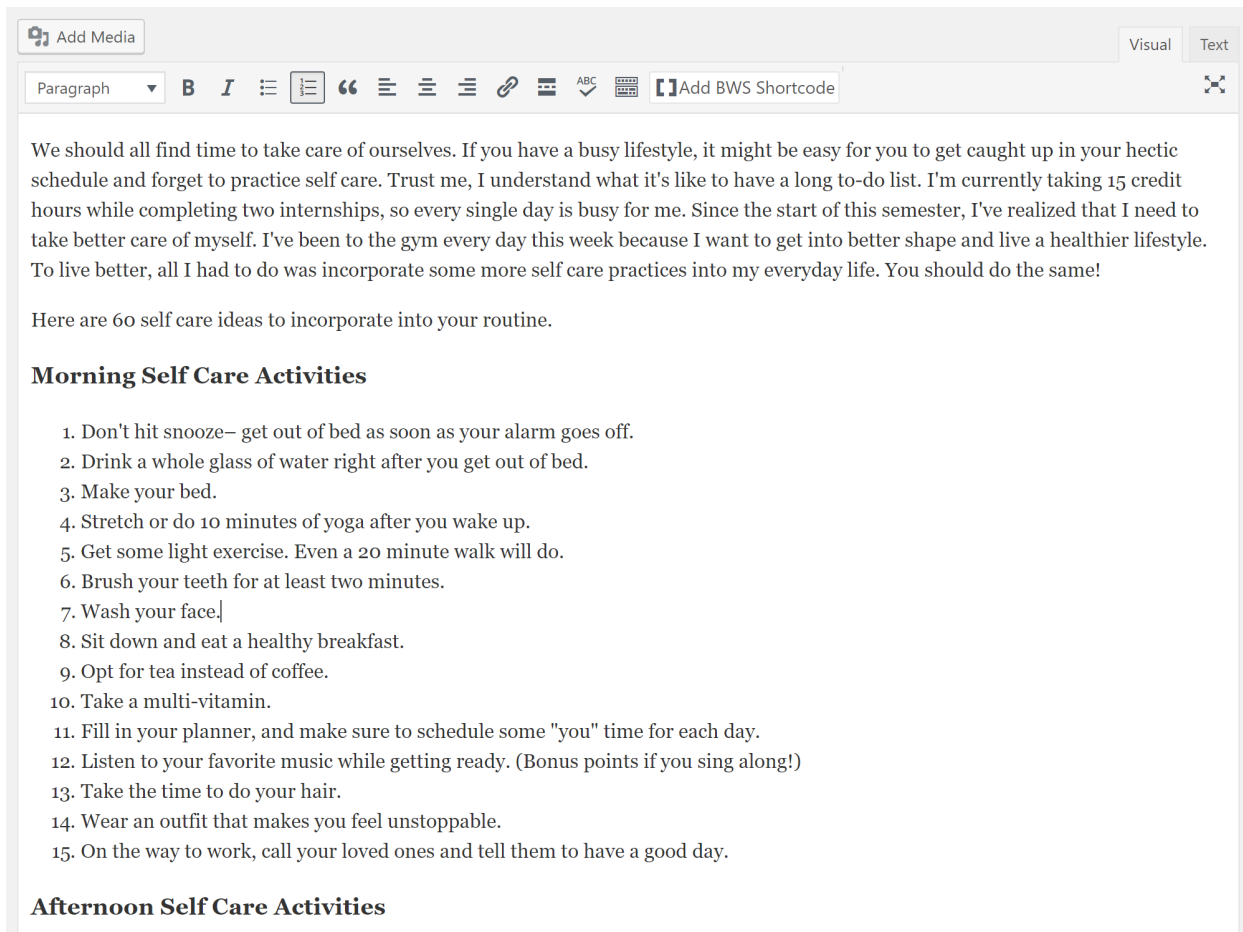


Figure 6: The content creation panel on the Wordpress platform

The content creation panel in Wordpress is a powerful tool. It is a basic text editor, but it supports images, video, links, and other media as well. The “Visual” tab in the editor gives me a rough idea of what the post will look like once it’s complete. The “Text” tab contains the HTML code for the post, which is even more complex and powerful than the visual editor. Sometimes, if I need to change something that the visual editor does not support, I will edit the HTML code to get my post to do exactly what I want it to. However, I am not a coding expert, so I usually stay in the visual editor.

The “Add Media” button allows me to add images, files, and other media. I don’t use any other media besides images in this post, but I have added .pdf file links in other posts.

The visual editor in Wordpress supports basic formatting, like paragraph text, headings, and bulleted or numbered lists. It also has a spell check feature.

I began my post with an introductory paragraph to hook the reader and explain the importance of self care. Then, I began writing the body of the post, which I formatted into four separate lists with headings above each one. The three headings were “Morning Self Care Activities,” “Afternoon Self Care Activities,” “Evening Self Care Activities,” and “Weekend Self Care Activities.”

After I created my list items underneath each heading, I wrote a short concluding sentence to thank visitors for reading my post and encourage them to share and subscribe. Below that, I included a “pin me” image to drive readers to share the post on Pinterest. Underneath the “pin me” image, I placed a vertical image with the post title written on it. I formatted the image that way to make it optimized for sharing on Pinterest, since Pinterest supports vertical images.

Thanks for reading! If this post helped you, don't forget to pin, share, and subscribe.



Figure 7: Example of a concluding sentence and Pinterest-optimized image for a post

Once I was finished creating the actual content for the post, I was ready to check my SEO optimization data. Yoast SEO is a Wordpress plugin I use to ensure my posts will be ranked as high as possible in search engine results.

● Readability ● Keyword: *self-care* + Add keyword

👁 Snippet preview ?

[60 Self Care Ideas to Incorporate into Your Everyday Life - Style of Change](http://www.styleofchange.net/2017/01/26/60-self-care-ideas/)
www.styleofchange.net/2017/01/26/60-self-care-ideas/

We should all find time to take care of ourselves. Read my 60 ways you can incorporate **self-care** into your everyday life, even with a busy schedule!

📱 🖥

SEO title

%%title%% %%page%% %%sep%% %%sitename%%

Slug

60-self-care-ideas

Meta description

We should all find time to take care of ourselves. Read my 60 ways you can incorporate self-care into your everyday life, even with a busy schedule!

🔍 Focus keyword ?

self-care

This article is [cornerstone content](#)

..bho

Figure 8: Screenshot of the Yoast SEO plugin on Wordpress

Yoast SEO calculates both readability and SEO data. The readability rating is based on paragraph length, use of headings, formatting of images, and many other factors.

Because I used many headings and numbered lists in this post, Yoast SEO gave me a “Good” readability rating.

The first row in the SEO panel is the “snippet preview.” The snippet preview shows me what my post will look like in search engine results. I can view what the snippet will look like on both desktop and mobile by clicking on the corresponding buttons.

The “SEO Title” section allows me to edit how the title of my post will appear in search engine results. I usually do not edit the SEO title because the default works well for me.

The default SEO title is usually just the title of the post followed by a dash and the site title.

Although I do not usually edit the SEO title, I do change the “Slug” and “Meta description.” The “Slug” is the post-specific part of the URL. If I have a long post title, I shorten it to make it more optimized for SEO. In this case, I shortened the slug to “60-self-care-ideas.”

I always edit the Meta description because the default is the first 155 characters in the blog post, which means that it can include unnecessary information or cut off the

description at an awkward point. I would rather edit the Meta description and provide a concise description of my post that contains the focus keyword so my SEO is better.

The focus keyword is the main keyword I want my post to rank for in search engines. For this post, I picked a keyword that is relevant to the post, commonly searched for, and specific enough to target a niche audience. In the case of this post, the focus keyword, “self-care,” was an obvious choice. However, in other posts, I might choose a more obscure focus keyword to help my post stand out in an overcrowded market.

Once I have adjusted all the data in Yoast SEO, I look at my feedback from the plugin.

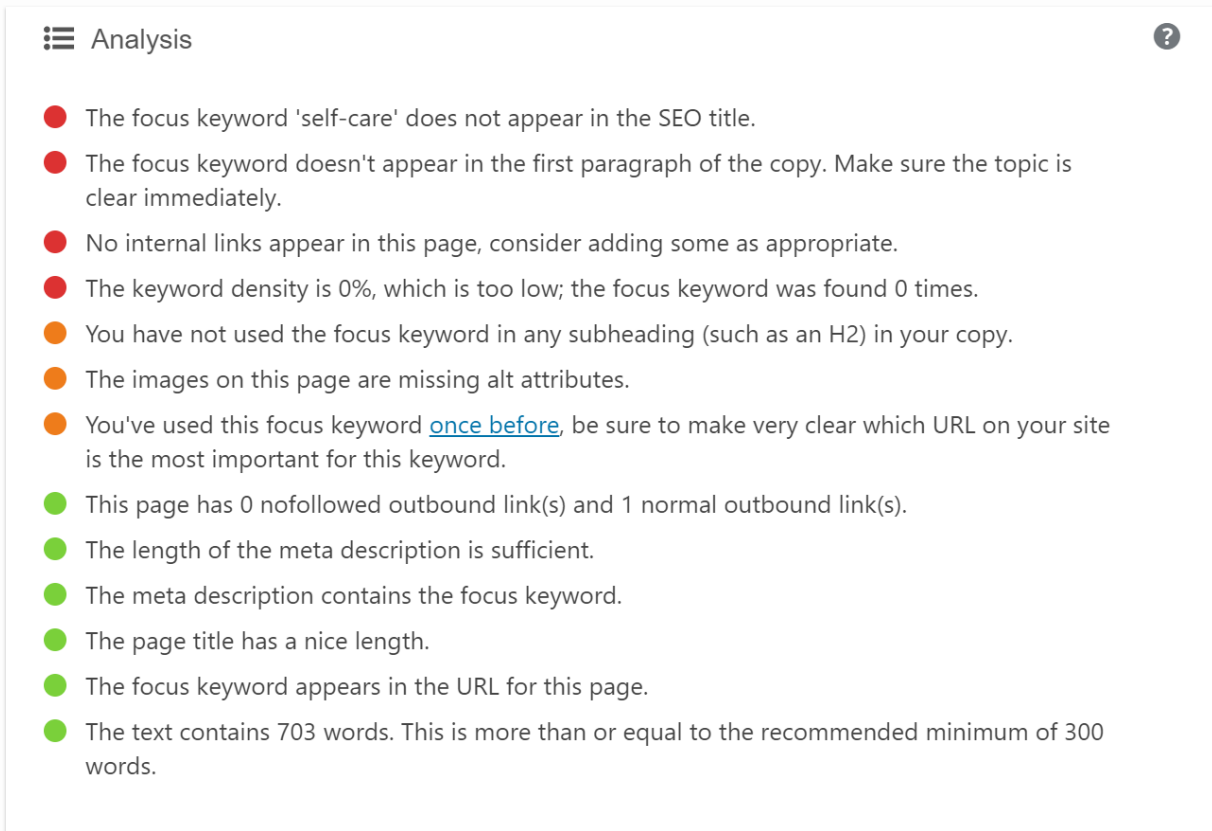


Figure 9: Feedback I received from Yoast SEO on my blog post

In the Yoast SEO analysis panel, I can view what helps my SEO and what hurts it. The green dots indicate parts of the post that will help it to rank better in search engines, and the orange and red dots indicate aspects of the post that could be improved.

It is incredibly difficult to create a post that will have all green dots. Therefore, I modify as much as possible to make my post fall into the “Good” category for SEO, as displayed in the “Publish” panel.

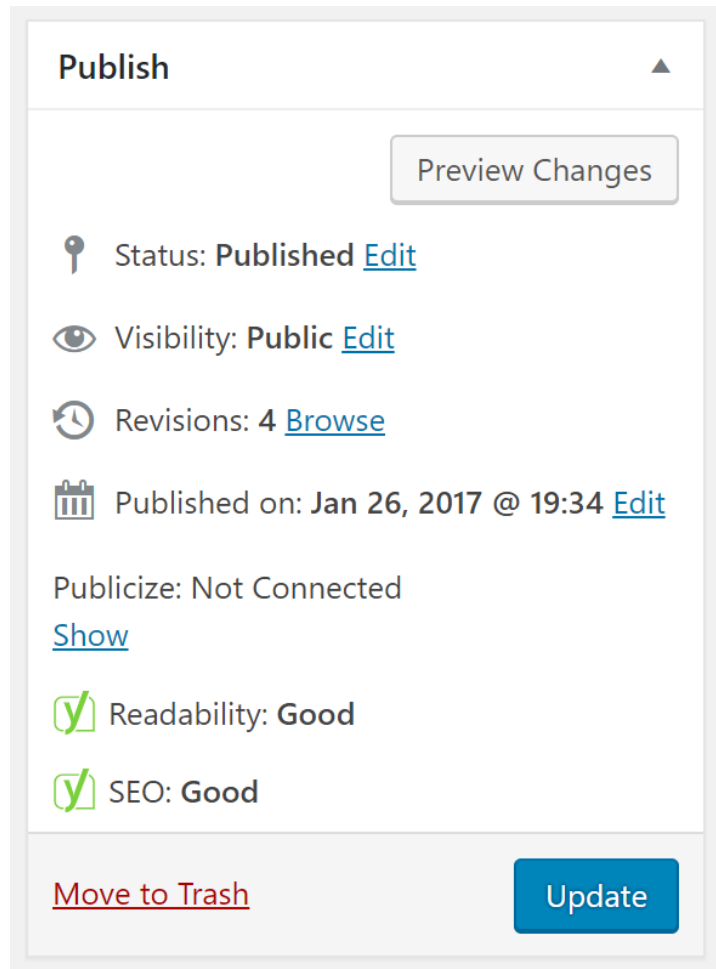


Figure 10: The “Publish” panel in Wordpress

Once I am finished optimizing my post for SEO, I am ready to proofread and publish it. In the “Publish” panel, I can view my readability and SEO ratings, preview my post, and view publishing information.

I always click the “Preview Changes” button to view exactly what my post will look like in its published form on my blog. I proofread my post in the preview mode and make changes if needed.

Once I am ready to publish my post, I hit the “Publish” button. If I want to make edits after the post is published, I can make the changes in the Wordpress editor and click “Update.”

Now that I have explained my content creation methods, I will describe how I adjust my process for monetization in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF MY TEXTUAL PROCESSES AND PRACTICES FOR MONETIZATION

In Chapter 3, I detailed my content creation process for non-sponsored content. For sponsored content or posts I create solely for monetization purposes, I employ a different process. Because my traffic and monetization are directly related, I earn more money from my blog when more people read it. In this chapter, I explain how I modify my process when I want to increase my traffic or monetize my content.

I decided to analyze my monetization practices because many bloggers are interested in monetizing their content, but they do not know how. My analysis provides them with a real example of how I earned a profit from my blog. Every blogger's monetization strategies are different. However, my process represents the journey of a blogger who started with zero subscribers, built a following, and eventually earned money from writing. The analysis of my monetization practices will also help researchers understand new writing career pursuits that have emerged in the digital age. It will show them that it is very possible for writers to make a substantial income from their work in the twenty-first century.

Common monetization strategies implemented by bloggers

Bloggers' prominence in the digital sphere provides them with many ways to monetize their platforms. The following are the most common ways bloggers profit from their work:

Affiliate marketing

For many bloggers, affiliate marketing is the most effective monetization strategy.

Bloggers utilize affiliate marketing when they promote a brand's products or services in exchange for a small commission for every sale driven by the blogger's influence. When bloggers become affiliates, brands often provide the bloggers with unique, trackable links that they can place in their blog or social media posts to drive sales. Based on the results from the links, the brands then determine the bloggers' payout.

Brand sponsorships

When a blogger writes a "sponsored" post, he or she receives a form of compensation in exchange for promoting a product or service within the post. The compensation for a sponsored post can be either product-only or monetary. Product-only sponsored campaigns allow brands with limited budgets to connect with influencers' targeted audiences. They also provide smaller influencers with opportunities to collaborate with brands and expand their reach.

Cost-per-click advertising

Many bloggers choose to place cost-per-click (also known as pay-per-click) advertisements onto their website to monetize their website traffic. When a user clicks on a cost-per-click (CPC) advertisement, the ad redirects the user to another website featuring the sponsored product or service. Bloggers receive a small commission every time one of their users clicks on a CPC ad. Blogs that receive high volumes of traffic can utilize CPC advertising to earn passive income.

A year's progress

In 2017, my blogging career progressed rapidly. In January 2017, I received 1,055 page views total, as reported by Jetpack, Wordpress.org's built-in analytics software. In December of the same year, I received 41,101 page views. See a detailed report of *Style of Change's* month-to-month page view count below:

Style of Change: Number of Page Views Received

(as reported by Jetpack)

Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June
1,055	12,680	21,596	30,768	31,010	23,014

July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
25,883	28,473	34,852	27,445	28,065	41,101

Table 1: Number of monthly page views I received in 2017

Content description

In 2017, I published 62 blog posts in total. Below is a list of the 10 blog posts that received the most page views in 2017:

1. 30 Awesome Free Fonts for Creatives
2. 50 Positive Ways to Deal with Negative Feelings
3. 100 Lifestyle Blog Post Ideas for 2017
4. 25 Healthy Ways to Deal with Stress
5. 15 FREE Printable Inspirational Quote Posters
6. 31 (more) Free Fonts for Creatives!
7. 20 Most Empowering Quotes from “Milk and Honey” by Rupi Kaur
8. 100 Lifestyle Blog Post Ideas for 2018
9. Achieve Beautiful Skin This Summer with AcneFree Products!
10. 12 Positive Things to Remind Yourself After a Breakup

Promotional methods

Social media is a key part of bloggers' promotional strategies. The rise of social media was intertwined with blogging. As social media platforms created online communities, blogs became more community-focused as well (Clark et al., 2016). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enabled bloggers and influencers to inhabit digital communities where they were "encouraged to share their opinions and connect with others" (Boyd, 2010).

After two months of blogging strictly for pleasure, I became curious about strategy. I wanted more people to read my work, so I researched how to drive more traffic to my blog and grow my email subscriber list. I also learned more about how to earn a profit from blogging. Literacy practices are exchanged within the social networks that we engage in (Barton, 2007). When I started blogging, my email subscriber list became one of my networks. My social media platforms also became networks that I communicated within.

Even though I conducted extensive research, I learned that finding the right strategy was a trial-and-error process. Initially, I tried sharing my posts more often on Facebook and Instagram. However, I did not see a significant increase in traffic from my investments in those platforms. After failing with Facebook and Instagram, I began strategically utilizing Pinterest. From my research, I knew that Pinterest was fundamental in many bloggers' social media strategies. I began sharing my pins to

Pinterest group boards, or boards that many different users simultaneously collaborate on. One morning in February, I looked at my analytics and saw an exponential increase in traffic from the prior week. One of my pins on Pinterest had gone viral, and thousands of users were sharing it on their own boards. As of today, over 69,000 people have repinned my “20 Healthy Ways to Deal with Stress” post.



Figure 11: Example of the Pinterest optimized image I created for “25 Healthy Ways to Deal with Stress”

Pinterest is the platform that many bloggers receive the most website traffic from (Cabrera, 2017). In 2017, *Style of Change* received most of its traffic from Pinterest. Other social media platforms I used to promote my blog post included Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is important to consider when composing blog posts. Yoast SEO is a Wordpress plugin, or software add-on, that analyzes blog posts based on popular search engine algorithms and provides suggestions to bloggers on how to improve their SEO. In 2017, I used Yoast SEO to optimize my blog posts so they would appear in search engine results more often. Over time, I noticed an increase in the number of page views

that came from search engine results.

In the content creation process, it is important to use a consumer-centered, or client-centered, approach (Pophal, 2017). When a blog post meets the need or demand of the reader, he or she is more likely to return to the website later or become a subscriber. If a blog post does not meet a need or demand, it is less likely to draw readers in.

Once I discovered how easily content could go viral on Pinterest, I prioritized Pinterest in my social media strategy. According to my Google Analytics, over 95 percent of my website traffic came from Pinterest. Pinterest was vital to my success as a blogger.

Over time, I accumulated page views and email subscribers. My email subscribers, my social media followers, and the people who regularly visited my blog became my community. Whenever I published a new post, I sent out an email to my subscribers to notify them so they could go read it. I also cross-promoted all my blog posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. Although each platform had an individual audience, my cross-promoting linked them together and composed *Style of Change's* community. At first, my community consisted of mainly friends and family. Then, it grew to include other bloggers, people interested in self-care, other creative people, and makeup and fashion enthusiasts.

Below are the numbers of subscribers and followers I had on each platform:

- Blog subscribers: 1,876
- Facebook followers: 1,502

- Instagram followers: 10,149
- Pinterest followers: 4,266
- Twitter followers: 896

Eventually, I became more curious about the entrepreneurial aspect of blogging; I wanted to know how bloggers and social media influencers turned their digital success into profit. I decided to turn my blog into a business, shifting my focus from self-expression to entrepreneurship.

Monetization strategy

In 2017, I earned \$8,794.28 in total from my blog. I earned most of my blogging income in the second half of the year, once I increased my traffic and optimized my monetization strategies. My two main monetization strategies were writing sponsored posts and leveraging cost-per-click ads on my website to generate income. Although affiliate marketing is a popular monetization strategy among many bloggers, I did not use affiliate marketing much.

I conducted research on influencer marketing and advertising opportunities. I created a Google AdSense account to place pay-per-click advertisements on my blog, and I joined influencer networks to seek sponsored post opportunities. Whenever a reader clicked on an advertisement on my website, I earned my cost-per-click amount. On average, my cost-per-click ranged in between 30 and 50 cents. As I drove more traffic to my blog,

I increased the number of clicks I received per day. In March 2016, I received 21,000 page views on my website.

In the same month, I completed my first sponsored post opportunity with Nature Made. I received \$200 in exchange for a review of a daily multivitamin product. I applied for the opportunity on Influence Central, an influencer network website that pairs brands with bloggers who want to write sponsored posts. So far, I have worked with many major brands, including Nature Made, Colgate, Hewlett-Packard, Neutrogena, Clean & Clear, and Brita. I enjoy trying new products and sharing them with my subscribers. Because my blog does not have a specific niche, I am able to write about products that interest me, regardless of type. I like to diversify both my sponsored and non-sponsored content because I can remain inspired and stay true to my purpose for blogging.

In July 2017, I received a significant income from my Google pay-per-click advertisements. On average, I earned \$17.20 per day from my advertisements, accumulating to a monthly total of \$533.07 in revenue. I can attribute my success to improved search engine optimization and increased traffic to my blog.

The number of page views I received each month and the amount of money I earned were directly related; when more readers visited my blog, I earned more clicks on my blog's cost-per-click ads and I received more sponsored post opportunities.

A blog post is “sponsored” when a blogger receives some form of compensation in exchange for promoting a brand’s product or service within the post. Often, brands pay influencers in the form of free product, but others are willing to provide monetary incentives. Below is a list of all the brands I completed sponsored blog posts for in 2017 and the compensation I received for each post:

Sponsored Posts on *Style of Change* in 2017

Brand	Date completed	Compensation
Nature Made	April 2017	\$225
AcneFree	July 2017	\$200
Neutrogena	August 2017	\$200
Brita	August 2017	Free product
Hewlett-Packard	September 2017	\$320
Colgate	September 2017	\$240
Schwarzkopf Keratin Color	September 2017	\$200
Nip + Fab	October 2017	Free product
Smartwater +	October 2017	\$190

Healthy Choice		
Henkel Got2B	October 2017	\$190
Schwarzkopf Color Ultime	October 2017	\$200
Nip + Fab	October 2017	Free product
Intel	November 2017	\$1,180
Advil	November 2017	\$270
Seventh Generation	December 2017	\$260
Poo~Pourri	December 2017	\$245
Coca-Cola	December 2017	\$240
Kellogg Special K	December 2017	\$245

Table 2: Amount earned from each sponsored post I completed for Style of Change in 2017

I received all but one of my sponsored post opportunities through influencer networks, or online platforms that pair bloggers with brands that are seeking influencers to promote their products. Below are the influencer networks I received sponsored post opportunities from:

**Number of Sponsored Posts Completed on *Style of Change*,
by Influencer Network**

Influencer network	URL	Number of opportunities
Social Fabric	https://socialfabric.us/	14
Collectively, Inc.	http://collectivelyinc.com/	2
Influence Central	http://influence-central.com/	1

Table 3: Number of Sponsored Posts Completed on Style of Change, by Influencer Network

In addition to finding opportunities through influencer networks, many established bloggers receive email pitches from brands.

In August 2017, a public relations representative for Brita sent me an email pitch about a sponsored post opportunity. The representative offered me free product in exchange for a blog review.

Many brands seeking influencers email pitch them directly because it is more cost-effective for both parties. Most influencer networks require brands to pay for access to their influencers. If brands pitch influencers directly, they do not have to pay a network

fee. Furthermore, if influencers pitch their services to brands, they can set their own quotes and receive more compensation.

How I read Google Analytics

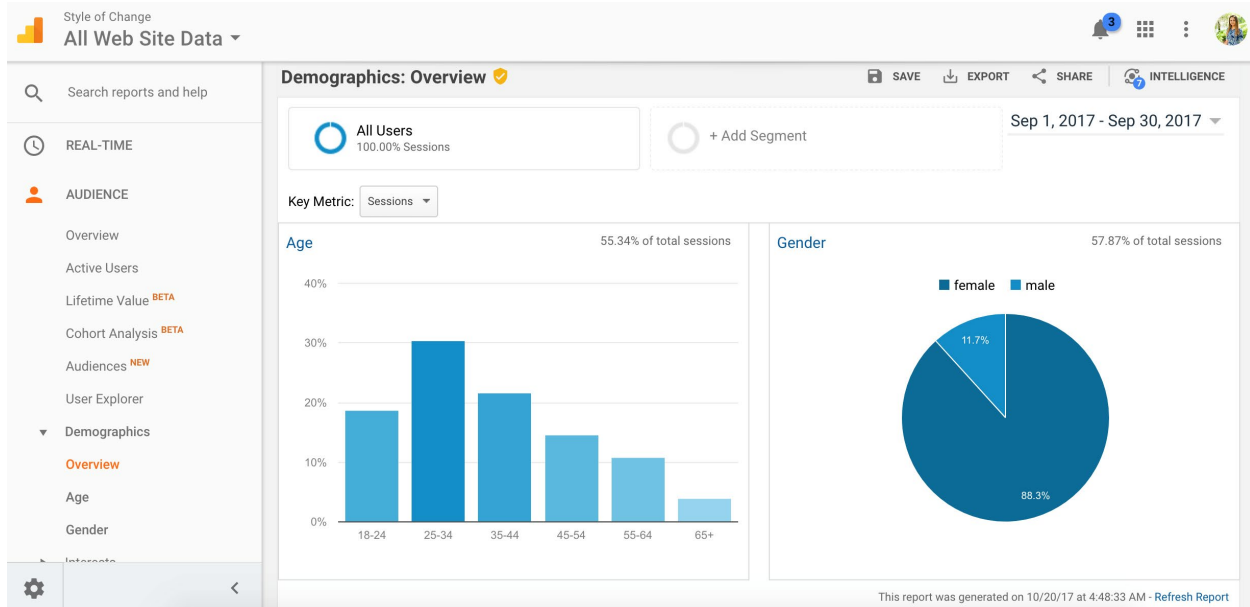


Figure 12: Screenshot #1 of my Sep. 2017 Google Analytics report

Country	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions
	13,814 % of Total: 100.00% (13,814)	91.02% Avg for View: 90.97% (0.06%)	12,574 % of Total: 100.06% (12,567)	76.38% Avg for View: 76.38% (0.00%)	1.64 Avg for View: 1.64 (0.00%)	00:01:24 Avg for View: 00:01:24 (0.00%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 % of Total: 0.00% (0)
1. United States	9,214 (66.70%)	91.25%	8,408 (66.87%)	74.01%	1.71	00:01:31	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
2. Canada	634 (4.59%)	91.96%	583 (4.64%)	81.86%	1.52	00:01:02	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
3. United Kingdom	581 (4.21%)	93.63%	544 (4.33%)	85.89%	1.35	00:00:53	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
4. India	443 (3.21%)	90.74%	402 (3.20%)	87.58%	1.19	00:00:37	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
5. Brazil	393 (2.84%)	87.02%	342 (2.72%)	73.54%	2.21	00:02:45	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
6. Australia	316 (2.29%)	96.20%	304 (2.42%)	81.01%	1.39	00:00:44	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
7. Philippines	158 (1.14%)	93.67%	148 (1.18%)	82.28%	1.30	00:00:44	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
8. South Africa	147 (1.06%)	95.24%	140 (1.11%)	78.91%	1.48	00:01:15	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
9. Germany	92 (0.67%)	88.04%	81 (0.64%)	72.83%	1.65	00:01:21	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
10. Indonesia	89 (0.64%)	87.64%	78 (0.62%)	87.64%	1.34	00:01:24	0.00%	0 (0.00%)

Figure 13: Screenshot #2 of my Sep. 2017 Google Analytics report

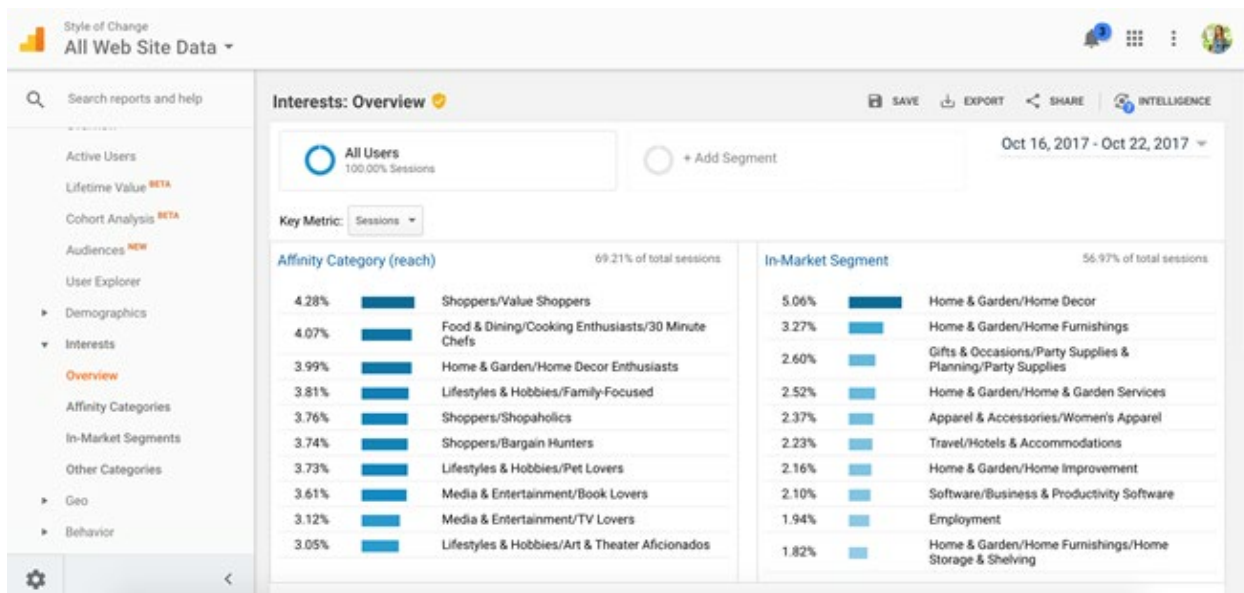


Figure 14: Screenshot #3 of my Sep. 2017 Google Analytics report

Above are screenshots of the demographics data for users of my website in September 2017, based on Google Analytics reporting. I have learned that Google Analytics is the most respected reporting service because it is highly accurate and easily shareable. When brands consider me for sponsored post opportunities, they always refer to my Google Analytics data to gauge my influence on their target audience.

My analytics are highly useful for me when I try to create content that is targeted to my audience. The data from September 2017 shows that the majority of my website's users are between the ages of 25 and 34, and the majority are female. Using this information, I can create content that will be more interesting and helpful for that demographic.

The second screenshot shows where the users of my website are from. The majority reside in the United States, but there are users from many other nations as well. Because my posts are written in English, the majority of my readers come from English-speaking countries. I keep this geographic information in mind when targeting posts to my audience.

The third screenshot provides insight into the interests of my website visitors. Because I write about a variety of topics, my readers have many different interests. The "Shoppers/Value Shoppers" category makes up the second largest grouping of visitors. Many of my posts are focused on beauty products, and the relatively large

“Shoppers/Value Shoppers” category reflects this.

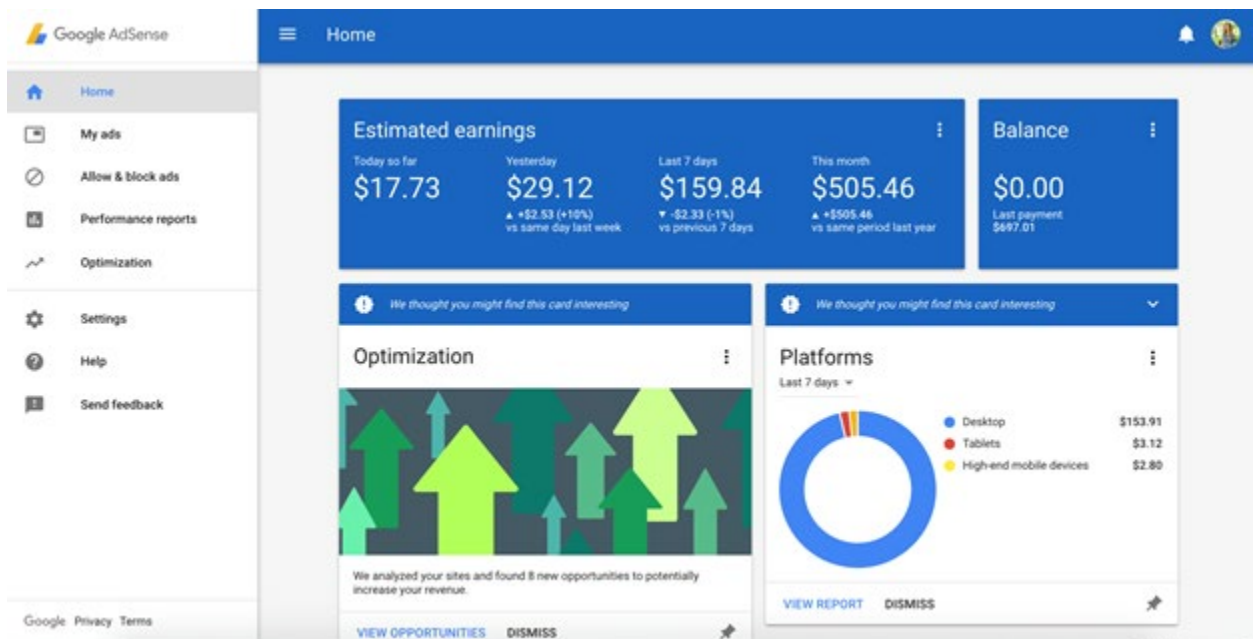


Figure 15: Screenshot of my Google AdSense dashboard

Above is a screenshot of my Google AdSense dashboard. I took the screenshot on October 23, 2017. My Google AdSense dashboard shows me how my pay-per-click ads on my website are doing on any given day. I visit this page at least ten times per day to check to see how much money I have made from my web advertising. The default dashboard shows today's earnings, yesterday's earnings, weekly earnings to date, and monthly earnings to date.

In September 2017, I earned \$23.20 on average per day from pay-per-click ads. The

revenue I earn from my ads make up about half of my monthly blog earnings.

My textual practices for monetization

Social Fabric is an influencer network that I am a part of. Influencer networks are one of the easiest ways that bloggers can partner with brands for paid sponsored posts. Above is a screenshot of my Social Fabric active campaign dashboard. The four campaigns displayed are for brands that I have recently partnered with. The dollar amount displayed below each product is the amount the brand paid me to write the sponsored post.

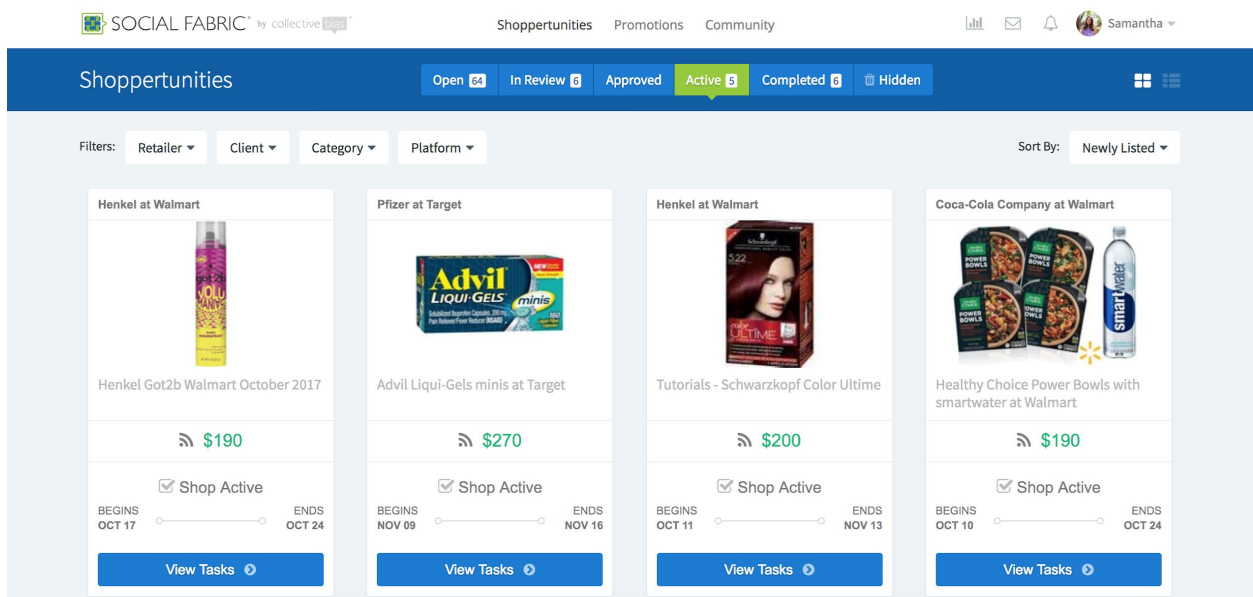


Figure 16: Screenshot of my Social Fabric dashboard

To be considered for sponsored campaigns on Social Fabric, I first view which open campaigns have been posted. Then, I select which campaigns I want to apply for. Once

I find one I am interested in, I fill out the application, which usually consists of four to five written answer questions. Social Fabric campaigns are formatted to incorporate creative “tutorial” ideas when promoting brands. In order to be selected for a campaign, I must pitch a creative post idea to the brand. If the brand likes my post idea and thinks my audience is a good fit for the campaign, I receive an email notifying me that I was selected for the campaign. Then, I sign a contract with the brand and begin working on the post.

“Quick and Easy 5 Step Back to School Makeup” is a sponsored post I created for Neutrogena and Clean & Clear. I was compensated \$200 and given a stipend to purchase the products I promoted in the post. I found the sponsored post opportunity through Social Fabric, applied for it, and was selected to be one of the influencers for the campaign.

When I write a sponsored post for a brand, I sign a contract that outlines specific guidelines I must follow when I create and promote the post.

Below are some of the guidelines outlined by Neutrogena and Clean & Clear:

- I must create a tutorial or how-to style post that features the products.
- I must include 3-5 high quality photos showing the product in my home.
- I must include images of me shopping for the products in-store, and the images must show what aisle the products can be found on.

- I must include a shoppable image that links to landing pages where readers can purchase the products themselves.
- I must mention the retailer I purchased the products from and write about my shopping experience.
- I must use all original photos.
- I must include a written disclosure at the top of my post to comply with Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines.
- I must code all campaign links as “nofollow.”

I'm a beauty addict, and I love to use lots of products. However, I'm also a busy woman. It's not always practical to cake on ten layers of makeup. And guess what? You don't have to wear lots of makeup to look beautiful! I've created a quick and easy back to school makeup tutorial using high quality, budget-friendly products. Look great and boost your confidence in just five simple steps. In my tutorial, I've used three amazing products: the [Clean & Clear® Morning Burst Facial Cleanser](#), the [Neutrogena® SkinClearing Liquid Makeup](#), and the [Neutrogena® SkinClearing Mineral Powder](#).

Figure 17: Sample text from post including links to landing pages for sponsored products



Figure 18: In-store images of me purchasing the products for the sponsored campaign

*This shop has been compensated by Collective Bias, Inc. and its advertiser. All opinions are mine alone.
#SkinEssentials #CollectiveBias*

Click the links in the image below to purchase the products I used in this tutorial online.



Figure 19: Required disclosure for sponsored post and the shoppable image that links to the featured products

```
9 Add Media Visual Text
b i link b-quote del ins img ul ol li code more close tags Ads1 Ads2 RndAds NoAds OffDef OffWidget
OffBegin OffMiddle OffEnd OffAfMore OffBfLastPara proofread
<div lang="en" data-widget-id="xG0JF43y8ORL5jsKCSP0gF9y60IjBb8t" data-active-product-icon="tag" data-stretch-to-fit="false" data-shop-
button-text="SHOP" data-auto-show-products="false" data-replace-tabs="false" data-custom-css-url-override="" data-custom-js-url-
override="" data-widget-version="v1" data-max-width="" data-seq-use-nofollow="true"><em>This shop has been compensated by Collective
Bias, Inc. and its advertiser. All opinions are mine alone. #SkinEssentials #CollectiveBias</em></div>
&nbsp;
<div lang="en" data-widget-id="xG0JF43y8ORL5jsKCSP0gF9y60IjBb8t" data-active-product-icon="tag" data-stretch-to-fit="false" data-shop-
button-text="SHOP" data-auto-show-products="false" data-replace-tabs="false" data-custom-css-url-override="" data-custom-js-url-
override="" data-widget-version="v1" data-max-width="" data-seq-use-nofollow="true">Click the links in the image below to purchase the
products I used in this tutorial online.</div>
```

Figure 20: The backend text editor on Wordpress with the HTML code for my post

In Figure 20, the highlighted text in the editor shows how I coded each campaign link as “nofollow,” which means that the links will not have any effect on my SEO ranking.

In the next chapter, I will draw conclusions from my research and suggest some productive directions for further study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH, AND PRODUCTIVE DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this final chapter, I draw conclusions from my research, explain the limitations of my research methods, and suggest productive directions for further study.

Reflecting on my blogging activities

Before I created my blog, I did not have a sole purpose for writing. I enjoyed many different literate activities, but I did not engage in any of them consistently. I did not have an outlet that allowed me to develop my voice and grow authentically as a writer. My blog was the first platform I had that was entirely mine. I built it from scratch to give myself a creative outlet in which I could express my ideas freely. As my blog grew, I realized that I could turn my passion into a business.

While some of my strategies have changed, my authenticity has not. From the very beginning, blogging was the most authentic form of writing I had ever engaged in. Through blogging, I was able to write in a way that was true to myself and create content that reflected my interests. Writing authentically allowed me to voice my ideas without censoring them for academic or professional contexts. It also gave me a sense of ownership over my work.

I did not create posts from prompts like I did from academic essays; instead, I used my creativity to brainstorm ideas for posts. My blog helped me to develop my voice as a writer by allowing me to explore different strategies and writing styles. Although my blog gave me freedom, the social aspect of it kept me grounded in reality. The balance between creative freedom and real world application allowed me to grow my voice in an authentic and beneficial way.

As I continue to write on my blog in the future, I expect that my writing will improve even more. I will explore my interests through my writing and discover new strategies to profit from my passion. I will experience growth both personally and professionally. Above all, blogging will help me to hone my voice as a writer so I can provide the best content possible to my readers. "We are constantly learning more about literacy," (Barton, 2007, p. 54), so I will continue to learn more about writing as long as I continue to blog. The literacy events I experience in the future, including blogging, academic writing, and writing for other platforms, will help me to strengthen my literary identity and grow into an even more authentic self.

What I learned from blogging

One of the most important lessons I learned from blogging is that it is interdisciplinary in many ways. While writing is an important skill for blogging, blog posts require much more than just words on a page to be effective. Images, links, and the organization of

elements in a blog post all affect how the blog post ranks in search engines and how many shares it receives. Even though I studied writing and rhetoric in college, I learned more about visual rhetoric from blogging than I did in my academic experiences.

Prior the rise of blogging as a prominent literate activity in the twenty-first century, many writers struggled to find ways to earn money from their work. Now that blogging has emerged as a new way to earn a living as a writer, many people are turning away from their corporate positions and becoming full-time bloggers. The profitability of blogging is an example of the “rise of writing” that Brandt described in her book.

Prior to becoming a blogger, many of my experiences with writing occurred inside the classroom. I enjoyed working on my own creative writing projects outside of class, but most of my learning as a writer came from assignments I completed for school. After breaking free from the five-paragraph essay format and exploring other forms of writing, I discovered a more authentic voice in my writing that did not need to conform to an elementary-level essay structure.

Although school-based writing experiences are important for the development of young writers, education systems should teach students to explore writing in multiple ways instead of in a simply structured essay format. Blogging and less traditional forms of writing may not be valued as much in modern schools, but they should be. Blogging has

become a profitable and attainable career path for writers of all kinds. Instead of forcing students' creative minds into metaphorical boxes, schools should encourage their students to explore different mediums of writing. Students would enjoy writing more, and the freedom to learn and grow would streamline their literate development.

Creativity vs. practicality

Some writers are pure innovators. They believe in allowing their creativity to flow freely onto the page without external forces affecting the outcome of their work. My experiences as a blogger are a stark contrast to the pure creative flow of poetry or more abstract forms of writing. Nearly every aspect of one of my blog posts is optimized for the practical use of the reader. I organize my posts into listicles or I separate main ideas with headings to improve readability. I only write about topics that I think will provide value to my readers. Although blogging does require creativity, it also requires a logical, reader-based, and often consumer-based perspective. The usability of a blog post is at the forefront of my considerations when I decide what to write about, how to write it, and when to publish it.

I began blogging because I enjoyed it, and I still do. However, I now compose blog posts differently than I did when I started. Instead of writing about a topic just because I think it's interesting, I think about my readers first. I ask myself if the topic will provide value to them. I also ask myself if the topic has any viral or profit-earning potential. If the

answer is no, I move onto a different topic until I find something I think would be a good fit for my objectives.

From blogging, I have learned that feedback is crucial. The comments I receive from my readers and the sponsor guidelines I must follow when I work on paid posts shape my content significantly. When I write on my blog, my work is not the result of pure creative flow. External feedback shapes my work and ultimately affects the success of my blog.

The impact of blogging

Another key contrast between blogging and school-based writing is the audience. When I write an essay for school, my teacher or professor is the intended audience. Even if the figurative audience for the assignment is different, the teacher is the one who reads it and gives a grade, the main form of feedback I receive in school. However, when I blog, I meet the needs of real people. My audience is much broader, and my writing has more impact than school-based writing would. My blog posts have the potential to change the way people think and even affect their purchasing habits. I benefit more from blogging than I would from school-based writing. In school, I write to get a grade. When I blog, I feel fulfilled and impact my readers.

Productive directions for future research

Because blogging is a rapidly changing field, there are many avenues researchers can take to learn more about the field. Based on my knowledge and research, I have a few suggestions for future study:

1. Analyze other bloggers' work.

One of the limitations of autoethnography is that it only analyzes one person's experiences. Although my research is rich, it is not representative of all bloggers. Therefore, researchers should conduct both qualitative and quantitative studies on other bloggers to learn more about their experiences and strategies.

2. Research a wide variety of blog types.

The "lifestyle blog" category is large, but it is not the only type of blog on the internet. It would be worthwhile for researchers to study other types, such as celebrity or sports-oriented blogs. Some blogs are personal, and others follow more of a magazine format. Since the two blog types are so different, they likely use different strategies to promote and monetize their content.

3. Study both bloggers and social media influencers.

The worlds of bloggers and social media influencers are intertwined in many ways. Most lifestyle bloggers who monetize their content are also social media influencers because a strong presence on social platforms is crucial for

monetization. However, there are some social media influencers who do not have blogs. It would be worthwhile to study both bloggers and influencers to observe similarities and differences between the different strategies and content creation processes.

4. Explore potential gender differences.

The world of lifestyle blogging is gendered. From my observations, it seems like mommy bloggers are more successful than dad bloggers. In online blogger communities on Facebook and other social media platforms, it seems that dad bloggers are often excluded from conversations, especially in more “mommy-focused” groups. An exploration of gender differences in the blogging world would be a productive direction for further research.

Autoethnography is an effective research method that gives scholars insights they could not tap into with other methods. There are many lenses researchers could use to study blogging, however. Conducting interviews with bloggers would provide researchers with rich data on many different accounts. Because visuals are so important for blogs, literacy scholars should take screenshots of bloggers’ writing processes so they can actually see what the processes look like. Especially for blogging, images could provide researchers with a better understanding of the process than a written explanation would.

The blogging field is constantly changing because bloggers must find new ways to stay relevant. Literacy scholars must work hard to keep up with new developments. However, the rapid change keeps blogging research exciting. As opposed to other literate activities that evolve more slowly, blogging will always have new avenues for further research.

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