Journal of Internet Commerce, 13:282–301, 2014
Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
ISSN: 1533-2861 print/1533-287X online
DOI: 10.1080/15332861.2014.961347

Online Customer Engagement through Blogs in India

SANJEEV VERMA
National Institute of Industrial Engineering, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

This article seeks to develop a framework which can be used by marketing practitioners for effective use of blogs to connect and communicate with customers. Through exploratory research using the netnography and the content analysis method, blogging practices and social media presence of Indian companies are studied to examine use of blogs as an online customer engagement tool and the issues they are facing in implementing this practice. Comparative analysis revealed indicators of effective blogging practice and the link between the outreach of blogs with other forms of social media. Data analysis showed the interaction between subject and object with underlying dimensions like emotions, cognition, and behavior to produce an overall customer engagement. Interplay between various dimensions manifests the outcome of an online and offline engagement with customers. For wider acceptability of the proposed framework, future research directions are provided.

KEYWORDS behavior, blog, cognition, customer engagement, emotion, netnography, social media

INTRODUCTION

Customer loyalty has always been the most promising source of revenue for companies during times of intense competition and market volatility. Company executives are increasingly realizing that the voice of the customer, not the company, establishes deliverable value (Gonring 2008). Loyalty

Address correspondence to Sanjeev Verma, National Institute of Industrial Engineering, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. E-mail: sanjeevnitie@gmail.com

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/wico.

marketing guru Reichheld (2003) stated that customer loyalty played an important role in driving a company's growth. A strong base of loyal customers not only leads to repeat business, but also helps in generating further leads through recommendation, a practice that is the best indicator of loyalty and one of the surest means to increase sales.

Customer loyalty can be achieved with the help of customer engagement (Bowden 2009). Theoretically, customer engagement is a part of relationship marketing, which reinforces customer interaction and customer experience (Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012). Customer engagement is a psychological state that comes with interaction and co-creation of customer experience with a focal agent/object (Brodie et al. 2011). The focal object for the engagement varies from context to context. It may be an individual, community, company, product, brand, or any other marketing-related activity which may affect customer experience. Interaction and involvement are key components of customer engagement. Involvement without interaction may not produce desired customer experience, but when active interaction and involvement are present, it helps in co-creation of positive customer experience. According to Mollen and Wilson (2010), an interactive relationship with engagement objects adds to perceived experiential value.

Social networking sites and blogs play an important role in triggering an active customer engagement with marketers and other community members. Emergence of social media has reduced physical space and boundaries between geographically dispersed customers with common interest (Thomsen, Straubhaar, and Bolyard 1998). Various online communication tools like social networking sites, web blogs, electronic discussion forum, bulletin boards, and so on are very handy in virtual interaction (De Valck, Van Bruggen, and Wierenga 2009). Blogs have been effectively used for corporate branding and customer engagement by companies such as Marriot (Marriot on the move), Amazon (Amazon Web Services Blog), Facebook (The Facebook Blog), Whole Foods (Whole Story), Delta Airlines (Delta Blog), Zappos (multiple blogs), and a number of other companies around the world (Harbison and Fisher 2012). Indian companies, though reaching fame and reputation worldwide, and having access to a vast Internet subscriber base tapping onto social media, have not used blogosphere successfully yet.

According to the Census of India (2011), there are 15.54 million households (6.3% of the total population) in India having computers or laptops; however, only 7.6 million of these (3.1% of the total population) have an Internet connection. According to the usage and population statistics website (InternetWorldStats.com), India has a Facebook subscriber base of 62.71 million users—about 5.1% of the total population. ComScore's report (2012) on the Indian social networking scenario claims that Facebook's penetration within the 15+ aged Internet users is 83.4% and puts India as the fastest growing Internet market among the BRIC nations, with India acquiring 41% annual growth in its Internet user base. The report also goes

on to explain how the categories of retail and travel in e-commerce are on an expansion phase in India, though the figures are still below the world average. Recent research indicates adoption of blogs by corporates in India, but it is limited to few sectors such as IT, telecom, consumer electronics, and so on, where companies are technologically inclined (Pal and Kapur 2010). According to Nielsen's (2011) social media usage report, nearly 40 million Indian used online reviews to help them make informed purchase decisions, which accounts for 67% of Indian online. The study also revealed that Indians want to connect with different brands through social media.

There are many Indian companies which have already started their blogging practices for customer engagement and brand building, but have not yet amassed a substantial following, thus losing out on the benefits that blogs can bring. This article is an effort to look into the blogging practices of Indian companies and attempts to gauge their impact on the customer engagement initiative. Endeavors have been made to identify themes and dimensions of customer engagement for creating the desired impact and derive strategies that can help companies to utilize the massive potential of blogs effectively. By using netnography and content analysis methods, this exploratory study aims to provide insights to customer engagement strategies with the help of blogs. The article proceeds with literature review in section 2, research approach in section 3, findings in section 4, conclusion in section 5, and limitations and scope for future research in section 6.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Engagement through interaction is the basic premise for building a long-term human relationship. Interaction between consumers and brand-related objects leads to the consumer engagement (Brodie et al. 2011), which contributes significantly in building a long-term customer relationship. Concepts like customer engagement are gaining importance in literature (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Van Doorn et al. 2010) because of the fact that contemporary customers are far more active in voicing their requirements, expectations, and experiences on various communication channels. Increased participation of customers is a win-win situation for both companies as well as for customers. Improved communication with customers will help companies to co-design the expected product, co-create better experiences, and achieve profitability (Bijmolt et al. 2010; Sawhney, Verona, and Prandelli 2005). Due to the complete communication loop between company and customers in the form of suggestions and feedback, engagement improves the prediction of consumer actions and resultant brand loyalty (Avnet and Higgins 2006; Pham and Avnet 2009).

The level of customer engagement depends on the level of persuasion and interaction a company has with its customers. Major underlying

dimensions behind the engagement are cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Brodie et al. 2011; Hollebeek 2011). Researchers have shown various forms of customer engagement in the varied context, but the underlying dimension of the engagement does not change. According to Phillips and McQuarrie (2010), consumers get engaged with advertisement to immerse (cognition), feel (emotion), identify (emotion), and act (behavior). According to Calder and colleagues (2009), consumers get engaged with companies online due to eight factors: stimulation and inspiration (emotion), social facilitation (emotion), temporal reason (cognitive), self-esteem and civic mindedness (emotion), intrinsic enjoyment (emotion), utility (cognition), participation and socializing (behavioral), and community (emotion). Yet, in other study, utility, hedonic needs, and social benefits are the major reasons for customer engagement with brands (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Hermann 2005; Abdul-Ghani, Hyde, and Marshall 2010). Thus, channels of communication and forms of engagement may vary, but the underlying dimensions of customer engagement like cognition, emotion, and behavior do not change with different objects (product, brand, or personnel).

While various engagement activities can be initiated at the point of purchase and after-sale services, the Internet allows for an altogether different set of activities that are qualitatively different. Informal communication style is very common on this platform, and there is no specific focus as to what kind of information is to be shared globally. Online communication has revolutionized the spread of information over the Internet, and now it is the customer who commands what is to be communicated. Consumers today choose the content, timing, and mode of communication, and they have the power to create and share their own content with anyone for free. Consumers are now better informed, better connected, more communicative, and more in control (Smith 2005). The web has facilitated an unprecedented level of interaction between the producer and the consumer, giving rise to the "prosumer," which means that the consumer is very much involved in the inception and creation of the product (Ryan and Jones 2012).

Social media has facilitated the existence of a virtual world where customers anywhere in the world can come together and interact with each other at any time. The speed with which social media has been adopted by Internet users can be attributed to the convenience it provides. Online networks help in getting updates on the latest happening across the world. It is obvious for marketers to join the worldwide chat for keeping them informed and updated. Internet in recent time has become the fastest means to spread word-of-mouth because now people are connected to massive human networks online. Undoubtedly, social media has played a vital role in the explosion of online buzz marketing (Taufique and Shahriar 2011).

The blog's foray into virtual communication became popular with online diaries or logs where the authors could self-publish anything they wanted, from daily musing to opinion and review. Blogs can be used for

building a long-term relationship with customers (Singh, Veron-Jackson, and Cullinane 2008). Blogs can be widely used for engaging customers in the creation and dissemination of marketing messages (Singh et al. 2008). Blogs can be used as a powerful tool for co-creation of value with products and services as it uses user generated contents. According to Baker and Green (2005), blogs are not optional for companies; rather, they have become a necessity. The spread of usage of blogs can be understood by its wider acceptability around the globe. Easy access to useful information, faster reach, and massive networking opportunities are some key features which contribute to wider acceptability of blogs by both customers and companies.

The corporate world may use this powerful tool of connectivity to enhance their business performance in two ways: First, the company can initiate a business or corporate blog of its own, and secondly they can approach active bloggers to talk about them in their blogs. Web 2.0 trends indicate complementary usage of different types of social media and websites for customer engagement. For instance, an advertisement on social networking sites contains links to the company's website, and in turn the company website has links for its pages on social networking sites. Blogging as an additional communication channel can differentiate information-intensive content from the rest of the commercial content on the website, and if used appropriately, present a more human face to the organization (Pal and Kapur 2010). From a marketing communication point of view, blogging can be indispensable for customer engagement as it works on two-way communication. Blogs are multifaceted and can be created by the customer, for the customers. They are mostly customer-oriented: They are written in a style that will appeal to the customers' literary tastes and involve messages relevant to customers. They also serve as a medium for feedback directly shared by customers. Since customers feel that their opinions are being valued, they enjoy sharing their experiences in an unrestrained way. This sort of customer engagement not only helps marketers to build customer loyalty, but it also helps in new product design with customer inputs. Customer-driven platforms build trust and loyalty among the customers by generating a feeling of ownership (Nardini 2005). If a blogger happens to have interests that coincide with those of the organizations, it would be worthwhile to build long-term relationships with them. Bloggers have a network of bloggers, and they talk about something and read what others have to talk about. Blog rolls are lists of links to various blogs or sites and are usually provided as a sidebar or footer on a blog's front page. Blog rolls are important as they can boost traffic to a blog (Mishra and Kannan 2010). The exposure received through this network of blogs would far exceed the reach of any traditional media. As an alternative, companies can build relationships with bloggers by engaging through comments or by replying with links to their own relevant blog post (Ryan and Jones 2012). Any blogger endorsing a company becomes its online brand ambassador. The company must nurture this

relationship carefully to avoid any backlashes from the blogger which can create havoc for the company's reputation.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Research questions that emerged from the detailed literature review acted as a guide for this exploratory study. For exploring answers to the identified research problem, theoretical sampling was used for identification of corporate blogs to be included in this study. To include variations in various aspects of blogging practice, researchers selected eight companies of different sizes from different sectors which have active corporate blogging practices directed at India as an audience. Netnography (Kozinets 2002) has been used to understand the meaning and type of customer engagement happening across the selected eight corporate blogs. Besides blogs, other forms of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) were also explored, but due to a high level of interactive opportunities available to posters on blogs, researchers have taken blogs to study customer engagement. In order to capture nature of interactions happening on blogs, selected blogs were observed for three months, and noteworthy blog posts were downloaded. Blog posts relevant to the customer engagement present for the longer period and having more descriptive discussion by discrete posters are considered for the study. Four blog posts for each company were coded for analysis purpose. Data were categorized theme-wise which formed a base for analysis in the study. The following five themes proposed by Brodie and colleagues (2011) are used as the basis for data analysis for this exploratory study:

1. Customer engagement presents a psychological state which occurs as a result of interaction between the subject (customer) and focal agent/object (product/brand/organization);
2. Customer engagement is a dynamic and repeated process for building relationships;
3. Customer engagement plays a central role within the nomological network of service relationships;
4. Customer engagement is a multidimensional concept expressed through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions; and
5. Customer engagement varies with situational conditions.

An overview of selected corporate blogs taken for the study are presented in table 1. Content and thematic analysis using open codes and axial codes was deployed for analyzing the data. Data triangulation technique was used for data coding and analysis. Data revealed different situations that governed the deployment of blogs as a customer engagement

tool and derived strategies that would suit each of these situations. Finally, a strategy framework was prepared that graphically captured the options that were available to company executives or marketing practitioners for successful deployment of blogs.

FINDINGS

Various industries in different sectors in India have started using social media, including blogs, to connect with customers for multiple reasons. Descriptive analyses of companies considered for the study are presented in table 1. Table 1 provides the details of company backgrounds and their social media presence. In sequence, the first four companies in table 2 are from the service sector (s.no. 1 to 4), and the remaining four companies are from manufacturing sector (s.no. 5 to 8). The presence of selected companies' blogs and their interconnectedness with the other social networks (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) was identified. Companies considered for the study are well-recognized firms of varied size from the manufacturing and service sectors to capture the multiple perspective of customer engagement with blogs in India.

The purpose of using blogs and the expected outcome differs from company to company across various sectors. Data analysis indicates that blogs help service firms to build customer trust by providing a platform for sharing customer feedback and experience. Feedback and experience shared by customers help companies to co-create value. It is observed that companies are primarily using blogs for sharing information about their products, listening to the customers' feedback, and thus using an inclusive approach for improving or designing product offerings.

A comparative analysis of purpose, presence, and performance (3P) of corporate blogs considered for study is presented in table 2. The table provides a glance on how Indian companies are faring with respect to achieving success on their blog practices and parallel reach on social media. The number of likes on Facebook indicates the reach and popularity of individual corporate blogs. The number of likes varied from 2,791 to mammoth 9,717,761, which shows the range of popularity and presence of selected corporate blogs. Service and manufacturing firms have realized the potential of social media, and they are maintaining their presence on major social networks. Only a few domestic firms in the service sector having regional presence could not expand their presence on all social networks; otherwise, most firms have started utilizing the potential of social media for customer engagement.

As per table 1 and table 2, it is evident that the successful implementation of a marketing communication plan using social media requires an integrated approach. For more gainful results, the marketing campaign

TABLE 1 Descriptive Analysis of Corporate Blogs Included for Qualitative Analysis

Company	Sector	Brief description about company and its social media presence
1	Matrimonial service	Matrimonial service-based company having very strong blog presence. Company has a very strong web presence and has a good following on Facebook (8,325 likes) and Twitter (6,878 followers). The enterprise has been actively discussed in mass media (magazines, news reports, blogs, and the like), and its founders are often consulted for expert advice. Their blogs lend an element of trust and ensure that their clients keep in touch, for advice on various facets of weddings and married life, and also help in generating referrals. Clients are also asked to provide testimonials, and these are displayed not as comments, but in a style that resembles blogs. What differentiates this blog from other commercial wedding planning blogs is the presence of attractive photographs and the variety of topics discussed. The blogs are also used to advertise offers from other firms. Blogs are actively shared by fans on social media.
2	Fast food service	It is a pizza brand in India having pan India presence. Customer-focused company keen to receive customer feedback on the taste of their pizza and their service performance. In order to encourage customers to co-create value through regular communication, they banked on social media. Blog has all the recent updates, product launches, new advertisements, coupons, deals on Pizza, Twitter feeds, events, and links to other social media links such as Google+ and Facebook.
3	E-commerce	Company started with selling of books to anyone who had Internet access, but today they are present across various categories including movies, music, games, mobiles, cameras, computers, healthcare and personal products, home appliances and electronics, stationery, perfumes, toys, apparels, shoes, etc. Company offers facilities like Cash on Delivery, a 30-day replacement policy, EMI options, and free shipping. Company blog was launched to share news with customers about books and events. Posts are not that frequent, but customers can comment on existing posts.
4	Fast food service	It is a coffee retail chain having pan India presence. Company has extensive presence in the social media sphere. Its Facebook page has three million-plus likes and is talked about by around 93,000 users. Company has blog where customer can post their most memorable moments about their visit to company outlets. Customers may post their messages anonymously also if they wish to keep their identity secret. This customer engagement activity lets the customer celebrate any occasion with the world and share their feelings, while directly connecting them to the experience provided by the company. Customers have been quick to post short stories or letters along with photographs, though the frequency is very low in comparison to the traffic on the Facebook page. The blog is connected to other social media and receives shares for each post, although mostly on Facebook.

(*Continued*)

TABLE 1 Continued

Company	Sector	Brief description about company and its social media presence
5	Computer manufacturing	Besides conventional communication modes, company started the blog to add a new two-way communication channel to connect with its customers. Blog provided the company the ability to listen to customer's feedback and new ideas. Company used the blog to communicate about their products and allied service in a more personal way. The blog served as a platform for sharing news on product launches, industry events, company perspective on various topics related to IT, and for solving customer support issues. The blog so far has delivered on its promise on this front.
6	Garment manufacturing	It is a multinational clothingcompany known worldwide for its branded jeans.The brand has faced fierce competition from other brands and cheaper products. The brand has a much smaller presence in India, and the company struggled with the positioning of the product. Blog connects customers through exciting events such as skateboarding and offers brand's innovative product line specific for an audience. Facebook likes (21,620,535) tell the customer interest in the brand. Blog also keeps customers connected with other social media such as Youtube, Pinterest, and Google+.
7	Home appliance manufacturing	Home appliance manufacturer which offers variety of products. Customer-focused product designs and service differentiates it from other competitors in market. Its blog provides customer one-stop information about existing and upcoming products. Company aims to keep customers informed about upcoming events and shows through its contemporary communication channels. Dedicated customer care response is quick to resolve customers' issues on Facebook (1,908,067 people like). There are linkages to other social media sites such as Twitter, Google+, RSS feed, and LinkedIn. There are regular product updates, but blog lacks product review by customer.
8	Kitchen-related products manufacturing	Company is a manufacturer of kitchen storage, food products, canisters, containers, freezer bowls, etc., and offers these products with lifetime guarantee to customers. Company blog (page views 1,058,338) educates customers about different products and their utilities in storage, keeping food fresh for longer time, and avoiding waste. It listens to customer views for product improvement and design. It provides customer with various tips, new product information, and replacements. The blog is frequently visited by customers and is rich with information.

should be spread across complementing media for quick and powerful propagation, and all corporate communication should serve as a catalyst for this process. Figure 1 represents the overall strategy framework based on the above discussion.

The devised framework suggests that companies should focus integrating their blog with other social media platforms, especially popular

TABLE 2 3P (Purpose, Presence, and Performance) Analysis

Company	Purpose of blog	Presence (Connectivity with other social media)	Performance (Approximate no. of likes on corresponding Facebook page)
1	To create trust and ensure that their clients keep in touch for advice on various facets of weddings and married life, and also to get referrals.	Facebook, Twitter	14,844
2	To co-create value	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	9,717,761
3	To share information with customers about books and events	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	3,184,318
4	To get customer feedback and share customer experience	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	4,843,744
5	To communicate about their products and allied service in a more personal way, share information on product launches, industry events, company perspective on various topics related to IT, and for solving customer support issues	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	2,791
6	To connect with customers through exciting events such as skateboarding and offer an innovative product line customized to specific segment of customers	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	21,656,330
7	To keep customer informed about upcoming events and shows	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	1,908,067
8	To educate customers about different products and their utilities, listen to customer views for product improvement and design, provide customer with various tips, new product information, and replacements	Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Youtube	1,064,181

networking sites having maximum traffic. Presence on the most frequently visited social networks is vital for ensuring rapid propagation of the blog and also for gathering instant feedback on the consumers' reactions to the blog. A large social media presence also spreads awareness about the blog and helps gather contributors, which, in turn ensures the continuity of the blog. The framework also attaches paramount significance to the tasks of continuously updating the blog and responding to customer/visitor queries,

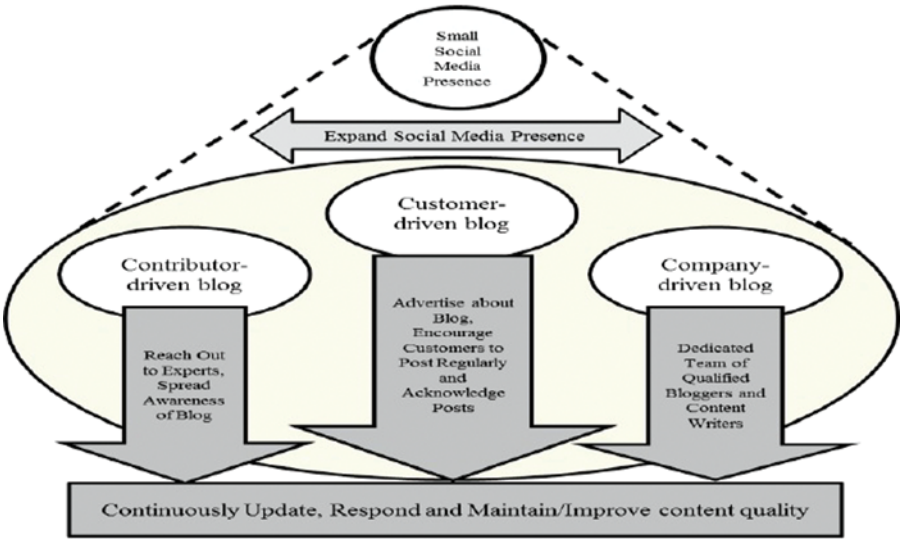

FIGURE 1 Strategy framework for integration of blogs with other social media platforms.

complaints and requests for information, and investing efforts to continuously maintain or enhance the content quality of the blog. This framework can form the initial basis of the corporate blogging initiative as well as serve as a checkpoint for existing blogging practices.

Further, for understanding drivers of customer engagement, corporate blogs were classified into two parts: Part A: corporate blogs pertaining to the service industry, and part B: blogs pertaining to the manufacturing industry in Indian context. Using content and thematic analysis, blogs were analyzed at the industry level and company level. To maintain anonymity, service companies are presented as *S*, and manufacturing companies are presented as *M*, with numeric value for numbering them. The conceptual framework proposed by Brodie and colleagues (2011) is used as a guide for identification of objects and dimensions. Selected blog posts are presented in table 3.

As one can see from table 3, blog contents are dynamic and contextual. As evident from the data, blogs were used for varied reasons like appreciation, criticism, complaint, suggestion, feedback, and so forth. Content analysis and thematic analysis highlighted the objects, themes, and dimensions discussed in the corporate blogs analyzed. Analysis revealed numerous engagement objects used in blog postings. As suggested by Brodie and colleagues (2011), consumer engagement on social media has two important components: objects related to the online community and related themes. Data pertaining to the service industry reveals the role of service setting, service provider, and other community members in overall customer satisfaction. Specific themes discussed in service industry blogs are brand, service firm,

TABLE 3 Blogs from Service and Manufacturing Companies

Service company	Blog	Manufacturing company	Blog
S1	. . . was my first love! I had my first date at . . . . It was one of the best day of my life :)) not to forget that my friends were there too, who teased me a lot!! I still remember it every time I sit at the couch in the corner. I'll never forget the guys at . . . who gave me the best coffee I've EVER had—one with her name on it.	M1	This launch is very gratifying and highly appreciated. BUT, kindly put up the prices also on your website for easier decision making . . . . I am still waiting for the launch of . . . technology . . . hopefully it happens sometime soon!!! It is highly disappointing to see that everything gets launched so quickly in . . . and we keep looking at that website and expect things to happen in India also.
	I invited him to the . . . outlet. In fact, it was that he who was very much interested in marrying me right after meeting at . . . . But he always used to say 'A Lot Can Happen Over Coffee.' He willed me to believe in those words and stay strong. And like he said, those beautiful words came true in the year 2008. We are now happily married and are blessed with a son.		. . . product has nice specifications. However, I am surprised to find that still there is no upgrade (Not even Announcement!) Please do note that there are many phones in the same price range which are offering out of the box upgrades or the manufacturers are promising upgrades. However, knowing . . . immaculate service and technological abilities, it is surprising that you have not even announced upgrades, while some phone manufacturers have announced upgrade! I will strongly consider buying this phone if you can promise upgradability.
	It was a table for two and we met for the first time. And in our case, it's been proved that "A lot can happen over Coffee". And still when we feel low or whenever our relationship wants some refreshment, we go for the same table, same coffee and everything seems like the very first day. It's amazing. We just love you guys.		I am really impressed with the specifications of product. The only thing that's stopping me from buying this phone is its Android version. Android 2.1 is kinda outdated. I would expect . . . to provide at least an upgrade to Android. Please let me know is there going to be any upgrades available for new product.
	I had called her and asked me to join me at . . . . This is a good policy of . . . that nobody comes to disturb you. I'm really thankful to		This e-waste initiative by . . . in India is commendable. What next after the pilot project? Was it merely an eyewash? Does . . . offer discount now on purchase of a replacement . . . laptop battery in exchange of old battery in India?

(*Continued*)

TABLE 3 Continued

Service company	Blog	Manufacturing company	Blog
S2	Very nice post. I simply stumbled upon your weblog and wanted to mention that I have truly loved surfing around your blog posts. In any case I will be subscribing to your feed and I'm hoping you write once more soon!	M2	. . . you are really rocking nowadays. Innovating and re-determining consumer appliances. I already have your fridge and washing machines. Now I'm going to buy your TV.Keep up the good work.
	Few hours back I visited . . . . Unfortunately my bike had a starting problem after reaching there. Luckily there was an . . . appointed mechanic who repaired my Bike very quickly and made my day. I am very grateful to him. He did not accept even a single rupee. Hats off to such wonderful person and company.		. . . mobile is a good. Every feature in it is good. I have bought this phone about 1 month ago. It's a good experience using . . . but I am facing some problems with this mobile regarding battery backup, camera etc. There is no satisfactory response from the service center. . . . can promote its sales if it can overcome these problems.
	Pan pizza has a great taste and I must say it was awesome.		I love what you guys are usually up too. This sort of clever work and exposure! Keep up the great works guys I've added you guys to my own blogroll.
	As I know, when we order pizza, you only cut the pizza in even, even though if you say it's of last slice of my pizza, I will share it with my friend not much but only one bite of it.		I've been browsing online more than 4hours today, yet I never found any interesting article like yours. It's pretty worth enough for me. In my view, if all webmasters and bloggers made good content as you did, the net will be a lot more useful than ever before.
S3	I am a great admirer of . . . . But there is one thing that's not going good on . . .. You have increased the home delivery cap too Rs . . . . There is a possibility that number of people purchasing at . . . to get reduced.	M3	This is very nice concept, I like it.
	There is every chance of it. The previous offer was a great deal. Once you revert it back to that . . . customers will flock. I don't know what the problem is.		

	Wish I was in Delhi—would have loved to interact with the . . . gang. I did attend book fairs when I was in Delhi, Mumbai and also one in Kolkata, I think. Sadly, Pune does not have any such literary events and fairs.		I will die for . . . products, especially jeans.
	Ah sad. It's been super fun so far—sure you would have loved it. Maybe all Pune-ites should get together and campaign for a book fair/literary festival. What say?		I have an ink stain on my jeans . . . after many washes still it is there . . . how to get rid of it? Help
	I accidently came on . . . website and tried to buy a book online (first time in my life). At that time there was only books to be sold. Now there is simply everything. Everyone knows . . . nowadays. At the courier office in our college, 60% of the incoming couriers are from . . .. How awesome is that . . . Keep up the good work.		. . . is best . . .
S4	Thank you for providing this informative blog. Kerala in Southern India is increasingly becoming a popular destination for brides and grooms. It will be useful for the people who are planning a trip to Kerala.	M4	Lovely to see your blog. I wanted to enquire about the products in your New Products tab. The flyers I have do not mention products like . . . . Where do I get info about these products?
	Kerala is the perfect destination for honeymoon travel. I heard some great things about Kerala's natural beauty and culture which gives opportunities to new couple for spending romantic and memorable holidays.		I was suggested this blog through my cousin. I am no longer positive whether this publish is written via him as no one else recognize such specified approximately my problem.
	Amazing post. I'll try all these tips in my elder sister's wedding. Thanks a lot.		Yes, there are people who give tremendous discounts which loses the charm of genuine people who work sincerely. It happens in other field too
	Hi, I love your blog. You have the best taste! Can you tell me which designer made the pink pastel sari (the first picture)? Thanks!		I don't know whether it's just me or if perhaps everyone experiencing problems with your website. It seems like some of the written text in your content are running off the screen. Can somebody else please comment and let me know if this is happening to them too?

service personnel, place (online and offline), occasion, price, distribution, and promotional offers. The most frequently discussed themes during online interactions are service firms, service personnel, and their role in enhancing customer experience when they made a visit to service outlet. Services offering customization also play a significant role in delighting a customer, as evident from the following excerpt: "I'll never forget the guys at . . . who gave me the best coffee I've EVER had—one with her name on it."

Other aspects of service offerings like price, occasion, distribution, and promotional offers also have been observed in some online interactions on blogs. Emotions, cognition, and behavioral dimensions have been depicted in most of the interactions observed in corporate blogs from the service sector. As depicted in following narration, emotions played a crucial role in consumer experience and contribute to cognition followed by behavior:

> . . . was my first love! I had my first date at . . . it was one of the best day of my life :)) not to forget that my friends were there too, who teased me a lot!! I still remember it every time I sit at the couch in the corner. I'll never forget the guys at . . . who gave me the best coffee I've EVER had—one with her name on it.

Bloggers' participation in discussion and reported offline actions clearly represent the behavioral engagement of observed participants. Transcripts such as, "He did not accept even a single rupee," "I will share it," and "subscribing to your feed" indicate an online and offline engagement. Interplay between various dimensions of the engagement manifests the outcome of offline and online engagement with customers. The overall engagement experience is positive in service firm blogs.

Data pertaining to manufacturing firm blogs showed the interaction between individual experience, personal role, community role, company role, and interaction with other members of the community. Themes discussed in manufacturing firm blogs are different than themes discussed in the service firm blogs. Product and technology-related themes are widely discussed among bloggers active on manufacturing firm blogs. Some instances of online aspects, pricing, promotion, and designs were also traced in observed data. In many discussions, participants showed their concern for technology and product options available in the Indian market. Participants showed their unhappiness on delay in making upgraded versions of product and technology available in the Indian market, and showed eagerness to buy if the manufacturing company provided them with upgraded options. The following transcripts clearly indicate the sentiments expressed:

> I am still waiting for the launch of . . . technology . . . hopefully it happens sometime soon!!! It is highly disappointing to see that everything gets launched so quickly in . . . and we keep looking at that website and expect things to happen in India also.

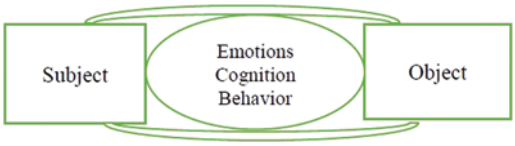

FIGURE 2 Overall customer experience.

> It is surprising that you have not even announced upgrades, while some phone manufacturers have announced upgrade! I will strongly consider buying this phone if you can promise upgradability.
>
> I am really impressed with the specifications of product. The only thing that's stopping me from buying this phone is its Android version. Android 2.1 is kinda outdated. I would expect . . . to provide at least an upgrade to Android. Please let me know is there going to be any upgrades available for new product.

Emotions like gratitude, appreciation, surprise, and complaint were observed in data analysis. The overall tone seems to be negative with complaining mode. Complaint about delayed upgradation, less customer focus, poor product performance, and so on has been observed at various places in corporate blogs from the manufacturing industry. As observed in the transcript mentioned above, behavior ("I will buy") followed cognition ("consider"), and cognition followed emotions ("it is surprising"). Thus, once again interplay between various dimensions of engagement has been observed here.

Corporate blogs analyzed from both the manufacturing and service industry showed interaction between subject (company/customer) and objects (themes and online community) of customer engagement. Nature of the underlying dimensions of customer engagement varied between manufacturing and service, but core dimensions remained the same. In both cases, emotions, cognition, and behavior interplay with each other to produce overall customer experience. A drawing from data analysis is presented in figure 2. The devised framework suggests that subject and object interaction with underlying dimensions like emotion, cognition, and behavior produce overall customer experience.

CONCLUSION

Due to variability in the nature of blogs, levels of engagement and drivers of customer engagement vary from blog to blog. In order to understand these two important aspects of the customer's engagement, corporate blogs from the manufacturing and service industry were included to capture variations and multiple perspectives. Theoretical sampling was used to select corporate blogs of eight companies of different sizes which have active corporate

blogging practices directed at India as an audience. With the help of netnography and the content analysis method, this study explored objects, themes, and dimensions of customer engagement. Brodie's five propositions (2011) were used as a guide for analysis of data. Exploratory data analysis provided contrast between themes and motives of engagement between services and manufacturing firms.

The observed blogs have been created for different purposes, but all of them have a common underlying objective, that is, to engage with customers for winning their trust to build loyalty and long-term relationships. Various communication strategies like information sharing and experience sharing have been used to actively involve customers for understanding their emotions, cognition, and behavior. Data analysis revealed that the key for successful corporate blogging is to identify ways of expansion for wider reach of blogs and then ensure that the blogs continue to engage the customer. Data analysis hinted at adoption of different strategies, depending on the extent to which the company has its presence on social media and the source of the blog posts. If the company does not have a strong "active" following on social networks, than it will be difficult to propagate the blog faster. Therefore, the company must increase its presence on social media by attracting the online audience. The company must invest in marketing efforts to make sure that visitors are attracted to its web pages and web posts on social media and share them with their friends and colleagues. Companies having a strong following on social media can leverage their popularity to spread awareness about their blog.

When blogs are customer-driven, the company must ensure that customers are aware of the presence of the blog and must be encouraged to contribute posts. When blogs are contributor-driven, the blog must have a sufficient following to give enough incentive to the contributors to create posts, and experts must be aware of the blog to become contributors. When blogs are company-driven, the company must invest effort and resources in the form of bloggers and content writers who can put across the company's communication to the customer in a way that is appealing, honest, and easy to understand. Whatever is the nature of the post contributors or the fan following any company enjoys, blogs cannot survive without consistently maintaining frequency and content quality. Companies must ensure that they have a dedicated team of bloggers and editors that are professionally qualified to communicate with customers and handle queries or comments.

Data pertaining to corporate blogs from both manufacturing and service industries showed the interaction between individual experience, personal role, community role, company role, and interaction with other members of the community. Themes discussed in manufacturing setup are different than themes discussed in the service setting. Product and technology-related themes are widely discussed among bloggers for product experience, while the role of service personnel in enhancing customer satisfaction was more

discussed for service experience. Some instances of online aspects of blogs, pricing, promotion, and brand were also traced in observed data from both manufacturing as well as service firms' blogs. Emotions like gratitude and appreciation were common in all forms of blog. Surprisingly, the overall tone in manufacturing companies' blogs was negative with complaining mode.

Emotions, cognition, and behavioral dimensions have been depicted in most of the interactions observed in blogs studied. In most of the interactions, emotions played a crucial role in consumer experience and contribute to cognition followed by behavior. Bloggers' participation in discussion and reported offline actions clearly represent the behavioral engagement of observed participants. Interplay between various dimensions of the engagement manifests the outcome of offline and online engagement with customers.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY

Theoretical sampling and smaller sample size are insufficient for generalizing the findings of this study. For wider acceptability of the proposed framework and findings, quantitative studies in different contexts may be undertaken for testing the applicability of the proposed model. Though the principle of content analysis and thematic analysis were followed rigorously, the findings are qualitative descriptors at best.

For gauging the level of customer engagement, blog contents and information about blog presence in other social networking sites were observed. For an in-depth review of drivers of customer engagement, future researchers may further explore given findings with in-depth interviews and observation techniques. Future research can aim to collect empirical evidence that can provide insights on the link between blogs and social network sites.

In the present study, the subjects in most cases are customers or companies, while there are possibilities that subjects can be customers, companies, or third-party contributors. Future researchers may explore varied perspectives from all three forms of contributors. The dimensions of the consumer engagement discussed in the present study are limited to emotion, cognition, and behavior. In future studies, effect of social factors, cultural factors, economic factors, and so forth on customer engagement in online communities can be undertaken. Further sub-classification of different types of emotion, cognition, and behaviors, and interplay between them at the sub-classified level could be an important future study researchers may consider.

REFERENCES

Abdul-Ghani, E., K. Hyde, and R. Marshall. 2010. Emic and etic interpretations of engagement with a consumer-to-consumer online auction site. *Journal of Business Research* 64 (10): 1060–1066.

Algesheimer, R., U. M. Dholakia, and A. Hermann. 2005. The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of Marketing* 69:19–34.

Avnet, T., and E. T. Higgins. 2006. How regulatory fit affects value in consumer choices and opinions. *Journal of Marketing Research* 43:1–10.

Baker, S., and H. Green. 2005. Blogs will change your business. *Business Week* 56–67.

Bijmolt, T. H. A., P. S. H. Leeflang, F. Block, M. Eisenbeiss, B. G. S. Hardie, A. Lemmens, and P. Saffert. 2010. Analytics for customer engagement. *Journal of Service Research* 13 (3): 341–356.

Bowden, J. L. H. 2009. The process of customer engagement: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 17 (1): 63–74.

Brodie, R. J., L. D. Hollebeek, B. Jurić, and A. Ilić. 2011. Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research in service marketing. *Journal of Service Research* 14 (3): 252–271.

Calder, B. J., E. M. Malthouse, and U. Schaedel. 2009. An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 23 (4): 321–331.

Census of India. 2011. Houses household amenities and assets: Communication. http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/hlo/Data_sheet/India/Communication.pdf.

ComScore. 2012. In India, 1 in 4 online minutes are spent on social networking sites. http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press_Releases/2012 (accessed January 21, 2013).

De Valck, K., G. H. van Bruggen, and B. Wierenga. 2009. Virtual communities: A marketing perspective. *Decision Support Systems* 47:185–203.

Gonring, M. 2008. Customer loyalty and employee engagement: An alignment for value. *Journal of Business Strategy* 29 (4): 29–40.

Harbison, N., and L. Fisher. 2012. 40 of the best corporate blogs to inspire you. *PR Daily*. http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/40_of_the_best_corporate_blogs_to_inspire_you_12645.aspx# (accessed January 26, 2013).

Hollebeek, L. D. 2011. Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management* 27 (7–8): 785–807.

Internet World Stats. n.d. http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#in (accessed January 22, 2013).

Kozinets, V. R. 2002. The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research* 39:61–72.

Mishra, S., and R. Kannan. 2010. Executive blogging: Indian corporate heads in the blogosphere. Working Paper [2010–05-01], Research and Publications, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India, May 12.

Mollen, A., and H. Wilson. 2010. Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspective. *Journal of Business Research* 63:919–925.

Nardini, J. 2005. Blogging 101. *Frozen Food Age* 53 (12): 32–33.

Nielsenwire. 2011. Indians now spend more time on social media sites than on personal email. http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/global/indians-now-spend-more-time-on-social-media-sites-than-on-personal-email/ (accessed January 27, 2013).

Pal, S. K., and V. Kapur. 2010. Blog marketing strategies for mature and emerging markets. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology* 1 (4): 411–418.

Pham, M. T., and T. Avnet. 2009. Rethinking regulatory engagement theory. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 19 (2): 115–123.

Phillips, B. J., and E. F. McQuarrie. 2010. Narrative and persuasion in fashion advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research* 37 (3): 368–392.

Reichheld, F. F. 2003. The one number you need to grow. *Harvard Business Review* 81 (12): 46–55.

Ryan, D., and C. Jones. 2012. *Understanding digital marketing—Marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Kogan Page.

Sawhney, M., G. Verona, and E. Prandelli. 2005. Collaborating to create: The Internet as a platform for customer engagement in product innovation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 19 (4): 4–17.

Singh, T., L. Veron-Jackson, and J. Cullinane. 2008. Blogging: A new play in your marketing game plan. *Business Horizons* 51 (4): 281–292.

Smith, J. 2005. Seven digital consumer trends, Part 2. *ClickZ*. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/column/1712610/seven-digital-consumer-trends-part (accessed January 25, 2013).

Taufique, K. M. R., and F. M. Shahriar. 2011. Online social media as a driver of buzz marketing: Who's riding? *International Journal of Online Marketing* 1 (2): 57–67.

Thomsen, S. R., J. D. Straubhaar, and D. M. Bolyard. 1998. Ethnomethodology and the study of online communities: Exploring the cyber streets. *Information Research* 4 (1).

Van Doorn, J., K. N. Lemon, V. Mittal, S. Nass, D. Peck, P. Pirner, and P. C. Verhoef. 2010. Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of Service Research* 13 (3): 253–266.

Vivek, S. D., S. E. Beatty, and R. M. Morgan. 2012. Consumer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. *Marketing Theory and Practice* 20 (2): 122–146.

Copyright of Journal of Internet Commerce is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.