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Blogging mastery: analyzing the key strategies behind successful blogs

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BLOGGING MASTERY: ANALYZING THE KEY STRATEGIES BEHIND SUCCESSFUL
BLOGS

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the pillars in my life who have stood by me with unwavering support and boundless love. To my father, whose wisdom and guidance have helped me overcome numerous challenges, and to my brother, for his endless support, humor, and belief in my abilities. To my sister-in-law, who has shown me what true strength and perseverance look like. Lastly, to my niece and nephews, who have shown me the true meaning of joy, laughter, and happiness.

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ABSTRACT

Bloggers in the digital landscape have the power to shape consumer behavior and influence their peers. However, successfully running a blog demands time and commitment, similar to operating a small business. Yet, there is scant literature regarding successful practices and strategies that bloggers use to build their blogs and remain successful. This study explores bloggers' most effective methods and strategies to establish themselves in their respective niches. The qualitative research study uses transcendental phenomenology to examine the lived experiences of successful bloggers, aiming to provide insights into their successful strategies, best practices, challenges, and insights for new bloggers. Twelve bloggers that met the criteria for inclusion were interviewed using 12 semi-structured open-ended questions. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorize the themes. The findings suggest that bloggers use various strategies to establish themselves in their respective niches and overcome challenges. The study results were integrated and used to develop the Blogger Success Framework to help established and aspiring bloggers navigate the digital landscape of blogging.

Keywords: blogging success strategies, content creation techniques, search engine optimization (SEO) strategies, monetization blogging strategies, blogging

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Links.net, the first blog, was created in 1994 by Justin Hall (Elega & Ozad, 2018). It was referred to as his webpage and not as a blog. Jorn Barger created the word *Weblog* in 1997 and followed in Hall's footsteps by publishing personal posts online. The term Weblog originates from logging onto the web. A blog is defined as a conversation or informative weblog published on the internet that consists of discrete, often informal text postings (Goggin & McLelland, 2017). Typically, posts are arranged so that the newest entry is at the top of the page, followed by older ones.

In 1999, there were 23 known blogs (X. Zhou, 2009). In the middle of that same year, the number of blog users increased, and in July 1999, the first blog hosting platform, *Pitas*, was created (Merskin, 2020). In the early 2000s, the popularity of blogs increased dramatically due to trends in mommy blogging, Google AdSense, political blogs, and accessible web design tools (Fox et al., 2009; Hunter, 2016; Khazraee & Losey, 2016). By this time, bloggers began to influence their readers as their blogs became credible sources, reaching a wider audience and, in some cases, making a profit (S. Bowman & Willis, 2003). They were deemed credible sources because the blogs were perceived as reliable and trustworthy for information, a status achieved through factors like detailed, accurate content and authentic viewpoints not always covered by mainstream media (Rosen, 2005).

Moreover, bloggers can influence an audience by empowering them to challenge a dominant mainstream media narrative, as was the case that led to the resignation of then-Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (V. Campbell, 2009). Lott made a controversial statement in 2002 during a birthday party for Senator Strom Thurmond (T. Haas, 2005). Lott suggested that the

United States would have been better off if Thurmond, a segregationist, had been elected president in 1948. Although mainstream media initially overlooked this comment, bloggers picked up, sparking a public outcry that challenged the dominant narrative and led to Lott's subsequent resignation. This incident underscores the power of bloggers to influence public opinion and bring about change.

Bloggers are thought of as digital journalists (Merskin, 2020). They have built a website where they will share their talents, thoughts, experiences, comments, etc. They are thought leaders whose views may be read online. Depending on the type of blog, their writing is often personal, and they share information about their lives or personal views on certain subjects. Additionally, bloggers may be more interactive with their readers than traditional journalists. For example, some bloggers have open spaces where anyone can leave a comment or open a debate on an issue (Mummery & Rodan, 2013).

Early blogs acted as the blogger's notebook or diary (Van Dijck, 2004). Distancing themselves from the conventional writing style by writing about personal thoughts and feelings, important news, and sharing interesting links to websites and blogs was seen as a new way to communicate (Akinnubi et al., 2021). Additionally, early bloggers set the ground for contemporary journalism by frequently writing about issues that were not being talked about or getting little attention in the mainstream media (Messner & Garrison, 2011). Blogs are considered an online diary, one of the famous blog sites used for online personal entries is Blogger. It also encourages other Internet users to publish their opinions and ideas via blogs.

Historical events that influenced early blogging

Multiple catastrophic events influenced how blogs were perceived by many, and gained popularity among users (Jankowski, 2010). Instead of blogs being looked upon as someone

sharing personal opinions, they began to gain credibility as reliable news sources (T. J. Johnson & Kaye, 2004). For example, after the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the invasion of Afghanistan, computer users expressed their emotions and responses via blogs. Blogs were used as an outlet for expressing sentiments about tragic circumstances. These early bloggers set the tone for present-day bloggers, often considered credible journalists, such as Garrett Graff, the first blogger to be granted White House press credentials (Seelye, 2005).

In addition to the 9/11 attacks, The Iraq War showed internet users at their most active through political blogs (Ekdale et al., 2010; Wall, 2005). During times of conflict, the words of citizens are ignored; thus, many resorted to blogging to discover communities or organizations that share the same stance and emotions. Blogs give them a voice during these difficult times and open the conversation for public discourse about war and conflicts (Godefroy, 2005; Wall, 2010). War blogging emphasizes personalization and audience participation in creating material about a current conflict. This genre's bloggers are more critical and accountable than the mainstream media (Gunter et al., 2009). For example, news blogs can correct errors and add detail to stories, which allows them to offer a greater diversity of opinions and perspectives than traditional media (S. Bowman & Willis, 2003). Furthermore, blogs enable interactive communication, connecting the blogger and their audience and strengthening the blogger's impact on the readers (Tan & Na, 2013).

The essence of modern technology is dynamic; it is continually growing to meet society's changing wants and concerns (Bausch et al., 2002). Blogs themselves would not be exempt from enhancements. As technology grew, so did how bloggers communicate and market to their audience. This communication was important as blogs became essential tools for businesses and organizations whose blogs needed more powerful software and functionality (Rutter et al., 2008).

Companies use blogs to market their products, share their corporate culture, and engage with their customers. Therefore, the need for more sophisticated features like e-commerce integration, lead capture forms, and analytics has become increasingly crucial. Powerful software like WordPress, Squarespace, and Wix came into existence to cater to these requirements.

Moreover, the emergence of social media has made blogs more interactive and engaging. Bloggers can use online networking platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to promote their blog posts and engage with their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Online networking platforms have guided the development of plugins and add-ons that enable bloggers to integrate their blogs with online networking platforms seamlessly. This integration enables bloggers to distribute content and extend their reach to a broader audience.

Voice of the People - News and Political Blogs

Blogging provides a platform for hosting forums and conversations on public and political issues (Ekdale et al., 2010). Since the term 'blog' sprang to prominence in 2004, most people are familiar with it, and several in-depth studies (DeGroot & Carmack, 2012; Rains & Keating, 2015) have been conducted to examine blogs (Kurambayev, 2018). Compared to other sources of information and news available to internet users, some users have relied on blogs because of their reputation for being serious and committed to journalism, particularly in covering themes such as conflict, politics, religious practice, and human rights (Benedek & Kettemann, 2013). While blogging was initially designed to democratize the sharing of information, it has also given rise to a variety of challenges, including conspiracy theories, alternate fact proponents, and other forms of disinformation. While the genuineness of information is one factor that distinguishes blogging from mainstream media (Kenix, 2009), it is also true that the lack of editorial oversight and the ease with which false information can be

spread online has contributed to the spread of conspiracy theories and alternate facts (Putnam, 2011). In order to combat these challenges, it is important to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills, as well as to support efforts to fact-check and verify information before it is shared online.

In modern journalism, anyone can become a journalist (Knight et al., 2008). This modernized journalism is brought about by bloggers. Pure journalism is made up of facts (Treske et al., 2011). However, journalism in blogs is not wholly guaranteed to be factual, it is because the opinions of the writer will be combined with real information, thus not making the blog fool-proof. Journalism is vulnerable given the challenges posed by blogging and the conditions under which journalists are likely to change their practices to address those vulnerabilities (Lowrey & Mackay, 2008). This power to publish and spread news to a large audience was formerly exclusive to the news industry; however, journalists are no longer the only gatekeepers of the media (Lasica, 2003; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Yet, news and politics are not the only types of blogs that individuals influence (Farrell & Drezner, 2007). Audiences are gradually becoming social media producers in the present day (Foroudi et al., 2019). Blogs have become a ubiquitous medium of expression in the digital age, encompassing a wide range of topics from fashion and travel to politics and news. Additionally, blogs have given rise to another similar phenomenon known as influencers. While bloggers and influencers are not mutually exclusive categories, they do differ in some key respects. For example, bloggers typically produce longer-form content and may have a more journalistic approach to their subject matter, whereas influencers tend to focus more on visual content and personal branding (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). However, both bloggers and influencers share a common goal of building a following and engaging with audiences through social media

platforms. As such, it is not uncommon for bloggers to also be influencers, or for influencers to incorporate blogging into their social media strategy. This convergence of blogging and social media has made both mediums powerful in today's digital landscape.

Fashion bloggers aspiring to become influencers understand the significance of building their brand on online networking sites (Wiazewicz & Zatwarnicka-Madura, 2016). The use of social media has become a primary communication channel in the fashion industry. It allows fashion bloggers and influencers to share user-generated fashion trends quickly and easily with their followers, particularly those within the younger demographic (Tomovska, 2020). Instagram, known for its engaging visual elements, has emerged as a favored space for fashion influencers to display clothing, accessories, and unique fashion. Using hashtags, location tags, and collaborations with other fashion bloggers, brands can further increase the reach of their content. As the popularity of fashion blogging and influencer marketing has grown, so has the monetization of fashion blogs (S. Lee & Kim, 2020). Fashion blogs are often monetized through affiliate marketing, sponsored content, or collaborations with fashion brands. This has led to some concerns about the objectivity of fashion bloggers and the potential for their content to be influenced by commercial relationships rather than a genuine desire to share their thoughts and opinions with their readers (Marwick, 2013). However, many successful fashion bloggers and influencers have been able to strike a balance between monetization and authenticity, building a loyal following by providing valuable insights and perspectives on the latest fashion trends.

Additionally, travel bloggers use themselves as the focus of a blog post (Van Nuenen, 2016). The significance of their experiences as visitors to a new land resides in their genuineness (A. Duffy, 2019). Moreover, they compose a narrative about their experiences in the area, provide ideas on how to spend time there and recommend destinations for future journeys. To

gain the trust of the reader, travel bloggers take a personal tone to create a connection with their readers, as this has proven to be successful (Van Nuenen, 2016). Blog writers should also make their posts repeatable by the reader as actions that cannot be imitated do not influence the spectator since they cannot be repeated. A travel blogger's credibility would be high if he or she has directly experienced or performed the activities described in the post.

New Media

The emergence of new media has transformed the landscape of media publication (M. E. Duffy & Thorson, 2008). The introduction of the internet has facilitated the accessibility of information and enabled individuals to become content producers. User-centered products and services have become more prevalent, and individuals can generate and share information more easily than ever before (Coleman, 2016). The internet has given rise to various types of media, including social media and microblogging, which have revolutionized the way people interact with each other and consume information (Bivens, 2008).

Microblogging platforms such as Twitter have become increasingly popular due to their ability to facilitate the rapid and direct dissemination of information (Breek et al., 2018; Warf, 2018). Microblogs are defined as lightweight blog posts which are normally shorter in comparison to the traditional blog post (Begel et al., 2010). This type of blogging has been said to be more convenient for users who are always on-the-go and do not have the time to sit down and write a full-length article. With features like mentions, microblogging platforms allow users to tag other users in their posts, making it easier for their content to reach a wider audience. However, despite the rise of social media, blog sites still have their unique advantages (S. Sharma & Verma, 2018). Unlike social media, blogs do not have any character limitation, which allows writers to fully express their thoughts and ideas. Additionally, blog sites often feature a

comments section, which allows readers to interact with the writer and other readers. This can deepen engagement and facilitate meaningful conversations about the topics discussed in the blog post.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Another facet of blogging and social media engagement lies in the utilization of phrases, sentences, and even keywords through what is known as search engine optimization (Bhandari & Bansal, 2018). *Search engines* are vital for allowing internet users to locate information on a certain topic using search terms (D. Sharma, R. Shukla et al., 2019). The primary function of a search engine with a vast database of stored websites is to choose and retrieve just the appropriate website based on the user's desires and search bar input. There are several search engines available, including Yahoo, Bing, Duckduckgo and ask.com, however, this list isn't exhaustive. The most prominent search engine, and one most are familiar with is Google. Google makes use of the PageRank algorithm which is the most widely utilized algorithm used by Google; it analyzes the relevance of websites based on the keywords input by the user, with the most relevant web page being shown first. Utilizing various search engine optimization tactics to provide clients with comfort and trustworthiness is a great benefit.

Digital trends tend to change over time (Twenge et al., 2019). As customers' interests vary over time, the digital movement must likewise undergo innovation to stay up and respond to the changing preferences of its users (Nyagadza, 2020). Microvlogging, popularized by platforms like YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and TikTok, enables users to create short-form video content. In contrast, microblogging involves short-form written content like Twitter or Tumblr posts. Staying current on trends is essential for marketing professionals to engage with

potential customers effectively. Social media is a potent and efficient tool for advertising products and reaching target customers.

Blogs and Social Media

In the modern era where technology is constantly evolving and where it is already part of the daily lives of the people, companies of any size should be able to keep abreast with the trending marketing styles to engage more with the consumers (Dahlan, 2019). Marketing strategies should also be dynamic to be on par with digital trends, innovative advertising entices more customers since the range of coverage of the internet is wide. Nowadays, social networking sites are the most important marketing arena mainly because there are increasing users of online social platforms and the convenience they deliver to their customers.

Businesses that use social networking services have seen a great increase in their volume of sales and decrease in operational costs, in contrast to those who are still exercising the traditional way of advertising (Dahlan, 2019). For example, Twitter and Instagram are used as outlets for the marketing of products by businesses. It is much easier to generate leads, establish relationships with customers and build a strong online presence using these platforms than through traditional advertising media such as television, radio, or newspapers. Companies who continue to dedicate effort and time in developing new and innovative marketing strategies entice customers, and maintain the brands' image, and is bound for success (Bansal & Masood, 2014). Social media is quickly becoming a huge hub for client engagement and communication. Social networking platforms have the ability to unite individuals from diverse locations and backgrounds (Sajjad & Zaman, 2020), which result in more people being exposed to the brand, hence it is important for a company's presence in social media platforms to be well-developed. Marketing managers are able to follow an individual's digital traces and actions. Through the

data obtained, these managers will be aware of your digital and consumer behaviors, and the data will be utilized to develop marketing strategies that may penetrate the prospective market.

Blog's Impact on Consumer Purchasing Decisions

Bloggers can serve as a medium through which to connect with consumers (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014). Different businesses contact bloggers to help promote their products and services (Lepkowska-White & Kortright, 2017). In return, the bloggers are given some form of compensation. The amount of money that can be earned from blogging has increased over the years. The impact of blogs on consumer purchasing decisions is mainly due to the content being delivered to the reader. The information must be relevant and trustworthy to influence the reader's decision (Sajjad & Zaman, 2020). If a certain blog post can build a good relationship with its readers, then it is more likely that the readers will purchase products that are being recommended.

Blogs significantly impact how their readers decide to buy products (C. Hsu, et al., 2013). To generate trust and loyalty, bloggers must establish a reputation for being credible and trustworthy, and their followers must have faith in their recommendations (Saxena, 2011). To promote product brands, bloggers employ a strategy known as Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM; ALNefae et al., 2019). eWOM refers to the type of online communication that occurs between consumers through the internet. Online reviews and social media platforms are examples of eWOM. Unlike traditional marketing, eWOM is customer-driven and relies on personal experiences and opinions. Customers turn to eWOM to obtain more information about a product or service or to learn about other customers' experiences and opinions. While marketing is focused on promoting a brand's message and increasing sales, eWOM relies on the opinions of satisfied customers to promote the brand's reputation and create positive word of mouth.

The Impact Blogs have on News and Social Issues

Blogs offer a unique perspective on social issues and news that differs from the mainstream media, such as television and newspapers (Gunter et al., 2009). Unlike traditional media, bloggers often offer more personal and nuanced insights on current events, providing readers with alternative viewpoints and in-depth analysis (Sánchez-Villar et al., 2017). However, this can also lead to the spread of conspiracy theories and misinformation if bloggers are not fact-checking their sources. To overcome this, readers should seek out blogs that are credible and trustworthy and critically evaluate the information presented. Additionally, engaging in constructive dialogue with bloggers and other readers can help foster a more informed and balanced perspective on social issues and news, as blogs have the potential to spark debates and discussions (Farrell & Drezner, 2007). However, this can also result in echo chambers, wherein readers exclusively consume information that validates their preexisting beliefs and opinions without any opportunity for critical examination (E. Gilbert et al., 2009). While echo chambers can be detrimental to intellectual growth and understanding, they can also serve as a safe space for marginalized communities to discuss important issues without fear of persecution (Seidmann, 2020). Therefore, it is important for readers to actively seek out diverse viewpoints and challenge their own beliefs to avoid falling into the trap of echo chambers.

Twitter is a major social media site where political conversations and debates often take place (Kalsnes et al., 2014). This microblogging platform enables all users to express their ideas and views on any issue. It is prevalent nowadays, particularly among the younger generation, that individuals may express their feelings without (approval) being required. Additionally, it might advocate and influence the political position of other users. Even politicians (promote) multiple political platforms and groups on Twitter. Despite all of the stated benefits, problems

were inevitable. Allegations could be uploaded on Twitter without censorship or verification of their veracity, and people from all over the globe may see them. These charges by an opposing party are intended to erode supporters' confidence and reputation.

Blogging enables activists to disseminate their stories and experiences across a broad audience (Maratea, 2008). Blogging and social media are used by unheard voices to gain support, especially environmentalists (Joosse & Brydges, 2018). In this way, people who have never been involved in these issues can better understand them. It also allows the general public to see how these issues impact real people. This visibility can make it more difficult for governments and corporations to ignore these issues. The environmental activists' platforms are now attracting the attention of a much bigger audience (Haider, 2015). Blogs on the environment increase the environmental literacy of the populace since they provide material distinct from that of the mainstream media. This sort of blog promotes ecologically conscious living.

Turning a Hobby into a Small Business

Blogging started as a leisure activity for some users (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007). However, as the years passed and the popularity of blogs expanded, the number of bloggers increased (Parry & Hracs, 2020). Many of these bloggers began to treat their blogs as a small business. In order to make money from their blog, they needed to find ways to attract readers and keep them coming back. This meant that they had to produce high-quality content on a regular basis. They also needed to promote their blog through social media and other online channels.

Any individual would always begin with their passion, a source of entertainment that would supply the motivating part of organizational success (Milanesi, 2018). Regarding the connection between an entrepreneur's creativity and organizational success, how and what they feel about their entrepreneurial activity is crucial, as it will always reflect on their performance,

fostering innovation and a heightened awareness of the possibilities (Bhansing et al., 2018).

These business owners serve as leaders inside their respective businesses and affect the motivation and viewpoint of their workers on the firm and their jobs. A dispassionate CEO could never attain the highest level of success in the firm. In the realm of entrepreneurship, enthusiasm is a crucial aspect. Individuals who demonstrated exceptional entrepreneurial zeal were deemed more likely to achieve prominence and success.

Turning blogging from a hobby to a potential professional career is a difficult but rewarding task (Pedroni, 2015). Yet, many have done it in various categories. For example, Fashion bloggers utilize their blogs as a forum to voice their opinions and thoughts on everything related to fashion (Wiazewicz & Zatwarnicka-Madura, 2016). Fashion bloggers advertise items to their target clients, and it has been seen that blogging may impact the purchasing choices of its viewers when the proper marketing methods are used. Additionally, some food bloggers have been able to turn their love for cooking and baking into a full-time job (Cesiri, 2020). By starting a food blog and posting recipes, restaurant recommendations, and anything else related to food, these bloggers have been able to build up a following of loyal readers. Some of these bloggers have even gone on to write cookbooks or start their own.

Statement of the Problem

Bloggers are integrating organizational structures and procedures in an effort to increase their popularity, reputation, and advertising income (Cho & Huh, 2010). The need to attract more readers is growing, and the majority of blogs of general interest now include advertising. A fast Google search for 'advertising' and 'blogs' returns dozens of sites that provide tips for attracting traffic and advertising, and whole conferences are devoted to monetizing blog ideas. Additionally, the number of blogs is increasing, and businesses are launching public blogs to

target blog readers as possible consumers (Y. Liu & Ji, 2010). Moreover, internet users who read blogs often and frequently revisit their favorite blogs (Shiau et al., 2011).

As bloggers continue to use their blogs as a revenue stream, their desire for increased notoriety and prestige will continue to increase (Mattson & Davidson, 2009). Bloggers from various industries (i.e. fashion, news) will continue to seek tips, tricks, and tactics to improve their blog ranking in search engines (i.e., Google, Yahoo). An increasing drive to earn connections, influence others, and generate an income will also be observed in bloggers, which has caused significant daily stress (Perlmutter, 2008). Therefore, examining the most effective strategies for successful bloggers to minimize stress, improve rankings, and sustain an online presence is crucial.

As the industry continues to grow, research about the psychology behind blogs (Gurak & Antonijevic, 2008), the consumer-blogger relationship (AlSaleh, 2017), Fashion blogs (Moloi & Nkhahle-Rapita, 2014), and the potential of blogs advertising (Ho et al., 2015), have been conducted. However, there is no discussion on the best practices that blog owners should follow when developing and managing their teams. Companies and individuals who blog to generate income need specific guidelines on operating their blogs and managing a team of writers, web designers, digital artists, etc. Understanding the best practices for successful bloggers can help business owners learn how to motivate and manage their workers better and understand what goes into developing a cohesive group that will produce high-quality content regularly (E. L. Baker, 2014).

Purpose Statement

Bloggers provide a unique voice in the online world that can influence buyers and other bloggers (Agarwal et al., 2008). In many ways, a successful blog is like a successful small

business. It takes time, effort, and dedication to grow a following and make money from your blog. Yet, the literature provides an inconsistent list of competencies that bloggers need to successfully manage a team and run a blog. Hence, this study aims to explore the most effective methods and strategies employed by bloggers to maintain and operate successful blogs, and to create a framework for understanding their key concepts in successful blogging.

Research Questions

In order to successfully accomplish the research objectives, this study will ask the following four research questions:

- RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?
- RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?

Blogging teams are becoming increasingly popular as a way to manage blogs (Baxter et al., 2010). A blog team consists of individuals collaborating on writing, editing, and marketing a blog. A successful blog team can help a blog grow its audience, generate income, and improve the quality of its content. However, little research is on the critical factors that make a blog team successful. This study identifies the essential elements necessary for bloggers to successfully lead a team and manage a blog, thus addressing an underexplored area in academic research.

Theoretical Framework

Appreciative inquiry is a philosophy and approach that focuses on the strengths, successes, and positive aspects of individuals, teams, or organizations (Bushe, 2011).

Appreciative inquiry posits that individuals or organizations should not focus on deficiencies but rather build upon existing strengths and successes (Whitney & Cooperrider, 2011). Appreciative Inquiry process consists of four parts (Bushe, 2011):

1. Discovery: exploring and identifying existing success stories within the organization.
2. Dream: setting goals and envisioning a future that builds upon existing strengths.
3. Design: creating plans to achieve the desired goals and objectives.
4. Destiny: implementing the plan and celebrating success.

The present study aims to utilize appreciative inquiry to identify best practices blog owners can implement to target their customers effectively. This study sheds light on effective strategies for blog owners to boost their traffic, engagement, and monetization by analyzing how environmental and personal factors influence people's willingness to engage with blogs.

Significance of the Study

This research can potentially enrich the current scholarly discourse in multiple aspects. Primarily, it offers valuable insights into the essential elements required for bloggers to lead a team and operate a successful blog effectively. It is crucial because it can help bloggers identify the areas they need to improve, thereby increasing their chances of success. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals looked for side hustles while working from home (Azavedo, 2022). For many people, blogging was a way to make some extra money. However, many bloggers were unsuccessful without understanding how to manage a team and run a blog. This study can help these bloggers by providing them with the critical factors they need to succeed.

Additionally, influencers who use blogging to promote their products or services can gain insight into effective team management and blog operation techniques. Brick-and-mortar businesses seeking to expand their online presence and utilize non-traditional marketing

strategies can also benefit from this research. For example, by properly managing their blogs and understanding SEO and social media, businesses can increase their potential for reaching more customers. Moreover, traditional marketing companies can learn from the study's findings about the relationship between traditional and non-traditional marketing methods, which can help them develop more effective strategies incorporating blogging and other online platforms.

Secondly, its goal is to construct a framework that captures the principles behind successful blogging. Given the absence of literature offering a thorough summary of the principles of successful blogging, this framework is set to serve as an important resource for future researchers and bloggers. Moreover, since blogging has few barriers to entry and is highly scalable, it can become a powerful tool for marketing, advertising, and even political campaigns (Linqia, 2020). Thus, understanding the key concepts of successful blogging is important for anyone who wants to use this tool for these purposes.

Lastly, this study will provide practical implications for bloggers looking to develop or improve their blog teams. Bloggers are always looking for innovative ways to grow their audience and generate income, and this study could provide valuable insights into how to do so. Moreover, it will provide common challenges and strategies to overcome those challenges that bloggers face.

Assumption of the Study

The research was based on the following assumptions:

- The panelists will be willing to share their experiences and insights on this topic.
- The panelists will be truthful in their responses.
- The panelists will not show bias in their responses.

Limitations of the Study

This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing phenomenological methods and thematic analysis. While a qualitative research methodology and phenomenological approach is deemed appropriate to investigate the phenomena, it is not without its limitations. Firstly, qualitative data consists of small sample sizes (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022), but it provides a rich and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. The criteria for inclusion of participants requires a minimum of 5 years in the blogging industry, which may have an impact on the responses depending on the various years of experience a participant has. Moreover, the different niches or geographical locations might influence the participants' responses, thus affecting the study's generalizability.

Definitions of the study

- **Domain Authority:** Domain Authority estimates a website's rank based on a keyword search (P. Dhar & Gayan, 2022). It displays the website's popularity. The greater a website's score, the more likely it is to be ranked higher; a low score implies that the website isn't performing well and is ranked lower. Backlinks to your website affect your domain authority.
- **Blog (Weblog):** Blogs are online journals in which users discuss their everyday lives, experiences, and even their ideas (Elega, 2018). It is a kind of online diary or journal. The comment area is a feature on several blogging systems; it enables interaction between the blogger and the audience.
- **Blogosphere:** Blogs are collectively called the blogosphere (Novikova et al., 2022). Examples include Tumblr, Blogger, Hashnode, and so on. Blogs in the blogosphere cover travel, leisure, gastronomy, politics, health, education, and many other themes.

- **Web Content Extractor (Crawler):** A web data extractor is a software system that automatically and routinely extracts data from online pages with dynamic content and delivers it to a database or another application (Bang et al., 2018).
- **Plugins:** Plugins are applications that work with your browser to provide functionality that would otherwise be unavailable (Sterne, n.d.). Each sort of computer platform has its version of a plug-in. The design is based on plugins, making optimizing the primary features easy depending on the requirements.
- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** SEO is a prominent approach that offers consumers a list of relevant websites based on the terms they enter (Bhandari & Bansal, 2018). It increases the likelihood that a website will appear on the first page of search results. It may be advantageous for businesses to embrace SEO to contact their target clients efficiently.

Chapter 1 Summary

Blogging has become a popular way to communicate and share information online. It has been used for various purposes, including marketing, personal expression, and social interaction. Despite its popularity, there is little research on best practices for bloggers. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by conducting a qualitative study and gaining knowledge of bloggers' lived experiences through semi-structured interviews with successful bloggers. The study will also provide a theoretical framework for understanding the key concepts of successful blogging and practical implications for bloggers looking to develop or improve their blog teams. Additionally, this research will benefit businesses and traditional marketing companies by providing insights into the relationship between traditional and non-traditional marketing methods incorporating blogging and other online platforms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is designed to set the scene for the study by exploring the existing scholarly literature related to the blogging industry, thereby providing a comprehensive contextual framework. An extensive literature review explores fundamental aspects of the blogging industry, encompassing the historical trajectory of blogging, the evolution of blogging technology, and the existing body of research on the critical success factors bloggers employ to establish and maintain influential blogs. This chapter also investigates the intricate dynamics of blogger-reader interactions and contemporary trends in blog monetization. This comprehensive literature examination lays the foundation for understanding the critical factors contributing to blog management and success.

The Blogging Industry

Social media platforms' exponential rise in popularity has been a prominent phenomenon (Boyd, 2015). Concurrently, the widespread adoption of blogs has garnered significant attention, capturing the interest of a vast consumer base comprising millions of individuals (S. Chen & Lin, 2015; T. Singh et al., 2008). The surge in interest has been largely driven by the perceived ease of creating and running a blog (Williams & Jacobs, 2004), thus transforming blogging from an exclusive domain to one that is widely accessible (Jacobs, 2003). However, while the initial barrier to entry into the blogging industry is low (J. A. Gilbert et al., 2016), sustaining a successful blog that appeals to readers and produces tangible results requires careful consideration of numerous factors (X. Liu & Wang, 2023). The factors include Search Engine Optimization (Madriz & Tejedor, 2020), audience engagement (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014), and proper utilization of social media for promotion and interactions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Hence, gaining an in-depth understanding of the blogging industry and its associated complexities is necessary to identify strategies to enable bloggers to create successful blogs.

The Historical Trajectory of Blogging

Tracing back the root of blogging reveals a long, intricate journey (Goldstein, 2009). The term *blog* was first coined by Jorn Barger in 1997 (Garden, 2011). Following the introduction of blog platforms, Blogger and LiveJournal in 1999, the popularity of blogs began to soar (Siles, 2011). During this period, blogs were largely used as digital diaries wherein bloggers shared stories or personal experiences with other users. Subsequently, blogging emerged as a popular tool for opinion-sharing and political activism in the early 2000s (Farrell & Drezner, 2007). Since then, blogging has progressively shifted from a hobby to a full-fledged profession (Pedroni, 2015). This shift is due to the emergence of blogs as a powerful tool for business marketing, facilitated by developing various monetization strategies (S. Müller et al., 2011; T. Singh et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2013).

Additionally, during the early 2000s, a significant surge in the emergence of “mommy blogs” captivated a substantial readership, establishing a prominent niche within the blogosphere (Germic et al., 2021; Hunter, 2016). Unlike traditional digital diaries for documenting personal experiences (O'Sullivan, 2005), 'mommy blogs' also evolved to foster a supportive community for mothers, offering advice and resources (Lopez, 2009). The mommy blogs predominantly revolved around documenting mothers' daily experiences and provided a platform for sharing parenting tips, personal anecdotes, and reflections on motherhood (Cummings, 2017; Ringrow, 2020). The mommy blog phenomenon serves as a testament to the transformative nature of blogs as it demonstrates how blogs have evolved from online diaries to platforms that facilitate communal support and the exchange of information on a niche (Goldstein, 2009; Mishne & de

Rijke, 2006; Reese et al., 2007). The mommy blogs demonstrated the power of blogging as a means of self-expression (Rogers & Green, 2015), community building (Hunter, 2015), and the growing recognition of mothers as influential voices (Lopez, 2009).

Parallel to the rise of mommy blogs was the emergence of travel blogs, which also became a significant force in the early 2000s (Wenger, 2008). These blogs started as simple digital diaries, where travel enthusiasts documented their journeys and shared their experiences about different destinations (Banyai & Glover, 2011). However, travel blogs soon evolved into an influential niche within the blogging industry, shaping the travel experiences of millions of readers globally (Bosangit et al., 2009). Travel blogs have transformed how travelers share their experiences, offering first-hand accounts of destinations, real-time travel advice, and cultural insights that transcend traditional travel guidebooks' offerings (B. Pan et al., 2007).

The rapid proliferation of travel blogs was facilitated by the globalizing impact of the internet (Litvin et al., 2008), making it possible for bloggers to share their experiences in real-time, regardless of their geographic location. Furthermore, travel blogs have become an effective marketing tool for the tourism industry, influencing travel services' demand and supply (S. Choi et al., 2007). On the one hand, travelers increasingly rely on travel blogs to inform their travel decisions, contributing to the demand side (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). On the other hand, tourism organizations started to leverage travel blogs as a promotional tool, contributing to the supply side (Buhalis & Jun, 2011).

As the new evolution expanded the scope and diversity of blog content, it also broadened the audience reach and impact of the blogging medium (Lahm, 2006). As such, advertising companies took notice and began to develop programs to target blogger audiences (T. Singh et al., 2008; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). One such company is Google, which debuted AdSense in

2003 (Fox et al., 2009). AdSense paired blogs with relevant advertisements. The milestone of AdSense marked a turning point in the blogging landscape, offering bloggers a lucrative avenue for monetizing their content (Fox et al., 2009; Soegoto & Semesta, 2018). Google's blogging tool created a paradigm where blogs can become eligible for sponsorships from major brands aligned with their characteristics and content (Hughes et al., 2019), allowing bloggers to establish mutually beneficial partnerships (Stubb, 2018). The collaborations encompassed a range of arrangements, including promotional endorsements or product reviews, which further propelled the transformation of blogging from a personal hobby to a viable business venture (Lim, 2019).

The next evolution of blogging began in 2004 with the introduction of video bloggers (X. Wang, 2022; X. Zhang et al., 2009). A vlog, or video blog, is a form of blog where the content is primarily presented in video format, offering a dynamic and interactive way for creators to share information, experiences, or insights with their audience (Snelson, 2013). Beauty vlogs are among the most favored types (Gannon & Prothero, 2018). For example, Sandra Cires Art is the most subscribed beauty channel, with 16.4 million subscribers (Statista, 2023). YouTube eventually became the primary platform for video blogging and provided a lucrative avenue for bloggers to monetize their content (Berry, 2018). In addition, YouTube enabled bloggers to generate revenue through affiliate links and private sponsorships (Ballard et al., 2022; A. Chu et al., 2022). This new avenue of financial opportunity further highlighted the multifaceted nature of blogs as an effective marketing tool (Felix & Stolarz, 2006), allowing them to transcend beyond text-based platforms.

News blogging also gained traction during this period (Gunter et al., 2009). For example, the Huffington Post, now called HuffPost, is one of the most prominent blogging sites covering

news (Bakker, 2012; Harvey, 2014). Through its success, HuffPost has demonstrated how much blogging can influence public discourse (J. Bowman, 2013; E. Bruni & Comacchio, 2023). In 2005, the first blogger, Garrett M. Graff, was granted White House press credentials (K. E. Gill, 2005). Mr. Graff was given a seat in the White House press briefing room after many mainstream media news outlets, such as CNN and USA Today, began to tell his story about bloggers being real journalists. This incident began a series of events that would open mainstream media doors to bloggers, allowing them to report on major news stories, such as the questioning of former US House-Senate Leader Trent Lott over his pro-segregationist comments and the first reporting of the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal (Bruns & Highfield, 2015) and become an integral part of the journalistic landscape (J. Roberts, 2019).

Blogs vary from websites in different aspects, such as their content and format (Herring et al., 2004). Generally, websites are composed of static pages that remain unchanged over time, while blogs are more dynamic and feature regularly updated content (Adar et al., 2009). Additionally, blogs' navigational structure and layout are designed to facilitate easy reading (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Blogs can also focus on specific topics, such as travel or lifestyle, thus allowing users to locate relevant information quickly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, blogging technology has evolved significantly over the years, such as introducing various plugins and widgets that permit users to customize their blogs according to their preferences (M. Jones & Alony, 2008; Kroski, 2008; S. Wang & Lin, 2011).

As social media platforms increased in popularity, the blogging industry adapted and evolved (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). For example, microblogging emerged as a popular form of blogging (Ehrlich & Shami, 2010). Microblogging consists of brief, concise posts that usually contain images or videos (Oulasvirta et al., 2009) and are used to share news stories and updates

(X. Chen et al., 2013; Ma, 2015). Examples of microblogging include Twitter (Veltri, 2012) and Tumblr (Steel, 2015; Xu et al., 2014). The introduction of microblogging has further propelled the blogging industry to new heights (Bao et al., 2013), allowing bloggers to reach more readers and produce tangible results, such as higher engagement and interactions, follower growth, and influence and authority, in a shorter time frame (Bao et al., 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Lamsal et al., 2022; Oulasvirta et al., 2009).

Blogger Behavior

A blogger is an individual or group of individuals who generate content on digital platforms and freely share their opinions and personal feelings through the internet (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Bloggers are generally free to publish whatever content they choose within certain ethical boundaries (Iskander, 2011; Soldatov, 2019). However, bloggers must know their style and brand to create successful blogs (Delisle & Parmentier, 2016). Understanding the behaviors that shape the blogging industry can help bloggers manage their content better and attract more readers (L. Li et al., 2014).

Behavior can be understood as the interaction between a person's innate personality traits and the circumstances of their environment (Highfield, 2017; C. Huang, C. Chou, & P. Lin, 2010). Most studies on blogger behavior focus on the motivations and activities of bloggers (Hollenbaugh, 2011; C. Hsu & Lin, 2008; Kjellberg, 2010; Nardi et al., 2004; Pettigrew et al., 2015). The main motivators are personal enjoyment or satisfaction (Y. Chen, R. Shang et al., 2014) and a desire to receive recognition for their work (Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014). Additionally, many bloggers aim to monetize their blogs (Ay et al., 2019; Rowse & Garrett, 2010). This goal is often achieved through sponsorships or digital product sales (Archer, 2019).

The activities of bloggers can be divided into two main categories: production and consumption (Thurman & Walters, 2013). Production activities involve creating content for the blog, while consumption activities involve interacting with other bloggers or engaging with readers (Liao et al., 2011). Bloggers need to find a balance between production and consumption activities (Sette & Brito, 2020). Bloggers should also be aware of the current trends in the blogging industry, as these can impact their blog's success (Philip, 2017). These trends include staying updated on the latest technologies and platforms and being aware of search engine optimization (SEO) techniques (Bakker, 2012).

Research by Pihl and Sandström (2013) found that bloggers can generate value by creating content and engaging with their readers. Bloggers can use their blogs to build a community of passionate followers who share and promote the content, which can increase credibility and visibility (Hernández-Méndez et al., 2013). The fashion blog niche, for example, is highly competitive and requires bloggers to create visually stimulating content and engage with their readers (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Moreover, companies within the fashion industry seek guidance from fashion bloggers, leveraging their specialized knowledge to shape the business trajectory in alignment with prevailing fashion trends and consumer preferences (A. Choi, 2020; B. E. Duffy & Hund, 2015; H. Ko, 2012; Rocamora, 2012).

A blog's credibility has increased Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), thus increasing visibility and recognition (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Credibility is largely driven by bloggers who have become influential figures within their respective niches (Whitmore et al., 2014). Being an influential blogger allows them to have a larger impact on their readers and the industry and can lead to various opportunities, such as brand partnerships or speaking engagements (S. Wang & Lin, 2011). Leveraging this influence is key to the success of a blog, as it can help

attract more readers, establish relationships with brands and companies, and provide potential monetization opportunities (Archer & Harrigan, 2016). Thus, successful blogging requires a combination of knowledge about industry trends, dedication to creating content, and engagement with the target audience.

Also, credibility can impact consumer purchase intent (C. Hsu, J. Chuan-Chuan Lin & H. Chiang, 2013). As illustrated in Figure 1, Saxena (2011) proposed an analytical framework that explores the influence of the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and the credibility of information on the propensity to utilize blogs. The theory of reasoned action suggests that a person's determination to perform a specific action impacts that behavior. Subsequently, their attitude toward the behavior and perception of subjective norms, or the expectations of others, impact this intention. The model examines the effect of the intention to engage with blogs on purchase intentions after acquiring information from blogs. The results show that consumers who intend to purchase items and use blogs as an information source are likely to be influenced by the credibility of information provided by the blog owner (Saxena, 2011). As such, bloggers need to establish trust and credibility with their readers, as this can be a powerful tool in influencing consumer behavior, gaining authority, and increasing monetization through sponsored content or affiliate marketing.

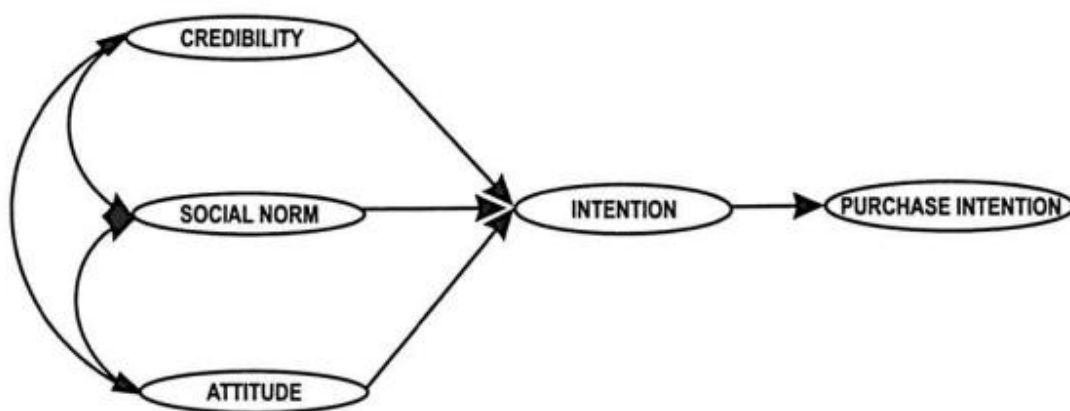
Why Bloggers Blog

In contemporary society, blogging has become a prevalent form of expression and communication for individuals and communities (Hibsch & Mason, 2020). Research conducted by Nardi et al. (2004) found that individuals who engage in blogging are often motivated by a desire to chronicle their personal experiences, offer insightful commentary and viewpoints, articulate their deep emotions, and establish and sustain communal discourse platforms.

Research from multiple disciplines, such as anthropology (Adolphs, 2003), behavioral science (Rotter, 1990), computer science (Kohler & Gumerman, 2000), and psychology (Baumeister & Bushman, 2016), have focused on understanding human social behavior. For instance, Yan (2011) asserts that humans are inherently drawn to engaging in complex social relationships and desire to be part of social groups. As such, blogging and reading blogs serve as a means to establish connections with like-minded individuals, fostering the development of virtual communities (Zou & Hyland, 2019). Blogs provide an online platform that transcends geographic barriers, enabling individuals from different countries and cultures to communicate and form relationships on a global scale (R. Wilson et al., 2015).

Figure 1

Purchase Intention Model



Note. Adapted from Saxena, A. (2011). Blogs and their impact on purchase intention: A structural equation modeling approach. *Paradigm*, 15(1-2), 102-110.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0971890720110114>. Copyright by Sage Publications.

In addition to other incentives, such as revenue and public recognition (S. Müller et al., 2011), bloggers are driven by the desire to establish connections with communities that might be otherwise inaccessible to them. A case in point is the research conducted by Knoll and Bronstein (2014), which delves into the blogging motivations among women grappling with infertility. The study underscores how personal blogs serve as a potent platform for fostering socialization, facilitating open discussions regarding the challenges associated with infertility, and facilitating the exchange of shared interests within this community. Such engagement can be attributed to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (C. Huang, Y. Shen et al., 2007; Mehendale, 2022).

Intrinsic motivations are attributed to the personal gratification of engaging in activities (Y. Li & Lin, 2012). Such activities include writing and reading blogs, commenting on posts, and forming relationships with other bloggers (Nardi et al., 2004). Extrinsic motivations involve external rewards such as feedback from followers, recognition of one's work within the blogging community, or income (Gerrath & Usrey, 2021). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations positively affect the overall blogging experience, and one type of motivation can increase as time goes on (Fullwood et al., 2014). For instance, Ekdale et al. (2010) examined American political bloggers' behavior online and offline and discovered their extrinsic motivations increased as time progressed. Additionally, a correlation emerged between the extrinsic motivations and the extent of the bloggers' online and offline political involvement. The increase in extrinsic motivation is due to political bloggers wanting to provide a different perspective to the mainstream media on political and social issues.

The advent of extrinsic motivations has ushered in a cohort of bloggers, as this subset now includes individuals who approach blogging as a professional vocation rather than a mere hobby (Celdrán et al., 2019; Erz & Heeris Christensen, 2018). Research by Sajjad and Zaman

(2020) has highlighted how contemporary digital media strategies heavily influence blogging practices, and trends seem to indicate that more financial opportunities are available for bloggers than ever. These opportunities range from sponsored content to brand collaborations (Stubb et al., 2019) and selling digital products (Phang et al., 2013). However, such opportunities are reserved for those who have established a strong presence within their respective niches (Maratea, 2008).

Blogs as Communication Resources

Blogs are increasingly recognized as vital communication tools in the digital age to interact with clients and foster long-term relationships (Nurfadila & Riyanto, 2020). Research by Keller (2013) shows that the cultivation of effective communication strategies fosters positive experiences, nurtures customer loyalty, and positively impacts brand equity. Blogs offer businesses an avenue to maintain ongoing communication with their clientele, enabling them to solicit feedback and cultivate relationships (A. T. Weinstein & McFarlane, 2016). For example, corporate blogs are used by organizations to disseminate important information about their operations, products, and services (T. Singh et al., 2008). However, corporate blogs also fail to establish strong relationships with their users as they only offer limited discourse with their readers through a one-way interaction (Waters et al., 2014).

However, when business blogs are strategically employed, they can function as a potent marketing tool, facilitating multiple avenues for engagement and interaction with their target audience (A. T. Weinstein & McFarlane, 2016). One of the primary roles of a business blog is to serve as a dynamic platform for dispensing valuable tips, recommendations, and advice related to industry, product offerings, or service provisions (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Such content can build trust and credibility with potential customers and bolster the brand's visibility (C. Hsu, J.

Chuan-Chuan Lin & H. Chiang, 2013). One such blog is Patagonia's blog, Patagonia Stories, which serves as a dynamic platform, sharing valuable industry insights and product information (Michel et al., 2019; Patagonia, 2023). The blog features articles on outdoor activities, sustainability efforts, adventurous stories, and updates on their environmental initiatives, enhancing their brand visibility and credibility. Through their blog, they foster a community that shares their passion for the outdoors and environmental commitment.

Moreover, business blogs can function as a customer service resource for customers needing assistance or information regarding products and services (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Additionally, businesses can use their blogs to provide timely updates about company news or activities (N. L. Chan & Guillet, 2011). The updates help to increase customer engagement and loyalty, as customers feel included in the company's journey. Furthermore, business blogs can offer exclusive discounts and promotions to customers, helping maintain relationships with existing clients while attracting new ones (Kaplan, 2012).

In the age demographic, blogs are important to market to millennials and Generation Z as they constantly use technology and social media (Kilian et al., 2012). Research by Seemiller and Grace (2017) has shown that millennials and Generation Z prefer to receive communication from brands through digital channels through short-form content, such as blogs, vs. long-form content, such as television advertisements and press releases. As such, a well-crafted blog can capture the attention of this demographic in a more sustained manner than other forms of media (García-Carrión et al., 2023). Additionally, businesses focusing on active customer engagement through blogs have seen increased conversion rates and brand recognition (Júnior et al., 2022).

Content Creation and Quality

Creating content for blogs is an important part of successful blogging. Content creation involves selecting a topic, researching the topic, and forming ideas into well-written blog posts (K. Chang et al., 2023). Articulating content in a blog is important because it captures and retains the readers' attention (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Fullwood et al., 2009; Kien-Weng Tan et al., 2011). Quality content is key in the blogging industry as it will determine the success of a blog. Successful bloggers often understand how to grow their audience and make their blogs visible (J. Chung et al., 2023; R. Li, 2021; Schmidt, 2007). This understanding involves embedding keywords in posts and using effective SEO strategies (M. N. Khan & Mahmood, 2018; S. Zhang & Cabage, 2013).

The relationship between content quality and audience engagement is important when blogging (Kulkarni et al., 2013). The relevance and value of the content need to be directed to the target audience's interests (Thawanyarat et al., 2023), needs (E. Baumer et al., 2008; Hookway, 2008), or challenges (Luehmann, 2008). Bloggers offer unique and original perspectives, attracting readers to well-written and informative content (Segev et al., 2015). Content that is tailored to the needs of the reader, as well as content that is engaging and interactive, will foster a more loyal reader base (Hughes et al., 2019; P. V. Singh et al., 2014).

Content creation by bloggers is not limited to text-only posts (Rietveld et al., 2020; Thoma et al., 2017). For example, visual appeal is essential in keeping readers engaged (Rietveld et al., 2020; S. Wang, C. Hsu, et al., 2015). Bloggers often include images, videos, or infographics to break up the text and provide visual context (T. M. Lin et al., 2012). Infographics aid in the simple and efficient understanding of complex topics (Thoma et al., 2017).

Additionally, multimedia elements can lead to greater engagement and sharing compared to text-only posts (S. W. Park, 2013).

Additionally, the high quality of content is important as it builds credibility and trust with readers (Shneiderman, 2014). Bloggers who use references and sources when articulating their opinions can demonstrate their authority and expertise in a topic (Mohta & Mohta, 2016; Shema et al., 2012). Having references or proof is important when blogging about complex or controversial topics as it helps construct knowledge (Luzón, 2009). Thus, bloggers can be perceived as more knowledgeable and reliable (Chesney & Su, 2009), therefore enhancing their brand reputation (Erdem & Swait, 2004) if they use valid sources to support their arguments (Fogg et al., 2001).

Factors Influencing Content Creation and Development

Bloggers focusing on informational blog content, such as news or lifestyle topics, may have to consider certain factors to produce successful blog posts closely (Gunter et al., 2009). The ultimate purpose of blogging content is to elicit a response from the reader (Juliaty & Dita, 2021). Therefore, bloggers must consider the context and purpose of their posts. For instance, bloggers focusing on current events must research and analyze relevant data to create an informative and accurate post (Munteanu, 2022). Additionally, bloggers who focus on trends in lifestyle topics, such as travel, must focus their content on timely and relevant topics (Mainolfi et al., 2021).

Other factors that influence content creation and development include identifying the needs of the readers (Bouwan & Van de Wijngaert, 2002), their interests (Petersen, 2019), and their preferences (Davidavičius & Limba, 2022). For example, if the readers of a lifestyle blog are primarily interested in traveling, the blogger must create content that caters to this topic

(Chandralal et al., 2014; Olenov & Slavnikov, 2022). Conversely, if the readers of a fashion blog are more interested in style tips, the blogger must create content that speaks to this audience (Engholm & Hansen-Hansen, 2013). To ensure relevancy, bloggers often conduct surveys (Hagan, 2020) or read comments and reviews from readers to gauge their interests (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005).

In addition to understanding readers' needs, successful bloggers employ certain strategies when creating content (E. Baumer et al., 2008; Hookway, 2008). For instance, bloggers can incorporate creativity and originality into content development by using an interesting narrative style (Swartjes, 2007) or creating engaging visuals (Amini et al., 2018; Meredith, 2021). Bloggers can use applications, such as Canva (Rustiman & Mahdi, 2021) or Shutterstock (Lose Hermanto, 2020), to create appealing visuals for blog posts. Additionally, bloggers can use storytelling techniques to capture readers' attention and draw them in (Atiq et al., 2022; K. Chang et al., 2023; De Fina, 2016; Maggiore et al., 2022).

Target Audience Analysis

It is important to understand the target audience for a blog to create effective content (D. Leung et al., 2013). Target audience analysis involves studying readers' demographics, behaviors, and interests (Dennis et al., 2016). This analysis can be done by collecting data from reader surveys or using online analytics tools (Raghupathi et al., 2022). Multiple websites focus on collecting data and analyzing the behavior of readers, such as Google Analytics (Porsche et al., 2022), BuzzSumo (Obiała et al., 2021), and MozBar (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016). Knowing the target audience enables a blogger to create content tailored to their interests, needs, and preferences (Rieh et al., 2014).

Understanding the target audience's demographics, geography, and behaviors can help inform content development (Dennis et al., 2016). For example, a blogger targeting readers in Japan will likely need to create content that speaks to this audience (Nardi et al., 2004). Similarly, if the target audience of a blog consists of young adults aged 18-24, then the blog content should reflect their interests and needs (Petersen, 2019). Moreover, understanding the type of device readers use can help inform how content is presented (Bhanarkar et al., 2023; Fink & Papismedov, 2023; B. A. Kumar, 2022). For instance, if most blog readers view posts on a mobile device, content should be formatted appropriately (Gardner, 2011).

Writing Style and Tone

The writing style is important to bloggers because it can determine the retention of readers (Schler et al., 2006). For example, bloggers should define the appropriate writing style and tone for their target audience because readers more familiar with a particular writing style will be more likely to engage with the content (Zou & Hyland, 2020). Additionally, bloggers should consider the need for brevity and clarity when composing blog posts (C. W. Van Eck et al., 2019). For example, informative posts should be concise and to the point, with fewer sentences but more paragraphs (H. Ko et al., 2013). Conversely, persuasive posts or posts with a specific goal, such as selling a product, will require a more persuasive writing style (Stubbs, 2018), such as storytelling or narrative writing style.

Storytelling as a writing style and tone is also important to successful blogging (De Fina, 2016; Rashid & Mohamad, 2019). Storytelling involves creating an engaging narrative (Taylor et al., 2017), which can help capture readers' attention (Pollock & Bono, 2013). Incorporating storytelling can make blog posts more interesting and memorable (Rashid & Mohamad, 2019). Storytelling enables the blogger to create an emotional connection with their reader (Pence,

2004), which helps increase engagement (McMullan et al., 2022; Schmälzle et al., 2022).

Additionally, storytelling allows a blogger to be creative and unique in their writing style (Kretz & De Valck, 2010).

Consistent Content Production

Successful bloggers understand the importance of consistent content production (Berger et al., 2013). Consistent content production entails creating a blog post regularly and staying active to retain readers (Y. Li, 2021; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007). Planning and organizing content are important because it schedules time and resources for content production (X. Liu & Wang, 2023).

Implementing efficient research and writing processes can aid in remaining consistent (K. Zhao & Kumar, 2012). For example, conducting thorough research to gather relevant information and insights on a particular topic can reduce the time spent creating a blog post (Y. Li, 2021; Rosser et al., 2001). Additionally, utilizing online applications and tools, such as Evernote (Ratcliffe, 2023) or Grammarly (Calma et al., 2022), can help streamline content production. Moreover, outlining, and sketching ideas for blog posts can help bloggers stay organized and on-task (Hellmann et al., 2010).

Collaborating with guest writers or contributors can yield significant advantages (E. P. Baumer et al., 2011; Efimova & De Moor, 2005). These individuals often bring fresh perspectives and unique insights on various topics (Robertson, 2022), which can greatly enhance the appeal and engagement level of the blogs' content (Jeziorski, 2014; D. Van Eck et al., 2021). Furthermore, guest writers offer an effective solution to maintaining consistency in content creation (Ay et al., 2019), especially when regular content creators are unavailable (Dugan et al., 2010). By ensuring these guest contributors adhere to specific guidelines and deadlines, bloggers

can maintain consistent quality and regularity in their blog posts (Louta & Varlamis, 2010), enhancing the overall reader experience (J. Liu et al., 2023).

Repurposing and Repackaging Existing Content

Bloggers leverage existing content to create new formats and repurpose it for different platforms (Sugimoto et al., 2017). For example, bloggers can turn an existing blog post into a video or podcast (Schulte, 2019). Repackaging existing content is beneficial because it allows the blogger to reach new audiences and expand their reader base (Emery, 2010; Raza & Siddiqui, 2019). Repurposing content can be used to create content for different mediums, such as an eBook or a webinar (Doorten et al., 2004).

Additionally, bloggers focusing on evergreen content can repurpose and reuse it for future blog posts (Gupta et al., 2023). *Evergreen content* refers to content that remains relevant and valuable over a long time, regardless of current trends (Du Plessis, 2017). Because it doesn't necessitate frequent updates or revision, this kind of content proves to be ideal for repurposing (Ezekiel, 2022). Bloggers can create various new formats by repackaging evergreen content without starting from scratch (A. Weinstein, 2023). Moreover, repurposed content can also help to reduce research and writing time (Sharda & Ponnada, 2008).

Search Engine Optimization and Blog Visibility

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an effective tool for increasing blog visibility (Vyas, 2019; Yalçın & Köse, 2010; Zakharenko & Smagulova, 2020). SEO is the practice of optimizing content to increase its ranking and visibility on search engines, such as Google and Bing (M. P. Evans, 2007). SEO can be done by using keywords throughout the content and ensuring the website has a good page rank (Fathollahi-Fard et al., 2018; Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012; Symitsi et al., 2022). Additionally, bloggers should create content that includes long-tail

keywords, which are words or phrases specific to a particular topic (Daruka & Damle, 2023; Skiera et al., 2010). Including images, videos, and infographics in blog posts can also aid in increasing visibility (O. Yu et al., 2006). For example, a travel blog focusing on the broad keyword "Santorini", can use "luxury suites Santorini Sea view" (Konidaris et al., 2022. p. 901) as a long-tail keyword.

Importance of SEO in Driving Blog Traffic

The absence of SEO significantly undermines the likelihood of success for online businesses (Schultheiß & Lewandowski, 2020), underscoring its essential role in digital commerce (Berman & Katona, 2013; Google Developers, 2023). For example, many bloggers rely heavily on search engine rankings to drive blog traffic (L. Wilson, 2019; S. Zhang & Cabage, 2013). Consequently, SEO is integral in helping online businesses, and blogs capture potential customers or readers searching for information related to a particular topic (Bhandari & Bansal, 2018; M. A. Khan et al., 2023; D. Sharma, R. Shukla et al., 2019). Additionally, SEO can help a business increase its credibility (A. Haas & Unkel, 2017), as higher-ranking pages are viewed as higher quality and trustworthy by search engines (Gunter et al., 2009; Robins & Holmes, 2008; Venkatakrishnan et al., 2023).

Organizations have two options to improve their ranking in Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs; Berman & Katona, 2013). The first is organic results, which pertain to the optimization of websites in a manner that allows search engines to perceive them as containing pertinent content for a specific search query (Baye et al., 2013; Höchstötter & Lewandowski, 2009). The perceived relevance can prompt search engines to rank these websites in prime positions within the resulting search list (Lewandowski et al., 2021). Several methodologies exist to facilitate page rankings (Looy, 2016), with Google's Rich Snippets (Google Search Central, 2009) being

paramount among them. This technique delves into the content of websites that have incorporated structured data known as microformats (Lewis, 2009).

The second option to improve their ranking in SERPs is sponsored results or advertising investment (V. Dhar & A. Ghose, 2010; Jansen & Spink, 2009; Jerath & Sayedi, 2011; Katona & Sarvary, 2010). The advertising investment is accomplished by acquiring keywords through Google Ads (Geddes, 2014). These keywords are typically associated with the websites, products, and services businesses offer, essentially serving as content descriptors (Yoo, 2014). Acquiring keywords through Google Ads provides businesses access to a larger number of potential customers as compared to organic search results (G. D. Smith, 2020; C. Zhao, Z. Zhang et al., 2010). Consequently, this technique is invaluable for bloggers attempting to increase their blog visibility (Iqbal et al., 2022).

Effective SEO implementation allows blogs to gain exposure to a wider audience (Pérez-Montoro & Codina, 2016), as search engines serve as the primary gateway for users seeking relevant information (Haider & Sundin, 2019; Hargittai, 2007; Liaw & Huang, 2003). Moreover, the organic nature of search engine traffic presents an opportunity for sustainable and long-term growth (Rehman & Khan, 2013), as the continuous optimization of blogs can lead to higher rankings (Kritikopoulos et al., 2006), increased visibility (J. Zhang & Dimitroff, 2005), and a steady flow of engaged visitors (Egri & Bayrak, 2014). Given the immense competition in the blogosphere (Tangirbergenovna, 2022), investing in SEO becomes a crucial strategy for bloggers to stand out (Sheffield, 2020), establish authority (Ziakis et al., 2019), and attract a steady stream of targeted readership (Lewandowski, 2023). Consequently, understanding and implementing SEO best practices are paramount for bloggers who aim to maximize their blog's potential and ensure its visibility in the highly competitive online landscape (J. Singh, 2016).

Implementing SEO strategies is often associated with various costs (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2017). A significant allocation of time and resources is necessary to consistently generate high-quality content that is relevant and valuable to readers (O'Neill & Curran, 2011). Furthermore, SEO demands technical expertise (S. Zhang & Cabage, 2016), as it involves understanding complex algorithms and constantly adjusting to the ever-evolving search engine guidelines (Ghose & Yang, 2008). Moreover, despite these investments, SEO outcomes are not immediate, and it may take months before noticeable improvements are seen in search rankings (Bifet et al., 2005). Therefore, while SEO is essential for driving blog traffic and ensuring online visibility, it is also associated with significant costs that must be carefully considered in the blog's overall growth strategy (Malaga, 2008).

Keyword Research and Optimization Techniques

Keywords are essential for SEO success (Jiang, 2018; R. Li, 2021), and conducting keyword research is important for blog optimization (J. Park et al., 2013). Through keyword research, bloggers gain insight into the specific terms and phrases that their target audience employs when searching for information online (Nagpal & Petersen, 2021; Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016). Bloggers who understand the search queries can strategically optimize their blog content to align with the needs and interests of their intended readership (Han et al., 2009). Keyword research allows bloggers to identify high-potential keywords with optimal search volume and competition levels, enabling them to prioritize the target the most relevant and valuable terms (R. F. Wilson & Pettijohn, 2006). Bloggers who incorporate keywords throughout their blogs can enhance the chances of their content being discovered by search engines, improving their visibility and attracting organic traffic (Dennis et al., 2016). Moreover, keyword research helps bloggers stay informed about emerging trends (Panchal et al., 2021), industry jargon (Schulkind,

2023), and shifts in audience preferences (Manjuladevi & Periyasamy, 2023), enabling them to continually refine their content strategy and maintain relevance in the digital world (Vaughan & Romero-Frías, 2012).

Bloggers should understand the various tools and methods for identifying relevant and high-performing keywords (Y. Chen, E. J. Lu et al., 2014). There is a plethora of keyword research tools to assist in uncovering insight into search volume, competition, and related keywords (Drivas et al., 2017). Premium tools such as SEMrush (Erdmann et al., 2022; Vyas, 2019), Moz Keyword Explorer (Zia & Mushtaq, 2021), and Ahrefs Keyword Explorer (Calvano et al., 2021; Fundingsland et al., 2021; M. Lin et al., 2023) offer valuable data to inform keyword selection (Hu et al., 2017). While keyword research can be tedious and time-consuming (S. Wang, Z. Chen et al., 2016), keyword research tools can aid bloggers in discovering keywords that align with their blog's niche, gauge their popularity, and evaluate the level of competition (Fang & Salvendy, 2000). Moreover, the tools can help identify keywords that competitors are targeting successfully, which can help reveal untapped opportunities (Duvvuru et al., 2012). Methods such as keyword clustering (S. Yang & Shi, 2013) and auditing keywords using Google's Keyword Planner (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016) can also help optimize blogs for SEO.

Additionally, analyzing user intent and search intent is an important step for optimizing blog content for target keywords (Roy et al., 2015; Tsai & Wu, 2022). Understanding user intent helps bloggers create content that aligns with what readers are searching for and prevents them from investing in keywords that have no connection to their blog's niche (Lu & Hsiao, 2007; S. Wang & Lin, 2011). Additionally, search engines like Google continuously refine their algorithms to understand better user intent (Surana et al., 2023). By optimizing their blogs to address the intent behind target keywords, bloggers can increase the chances of their content

satisfying the searcher's needs and appearing prominently in search engine results (Y. Chen, F. S. Tsai, & K. L. Chan, 2008; K. B. Jones, 2013). Thus, aligning content and intent can enhance the user experience and improve the blog's relevance, credibility, and authoring of search engines (Kim et al., 2008; J. Park et al., 2013).

Furthermore, incorporating keywords within blog titles, headings, meta tags, and content bodies is fundamental in optimizing blog content for search engines (Groth & Gurney, 2010). Blog titles are essential indicators of the blog's content and provide an opportunity to include primary target keywords (Wallsten, 2010). Incorporating keywords into headings can signal topical relevance to search engines (Bissonnette-Maheux et al., 2018; Dickinson et al., 2018). Properly optimizing meta tags, including meta titles and meta descriptions, allows bloggers to craft concise and compelling snippets that entice search engine users to click through to their blogs (Alimohammadi, 2003; J. A. Clark et al., 2022).

Integrating keywords into the blog content's body is also important for SEO (Yalçın & Köse, 2010). However, it is important to know that bloggers should avoid keyword stuffing (Zuze & Weideman, 2013), which is an outdated SEO technique that involves overloading a web page with keywords to manipulate a site's ranking in Google search results and can result in negative user experience, such as repetition of the same words or phrases and the content sounding unnatural (Google Search Central, 2023), and harm the site's ranking (Weideman, 2009). Thus, to prevent keyword stuffing, bloggers should incorporate them naturally and strategically throughout the text to enhance readability while maximizing search engine visibility (Bondi, 2022; Vaughan & Romero-Frías, 2012). Optimization techniques, such as internal linking to bolster content value, can improve SEO performance (Kloostera, 2015).

On-Page SEO Strategies

On-page SEO strategies encompass a range of techniques that optimize various elements within a blog to improve its visibility and relevance to search engines (G. Kumar & Paul, 2020). An important aspect of on-page SEO is optimizing the blog's structure, URLs, and internal linking to ensure that search engines can crawl and index the content effectively (Enge et al., 2015). Bloggers who organize their blog structure logically and hierarchically can make it easier for search engine bots to navigate and understand the content's context (K. B. Jones, 2013). Additionally, utilizing descriptive and keyword-rich URLs aids search engines in comprehending the blog's content (Kuśmierczyk & Sydow, 2013). It provides users with clear and informative URLs that enhance their browsing experience (Žilincan, 2017). Furthermore, implementing strategic internal linking allows bloggers to establish connections between different pages and posts within the blog (Noaman & Abuata, 2012), facilitating user navigation and helping search engines discover and index the content more efficiently (Rajabi et al., 2014).

Another on-page SEO strategy includes crafting compelling meta titles and descriptions (Husain et al., 2020). Meta titles serve as concise and informative summaries of the blog's content (Wijaya et al., 2021), while meta descriptions provide additional context to entice users to click through to the blog (Matošević, 2018). Aligning meta titles and descriptions with target keywords ensures that search engines and users quickly grasp the blog's relevance to their search queries (Ambarsari et al., 2019; Craven, 2000). By crafting compelling meta tags that accurately represent the content, bloggers can enhance the blog's click-through rate and improve its visibility in search engine results pages (D. K. Singh et al., 2022).

Schema markup is a powerful on-page SEO technique that allows bloggers to add additional data to their blog posts, which search engines can index and display in search engine

results pages (Edgar, 2023). Schema markup involves adding structured data markup to the HTML code, providing additional context and metadata about the content (Julião & Malta, 2020). Bloggers can use schema markup to help search engines better understand and display their information, which may result in more attractive search results, such as enhanced displays or rich snippets (L. Yu, 2014). Schema markup enhances the visibility and presentation of the blog's content, increasing the chances of attracting user attention and engagement (Barrett & Herten, 2021).

Off-Page SEO Strategy

Off-page SEO strategies are important in enhancing a blog's visibility and authority by focusing on external factors that impact search engine rankings (Kloostera, 2015). A key off-page SEO strategy is linking building or acquiring backlinks from other websites (French & Ward, 2020). Backlinks are an important ranking signal used by search engines to determine a blog's authority and relevance (Geetha & Sathiyakumari, 2012; M. N. Khan & Mahmood, 2018). Bloggers can obtain quality backlinks by creating content that other websites are likelier to share, such as infographics, podcasts, or videos (Yin et al., 2023). By acquiring high-quality backlinks from reputable and authoritative websites within the blog's niche, bloggers can strengthen their blog's authority and improve its search engine rankings.

Additionally, engaging in social media promotion and sharing amplifies the blog's reach (Dobele et al., 2015). Leveraging online networks like Instagram and Pinterest (Cawcutt et al., 2019; Collins et al., 2016) to disseminate blog content, bloggers can attract a wider audience, encourage social engagement, and potentially acquire more backlinks (Mladenović et al., 2022; Treem & Leonardi, 2016). Moreover, social media platforms provide an avenue for building

relationships with followers, fostering a sense of community (L. F. Pitt et al., 2011), and increasing the visibility and virality of blog posts (L. Bruni et al., 2012).

Furthermore, leveraging influencer collaborations and guest posting can enhance the blog's visibility (Luzón, 2018). By collaborating with influencers or experts in the field, bloggers can tap into their established audience and gain exposure to a larger demographic (Ojala, 2005). Similarly, guest posting on influential websites (Agarwal et al., 2008; Langner et al., 2013) within a niche can expand the blog's reach and build authority and credibility (Altin et al., 2023; Nurkasanah et al., 2022). For example, the American Library Association's Emerging Leaders Program has a blog that uses guest posts to increase user engagement and visibility (Barlow et al., 2013). Moreover, guest posts often include backlinks that can increase the blog's visibility and search engine rankings (Otero et al., 2014).

Monitoring and Analyzing Blog Performance with Analytical Tools

Monitoring and analyzing the performance of a blog is essential for understanding the impact of SEO strategies, identifying areas for improvement, and determining what content resonates with readers (D'Andrea et al., 2015). Web analytics tools such as Google Analytics provide detailed insights into blog performance (Pakkala et al., 2012), including user engagement metrics (Plaza, 2011), traffic sources (Prantl & Prantl, 2018), and keyword analysis (Shin et al., 2022). The metrics can help bloggers assess the efficacy of SEO strategies and optimize content to meet user needs better. Additionally, contextualizing data with other external factors can provide a more comprehensive view of blog performance. For example, understanding how competitors' content or related blogs influence user engagement (Tafesse & Dayan, 2023) can provide useful insights into what type of content to produce (R. Liu & Suh, 2017).

While there are various analytic tools, such as SEMrush and Ahrefs, bloggers use Google Analytics as the primary tool for measuring and analyzing blog performance (Nakatani & Chuang, 2011). Google Analytics, a free software, allows bloggers to track a variety of metrics, such as page views, time spent on the blog (Davis et al., 2019), bounce rate (Poulos et al., 2020), user engagement (De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020), and return visitor rate (D. Clark et al., 2014). Additionally, it provides detailed reports that assess the performance of individual blog posts and helps bloggers understand their audiences (Alhlou et al., 2016). Google Analytics also allows bloggers to track how users interact with content, providing valuable insights into user behavior (Barba et al., 2013). Using this data to optimize content continually, bloggers can improve their blog's visibility and search engine rankings.

The analytic tools allow bloggers to analyze the key metrics to measure blog performance (Madriz & Tejedor, 2020). Key metrics include traffic (Shema et al., 2014), engagement (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014), conversion (Roumeliotis et al., 2022), and audience (Hennig et al., 2013). Traffic metrics are important as they measure the number of blog users (Dolega et al., 2021). For example, bloggers can use traffic metrics to understand if their users visit through various channels, such as social media (Tran, 2017), organic results (Baye et al., 2016), or directly.

The engagement metric is also important as it measures how users interact with blog content and has significant financial implications for bloggers (Luo et al., 2012). Bloggers can use engagement metrics to understand user behavior on the blog, such as which posts are most popular (A. Singh et al., 2010). Furthermore, businesses can assess the effectiveness of their SEO practices using engagement measures, like eWOM (Hughes et al., 2019) and adjust content optimization accordingly (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

The conversion metric, supplied by the hosting site, is another key metric that bloggers track (V. Dhar & E. A. Chang, 2009). Conversion metrics measure the number of users who take a desired action, such as purchasing or subscribing to a newsletter (A. Kumar, 2021). By tracking conversion metrics, bloggers can understand how successful their SEO strategies are and optimize content accordingly (P. Lee et al., 2021). Additionally, the conversion metric is important for sponsored content as it helps bloggers understand their campaigns' effectiveness (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019).

The audience metric is another important tool as it measures the type of individuals visiting the blog (Eysenbach, 2009). The metrics relating to the audience feature demographic details like age, gender, and the readers' geographic location (Tandoc, 2014). This information allows bloggers to understand their readers better so bloggers can tailor content and marketing strategies to their readers' interests (McQuarrie et al., 2013). By leveraging these metrics, bloggers can gain insights into how successful their SEO strategies are and the type of content that resonates with users. Furthermore, bloggers can use this data to optimize content for better search engine rankings and user engagement (Turban et al., 2015)

Bloggers can use analytic tools to assess the efficacy of SEO strategies (Saura et al., 2017), identify areas for improvement (Schmidt, 2007), and determine what content resonates with readers (Du & Wagner, 2006). Additionally, understanding how competitors or related blogs influence user engagement can inform content creation (Sinha et al., 2011). Bloggers can maximize their online visibility by optimizing blog performance using analytics tools and other key metrics.

Monetization and Blogging as a Business

Monetization has emerged as a key aspect of blogging (S. Müller et al., 2011; Stoldt et al., 2019), transforming it from a hobby or creative outlet into a viable business venture for many individuals (Brydges & Sjöholm, 2018). As the blogging industry continues to evolve (Goldstein, 2009), bloggers are increasingly exploring different revenue streams to monetize their platforms effectively (C. Zhao, Z. Liu & C. Zhang, 2023). As such, the strategies that focus on monetization have become more sophisticated and multifaceted (J. Li & Zhao, 2021).

Critical Success Factors for Monetization

Previous research conducted by Du and Wagner (2006) discussed the success characteristics from a technological standpoint. The study evaluated the influence of technological applications across 126 blogs selected from Technorati's highest-rated hundred listings. The criterion for assessing success was determined by the number of inbound links directed toward a specific weblog. In another study conducted by Safran and Kappe (2008), the researchers examined several elements, including engagement activities, the frequency of posting, the utilization of images, the exchange of comments, and giving and receiving guestbooks. They concluded that active participation within the blogging community emerges as the most vital factor for success in blogging.

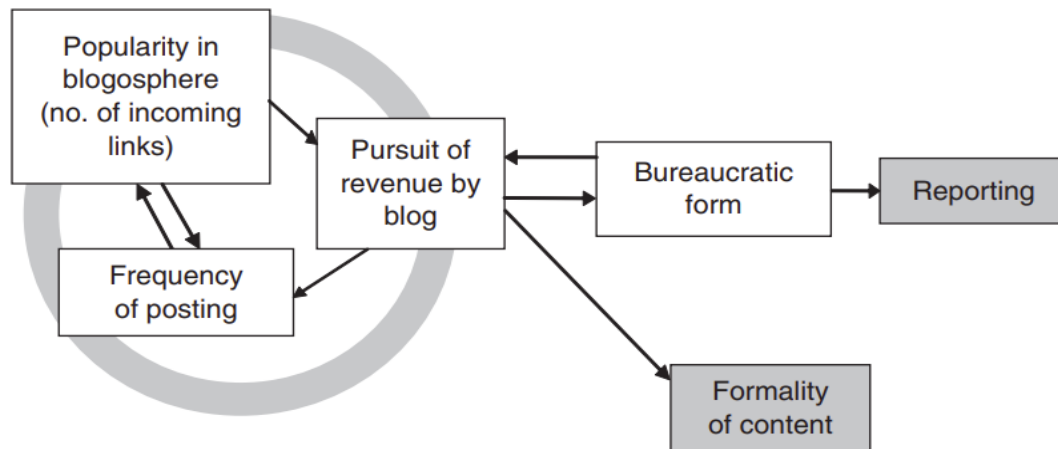
S. Müller et al. (2011) examined popular monetization techniques to determine the most successful form for monetizing blogs. Their research showed that advertising is the most common method, allowing bloggers to earn a steady income from their content. Different monetization strategies are more widely used in the different categories of blogs depending on their respective niches. For example, In the fashion and lifestyle blog niche, bloggers tend to use three different methods to monetize:

1. Inbound marketing,
2. product brand sales, and
3. affiliated marketing (Armstrong & McDowell, 2018; Pedroni, 2022; Stankeviciute, 2012).

A study by Lowrey et al. (2011) examined the relationship between various variables and their influence on bloggers. The results indicate an interconnection between the pursuit of revenue, popularity, and posting frequency. The relationship suggests a cyclical pattern wherein greater prominence in the blogosphere leads to increased advertising opportunities, subsequently enabling more productive posting, drawing greater attention to the site, and ranking for higher authority (D. K. Sharma & Sharma, 2010)—ultimately reinforcing its prominence and attracting further advertising for revenue growth (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Revenue Cycle



Note. Adapted from Lowrey, W., Parrott, S., & Meade, T. (2011). When blogs become organizations. *Journalism*, 12(3), 243-259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884910387994>

Different Revenue Streams for Bloggers

Bloggers, much like social media influencers, generate income from various sources, such as advertising (Helm & Jones, 2016); affiliate marketing (Gretzel, 2017); sponsored content (Mutum & Ghazali, 2013); and product sales (Liming, 2012). These revenue streams provide a diverse range of opportunities for bloggers to monetize their platforms and maximize their earnings (Frumkin & Keating, 2011). Advertising, affiliate marketing, sponsored content, and product sales are the main channels through which bloggers generate revenue (Guan, 2020). These multiple income streams offer bloggers the potential to earn money from various sources, enhancing their financial prospects.

Advertising Revenue. A prevalent model in the blogging industry involves revenue generation through various advertising models such as display ads, native ads, and video ads (Onishi & Manchanda, 2012). While ad networks like Google AdSense and Media.net handle the distribution of these ads, bloggers do have some degree of control over the placement and types of ads that appear on their sites, allowing for customization by their content and audience preferences (Fox et al., 2009). Advertising revenue typically depend on the traffic volume or interaction they can garner (Windels et al., 2018). Display ads are visual banners embedded within the blog pages, while native ads are seamlessly integrated into the blog content, appearing less intrusive to the reader (De Keyzer et al., 2021). Video ads, on the other hand, usually autoplay before, during, or after video content hosted on the blog (Bruce et al., 2023). Ad networks and platforms like Google AdSense and Media.net aggregate ads from advertisers and distribute them across their network of blogs, thereby providing a steady source of ads for bloggers (Shareef, 2021; Soegoto & Semesta, 2018).

Affiliate Marketing. The concept of affiliate marketing entails promoting products or services of other businesses on one's blog (Syrdal et al., 2023). When a purchase is made through the blogger's referral link, they receive a commission (Snyder & Kanich, 2016). This model is particularly lucrative when there's a strong alignment between the blog's content and the affiliate product or service (Abdelhady et al., 2020). Popular affiliate programs include Amazon Associates and CJ Affiliate (Kaur, 2018), providing bloggers with various products and services tailored to their niche (Damnjanovic, 2020).

Sponsored Content. Utilizing sponsored content, bloggers can craft tailored posts that promote a specific product or service, effectively generating revenue (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). This symbiotic relationship allows brands to tap into the blogger's audience while bloggers earn from their creative efforts (De Vries et al., 2012; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). However, transparency is crucial. Sponsored posts should be indicated to maintain trust with the readership (Wellman et al., 2020). Moreover, the challenge lies in maintaining authenticity while meeting the brand's promotional expectations (S. S. Lee & Johnson, 2021). Bloggers are responsible for maintaining authenticity by crafting content that aligns with their unique voice and perspective while accurately representing the brand's offerings (Wellman et al., 2020).

Product Sales. Selling one's products, such as e-books, courses, or merchandise, offers another viable revenue stream for bloggers (Lambrecht et al., 2014). This approach leverages the blogger's expertise and the trust they've built with their audience (L. Zhou et al., 2013). However, it requires a significant investment of time and money in product development, marketing, and customer service (Khamis et al., 2016; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). The success of this model depends largely on the quality of the product and its relevance to the blog's audience. Platforms like Shopify and Gumroad can facilitate the selling process for a fee (Tola &

Marinova, 2022), offering tools for product listing, payment processing, and customer management (Martin, 2017).

Affiliate Marketing and Sponsored Content

Affiliate marketing can be conceptualized as a performance-based marketing strategy that capitalizes on the synergies between three entities:

1. The affiliate, referred to as the publisher in certain instances,
2. the merchant, and
3. the affiliate network (D. L. Duffy, 2005).

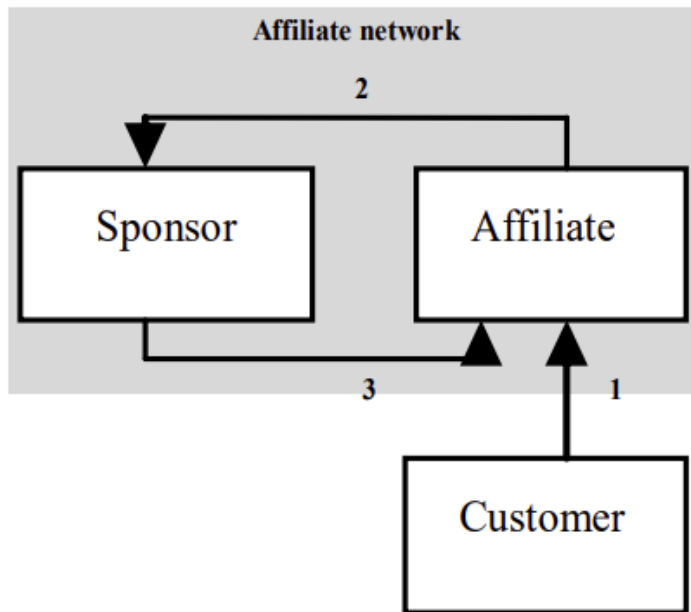
It involves establishing agreements between the affiliate and the affiliate network and between the affiliate and merchant. The schematic depiction in Figure 3 explains the operational framework of affiliate marketing, which commonly unfolds in the following manner (Mazurek & Kucia, 2011):

1. The initial phase of affiliate marketing involves persuading prospective customers to engage with the affiliate's web platform. This phase often requires strategic content development and targeted marketing efforts to attract the desired audience segment.
2. Subsequently, the customer is redirected to the sponsor's website, where they are expected to perform a specific action. This action could range from completing a purchase transaction to filling out a form or registering an email address. The precise nature of this action is typically predefined and forms the basis for commission calculation.
3. Lastly, the affiliate is reimbursed based on the value of the completed transactions or the number of predetermined actions executed by the customer. This compensation, often

referred to as a commission, serves as the primary incentive for the affiliate's promotional efforts.

Figure 3

Affiliate Network



Note. Adapted from Mazurek, G., & Kucia, M. (2011). Potential of affiliate marketing.

International Conference Management of Technological Changes, 7, 1-4.

The core principle of this model is rooted in the commission-based incentivization of the affiliates who undertake promotional activities for the advertiser's offerings (Kalyanam & McIntyre, 2002). This mutualistic relationship allows advertisers to extend their market reach and optimize their sales conversions while providing affiliates with a revenue stream proportional to their promotional efforts and success (Venugopal et al., 2013). Transparency, trust, and alignment of interests are key determinants of an efficacious affiliate marketing framework (Gregori & Daniele, 2011; Gupta & Aggarwal, 2019; Prabhu & Satpathy, 2015).

Transparency is important when blogging about affiliate marketing (Federal Trade Commission, 2020). For example, within the US, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has instituted guidelines that obligate content creators to disclose their affiliations with advertisers clearly and accurately (Federal Register, 2022). This directive emphasizes transparency in advertising, particularly when dealing with endorsements and testimonials (Bladow, 2018). The FTC mandates that any material relationship between the content creator and the advertiser, which could potentially influence the credibility or weight of an endorsement, must be disclosed (Federal Register, 2022). These connections may include financial or familial ties or receiving free products for review purposes.

Sponsored content, conversely, refers to material created and paid for by a third-party brand (Forrest & Cao, 2010). The content is typically crafted around the product or service of the sponsor and is featured on a blog or other online platform (Y. Chen & Xie, 2008). This form of advertising aims to influence the audience's perception and attitude toward the advertiser's offering (Zhu & Tan, 2007). The advertising could be achieved through various means, such as providing expert opinions or in-depth product reviews (Boerman et al., 2018; N. J. Evans et al., 2022; Van der Goot et al., 2021).

Bloggers' primary challenge when dealing with sponsored content is ensuring their credibility and trustworthiness are not compromised (Gomes et al., 2022; Hudders et al., 2021). A compromised situation can transpire if a blogger, for instance, readily agrees to promote a product that they normally wouldn't use or something that does not fit within the blogger's community, solely because of an attractive sponsorship deal (Wellman et al., 2020). This could lead to a perceived lack of authenticity among their audience and consequently, a loss of trust and credibility (Abidin & Ots, 2016a). Maintaining their credibility and trustworthiness requires

maintaining a delicate balance between meeting the sponsor's expectations and preserving the integrity of their blog. Wellman et al. (2020) argue that individuals who have sponsored content should use authenticity as a guideline, as authenticity involves balancing the need to earn income through brand partnerships with the desire to maintain a genuine connection with their audience (L. Huang, 2014).

Building Partnerships and Collaborations with Brands

Building partnerships and collaborations with brands and other bloggers is important to gain exposure and grow a blog (Delisle & Parmentier, 2016; B. E. Duffy & Hund, 2015; Haven-Tang & Sedgley, 2014). Gaining exposure is also important as bloggers with a following are considered human brands (Erz & Heeris Christensen, 2018). The partnerships can take various forms, such as guest posts on other blogs (Byington, 2011), joint projects with brands (F. F. Leung et al., 2022), or setting up an influencer network (Gannon & Prothero, 2018). However, it is important to identify brands that align with the blog's niche and values (Abidin & Ots, 2016b; Son et al., 2017; Stoldt et al., 2019). Thus, strategies for finding brands include analyzing competitor blogs (Cox et al., 2008), researching and testing products related to their niches (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2016), and utilizing social media platforms to discover brands that resonate with the target audience (D. Leung et al., 2013).

Bloggers can negotiate and structure their brand partnerships to best suit their needs (Abidin & Ots, 2016b; Long & Wilhoit, 2018). The negotiation could include setting specific goals and timelines and deciding on the nature of the collaboration (Gannon & Prothero, 2018). For example, a brand may offer free products for review or promotional services in exchange for sponsored content (McClain & Mears, 2012). Alternatively, bloggers can negotiate payment terms with the brands directly based on their experience and expertise (Stoldt et al., 2019).

Hiring a lawyer to draft a contract to protect their interests and ensure that any commitments made by the brand are fulfilled is also recommended (Keller, 2013; Sebenius et al., 2021).

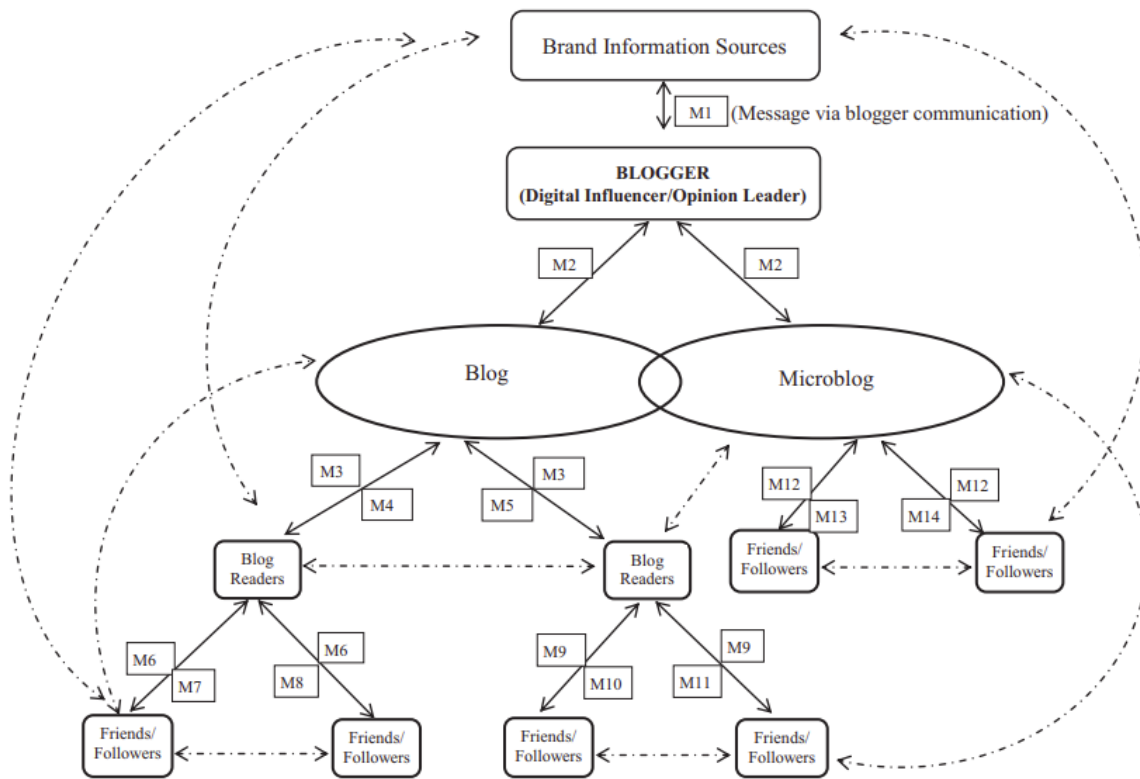
Developing compelling and mutually beneficial collaborations requires careful planning and creativity (Hugh et al., 2022; Ngai et al., 2015). There are multiple strategies that bloggers can use to integrate the brand's offerings into their content organically and authentically (J. Müller & Christandl, 2019). For example, bloggers can create sponsored content by discussing their personal experiences with the product or service (Lou & Yuan, 2019), providing informative tutorials to demonstrate how to use the product (Sabate et al., 2014), or creating a sponsored series highlighting the brand's offerings (Paintsil & Kim, 2021).

Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014) proposed a model highlighting the strategic approach by which brands can effectively engage with bloggers to bolster brand awareness in online communities. The researchers used Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) two-flow theory, which suggests that opinion leaders have a significant role in spreading information from the media to the public. The individuals actively interpret the received media message and subsequently share their insights with others, amplifying the overall impact and reach of the information within their social networks. Consequently, bloggers are an intermediary, bridging the gap between businesses and consumers by sharing their experiences with brands, products, and services. A noteworthy example of bloggers functioning as intermediaries between businesses and consumers is the collaboration between the fashion blogger Chiara Ferragni and the luxury Italian brand Tod's (Bazaki & Wanick, 2023). Ferragni utilized her blog, 'The Blonde Salad,' to introduce her followers to a new shoe collection from Tod's, sharing her personal experiences with the products and effectively driving traffic and sales towards the brand. The model Uzunoğlu and

Kip (2014) developed (see Figure 4) illustrates how organizations can use bloggers to engage with online communities and amplify their brand awareness.

Figure 4

Brand Communication Through Digital Influencers Model



Note. Adapted from Uzunoğlu, E., & Kip, S. M. (2014). Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging blogger engagement. *International Journal of Information Management*, 34(5), 592-602. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2014.04.007>.

Despite the potential benefits, brand collaborations are not without their risks. Ugglä and Åsberg (2010) delineated five associated risk factors that could impact all participating entities. The first risk involves the potential loss of control over brand associations, which can compromise the integrity of the brand's identity (S. Lee & Kim, 2020). Secondly, there is a

threat of losing control and focus on target demographics (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2013), which can dilute the effectiveness of marketing strategies (Gensler et al., 2013). The third risk is the potential dilution of a brand image due to overexposure (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014), leading to brand fatigue among consumers (Brown, 2014; K. Zhang & Hung, 2020). Fourth, a risk exists of one brand within the alliance becoming genericized, reducing its distinctiveness and competitive advantage (Hosseini et al., 2018). Lastly, future leverage points for the brands involved may be diminished, limiting their strategic options in the future (Tse et al., 2023)

Building a Personal Brand

Building a personal brand as a blogger is an important component of achieving success (Whitmer, 2020). Building a personal brand involves developing an identity or persona that can be used to create content and connect with the target audience. Creating a unique personal brand requires understanding the readers' needs and crafting content aligned with those expectations (B. E. Duffy & Hund, 2015). Furthermore, this phenomenon establishes bloggers as trustworthy, credible, and expertly reputable personal brands. Thus fostering opportunities for business engagements and creating a cohesive community of devoted followers.

Bloggers' creation and establishment of a personal brand involve many strategies, each contributing to the blogger's distinct identity and appeal (S. Chu & Kamal, 2008). The methods can be grouped into several key areas: self-branding (Lopes, 2021), content creation (Meisner & Ledbetter, 2020), social media utilization (Harris & Rae, 2011), and audience interaction (Blyth et al., 2022). Self-branding is crucial, allowing bloggers to define their unique identity and differentiate themselves from others in the blogosphere (Curran & Jenks, 2022). Self-branding involves the careful crafting of an online persona that aligns with the blogger's goals and values.

As highlighted by Rangarajan et al. (2017), bloggers often begin by outlining their personal history and mission, laying the foundation for their brand.

The process of self-branding, while pivotal, can sometimes go awry, leading to reputational damage or loss of credibility (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). This can occur when the blogger's online persona and real life are in stark contrast, a scenario that can rapidly unravel if the truth comes to light (Khamis et al., 2016). An example is Belle Gibson, a wellness blogger who crafted a personal brand around her story of beating cancer through healthy eating (S. A. Baker & Rojek, 2019). However, in 2015, it was revealed that she had never had cancer to begin with. This revelation ended her career as a blogger and resulted in a hefty fine for misleading her audience.

Content creation is another pivotal aspect. Jacobson (2020) finds that bloggers often develop content strategically, such as attending brand-sponsored events, to improve their brand image. Additionally, bloggers aspire to establish networks of individuals who share similar personal narratives, thus facilitating connections based on relatability and fostering meaningful relationships (Kozinets et al., 2010). The bloggers use the connections to demonstrate their status and expertise, which may give their readership opportunities for business connections and marketing productions (Boepple & Thompson, 2014; Denveater, 2009).

In addition to self-branding and content creation, social media utilization is an important component of a successful blog (Thevenot, 2007). Brems et al. (2016) delve into the strategies employed by bloggers to enhance their online presence and solidify their brand identity, particularly through platforms such as Twitter. The researchers demonstrate how digital avenues serve as channels for content distribution, tools for audience expansion, and brand reinforcement. Moreover, Page (2012) underscores the significance of utilizing hashtags and metatags within

social media platforms, asserting that such techniques can amplify visibility and foster greater audience engagement.

Audience interaction in blogging is another important aspect of personal brand creation (Shutaleva et al., 2022). It is an essential element that bloggers should prioritize to foster meaningful relationships with their readers, thereby cultivating a sense of loyalty and trust (Chai et al., 2011). Engaging with the readers involves responding to comments or creating content based on reader suggestions (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Labrecque et al. (2011) further emphasize the need for a feedback loop in personal branding strategies, suggesting that bloggers continually assess the effectiveness of their engagement methods to refine their approach and better meet their audience's needs. Bloggers use feedback loops to improve their content and understand their audience's preferences and expectations, thus increasing reader satisfaction and retention.

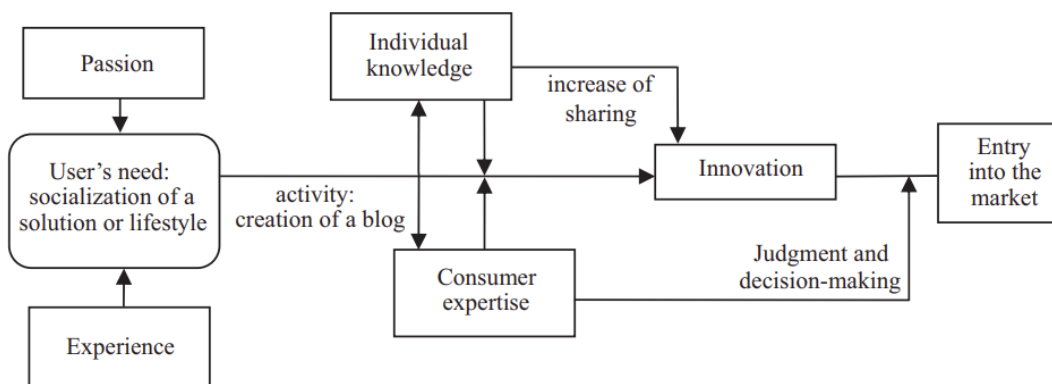
A study by Cuomo et al. (2017) sought to understand the traits of food bloggers. The researchers' findings indicate that, when viewed through an entrepreneurial lens, food bloggers who actively interact with their followers and foster communication within their community tend to achieve higher levels of success. Figure 5 illustrates a virtuous circle that exhibits the potential for enhancing the end-user experience within the domain of food blogging. As such, the findings suggest that bloggers who want to interact with their audience should use passion, experience, and sharing when writing their content and engaging with their audience.

Blogs are inherently interactive, providing a personalized and engaging experience allowing real-time interactions between bloggers and their readers (H. Chung & Ahn, 2013). Immediacy allows for an authentic connection with the community, which is essential to creating a successful blog. This quality is significant in contemporary business contexts (Villagra et al., 2021). Notably, networking serves as a vital conduit for accessing and manifesting social

support, as bloggers attentively peruse comments and offer responses, thereby forging closer connections with readers and fellow bloggers (Jung et al., 2012).

Figure 5

A Virtuous Circle in the Entrepreneurial Process of Food Bloggers



Note. Adapted from Cuomo, M. T., Tortora, D., Festa, G., Giordano, A., & Metallo, G. (2017).

Enablers for end-user entrepreneurship: An investigation on Italian food bloggers. *Psychology & Marketing*, 34(12), 1109-1118. Copyright by Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Legal Considerations

For bloggers to successfully manage and run successful blogs, they must be aware of the applicable laws and regulations (Boerman et al., 2018; Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006; Mohamed, 2015; Ribstein, 2006). Bloggers must adhere to legal requirements and best practices regarding disclosure (C. Campbell & Grimm, 2018; Esarey & Qiang, 2011; Khuong, 2017). In the United States, the FTC issued guidelines on disclosure requirements for endorsements and testimonials in 2009 (Y. J. Chung et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2020; Xie & Feng, 2022). Other countries, such as Canada and the United Kingdom, have adopted similar regulations (Kerr et al., 2012; Hintz, 2013; Small, 2011).

Other countries, such as Tanzania, have set forth regulations that require individuals and businesses to apply for a license to be authorized as online content providers (John, 2019). The Tanzania Electronic and Postal Communications Act of 2020 requires bloggers to adhere to standards of professional ethics and accuracy in their content (Makulilo, 2020; Parks & Thompson, 2020). Furthermore, the Act prohibits deceptive or misleading online activities, such as false claims about a product or service (Simiyu, 2022). Failure to adhere to the aforementioned guidelines can result in legal repercussions (Bebia & Mallya, 2022), underlining the seriousness of these regulations in protecting fair business practices and consumer interests.

Additionally, Australia's Competition and Consumer Act (ACCA) of 2010 also includes regulations on misleading and deceptive conduct about online content (Competition and Consumer Act, 2010). This Act aims to promote fair trading and protect consumers from false or misleading information that may lead to them making uninformed decisions. Additionally, the ACCA requires that any sponsored content be clearly identified, with severe penalties for those failing to comply (C. Campbell & Grimm, 2018).

Copyright laws and intellectual property are also relevant in blogging as they play a crucial role in protecting the original creative works of bloggers (Kent, 2008). Countries have different copyright and intellectual property regulations, but they all provide some level of protection for creators (Farrall, 2012; Mejias & Vokuev, 2017; Rakha, 2023; Shakhsari, 2011). For instance, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 was established to protect copyright holders from online infringement in the United States (Urban & Quilter, 2016). Similarly, the European Union introduced the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, which outlines how copyright should be protected and enforced within EU member states (EUR-Lex, 2019).

Bloggers who wish to leverage their content to generate income must know the applicable copyright laws and regulations to protect their work and ensure they are compensated accordingly (Ahmad et al., 2011). For example, Creative Commons licenses allow creators to choose the terms of use for their works and are another avenue that bloggers can utilize if they wish to monetize their content (Powell et al., 2011). Also, bloggers must be cognizant of potential conflicts of interest when engaging in brand partnerships (Sah et al., 2018) or other collaborations (Cress & Kimmerle, 2008; Franzoni & Sauermann, 2012).

Privacy and data protection is an important aspect of blogging, and bloggers should prioritize the privacy and data protection of their users in compliance with relevant privacy laws (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2010; Child et al., 2011; López & Sebé, 2013). Understanding the legal obligations under laws like the General Data Protection Regulation (European Union, 2022) and the California Online Privacy Protection Act (California Legislative Information, n.d.) is essential for bloggers collecting user data. As such, bloggers should guide on implementing privacy policies informing users about data collection, processing, storage, and third-party sharing practices (K. Li et al., 2015; Robinson, 2017). Obtaining explicit user consent for data collection and offering opt-out mechanisms are fundamental to ensuring compliance and protecting user privacy (K. M. Jones, 2019). Failure to comply with privacy laws can result in severe penalties, damage to the blogger's reputation, and potential legal consequences (Lageson, 2020).

Time Management and Organization

Time management and organization are essential to successful blog management (Rittenberry, 2006). Bloggers face various challenges, such as time constraints, ethical issues, privacy concerns, overwhelming workload, and lack of proper skills, in effectively managing

their time and resources while maintaining the quality and consistency of their content (Gelber, 2011). Efficient time management enables bloggers to optimize productivity, meet deadlines, and allocate sufficient attention to the diverse tasks of running a blog (Mustafa et al., 2015).

Furthermore, effective organization strategies, such as content planning and editorial calendars, contribute to the smooth flow of content creation and publication (Lowrey et al., 2011).

Challenges in Managing and Running a Successful Blog

Bloggers must navigate a myriad of obstacles to maintain the success of their blogs (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013; Parnin et al., 2013). While different types of bloggers face their unique challenges, such as librarian bloggers who face self-presentation and identity, ethical issues, readership, and privacy (Belden, 2009; Greenland, 2013), there are some overlaps in the issues that they all face. The challenges include lacking the proper skills and dispositions (McQuarrie et al., 2013), desperation for validation leading to negative content (Orton-Johnson, 2017), failure to generate a community (Nardi et al., 2004), or multitasking (McEnnis, 2015). Other professions, such as science bloggers face other challenges as their content could be too complex for the average reader (Ranger & Bultitude, 2014). Additionally, science bloggers, and bloggers in general, have challenges with funding and treat it as a hobby rather than a source of income (de Zúñiga et al., 2011).

The overwhelming workload (Kian et al., 2011) and the need for multitasking are the primary challenges bloggers face (McKenna, 2007). Additionally, most bloggers have full-time jobs while running their blogs, making it difficult to dedicate enough time and energy to maintaining the blog's quality consistently (Armstrong & McDowell, 2018). The workload involves handling various aspects of the blog, such as content creation (A. T. Weinstein & McFarlane, 2017), promotion (Y. Li et al., 2011), engagement with the audience (Garden, 2014;

Luzón, 2013), and administrative tasks like managing comments (Viégas, 2006), responding to emails (Hendry, 2022), and website maintenance (Kirkup, 2010; Moore & Clayton, 2009).

Furthermore, bloggers must also be aware of the latest trends in their field to remain relevant and competitive (Halvorsen et al., 2013). Multitasking necessitates effective organization strategies and understanding time management techniques to manage the workload efficiently (Aeon et al., 2021).

Time constraints and competing priorities (Bar-Ilan, 2005) are additional challenge bloggers face (Domingo, 2008). While blogging can be a highly rewarding experience (H. Y. Hsu & Tsou, 2011), it also requires significant dedication (Kohnen, 2019), with most successful bloggers spending up to several hours per day managing their blogs (T. M. Chan et al., 2018). In addition, the need to balance their blogging responsibilities with other personal and professional commitments, such as full-time jobs, family obligations, or educational pursuits (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2020), can hinder their ability to dedicate sufficient amounts of time towards the blog (Zeman et al., 2011). Limited time availability adds pressure and necessitates efficient time management to ensure the successful execution of blogging tasks (Morrison, 2011).

Strategies for Effective Time Management

Effective blog management necessitates a strong emphasis on time management (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Bloggers must optimize their time utilization to fulfill all pertinent tasks and maintain an elevated level of productivity (Lövheim, 2013). They can employ various strategies such as establishing monetization strategies (De Perthuis, 2015), prioritizing tasks based on importance (Burmeister, 2008), delegating duties to other members of the team (Carter, 2017), and hiring virtual assistants to help with tasks, such as content creation (Thackston &

Umphress, 2013). Modern technological tools like project management software can help with tasks (D. Pan et al., 2011).

Delegation and outsourcing are important for bloggers as many hire professionals to help with tasks such as content generation, graphic design, website development, and maintenance (Y. G. Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017). Outsourcing is an effective strategy for bloggers who lack the time or resources to devote sufficient attention to certain blog tasks (Agburu et al., 2017). For example, outsourcing blog writing to copywriters can help maintain the quality and consistency of blog content (Kesteven & Melrose, 2022). Additionally, digital tools such as scheduling software or online task managers, such as *Asana* or *Trello* (H. A. Johnson, 2017), are other effective strategies for bloggers who need help managing their workflow.

Moreover, bloggers use automation to streamline their blog management processes, reducing manual effort and enhancing overall efficiency (Rainer & Williams, 2018). For instance, automation tools such as Hootsuite (Kelsey, 2017) can be employed to automate the scheduling of blog posts (Patel et al., 2011) and email marketing (Bernstein & Wolfram-Hvass, 2015). Furthermore, blogging software such as WordPress (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013) and Wix (Barker, 2016) are effective tools for simplifying content management processes and improving efficiency.

Additionally, automation tools help enhance bloggers' email marketing strategies to engage their readers and amplify their content (Philipp, 2023). The tools facilitate the dispatch of personalized emails tailored to resonate with each reader's preferences and interests (Sahni et al., 2018). Moreover, the tools enable market segmentation of customers based on their unique preferences and interests (Desai, 2019), ensuring that the content delivered is relevant and captivating (Mazzarol, 2015). In addition to personalized outreach efforts, automation tools

provide the capability to track the performance of marketing campaigns through the measurement of key metrics, such as open rates (Mero et al., 2020) and click-through rates (Lorente-Páramo et al., 2020). The data-driven approach allows for constantly refining and optimizing email marketing strategies based on quantifiable feedback (Füller, 2010; L. Wilson, 2019).

Gaps in the Literature

While considerable research has been carried out on certain aspects of blogging, there are several gaps in the literature discussing best practices for successful blogging. First, while much attention has been paid to bloggers' use of SEO tools for keyword research, there is less research on how bloggers are using the tools (Tolica et al., 2017). For example, there is scant literature on the best practices, strategies, and tactics bloggers use to maximize their SEO efforts (Cahill & Chalut, 2009; Papagiannis, 2020). Most of the research explores suggestions for using SEO tools and backlinks. Still, those strategies take time to do extensive keyword research and identify websites, social media sites, and other sources to link back to (M. N. Khan & Mahmood, 2018).

Secondly, there is a gap in the literature regarding the traits and characteristics of successful bloggers and the skills and traits that overlap from different niches. Research like the study by Cuomo et al. (2017) has centered on food bloggers. Bowen and Bowen (2021) focused on the characteristics of fashion bloggers and how they differentiate themselves from other bloggers. However, there is a need for research to understand the commonalities and differences across various blog niches, like fashion, travel, tech, or lifestyle. Bloggers in different niches may employ varying strategies for success, and identifying these patterns could provide valuable insights (McRae, 2017).

Thirdly, the literature has yet to adequately address the changing digital landscape and how it impacts the way bloggers operate (Ghose & Yang, 2008). Many studies were conducted when blogging was a relatively new phenomenon, and businesses first noted the influence blogs had on consumer behavior (H. Chung & Ahn, 2013; Jung et al., 2012). As the digital space evolves, there is a need for up-to-date research that considers advancements in technology such as artificial intelligence, shifts in consumer behavior due to new social media platforms and new purchasing generations coming of age, and the effect of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic (Fraumann & Colavizza, 2022) and conflicts between nations on blogging practices (Suslov, 2014).

Lastly, the current literature lacks an understanding and studies on how bloggers successfully manage their teams, such as virtual assistants, copywriters, editors, or graphic designers. Many bloggers rely on these professionals to help them manage their blog and social media accounts (Stoldt et al., 2019). Still, there is scant literature on what strategies they use to train and manage their teams, how they delegate tasks, or how they measure success. Understanding the dynamics between bloggers and their teams could lead to more efficient and effective workflows, resulting in enhanced productivity for successful bloggers. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of foundational literature, detailing the attributes and motivations of bloggers as identified in key scholarly works.

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter two extensively examines current literature on effective blogging, aiming to establish a foundational understanding of the key principles behind successful blogging practices. The literature review first identified the history trajectory of the blogging industry. Next, it discusses blogging behavior and the motivations behind why bloggers continue to create

content. It also discusses how individuals use blogs as a personal communication resource and how businesses use them to communicate with their target audience.

Table 1

Summary of key literature on blogger characteristics and intention

	Source	Topic	Method	Key Findings
1	Nardi et al. (2004)	Motivations of bloggers	Empirical	A diverse set of motivations drives blogging. It serves as a platform for a multitude of purposes, from the impromptu expression of emotions to facilitating group cooperation and fostering a sense of community.
2	Du & Wagner (2006)	Success in weblogs	Empirical	The findings imply that the success of a blog is connected to the blogging tool used, with the characteristics of the technology affecting how content is presented and how bloggers interact. This subsequently influences the blog's popularity. Additionally, a techno-social model for blog success is recommended, arguing that the worth of a blog to its users and readers at content, technology, and asocial levels primarily dictates its success.
3	Miura & Yamashita (2007)	The intention of blog use	Empirical	Personal benefits, relationship building, and information management skills significantly influence the intent to continue using blogs.
4	Lu & Hsiao (2007)	Behavioral motivations	Empirical	Findings suggest that self-efficacy and personal outcome expectations influence the intent to disseminate blog information. Researchers also found that personal outcomes have a stronger influence on motivational behaviors. Conversely, social persuasion indirectly shapes the intent to disseminate information.
5	Agarwal et al. (2008)	Blogger Characteristics	Qualitative Analysis	The findings provide a model to identify influential bloggers and provide characteristics for identifying influential bloggers.

(continued)

	Source	Topic	Method	Key Findings
6	Ekdale et al. (2010)	Motivations of bloggers	Empirical	Over time, motivations have shown a growth primarily in external factors. There's a correlation between online and offline political engagement driven by these extrinsic motivations.
7	Liao et al. (2011)	Motivations of bloggers	Empirical	The findings suggest that bloggers with greater intrinsic and extrinsic rewards display increased blogging intentions. Those with high blogging intentions are likelier to invest time in blog upkeep and post more frequently.
8	S. Wang & Lin (2011)	The intention of blog use	Empirical	The findings suggest that technical elements like information quality, system quality, and blog function quality positively impact bloggers' usage intention, with system quality being the most influential. Additionally, social influences sway bloggers' usage intention both directly and indirectly via blog platform qualities.
9	Ko (2012)	Popularity of bloggers	Empirical	On average, A-list bloggers post several articles per week. The blogs attract extensive traffic, with audience interaction bolstering the bloggers' credibility and social capital, thus creating potential revenue streams.
10	Pihl & Sandström (2013)	Strategies to create revenue by bloggers	Empirical	Findings suggest that bloggers enhance value via increased transaction efficiency, with fashion bloggers offering credible insights that aid customer decisions.
11	Uzunoğlu & Kip (2014)	Blogger communication	Empirical	The findings indicate that bloggers can foster communities based on shared interests and initiate dialogue with specific audiences. Influential bloggers are emerging as digital opinion leaders. Strategic communication from these bloggers could facilitate innovation diffusion, bolstering product launches and development adoption among their followers.

(continued)

	Source	Topic	Method	Key Findings
12	B. E. Duffy & Hund (2015)	Self-branding	Quantitative Analysis	Finds that the entrepreneurial femininity of female fashion bloggers is shown by bloggers who are passionate about their blogging work, glamorous lifestyles, and selective social sharing in their blogging conversations and engagements.
13	Pedroni (2015)	Career in Blogging	Empirical	Research provides steps to becoming a career blogger and discusses that viewing the blogosphere as an independent microcosm with unique laws is crucial.
14	S. Müller et al. (2011)	Blogging revenue streams	Empirical	Findings suggest that advertising is the most popular form of revenue stream by bloggers.
15	Stubb et al. (2019)	Investigate the effects of influencer product endorsements on consumer reactions.	Experiment	When people see a statement claiming fairness and then are taken directly to a page about a specific product instead of a general homepage, it doesn't seem to change their opinions about the brand or their willingness to buy as much. Whether this kind of fairness statement works depends greatly on how consumers view the information—specifically, if they think of it as an ad.
16	Schultheiß & Lewandowski, 2020	The impact of SEO on content visibility	Empirical	The research emphasizes the crucial role of SEO in enhancing content providers' visibility, leading to the development of dependencies between stakeholders, while revealing that users' limited awareness of SEO hinders their ability to accurately assess its impact, shaping their opinions based on their knowledge of the subject.
17	(Iqbal et al., 2022)	Key factors for better SERP	Empirical	Findings suggest that websites should use white hat SEO strategies to increase organic SERP longer than black hat SEO strategies.

(continued)

	Source	Topic	Method	Key Findings
18	Júnior et al. (2022)	Blogger communication	Empirical	The findings suggest that bloggers who employ storytelling can enhance brand identification, evoke emotional value, and foster engagement. However, they should be cautious, as storytelling can potentially encourage detrimental dialogue.

Note. This table provides a comprehensive overview of foundational literature, detailing the attributes and motivations of bloggers as identified in key scholarly works.

The different elements of content creation are also discussed. The literature illustrates how different writing styles and tones are used to engage the audience, how SEO techniques, such as keyword research and off- and on-page SEO strategies, can be used to optimize content for organic searches, and the usage of different marketing strategies to increase readership. Additionally, it discusses how bloggers are monetizing their blogs and transforming their hobbies into businesses.

Moreover, it identifies gaps in the literature when discussing best practices for successful blogging, such as using SEO tools efficiently, understanding traits across different niches, keeping up with the ever-changing digital landscape, and managing teams. In summary, the literature review provides important insights into how bloggers can create successful blogs by understanding their audience's needs and utilizing various content strategies to engage them. Furthermore, it identifies emerging topics from the gap in the literature for future research that may contribute to furthering our understanding of blogging behaviors and trends.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 describes the study's methods utilized to explore the strategies for managing and sustaining successful blogs, along with facilitating the creation of a framework to comprehend essential concepts related to successful blogging. This chapter explains the significance of the study and offers a summary of its research questions. Additionally, this chapter extensively explores the qualitative method using a phenomenological approach, scrutinizing its suitability for this research. The focus is placed on evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the method, which is succeeded by an in-depth examination of the research design. Furthermore, the chapter examines the study's validity and reliability, participant selection, human subject protection, personal biases, and data analysis.

Restatement of the Research Question

In the online world, bloggers provide a distinctive and influential voice that extends its impact beyond individual blogs and into collective conversations, communities, networks, and movements (Agarwal et al., 2008, 2011). The objective of the research is to identify the most effective methods and approaches for managing and maintaining successful blogs. A successful blog resembles a successful small business because it involves an entrepreneurial mindset and vision, a keen understanding of audience needs, and the ability to use technology innovatively (Lowrey et al., 2011). However, a literature review highlights the lack of competencies bloggers need to manage a team and run a blog successfully. As such, this research explores the successful strategies bloggers need to manage and operate successful blogs. Additionally, the study aims to establish a framework to help comprehend the fundamental concepts of successful blogging.

Research Questions

This section outlines the methodological approach to address these four research questions.

- RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?
- RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?

The principal research questions guide the data collection for this phenomenological study. These inquiries are deliberately extensive to ensure the interview responses are not manipulated or constrained. The objective is to facilitate participants in articulating their subjective understanding of occurrences without reservation. The research questions are constructed to be open-ended, aiming to emulate conversational interaction as closely as possible. Much like discourse contributes to creating meaning; open-ended questions serve a similar function. Consequently, the questions are purposely composed in an open-ended format (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research involves an inductive, exploratory approach, inquiring into more complex and subjective topics like individuals' feelings, values, beliefs, and behaviors (Tjora, 2018). It allows the researcher to understand a participant's life context and establish the subjective meaning attributed to particular phenomena (Neubauer et al., 2019). Qualitative studies include phenomenology, a post-positivist approach that focuses on understanding how

individuals perceive events (Racher & Robinson, 2003). This study utilized the phenomenology method to investigate participants' experiences of blogging and their perceptions of successful blogging.

Assumptions of Qualitative Research

Kuhn (1962) introduced the concept of a *research paradigm* characterized as a collective understanding and consensus among researchers regarding the appropriate methodology for identifying and resolving scientific problems. Later, Guba and Lincoln (1994) broadened the scope of the term 'research paradigm' to encompass a worldview perspective that governs the ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises underpinning research investigations. Subsequently, Guba and Lincoln (2005) incorporated axiological assumptions into the components of research paradigms, thereby integrating values - about ethics, aesthetics, and religion - as a fundamental philosophical dimension of their paradigm proposal. Given their inherent value-oriented nature, axiological assumptions are important in numerous qualitative research investigations. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) expanded on the four assumptions, including rhetorical assumptions, which focus on applying language in qualitative research.

Choosing a qualitative research method, particularly phenomenology, aligns with the study's goal of exploring bloggers' distinct practices, experiences, and insights (Manen, 2016). Such a methodology allows for a deeper exploration of their subjective experiences, enabling a more profound understanding of the factors contributing to their success (Laverty, 2003). The choice of phenomenology, in particular, allows the study to grasp how bloggers perceive and interpret their experiences, offering valuable insights that can enrich the conceptual framework for understanding successful blogging practices.

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research represents a methodological approach that offers detailed and descriptive data to investigate the various dimensions of a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Its primary objective is to understand the complex social dynamics that cannot be easily measured or quantified. Using a qualitative research approach yields certain advantages. For example, they facilitate the generation of rich, detailed accounts of the participants' sentiments, viewpoints, and lived experiences (Denzin, 2001). Additionally, qualitative research possesses a versatile design that allows for significant construction and reconfiguration (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; J. A. Maxwell, 2012). Hence, qualitative research approaches can facilitate comprehensive and appropriate assessments of a problem, granting participants sufficient autonomy to identify consistencies within their specific circumstances (Lasch et al., 2010).

Weaknesses of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research comes with its own set of limitations. An example of this is the assertion made by Silverman (2021) that qualitative research methodologies often neglect the significance of contextual sensitivities, prioritizing the investigation of meanings and experiences. This propensity is particularly evident in phenomenological research, which seeks to delve into, interpret, and comprehend the participants' lived experiences (Prosek & Gibson, 2021)—furthermore, data interpretation and analysis in qualitative research present particular challenges. With the data collected, researchers must grapple with extracting and producing meaningful findings from the extended narratives of participants (Burman & Whelan, 2011). As such, researchers need to perform checks and balances when interpreting the data and avoid personal biases when making sense of the data (Mohajan, 2018).

Methodology

This study used a phenomenological approach to explore, describe, and interpret individuals' subjective experiences and perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). As a research approach, phenomenology aims to reveal the essence of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by individuals, offering a profound and detailed insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Van Manen, 2017). Phenomenology is suited to the study's objectives, aiming to understand the lived experiences of bloggers, including their strategies, challenges, criteria for success, and recommendations for those aspiring to blog.

Structured Process of Phenomenology

Creswell (2007) examined two different types of phenomenology approaches, which include hermeneutic (Van Manen, 1997) and transcendental (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand experiences through meaningful interpretations, while transcendental phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of lived experience (Creswell, 2007). This research aims to comprehend the optimal strategies bloggers employ for success, thus making the transcendental phenomenology approach appropriate for this objective. Moustakas (1994) delineates a sequence of actions that investigators employing phenomenological methodologies in their research ought to adhere to. The steps include the following (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Moustakas, 1994):

1. The researcher assesses the suitability of the phenomenological approach in addressing the research problem.
2. The researcher determines the phenomena to be studied.
3. The investigator will specify the study's assumptions and thoroughly explain them.
4. The researcher will interview people who have firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon.

5. The researcher will examine the data to uncover recurring themes among the participants' responses.
6. The researcher will generate descriptions that effectively represent the structure and textural of the results.
7. From the descriptions, the researcher will craft an illustration that outlines the core essence of the phenomena in question.

Appropriateness of Phenomenology Methodology

Selecting an appropriate research methodology is a critical decision in any research project. Neubauer et al. (2019) highlight that phenomenology focuses on exploring the lived experiences of individuals. Trace (2017) explained that phenomenology equips researchers with an ontological framework for ideal and real objects, thereby providing the investigator with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. Moreover, Ramstead (2014) argued that phenomenology provides researchers with an epistemological framework. This framework allows researchers to comprehend the subjective realities of individuals and their firsthand experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). The structure and texture of these experiences can then be effectively articulated as a rich, detailed account that is meaningful for both the researcher and the participant (Petitmengin et al., 2018).

The phenomenological approach was selected for this study to gain insight into the successful strategies employed by bloggers. Through the phenomenology method, the researcher can understand bloggers' lived experiences. In turn, it provided an in-depth appreciation of successful strategies bloggers use to achieve success.

Strengths of Phenomenology Methodology

Transcendental phenomenology brings multiple strengths to the research process. Firstly, it emphasizes the 'lived experiences' of individuals, allowing for a deep-dive exploration into the essence of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This approach offers a unique, first-person perspective on the phenomenon being studied, capturing the richness and depth of human experiences. It offers valuable insights into the subjectivity of human experience.

Secondly, the transcendental nature of this approach ensures that researchers bracket their preconceived notions, biases, and judgments during the investigation (Reiners, 2012). This process, known as *Epoché*, facilitates an unbiased, pure description of the phenomenon without the researcher's interference (Moustakas, 1994). It is particularly beneficial in research where subjectivity is central, allowing for new understanding and knowledge untainted by the researcher's biases. The ability to generate such unadulterated insights adds a layer of credibility and authenticity to the research findings, strengthening the validity and dependability of the study (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018).

Weakness of Phenomenology Method

While transcendental phenomenology has its strengths, it is not without its challenges. Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) provide an overview of the key limitations of phenomenology research design. Firstly, ensuring a seamless transition from individual significant statements to broader meaning units and ultimately to the essence description can be challenging. Additionally, there is a lack in the analysis process as it does not inherently include checks to guarantee a smooth flow from a specific statement to a theme, which, in essence, potentially leads to disruptions in the research process. Moreover, it is argued that achieving an unadulterated state of conscious awareness to perceive and experience phenomena, as required

by epoché (Moustakas, 1994), presents difficulties owing to the challenging nature of biases, presumptions, and individual experiences (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

To overcome these challenges, the researcher utilized interrater reliability and validity checks to ensure academic rigor in the research process (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). In addition, the data gathering and analysis stages incorporated bracketing and epoché techniques to guarantee the objectivity and reliability of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher also applied reflexivity when analyzing data to remain aware of personal biases that could interfere with the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Dodgson, 2019). Lastly, multiple interviews were conducted to increase the richness of data and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Overall, these strategies were expected to limit the impact of the weaknesses associated with phenomenology.

Research Design

This qualitative research study uses transcendental phenomenology, allowing the research to use in-depth interviews to understand successful bloggers' lived experiences. The research design was particularly suited to this research as it allowed for a deep exploration of the subjective experiences relating to blogging success (Yusof et al., 2014). As the principal data collection method, this approach employs semi-structured, open-ended interviews to facilitate participants in expressing their experiences through their perspectives.

Participants and Sampling

The research questions directed the participants and sample. This study focused on bloggers with years of experience in blogging and managing their teams within their respective niches. Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Yadav et al., 2019). This strategy enabled identifying participants with traits that coincide with the research objectives. The sample

size was determined by the recommended range from the literature of 15-20 participants (Bertaux, 1981; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Unit of Analysis

The analysis unit is determined to be an individual who owns and operates a blog, has over five years of industry experience, is over 18 years old, and has at least two employees or contractors. The term *own* defines individuals with administrative control, responsibility, and authorship rights over the blog's content, design, and functionality. It includes individuals who create, manage, and publish blog content or have a significant role in overseeing the blog's operations and content direction.

Population

The population for this study comprises established bloggers who meet the criteria outlined in the unit of analysis. These individuals operate within various niche markets, providing a broad perspective across the blogging industry. By focusing on bloggers with at least five years of experience and at least two employees or contractors, the study aims to gain insights from those who have navigated the challenges of blogging and achieved measurable success. The selection of this population is integral to the research aims, as it facilitates an understanding of successful blogging practices from those currently engaged in the field. The geographical location of the bloggers will not be a limiting factor, thus allowing for a diverse range of experiences and strategies applicable in different contexts and markets.

Sample Size

Vasileiou et al. (2018) argue that saturation is needed to determine a sample size. Yet, determining optimal sample sizes in qualitative research remains an issue, as many influencing factors exist. However, Guest et al. (2006) conducted research that indicated that while the

concept of saturation proves beneficial from a theoretical standpoint, it offers minimal practical assistance regarding pre-data collection estimation of sample sizes. They provide a literature review that discusses guidelines on sample sizes based on research methodology. For example, Creswell and Poth (2017) recommend 5 to 25 participants in a phenomenology design as a sample size. In contrast, Morse (1994) suggests a minimum of six as a sample size for a phenomenology research study. Additionally, Bertaux (1981) posits that all qualitative research methods require a minimum sample size of 15.

Generally, qualitative research studies' sample sizes are less extensive than quantitative studies (Levitt et al., 2018). Compared to quantitative research studies, qualitative studies do not use a multitude of participants to draw the richness of data. Instead, it is derived from the profound insights related to the phenomenon under investigation provided by the individual participants (Levitt et al., 2017). Hence, drawing from the literature, this study uses 15-20 participants for its sample size as it is within the recommended range and allows sufficient depth of analysis.

Purposive Sampling

Collecting data is essential in the research process, given its role in enhancing comprehension of a theoretical framework (Bernard, 2017). Thus, the way a researcher chooses the appropriate methods and sources for data collection with careful judgment cannot be overstated. Purposive sampling, or judgment sampling, is a method of non-probability sampling in which the selection of study participants is based on the researcher's judgment (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The selection of participants is based on their possession of relevant information and experience concerning the research topic (Abrams, 2010). In this respect, purposive sampling was considered an appropriate data collection strategy in phenomenological

studies as it allowed for direct access to individuals whose experiences are particularly relevant to the research questions.

Participant Selection

For this study, identifying potential participants was facilitated through a meticulously curated list, ensuring individuals meet specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process forms the basis for the development of a sampling frame. The focus of this frame was to encompass participants who possess lived experiences related to the research phenomenon under study.

Sampling Frame

A sampling frame comprises a list of prospective participants deemed appropriate for the research (Creswell, 2007). The researcher will look for participants in the blogging industry on two different social media platforms. The first platform is LinkedIn, a social media network focused on individuals, enabling users to establish professional relationships and develop their personal brand (Power, 2015). The researcher will search terms such as "Bloggers," "Copywriter," "Technical Writing," and "Content Strategy." The research will use LinkedIn's Premium Business plan to locate individuals who fulfill the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. Should the researcher not find individuals meeting all the criteria, other online networking sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr will be used.

Additionally, the researcher used Facebook to solicit participants from Facebook groups. Facebook groups allow members to join and participate in conversations about their interests (Castillo de Mesa & Gómez Jacinto, 2019). The researcher acquired written consent from the Facebook group owner to solicit individuals to take part in the study (see Appendix A). The researcher employed identical search keywords on LinkedIn to find possible subjects. The

researcher shared an invitation within the Facebook group, inviting individuals to engage in the study, as Appendix B describes. The message briefly describes the study, its objectives, the criteria for inclusion, and the details of how to participate. Those who wish to participate can comment on the post, and the researcher directly messages (DMs) them privately to collect their email and email them the participant recruitment script (see Appendix C) and the consent form (see Appendix D). Once a list of potential participants was generated, each participant was emailed a recruitment letter that explained the purpose and expectations of participating in the study (see Appendix C). If interested, the participant must respond with written consent before being included in the research.

Criteria for Inclusion. Participants are included in the research study if they meet the following criteria: (a) Individuals who own and operate a minimum of one blog; (b) possess at least five years of blogging experience in any niche, including but not limited to technology, health and wellness, travel, fashion, food and cooking, finance, parenting, sports, or entertainment; (c) have a minimum of two employees or two recurring contractors; (d) over the age of 18, and (e) express a willingness to partake in the study.

Criteria for Exclusion. The criteria for exclusion include (a) unavailable to participate in the Zoom interview within the designated data collection timeframe (February - March 2023), (b) has five years of experience but has not managed at least two employees or contractors within those five years, and (c) only has vlogs, and no written blog contents.

Criteria for Maximum Variation. The criteria for maximum variation will be implemented if more than 20 participants are willing to participate. The standards for achieving maximum variation will include (a) varying levels of experience in the blogging industry, (b)

varying ages, (c) varying geographical locations, and (d) the type of niches in the blogging industry.

Protection of Human Subjects

Safeguarding the welfare of human participants is paramount in research, a principle strongly advocated by the United States Department of Health and Human Subjects (Protection of Human Subjects, 2020). Responsibility for the protection of participants is entrusted to Institutional Review Boards (IRB), entities dedicated to overseeing research ethics. At Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology, adherence to the ethical guidelines established by the Graduate and Professional Schools IRB is fundamental. The university's IRB undertakes rigorous efforts to ensure the safety and dignity of participants and researchers (Pepperdine University, n.d.), with a focused commitment to upholding the rights and well-being of individuals engaged in research activities.

Additionally, the IRB at Pepperdine University aims to ensure adherence to federal and state laws, university policies, and national norms concerning human subjects research (Pepperdine University, n.d.). The IRBs provide valuable support through timely and focused education, thorough review processes, and ongoing monitoring of human research projects. Moreover, they support researchers in executing ethically stable and high-standard research while ensuring adherence to pertinent regulations.

Furthermore, Pepperdine University stipulates that all research involving human participants, whether conducted directly by or under the university's supervision, must comply with the United States Code of Federal Regulations set by the Department of Health and Human Services, particularly Title 45 Part 46, which focuses on the protection of human research subjects (45 CFR 46). This compliance extends to Parts 160 and 164, outlining the Standards for

Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information and adherence to the California Protection of Human Subjects in Medical Experimentation Act. When relevant, the university also follows FDA regulations regarding research with human subjects (CFR Title 21 Parts 50 and 56, regarding the Protection of Human Subjects and Institutional Review Boards). In addition, the researcher has secured the CITI Human Subjects Research certification, as documented in Appendix E.

The present study entails interviews with a cohort of adult human subjects, necessitating an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application submission. The participants in this study consist of bloggers situated across different global regions. A comprehensive evaluation of possible risks has established that engaging in this study carries minimal risk, with the sole recognized risk being the commitment of one's time necessary to complete the research. Consequently, this study satisfies the criteria for exemption outlined in §§ 46.101(l)(2) - (l)(5)(iii) of The Code of Federal Regulations (Protection of Human Subjects, 2020). To ensure that this study conforms to ethical standards, the researcher will take the following steps:

1. Obtaining informed consent from participants (see Appendix C).
2. Providing a detailed explanation of the study's purpose and procedures.
3. Protecting participant privacy and confidentiality.
4. Providing an easily accessible and convenient means of voluntary withdrawal or termination from the study.

Data Collection

The internet-based social networks have enhanced people's ability to directly contact experts from various fields and enabled quicker and more affordable communication and data gathering (Akram & Kumar, 2017). Thus, participants were recruited using features within two

social media sites, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Participants who expressed interest in participating are placed into a master list, and the potential participants' information is stored and sorted in Pepperdine's firewalled-protected Google Drive in a Google Sheets spreadsheet. Participants will be selected or excluded according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After determining the qualified participants, an email with a recruitment script will be dispatched to each potential participant through my Pepperdine University email (see Appendix C).

Participants who expressed consideration will be emailed details about the study and the informed consent form. The participants are told to sign the informed consent form if they want to participate and send it back. Once the researcher receives the signed consent form, the researcher will schedule a Zoom appointment and send the link to the participant. The interviews are organized in one-hour intervals to ensure adequate time for conducting the conversation. All communication will be done via Pepperdine University email so that it remains secure.

The interviews will be done on Zoom using the researcher's University email sign-in. Before the voice recording, using Otter.ai, the researcher asked each participant to turn off their cameras and change their Zoom screen name to a pseudonym. Once done, the interview will be audio-recorded using Otter.ai. After the audio recordings were transcribed, they were deleted to ensure anonymity and protection of the human subjects involved. The transcripts were uploaded to the Pepperdine Google Drive in a secure folder to which the researcher and two cohort members who will serve as interrater reviewers had access.

Interview Techniques

In this study, the researcher utilized semi-structured interviews to gain profound insight into the phenomenon under investigation (J. Johnson, 2001). Semi-structured interviews are frequently employed in qualitative research because they elicit rich, detailed responses (Flick,

2019). The semi-structured format, with its open-ended design, is generally believed to be more effective in capturing the perspectives of interviewees compared to structured interviews or questionnaires. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to pose additional follow-up questions for further clarification, thereby allowing for a more comprehensive examination of the subject matter (Guest et al., 2013).

The interview process consisted of an icebreaker question, 12 interview questions, and, if needed, follow-up questions for clarification. Before the icebreaker question was given, the researcher gave a brief introduction, followed by an explanation of the study's objectives and methods for documenting the interview. It was designed to provide transparency and allow the participants to clarify doubts or concerns. The icebreaker question created a comfortable atmosphere as it was a non-intrusive question that did not require the participants to talk about themselves but their blogging experiences. It helped the participant enter the interview and build rapport with the researcher.

Interview Protocol

The interview method employed in this research is a semi-structured format, which balances structured queries and open-ended discussions. This method offers the dual benefits of directional focus from the researcher while permitting the participants to share their experiences and perspectives freely, hence fostering rich, nuanced data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The following are the interview and corresponding research questions in Appendix F.

- IQ 1: Think of the single biggest success you have had as a blogger, what was that experience and what strategies, or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 2: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?

- IQ3: What are other similar successful experiences you have had as a blogger; What was that experience and what strategies or best practice did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 4: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?
- IQ 5: Are you personally aware of similar successful experiences by other bloggers? If so, what was that experience and what strategies, or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 6: Are you personally aware of what challenge(s) did they face in achieving that successful experience?
- IQ 7: How do you define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?
- IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence, and if so which ones and how do you use them?
- IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?
- IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?
- IQ 11: Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?
- IQ 12: Has the experience been worth it? How?

Relationship Between Research and Interview Questions

To extract meaningful information from interviews, the researcher must craft detailed and pertinent questions that align with the research objectives (R. E. Roberts, 2020). These well-structured questions allow the researcher to delve deeper into the subject under study and address the research queries effectively (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The questions posted to each participant are aligned with the study's research questions.

Validity of the Study

J. Maxwell (2010) emphasizes the significance of validity in research studies. Maxwell points out the necessity for researchers in qualitative studies to verify their work's validity. As a researcher, minimizing biases and improving the study's validity were essential. The dependability of the interview questionnaire and research questions was assessed through a three-step process:

1. Initial and content validity evaluation.
2. Review by peers for validation.
3. Examination by experts for further validation.

Prima-Face and Content Validity

Prima facie validity, or face validity, is a measure of whether a tool for evaluation seemingly achieves its declared intent (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Following the study's objectives, the literature review directed the development of the interview protocol, thereby granting it face validity. Content validity refers to how well a measurement covers all facets of the evaluated concept. Table 2 comprehensively describes the correlation between the interview questions and the research objectives. Additionally, it underscores the content validity of the interview protocol by ensuring that it adequately covers all facets of the evaluated concept.

Table 2*Relationship between Research and Interview Questions*

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 1: Can you describe some specific strategies or best practices you've personally employed to establish yourself in your blogging niche?</p> <p>IQ 2: What do you believe are the key factors that differentiate successful bloggers from others in the same niche?</p> <p>IQ 3: Have you found certain content creation or promotion strategies to be particularly effective in gaining recognition within your niche?</p>
RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 4 In your experience, what are some common challenges or obstacles bloggers face when trying to establish themselves in their niche?</p> <p>IQ 5: Can you share a personal example of a challenge you've faced while trying to establish your presence in the blogging community, and how you overcame it?</p> <p>IQ 6: Are there any industry-specific challenges that emerging bloggers should be especially aware of when entering the field?</p>
RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?	<p>IQ 7: How do you personally define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?</p> <p>IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence?</p> <p>IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?</p>
RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?	<p>IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?</p> <p>IQ 11: Can you share any valuable lessons or tips that you wish you had known when you were starting out as a blogger in your niche?</p>

Note. The table illustrates the four research questions of the study, alongside their associated interview questions.

Peer-Review Validity

Peer-review validity is the extent to which the researcher seeks external perspectives to evaluate the instrument used in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study attained peer-review validity by soliciting insights from two doctoral candidates from Pepperdine University. These peers were asked to evaluate the interview questions using a template; their responses are found in Appendix G and Appendix H. Feedback was obtained from two peers knowledgeable in qualitative research methods for content validity. Following their suggestions, the interview questions were adjusted, with specifics provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Research Questions and Associated Interview Questions (Revised Through Peer Review)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question	Peer-Reviewed Revised Interview Question
RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 1: Can you describe some specific strategies or best practices you've personally employed to establish yourself in your blogging niche?</p> <p>IQ 2: What do you believe are the key factors that differentiate successful bloggers from others in the same niche?</p> <p>IQ 3: Have you found certain content creation or promotion strategies to be particularly effective in gaining recognition within your niche?</p>	<p>IQ 1: Can you describe some specific strategies or best practices you've personally employed to establish yourself in your blogging niche?</p> <p>IQ 2: What do you believe are the key strategies or best practices that differentiate successful bloggers from others in your niche?</p> <p>IQ 3: Have you found certain content creation or promotion strategies to be particularly effective in gaining recognition within your niche?</p>

(continued)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question	Peer-Reviewed Revised Interview Question
RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 4 In your experience, what are some common challenges or obstacles bloggers face when trying to establish themselves in their niche?</p> <p>IQ 5: Can you share a personal example of a challenge you've faced while trying to establish your presence in the blogging community, and how you overcame it?</p> <p>IQ 6: Are there any industry-specific challenges that emerging bloggers should be especially aware of when entering the field?</p>	<p>IQ 4 In your experience, what are some common challenges or obstacles bloggers face when trying to establish themselves in their niche?</p> <p>IQ 5: Can you share a personal example of a challenge you've faced while trying to establish your presence in the blogging community, and how you overcame it?</p> <p>IQ 6: Are there any industry-specific challenges that emerging bloggers should be especially aware of when entering the field?</p>
RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?	<p>IQ 7: How do you personally define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?</p> <p>IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence?</p> <p>IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?</p>	<p>IQ 7: How do you define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?</p> <p>IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence, and if so which ones and how do you use them?</p> <p>IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?</p>
RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?	<p>IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?</p> <p>IQ 11: Can you share any valuable lessons or tips that you wish you had known when you were starting out as a blogger in your niche?</p>	<p>IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?</p> <p>IQ 11: Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?</p>

Note. The table represents four research questions paired with interview questions that were modified after receiving feedback from peer reviewers. Additional adjustments were made to the order and phrasing of the questions within the interview protocol.

Expert Review Validity

The third phase entailed implementing an expert evaluation process to validate the research questions comprehensively. This stage added further clarity to ensure the research and interview questions were aligned. The expert review panel from the dissertation committee engaged in discussions with the researcher regarding any recommended modifications. After obtaining further feedback and understanding, the researcher enacted the final alterations to the questions in Table 4. Once the revisions were completed, the researcher proceeded to the next phase of the study, confident in the refined questions' alignment with the research objectives.

Table 4

Research Questions and Associated Interview Questions (Revised Through Expert Review)

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>Tell me how you got interested in becoming a blogger?</p> <p>IQ1: Think of the single biggest success you have had as a blogger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What was that experience and b. What strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful? <p>IQ3: What are other similar successful experiences you have had as a blogger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What was that experience and b. What strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful? <p>IQ5: Are you personally aware of similar successful experiences by other bloggers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What was that experience and b. What strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?

(continued)

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?	IQ2: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience? IQ4: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience? IQ6: Are you personally aware of what challenge(s) did they face in achieving that successful experience?
RQ3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?	IQ 7: How do you define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success? IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence, and if so which ones and how do you use them? IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how? IQ12: Has the experience been worth it? How?
RQ4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?	IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry? IQ 11: Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?

Note. The table shows four research questions alongside interview questions that have been modified according to suggestions from expert reviewers (dissertation committee). Further refinements in the sequence and wording of the interview questions were also carried out.

Reliability of the Study

C. Roberts and Hyatt (2018) assert that a crucial step in the research is verifying the efficacy of instruments to gather data pertinent to addressing the research inquiries. To uphold the research instrument's reliability, the researchers will enlist two experts who meet the inclusion criteria to participate in pilot testing (C. A. Smith, 2019). These participants will complete the interview process and offer the researcher feedback regarding the interview questions. The feedback gathered during this testing phase will be carefully evaluated and utilized to refine the interview questions, bolstering the instrument's validity and reliability. This

iterative process of soliciting and incorporating feedback enables the researcher to enhance the interview questions' effectiveness.

Statement of Personal Bias

During the stages of research development, gathering information, and examining data, the researcher must maintain a level of emotional neutrality while concurrently being attentive to potential bias (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher possesses a personal connection to the topic, as the researcher owns and operates multiple blogs in different niches. The experiences the researcher has acquired through running the blogs will help interpret and understand the data collected. The researcher strives to remain unbiased to attain valid findings from this study.

Bracketing and Epoché

Bracketing is a technique researchers employ in qualitative research to reduce the influence of their prior assumptions on the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2017). It is particularly vital in phenomenological studies, where how a researcher interprets the data can impact the study (Drew, 2004). Bracketing requires the recognition of these biases and their suspension throughout the gathering and examination of data, ensuring an objective and fresh viewpoint on the phenomenon being researched (Husserl, 2012). On the other hand, epoché is a concept closely tied to bracketing and originates from the Greek word meaning to refrain or abstain (Moustakas, 1994). In qualitative research, epoché refers to temporarily suspending one's judgments, preconceptions, and personal experiences to immerse in understanding the participants' lived experiences.

In adherence to the principles of bracketing and epoché, I have undertaken a comprehensive process to set aside my preconceived notions, personal experiences, and biases. As a blogger, I found this crucial to ensure the data's integrity. The bracketing process started

with a thorough self-reflection where I acknowledged my personal experiences and biases stemming from my role as a blogger. I then consciously set them aside when interacting with the study participants and during data analysis. As for epoché, I suspended my judgments and refrained from making quick interpretations based on my personal experiences in blogging. Here, I diligently focused solely on the participant's lived experiences, allowing their narratives to shape the interpretation of the data. This commitment to bracketing and epoché ensured an objective analysis and interpretation of the research data, contributing to the study's overall validity and reliability.

Data Analysis

After collecting the participants' data, the audio was transcribed into text format, organized into distinct codes, and then analyzed. The coding process was done using Google Sheets in Pepperdine's Google Drive. The coding process involved breaking down the data into manageable units of meaning and assigning codes to each unit based on its relevance to the research questions (Saldaña, 2021). Following data coding, the researchers employed thematic analysis to discern recurring patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The themes were then applied to gain perspective on the phenomenon being studied and to address the research questions. This process allowed a deep understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding running successful blogs.

Coding

Coding involves dissecting qualitative textual data to understand its core components and then reassembling it to provide meaningful interpretation (Creswell & Báez, 2020). Employing coding techniques helps researchers uncover data themes, relationships, and patterns, thereby deepening their comprehension of the investigated phenomenon (Saldaña, 2021). The transcripts

of the audio recordings will be downloaded and uploaded to Pepperdine's Google Drive and into a secure folder that the researcher and two cohort members have access to, who will serve as interrater reviewers. Each participant will be given a pseudonym for their name to protect their identities. The researcher will carefully read through the transcriptions and highlight sections of text that relate to the research questions. These sections will then be assigned codes, and similar codes will be grouped to identify overarching themes.

Interrater Reliability and Validity

Interrater reliability measures the agreement or consistency between separate raters or judges who independently assess the same data or observations (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Additionally, it is used to evaluate whether it's possible to create a strong theoretical framework. Moreover, interrater reliability enhances the credibility and validity of the research findings (Cole, 2023). As such, this study uses a four-step process that includes the following:

1. Baseline Themes: The first three participants were interviewed, and the information gathered was utilized to pinpoint major themes among the participants.
2. Interrater Review Consensus: The findings from the baseline themes step are presented to two co-raters who thoroughly evaluate the assigned codes and thematic categories. They will engage in discussion with the researcher to propose potential refinements. The aim is to establish a consensus between the researcher and co-raters regarding the identified codes and themes. If consensus is not reached, any areas of contention will be referred to a dissertation committee member for resolution.
3. Baseline Themes: Once the interrater review consensus was concluded, the remaining interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded. If there were changes in the coding

due to the new interviews, the codes were changed, and the data was sent to the same two co-raters for the next step.

4. Interrater Review Consensus: In this final step, the data was presented to the same two co-raters for a second review and consensus. This step aims to ensure that all codes and themes are accurately identified and coded. If consensus is not reached, any areas of contention will be referred to a dissertation committee member for resolution.

Data Presentation

Presenting findings from a qualitative study involves creating descriptions and identifying themes from the data gathered during interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher used charts, tables, narrative texts, and participant quotes to present the findings. The data will be organized and presented clearly and concisely to allow for easy interpretation of the research findings (Creswell & Báez, 2020). Additionally, the researcher will use tables and charts to compare and contrast the participants' responses to key themes identified during the coding process. These will visually represent the data and allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the research findings. Furthermore, participant quotes will be included in the data presentation to add depth and authenticity to the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the research approach and methods used in the study. The researcher chose to use a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological lens. The data collection method involved conducting in-depth interviews with participants who have experience running successful blogs. Following data collection, coding and thematic analysis were employed to discern patterns and themes. Measures of interrater reliability and validity

were applied to confirm the validity and reliability of the interview protocol. Chapter 4 outlines the findings of the research questions.

Safeguarding human participants' welfare and rights is a primary concern for this study. Therefore, strict compliance with the IRB guidelines of Pepperdine University, as outlined in Title 45, Part 46 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, is maintained at all stages of the research. Before engaging in the interview, participants were given a consent form, allowing them to provide informed consent for their involvement. The data collected from the study was gathered and securely stored in Pepperdine's Google Drive in a secure folder shared with two cohort interrater reviewers. The findings are discussed in Chapter 4 and used to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

Bloggers provide a unique insight into their specific niches that can influence readers (Agarwal et al., 2008). A successful blog requires time, effort, and dedication to grow a profitable following. This study aims to discover the strategies for effectively managing and operating successful blogs, focusing on developing a framework to understand the key concepts of successful blogging. The research addresses the disparities found in existing literature concerning the skills required to manage and monetize their blogs effectively. The study poses four research questions:

- RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?
- RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?

The interview protocol consists of 12 interview questions crafted using interrater reliability and validity with the help of an expert panel. The interview questions aimed to draw themes consistent with the study's objectives. The participants were posed with these questions:

- IQ 1: Think of the single biggest success you have had as a blogger; what was that experience, and what strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 2: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?

- IQ 3: What are other similar successful experiences you have had as a blogger? What was that experience, and what strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 4: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?
- IQ 5: Are you personally aware of similar successful experiences by other bloggers? If so, what was that experience, and what strategies or best practices did they engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 6: Are you personally aware of what challenge(s) they faced in achieving that successful experience?
- IQ 7: How do you define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?
- IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence, and if so, which ones and how do you use them?
- IQ 9: Have your definitions of success, and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?
- IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?
- IQ 11: Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?
- IQ 12: Has the experience been worth it? How?

All 12 participants satisfied the inclusion criteria and were asked the 12 interview questions. The responses were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This chapter

will provide a detailed discussion of the data analysis results. Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of successful blogging by identifying best practices and strategies successful bloggers use and providing insights for aspiring bloggers looking to establish themselves in their respective niches.

Participants

This study leveraged purposive sampling, identifying 90 individuals who could participate. The sample consisted of 12 actively blogging individuals who satisfied the inclusion criteria. The 12 subjects included participants representing various niches, such as fashion, food, travel, lifestyle, and personal development. Of the 90 identified possible participants, 24 participants responded and showed interest, they were then asked for their email so that the researcher could send the consent form. 17 responded with their email and 13 returned a signed consent form. Of the 13 participants, 12 were interviewed as saturation was achieved. The participants were informed of the steps to protect their anonymity, creating a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged genuine reflection and candid responses. Table 5 illustrates the participants' pseudonyms and the dates that they were interviewed.

Table 5

Dates of Participant Interviews

Participant Pseudonym	Interview Date
BG01	January 30, 2024
BG02	January 31, 2024
BG03	February 02, 2024
BG04	February 02, 2024
BG05	February 06, 2024

(continued)

Participant Pseudonym	Interview Date
BG06	February 06, 2024
BG07	February 09, 2024
BG08	February 13, 2024
BG09	February 13, 2024
BG10	February 15, 2024
BG11	February 15, 2024
BG12	February 17, 2024

Note. The table illustrates the pseudonym of the interviewee and interview date.

Saturation

The researcher determined saturation was reached when the interviews ceased to yield any new insights (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Research by Guest et al. (2006) found that their first six interviews were enough to determine saturation, which is also aligned with Morse's (1994) suggestion of six interviews for phenomenological studies. Additionally, the focused research topic and homogeneity of the sample in Guest et al.'s (2006) study facilitated saturation within a smaller sample size. Francis et al. (2010) provided a formula for determining saturation, suggesting a minimum sample size of ten and stopping when 3 further interviews yield no new themes. Moreover, Mason (2010) suggests that the sample size in qualitative research should be sufficiently extensive to acquire various experiences without becoming redundant, with saturation as the primary guiding principle.

In this study, it appeared that saturation was reached at the eighth interview as no new themes were revealed after the coding analysis. However, to fully explore the themes and verify that saturation was indeed reached, four additional interviews were conducted and coded to ensure data saturation. Upon completion of the 12 interviews, the researcher determined that

saturation had been achieved as no new themes emerged. Given the diversity of niches represented by the participants and the depth of insight they provided through the interviews, the sample size of 12 proved to be sufficient in capturing a comprehensive range of perspectives. Despite the initial heterogeneity of the sample, it is noteworthy that the responses across interviews demonstrated consistency. The convergence of insights given by the participants reinforces the notion of data saturation, indicating that the key themes had been thoroughly explored.

Evidence of Saturation

Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify patterns within the data and develop themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The determination of saturation was determined by multiple factors. For example, while the initial step in the triangulation process was to code the first three interviews, the third and fourth interview were done on the same day, so the researcher coded the first four. The goal of the coding process was to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within the dataset to uncover underlying meanings, concepts, and patterns, thereby providing insights into the phenomenon being examined (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

The researcher began coding the data by identifying specific excerpts of the transcripts that captured the key ideas, concepts, or experiences expressed by the participants. After coding the first four datasets, the researcher searched for broader themes that emerged from the coded segments. The researcher grouped together related codes that seemed to reflect similar concepts or experiences so that their theoretical meaning could be identified. The themes were then condensed, refined, and named to provide a full account of the participants' experiences.

Next, investigator triangulation, which involved two cohort members to analyze the data so that multiple perspectives can be considered (Denzin, 2017), was used. The two cohort reviewers independently analyzed and reviewed the themes before reaching an agreement on the themes. Subsequently, the researcher continued with the interviews and the coding process.

After the eighth interview, the transcripts were coded, and the preliminary themes were discussed with the reviewers. No new themes emerged, and it appeared that saturation was reached after reviewing the eighth transcript. However, four more interviews were done so that the researcher could confirm saturation had been achieved.

While the language between participants was not verbatim, it was similar in how participants expressed their answers. For example, interview question ten asked participants for advice they would give to aspiring bloggers. Early on, interviewees BG01 through BG05 mentioned, in some form, understanding one's audience as a code, which later was categorized as a theme. Participants BG06 and BG07 did not mention understanding one's audiences, but BG09 and BG10 did. Subsequently, BG11 did not express an understanding of one's audience, but BG12 did. An outline of the 'understand your audience' theme is presented (see Table 6). However, due to space constraints, a short explanation was provided, and more description of the theme is presented in the data display of this chapter.

Table 6

Saturating data for the 'Understand your audience' theme (excerpts)

Understand your audience (Theme)
<i>Audience Research (Sub-theme)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Codes: Research, Understanding, Needs, Challenges, Interests
<i>Audience Research (Sub-theme; cont.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quote BG12: "You need to understand their needs and challenges and their interests. Understanding all of that will guide you in creating content that will eventually resonate with them and provide value to them."

(continued)

Understand your audience (Theme)
<i>Audience Research (Sub-theme; cont.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning: This sub-theme emphasizes researching and understanding the audience by gathering insights into their needs, challenges, interests, and preferences.
<i>Engagement and Community Building (Sub-theme)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Codes: Engage, community, Feedback, Social Media, Comments, Emails • Quote BG09: “Involve your readers. Ask them for feedback and suggestions on what they would like to see on your blog. It will make them feel appreciated and give you future content. Leverage social media comments and posts as well.” • Meaning: This sub-theme focuses on actively engaging with the audience to create content and build a community around a niche.
<i>Personalization and Tailoring Content (Sub-theme)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Codes: Personalization, Tailoring, Value, Filling in Gaps, Resonance • Quote BG08: “Understand the current conversations, what's the audience's pain points? What are the gaps in the current content out there?” • Meaning: This sub-theme focuses on tailoring content to meet the audience's needs by providing unique value and determining how it can resonate with the audience.

Note. The table briefly outlines how saturation was reached using thematic analysis. The initial codes were used to determine the final themes for each interview question, culminating in the emergence of overarching themes and the formulation of a theoretical framework.

Data Collection

The data collection began after the researcher received IRB approval, which was given on January 23, 2024. Participants were solicited using Facebook Groups. The researcher obtained permission from the Facebook group owner (see Appendix A) before posting a recruitment message (see Appendix B) on the Facebook group. Participants who showed interest were directly messaged and asked for their email. A recruitment email was sent using the researcher's Pepperdine email. After participants indicated their willingness to participate in the study, they were sent a letter of consent requesting them to provide three potential dates for the interview. After receiving the signed consent form and scheduling an interview, the researcher forwarded a Zoom link to the participant. The Zoom session was password-protected and done using the researcher's Pepperdine account. Only audio was recorded using Otter.ai and for

transcription. Interviews occurred between January 30, 2024, and February 17, 2024. Although each interview was allotted an hour, the duration varied between 30 to 51 minutes.

Data Analysis

This study uses phenomenology, and the researcher needs to practice epoche and bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Drew, 2004). As such, the researcher bracketed their preconceived notions about the topic, the participants, or anything else that could hinder the analysis. After each interview, the researcher examined the audio recordings and made any necessary adjustments to the transcripts generated by Otter.ai to ensure they accurately reflected the conversations word for word. The audio recordings were deleted once the transcription process was completed. The researcher then meticulously examined the transcripts, marking significant words and phrases. A Google Sheet was created, and the keywords and phrases were organized into codes and buckets to complete the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Interrater Review

An interrater evaluation was used to verify the accuracy of the codes and themes determined by the researcher. An external party was asked to review the transcripts and the coded Google Sheet to assess if they agreed with the identified codes and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Any discrepancies were discussed until a consensus was reached. This process helped validate the thematic analysis results and ensured that personal biases or preconceived notions did not impact the study's findings.

Two cohort members with experience reviewing qualitative data were asked to participate in the interrater review process. They both reviewed the transcriptions and provided feedback. The feedback was used to refine the codes and themes identified by the researcher.

Ultimately, there were no discrepancies; all three reviewers agreed on the final codes and themes.

Data Display

The interview data was systematically categorized based on the four research questions and their corresponding interview questions. Bar charts were created for each interview question to illustrate the recurring themes. Detailed analysis of the themes with direct quotations from the participants is used with each chart. The quotations are presented verbatim to maintain the authenticity of the data and offer a deeper understanding of each question. In keeping with the confidentiality and protection of the participants, pseudonyms were used and labeled as Blogger "BG," along with a unique number to represent the participants—for example, BG01 to BG12.

Research Question 1

The first research question asks, "How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?" The following interview questions were used to answer research question 1:

- IQ 1: Think of the single biggest success you have had as a blogger; what was that experience, and what strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ3: What are other similar successful experiences you have had as a blogger? What was that experience, and what strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
- IQ 5: Are you personally aware of similar successful experiences by other bloggers? If so, what was that experience, and what strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?

Interview Question 1

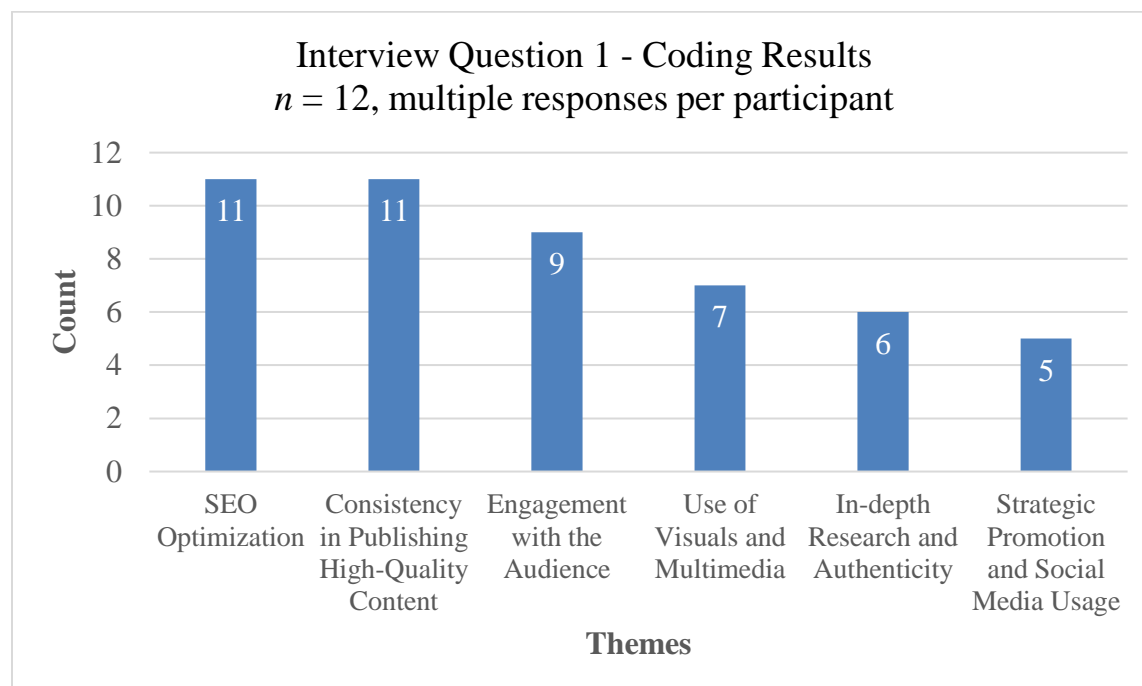
Interviewees were asked to ponder on their biggest successful experience as a blogger and what strategies or best practices they used to make that experience successful. After the 12 responses, a total of six themes emerged:

1. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Optimization,
2. Consistency in Publishing High-Quality Content,
3. Engagement with the Audience,
4. Use of Visuals and Multimedia,
5. In-depth Research and Authenticity, and
6. Strategic Promotion and Social Media Usage.

The themes and frequencies are displayed in Figure 6.

Figure 6

The Most Commonly Used Strategies and Best Practices from Successful Bloggers



Note. The figure represents themes participants described as the strategies and best practices they use to be successful bloggers.

SEO Optimization. The SEO optimization theme was described by 11 out of 12 participants (92%). This theme describes the strategic use of keywords and SEO practices to improve visibility on search engines. For example, BG01 said, "I worked closely with my SEO contractor to target specific keywords related to local cuisines and dining spots that weren't already saturated." Additionally, BG07 described how she put a lot of time into keyword research when she stated, "I conducted thorough keyword research and targeted long-tail keywords with high search volumes but low competition. This helped me rank higher for specific search queries and attract more organic traffic." The SEO optimization theme aligns with previous research by Zakharenko and Smagulova (2020) who found that SEO helps individuals find relevant content that matches their intended search criteria, while removing other information that they do not find helpful.

Consistency in Publishing High-Quality Content. Eleven out of 12 participants (92%) identified the importance of consistently publishing high-quality content. Participants shared their consistent efforts to provide well-researched, informative, and valuable content that stands out, and a regular and predictable posting schedule keeps the audience engaged. For example, when discussing his blog posts for his tech blog, BG09 shared, "The review was comprehensive, providing valuable insights beyond the technical specifications to include battery life in real-world scenarios, camera performance under different conditions, and personal experiences after extensive use." Additionally, BG11 explained how he focuses on creating content that is informative, engaging, and relatable to his audience when he shared, "I shared personal stories related to the topic, included high-quality images, and formatted the article for easy reading with

bullet points, subheadings, and short paragraphs." Furthermore, BG08 described his consistent publishing style: "I made sure to publish high-quality content regularly, whether once a week or multiple times per week." Berger et al. (2013) have argued that bloggers who post consistently about a certain topic, can be a sign of expertise in that niche.

Engagement with the Audience. Nine out of 12 (75%) of participants mentioned the importance of engaging with their audience. This theme encompasses interactive communication with readers through comments, social media, and other platforms. BG05 shared, "I engaged with my readers through emails, social media, and comments. This helped spread the word and understand what aspects of the series impacted readers the most, allowing me to tailor subsequent posts more effectively." Additionally, BG10 explained, "I actively responded to comments and questions on the blog and social media. I think this creates a sense of community with travelers and encourages people to come back." Research by Miura and Yamashita found that engagement with the blogs audience who give positive feedback can help bloggers to stay motivated and create high-quality content.

Use of Visuals and Multimedia. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants shared using visuals and multimedia as a successful strategy. This theme includes strategically using high-quality images, videos, and infographics to complement and enhance content. The use of visuals and multimedia has been shown to keep reader engagement in various industries, such as higher education (S. W. Park, 2013). BG02 discussed the importance of visuals and stated, "we recognize the importance of visuals in fashion blogging. So, we include high-quality, original images that showcase the clothing in different settings and styles." Similarly, BG04 mentioned using videos to engage her audience by saying, "I create video content about sustainable living

practices like recycling, composting, and upcycling. This allows my audience to see the process in action, making it more relatable."

In-Depth Research and Authenticity. Six out of the 12 participants (50%) mentioned using in-depth research and authenticity as a successful strategy. This theme includes conducting thorough research, using credible sources, and creating genuine content. The theme of authenticity has been studied by researchers, such as S. S. Lee and Johnson (2021) who found that authenticity and credibility of influencers can impact the effectiveness of marketing strategies. BG05 explained how she conducts extensive research on topics before publishing by stating, "I spend a good amount of time researching for each post. I read articles and books and watched videos related to my topic, compiling data not widely discussed in the pet community." Furthermore, BG10 discussed how he spends time visiting locations for his travel blog because the "firsthand experiences add authenticity and depth to my content. It sets apart my content from other generic travel guides."

Strategic Promotion and Social Media Usage. Five out of 12 (42%) participants shared using strategic promotion and social media usage as a successful strategy. This theme includes utilizing different marketing techniques, building a strong presence on various social media platforms, and collaborating with other bloggers and influencers. While the rise of bloggers and user-generated content has created new marketing strategies that brands collaborate with bloggers and use social media to promote their products (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), bloggers tend to use social media to promote their own content. For example, BG04 discussed how she utilizes social media to increase her reach when she stated, "Additionally, sharing the article across social media platforms with a community already interested in sustainability topics helped amplify its reach dramatically." Furthermore, BG10 shared, "I actively promoted the post

through my social media channels, email newsletter, and by reaching out to travel forums and communities. I also engaged in guest blogging to create backlinks and drive additional traffic."

Interview Question 3

Interview question 3 asked participants to share other similar successful experiences as a blogger. It also asked about the strategies or best practices that made that experience successful.

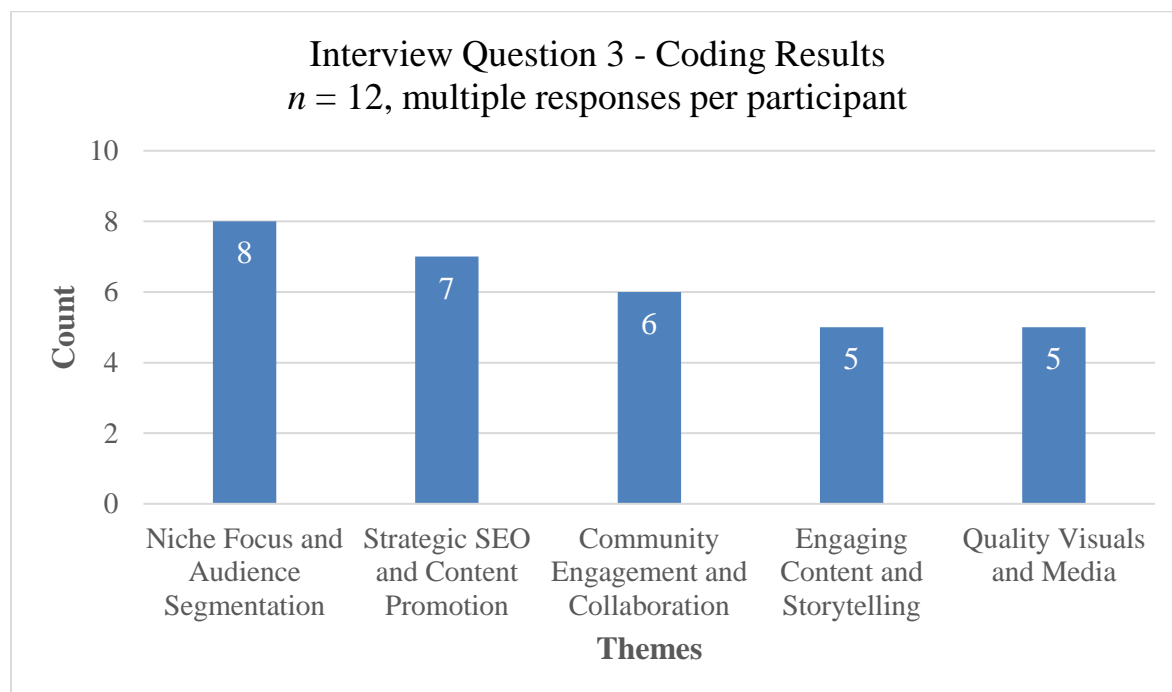
After the 12 responses, five themes emerged that include

1. Niche Focus and Audience Segmentation,
2. Strategic SEO and Content Promotion,
3. Community Engagement and Collaboration,
4. Engaging Content and Storytelling, and
5. Quality Visuals and Media.

The themes and their frequency are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Other Commonly Used Strategies and Best Practices from Successful Bloggers



Note. This figure represents themes participants described as the strategies or best practices they use to be successful in blogging.

Niche Focus and Audience Segmentation. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants shared how having a specific niche and segmenting their audience played an important role in their successful experiences. Research on travel blogs, such as that of Bosangit et al. (2009) have highlighted that niche focus can help bloggers attract a dedicated readership. The theme focuses on specific interests or needs within a broader market to attract a dedicated audience segment. For example, BG02, who operates a personal healthcare blog focusing on natural skincare, shared how she created a series of blog posts on this topic that attracted a dedicated group of readers. She said, "Recognizing the diversity in skin types and concerns, we created a series that individually addressed each major skin type. This targeted approach made our content highly relevant to different audience segments, increasing engagement and shares."

Similarly, BG09 focuses on the 'Hidden Gems' niche for travelers. He said, "Focusing on the hidden gems niche allowed me to cater to an audience seeking unique travel experiences beyond the usual tourist spots. This specificity helped attract readers who are passionate about discovering new places."

Strategic SEO and Content Promotion. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants mentioned utilizing strategic SEO and content promotion as an important factor in their successful experiences. This theme includes optimizing blog posts for search engines, targeting specific keywords, and promoting content through different channels to increase visibility and traffic. Husain et al. (2020) argued that using SEO strategy on websites can increase traffic and SERPs ranking. Participants shared their experiences with SEO, such as BG11 who discussed how he leveraged SEO when promoting his book. He shared, "I wrote SEO-optimized blog posts related

to the ebook's topics, included calls-to-action (CTAs) within popular articles on my blog, and guest-posted on other blogs with backlinks to the ebook's landing page." Similarly, BG01 discussed how he focused on long-tailed keywords for golf courses and shared, "I ranked well for searches related to unique golfing experiences, driving targeted traffic to the blog."

Community Engagement and Collaboration. Six out of 12 (50%) participants shared the importance of community engagement and collaboration in their successful experiences. This theme includes building a loyal audience, engaging with readers through comments and social media, and collaborating with other bloggers and influencers to reach a wider audience.

Community engagement is used by bloggers to promote products (Hughes et al., 2019; Mainolfi et al., 2021), however the participants discussed how they use community engagement and collaborate to write creative content. For example, BG12 mentioned how he engaged with his readers when he started his snake blog. He shared, "The core of this initiative's success was its foundation in community participation. I invited readers to submit their own stories and photos, and the project tapped into the collective enthusiasm and expertise of the snake-owning community." Similarly, BG05 mentioned that she created an online event for pet care and said

I started building a community around the theme of sustainable pet care. I engaged my audience through regular blog posts, social media discussions, and newsletters that shared tips, asked for insights, and highlighted the importance of sustainability in pet care. It built a strong foundation of interest and anticipation for the conference.

Engaging Content and Storytelling. Five out of 12 (42%) participants mentioned creating engaging content and utilizing storytelling as an important factor in their successful experiences. This theme includes incorporating personal anecdotes and emotions into blog posts, using descriptive language to bring stories to life, and providing valuable information creatively

and entertainingly. Keeping the audience engaged with storytelling has been shown to build reliability and trust with readers (Atiq et al., 2022). Participant BG12 shared how he uses multiple perspectives when writing his blog content. He said, "I consciously tried to feature a broad spectrum of species, care environments, and owner experiences. This diversity showcased the vastness of the hobby and provided valuable insights into different aspects of snake care and companionship." Similarly, BG01 said, "Each post was crafted not just to inform but to tell a story, capturing each course's history, landscape, and unique characteristics. This storytelling approach resonated with readers, making each article more memorable and shareable."

Quality Visuals and Media. Five out of 12 (42%) participants also mentioned the importance of using high-quality visuals and media in their successful experiences. This theme includes utilizing photos, videos, infographics, and other visual elements to enhance the content and make it more engaging for readers. The use of infographic aid or other multiple media helps readers understand complex topics and increases content readability (Thoma et al., 2017). For example, BG02 said, "Knowing the personal care audience appreciates visual aids, we included step-by-step videos and high-quality images demonstrating the skincare routines. This visual component made the content more engaging and shareable, especially on platforms like Pinterest and Instagram." Similarly, BG10 mentioned how he shared personal photos for his travel posts in Asia when he said, "I included a mix of personal photographs and videos that showcased the beauty and diversity of Asian destinations."

Interview Question 5

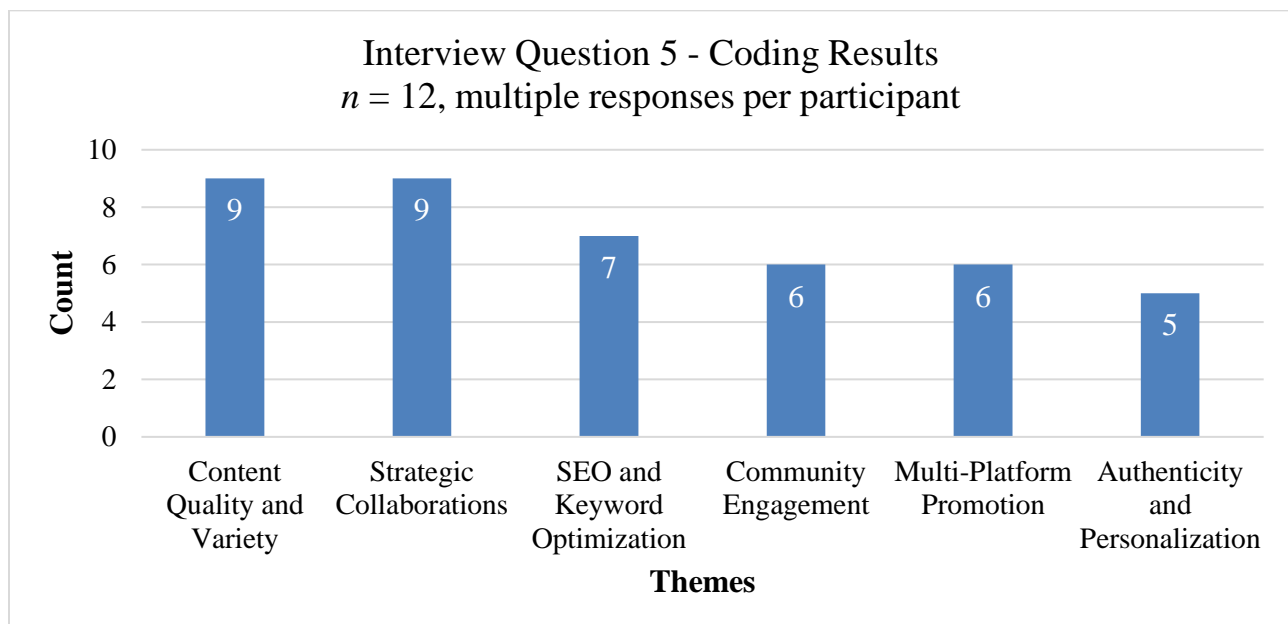
Interview question 5 asks participants if they are aware of similar successful experiences by other bloggers. It also asks about those experiences and the strategies or best practices they used to make it successful. This interview question identified six themes:

1. Content Quality and Variety.
2. Strategic Collaborations.
3. SEO and Keyword Optimization.
4. Community Engagement.
5. Multi-Platform Promotion.
6. Authenticity and Personalization.

Figure 8 shows the themes and their frequency.

Figure 8

Other Commonly Used Strategies and Best Practices from Successful Bloggers



Note. The figure represents themes participants described as the successful strategies and best practices other bloggers use.

Content Quality and Variety. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants mentioned the importance of creating high-quality and diverse content to succeed. This theme includes incorporating multimedia elements, providing valuable information, and offering a variety of topics to appeal to different audience interests. Bloggers use a variety of content to appeal to

their readers, such as images and videos (T. M. Lin et al., 2012). For example, BG02 discussed the success of a food blog and said that "the blogger invested in high-quality photography and video tutorials for each recipe." Similarly, BG09 shared, "The blogger identified a rising interest in veganism and the specific niche of vegan food. The blogger produced good content and informative posts on vegan recipes, restaurant reviews, and lifestyle tips."

Strategic Collaborations. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants discussed the effectiveness of strategic collaborations. This theme includes cross-promoting content, creating backlinks, co-creating posts or events with others, and leveraging each other's audiences to reach a wider audience. Research by Luzón (2018) found that leveraging collaboration and guest posting can increase a blog's visibility. Participants also expressed this strategy, for example, BG10 mentioned how a travel blog that focuses on eco-friendly travel partnered with travel-type brands and tourism boards and how it helped increase the blog's visibility when he shared, "These partnerships often involved sponsored trips, gear reviews, and collaborative content creation, providing mutual benefits and reinforcing the blog's credibility in the eco-friendly space." Similarly, BG04 shared how a food blogger focused on providing guides on how to farm and cook your food became successful when she said, "This blogger's strategy involved partnering with local farmers and food co-ops to provide fresh insights and authenticity to the content."

SEO and Keyword Optimization. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants mentioned using SEO strategies and keyword optimization as an important factor in their successful experiences. This theme includes conducting keyword research, optimizing blog posts for search engines, and staying up to date with SEO trends and changes to attract organic traffic. Bloggers can do extensive keyword research to optimize their blog and improve its visibility (Nagpal & Petersen, 2021; Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016). For example, BG08 shared, "Like myself, they leveraged SEO to

ensure their content was easily discoverable by new readers." Additionally, BG12 shared, "The blogger used targeted SEO strategies to optimize each post, making them easily discoverable by people searching for authentic international recipes." Similar to BG08 and BG12, BG02 shared how a food blogger did extensive keyword research related to the niche of global cuisines and specific dishes when she said, "The blogger optimized each post to attract organic traffic from search engines."

Community Engagement. Six out of 12 (50%) participants mentioned the importance of engaging with their community and building a strong relationship with their audience. This theme includes responding to comments, creating interactive content, and actively participating in online networking platforms to cultivate a sense of camaraderie among readers. Bloggers use community engagement to build a loyal readership and promote their products and blog posts (Sajjad & Zaman, 2020). For example, BG10 shared how the blogger he knows responds to comments: "They encouraged discussions around sustainable travel, shared tips from their travels, and fostered a community of like-minded individuals." BG11 shared a similar experience, "They were highly active in various online communities, like Reddit forums, Facebook groups, and other platforms where their target audience spent time."

Multi-Platform Promotion. Six out of 12 (50%) participants mentioned utilizing multiple platforms to promote their content as an effective strategy for achieving success. This theme includes leveraging social media, email lists, guest blogging, and collaborating with other bloggers or influencers to reach a wider audience. Multi-platform promotion helps bloggers with their marketing strategies, such as emailing loyal readers to engage with them and increase their content visibility (Philipp, 2023). For example, BG07 shared how a fellow blogger built a substantial email list to promote their content and increase engagement when she said, "She

grouped her subscribers based on their interests and sent out personalized and relevant content to increase her engagement rates." Similarly, BG09 shared how a blogger leveraged Pinterest to bring traffic to their blog, "The blogger used Pinterest to create visually appealing pins, which linked back to their blog posts and helped drive traffic through the platform's algorithm."

Authenticity and Personalization. Five out of 12 (42%) participants mentioned the importance of being authentic and personal in their content. This theme includes sharing personal experiences, opinions, and unique perspectives to stand out from other bloggers in the same niche and create a deeper connection with the audience. Bloggers who provide accurate content and authentic viewpoints are perceived as reliable and trustworthy for information (Rosen, 2005). For example, BG09 shared how a food blog shares personalized stories when the participant said, "They also shared personal anecdotes about the recipes, making the content relatable and engaging." Furthermore, BG12 shared how a blogger's authenticity helped them gain credibility that translated into success when he said

Each post was crafted to respect and accurately represent the cultural significance of the featured cuisine. The blogger tried to consult with cultural experts or natives to ensure authenticity, which was appreciated by readers and contributed to the series' credibility.

Summary of Research Question 1

The first research question of this study sought to understand how bloggers use strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches. Three interview questions were asked to gain insight into the topic. Using thematic analysis, a total of 17 themes emerged. The themes include

1. SEO Optimization.
2. Consistency in Publishing High-Quality Content.

3. Engagement with the Audience.
4. Use of Visuals and Multimedia.
5. In-depth Research and Authenticity.
6. Strategic Promotion and Social Media Usage.
7. Niche Focus and Audience Segmentation.
8. Strategic SEO and Content Promotion.
9. Community Engagement and Collaboration.
10. Engaging Content and Storytelling.
11. Quality Visuals and Media.
12. Content Quality and Variety.
13. Strategic Collaborations.
14. SEO and Keyword Optimization.
15. Community Engagement.
16. Multi-Platform Promotion.
17. Authenticity and Personalization.

Research Question 2

The second research question asks, "What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?" The following three interview questions were asked to understand the challenges bloggers face in establishing themselves in their respective niches:

- IQ2: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?
- IQ4: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?

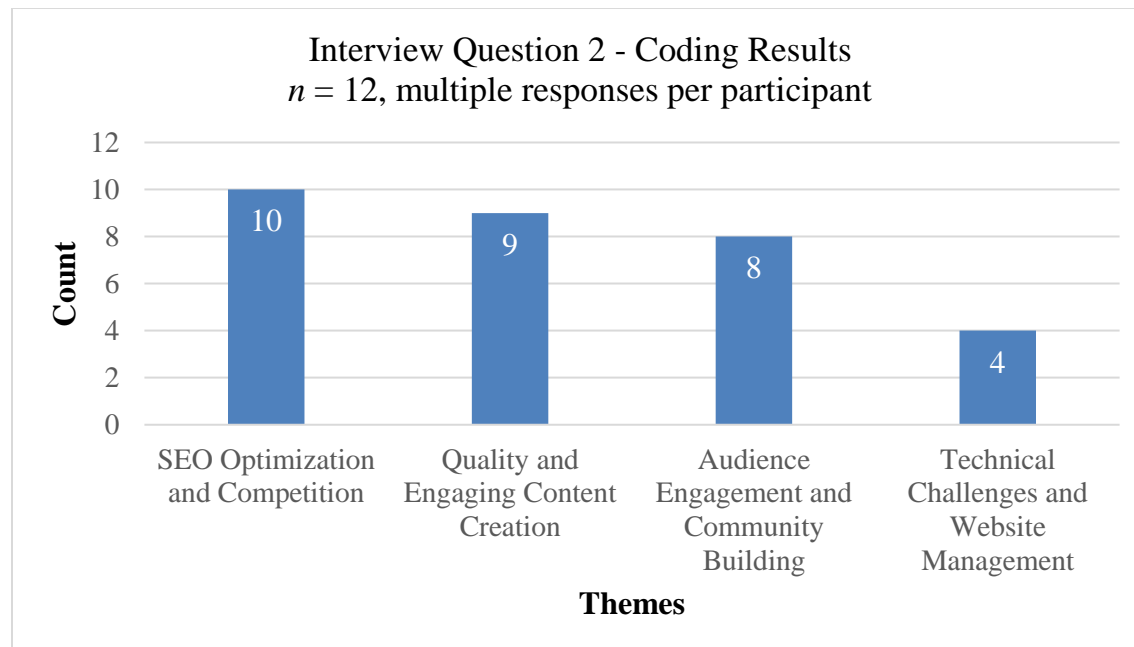
- IQ6: Are you personally aware of what challenge(s) did they face in achieving that successful experience?

Interview Question 2

The second interview question asked participants about the challenges they faced in achieving their successful experience discussed in interview question 1. After the responses, four themes emerged. The themes include (a) SEO Optimization and Competition, (b) Quality and Engaging Content Creation, (c) Audience Engagement and Community Building, and (d) Technical Challenges and Website Management. Figure 9 shows the themes and their frequency.

Figure 9

Challenges Faced by Bloggers in Achieving Their Success



Note. The figure represents themes and the frequencies of challenges that bloggers encounter while achieving their success.

SEO Optimization and Competition. Ten out of 12 (83%) participants mentioned the challenges of SEO optimization and competition in their niche. This theme includes difficulties

achieving high search engine rankings, competing with established bloggers in the same niche, and continuously updating SEO strategies to stay relevant. The blogosphere has big competition and reaching the top search results is challenging (Tangirbergenovna, 2022). For example, BG01 shared how it can be challenging to rank high on search engines in the food and travel niches:

Despite targeting less saturated keywords, the SEO landscape for food and travel is highly competitive. Google changing algorithms isn't helping anything, either. It's tough to have topical authority, too. I constantly stay up to date with SEO and have backlinks. So, I just had to keep adapting, which is time-consuming and requires a strategic keyword optimization approach.

Like the food and travel blog, SEO optimization is challenging for the financial niche. As BG03 shared, "The financial niche is highly competitive, and finding unique keywords with good search volume but manageable competition was challenging." Furthermore, BG11 said, "The challenge was to optimize my content without sacrificing readability and engagement."

Quality and Engaging Content Creation. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants mentioned the challenges of creating high-quality, engaging content. This theme includes difficulties developing new and creative ideas, consistently producing valuable content, and standing out from other bloggers in the same niche. Generating high-quality content requires significant allocation of time and resources (O'Neill & Curran, 2011). For example, BG03 shared, "Breaking down complex financial concepts into engaging, accessible content was another hurdle. It's important to make the information digestible for the layperson without oversimplifying or losing the depth our more knowledgeable readers expected." BG07 also expressed the challenge and added how it led to burnout when she shared, "Trying to consistently create high-quality content, promote it effectively, and stay updated on industry trends while juggling other personal and

professional responsibilities was difficult. This led to periods of burnout and affected my consistency in publishing new content."

Audience Engagement and Community Building. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned the challenges of engaging with their audience and building a community. This theme includes difficulties reaching and retaining an engaged audience, responding to comments and messages, and fostering a sense of community among readers. While previous research such as that of Jung et al. (2012) and Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) have discussed the importance of audience engagement and community building for bloggers, not much research has discussed the challenges in doing so. BG10 shared how he struggled with audience engagement when he shared, "Initially, getting the word out and encouraging shares and backlinks was tough. Convincing other sites to link to the post and getting traction on social media platforms required persistent outreach and promotion." BG05 shared a similar experience, "At first, there was a challenge in engaging readers and encouraging them to share the content. I addressed this by actively soliciting feedback, creating interactive content, and highlighting reader stories and experiences to make the topic more relatable."

Technical Challenges and Website Management. Four out of 12 (33%) participants mentioned the challenges of technical aspects and managing their websites. This theme includes difficulties in website design, coding, and frequently updating plugins and software. Technical elements are important for blogs to function properly and attract readers (S. Wang & Lin, 2011). For example, BG01 shared, "Traffic grew, and so did the technical demands of managing the website. I had to ensure the site could handle the traffic, and I had to focus on SEO, so sometimes I had to outsource it." BG09 also shared a similar experience, "When my blog became

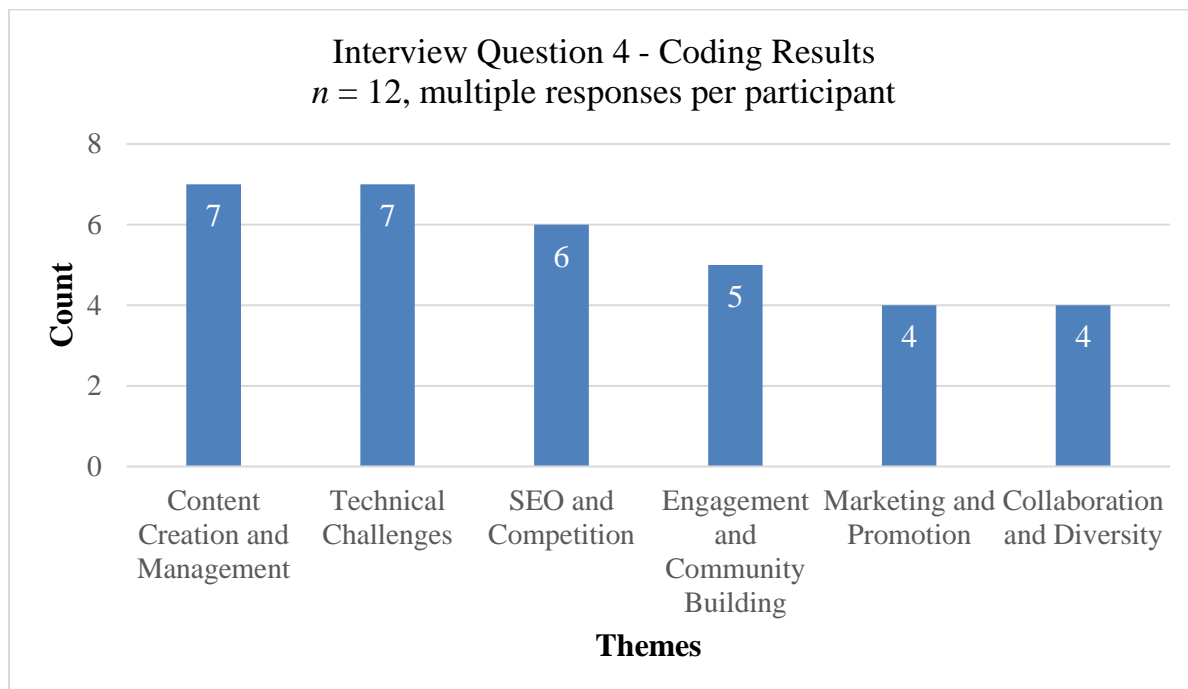
popular, I had to handle a surge in traffic. I had to upgrade my hosting site to accommodate the increased traffic load and not crash."

Interview Question 4

The fourth interview question asked participants about the challenges they faced in achieving their other successful experiences, which was discussed in interview question 3. Six themes were identified, including (a) Content Creation and Management, (b) Technical Challenges, (c) SEO and Competition, (d) Engagement and Community Building, (e) Marketing and Promotion, and (f) Collaboration and Diversity. Figure 10 shows the themes and their frequency.

Figure 10

Other Challenges Faced by Bloggers in Achieving Their Success



Note. The figure represents themes, and the frequency of other challenges bloggers encounter while achieving success.

Content Creation and Management. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants mentioned the challenges of creating and managing content for their other successful experiences. This theme includes challenges related to researching, compiling, planning, and managing content across multiple projects or platforms, ensuring consistency and engaging content schedule. Creating content includes identifying the needs of readers, their interests, and the most effective way to deliver content that meets their needs (Bouwan & Van de Wijngaert, 2002; Petersen, 2019). The participants expressed this challenges in multiple ways. For example, BG04 shared, "Managing this series' content schedule alongside the demands of my other blogs was challenging." Similarly, BG12 discussed how his snake series "required significant time and resources for management, editing, and promotion. Balancing this with other blog content and personal commitments was challenging, necessitating better time management and sometimes delegation of tasks to maintain the series' quality and consistency."

Technical Challenges. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants also mentioned the challenges related to technical aspects in their other successful experiences. This theme includes difficulties with website design, coding, and managing plugins and software, as well as handling technical issues and crashes. It is important for bloggers to maintain website maintenance and technical support to ensure their websites function properly and provide a good user experience (Kirkup, 2010; Moore & Clayton, 2009). For example, BG04 said, "Technical issues like website compatibility and resource hosting needed careful attention to provide a great user experience." Also, BG05 shared, "There were concerns about potential technical glitches, bandwidth issues, and user interface problems. I eventually switched hosting platforms, and my technical problems went away. So that was good."

SEO and Competition. Six out of 12 (50%) participants mentioned the challenges of SEO optimization and competition in their other successful experiences. This theme includes difficulties in finding unique keywords, optimizing content without sacrificing readability and engagement, and standing out from competitors. SEO Keyword research is an important factor for blog visibility and includes embedding keywords in posts and off-page SEO strategies (S. Zhang & Cabage, 2013). While the current research provides information on how SEO is an effective strategy (M. N. Khan & Mahmood, 2018), participants in this study discussed the challenges of SEO. For example, BG08 shared how he struggled with keyword research and optimization when he said, "SEO is important for success but requires a lot of time to research and learn. It was challenging to find the right keywords without affecting the quality of my content or sounding too repetitive." Similarly, BG09 mentioned the challenges of standing out in a crowded niche and using software when he said, "Ranking well for keywords, even long-tail ones, was challenging due to the sheer volume of content online. I had to refine my SEO strategies and used Ahrefs and SurferSEO to help me."

Engagement and Community Building. Five out of 12 (42%) participants mentioned the challenges of engaging with their audience and building a community for their other successful experiences. This theme includes difficulties reaching and retaining an engaged audience, responding to comments and messages, and fostering a sense of community among readers. Research by Kulkarni et al. (2013) has examined the relationship between audience engagement and the content quality of a blog. Yet, the participants discussed how bloggers face the challenges with community building and engagement. For example, BG06 discussed how their team had trouble keeping momentum after doing a successful event experience with their community and shared, "Furthermore, we faced the challenge of keeping the momentum going

post-event, translating the heightened engagement into long-term readership and community growth." BG02 commented on the time commitment and said, "As the series gained popularity, fostering and moderating the community around it became increasingly time-consuming."

Marketing and Promotion. Four out of 12 (33%) participants mentioned the challenges of marketing and promoting their other successful experiences. This theme includes difficulties reaching a wider audience, getting traction on social media platforms, and convincing other sites to share and link back to their content. Research by Dobeles et al. (2015) discuss the importance of promotion, and how to use social media as a promotional tool to reach more people. Yet, the participants discussed the challenges of marketing and promotion. For example, BG10 shared how he struggled with promotion when he said, "Given the series' extensive nature, continuously promoting each guide to ensure visibility and engagement was challenging. It required leveraging multiple platforms like Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram, and then I did email marketing, Reddit, and collaborations with other bloggers and influencers." BG03 shared a similar experience with marketing, "Reaching a wider audience was a challenge, and so were backlinks. However, I eventually found HARO, which greatly helped me."

Collaboration and Diversity. Four out of 12 (33%) participants mentioned the challenges of collaborating with others and incorporating diversity into their other successful experiences. This theme includes difficulties in finding and working with collaborators, representing diverse perspectives and voices, and navigating potential conflicts or differing opinions. Collaborating with other bloggers and brands help bloggers gain exposure and reach a wider audience (Delisle & Parmentier, 2016). Yet, the bloggers discuss the challenges associated with trying to collaborate with other bloggers. For example, BG03 shared how collaboration was a challenge when they said, "While involving industry experts added value to the blog,

coordinating their contributions was complex. It involved managing schedules, aligning content expectations, and integrating their insights into the overall narrative of the content." BG02 shared how they had to balance scientifically accurate advice from experts but still make it understandable for the readers, "Collaborating with dermatologists and skincare professionals meant that some of the advice needed to be simplified without losing its accuracy, which required careful editing and clarification."

Interview Question 6

Interview question 6 asks participants about other bloggers' challenges while achieving their successful experiences. The researcher identified four themes

1. Audience Engagement and Growth.
2. Content Creation and Management.
3. Technical and Logistical Issues.
4. Monetization and Financial Sustainability.

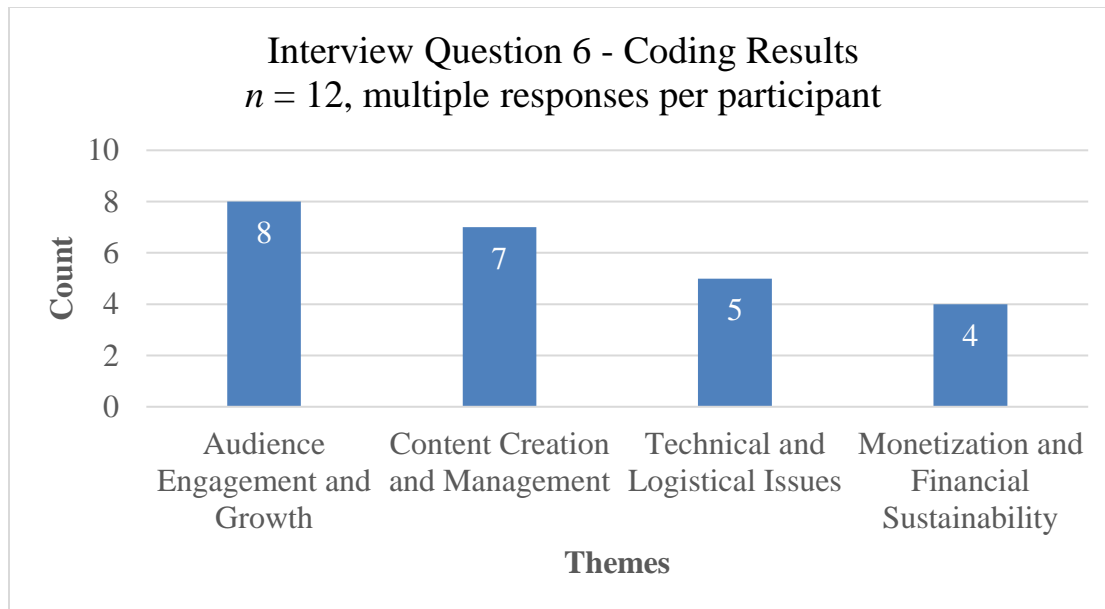
Figure 11 shows the themes and their frequency.

Audience Engagement and Growth. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned the challenges related to audience engagement and growth in their experience. This theme includes struggles with reaching a wider audience, retaining reader interest and loyalty, and standing out in a crowded niche. Indeed Sajjad and Zaman (2020) argued that user loyalty in blogging is affected by seeking new ideas, reader participation on the website, and collaborative engagement, participants highlighted the challenges associated with audience engagement and growth. For example, BG01 shared, "Another challenge is keeping the audience engaged every day without causing content fatigue. Finding new and interesting angles on sustainability that resonate with readers requires constant brainstorming and creative thinking." Moreover, BG08

shared, "Time management also posed a challenge. The blogger juggled content creation with audience engagement while trying to promote their blog. They had often worked long hours to keep up with their audience and growing demand."

Figure 11

Challenges Faced by Bloggers in Achieving Their Success



Note. The figure represents themes, and the frequency of challenges other bloggers encounter while achieving success.

Content Creation and Management. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants mentioned content creation and management challenges in their successful experience. This theme includes difficulties in consistently creating high-quality content, managing a large volume of content, and balancing multiple types and formats of content. Park (2013) and Thoma et al. (2017) highlighted how content creation involves multiple formats, such as multimedia and visual. However, creating content comes with their set of challenges. Participants echoed the challenges, for example, BG09 shared how they struggled with maintaining the quality of their posts, developing recipes, and taking photographs when they said, "Maintaining high-quality content

was a challenge, especially given the hands-on nature of recipe development, testing, and photography. The blogger had to invest significant time and resources into creating each post."

Additionally, BG12 shared

Managing a large volume of content was overwhelming for them. They planned to post every day but wanted to provide various content, such as recipes from different parts of the world and from country to region, but it was tough to maintain that daily.

Technical and Logistical Issues. Five out of 12 (42%) participants mentioned the challenges related to technical and logistical issues in their successful experience. This theme includes struggles with website design and maintenance, technical glitches, and errors, and managing the administrative tasks of running a blog. Hosting sites, such as WordPress, have built in plugins to make the technical side of blogging easier (Sterne, n.d.). However, participants expressed their challenges with this aspect of blogging. For example, BG08 shared how they struggled with website maintenance and said, "They encountered technical difficulties like I did, such as website maintenance and optimization for increased traffic. They also continually adapted their SEO strategies to maintain domain authority and rankings." Additionally, BG02 mentioned that the other blogger had logistical issues when they tried to host a live stream on their blog that kept crashing; they said, "Dealing with technical glitches like that and ensuring a smooth live stream was challenging, especially when guests joined remotely."

Monetization and Financial Sustainability. Four out of 12 (33%) participants mentioned the challenges related to monetization and financial sustainability in their successful experience. This theme includes difficulties generating income from the blog, managing finances and expenses, and balancing creating valuable content for readers and earning a profit. Bloggers use multiple streams to generate income, such as advertising and affiliate marketing (Gretzel,

2017; Helm & Jones, 2016). However, participants highlighted the challenges associated with generating a stable income from various sources. For example, BG03 shared how they struggled with pricing models for fitness coaching and advertising from agencies, saying, "Finding a balance between providing valuable content and earning a profit from sponsorships was challenging. As their blog grew in popularity, they needed to consider different pricing models for fitness coaching and advertising from agencies." Additionally, BG12 shared how the bloggers struggled to get approval from advertising agencies, such as Mediavine, Ezoic, and Publift, by saying, "They had to build up their monthly visits to get approved, and once they had enough visits, they were still denied for whatever reason."

Summary of Research Question 2

The study's second research question explored the challenges bloggers encounter in establishing themselves within their respective niches. Three interview questions were asked to gain an understanding of the challenges. Using thematic analysis, a total of 14 themes emerged.

The themes include

1. SEO Optimization and Competition.
2. Quality and Engaging Content Creation.
3. Audience Engagement and Community Building.
4. Technical Challenges and Website Management.
5. Content Creation and Management.
6. Technical Challenges.
7. SEO and Competition.
8. Engagement and Community Building.
9. Marketing and Promotion.

10. Collaboration and Diversity.
11. Audience Engagement and Growth.
12. Content Creation and Management.
13. Technical and Logistical Issues.
14. Monetization and Financial Sustainability.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, "How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?" To explore how bloggers determine, assess, and keep track of their success, four interview questions were posed, including

- IQ 7: How do you define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?
- IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence, and if so, which ones and how do you use them?
- IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?
- IQ12: Has the experience been worth it? How?

Interview Question 7

Interviewees were prompted by the seventh interview question to reflect on their definitions of success as bloggers and the metrics they employ to gauge this success. The researcher identified six themes for this interview question. The six themes include

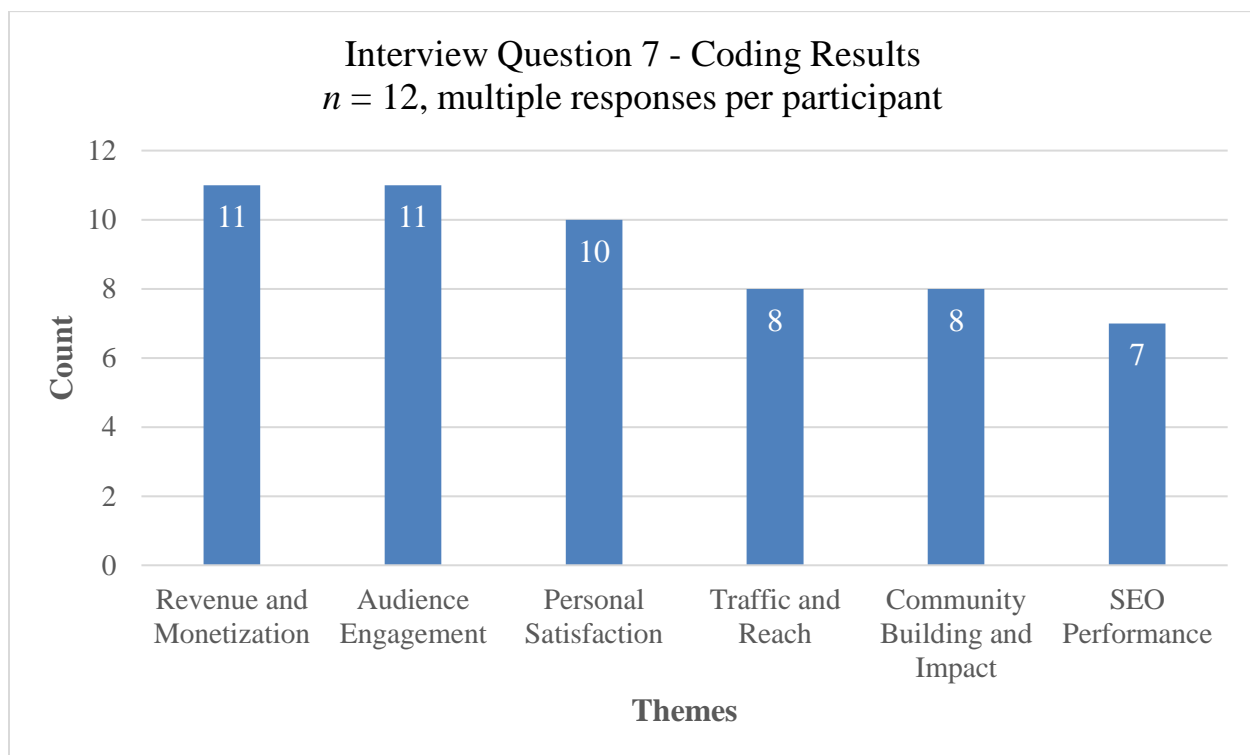
1. Revenue and Monetization.
2. Audience Engagement.

3. Personal Satisfaction.
4. Traffic and Reach.
5. Community Building and Impact.
6. SEO Performance.

Figure 12 shows the themes and their frequency.

Figure 12

How Bloggers Define Success and the Metrics They Use to Measure Success



Note. The figure represents themes and the frequencies of how the participants define, measure, and monitor their success.

Revenue and Monetization. Eleven out of 12 participants (92%) mentioned revenue and monetization as key factors defining their blogger's success. This theme includes generating income from the blog through various methods such as advertising revenue, sponsored content, affiliate marketing, and digital products. Bloggers are motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic

factors, such as income and a platform for expression (C. Huang, Y. Shen et al., 2007; Y. Li & Lin, 2012; Mehendale, 2022; Nardi et al., 2004). For example, BG01 shared how they define success based on their revenue and said

As a blogger, finding success means monetizing my blog effectively through different channels such as advertising, sponsored content, affiliate marketing, or selling my own products and services. My key metrics include my monthly revenue, conversion rates, and the return on investment (ROI) from my marketing efforts.

Similarly, BG05 shared

For me, it's about monetizing my blog through different avenues, like advertising, affiliate marketing, and sponsored content. However, I want to keep a balance so that it doesn't hurt my blog's integrity or diminish my audience's trust. It's about reaching a point of financial stability for me.

Audience Engagement. Eleven out of 12 (92%) participants also discussed audience engagement as important in determining their success as a blogger. The theme includes connecting with and engaging their audience through various platforms such as social media, email newsletters, and comments on blog posts. Interacting with the audience is a fundamental aspect of blogging and contributes to the success of a blogger (Kulkarni et al., 2013; Shutaleva et al., 2022; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). BG04 shared how they measure success based on audience engagement, "Analytically, I look at engagement rates, including comments, shares, and time spent on the page. The growth of my subscriber base and repeat visitors is a testament to the value and impact of my content." BG10 similarly shared how they define success based on their impact on their audience and community, saying, "I like seeing my readers share my posts, images, you know, all that stuff. I also like how some email me back or continue the

conversations on the blog posts." BG10 also said, "Seeing my email subscriber list grow is a good metric to measure it. It shows how genuinely they are interested in staying connected to my content."

Personal Satisfaction. Ten out of 12 (83%) participants mentioned personal satisfaction as a defining measure of their success as a blogger. This theme includes a blogger's self-fulfillment and enjoyment from creating, sharing, and engaging with their content. Nardi et al. (2004) found that bloggers are motivated by intrinsic factors, which aligns with the participants' responses, but the participants provide more in-depth detail about personal satisfaction. For example, BG09 said

Enjoying what I do, feeling challenged and fulfilled, and maintaining a work-life balance are important. Personal satisfaction is key for me. I can sustain my blogging career and remain committed to it long-term. It's not just about meeting external measures of success but also about feeling content and motivated internally.

Moreover, BG02 said, "Personal fulfillment plays a big role in defining success. I like feeling a sense of accomplishment from creating valuable content. learning new skills and seeing how I have contributed to the fashion niche." Additionally, BG10 mentioned, "I like the freedom and flexibility that blogging gives me. I can work from home and do something I love while making a living. It's my passion as long as I am happy; that is how I measure it."

Traffic and Reach. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned traffic and reach as a measure of success. This theme includes the number of page views, unique visitors, or social media followers a blogger attracts to their blog or website. While current literature, such as Pakkala et al. (2012) and Shin et al. (2022) discuss tools for bloggers to use to measure their analytics, they do not discuss how bloggers define their success and monitor it, as the

participants in this study did. For example, BG06 shared how they define success based on their reach and said: "I look at my analytics dashboard regularly to see how my blog gets traffic and from where. I also look at the returning and new visitors on a monthly basis." BG01 said, "I like seeing consistent growth in website traffic. Unique visitors and page views. I use analytical tools to track my monthly growth rates, bounce rates, and the time visitors spend on the site."

Community Building and Impact. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned community building and impact as a measure of success. This theme includes creating a community, fostering meaningful connections, and impacting their audience through their content. Research by Hunter (2015) found that blogs provide a sense of community building, especially topics that are niched, focused, and shared interests. However, there is no mention of how bloggers define and measure community building in current literature. BG08 shared how they define success based on their ability to provide an impact on their community and said, "Influence and authority refer to my impact on my readers' lives, whether it's through inspiring them with my personal stories or providing valuable insights that help improve their lives." Similarly, BG09 says, "Making a positive impact on readers' lives, whether by providing helpful information, inspiring change, or offering support and community, is a measure of my success."

SEO Performance. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants mentioned SEO performance as a measure of success. This theme includes optimizing and ranking for relevant keywords, increasing search engine visibility, and attracting organic traffic to their blog or website. While extensive research has gone into SEO (Kloostera, 2015; Kuśmierczyk & Sydow, 2013), the participants shared how they use SEO performance as method to define success. For example, BG03 shared how they define success based on their SEO performance and said, "I try to achieve high rankings for targeted keywords in SERPs. It drives organic traffic, and it indicates the

effectiveness of my SEO strategy. Lately, doing research on Ahrefs has been very helpful."

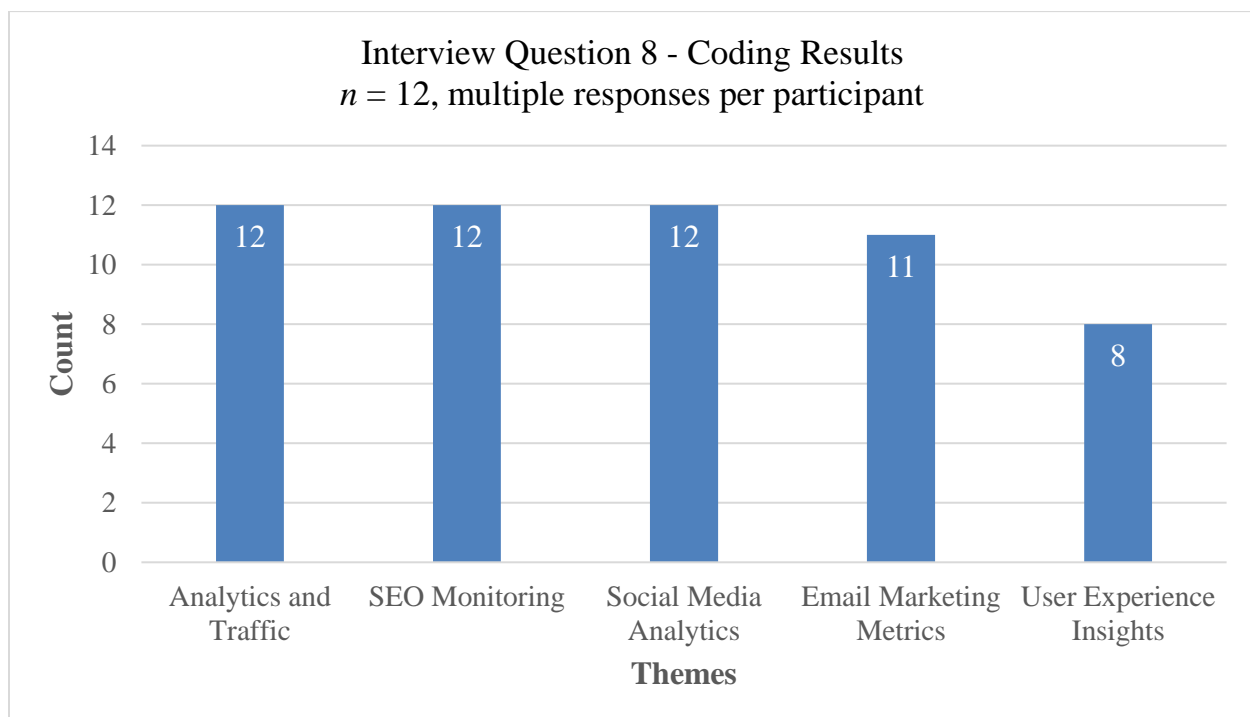
BG05 also mentioned, "Improving my SEO game and seeing growth in organic traffic is a good way for me to measure success. It shows that my content is reaching a wider audience and resonating with them."

Interview Question 8

Participants were asked about the tools or methods they find useful for monitoring or tracking their blog's or online presence's performance. The interview question yielded five themes. The themes include (a) Analytics and Traffic, (b) SEO Monitoring, (c) Social Media Analytics, (d) Email Marketing Metrics, and (e) User Experience Insights. Figure 13 shows the themes and their frequency.

Figure 13

Tools That Bloggers Use to Monitor or Track the Performance of Their Blog



Note. The figure represents themes and frequencies of the participants' methods and tools to measure and monitor their success.

Analytics and Traffic. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned using analytics and traffic tools to monitor and track the performance of their blog or online presence. This theme includes tools that provide data on website traffic, user behavior, and engagement metrics, primarily focusing on quantitative analysis of blog performance. Indeed research has provided analytical tools to provide bloggers with insights into their blog performance (Pakkala et al., 2012; Plaza, 2011; Prantl & Prantl, 2018; Shin et al., 2022), the participants in this study mentioned the specifics they look at when analyzing the analytical tools. For example, BG03 mentioned

I like to use Google Analytics. I think everyone does. It's free and easy to use. I look at the number of sessions, page views, and time spent on pages. I also monitor bounce rates to see how engaging my content is. It also tells me where people are coming from and the demographics. It's an important tool for understanding the audience and improving my blog.

Similarly, BG05 said, "Analytics tools like Google Analytics have been great for understanding my blog's performance. It allows me to track visitor behavior, demographics, and acquisition channels, providing data-driven insights to inform my content strategy." Additionally, BG10 said, "I frequently check my Google Analytics dashboard to analyze traffic patterns, audience demographics, and popular content. It helps me understand how well my blog reaches the right people with the right content."

SEO Monitoring. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned using SEO monitoring tools to track and optimize their search engine performance. This theme includes

tools specifically designed to monitor search engine performance, keyword rankings, and SEO health of the blog, aiding in optimizing content for search visibility. The blogging community has multiple keyword research tools, such as SEMrush, Ahrefs, and Moz (Calvano et al., 2021; Erdmann et al., 2022; Fundingsland et al., 2021; M. Lin et al., 2023; Vyas, 2019; Zia & Mushtaq, 2021). While the literature mentions the tools, the participants of this study discuss how bloggers use them. For example, BG11 stated, "I use SEMrush for tracking keyword rankings and optimizing content based on popular or trending keywords. It also gives me insights into my backlink profile and competitors' strategies, which is very helpful for improving my SEO performance." Similarly, BG07 said, "I use a variety of tools like SEMrush, Moz, and Ahrefs to monitor my SEO performance and identify areas I can improve upon. I also use SurferSEO to optimize my content as I write it."

Social Media Analytics. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned using social media analytics tools to track the performance of their social media presence. This theme includes built-in analytics provided by social media platforms, allowing bloggers to measure their content's reach, engagement, and growth across social networks. This theme aligns with current literature on how bloggers and other business websites can monitor their engagement metrics on social media (A. Singh et al., 2010). For example, BG04 shared how they monitor their social media performance by saying, "Social media analytics platforms, like Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics, help me assess the performance of my content on these channels and optimize my social media strategy for better engagement." Similarly, BG02 said, "I use Buzzsumo for content research and monitoring of social media shares and engagements. It's a great way to see what content resonates with the readers. I use Hootsuite to schedule and track my posts on social media."

Email Marketing Metrics. Eleven out of 12 participants (92%) mentioned using email marketing metrics to track and measure the success of their email campaigns. This theme includes tools or platforms that allow bloggers to analyze the performance of their email newsletters or campaigns, including open rates, click-through rates, and conversions. This theme aligns with previous research (Bernstein & Wolfram-Hvass, 2015; Philipp, 2023), that discusses how automation tools can help bloggers with email marketing. However, the participants specifically discuss the services they use for email marketing. For example, BG06 said, "I use Mailchimp for email marketing, and it provides detailed reports on my campaigns, which allows me to see how many people open and read my emails, click on links, or make a purchase." Also, BG09 shared their experience by saying, "I use ConvertKit for email marketing. It has templates that I can use, check my metrics, and puts my subs into segments. It's a great platform. I like it. It also helps with automation workflows and A/B testing."

User Experience Insights. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned using tools or methods to obtain user experience insights and feedback from their audience. This theme includes tools that offer visual and behavioral insights into how users interact with the blog, such as heatmaps, session recordings, and user feedback mechanisms. Despite the extensive use of various analytics tools by bloggers, the literature lacks discussions on how bloggers obtain user experience insights directly from their audiences, underscoring a pivotal gap that this research study uniquely addresses by providing empirical data on the subject. For example, BG10 said, "I use Hotjar for heatmaps and session recordings to see how users interact with my blog, which helps me optimize the layout and design for a better user experience." BG07 also mentioned, "Crazy Egg is pretty good to see what's happening with people. I like seeing the heatmaps, recordings, and CTAs to see how they interact or if they get distracted."

Interview Question 9

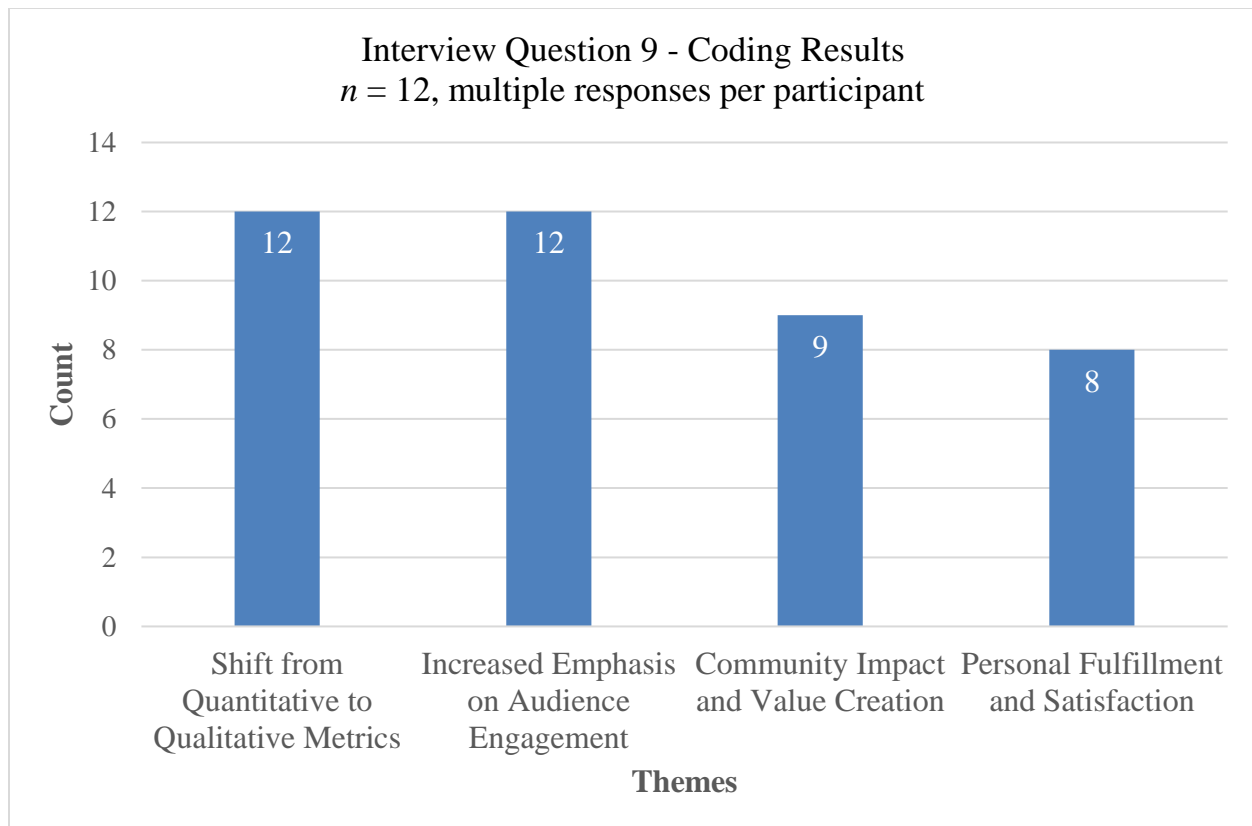
Interviewees were asked to ponder whether their definitions of success and how they measure it has evolved. After the responses, four themes emerged that include

1. Shift from Quantitative to Qualitative Metrics.
2. Increased Emphasis on Audience Engagement.
3. Community Impact and Value Creation.
4. Personal Fulfillment and Satisfaction.

Figure 14 shows the themes and their frequency.

Figure 14

How The Definition of Success Has Evolved Overtime



Note. The figure represents themes and the frequency with which participants mentioned how their definition of success has evolved.

Shift from Quantitative to Qualitative Metrics. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned a shift from primarily focusing on quantitative metrics to also considering qualitative metrics when measuring the success of their blog or online presence. This theme reflects a change in perspective towards valuing more than numerical indicators (e.g., page views, subscriber counts) to valuing qualitative measures of success (e.g., reader engagement, content impact). Research by Nardi et al. (2004) found that bloggers are motivated by intrinsic factors, such as fostering a sense of community or expressing creativity. Yet, the participants expressed how their shift from income and monetization changes over time. For example, BG03 said:

Initially, success was quantified by page views, unique visitors, and traffic metrics. My goal was to establish my presence and attract an audience to get monetized. Now, I consider a blog successful when it creates value for my readers and resonates with them, but I do make my own income, so monetization always takes priority.

Similarly, BG01 said, "Initially, success was largely about visibility and monetization. The main goals were high traffic numbers and earning income from my blogs." BG07 mentioned, "My focus was purely on quantitative data such as page views and follower counts. Over time, I realized that while these numbers are important, they don't tell the whole story."

Increased Emphasis on Audience Engagement. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned emphasizing audience engagement as a measure of success. This theme reflects the growing importance placed on the depth of interaction with the audience, including comments, emails, and social media interactions, as indicators of success. Audience engagement is an important aspect of blogging as it reflects the effectiveness of blog content in creating a connection with readers (Kulkarni et al., 2013). However, the participants discussed audience engagement as a measurement of success. For example, BG08 said

However, over time, I've come to appreciate the value of deeper engagement and the quality of the conversations sparked by my content. I've shifted towards meaningful metrics like the time spent on my site, the comments section's activity, and personal feedback received via email. It is not just about reaching a wide audience but rather about impacting the audience I do reach.

BG11 shared, "I used to focus on page views and social media followers, but now I prioritize comments and personal messages from my readers. It's a more meaningful measure of success for me." Similarly, BG06 mentioned, "success is no longer just about traffic or income numbers. It's also about creating a community and building relationships with my audience."

Community Impact and Value Creation. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants mentioned considering the impact and value their blog brings to their community or target audience as a measure of success. This theme is defined by the ability to impact readers' lives positively, contribute to the community, and create valuable, impactful content. While most blog literature that focuses on bloggers' impact on consumer purchasing behavior and social connection (Esteban-Santos et al., 2018; H. Ko et al., 2013; Lohtia et al., 2013), the participants discussed it as a way to define success. For example, BG09 said, "The positive impact my blogs have on readers, such as helping them solve a problem, providing credible information, or inspiring change, has become a key measure of success." Similarly, BG11 mentioned another evolution in success, which now "means building a supportive community around my blog and engaging in meaningful collaborations. Success is not just in numbers but in relationships and connections with my audience and peers in the blogging community."

Personal Fulfillment and Satisfaction. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned personal fulfillment and satisfaction as important measures of success. This theme reflects the

shift towards finding purpose and passion in blogging, creating content that aligns with one's values and interests, and feeling fulfilled by its impact. A. Gill et al. (2009) found that bloggers are motivated to blog by expressing their creativity and gratifying their personal interests. The participants expressed the same sentiment but focused on it as a form of success rather than a motivation. For example, BG05 said, "Success also became more about personal satisfaction with the content. Being able to post content makes me feel good about it. Having a good work-life balance also helps out." BG10 shared a holistic view: "While I still monitor traditional metrics like traffic and engagement, I also consider how satisfied I am with my work. Am I continuing to learn and grow? Am I enjoying the process of creating content? Things like that."

Interview Question 12

Interviewees were prompted by the twelfth question to reflect on whether the experience was worth it and how it has been worth it. The researcher identified three themes

1. Impact and Influence.
2. Financial Independence.
3. Creative Outlet.

Figure 15 shows the themes and their frequency.

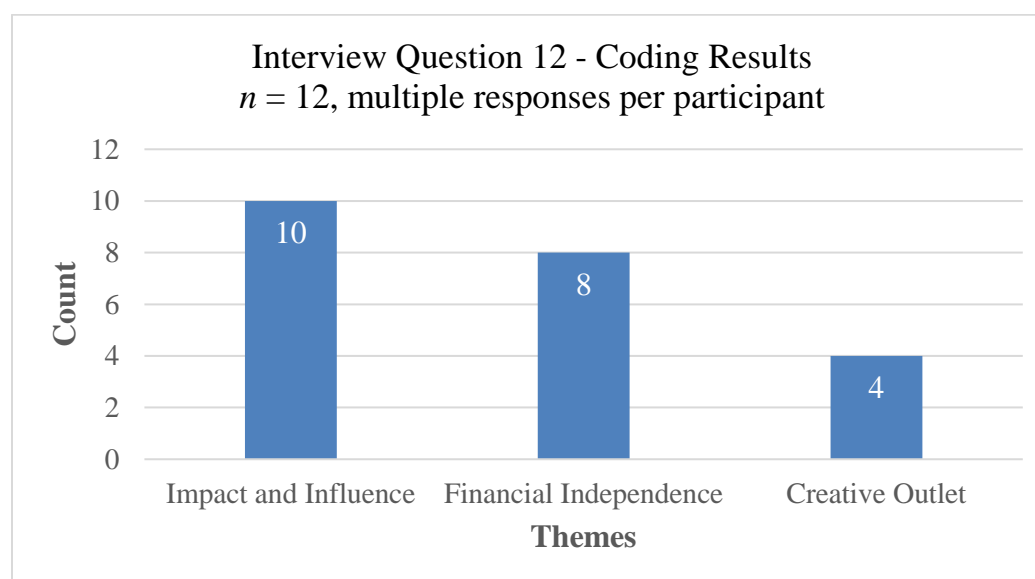
Impact and Influence. Ten out of 12 (83%) participants mentioned the impact and influence their blogging experience has had on themselves and others as a reason why it has been worth it. This theme is defined by the ability to positively impact others' lives through content, whether by inspiring, educating, or advocating for causes. Y. Li and Lin (2012) focused on the intrinsic factors that motivate bloggers to blog. Nonetheless, despite their identification of motivations such as the desire to engage in a novel form of journaling, curiosity, and the

inclination to conform to trends, participants in the study diverged from these findings. For example, BG01 said:

Having a platform that allows me to share my thoughts and passion has helped me make a positive impact. Whether helping someone discover a new hobby, improving their skills, or gaining confidence, knowing I can positively touch someone's life makes it all worthwhile.

Figure 15

Themes On If the Experience Has Been Worth It



Note. The figure represents themes and the frequencies participants mentioned on whether their successful blogging experience has been worth it.

BG05 shared, "Perhaps most importantly, the blog has been a platform for advocating for pet welfare and responsible pet ownership." Similarly, BG09 said, "Receiving feedback from readers about how my content has helped them in their lives is rewarding to me. Knowing that my work positively impacts their lives makes it worthwhile." The theme also covers different niches, as BG10 shared with the travel niche: "One of the most gratifying parts of blogging is

that my content has inspired readers to explore new destinations and use the sustainable travel practices that I write about."

Financial Independence. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants mentioned achieving financial independence as a significant reason why their blogging experience has been worth it. This theme reflects the success in monetization, whether through advertising, sponsorships, affiliate marketing, or selling products and services. Research by S. Müller et al. (2011) suggests that bloggers do monetize their blogs using strategies, such as advertising. The participants in the study discussed monetization as financial independence and a way to justify the time and effort invested in blogging. For example, BG08 said, "Financially, the blog has become a sustainable source of income. It has let me work independently on my terms. Similarly, BG06 shared, "it has offered financial independence and flexibility. It let me carve out a career that aligns with my passions and lifestyle." Additionally, BG03 stated

Monetizing my blog wasn't an overnight success. It took almost a year to gain a sustainable income. I posted almost daily, but it was worth it once I got traction and gained a steady income. Having that kind of financial freedom is something I'm proud of and grateful for.

Creative Outlet. Four out of 12 (33%) participants mentioned the creative outlet and personal fulfillment as reasons why their blogging experience has been worth it. This theme reflects the opportunity to express oneself, share one's passions and interests, and have a platform for self-expression. Bloggers tend to share their personal opinions and express themselves whether it be because of tragic events (Jankowski, 2010), shared interests (Wall, 2005), or self-expression (Rogers & Green, 2015). For example, BG02 stated

Blogging has been an outlet for me. It lets me share my interests and ideas with anyone who is willing to read them. I enjoy the freedom to create content on topics that I am passionate about. It's honestly satisfying, and it's a source of motivation.

Similarly, BG07 said, "Blogging is an outlet for me. I can express my thoughts and feelings on a subject I'm passionate about and connect with like-minded individuals. It brings me joy." BG12 discussed how blogging helped him express his thoughts about snakes when he shared, "I have been passionate about snakes since I was a child. Blogging has given me a platform to voice my thoughts and educate others on these misunderstood creatures."

Summary of Research Question 3

Exploration of how bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry was the central focus of the third research question. Participants were asked four interview questions about how they define success and the tools they use to measure and monitor their success. Thematic analysis was used, and 18 themes emerged. The themes include

1. Revenue and Monetization.
2. Audience Engagement.
3. Personal Satisfaction.
4. Traffic and Reach.
5. Community Building and Impact.
6. SEO Performance.
7. Analytics and Traffic.
8. SEO Monitoring.
9. Social Media Analytics.
10. Email Marketing Metrics.

11. User Experience Insights.
12. Shift from Quantitative to Qualitative Metrics.
13. Increased Emphasis on Audience Engagement.
14. Community Impact and Value Creation.
15. Personal Fulfillment and Satisfaction.
16. Impact and Influence.
17. Financial Independence.
18. Creative Outlet.

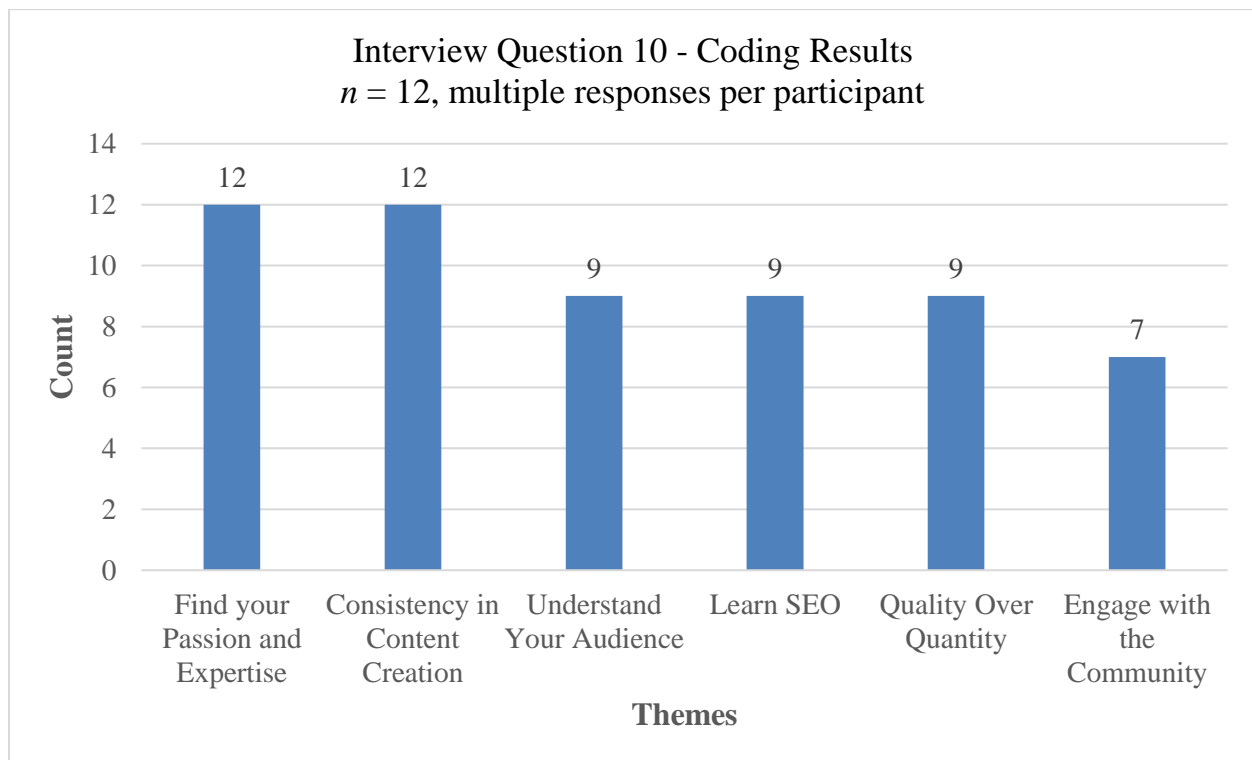
Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked, "What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?" The following interview questions were developed to answer research question 4

- IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?
- IQ 11: Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?

Interview Question 10

Interview question 10 asked the participants to reflect on any advice they would give to aspiring bloggers who want to establish themselves in the industry. After the 12 responses, a total of six themes emerged. The themes include: (a) Find your Passion and Expertise, (b) Consistency in Content Creation, (c) Understand Your Audience, (d) Learn SEO, and (e) Quality Over Quantity. The themes and frequencies are displayed in Figure 16.

Figure 16*Advice for Aspiring Bloggers*

Note. The figure represents themes and the frequency with which participants give aspiring bloggers advice.

Find Your Passion and Expertise. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned the importance of finding passion and expertise when starting a blog. This theme reflects choosing a niche based on personal interest and expertise to ensure sustained motivation and authentic content. Finding a niche or expertise is vital to bloggers as it can positively impact a blog's success and audience engagement (Germic et al., 2021). As BG01 shared

Choose a niche you are genuinely passionate about and where you have or can develop expertise. Blogging requires a lot of time and effort, and it's much easier to stay motivated and produce engaging content if you're writing about something you love and understand.

Similarly, BG04 shared, "The best advice I would offer aspiring bloggers is to immerse themselves in their chosen niche and strive for authenticity." Additionally, BG05 shared something called Unique Value Proposition (UVP) when she shared that bloggers should "Determine what sets your blog apart from others in the same niche. It could be your unique perspective, specialized knowledge, or a particular topic approach."

Consistency in Content Creation. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned the importance of consistency in content creation. This theme reflects the need to maintain a regular posting schedule to build audience trust and improve blog visibility and SEO. Posting consistently is a successful strategy (Berger et al., 2013), however it also takes time to research quality content and stay organized (Y. Li, 2021; Miura & Yamashita, 2007). For example, BG06 shared, "Be patient and consistent. Building a trusted and recognized blog within a niche takes time and dedication. Set yourself up for a marathon, not a sprint, and keep refining your strategy based on feedback and performance metrics." BG07 said, "Establish a regular posting schedule and stick to it. Posting consistent content can help build authority and trust with your audience." BG10 also emphasized the importance of consistency when he shared, "Consistency is key. Be consistent in your posting schedule, content quality, and engagement with your audience. Consistency builds credibility and helps establish you as a reliable source within your niche."

Understand Your Audience. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants mentioned the importance of understanding their target audience when starting a blog. This theme reflects the need to create content that resonates with readers and addresses their needs and interests. It is important to understand the interests and needs of the target audience so that bloggers can create engaging and valuable content (Han et al., 2009). As BG12 shared,

You have to research and understand your target audience. You need to understand their needs and challenges and their interests. Understanding all of that will guide you in creating content that will eventually resonate with them and provide value to them. If you can solve their problems, then that's even better. Most people search How-to this and how-to that. So it's always good to solve problems.

Additionally, BG09 shared the importance of involving the audience in content creation by saying, "Involve your readers. Ask them for feedback and suggestions on what they would like to see on your blog. It will make them feel appreciated and give you future content. Leverage social media comments and posts as well. Similarly, BG08 advised on understanding gaps the audience wants to know by saying, "Understand the current conversations, what's the audience's pain points? What are the gaps in the current content out there?"

Learn SEO. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants mentioned the importance of understanding and implementing SEO strategies when starting a blog. This theme reflects on acquiring knowledge in SEO to enhance blog visibility in search engines, attract organic traffic, and cater to the audience's search queries. This theme reflects the importance of SEO and how it is needed for bloggers to be successful (Schultheiß & Lewandowski, 2020). For example, BG09 advises, "You have to have a solid understanding of SEO if you want to blog. Optimize your content to rank high on Google, and you'll get a lot of traffic from SERPs." BG05 mentioned the importance of on-page SEO by sharing, "Invest time into keyword research and understand SEO. Use on-page SEO like titles, meta descriptions, internal linking. etc." Similarly, BG02 discussed how understanding "SEO principles like backlinks, keywords, and blog organization can help to rank your content organically and drive traffic to your website."

Quality Over Quantity. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants mentioned prioritizing quality over quantity when creating blog content. This theme reflects the need to produce high-quality, well-researched, and engaging content rather than focusing on producing a large volume of subpar content. While generating high-quality content includes allocation of time and resources (O'Neill & Curran, 2011), it is crucial for building a strong reputation and audience trust (Berger et al., 2013). For instance, BG03 shared, "Quality should always come first. One or two good posts are much better than several mediocre ones. As long as your post is high quality, it will keep your audience engaged and reduce the bounce rate." BG06 also emphasized the importance of quality by saying, "Don't sacrifice quality for quantity. It's better to post consistently with high-quality content rather than rushing and posting low-quality content."

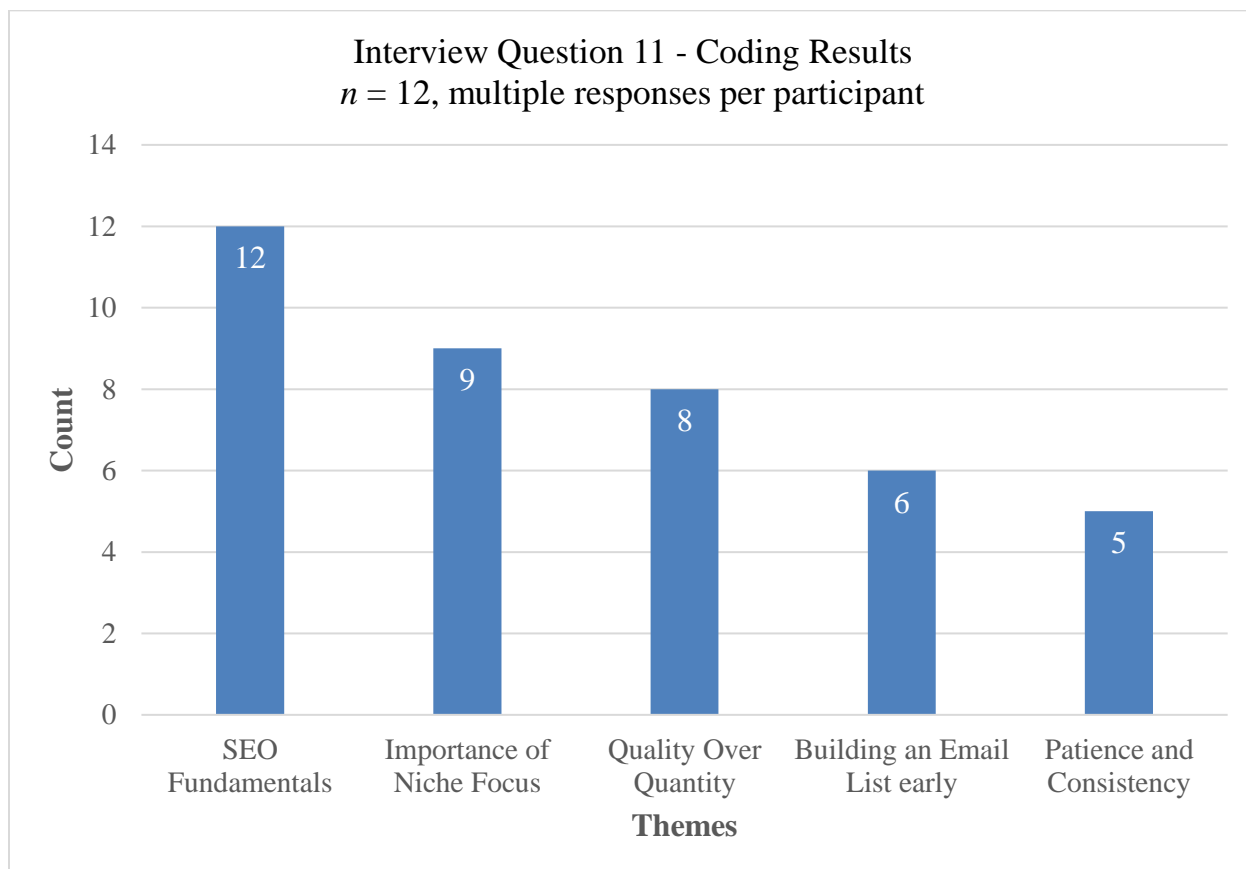
Engage with the Community. Seven out of 12 (58%) participants mentioned the importance of engaging with the blogging community. This theme reflects on actively interacting with readers and the broader community through comments, social media, and emails to build loyalty and gather feedback. Bloggers use comments and feedback to gauge their audiences' interest (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005), and to generate content ideas (Hookway, 2008; Luehmann, 2008). However, the participants shared that bloggers should engage with the community to build strong relationships. For example, BG10 shared, "Engage with your audience and other bloggers in your niche. Leave comments on their posts, respond to questions and feedback, and participate in discussions. This will help you build relationships, expand your reach, and help with backlinks." BG06 also shared the importance of engagement with the community by saying, "Engage with your audience and the community. Comment on forums like Reddit or other social media. Build relationships so you can get known and gain insights into what readers want to know to create your content."

Interview Question 11

The eleventh interview question asked participants to reflect on their journey and discuss any specific lessons or strategies they wished they had known when they began their blogging career. After reviewing 12 responses, five themes were identified. The themes include (a) SEO Fundamentals, (b) Importance of Niche Focus, (c) Quality Over Quantity, (d) Building an Email List early, and (e) Patience and Consistency. The themes and frequencies are displayed in Figure 17.

Figure 17

Lessons or Strategies Bloggers Wish They Knew When They Started Blogging



Note. The figure represents themes, and the frequencies of lessons or strategies bloggers wish they had known before starting.

SEO Fundamentals. Twelve out of 12 (100%) participants mentioned the importance of basic understanding and implementation of SEO strategies when starting a blog. This theme reflects the need to optimize content for search engines, understand keyword research, and implement on-page SEO techniques. This theme aligns with the extensive research done on SEO, which highlights the significant role it plays in increasing blog traffic and blog success (Schultheiß & Lewandowski, 2020). For example, BG01 discussed how SEO is the most important thing to know when blogging because

I underestimated the importance of SEO when I first started. I posted regularly, thinking that would make me rank high on SERPs, but that wasn't the case. So, if I could go back, I would do keyword research and get tools like Ahrefs and SurferSEO. I would do on-page SEO, optimize my content for keywords, and try to focus on increasing my domain authority.

Moreover, BG03 elaborated on the critical nature of SEO and the lasting value of evergreen content, emphasizing their significance by stating,

I viewed SEO as a set of hacks or shortcuts to get quick rankings, but I did not know what I was doing. Over time, I learned that SEO success is built on consistent, quality content creation and smart keyword research. If I were to put that into a strategy, I would adopt a long-term perspective on SEO, focus on evergreen content, and stay updated with Google's algorithm changes.

Furthermore, BG11 discussed the importance of understanding SEO basics and building backlinks by stating:

I wish I knew how backlinks work. When I started, I did not focus on link building and only wrote my posts based on inspiration and no keyword research. In my opinion, SEO

and backlinks are very important because they are the main factors determining how high you rank on Google. So, I would advise new bloggers to study SEO and understand how backlinks work early on.

Importance of Niche Focus. Nine out of 12 (75%) participants emphasized the importance of having a niche focus when starting a blog. This theme reflects the need to select and concentrate on a specific niche to attract a dedicated audience and establish expertise. Bloggers who focus on a niche and disseminate their expertise on a subject can have a better chance of standing out, attracting loyal readership, and establish domain authority (Bosangit et al., 2009; B. Pan et al., 2007). Participants shared the advice of pursuing a niche as it can establish them as a go-to source of information on the subject they are blogging about. For instance, BG10 shared:

I tried to cover a broad range of topics when I first began. Later, I learned that having a clear niche focus is important to build a dedicated readership. Since I focused on a specific niche, I have been able to become an expert in the area for which I'm known. My blog has been a go-to resource for specific information for some.

Similarly, BG03 articulated the significance of maintaining a focus on niche markets, conveying this perspective by sharing,

I looked for a wider audience and wrote anything about finance. I figured it would give me a larger audience, but it made it harder to rank and stand out. It is much better to focus on a specific niche or sub-niche to be the expert, have authority over keywords, and rank one on the search page.

Quality Over Quantity. Eight out of 12 (67%) participants emphasized prioritizing quality over quantity when starting a blog. This theme reflects on producing high-quality, well-

researched, and engaging content rather than focusing on the frequency of posts. Producing high-quality content is important as it demonstrates expertise, increases readership, and keeps the audience engaged longer (O'Neill & Curran, 2011). While the literature highlights the importance of high-quality content, the participants mentioned why it is important over quantity of posts. For example, BG09 shared:

I made the mistake of trying to post every day when I started blogging. It was exhausting, and I couldn't keep up with the quality. Later, I realized it is better to post less frequently and focus on producing high-quality content. One well-researched and engaging post per week will be much more valuable than five mediocre posts.

Furthermore, BG12 stated the importance of quality content with keywords over quantity by sharing:

I wish I knew that quality always beats quantity. Early on, I focused on pushing out as much content as possible and sacrificed the quality of my posts. I've shifted my focus to producing well-researched and high-quality content less often. It's better for maintaining readers' interest and attracting new ones. There's a lot of software out now, so it makes it easier for new bloggers to post multiple posts a day. I don't recommend that. Stick to what works, which is quality posts with SEO keywords.

Building an Email List Early. Six out of 12 (50%) participants recognized the importance of building an email list early in their blogging journey. This theme reflects the need to collect emails from readers and use them for marketing efforts, such as advertising new blog posts, products, and services. Bloggers use emails for email marketing (Bernstein & Wolfram-Hvass, 2015) and to engage with their readers (Philipp, 2023). The participants expressed their regrets for not building an email list early on and advised new bloggers to do so and as to why it

is a critical aspect of blogging. For instance, BG06 shared, "One important part is to build an email list and engage with it regularly. It acts as a direct line of communication with the most engaged members who visit your blog." BG03 shared a similar lesson: "I did not build an email list right away, and it hurt me in the long run. I wish I would have started right away because once I got established, I didn't have anyone to promote my products to."

Patience and Consistency. Five out of 12 (42%) participants highlighted the importance of patience and consistency when starting a blog. This theme reflects the need to be patient with results and consistently produce content, even when there may not be immediate success. While the literature discusses the importance of consistently posting high quality content (Y. Li, 2021; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007), the participants discussed the amount of time it takes and how results may not be immediate. For example, BG06 shared:

I didn't realize the tenacity that you need to create and promote content when I first started. You have to balance creativity with persistence and patience, especially in the beginning when you're not seeing immediate results. It takes time to build an audience and rank in search engines. Also, you probably won't be able to get monetized right away. While you might get Google AdSense, it's better to wait it out and go with Mediavine or Ezoic.

Similarly, BG12 expressed someone should stay consistent to be successful and leverage social media platforms to promote their content by sharing:

I thought that success was going to be easy because all I had to do was talk about what I liked about pet snakes and snakes in general. However, it does require patience and consistent effort. I realized that if I want to see results, I have to consistently produce quality content and promote it consistently on social media. Believe it or not, my most

valuable social media site at the time was Pinterest. If I had to start over, I would leverage Reddit or TikTok over Pinterest.

Summary Research Question 4

The objective of research question four was to understand the advice experienced bloggers would offer aspiring bloggers who want to establish their presence in the blogging industry. Two interview questions were developed to answer the research question. Thematic analysis was used, and ten themes emerged, including (a) Find your Passion and Expertise, (b) Consistency in Content Creation, (c) Understand Your Audience, (d) Learn SEO, (e) Quality Over Quantity, (f) SEO Fundamentals, (g) Importance of niche Focus, (h) Quality Over Quantity, (i) Building an Email List early, and (j) Patience and Consistency.

Chapter 4 Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the best practices and strategies bloggers use to operate and maintain their successful blogs. Data gathered from 12 successful bloggers through 12 semi-structured interview questions and a thematic analysis revealed 59 themes, shown in Table 7. An inter-rater review process confirmed the validity of these themes. The subsequent chapter will discuss each research question, its implications, and future research opportunities.

Table 7*Overview of Themes Across the Four Research Questions*

RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	RQ 4
How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?	How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?	What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?
SEO Optimization	SEO Optimization and Competition	Revenue and Monetization	Find your Passion and Expertise
Consistency in Publishing High-Quality Content	Quality and Engaging Content Creation	Audience Engagement	Consistency in Content Creation
Engagement with the Audience	Audience Engagement and Community Building	Personal Satisfaction	Understand Your Audience
Use of Visuals and Multimedia	Technical Challenges and Website Management	Traffic and Reach	Learn SEO
In-depth Research and Authenticity	Content Creation and Management	Community Building and Impact	Quality Over Quantity
Strategic Promotion and Social Media Usage	Technical Challenges	SEO Performance	SEO Fundamentals
Niche Focus and Audience Segmentation	SEO and Competition	Analytics and Traffic	Importance of Niche Focus
Strategic SEO and Content Promotion	Engagement and Community Building	SEO Monitoring	Quality Over Quantity
Community Engagement and Collaboration	Marketing and Promotion	Social Media Analytics	Building an Email List early
Engaging Content and Storytelling	Collaboration and Diversity	Email Marketing Metrics	Patience and Consistency.
Quality Visuals and Media	Audience Engagement and Growth	User Experience Insights	

(continued)

RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	RQ 4
Content Quality and Variety	Content Creation and Management	Shift from Quantitative to Qualitative Metrics	
Strategic Collaborations	Technical and Logistical Issues	Increased Emphasis on Audience Engagement	
SEO and Keyword Optimization	Monetization and Financial Sustainability.	Community Impact and Value Creation	
Community Engagement		Personal Fulfillment and Satisfaction	
Multi-Platform Promotion		Impact and Influence	
Authenticity and Personalization		Financial Independence	
		Creative Outlet	

Note. This table represents the themes for their respective research questions.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

As the digital landscape evolves, bloggers have emerged as influential voices shaping public opinion and consumer behavior (Chopra et al., 2020; Drezner & Farrell, 2008).

Businesses leverage blogger influence by engaging them for product endorsements and reviews, effectively tapping into the bloggers' dedicated readerships (Halvorsen et al., 2013). The individualization of media consumption has made many readers gravitate towards favorite blogs that align with their interests (Pantic, 2019). Furthermore, bloggers have cultivated various revenue streams, such as advertising, sponsored content, and affiliate marketing, with some achieving significant financial success (Wasilczuk & Heinonen, 2023).

Intent of the Study

This study intended to analyze and synthesize successful bloggers' diverse practices and strategies in the blog industry. Through this study, the researcher aims to transcend the surface-level understanding of blogging success, uncovering the underlying principles, techniques, and methodologies contributing to a blog's impact and reach. This study is motivated by the increasing interest in blogging as a form of communication and its potential to influence opinion formation and consumer behavior. The study aims to construct a framework highlighting the key components of successful blogging and guiding aspiring bloggers.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored blogging methods and approaches that contribute to measuring success. It involved a systemic examination of content quality, audience engagement, marketing tactics, and the monetization strategies that make blogging a viable profession for some (Kjellberg, 2010). With the insights gained from this study, aspiring bloggers can implement

effective practices and techniques to build their brand and establish a loyal readership. This study seeks to enhance the current body of knowledge by defining the specific competencies necessary for bloggers to manage and sustain their blogs efficiently.

Summary of the Study

This research examined bloggers' best practices, strategies, and challenges to operate and sustain successful blogs. Through a comprehensive literature review, four research questions were developed. Twelve open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were used to gather information from bloggers. These questions underwent a three-step validation process, including *prima facie*, peer review, and expert review validity. The study used a qualitative phenomenology approach, allowing the researcher to understand the bloggers' lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Purposive sampling was used as it allowed the selection of participants with specific characteristics that align with the research objectives (Yadav et al., 2019). A master list was utilized to identify potential participants for the research. From a pool of 90 potential participants, 12 individuals who satisfied the inclusion requirements were selected for interviews. Participants were selected through Facebook Groups, where bloggers are actively involved. While the study originally sought to interview 15-20 participants, saturation was reached after 12 interviews. The researcher determined saturation was reached by analyzing the data for repeating themes, and no new information emerged in subsequent interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The interviews were conducted via Zoom; audio was recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai.

The collected data underwent thematic analysis, a method approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2020). An interrater review

process, facilitating the objective assessment of research findings through the involvement of multiple evaluators, was used to guarantee the study's validity (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Two cohort members were selected to evaluate and validate the themes. Once validation was complete, the themes corresponding to each interview question were illustrated in Chapter 4 through charts for data visualization. Participants' quotes were used throughout to support the themes identified.

Discussion of the Findings

The research objective was to uncover successful bloggers' strategies and best practices, identify their challenges, explore their strategies for overcoming them, and examine how they monitor, evaluate, and track their success. Analyzing the collected data through thematic techniques resulted in the discovering of 59 themes. The study was directed by four research questions, which were

- RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?
- RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?
- RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?

Results for Research Question 1

The first research question asked, "How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?" Three interview questions were developed to answer the first research question. The findings indicate that Search Engine Optimization (SEO),

audience engagement, creating backlinks, creating quality content, and strategically promotion their posts are the strategies employed by successful bloggers.

Discussion of Research Question 1

The results of the first research question indicate that successful bloggers emphasize SEO and everything that involves SEO, such as creating quality content, on-page and off-page SEO, and blog post promotion using social media. SEO is a powerful tool for bloggers as these strategies help to increase their visibility and attract more traffic. Extensive research has gone into SEO as an effective tool for blog visibility (Vyas, 2019; Yalçın & Köse, 2010; Zakharenko & Smagulova, 2020). The findings are aligned with Alfiana et al. (2023), who suggest that SEO is a continued process that needs constant updating as search engines' algorithms change regularly. As such, bloggers must continually monitor and update their SEO strategies for maximum impact. Moreover, Malaga (2008) indicated that SEO is a viable strategy for enhancing Search Engine Result Page (SERP) ranking and website traffic.

Creating quality content provides blogs with organic SEO, which drives organic traffic and can be shared across multiple social media platforms (Prakash, 2020). Quality content also ensures visitors spend more time on a particular blog, positively impacting a website's bounce rate (C. S. Pitt et al., 2019). Gangi and Wasko (2009) also observed that organizations providing high-quality user-generated content influence potential customers' engagement, experience, and interests. Developing content tailored to meet the reader's requirements and encouraging interaction enhances the growth of a loyal readership (Hughes et al., 2019). Moreover, these findings resonate with Killoran's (2013) suggestion that producing high-quality content enhances SEO and SERPs ranking. Consequently, this attracts more visitors and leads to increased blog traffic.

On-page and off-page SEO is another strategy that helps successful bloggers as it enhances a blog's visibility and ranking through various SEO techniques (G. Kumar & Paul, 2020). On-page SEO involves conducting keyword research and using keywords in headlines, URLs, images, and meta descriptions (Enge et al., 2015). Successful bloggers strategically place keywords in their blog's titles, URLs, and descriptions for increased organic traffic. Additionally, bloggers conduct extensive keyword research to use keywords with high search volumes and integrate them into their quality content.

Similarly, off-page SEO involves acquiring backlinks from external websites to improve a blog's ranking (Kloostr, 2015). Backlinks serve as external endorsements for bloggers, boosting their credibility and authority (Ranjpour, 2024). As such, successful bloggers focus on creating backlinks to improve their blog's visibility and attract more traffic. The backlinks or link-building process can improve website traffic and potentially increase the blog's revenue, as suggested by S. Zhang and Cabage (2016). While it is mentioned in the literature that off-page SEO techniques allow bloggers to submit articles to high-impact websites to boost their blog's visibility (Patil & Patil, 2018), it does not provide how it should be done. For example, HARO is a website that connects bloggers or journalists with sources so they can submit guest posts for publishing. Of course, HARO is one of the many platforms' bloggers can utilize to acquire backlinks from authoritative websites.

Another off-page SEO strategy involves blog post promotion using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest (Cawcutt et al., 2019; Collins et al., 2016). Mladenović et al. (2022) highlight that social sharing blog posts could give bloggers a wider audience and potentially acquire more website backlinks. Additionally, promoting with social media could help bloggers enhance relationships with followers to build a community of

loyal readers, thus enhancing audience engagement. Furthermore, guest blogging is also an effective strategy utilized by successful bloggers, wherein they write posts for other blogs in their niche and gain exposure to a wider audience (Cawcutt et al., 2019; Collins et al., 2016; Dobeles et al., 2015). This technique not only helps acquire valuable backlinks but also allows networking with other bloggers within the same niche.

Results for Research Question 2

The second research question asked, "What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?" Three interview questions were developed to answer the second research question. The results indicate that the challenges bloggers encounter include changes in search engine algorithms, monetization, the creation of quality content, and audience interaction.

Discussion of Research Question 2

While SEO is a powerful strategy for bloggers and websites (Bhandari & Bansal, 2018), it is a challenge for many bloggers as keyword rankings change because of competitors and trends and because search engine algorithms change. For example, Wilkinson and Thelwall (2010) emphasized the difficulties of selecting suitable keywords for bloggers to use in their SEO strategies. They pointed out that these challenges stem from the ambiguity of keywords with multiple meanings and the issue of keywords being closely related but not identical. Bloggers are sometimes unaware that they use black-hat SEO techniques that can hurt their blog's ranking and authority. The techniques include stolen content, keyword stuffing or spamming, and link purchasing for backlinks (R. Yang et al., 2021). The results of black-hat SEO techniques could cause blogs or websites to be banned from search engines. As such, bloggers should implement good SEO strategies, such as thorough keyword research,

strategically utilizing keywords in various places, and avoiding black-hat techniques to ensure their blog's visibility and ranking (J. Chen & Sénéchal, 2023).

Monetization is another challenge bloggers encounter due to the requirements by ad agencies, the difficulty of acquiring brands for sponsored content, and affiliate marketing. While affiliate marketing, sponsored content, and advertisements are common monetization methods for blogs (S. Lee & Kim, 2020), the existing literature lacks discussion on the challenges bloggers encounter in identifying and securing these opportunities. The results show that ad agencies, such as Mediavine or Ezoic, require blogs to meet their specific monthly visitors' threshold for bloggers to monetize their blogs through advertisements (Mediavine, 2024). In contrast, securing sponsored content and affiliate marketing opportunities depends on the blogger's niche and audience engagement (Wasilczuk & Heinonen, 2023). Bloggers with established niches and loyal readerships may find it easier to acquire such opportunities than new or niche-less bloggers. Furthermore, bloggers encounter difficulties in delivering high-quality content that retains authenticity while aligning with brand promotional expectations (S. S. Lee & Johnson, 2021).

Despite its successful strategy, quality content has challenges due to the complexity of creating engaging, informative, and valuable content while including SEO keywords, images, and external links. Kulkarni et al. (2013) suggested that producing quality content is crucial for enhancing user engagement, yet it poses challenges due to the ongoing demands of maintaining a blog. As such, bloggers could write high-quality content that addresses the interests and needs of their target audience or resolve their issues, which will benefit the blog and improve audience engagement and loyalty (E. Baumer et al., 2008; Hookway, 2008; Luehmann, 2008; Thawanyarat et al., 2023). Moreover, it suggests that bloggers should diversify their content

formats by incorporating videos, infographics, images, and other multimedia elements to make their content more engaging and appealing to a wider audience (Rietveld et al., 2020; Thoma et al., 2017).

Audience interaction is another challenge for bloggers as they strive to build a community, increase traffic, and retain readership to generate income through advertisements, sponsored content, and affiliate marketing. However, the literature on audience engagement primarily addresses how user engagement affects user loyalty (Sajjad & Zaman, 2020) and ways to enhance audience interaction (Y. Li, 2021; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007). The results show that audience interaction requires constant effort and attention from bloggers through social media promotions of their blog posts, responding to comments and messages from readers, and collaborating with other bloggers to expand their reach and build a community. Moreover, the challenges of audience interaction also include understanding and meeting the diverse preferences, needs, and expectations of different readers within a niche.

Results for Research Question 3

The third research question explored the bloggers' perception of success within their industry; specifically, it asked, "How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?" The results show that bloggers define their success through two factors: earning income through their blog and personal fulfillment. They measure and monitor these successes by their performance metrics, such as page views, engagement rates, and income generated. They also measure their success through social interaction with their community, monetization, and collaborations with brands or other bloggers.

Discussion of Research Question 3

The results show that bloggers define their success through two distinct factors: financial success and personal fulfillment. Although the income generated from blogging varies for each individual, achieving financial success through blogging can be defined as a significant milestone. In contrast to the findings of S. Lee and Kim (2020), which emphasize the significance of blogs providing value to their readers, the results indicate that bloggers predominantly view success as the ability to generate income through their blogs. Bloggers often leverage analytics tools and platforms to track their page views and engagement rates, which are key indicators of their blog's potential to generate revenue (Porsche et al., 2022). Moreover, they use tools such as Buzzsumo, Mozbar, and Google Analytics to track the performance of their content and understand how it resonates with their audience (Obiała et al., 2021; Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016). Additionally, bloggers closely monitor their affiliate marketing earnings, ad revenue, and sponsorship opportunities to measure their success in monetization.

The second factor in how bloggers define success is through personal fulfillment. Personal fulfillment for bloggers may include achieving their blogging goals, creating meaningful and valuable content for their audience, or gaining recognition and respect within the industry. Personal fulfillment as a definition of success in blogging aligns with research by Nardi et al. (2004), who discovered that bloggers are motivated to blog by intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors. This success definition could be attributed to bloggers using blogging as a channel for self-expression, creativity and a platform to share personal thoughts, experiences, or causes (Nardi et al., 2004; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

Bloggers measure and monitor their personal fulfillment success definition by tracking their blog's growth and engagement and feedback from their readers or other bloggers in the

industry. They also use social media platforms to interact with their audience and receive comments, shares, and likes on their content (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Bloggers may also collaborate with brands and other bloggers to expand their reach and increase their credibility within the industry, indicators of success and recognition. Furthermore, depending on their niche or cause, they monitor their fulfillment success by their blog's impact on their audience or society, such as raising awareness, initiating change, or providing support and resources for a specific cause.

While the two success factors may differ in importance for each blogger, the results suggest that bloggers often view success as a combination of financial success and personal fulfillment. Moreover, it suggests that as bloggers monetize, grow, and achieve recognition, their definition and measurement of success may also evolve. Therefore, it is crucial for bloggers to continually evaluate and reflect on their goals and motivations to ensure that they are aligned with their current perception of success within the industry to sustain their growth and satisfaction.

Results for Research Question 4

The fourth research question states, "What advice do bloggers offer aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?" Two interview questions were developed to answer this research question. The results show that the advice for aspiring bloggers from experienced bloggers includes the importance of learning and understanding SEO strategies to increase visibility, the significance of consistency in creating content that resonates with their target audience, and the need to find a unique niche or angle for their blog so that the blogger can provide expertise advice, content, or perspective for their audience.

Discussion of Research Question 4

The role of mastering SEO strategies for those new to the blogging world is great advice for new bloggers, as it suggests the foundational step towards achieving visibility and blogging success. Schultheiß and Lewandowski (2020) suggest that learning and understanding SEO strategies can significantly enhance a blog's SERPs, making content more discoverable to potential readers. Moreover, those who rank higher and are used more in SERPs have a higher domain authority and are typically more trusted by readers (Halibas et al., 2020). A key strategy involves researching and using relevant keywords throughout blog posts, ensuring that content aligns with what audiences seek. Using on-page SEO strategies, such as optimizing post titles and meta descriptions with keywords, can improve SERPs and attract clicks (Kuśmierczyk & Sydow, 2013). Also, Geetha and Sathiyakumari (2012) suggest that off-page SEO strategies like building backlinks from reputable sources can significantly improve domain authority and overall visibility. These practices and creating high-quality, relevant content form the backbone of an effective SEO strategy for new bloggers.

While mastering SEO strategies lays the foundation for a blog's visibility and search engine success, the significance of consistency in creating content cannot be overstated. Consistent delivery of high-quality content is pivotal for a successful blogging strategy, as it can captivate readers and encourage return visits (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Fullwood et al., 2009; Ietto & Pascucci, 2023; Kien-Weng Tan et al., 2011). Regular updates signal to search engines that a website is active, potentially improving search rankings and helping establish the blogger's authority and credibility within their niche. For example, Berger et al. (2013) contend that blogs maintaining consistent posting schedules demonstrate expertise within their niche.

Having a niche focus as a blogger is important as it allows individuals to share content on topics they are passionate and knowledgeable about. It also helps bloggers attract a specific audience interested in the niche, creating targeted and engaged readers (Germic et al., 2021). Additionally, having a unique angle or perspective within a niche can help differentiate a blog from others in the same space, providing a competitive edge and increasing chances for success. Moreover, finding a niche that aligns with personal interests and values can also contribute to a blogger's fulfillment and satisfaction (Bosangit et al., 2009; B. Pan et al., 2007). Additionally, bloggers who focus on a specific subject area can effectively tailor their SEO strategy, rank for keywords, and create content that resonates deeply with a specific audience, thereby improving the visibility and relevance of their blog.

Implications of the Study

This research sought to uncover successful bloggers' best practices and strategies to establish themselves in their respective niches. The results from this study contribute to comprehending what constitutes success in the blogging industry and reveal actionable strategies for bloggers at various stages in their careers. As such, the outcomes of this research offer important guidance for aspiring bloggers aiming to establish themselves in the blogging industry. For example, individuals interested in starting a blog can use the insights and advice from experienced bloggers to develop an effective SEO strategy, attract and retain readers, and find their niche within the blogging community. Bosangit et al. (2009) demonstrated that focusing on a specific niche can lead to higher audience engagement and satisfaction, potentially increasing the likelihood of a blog's success.

Additionally, the findings can prove beneficial for other professions. For example, digital marketing professionals can use the findings to understand the strategies and tools used by

successful bloggers to increase their online presence. Research by Panchal et al. (2021) demonstrated the demand for understanding the strategies of SEO and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and the tools and techniques used to achieve a competitive edge in the digital marketing field. The challenges identified in this study underscore the necessity for digital marketing strategies specifically tailored to meet the demands of blogging (Poturak et al., 2022). Digital marketing professionals can leverage the findings to develop targeted services and tools for bloggers to help resolve their challenges.

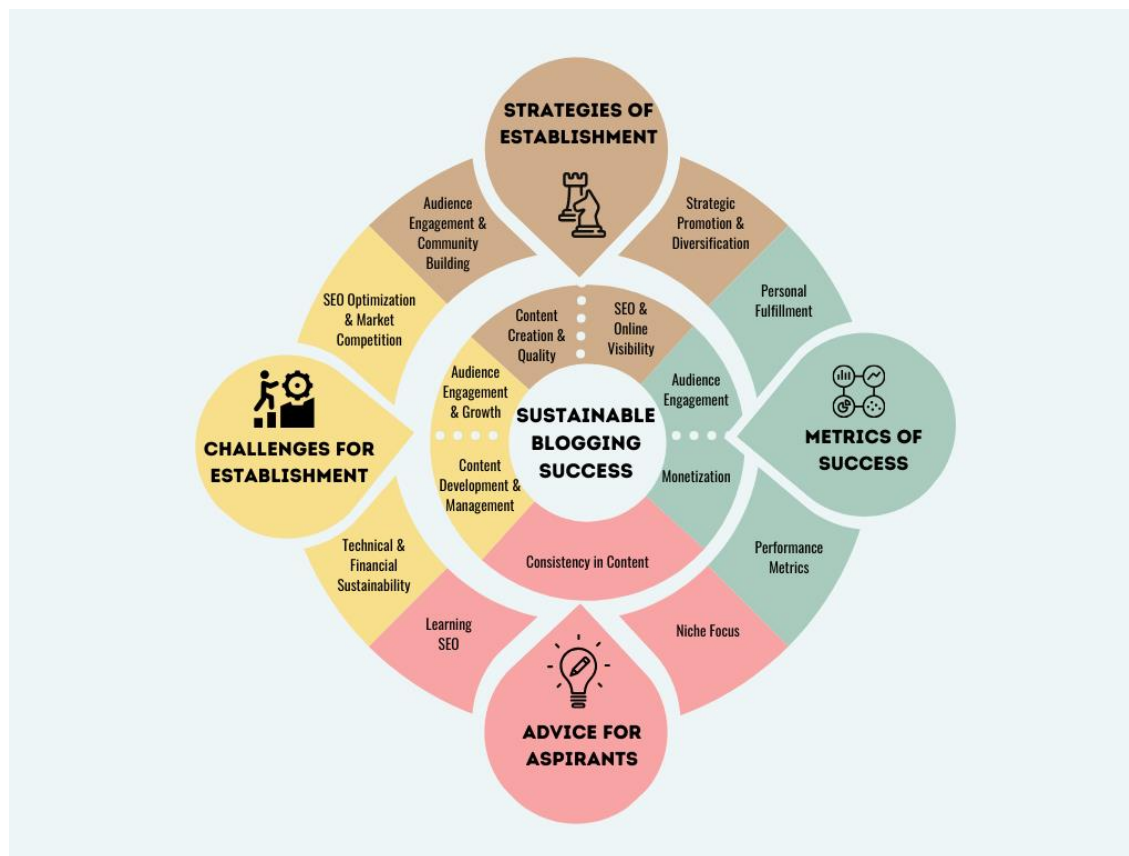
The findings also have implications for technology developers and platform providers. For example, platform providers, such as hosting sites, can use the findings to innovate or improve blogging platforms, content management systems (CMS), SEO tools, and audience engagement solutions to fit the specific needs of bloggers. According to Julião and Malta (2020), Wordpress's SEO-free plugins lack the essential features required to maximize site performance. As such, developers can create more intuitive, feature-rich platforms that facilitate content creation, distribution, and monetization by understanding bloggers' pain points and success strategies. It could result in the creation of sophisticated analytical tools offering insights into content efficacy, audience dynamics, and various engagement indicators, assisting bloggers in crafting well-informed choices regarding their content and strategies. For example, Esteban-Santos et al. (2018) found that those who follow fashion bloggers are motivated by credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, and other factors. Thus, the hosting platforms can better support content creation, distribution, and monetization, leading to the development of sophisticated analytical tools that offer insights into content efficacy, audience engagement indicators, and understanding of bloggers' pain points. Ultimately, such efforts could help increase the success rates of bloggers in their respective niches.

Application

The study's objective was to ascertain the most effective methods and techniques employed by accomplished bloggers. Fifty-nine themes emerged and were consolidated into 15 themes through thematic analysis. Using the findings, the researcher developed The Blogging Success Framework (BSF) Model (see Figure 18). The model is structured around four core pillars that encapsulate essential aspects of blogging success: (a) Strategies for Establishment (SE), Challenges of Establishment (CE), Metrics of Success (MS), and Advice for Aspirants (AA). The interconnected pillars indicate that the journey to successful blogging is cyclical and iterative, with each element influencing the other.

Figure 18

Blogging Success Framework



Note. Proposed model of applying successful strategies for blogging.

Strategies for Establishment (SE)

The SE pillar includes all the critical strategies and practices that successful bloggers use to establish themselves in their niche, such as *Content Creation and Quality*, emphasizing the importance of delivering valuable, high-quality content as the foundation of blogging. It also covers *SEO and Online Visibility*, focusing on techniques to improve a blog's visibility and rankings in search engines, ensuring that the content reaches the intended audience. Another critical facet is *Audience Engagement and Community Building*, which outlines strategies to foster a loyal community through meaningful engagement, feedback, and interaction, turning readers into a vibrant community. Lastly, *Strategic Promotion and Monetization* highlight using various platforms and media to promote content effectively and diversify income sources, ensuring a sustainable blogging career.

The content Creation and Quality section focuses on producing high-quality, informative, and engaging content. It emphasizes the need for originality, depth, and value, suggesting that content should solve problems, answer questions, or entertain in a way that is unique to the blogger's voice and expertise (E. Baumer et al., 2008; Hookway, 2008; Luehmann, 2008; Thawanyarat et al., 2023). For example, a blogger can develop comprehensive guides that provide more detail than competitors and create visually appealing posts that combine text with multimedia elements, such as custom images, videos, or infographics. Also, bloggers should update old content to keep it relevant and continually add value. Furthermore, bloggers focusing on evergreen content are more likely to attract and retain readers over time (Gupta et al., 2023). In contrast, those who rely on trending topics may experience a short-lived surge in traffic but struggle to maintain consistent engagement (Javed et al., 2015).

SEO and Online Visibility outline the importance of making a blog easy to find through search engines. It involves understanding and implementing SEO best practices, such as keyword research, on-page SEO, and optimizing titles, headings, and images (G. Kumar & Paul, 2020). It also includes off-page SEO to increase a blog's authority and credibility, such as link building and guest posting (Kloostera, 2015). For example, bloggers can use software such as Ahrefs, SurferSEO, and SEMrush to target high-volume, low-competition keywords, thus optimizing blog posts to ensure readability (Nakatani & Chuang, 2011). Also, bloggers can create backlinks by making quality content that attracts backlinks from reputable sites, using the Help A Reporter Out (HARO) website to connect with journalists seeking expert sources and submit guest posts on relevant sites. Leveraging local SEO strategies can also significantly boost a blog's visibility in specific geographic regions, making the content more relevant and accessible to local audiences (Keegan & Taylor, 2019). This strategy can involve optimizing the blog for local search terms, including city or region names, and ensuring the blog is listed in local business directories and maps.

Audience Engagement and Community Building emphasizes creating a loyal and engaged community around the blog. It teaches the importance of two-way communication, encouraging comments, feedback, and discussions on the blog and across social media platforms. For example, encourage your readers to leave comments by asking questions at the end of blog posts, responding to all comments promptly, and creating a Facebook group or forum for readers to discuss topics related to the blog. White and Biggs (2014) assert that the quantity of comments left on a blog is related to audience engagement and the quality of blog post content. Similarly, Men and Tsai (2013) argue that audience engagement is one of the most effective ways to

measure the effectiveness of a blog. As such, bloggers should consider listening to readers and making their feedback a consistent priority.

Strategic Promotion and Monetization covers the diverse tactics for promoting blog content and generating income. It involves choosing the right channels and tools for promotion and diversifying income streams through various monetization strategies. For example, bloggers can utilize email marketing to promote new posts and collaborate with other bloggers for guest posting to reach new audiences (Bernstein & Wolfram-Hvass, 2015; Mladenović et al., 2022; Philipp, 2023). Moreover, bloggers can use affiliate marketing by recommending products and earning commissions (S. Lee & Kim, 2020). Bloggers can offer premium content, such as ebooks or courses, and display ads through platforms like Google AdSense, Mediavine, Ezoic, and Publift. Furthermore, since bloggers are seen as opinion leaders, they can promote products for brands as sponsored content that aligns with their niche and readers' interests (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

Challenges of Establishment (CE)

The CE Pillar underscores bloggers' hurdles while solidifying their presence in the blogosphere. *SEO Optimization and Market Competition* sheds light on the complexities of SEO and standing out in a competitive market. *Content Development and Management* involves crafting engaging, accurate, and timely content while managing the blog's operations. The challenge of *Audience Engagement and Growth* revolves around attracting and retaining readers, fostering a sense of community, and expanding the audience base. Lastly, tackling *Technical and Financial Sustainability* means navigating the complex technical aspects of blogging, such as website and platform management, while strategizing monetization methods to ensure the blog's long-term viability and financial success.

SEO Optimization and Market Competition highlight the dual hurdles of mastering SEO to ensure visibility and differentiate oneself in a saturated market. Bloggers must stay informed of the evolving SEO best practices and algorithm changes while finding unique angles to stand out. For example, bloggers can update their skills through SEO courses or webinars, analyzing competitors to identify gaps in content that can be filled with unique perspectives or untapped topics. Bloggers can research keywords using software like Ahrefs or SEMrush to leverage niche-specific keywords to target a more focused audience (French & Ward, 2020; Geetha & Sathiyakumari, 2012; M. N. Khan & Mahmood, 2018). Additionally, bloggers can use off-page SEO to build backlinks and increase their blog's credibility, authority, and traffic (Venkatakrishnan et al., 2023). Iqbal et al. (2022) suggest that bloggers should continue learning and staying updated with SEO and its trends as search engines consistently change their algorithms.

Content Development and Management covers the demand for fresh, relevant, high-quality content and the operational side of running a blog. It comprises planning, researching, writing, editing, publishing content, and managing social media, email lists, and analytics. To diminish this challenge, bloggers can use tools like *Trello* or *Asana* to help with content planning and scheduling (H. A. Johnson, 2017). Bloggers can hire freelance writers or editors to help manage the workload (Garden, 2011; Kesteven & Melrose, 2022). Moreover, it is important to establish a consistent publishing schedule to keep the audience engaged. Furthermore, regular postings keep a blog active and relevant and aid in retaining readers to the blog (Y. Li, 2021; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007).

Audience Engagement and Growth is a challenge that involves attracting new readers, fostering engagement, and retaining loyal followers. Overcoming this challenge to encourage

reader participation requires developing high-quality interactive content that is relevant to the target audience's interests, needs, or challenges (E. Baumer et al., 2008; Hookway, 2008; Luehmann, 2008; Thawanyarat et al., 2023). Bloggers can use email newsletters to keep readers informed and engaged and host giveaways or contests to create buzz and attract new followers (Garden, 2014; Hendry, 2022; Y. Li et al., 2011; Luzón, 2013). Bloggers can use software such as MailChips and ConvertKit for email marketing, as the software can segment email lists based on reader preferences and behaviors. Furthermore, automated email tools will amplify their content, thus boosting blog traffic and engagement (Philipp, 2023).

Technical and Financial Sustainability is a challenge that acknowledges the technical complexities of blogging and the need for financial understanding. Bloggers must navigate website management, security, and optimization, along with developing multiple revenue streams to ensure sustainability, which proves a significant challenge for many bloggers (S. Wang & Lin, 2011). Alleviating this challenge includes investing in reliable hosting services, such as BlueHost, Hostinger, or SiteGround. Additionally, learning basic web development skills or hiring a professional to handle technical aspects can save time and money in the long run (Martins et al., 2021).

Additionally, monetization strategies, such as sponsored content, membership models, and selling digital products, can help bloggers diversify their income streams. Also, bloggers can use affiliate marketing to earn commissions by recommending products and services relevant to their niche. However, bloggers have challenges balancing the authenticity of their blog content and the sponsored content they promote (Marwick, 2013). To minimize the challenge, bloggers ensure transparency and disclose any sponsored content to maintain reader trust and credibility (Bladow, 2018; Federal Register, 2022; Gomes et al., 2022; Hudders et al., 2021). Moreover,

diversifying income streams helps bloggers mitigate the risk of relying solely on one source and allows for financial stability in the long run (Rowse & Garrett, 2012).

Metrics of Success (MS)

The MS pillar defines how bloggers can evaluate their achievements and areas for improvement. *Monetization* plays a pivotal role, as generating income from blogging activities validates the effort put into content creation and ensures the sustainability of the blog. *Personal Fulfillment* is equally important; achieving personal goals and deriving satisfaction from blogging are key motivators for bloggers, reflecting the passion and dedication behind their work. *Performance Metrics* involve using analytics to measure traffic, engagement, and other key performance indicators that offer tangible evidence of a blog's success and areas for improvement. Lastly, *audience engagement is the importance of maintaining a high level of interaction with the blog's audience and fostering a loyal community that can aid the blog's growth and success.*

Monetization is an important metric for validating the effect bloggers put into their content and ensuring the sustainability of their blogs. The monetization component teaches bloggers how to convert their traffic and content into revenue streams (Hunter, 2016). Bloggers can implement affiliate marketing strategies by partnering with brands and earning commissions on sales from their blog content. They can also create digital products, such as ebooks or courses, to sell to their audience. Bloggers can use ad networks like Google AdSense, Mediavine, or Ezoic to display ads and earn revenue based on clicks and impressions. Monetization in blogging is a growing trend of earning income through blogs, and bloggers must stay updated with new strategies and trends to maximize their earnings (Armstrong & McDowell, 2018; Guan, 2020; Helm & Jones, 2016; S. Müller et al., 2011; Pedroni, 2022; Stankeviciute, 2012).

Personal Fulfillment highlights the intrinsic rewards of blogging, such as achieving personal goals, self-expression, and the satisfaction derived from sharing knowledge or entertaining an audience. This metric emphasizes the passion and dedication to driving long-term success and resilience amidst challenges. Nardi et al. (2004) asserted that bloggers are motivated by intrinsic factors, such as personal fulfillment and self-expression. Some bloggers may have a specific goal, such as establishing themselves as an expert or building a community around their niche (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). Personal Fulfillment is also linked to mental health benefits (D. S. Chung & Kim, 2007); blogging can serve as a creative outlet and aid in stress relief, making it a fulfilling and positive activity (H. Ko & F. Kuo, 2009). Bloggers use metrics such as positive feedback and stories from readers about blog posts or advice that has impacted their lives (Füller, 2010; L. Wilson, 2019). Other metrics include achieving personal milestones, such as publishing a certain number of posts, reaching a specific audience size, or being recognized as an expert in one's niche.

Performance Metrics measure the quantitative assessment of a blog's success through analytics. Bloggers learn to use data to measure traffic, engagement, conversion rates, and other key performance indicators (KPIs), giving insights into what works and needs improvement. Bloggers can use Google Analytics to understand their audience demographics, most popular content, and traffic sources. Pakkala et al. (2012) assert that bloggers use web analytics to improve their blog's performance, such as identifying trends and patterns to generate more traffic. Moreover, bloggers can monitor engagement rates by analyzing comments, shares, and bounce rates. White and Biggs (2014) argue that the volume of comments left on a blog correlates with audience engagement and the caliber of the blog's content. Furthermore, bloggers

can use heatmaps from companies like Hotjar to gain insights into how readers interact with their websites.

Audience Engagement is vital as it measures readers' interaction and loyalty towards the blog. Audience engagement is a prominent method for assessing a blog's efficacy (Men & Tsai, 2013). The metric emphasizes building relationships with readers, encouraging active participation, and creating content that resonates with their interests and needs. For example, bloggers can use online networking sites to connect with their audience, respond to feedback and messages, and share updates about new content (L. F. Pitt et al., 2011). Additionally, bloggers can host webinars to connect with the audience in real-time and offer live Q&A (Broersma, 2019). Furthermore, bloggers can actively engage with the readers to build their community and provide a platform where readers can share their experiences, questions, and discussions related to the blog's niche (L. Bruni et al., 2012).

Advice for Aspirants (AA)

The AA pillar is advice that expert bloggers give to new bloggers and things they wished they knew before they began their careers. While the AA pillar is meant for aspiring bloggers, the advice is relevant to individuals facing challenges in blogging. *Mastering SEO* is fundamental; understanding how search engines work can increase the blog's visibility, rank higher in SERPS, and increase domain authority and backlinks. Equally important is *Consistency in Content*; maintaining a regular publishing schedule with high-quality content is critical for retaining the blog audience. Lastly, homing in on a *Niche Focus* allows bloggers to build authority in a specific area, attracting a dedicated audience interested in your specialized content.

Mastering SEO teaches that understanding and leveraging SEO is about increasing blog visibility and making your blog a credible source of information that search engines can trust and

recommend (Bakker, 2012). Bloggers should understand that mastering SEO involves a deep dive into keyword research on- and off-page SEO strategies (Fathollahi-Fard et al., 2018; Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012; Symitsi et al., 2022). Using tools like SEMrush and Ahrefs for comprehensive keyword research and analysis can help bloggers identify the most relevant keywords in their niche and optimize their content to rank higher on SERPs (Calvano et al., 2021; Erdmann et al., 2022; Fundingsland et al., 2021; M. Lin et al., 2023; Vyas, 2019; Zia & Mushtaq, 2021). Furthermore, bloggers should regularly conduct SEO audits to identify and rectify issues that could harm their ranking (Kloostera, 2015).

Consistency in Content teaches bloggers that consistency is key. Maintaining consistent publishing schedules and ensuring content quality are key factors in building a loyal readership base (J. Liu et al., 2023; Louta & Varlamis, 2010). This part of the model is about setting expectations with your audience and then fulfilling them without fail, which will aid in establishing your blog's reliability and authority (P. Dhar & Gayan, 2022). H. C. Chang and Yeh (2008) argued that content production is time-consuming and can be overwhelming for bloggers. As such, bloggers should schedule when to post, either daily, weekly, or bi-weekly.

Additionally, most platforms, like WordPress, allow bloggers to set schedules for their posts. However, bloggers should strive to make their content as high-quality as possible and create evergreen content (O'Neill & Curran, 2011). Tools like *Trello* or *Asana* can help with content planning and workflow management.

Niche Focus teaches bloggers to focus on a specific audience that will make your blog a go-to resource for that niche. A focused niche will help to create tailored and relevant content, build authority, and improve SEO for niche-specific keywords. Moreover, it helps to differentiate your blog from competitors by highlighting your expertise and perspective.

Bloggers can do this by conducting market research to identify gaps in content within an area of interest. Tools like SurferSEO, Ahrefs, SEMrush, and Moz can help identify trending topics, keyword difficulty, and competition analysis. Bloggers should also research their competitors' content strategies to understand what works and what doesn't.

Niche Focus teaches bloggers to focus on a specific audience that will make your blog a go-to resource for that niche. A focused niche will help to create tailored and relevant content, build authority, and improve SEO for niche-specific keywords. For example, Şenyapar (2024) demonstrated that blogs that are niched focused can target keywords, rank higher in those keywords, and have a larger influence in that niche. Moreover, it helps to differentiate a blog from competitors by highlighting the blog owner's expertise and perspective (Mohta & Mohta, 2016; Shema et al., 2012). Bloggers can do this by conducting market research to identify gaps in content within an area of interest. Tools like SurferSEO, Ahrefs, SEMrush, and Moz can help identify trending topics, keyword difficulty, and competition analysis. Bloggers should also research their competitors' content strategies to understand what works and what doesn't.

Discussion of the BSF Model

The BSF model emphasizes that successful blogging is not about excelling in just one area but finding a balance between creating quality content, overcoming challenges, measuring success accurately, and continuously learning and adapting. The model reflects on the ongoing nature of blogging, where bloggers must constantly adapt to changes in technology, audience preferences, and the competitive nature of blogging. The BSF model provides bloggers with a thorough comprehension of the key components that lead to effective blogging. Bloggers may utilize this model as a guide to enhance their skills and accomplish their objectives continuously. The model also highlights the interconnectedness of different aspects of blogging, emphasizing

the need for a holistic approach rather than focusing on one area alone. Ultimately, the BSF model provides valuable insights and guidance for aspiring and established bloggers, highlighting key strategies and areas of focus for success.

The researcher intends to present the model at various conferences and refine it based on feedback from fellow bloggers and industry experts. The conferences include Bloggy, SXSW, Affiliate World, and Traffic & Conversion Summit. Additionally, the researcher will blog about the model and make YouTube videos that will explain the model in detail. Furthermore, the researcher plans to collaborate with other bloggers and conduct webinars to discuss the model and how it can be applied in different niches. Through these efforts, the BSF model aims to contribute to the blogging community by providing a comprehensive guide for success and promoting continuous learning and growth within the industry.

Study Conclusion

The findings offer a thorough understanding of the key factors contributing to successful blogging, providing valuable insights for bloggers looking to establish themselves in the blogosphere. Through the development of the BSF model, this study offers a practical framework that highlights the interconnectedness of different pillars and emphasizes continuous learning and adaptation as crucial elements for success. Overall, this study adds to the understanding of blogging and has applications for bloggers, digital marketers, and content creators. With the ever-evolving nature of technology and online media, this study provides a relevant and timely exploration of the blogging world and its various facets. As such, it is hoped that the findings of this study will aid in developing more effective strategies for successful blogging in the future.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Continued research efforts can enhance the comprehension of successful blogging practices in the future by building upon the current study's findings. An in-depth investigation through a longitudinal study can offer valuable perspectives on how blogging strategies and challenges evolve in response to the changing digital landscape. For example, by tracking the progress and shifts in tactics of a diverse range of bloggers, researchers can unearth data on the long-term sustainability of different blogging approaches, the impact of technological advancements, and the nature of audience engagement strategies.

Another area of recommendation is a comparative analysis of blogging challenges across different niches. For example, a comparative study can explore how challenges in content development, SEO strategies, and other challenges vary between lifestyle, fashion, business, and other blogs. The study can offer insights into niche-specific challenges bloggers face and how they overcome them to succeed.

Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, influence blogging practices, particularly in content creation and SEO strategies (T. Kumar, 2023; Morrison, 2023). A study focusing on the use and impact of these technologies in successful blogging can provide insights into the future of blogging and how bloggers can adapt to remain competitive. Furthermore, a study that researches how AI-generated content can impact audience engagement, SERPs, and authority can offer a unique perspective on the changes in search engine algorithms.

Lastly, an interesting question emerged about the psychological impact of blogging on bloggers. Future studies can explore the relationship between blogging and mental health, particularly regarding motivation, satisfaction, and burnout. With increasing numbers of

individuals turning to blogs as a career or side hustle, it is important to understand how this form of work affects bloggers' well-being. By examining the psychological aspects of successful blogging, researchers can provide valuable insights into maintaining a healthy and sustainable blogging practice.

Final Thoughts

The research presented in this study offers a fresh perspective on the intricate world of blogging, highlighting its complexities and the various methods through which success can be achieved. The research presented in this study offers a fresh perspective on the multifaceted world of blogging, shedding light on its complexities and the myriad ways success can be achieved. For example, the researcher realized how the balance between creativity and analytical skills is important for bloggers. It became evident that successful blogging hinges on integrating the production of engaging content that appeals to the target audience and refining SEO strategies for blog visibility and ranking high in SERPs.

Another significant insight was the importance of community engagement and building a loyal readership. While previous research (Hughes et al., 2019; Kulkarni et al., 2013; Mainolfi et al., 2021; Sajjad & Zaman, 2020) discussed how bloggers use audience engagement for promotion and to use creative content to keep readers engaged, no research discusses using the audience to create content. Additionally, social media channels, like Pinterest, Instagram, and Reddit, can be used to learn content ideas and strategies from the audience. These channels provide valuable feedback and insights into what resonates with the target audience, ultimately contributing to successful blogging.

Lastly, the research highlighted the pace of change that the blogosphere and digital environment are experiencing, making it important for bloggers to adapt and evolve constantly.

The dynamic nature of blogging was eye-opening, as the participants discussed their success as a journey where adaptation and learning are constant. The realization is that the most successful bloggers view their blogs as evolving entities rather than static platforms.

Author's Observation

While conducting this research and drawing from years of experience in the blogging industry, I have encountered multiple strategies and challenges that have shaped my blogging journey. However, I observed what was very interesting to me was how some participants explained their change in the definition of success. They spoke about how they first got into blogging as either a way to express themselves or to make it into an actual business that would generate income. Those who mentioned income as a measure of success changed their view to a more self-fulfillment-based one. Yet, this only occurred after they were established in their niches and generated an income they were satisfied with. This observation shows that while income is initially a driving factor for blogging success, it eventually becomes more about personal fulfillment and finding a sense of purpose. The observation aligns with Nardi et al. (2004), whose examination revealed various intrinsic motivational factors as to why bloggers start blogging.

Another interesting observation was that there was no mention of physical attractiveness or social status as factors for successful blogging. Research by S. Chu and Kamal (2008) found that bloggers perceived as physically attractive tended to garner higher levels of likeability among readers, positively influencing readers' attitudes and evaluations of products. Moreover, attractiveness has been liked as a source of credibility (W. Lee & Choi, 2005). This observation is particularly interesting given the increasing emphasis on visual content and influencer marketing in the blogging industry. It highlights how bloggers are valued more for their content

and expertise than their physical appearance or social status. However, with new social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram, becoming more influential in the blogging industry, it will be interesting to see if this dynamic changes.

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APPENDIX A

Written consent from Facebook group owner



Michael Llamas

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Approved by moderator, [REDACTED]

As a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, I am conducting a research study that seeks to identify the best practices and strategies used by successful bloggers.

If you are an individual who own and operate a minimum of one blog, have five years of experience running a blog in any niche, have a minimum of two employees or two recurring contractors, over the age of 18, and are willing to participate in the study, please email me at Michael.Llamas@Pepperdine.edu or Directly Message (DM) me.

Your participation in the study would consist of a Zoom interview and using Otter.ai to record audio only. The interview is expected to take no more than 30-60 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that the study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. Confidentiality will be maintained using Pepperdine's Google Drive, which is safe and secure to store all data collected, including informed consent, and the transcribed data. All data will also be identified using a numerical pseudonym which will be assigned to each individual recording.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

Michael Llamas

Michael.Llamas@Pepperdine.edu

1 comment


Like


Comment


Send

Top comments ▼



Write a comment...







Moderator

Confirmed, approved by me.

1m
Like
Reply

APPENDIX B

Facebook Recruitment Post

As a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, I am conducting a research study that seeks to identify the best practices and strategies used by successful bloggers.

If you are an individual who own and operate a minimum of one blog, have five years of experience running a blog in any niche, have a minimum of two employees or two recurring contractors, over the age of 18, and are willing to participate in the study, please email me at Michael.Llamas@Pepperdine.edu or Directly Message (DM) me.

Your participation in the study would consist of a Zoom interview and using Otter.ai to record audio only. The interview is expected to take no more than 30-60 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that the study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. Confidentiality will be maintained using Pepperdine's Google Drive, which is safe and secure to store all data collected, including informed consent, and the transcribed data. All data will also be identified using a numerical pseudonym which will be assigned to each individual recording.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,
Michael Llamas
Michael.Llamas@Pepperdine.edu

APPENDIX C

IRB Approved Recruitment Script



Dear [name],

My name is Michael Llamas, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study examining the critical success factors in managing and sustaining successful blogs. I am seeking volunteer study participants to participate in a Zoom interview with audio being recorded via Otter.ai. The interview is not expected to exceed 45 minutes; however, an hour will be blocked out in the event there is more information discussed or you have any questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. During and after the study to mitigate the risk of breach of confidentiality. These procedures include securely storing data in Pepperdine's Google Drive and in a secure folder, using password protected email communication with university firewall protection, and using pseudonyms to replace personal identifiers. Additionally, all data will be deleted 3 years after the completion of this study.

If you are interested in participating, or have any questions, please contact me at Michael.Llamas@Pepperdine.edu or call me at (###) ###-####. I am happy to answer any questions you have about the study and appreciate your consideration of my request for participation.

Thank you for your participation,

Michael Llamas

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Ph.D. Candidate

Email: Michael.Llamas@pepperdine.edu

Phone: (###) ###-####

APPENDIX D

IRB Informed Consent Form



IRB TEMPLATE SOCIAL- BEHAVIORAL ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

IRB #: 23-09-2253**Formal Study Title:** Blogging Mastery: Analyzing the Key Strategies Behind Influential Blogs**Authorized Study Personnel:**

Principal Investigator: Michael Llamas
100596212,
Michael.Llamas@Pepperdine.edu.

Key Information:**If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:**

- ☒ (Males and Females) between the ages of (18-90)
- ☒ Procedures will include (Contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via questionnaire, analysis of data, documentation of findings)
- ☒ One virtual visit is required
- ☒ The visit will take 60 minutes total
- ☒ There is a minimal risk associated with this study
- ☒ You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation
- ☒ You will be provided a copy of this consent form.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a leader in the blogging industry. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of this study is to determine the best practices and strategies used by bloggers to be successful. The goal is to create a framework with these qualities to help individuals who want to

be bloggers and how they can manage and run successful blogs and understand the key concepts in successful blogging.

What will be done during this research study?

You will be asked to complete a 60 minute semistructured virtual interview. The PI will ask you a series of questions aimed at figuring out what strategies are used by leaders in your field. While the research will take approximately 26 to 52 weeks, your interview will only take 60 minutes.

How will my data be used?

Your interview responses will be transcribed, analyzed, and aggregated in order to determine the findings to the established research questions.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involves questions about your leadership practices. You may also experience fatigue, boredom, or anxiety as a result.

What are the possible benefits to you?

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The benefits to society may include better understanding of leadership strategies used within your industry. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from any additional recommendations that are shared through this process.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating, other than deciding to not participate.

What will participating in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be deidentified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and until the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant

Name:

(First, Last: Please Print)

Participant

Signature:

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E

CITI Human Subjects Research (HSR) Certificate



Completion Date 27-Aug-2020
Expiration Date 26-Aug-2025
Record ID 38092985

This is to certify that:

Michael Llamas

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

GSEP Education Division
GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)
1 - Basic Course

(Curriculum Group)

(Course Learner Group)

(Stage)

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Under requirements set by:

Pepperdine University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wac75b34b-9bf3-4cb2-972d-1b889b3e43f3-38092985

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
<p>RQ1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?</p>	<p>Tell me how you got interested in becoming a blogger?</p> <p>IQ1: Think of the single biggest success you have had as a blogger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. What was that experience and d. What strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful? <p>IQ3: What are other similar successful experiences you have had as a blogger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. What was that experience and d. What strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful? <p>IQ5: Are you personally aware of similar successful experiences by other bloggers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. What was that experience and d. What strategies or best practices did you engage in that made that experience successful?
<p>RQ2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?</p>	<p>IQ2: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?</p> <p>IQ4: What challenge(s) did you face in achieving that successful experience?</p> <p>IQ6: Are you personally aware of what challenge(s) did they face in achieving that successful experience?</p>
<p>RQ3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?</p>	<p>IQ 7: How do you define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?</p> <p>IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence, and if so which ones and how do you use them?</p>

(continued)

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry? (cont.)	IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how? IQ12: Has the experience been worth it? How?
RQ4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?	IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry? IQ 11: Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?

APPENDIX G

Peer Review Validity Peer Reviewer Form #1

Dear reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The table below is designed to ensure that the research questions for the study are properly addressed with corresponding interview questions.

Please review each research question and the corresponding interview questions in the table below. Consider how well the interview question addresses the research question for each interview. If the interview question is directly relevant to the research question, please mark "Keep as stated." If the interview question is irrelevant to the research question, please mark "Delete it." Finally, if the interview question can be modified to fit the research question best, please suggest your modifications in the space provided. You may also recommend additional interview questions you deem necessary.

Once you have completed your analysis, please return the completed form to me via email at michael.llamas@pepperdine.edu. Thank you again for your participation.

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 1: Can you describe some specific strategies or best practices you've personally employed to establish yourself in your blogging niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 2: What do you believe are the key factors that differentiate successful bloggers from others in the same niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested: <p style="color: red;">I think it's a relevant question, but reword it to this: "What are the key factors differentiating successful bloggers from others in the same niche?"</p>

(continued)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 3: Have you found certain content creation or promotion strategies particularly effective in gaining recognition within your niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested:
RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 4: In your experience, what are some common challenges or obstacles bloggers face when trying to establish themselves in their niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 5: Can you share a personal example of a challenge you've faced while trying to establish your presence in the blogging community and how you overcame it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 6: Are there any industry-specific challenges that emerging bloggers should be especially aware of when entering the field?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested:

(continued)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
<p>RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?</p>	<p>IQ 7: How do you personally define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested: I think it's fine, but "personally" might be redundant. <p>IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested: I think you should add at the end "If so, what do you use?". Or else it might sound like a yes or no question. <p>IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. c. The question should be modified as suggested:
<p>RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?</p>	<p>IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated.

(continued)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
<p>RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community? (cont.)</p>	<p>b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it.</p> <p>c. The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <p>IQ 11: Can you share any valuable lessons or tips that you wish you had known when you were starting out as a blogger in your niche?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated.</p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it.</p> <p>c. The question should be modified as suggested:</p>

APPENDIX H

Peer Review Validity Peer Reviewer Form #2

Dear reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The table below is designed to ensure that the research questions for the study are properly addressed with corresponding interview questions.

Please review each research question and the corresponding interview questions in the table below. Consider how well the interview questions address the research question for each interview. If the interview question is directly relevant to the research question, please mark "Keep as stated." If the interview question is irrelevant to the research question, please mark "Delete it." Finally, if the interview question can be modified to fit the research question best, please suggest your modifications in the space provided. You may also recommend additional interview questions you deem necessary.

Once you have completed your analysis, please return the completed form to me via email at michael.llamas@pepperdine.edu. Thank you again for your participation.

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 1: Can you describe some specific strategies or best practices you've personally employed to establish yourself in your blogging niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 2: What do you believe are the key factors that differentiate successful bloggers from others in the same niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested: <p>Modify as suggested: What do you believe are the key strategies or best practices that differentiate successful bloggers from others in your niche?</p>

(continued)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ 1: How do bloggers employ strategies and best practices to establish themselves in their respective niches? (cont.)	<p>IQ 3: Have you found certain content creation or promotion strategies to be particularly effective in gaining recognition within your niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested:
RQ 2: What challenges do bloggers encounter while striving to establish themselves in their respective niches?	<p>IQ 4 In your experience, what are some common challenges or obstacles bloggers face when trying to establish themselves in their niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 5: Can you share a personal example of a challenge you've faced while trying to establish your presence in the blogging community, and how you overcame it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 6: Are there any industry-specific challenges that emerging bloggers should be especially aware of when entering the field?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested:

(continued)

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ 3: How do bloggers define, measure, and monitor their success in the blogging industry?	<p>IQ 7: How do you personally define success as a blogger, and what metrics or indicators do you use to measure your success?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested. <p>IQ 8: Are there any tools or methods you find particularly useful for tracking and monitoring the performance of your blog or online presence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested. <p>IQ 9: Have your definitions of success and the way you measure it evolved over time, and if so, how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested
RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community?	<p>IQ 10: What advice would you give to aspiring bloggers who are looking to establish themselves within a specific niche or industry?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested: <p>IQ 11: Can you share any valuable lessons or tips that you wish you had known when you were starting out as a blogger in your niche?</p>

(continued)

<p>RQ 4: What advice do bloggers offer to aspiring bloggers aiming to establish their presence in the blogging community? (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is directly relevant to the Research question - Keep as stated. • The question is irrelevant to the research question – Delete it. • The question should be modified as suggested: <p>Modify as suggested: "Looking back at your journey, are there any specific lessons or strategies you wish you had known when you began your blogging career?"</p> <p><i>You could also modify question 11 or add question 12 to this: "What do you think are the most common misconceptions or errors new bloggers make when trying to establish themselves?"</i></p>
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APPENDIX I

List of tools, software, and websites mentioned by the participants.

Tool/Software/Website	Primary Use
SEMrush	SEO, keyword research, competitive analysis
Moz	SEO, site auditing, keyword research
Ahrefs	SEO, backlink analysis, competitor research
SurferSEO	On-page SEO optimization
Facebook Insights	Social media analytics for Facebook pages
Twitter Analytics	Analytics for Twitter accounts
Buzzsumo	Content research, social media engagement tracking
Hootsuite	Social media management and scheduling
Mailchimp	Email marketing and newsletter distribution
ConvertKit	Email marketing, aimed at bloggers and content creators
HotJar	User behavior analytics and feedback tool
Crazy Egg	Heatmaps, scroll maps, and other website optimization tools
Mediavine	Ad management service for monetizing websites
Ezoic	AI-driven platform for website monetization and analytics
Publfit	Programmatic advertising and revenue optimization
Help A Reporter Out (HARO)	Source for journalists and bloggers to connect
Trello	Project management and organization tool
Asana	Task management and team collaboration
BlueHost	Web hosting service provider
Hostinger	Affordable web hosting and domain service
SiteGround	Web hosting, including managed WordPress hosting
WordPress	Website and blog creation and management platform
Google Analytics	Website traffic and audience analytics
Yoast SEO	WordPress plugin for SEO optimization
Canva	Graphic design tool for creating blog images and social media graphics
Grammarly	Writing and grammar checking tool
Adobe Creative Cloud	Suite of graphic design, video editing, and web development tools
Tailwind	Social media scheduling for Pinterest and Instagram
Google Search Console	Website performance in Google search results tracking