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I Buy Your Product When I Feel I Know You: Using Blog Disclosure To Influence Consumers

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**I buy your product when I feel I know you: using blog disclosure
to influence consumers**

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I buy your product when I feel I know you: using blog disclosure to influence consumers

Abstract:

Whilst confidence in certain companies has fallen as a result of the feeling amongst consumers that their private life has been violated, it would seem that at the same time, consumers are very eager to know more about the private life of the bloggers they follow. In return, bloggers are revealing more and more about themselves and displaying their private lives on their blogs. We show that the role of disclosure is a key determinant in consumer persuasion and that the exposure by bloggers of their private lives has a positive influence on their visitors. A quantitative study made of fashion and beauty blog enabled us to assess the impact of such disclosure on confidence in the blog, attitude towards the blog and the brand, and on the various routes to persuasion observed. The managerial implications of this research are presented in conclusion to help managers choose relevant blogs.

Keywords: blog, private life, perceived disclosure of private life, confidence, routes to persuasion

Introduction

The phenomenon of blogs, and in particular, those concerned with fashion and beauty, has developed dramatically and the power of these blogs has been taken on board by companies: recruitment of certain bloggers by publishing and press companies, the development of advertising, the recourse to sponsored articles and the sending of free products to influential bloggers, etc. As a result, blogs are now entering into serious competition for audiences, competition that is reinforced by the appearance of measurement and classification tools such as *Ebuzzing*.¹ In this ceaseless race for visibility, bloggers have turned the disclosure of their private lives into a deliberate strategy for attracting and winning the loyalty of readers. This research contributes to understanding how the capacity of blogs for commercial persuasion is fuelled, with the private life of the blogger serving as an element of personalization and confidence. In 2009, Shankar and Batra emphasized the growing influence of online communications and this is particularly true of blogs, which are increasingly influencing sales (Dhar and Chang, 2009). The private life variable is very influential where online media is concerned (Peltier, Milne and Phelps, 2009), hence the development by bloggers of strategies that attract and persuade their visitors by intentionally revealing elements of their private life.

Although the literature has dealt with the reasons why bloggers are led to reveal their private lives, very little research has been done to measure the impact of such disclosure on consumers. In the first section, we present the literature relating to private life and Internet. We have centered this presentation on the particular case of the voluntary disclosure of private life with the aim of persuasion. In the second section, we establish a model of the influence of disclosure of the blogger's private life on confidence and persuasion. This model, presented in the third section, was tested on a sample made up of 300 consumers. It culminates in an analysis of the routes to persuasion taken by the bloggers and of the influence of the disclosure of the writer's private life on attitudes towards the blog and intentions to buy the featured product. In conclusion, the managerial implications are commented on and analyzed.

¹ Ebuzzing is a monitoring and audience measurement platform for blogs but also an advertising agency specialising in social media.

Contextual and Theoretical Background

The disclosure of private life on Internet: from search for gratification to inclination to disclosure

Two strands of research deal with the implications of self-disclosure online. The first endeavors to define the potential threats to the personal safety of the Internet user as a result of revealing private information online (Andrade and al. (2002); Phelps and al. 2001) and the influence of such threats on the behavior of the Internet user (Dinev and Hart 2005, Lee and al., 2008).

The second strand is centered on the use that brands can make of this type of information, that is to say, the personalization of messages (Blattberg and Deighton, 1991), the influence on survey methodologies (Tourangeau and Ting, 2007) and consumers' resistance to intrusive communications (White, 2004). These research strands draw on Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch, 1974) to explain the motivations that lead individuals to self-disclosure on Internet. The disclosure of private life represents a form of exchange between that which is received and that which is given. Nonetheless, this theory only explains a small part of the motivations for self-disclosure on the Net. A paradox exists based on the following observations: individuals agree to self-disclosure with no firm assurance of real gratification. Therefore, disclosures of private life are a situational variable that cannot be explained wholly by the desire to receive gratifications. Acquisti, John and Loewenstein (2012) show that receiving private information from one's Internet contacts increases one's personal inclination for disclosure. This reciprocal disclosure is related to social imitation (Moon, 2000), since individuals are influenced by the behaviors of the Internet user with whom they are in contact. These observations do not call into question Uses and Gratifications Theory, but they extend the sphere of application of gratifications, which may be monetary but also social. Lastly, the idea of inclination to disclosure must be understood in the light of the various presences on Internet. Balague and de Valck (2013) studied the effect of questioning. Although the idea of reciprocal disclosure is very important on social networking sites such as Facebook, it is much less so on blogs, which are a social media within which the transmitter (blogger) is the main actor.

Motivations for revealing one's private life: the specific case of bloggers

Blogs are characterized by a considerable degree of disclosure of private life (Viegas, 2005). Suler (2004) explains this by the relative anonymity and asynchronicity of the information given. A certain number of research papers have shown that the phenomenon of blogs and personal sites is developing all the more rapidly since such sites "represent a recreational space for post-modern personalities and allow individuals to create and develop their identities" (Marcus and al. 2006). These characteristics are in line with research on private life and Internet. Bloggers are seeking to generate authenticity as well as placing themselves in a setting that will be attractive to their visitors (Kretz, 2010). Amongst the individual variables, gender seems to be an essential element in explaining this. Women are more inclined to online revelations. A study carried out on female British bloggers (Pederson and Macaffee, 2007) shows that they are more interested in the social aspect of blogging. Moreover, the content of blogs plays a vital aspect in disclosure. Blogs centered on the presentation of general, rather than personal content are far less likely to reveal the private life of their authors. However, the latter only represent half of all bloggers, with the other half made up of bloggers who write for themselves as though in a private diary and without really taking their readers into account (Lenhart and Fox, 2006).

Motivations for blogging and influence on the disclosure of private life:

The motivations for blogging have a relatively weak influence on the voluntary revelation of a blogger's private life. Hollenbaugh (2010) constructed a scale for measuring the motivations for blogging. This comprised seven factors (sharing feelings, desire to inform, desire for entertainment, desire to become well-known, desire to archive and organize information, desire to improve one's image, desire to obtain feedback on posts). The author studied the links between these constructs and disclosure of private life. It would seem that only the motivation relating to the wish to archive and organize information exercises a significant influence on self-disclosure. On the other hand, gender and propensity to reveal one's private life (which is a permanent psychological variable) have a strong influence on disclosure of private life. These results lead to a certain number of observations. Bloggers do

not reveal their private life for commercial ends. "Professionalism" (importance for career or image) or "Feedback" (obtaining feedback and comments on the posts) does not seem to be antecedents of disclosure. It is individual characteristics (being a woman and the degree of propensity to reveal details of private life) that would seem to explain disclosure. Nonetheless, these results need qualification. The bloggers questioned kept blogs that we would qualify as personal online diaries rather than content-driven blogs. Self-disclosure in a more commercial context remains to be studied.

Type of blog and measurement of perceived disclosure; two research fields yet to be explored

Taking account of the type of blog would seem to be essential to an understanding of the links that exist between self-disclosure and the motivations for blogging. Lenhart and Fox (2006) showed that the type of audience and the target are antecedents of disclosure. Lastly, the degree of private life disclosure merits clarification. The degree of private life disclosure should be differentiated from the propensity to make private life disclosures. The latter may be defined as a tendency to reveal elements of private life whatever the context. Wheelless (1978) drew up a measuring scale comprising seven items (" I tend to talk about myself relatively often", "I like talking about myself" etc.) that was taken and adapted to the online context (Stefanove and Jang, 2007). As for the degree of disclosure of private life, this is based on a two-dimensional scale (quantity of information disclosed and depth of intimacy of the information disclosed) that has been tested in numerous research projects including Hollenbaugh's (2010). To our knowledge, however, no scale exists for measuring readers' perceptions of the blogger's disclosure of her private life.

With respect to the literature, a certain number of questions therefore continue to arise. How is the disclosure of private life by bloggers perceived by their readers? How can this perception be measured? Does the perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life have an influence on the process of consumer persuasion in relation to blogs concerned with consumer topics such as fashion and beauty?

Presentation and objectives of the study

The objectives of the quantitative study were to examine the possible link between a blogger's disclosure of her private life and persuasion, and to assess the effectiveness of such disclosure on attitudes to the blog, the brand featured in the blog, and purchasing intentions.

Perceived disclosure of private life

The disclosure of private life was studied from the point of view of perception and from the point of view of the measurement and detection of self-disclosure signals (Brodin and Magnier, 2011). With regard to the detection of self-disclosure signals, what the authors term "extimity" was assessed in relation to social media networks. It was therefore possible to clarify the various indicators of the disclosure on Internet of private life: the formalization of status, public presence (open networks), free expression of the social role, quantitative production of signs linked to the self, etc. Another thread in the literature is concerned with measuring self-disclosure by approaching it as a perceptual construct. For these authors, it is more important to assess the force of the impression that others receive of an individual's self-disclosure. Leung (2002) defines the concept of self-disclosure as the way individuals reveal themselves to others, which includes their experiences and feelings. Self-disclosure is therefore measured in relation to others. It corresponds to all messages about oneself that a person communicates to others and to the perception of the degree of intimacy that the latter have of this. It is a multi-dimensional concept based on the following aspects: depth of revelation, honesty, and intentionality.

The various routes to persuasion that the readership of a blog can follow

In order to anchor our study in the literature dealing with advertising persuasion, we formulated our research proposals and hypotheses on the basis of MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch's persuasion model (1986). They identified four routes to persuasion, which are described in the following Table.

Table 1

Description of MacKenzie Lutz and Belch's four potential persuasion mechanisms (1986)

Hypothesis of affective transfer

The consumer transfers the feelings he experienced during his exposure to the message onto the brand. This route may be assimilated into the peripheral persuasion route of Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (1981, 1986).
Hypothesis of dual mediation
The consumer is influenced both by the beliefs he holds with regard to the advertisement and his beliefs with regard to the brand. Moreover, an interaction exists between attitudes and beliefs. The central and peripheral routes are interdependent rather than mutually exclusive.
Hypothesis of reciprocal mediation
The consumer seeks to maintain a balance between his attitude towards the advertisement and his attitude towards the brand by liking both the advertisement and the brand or by rejecting both of them.
Hypothesis of independent influence
No relationship is observed between the attitude to the advertisement and the attitude towards the brand.

Source: adapted from MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986)

Presentation of the model and methodology

Our quantitative study is based on two levels of analysis. The first is centered on the link that may exist between the perceived disclosure of private life and the confidence generated by the blog. The second lies in the description of the routes to persuasion followed by the reader depending on the type of blog (impersonal blog with no disclosure of the blogger's private life or blog in which the blogger reveals details of her private life).

Analysis 1: This level of analysis (Figure 1) requires the construction of a scale to measure the perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life, the use of the measure of confidence scale (Gurviez and Korchia, 2002), the cleaning of items, and a study of the links between constructs using SPSS and Amos 16 software.

Analysis 2: The second level of analysis is presented in Figure 2. This consisted in checking whether the type of blog (impersonal or disclosing the private life of the blogger) moderates the routes to persuasion followed by the reader. The analyses

were based on pre-tests of all the scales of variables that constituted the model and a multi-group analysis using Amos 16 in order to check the moderating nature of the type of blog.

Figure 1

First level of analysis, the perceived disclosure of private life as an antecedent of the confidence generated by the blog

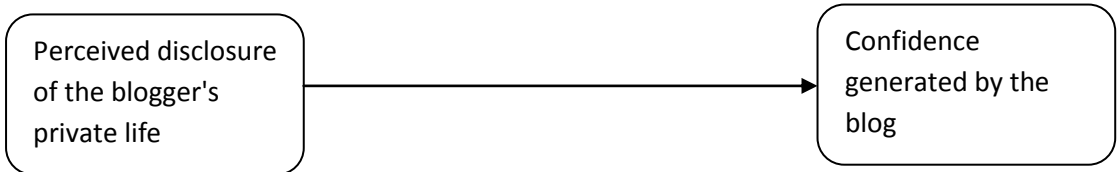
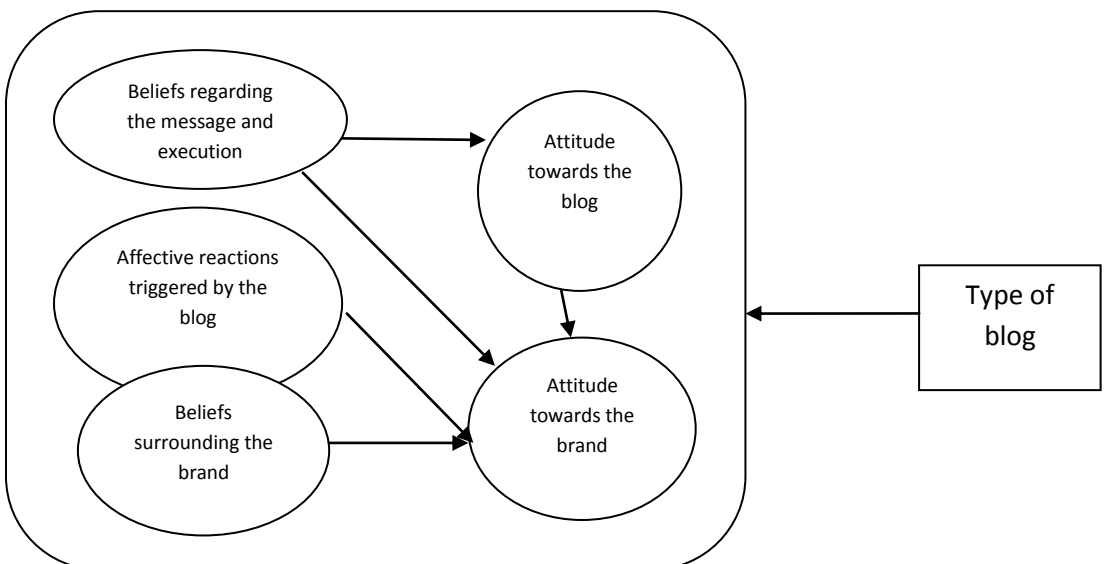


Figure 2

Second level of analysis, modeling of the different routes to persuasion followed by the reader of an impersonal blog versus a blog that reveals details of the blogger's private life.



The methodology of the qualitative survey is detailed in the following box (Box 1):

Box 1 – Methodology of the quantitative survey

Stage 1: the scales of variables in our model were pre-tested to ensure their reliability and the validity of our measuring instruments.

Stage 2: a questionnaire that took all the items adopted was presented to two paired samples. The first sample read a blog in which the blogger revealed her private life. The second sample was shown a completely impersonal blog (with no information about the blogger).

Structure of the sample: the sample of interviewees was made up of 305 people (students on initial or further training courses). The average age was 22.9 years and the median age was 23. Women represent 61% of the sample. 53% of the sample, that is to say 162 people, were shown the blog disclosing details of the private life of the blogger.

Test material: the two blogs selected were fashion and beauty blogs. An identical brand of make-up featured in both blogs. The selection of these two blogs was made from a pre-selection of blogs listed in E-Buzzing in the Beauty category. A private life disclosure grid was drawn up using items identified in the qualitative study. Each item on each pre-selected blog was given a mark from 1 to 5 ("highly visible" item versus "not very" visible item) by a convenience sample made up of twenty people. The blog with the highest average mark for the items overall (blog disclosing private life) and the blog with the lowest average mark (impersonal blog) were retained.

The blog containing disclosures of private life had the following characteristics: scene-setting (blogger shown with products), confidences on her private life



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The impersonal blog presents the following characteristics: minimalist introduction of blogger, very few confidences on her life apart from those corresponding to purchasing occasions.

Structure of the questionnaire: the structure of the questionnaire lists all the variables for the model: opinion on the brand and the blog, affective reactions triggered by the blog, questions linked to the measure of confidence generated by the blog, beliefs regarding the message delivered by the blog and its execution, items linked to perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life, purchasing intention, beliefs regarding the brand.

Results

Perceived disclosure of private life, antecedent of the confidence regarding the blog: a partial influence

The first part of our results consisted in estimating the antecedent nature of the perceived disclosure of private life on confidence in the blog (Figure 1). To do this, we:

1. Checked the validity and reliability of our measuring instruments, that is, the scale of perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life and the confidence scale.
2. Checked to see if a significant link existed between the perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life and the confidence generated by the blog.

The following Table summarizes the results of Leung's **scale for measuring perception of disclosure** of the blogger's life (2002) used in this research.² After cleaning (submitted to a sample of 290 individuals), it appears that perceived disclosure of private life is composed of two dimensions, one dimension founded on the impression of the blogger's honesty, sincerity and accessibility and the other centered on the blogger's intentions, that is to show herself to advantage and attract people to her blog. We called the first dimension the "honesty" dimension and the second, the "intentionality" dimension.

Table 3 – Scale for Measuring perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life

² Leung's original self-disclosure scale (2002) had five dimensions: depth, accuracy, intention, frequency, valency.

Main indicators of the adequacy of the measurement model		Items retained after first cleaning	Representativeness	Matrix of the components 1	Matrix of the components 2	Standardized coefficient	T
Chi-two	39.29	She seems sincere when talking about herself	.859	.924		0.92	2
ddl	7 (.000)	She seems sincere when revealing her feelings	.854	.925		0.91	1
GFI	970	She seems close and accessible	.803	.888		0.806	1
AGFI	0.845	She is not being hypocritical when she reveals her feelings and emotions	.818	.904		0.892	1
NFI	983	She makes you want to be her friend	.793	.876		0.78	1
RMR	0.066	She presents herself to advantage	.822		.901	0.522	8
Cronbach's Alpha	.903	In her blog, she only talks	.864		.929	0.659	1

³ Associated Student Test T

		about herself				
Matrix of correlation between the components	.358	She reveals her private life in order to sell the products she talks about	.676		.753	0.881
Discriminant validity Dim1-Dim2 0.620	Convergent validity test 0.620>		ϕ Jöreskog: 0.867 ϕ convergent validity: 0.452		% variance of the components Component 1: 60.72% Component 2: 37.8%	

The confidence measurement scale we adopted (Bartokowski, Chandon and Müller, 2002) revealed three dimensions (credibility, integrity and benevolence). A complete review of the literature on confidence scales and research centered on confidence in online sites shows that two opposing opinions exist. The first considers that confidence should be taken globally (Geykens, Steenkamp and Kumar, 1998). The second insists on the multi-dimensional aspect of confidence as a personality, belief, state, personality trait, etc. Lastly, the object of confidence can be an institution or person representing the brand (interpersonal confidence). In the case of blogs, it would appear that there exists certain confusion between the institution and the person. The blogger does not represent the brand, but embodies the institution that is communicating. He or she is both an interpersonal and institutional source of confidence. Therefore the credibility of the blogger, her honesty towards her readers, and her desire to improve her recommendations are part of the same construct, that of a global perception of confidence.

Table 4 – Confidence measurement scale after cleaning

Items on the confidence measurement scale relating to a blog	Representativeness
The advice given in this blog is good	0.880

advice	
I trust the advice given in this blog	0.918
Buying products recommended by this blog is a guarantee	0.865
This blog seems sincere towards its readers	0.872
This blog seems honest with its readers	0.908
This blog shows an interest in its readers	Item not adopted
I think this blog recommends fashionable products	Item not adopted
I think this blog is continually trying to improve its recommendations	0.864

According to our results, it would seem that "honesty" is the sole antecedent of confidence in the blog. Moreover, the items linked to the credibility of the blog are particularly influenced by this dimension.

Table 5 – Influence of the perceived disclosure of the blogger's life on confidence in the blog

Perceived disclosure of the blogger's private life	Associated Student T – links between private life and confidence
"Honesty" dimension	18.8
"Intentionality" dimension	NS

Lastly, the mean tests effected on the level of confidence generated by an impersonal blog versus a blog that reveals the blogger's private life show a significant mean difference between the two types of blog. The same is true if we take the level of credibility generated by the two types of blog.

Table 6 – Mean difference, confidence and credibility generated by impersonal blogs versus blogs that disclose the blogger's private life

Confidence mean	Impersonal blog	Blog disclosing private life	Significance test
	1.94	3.64	F 45.931 Sig .000
Credibility mean	Impersonal blog	Blog disclosing private life	Significance test
	1.65	3.35	F 53.956 Sig .000

To conclude, we would repeat that we detected two constitutive dimensions of the perceived disclosure of private life. The "honesty" dimension corresponds to the positive vision of the disclosure of private life, that is to say, transparency, accessibility, and a close relationship with the readership. The "intentionality" dimension corresponds to the objectives of this disclosure as felt by the blog readers. Disclosures of private life would not appear to be gratuitous but made with two precise aims: to appear to advantage and to attract readers by revealing elements of private life. Readers, therefore, are attracted but at the same time irritated by this method of capturing the attention of a readership; attracted because the exposure of these elements creates empathy with the blogger (honesty dimension) and irritated because they are aware that even if the private life that is revealed is a "real" life, the reasons it is revealed are not gratuitous (intentionality dimension) and correspond to a wish to appear to advantage or even to a degree of exhibitionism, a retention and audience-winning strategy.

So the question of the influence of the disclosure of private life on confidence then arises. Our results show that only the "honesty" dimension has a significant influence on confidence. Moreover, confidence in a blog seems one-dimensional. For example, the authentic nature of private life disclosures can generate confidence and credibility. Bloggers that reveal their private life have a more effective power of recommendation than bloggers who reveal no personal facts at all. Nonetheless, the revelation must be made with spontaneity and no apparent signs of any commercial objective. It must, however, be noted that the taking into

account of the intentional nature of private life disclosure by the consumer does not generate distrust of the blog (the intentionality-confidence relationship is not significant but not negative).

What routes to persuasion are followed in the case of private life disclosure by the blogger?

In order to determine the different routes to persuasion followed in the case of reading a blog in which considerable revelations of private life are made, we

1. Cleaned the different scales of the variables we adopted
2. Carried out a multi-group analysis (blog exposing the private life of the blogger versus impersonal blog) in order to confirm the moderating nature of the disclosure of the blogger's private life on the persuasion of her readers.

Table 7 – Summary of the measurement scales used in this research

Variable	Adaptation of the scale used	Items after cleaning	Matrix of the components		Community	Variance percentage explained	α Cronbach Jöreskog ρ ρ Fornell and Larcker
Attitude to the blog	Holbrook and Batra (1987)	Mono-item: I like this blog					
Attitude to the brand	Gardner (1985)	Mono-item: I like the brand presented in this blog					
RADA(Affective reactions triggered by	Derbaix (1995)	Surprise Hooked Amused	.832 .904 .802		.802 .886 .75	.73	.797 .67 .40

exposure to the blog)		Distrustful Irritated		.652 .807	.670 .811		
Beliefs Message and execution	Burton and Lichtenstein (1988)	Message Convincing Effective Credible Persuasive Execution Warm Agreeable	.904 .832 .783 .750		.821 .700 .623 .775	.78	.72 .74 .47
Product beliefs	Founded on the exploratory study	Seems trendy Looks nice Seems to be good quality	.831 .895	.746	.872 .824 .986	.90	.720 .805 .62

Theoretical Implications

The routes to persuasion followed by readers exposed to a blog revealing the blogger's private life highlights the importance of beliefs relating to the message and positive affective reactions. In this case, persuasion is both cognitive and affective. Moreover, negative affective reactions have a significant negative influence on beliefs surrounding the brand, which would tend to show that the reader has an ambivalent attitude towards private life disclosures. It is an important factor of persuasion since it improves attitudes towards the blog. Nonetheless, this persuasion is peripheral since at the same time negative affective reactions damage beliefs surrounding the brand. It would seem that the blog benefits from private life disclosure but that this disclosure is made to the detriment of the brand it is intended to promote.

The routes to persuasion followed by the reader exposed to an impersonal blog display two strong significant links: the link between attitude towards the blog and attitude towards the brand and the link between positive affective reactions and

attitude towards the blog. Whilst in the case of private life disclosure, persuasion is dual (both cognitive and affective), in the case of an impersonal blog, persuasion would seem to be purely peripheral. Moreover, it is worth noting that where beliefs are concerned, only beliefs regarding execution of the blog have an influence on attitude towards the brand. This would tend to show that:

- Blogs are a specific media in which the elements of execution (form of the blog, ergonomics of the blog, good presentation of images and videos) occupy an important place. In the case of impersonal blogs, with a reading contract only tenuously based on content (form is more important than the message), the reader gains little vital information on the brand. Moreover, affective reactions occupy little space in persuasion. So an impersonal blog will not trigger a great deal of attachment and affect.
- On the other hand, disclosure of the blogger's private life enhances the message to the detriment of the form. The latter becomes an important element of persuasion since it generates confidence and makes visitors want to read what it says about the product.

The visualisation of the different routes to persuasion is detailed in the following Tables:

Table 8 – Significant links between variables in the case of a blog that reveals private life

Main significant links between variables	Standardised coefficients (Student T)
Beliefs surrounding message –beliefs surrounding execution	1.146 (23.297)
Beliefs surrounding message – positive affective reactions	0.823 (9.351)
Links between positive affective reactions-attitude towards the blog	0.689 (11.482)
Links between attitude towards the blog-attitude towards the brand	0.540 (6.803)
Links between positive affective reactions-beliefs surrounding the brand	0.442 (7.546)
Links between negative affective	-0.265 (-4.815)

reactions-beliefs surrounding the brand	
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Table 9 - Significant links between variables in the case of an impersonal blog

Main significant links between variables	Standardised coefficients (Student T)
Links between attitude towards the blog-attitude towards the brand	0.555 (6.984)
Links between beliefs surrounding execution of blog –att	0.948 (16.324)

The following Table confirms the moderating nature of the type of blog on the routes to persuasion.

Table 10 – Moderating effect of the type of blog on the process of persuasion

Adjustment indicators	Model resulting from the multi-groups analysis	Restricted model	Key values
Chi-two ddl	148.135 18	385.6 30	
Chi-Two difference	237 difference for 12 degrees of freedom > 46.08 for an associated probability of 0.05		Difference greater than 3.8 for one degree of freedom

To conclude, we wished to evaluate the effectiveness of a message based on private life disclosure by comparing the different means of the following variables: attitude towards the blog, attitude towards the brand, purchasing intentions.

Table 11 – Analysis of means, blog exposing private life versus impersonal blog

	Mean: Blog disclosing private life	Mean: Impersonal blog	F	Sig
Attitude towards the brand	3.648	3.02	38.377	.000

Attitude towards the blog	3.765	2.293	186.871	.000
Purchasing intention	3.487	1.188	377.266	.000

It should be noted that overall differences in means is significant. Nonetheless, it would seem that the biggest mean deviation concerns purchasing intention. The fact that the blogger personalizes her experiences with the product by inserting them into her life may be the source of a stronger wish to buy the product. At the same time, the attitude towards the blog is most favorable when the blogger's private life is revealed. This confirms our previous results on the routes to persuasion. In the case of an impersonal blog, the attitude towards the blog is less positive than the attitude towards the brand (deficit of attachment and affective reactions towards a media perceived as cold).

Managerial Implications

Unlike other fields, where Internet would seem to threaten the private life of Internet user, personal revelations are an important element of persuasion. The results underline the importance of specific elements that construct legitimacy and credibility, based on private life. Therefore, the perceived exposure of private life is a variable that generates confidence in the blog and is a moderator of the different routes to persuasion. Blog visitors are appreciative of this type of self-disclosure by the blogger and will assimilate the message concerning the brand at both cognitive and affective level. Lastly, this type of blog encourages more favorable attitudes towards the brand and the blog and increases intentions to purchase the product. Disclosure may constitute a real commercial strategy for the blogger. Nonetheless, a certain number of precautions are essential. The honesty of the disclosure is central in this strategy. This dimension should not be clouded by overly visible commercial intentions. In that case, the perceived intentionality will affect the special relationship a blogger can have with her audience. This research therefore gives us a better understanding of the stake blogs now represent and over and above this, new forms of brand presence. This may lead to greater effectiveness in

the techniques of sponsored articles, product placement and seeding.⁴

Conclusions

The above research gives us a better understanding of the reactions of blog visitors to disclosure and of the relationships between visitors and bloggers. At managerial level, these results offer media-planning keys to the rapidly developing, complex and multi-form world that is the blogosphere. In practical terms, it enables the selection of supports and type of brand presence to be used.

The limits of our research work lie in the audience of young adults chosen. Indeed, the literature on self-disclosure shows that young people are less embarrassed than older populations by intimate revelations. These young adults are, however, the main audience for blogs. Another limit is linked to the fact that we have chosen to examine women bloggers. It would be interesting to carry out the same type of research with reference to male bloggers. This is an avenue to be explored in the future. The disclosure of a man's private life is a hitherto unexploited field of research.

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⁴ Seeding consists of sending a new product to influential bloggers and waiting for the media results. The abuses this has led to (systematically positive remarks in exchange for money) have led to specific legislation being drafted in the United States.

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