

# **TV Blogging: A Multiple Case Study of Blog Management in Taiwan**

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## **Abstract**

This multiple-case study aims at examining the strategies of weblog management of television stations in Taiwan. The researcher interviewed IT/web managers and publicists, and analyzed the contents and features of four TV weblogs. This study found the content and management strategies of Taiwan's TV blogs were in their infancy. There were positioned as subsidiary web services, these blogs were used mainly to publicize programs and artists, and partially to enhance customers' relationships. The study found that artist blogs that featured personal stories and interacted with fans were very popular and suggested that promotional and program blogs have to improve their interactivity and enhance their functions of conversational writing for future development. To recruit bloggers and enrich the contents, this study suggested the TV stations could adopt mediation strategies, like compulsory adoption, encouragement, or competition. By using Cho and Huh's (2007) relational maintenance framework to examine the TV blogs' features showed that these TV weblogs were insufficient in blog policy setting (assurance), accessibility to company representatives and decision making processes (access), and content updating (sharing tasks).

**Keywords: TV weblog, corporate blog, organizational blog,  
relational maintenance framework, blog content management**

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Weblogs, a new genre of computer-mediated communication (Blood, 2002; Erickson & Herring, 2007; Schmidt, 2007) has grown exponentially and become a global phenomenon in just a few years. A weblog is a web-based publication with dated entries in reverse chronological order, usually maintained and published using a popular blog authoring tool (Kumar et al., 2004). Technorati's 2008 State of the Blogosphere Report tracked 133 million weblogs worldwide. The size of the blogosphere demonstrates that blogging is a significant digital genre that not only shapes the virtual world but also influences our reality.

While the overall growth rate of the blogosphere has slowed down recently (Sifry, 2007), professional and corporate blogs have increased. Corporate blogs, published or used by an organization to support organizational goals, have appeared only more recently and are less well understood. A corporate blog is defined as a blog that is: (1) endorsed explicitly or implicitly by a company and (2) posted by a person or group who is affiliated with the company (Cho & Huh, 2007; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Sifry, 2004; Smudde, 2005). There are two kinds of corporate blogs: external blogs which can be accessed by the public, and internal blogs which are circulated only among employees. As of October 2006, 8% of Fortune 500 companies had external corporate blogs, published by their employees about the companies and/or their products (Anderson & Mayfield, 2006). The fast-growing number of corporate blogs has caught the attention of researchers, PR practitioners, and marketers.

Because blogs facilitate both mass communication and interpersonal communication, they have great potential for publicity campaigns and marketing (Lawson-Borders & Kirk, 2005). Despite increasing interest from businesses in adopting blogs, however, there has been little research into corporate blogs, and many questions remain unanswered. Among the few studies that do exist, most show that corporate blogs can serve as an effective communication tool for public relations and marketing (Cho & Huh, 2007; Jackson et al., 2007; Marken, 2005; Smudde, 2005). However, Lawley (2004) points out that a useful approach to exploring blogs further is "the study of the use of weblogs as tools in specific

organizational contexts.” This study, therefore, focuses on the management and operation of external corporate blogs by four TV stations in Taiwan: two terrestrial TV stations (Taiwan Television Enterprise and Formosa TV) and two cable networks (TVBS and Eastern TV). As of October 2007, they are the only early adopters of corporate blogs<sup>1</sup> out of forty TV companies in Taiwan<sup>2</sup>. In this exploratory case study, the researcher interviewed IT managers, webmasters, blog masters and publicists responsible for the management of blogs in the four stations, and analyzed the content and features of their weblogs. The study aims to find out the types and characteristics of TV weblogs and the management strategies and relational maintenance strategies used for corporate blogs within TV stations.

## Characteristics of corporate blogs

The content of business blogs is relatively informal, revealing, and timely compared with information posted on official corporate websites. Lee, Hwang, and Lee (2006) split corporate blogs into five categories: (1) the employee blog, written by any worker in the company; (2) the group blog, which is a workers' blog kept by a set of experts; (3) the executive blog, written by management; (4) the promotional blog, which is an impersonal blog for diffusing product and event information; and (5) the newsletter blog, which is also impersonal and used to present the company's stance through its information.

The unique functionality of blogs, such as trackbacks, comments, blogrolls, tags and RSS can make connecting with potential customers easier and differentiate a company from its competitors. A blog is easy to create and maintain, and less expensive to produce than traditional customer newsletters. Kelleher and Miller (2006) found conversational

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<sup>1</sup> This study checked every TV station's official website during the research period of time. The four cases examined in this study were the only TV stations using external corporate blogs.

<sup>2</sup> The total number of Taiwan's TV companies includes terrestrial TV stations, TV networks, cable and satellite TV stations which produce original content for Taiwan's audience and can be watched island wide.

human voice was communicated more effectively via organizational blogs than traditional newsletter-type material posted online.

Since 2006, many businesses that had earlier observed the blogosphere with a wary eye have implemented corporate blogs for both individual and business customers (Gillin, 2007). Technorati (2008) reported that 20% of corporate bloggers have paid full-time or part-time staff to maintain the content, but a higher percentage have unpaid help. Corporate blogs are used for marketing, to test new products, run online focus groups, or counter negative publicity. They provide both established companies and obscure brands with opportunities to connect with customers on a more personal level. As corporate blogs open up two-way communication flows for unfiltered feedback from customers, their advantages include: (1) adding credibility and trust (Turcotte et al., 2005); (2) increasing transparency and accessibility, which enhances corporate image; (3) reaching and interacting with a target market on a personal level (Karpinski, 2003); (4) maintaining customer relationships (Cho & Huh, 2007); (5) managing organizational crisis (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007); and (6) building online communities (Blanchard, 2004; Cayzer, 2004; Jackson et al., 2007).

According to Backbone Media's 2005 corporate blogging research, a successful blog breeds success in marketing and sales initiatives. This chain reaction comes about when corporate bloggers provide useful and engaging content (i.e., latest information, troubleshooting, and discussions). On the one hand, customer education appears to be a natural use for corporate weblogs (Karpinski, 2003). On the other hand, if a company adopts blogging strategies to encourage customer connection (Karpinski, 2003; Lloyd, 2007), customers start responding by commenting, posting or tracking back to a blogging community. This viral effect disseminates blogging content and linkages across the blogosphere.

## **Management strategies of corporate blogs**

Content management is critical to the success of corporate blogs. Corporate blogging is an ideal medium which combines the casual communication style of weblogs with a mix of corporate messages and individual voices (Karpinski, 2003), to achieve corporate marketing goals. The conversational tone of an organizational blog, combined with its two-way communication function, can enable a company to connect to people better than traditional websites (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). This type of communication gives a human face to the company, building a positive community image about it and its products (Lee et al., 2006). Also, the content of a corporate blog should present the company's messages and avoid blatant attempts at self-promotion; otherwise, the results of corporate blogging may backfire. According to a study of 100 Taiwan's corporate blogs (Ren, 2006), companies ought to improve their content and utilize the functionalities of blogging to engage the public and create brand awareness, instead of passively showing online product information.

A few studies have explored how corporate blogs are used in public relations. Hill (2004) found that blogs are an effective tool for small businesses to build customer relationships, engage in viral marketing, and optimize their search engines. Adapted from Canary and Stafford's (1992) maintenance strategy factors and Hon and Grunig's (1999) PR relationship measurement scale, Cho and Huh (2007) first developed a framework to analyze the relational maintenance strategies of corporate blogs. Table 1 illustrates the definitions of the six strategies. This content analysis study showed that positivity, assurance, and task-sharing strategies were more frequently applied by corporate blogs than access, social networking, and openness strategies. They found that corporate blogs have only limited contributions to corporate relationship management in the sampling of 31 Fortune 500 and Interbrand 100 companies. Specifically, companies in service or retail business employed relational maintenance strategies in their blogs more than manufacturers. Keller (2009) further found relational maintenance strategies and conversational human voice correlated positively with trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality.

**Table 1** Relational Maintenance Strategies for Corporate Blogs (Cho & Huh, 2007)

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Access	Provide public access to representatives of the company or to a decision making process
Positivity	Offer users an enjoyable interactive experience
Openness	Have two-way communication between the blog authors and visitors
Social network	Support networking with common friends and affiliations
Assurance	Issue messages which stress commitment to the blog community
Sharing task	Attempt to maintain relationships by performing shared duties

Previous studies showed many corporate blogs operated as a form of one-way communication dispersing information from corporate bloggers to the public, and failed to make use of the unique features of blogs to improve relationships (Cho & Huh, 2007; Keller & Miller, 2006; Keller, 2009). Even though corporate blogs share similar formats and characteristics with personal blogs, most of the companies did not develop different strategies and usages of blog features from those of traditional corporate websites. Similarly, Xifra and Huertas (2008) found highly usable and interlinked PR blogs underutilized their development in interactive resources and capacities.

Also, if corporate blogging culture is open, and customer feedback is treated seriously, a company will be able to harness the benefits and opportunities that blogging offers (Turcotte et al., 2005) such as better product development, higher search engine rankings, and direct online PR. Macromedia's weblog has been viewed as a "killer application," which chooses passionate and knowledgeable employees to write blogs about commentary with news, tips on debugging, product use and development, and customer feedback. In addition to open blogging culture, Carl and Cass (2006) indentified other key factors that make corporate blogs

successful, like clear goals, enough research time, and engaging and inviting topics.

A corporate weblog can be a double-edged sword: it can serve as an interactive platform to connect with customers or a medium to spread defamation and rumors. Companies must establish ground rules and guidelines for company bloggers (Gartenberg, 2004) and draw up boundaries for employee bloggers and external blog users. Blogs potentially raise other major legal issues such as intellectual property, privacy, and security concerns. A company is likely to avoid any legal minefield or potential liability if it implements a blogging policy tailored to organizational goals, culture, and existing policies (Klosek, 2006).

Among the few studies on this subject, Cho and Huh (2007) found that the use of weblogs for corporate communications is now still limited to a small proportion of the major corporations in the US. In a study of US Fortune 100 companies and Taiwan's top 100 companies, Chen (2005) found that the corporate blogs of large enterprises were mostly still in the initial stages, and that small businesses were more enthusiastic about harnessing weblogs to reach out to customers. The bandwagon effect and the unique characteristics of blogs – such as low cost, low entry level, and interactivity – are the main factors affecting the decisions of Taiwanese businesses to adopt blogs (Lin, 2005).

## **Research Method**

Reverse chronological and frequently maintained corporate blogs have distinct characteristics that differ from one-way, less-updated corporate websites (Kumar et al., 2004). The TV weblogs identified in these cases are attached to the front page of the official corporate websites explicitly. They are external blogs that can be accessed by employers and the public. TV weblogs have unique characteristics, like the blogs published by TV talents or blogs related to TV content. After Cho and Huh's study (2007) of the big companies in manufacturer, service, and retail business, it will

be interesting to apply this relational maintenance framework to the media industry and find out whether there is any salient difference.

This qualitative multiple case study selected the only TV stations adopting external corporate blogs in Taiwan<sup>3</sup> as of October 2007. By examining the four TV weblogs, this study aims to answer the research questions:

1. *What are the key characteristics of external corporate blogs in TV stations?*
2. *What kinds of strategies do the four TV stations use to manage their blog platforms?*
3. *How well do the four TV blog platform perform in terms of relational maintenance?*

Highly advanced in digital technologies, Taiwan has a diversified and competitive TV industry. It is a small island with 40 television companies which produce a variety of TV content. The backgrounds of the four cases are briefly introduced below.

## **1. TVBS**

TVBS, Taiwan's first satellite broadcasting channel, was launched in 1993 by TVBI Company Limited (TVBI), a subsidiary of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) in Hong Kong and ERA Group of Taiwan. This national cable TV network has four channels. In early 2005, the company became wholly owned by Television Broadcasts Limited of Hong Kong, and its organizational culture changed from innovative to conservative and profit-driven.

## **2. Eastern TV (ETTV)**

The Eastern Broadcasting Company (EBC) is a media conglomerate that owns multiple cable systems, various TV channels, a newspaper, a radio station, an online news forum, and a TV shopping channel. It is the world's biggest private Chinese-language TV station and several of its channels can be watched in 66 countries. The ex-president had the

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<sup>3</sup> Ditto the footnote 1 on page 4.



ambitious goal to make ETTV News the Chinese CNN. As a result of financial scandals, EBC's ownership was transferred to USA's Carlyle Group in late 2007.

### **3. Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV)**

Established in 1962, TTV was the first television broadcaster in Taiwan and has been the breeding ground for many successful TV programs and dramas. It broadcasts one terrestrial TV channel and a digital TV channel. The station has invested significant resources in innovations such as IPTV to rejuvenate its business performance. Under Taiwan's media reform laws, the previously partially government-owned TTV became fully privatized in September 2007.

### **4. Formosa Television (FTV)**

FTV, the fourth national broadcaster, was established in June 1997. It broadcasts two standard TV channels and one digital channel. FTV is innovative and adventurous in trying out new technologies and applications like DTV, IPTV, and mobile TV, and adept at creating profitable business opportunities.

The qualitative data were collected by interviews and observation. In October 2007, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with IT managers, webmasters, blog masters and publicists in the four TV stations (Appendix 1). The researcher followed up the interviews and clarified some vagueness via email. The interview questions were mainly to uncover the factors affecting TV blogs' management strategies. Meanwhile, the researcher and assistants observed the four TV blog platforms over the last two weeks of September in 2007, and thematically analyzed their key characteristics by features, blog types, popular content, and blog authors.

Instead of using quantitative content analysis, Cho and Huh's (2007) framework was used to analyze the content and features of the four TV weblogs (Table 2). It is the only theoretic framework that examines corporate blogs' relational maintenance strategies with clear operational definitions and measurements to assess blog features. Finally, a thematic

analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to analyze the data and uncover recurrent patterns. We coded the content with Cho and Huh's (2007) measured features and key management strategies including interactivity, conversational human voice, encouragement, competition, and voluntary use.

**Table 2** Measured Features and Content of Corporate Blogs' Relational Maintenance Strategies (Cho & Huh, 2007)

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Measured features &amp; content</b>	<b>Features</b>
Access	Contact information such as address, telephone number, and email address	Physical address, email address, telephone/fax number
Positivity	User friendly navigation tools and multimedia features	RSS, monthly archive, hypertext within posts, site search, category, calendar, podcast, video clip, animation
Openness	Comment functions, trackback	Comment, trackback
Social network	Blogroll and the number of links on the blogroll	blogroll
Assurance	Blog policy statements, including privacy policy, disclaimer, or copyright concerns	Policy statement for the blog, policy statement for the website
Sharing task	Post blogging content frequently	Frequency of postings

## Findings

### Characteristics of corporate blogs in TV contexts

The two-week observational data of the four TV blogs were analyzed by features, blog types, popular content, and blog authors. Interestingly, the blog platforms of the cable TV networks (TVBS and ETTV) have more sophisticated features and functionalities and attract more internal and

external bloggers to post diversified topics frequently than the weblogs of the broadcasters (TTV and FTV) do.

### 1. TVBS Pop Blog

TVBS's General Manager Li Tao attempted to replicate the success of foreign TV blogs by launching "TVBS Pop Blog," the first corporate blog in Taiwan's media industry. He attempted to use the blog as a public forum to gather comments on "TVBS 2100," a popular call-in political commentary show. This idea failed after a trial period of a few months as most of the audience were not tech-savvy Internet users, so interest in the program did not carry over to the weblog. Also, without monetary incentives, professional news commentators were not willing to author blogs on this platform. Later, TVBS's blog shifted from its original goal to providing an interactive platform that connects its TV talents with audience, and promotes its TV content.

TVBS Pop Blog is a blog-hosting platform that welcomes both internal and external users. The blog's icon is prominent on the menu of the corporate homepage, which indicates TVBS's recognition of its importance. Although Pop Blog is open to the public, the content on the front page tends to promote TVBS's news, programs, and on-cam talents.

Three blog categories related to TV business are highlighted, including celebrity blogs,<sup>4</sup> artist blogs, and the Hong Kong Pop Blog. The 12 celebrity blogs can be divided into two types: blogs linked to political commentary shows, which are relatively routine, feature program-centric content, and are maintained by hosts or production staff; and (2) anchor blogs which are more personal, conversational, and informal. The artist blogs which mix information from local famous hosts and experts has the highest viewership as their hosts and program publicists are diligent at updating content and replying to questions. Hong

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<sup>4</sup> The authors of celebrity, artist, and anchor blogs are well-known public figures. Artist blogs in this study refer to the blogs written by either hosts of variety shows and entertainment programs or actors. Unlike the other three cases that clearly identify anchor blogs and artist blogs, TVBS Pop Blog uses the category of "celebrity" blogs to encompass anchors and hosts of the current affairs or political commentary shows like Li Tao.

Kong Pop Blog presents the personal blogs of 22 Hong Kong TVB artists.

After analyzing the categories of blogs, the study found that TVBS' Pop Blog balances personal and organizational voices well. On the one hand, its celebrity and artist blogs draw a lot of traffic to this blog platform. For instance, Li Tao's TVBS 2100 celebrity blogs have attracted half a million readers, while the most popular artist blogs have accumulated millions of clicks. On the other hand, public bloggers enrich the content of the TV weblog and dilute blatant commercial and promotional attempts of the program blogs, so visitors trust TVBS Pop Blog more.

## **2. ETTV's Bloguide**

After noticing the popularity of "Yi-Zen.com," a TVBS anchor blog, EBC, was inspired to establish an interactive platform for ETTV's anchors. In 2005, it launched "Bloguide," a corporate blog under ETToday.com,<sup>5</sup> EBC's online newspaper. The blog was first used primarily to publicize ETTV's news and programs, and the public could apply for accounts through strict scrutiny. Later, EBC decided to expand the scope of its blog service and open its application as a blog service provider (BSP). Even after the ownership was transferred and the online newspaper had changed its name from ETToday.com to NOWnews.com in early 2008, the content and layout of Bloguide remained the same.

Bloguide is a large blog platform linked to NOWnews.com. It hosts 4,000 public bloggers and internal blogs and does not blatantly promote ETTV's business. Three out of 17 blog categories on Bloguide – anchor, shopping, and ETTV – are operated by internal employees to promote artists or shows and to connect with the public. Anchor blogs and Shopping blogs are the personal blogs of news presenters and shopping channel hosts respectively. Their tone is open and straightforward. The ETTV blogs showcase dramas serials, programs, and artists from various

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<sup>5</sup> Chunghwa United Telecom Group bought ETToday.com and re-launched it as NOWnews.com in April, 2008. Nownews.com is the one of the top three internet service providers.

ETTV channels. It encompasses two types of blogs: (1) artist blogs, personal blogs whose content and style are similar to the two aforementioned blog categories; and (2) program and channel blogs, which are usually maintained by program publicists and planners and written in a relatively formal way.

Program and channel blogs which aim for publicity are PR blogs or promotional blogs. Their content covers introductions, scheduling, episode content, and selected gossip about programs. With a less personalized tone, these blogs have more sophisticated layout designs and better functionality than other personal blogs.

With full-time blog masters to maintain the content, Bloguide has savvy blog presentations and multimedia features to showcase some articles with videos. Its 10 most popular blogs show that readers are interested in accessing content related to ETTV and in interacting with its TV celebrities.

### **3. TTV's blog**

In January 2006, TTV opened its external corporate blog platform to public users and attracted many external bloggers. Due to high cost in maintenance and difficulty in content management, TTV changed its policy after three months and closed its door on public usage. The majority of TTV's corporate bloggers are employees, artists, and business partners but a few external bloggers have remained since the early days. Most of TTV's blogs are personal blogs. The observation showed some blogs under the 12 categories were no longer updated and others were not attracting any new clicks.

Without planning, such co-existence of internal and external bloggers failed to enrich the blog's content, but caused confusion. For publicity purposes, a few artist blogs related to primetime dramas or high-rating shows were placed in prominent positions on the front page and maintained more diligently. Only a couple of program blogs – TTV World Channel and Enterprise Hall of Fame – actively posted information about their episodes and gave feedback to users. Program

advertisements on the TTV blog's front page exposed its commercial purposes blatantly. Overall, TTV's blog platform with basic functionality and meager and static content attracted only a few visitors and hits.

#### 4. FTV's blogs

Of the four, FTV was the last to launch its corporate blog and is comparatively less enthusiastic about its operation. Lacking a unified blogging platform, FTV's corporate blogs have two segments: Artist's Blogging, and Artist Wharf-Star Lounge, a program blog. The two blogs only have basic blog features and their content representation is fragmented without a unified tone and design. Artist's Blogging contains 20 artist blogs independently operated by the stars. Surprisingly enough, although the links to these blogs are placed in a small corner of FTV official website, they attract myriad hits. For instance, the blog of one famous actress, June, had more than 10 million hits because she assiduously posted personal stories and shared private pictures with readers. By contrast, as FTV's publicists infrequently uploaded pictures for dramas, programs, and actors to Artist Wharf-Star Lounge, it had only about 60,000 hits over two years. Artist's Blogging is hence much more popular than the Artist Wharf-Star Lounge.

**Table 3** Characteristics of the four TV weblogs

TV	Blog Category	Blog related to TV business	Popular blogs
TVBS	20	Celebrity blog, Artist blog,	Celebrity blog
		Hong Kong Pop Blog	Artist blog
ETTV	17	Anchor blog, Shopping Blog,	Anchor blog,
		ETTV blog	Artist blog, Programming blog
TTV	12	Artist blogs, Programming blogs	Artist blog
FTV	2	Artist blogs, Programming blogs	Artist blog

According to Lee, Hwang, and Lee's (2006) corporate blog categories, the four TV stations have employee blogs, group blogs, and promotional blogs that are related to their core TV businesses. TVBS, ETTV, and TTV opened their blog platforms for internal employees, such as reporters or production crew members, to share their working

experiences or personal views. These blogs provide human faces in a conversational manner on TV blogs that allow outsiders to take a behind-the-scenes peek into the TV world and connect with TV professionals and stations. As for the group blogs, anchor blogs and artist blogs in the four blog platforms are most popular and attract web traffic and viewership. Celebrities who post personal stories and perspectives create brand affinity for the TV stations they work for or are affiliated with. Both employee blogs and group blogs shorten the distance between viewers and TV stations and dilute the commercial overtones of the promotional blogs that are too impersonal for diffusing programming and events. Moreover, direct selling of programs or channels is less appealing to blog visitors, thus publicists who write promotional blogs should switch from impersonal to conversational and human-centered writing.

### **Management and relational maintenance strategies of TV weblogs**

The way in which a corporate blog is perceived and positioned by decision makers greatly affects an organization's implementation and management strategies as well as the allocation of resources to operate the blogs. The interview results showed that the managers in the four cases considered TV as the core business and the Internet as the secondary. They treated corporate blogging as a supplementary online service with different levels of significance. This finding is similar to Chan-Olmsted and Ha's (2003) study that the broadcasters used online activities to build audience relationship and support the stations' offline core products.

#### **1. TVBS Pop Blog**

Since 2005, TVBS has held an open-door policy as a BSP in an attempt to encourage the public to participate in its corporate blog, TVBS Pop Blog. After its content focus was switched from political commentary to program and artist promotion, the blog platform became quite popular.

Nevertheless, since it is still considered an auxiliary online service, TVBS's corporate blog is allocated limited resources. For example, there is no personnel assigned full-time responsibility for its maintenance, and

no new features were added to the blog platform in 2007. “*Our operational strategy is open and transparent,*” TVBS’ IT and multimedia manager, who is responsible for the blog, said. “*The number of hits, the number of new bloggers, and the number of visitors... are shown clearly on the website.*” Without enough manpower, TVBS could not analyze the significance behind these figures. The manager felt frustrated that because of insufficient resources, Pop Blog could not compete with other BSPs which provide fancy features – such as raising virtual pets or uploading videos – to attract users.

Unlike EBC, which initially made anchor blogs mandatory, TVBS has merely encouraged its anchors, hosts, and artists to jump on the blog wagon.

*Our blog management is quite laissez-faire. Without using the mandatory strategy used in EBC’s Bloguide, we just set up the blog platform for internal and external users and offer special designs for popular on-cam talents’ personal blogs (Chen, 2007).*

From the observation, this blog platform showed the co-existence of two extremes: a few hot artists’ blogs, operated by TV hosts that regularly updated content and responded to audience, gathering millions of hits, while some bloggers who posted a few lines infrequently lost audience appeal. To encourage artists’ involvement in blogging and create competition, IT technicians provided special services to design customized blog layouts for the more popular blogs, so as to differentiate their representation and help attract more visitors.

## **2. ETTV’s Bloguide**

Comparatively speaking, EBC put more emphasis on and invested more resources into the operation of its weblog than the other three. It is the only TV blog platform that links to an online newspaper (ETToday) to increase its visibility and exposure and has three full-time staff to operate it. When Bloguide launched, EBC held several big campaigns, such as the Bloguide Deputy contest, to raise awareness of its corporate blog brand.

When it was established, EBC’s corporate blog aimed to serve as an



interactive platform which would open up a two-way communication channel between its news anchors and fans. Its anchors were forced to adopt personal blogs initially, and they routinely promote their blogs at the end of newscasts. However, the levels of usage and the effort of maintaining the blogs vary. As blogging is not regarded as the core business by EBC's top management, employees, like anchors and hosts, were not necessarily enthusiastic about updating blog content. According to EBC's deputy director at Value-Added Business Center, those who diligently maintained their blogs reaped significant rewards, especially that of increasing popularity. Besides, EBC's artists who were keen to blog inspired lots of fans to set up personal blogs in Bloguide and thus expanded its online community.

Even though Bloguide was open for the public after the first year and has since accumulated thousands of bloggers, it was not taken too seriously by top management. *"We often had internal discrepancies toward the development of the Bloguide: whether Bloguide's operation should be upgraded to take on other BSPs or maintain the status quo. After all, it is a value-added service for the online news,"* indicated the deputy director (Yen, 2007) who indeed fought hard to win resources for the blog platform, as it was still positioned as a subsidiary web service in EBC.

### **3. TTV's blog**

TTV regards the blog as a channel for the sole purpose of propaganda because its top management does not foresee corporate blogging generating any direct revenue. *"For the company's sake, it is not cost-effective to invest money in broadband and virtual space for laymen to express emotions or opinions that are irrelevant to core TV business,"* said TTV's IT director (Lo, 2007). After restricting the blog platform to internal usage only, TTV has kept the original structure and blog categories, but has shifted the focus to promoting content. As at TVBS, there is no full-time personnel assigned to blog maintenance.

The main goal for TTV's Blog is two-fold: to provide a two-way platform that allows actors to directly interact with audience, and to

publicize programs, especially dramas. “*TTV’s corporate blog is a medium for those who really need to communicate with the public,*” said TTV’s IT director (Lo, 2007). He pointed out artists and publicity staff should interact with audience and promote TV content through blogging.

*We are heading in the direction of drama promotion. We provide a blog platform for fans to interact with the artists. It (interactivity) is more difficult to be achieved by the official website. And writing in a blog is more straightforward* (Yen, 2007).

One 11-year-old new actor who assiduously maintained his blog and had already made many fans before the release of his prime-time drama in TTV. He even uploaded video clips of his magic show to attract visitors. Such self-motivated artist bloggers were strongly encouraged by TTV, because the management believed that the popularity of artist blogs could boost TV ratings. In fact, it was fairly difficult to compel artists to update blog content regularly as they were overwhelmed by their show business schedules. From the observation, a large percentage of the artists’ blogs at TTV were dead or static and had not been updated for months prior to the study. That was because actors usually cooperated for promotional purposes while their shows were being aired on TTV, but artist blogs were often abandoned once show ended.

#### **4. FTV’s blogs**

The Artist Wharf-Star Lounge was launched cooperatively in March 2005 by FTV’s IT department and program publicity department. The former set up the blog space linked to FTV’s official website, while the latter provided articles and pictures related to FTV’s shows and programs. When interviewed, FTV’s IT manager said that FTV did not operate a corporate blog, as their blogs – unlike those of other BSPs – were not open to public participation. Nevertheless, the blogs fit the definition of a corporate blog as they are endorsed explicitly or implicitly by FTV and are posted by their employees, artists, and business partners.

Initially, Artist Wharf-Star Lounge regularly updated live webcam interaction with celebrities. However, short of manpower, it only published celebrity tidbits and occasionally posted behind-the-scenes pictures of artists. It is, therefore, an external corporate blog used by

publicists to maintain customer relationships and promote programming. According to FTV’s head of Program Publicity (Du, 2007), the content published in this blog was strategically differentiated from the information on the official website in order to attract young fans.

The other FTV blog, Artist Blogging, is independently operated by stars and celebrities. FTV takes a laissez-faire approach to artist blogs; for example Phoenix Artist Agent, a subsidiary of FTV, has provided its actors only with technical support to launch personal blogs. Artists are then expected to post and maintain content by themselves. Occasionally, program publicists pushed the artists to post stories on their blogs, so that they could create some entertainment news topics and increase their program exposure.

FTV’s two TV weblogs used other existing BSPs’ authoring tools for publishing information and articles. They only have simple features and minimum functionalities. Without clear and unified blog goals, the fragmented messages from personal blogs and infrequently updated programming blogs fail to create trust and interactivity or form any online community.

**Table 4** Comparison of Management Strategies in the TV Stations

TV Station	Blog goals	Bloggers	Management strategies
TVBS	- Promotion of programs - Artist publicity	Public, anchors, hosts, employees	- Encouragement - Voluntary use - Competition
ETTV	- Anchor publicity - News	Public, anchors, hosts, employees	- Compulsory implementation - Campaigns + link to online newspaper (brand awareness)
TTV	- Drama promotion - Artist publicity	Artists, a few external bloggers	- Encouragement - Voluntary use
FTV	- Promotion of programs - Artist publicity	Artists, program publicists	- Voluntary use - Laissez-faire

In short, the data analysis showed the four TV stations treated blogs

as the complementary platforms for publicizing content and artists as well as connecting with audience. No matter the corporate blogs were open for the public or not, only limited resources were allocated to manage and maintain these blogs which restricted their interactivity and content diversity. With voluntary use, only a few self-motivated employers were keen in updating content and interacting with readers. Some blog masters used encouragement, mandate, and competition to stimulate the participation from internal employers (i.e. anchors, hosts, reporters). In addition to programs publicists' official content information, TV artists' personal and conversational blogs appealed to many fans and often became sources of newspapers' stories. Also, the findings indicated that campaigns and cross-platform promotion between TV and official websites helped create corporate blogs' brand awareness.

### **5. Relational maintenance strategies of TV Blogs**

Cho and Huh's (2007) corporate blog research clearly defined six indicators of relational maintenance strategies (access, assurance, positivity, openness, sharing task, and social network) and their measurement of corporate blogs' features and content. In spite of using quantitative content analysis, this multiple case study used the framework to analyze the observational data of weblog features and evaluate their performance of relational maintenance.

First, the front page of TVBS's Pop Blog features a photo gallery to showcase artists and programs, Netmate recommended blogs, Netmate recommended articles (with mostly TVBS-related content), and a Pop Blog Housekeeper. It also includes a voting center, which registers users' opinions on various topics. Individual blogs on this platform can proactively invite readers to subscribe to emails.

TVBS's Pop Blog provides comment functions, trackbacks, and the number of hits showed evidence of transparent operational strategies (openness). It has a policy statement of operating principles (assurance), easy-to-use navigation tools and multimedia features (positivity), linkages of blogrolls (social network), and constantly updated blog content (sharing task). However, this blog platform is weak in "access" because it

does not provide any blog housekeeper or contact information.

Next, Bloguide's front page has some interesting features: (1) highlighted services: a blog billboard (10 most popular blogs), hottest hits, and the editor's recommended blogs; and (2) classified content: selected latest articles, article classifications, blog categories, updated audiovisual content, and newly posted articles. The front page also contains the blogmaster's messages to the blog community, through features such as the blog workstation (containing ETTV's blog policy, manual, and Q & A section) and the blog board, or blogmaster's announcement.

EBC's Bloguide scored highly in the six strategies. The blog lists the company's contact information (access) and blog policy statements (assurance). Its blogmaster also responds to readers regularly. Bloguide has friendly navigation tools and audiovisual features (positivity), and comment and trackback functions (openness). Both Bloguide's personal and channel blogs post content frequently (sharing task), along with showing blogrolls on most of the hosted blogs (social network).

TTV weblog's front page shows focal diaries, popular blog articles, latest posted articles, new photo albums, and featured artists for TTV dramas and programs. It has a blogmaster blog to educate users about new blog features and answer their questions. However, the latest article was posted in late 2006. Although TTV weblog provides user friendly navigation tools (positivity), has comment functions and feedback (openness), as well as blogrolls (social network), without an explicit blog policy and contact information, it fails to fulfill the requirements of "access" and "assurance." TTV's blog relational maintenance is considered weak in "sharing task," because its content is seldom updated.

FTV's corporate blogs are the least developed and maintained among the four. Like TTV's blog, they fail in "access" and "assurance," since no contact information and blog policy are provided. Without multimedia functionalities, its navigation tools are basic and simple (no positivity). Nevertheless, its individual blogs still have features as comments and trackbacks (openness), as well as a blogroll (social network). The success of some FTV artists' blogs that often post personal stories and pictures emphasizes that "sharing tasks" is the key to attracting readership.

**Table 5** Relational Maintenance Strategies of the four TV weblogs

TV	Access	Positivity	Openness	Social network	Assurance	Sharing task
<b>TVBS</b>	- No blog housekeeper - No contact information	√	√	√	√	√
<b>ETTV</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>TTV</b>	- Discontinued blog housekeeper - No contact information	√	√	√	No blog policy	Less frequently update
<b>FTV</b>	- No blog housekeeper - No contact information	Basic & simple navigation	√	√	No blog policy	Varied in content maintenance

Among the four, ETTV's Bloguide's features show the best performance in its relational maintenance strategies. The analyses show Taiwan's TV blogs require more improvement in accessibility to representatives and decision making processes (access), blog policy setting (assurance), and frequently updated content (sharing task). The first two strategies, access and assurance, can be reinforced easily by adding contact information, a blogmaster, and a clear blog policy.

## Discussion

Media hype of corporate blogging and some successful cases boost the interest of enterprises in adopting weblogs. It was forecast that the number of corporate blogs would soar within a few years worldwide. This effective communication tool for both personal and mass communication (Lawson-Borders & Kirk, 2005) should be utilized by TV stations beyond simple publicity. By using a conversational tone and interactivity, TV weblogs can communicate more effectively than corporate websites. These blog platforms should try to provide a good mix of personal and corporate voices and diversified topics authored by internal TV

professionals or the public. Viewers actively seek for information in TV blogs, engage themselves by leaving comments and feedback, reaching out to the previously unreachable TV celebrities.

Successfully operating a blog hosting platform requires skillful utilization of the unique characteristics of blogging, such as interactivity and conversational human voice (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kelleher, in press). Similar to the findings in previous studies (Cho & Huh, 2007; Xifra & Huertas, 2008), most promotional blogs and programming blogs on the four blogging platforms we have seen still operated as a form of one-way communication and their interactive resources and capacities were still underutilized. The TV stations should impose strategies to improve the interactivity of the blog platform. In comparison, their personal blogs (i.e., artist blogs, anchor blogs, and employee blogs) were more responsive, interactive, and conversational. As for blogging in a conversational voice, artist blogs that used a straightforward and personal writing style were the foci of the four TV weblogs. Their communication with fans and readers not only gave human faces to the companies (Lee et al., 2006), but also created positive images for their brands and TV content. Comparatively, programming blogs used more an official tone instead of a conversational style. TV weblogs are easy to set up and maintain, and less costly to produce than traditional customer newsletters or websites.

When corporate bloggers provide values and share useful and engaging content (Turcotte, et al., 2005), it will arouse readers' attention and feedback, and thus bring traffic, hits, media coverage, or success in marketing and customer relationship. The four TV weblogs have famous human voices and attempt to promote TV content, instead of selling tangible products. They need not do much promotion to create brand awareness. Compared with other corporate blogs, TV weblogs can attract a huge amount of general public easily because they have celebrity bloggers as charming ambassadors and compelling topics related to the glamour of the TV world. In order to recruit high-quality bloggers or retain busy star bloggers, the companies should adopt effective mediation

strategies, like compulsory adoption, competition, or reward to increase user involvement.

The popularity of artist blogs proves the significance of compelling blogging content. The uniqueness of artist blogs offer unprecedented up-close and personal opportunities for fans to hear their idols' voices, know their whereabouts, and interact directly with them through a virtual medium. From the analyses of the cases, the successful formula for TV blogs is to run such blogs under well-known hosts/experts who write about celebrity stories or useful topical information such as fashion and health. These blogs can connect with fans, something that one-way broadcasting content on official websites or surrogated responses in discussion boards cannot do.

Unlike Cho and Huh's findings, Taiwan's TV blogs perform weakly in "assurance" and "sharing task." In terms of relational maintenance strategies of TV blogs, it is critical to have blog policy statements tailored to organizational goals, culture, and existing constraints for internal users and external publics to follow, whereby the blog company is likely avoid any legal minefield or potential liability (Klosek, 2006). TV blogs can simply state clear blog policy to increase the "assurance" and avoid future legal or management problems. The problems of "sharing tasks" in TV weblogs were mostly caused by the infrequently updated artists blogs. Although TV artist blogs tended to be very popular, these busy star authors often had difficulty in constantly maintaining their blog content. No matter how attractive the blog content is, it must be updated frequently so as to keep existing readers' loyalty and improve customers' relationships. It is necessary to have staff to keep track of the hot blogs and encourage content updating.

From the analyses of the four cases, an open, transparent, and responsive corporate blogging culture stimulated user participation and boosted the popularity of weblogs. ETTV's Bloguide had an engaging blogging culture and attracted myriad blog authors and readers. With a casual blogging communication style (Karpinski, 2003), Bloguide presents a good example of balancing corporate messages (programming



and PR blogs) with individual voices (artist and anchors blogs). Other TV blogs, with official voices and blatant attempts at propaganda did not result in desirable effects. Hence, blog masters should look at the big picture and carefully plan PR/promotional blogs and personal blogs on their platform, so as to present unified, credible corporate messages and build up trust, satisfaction, and customer commitment.

The organizational contexts of the TV networks and broadcasters influence their blog management strategies and relational maintenance. The two cable TV networks, ETTV and TVBS, adopted TV weblogs early and placed lots of resources and emphasis on operating the blog platforms to incorporate external and internal bloggers and balance corporate and personal voices. In contrast, the two broadcasters, TTV and FTV, failed to maintain their TV blogs frequently and left the content to individual bloggers without any coherent corporate images or messages. ETTV belongs to a media conglomerate, EBC, which has experience in running an online news forum. Its weblog has sophisticated features and compelling content and layout. It also performs well in relational maintenance with blog visitors. Both TVBS and TTV encounter similar problems of limited resources and no staff to operate their TV weblogs, so that the quality of the management is difficult to improve. With an innovative organizational culture, FTV does not operate blogs to their full potential, as managers do not see the blogs' advantages for creating strategic competitiveness and invested more in other new digital mobile technologies.

Moreover, with unfiltered feedback and comments, TV corporate blogging is useful as a test bed for new ideas in programming, genres, or artists. For example, the corporate blog of China's CCTV held a successful campaign, "Seeking for the Red Cabinet," which attracted an incredibly amount of traffic and hits through the following of the online contest. Next, the previous study showed that a corporate blog was a good communicative tool to build virtual communities (Jackson et al., 2007). Popular US TV series like "Heroes" used blogs to provide extra information for characters and stories and formed online communities for

fans. The BBC's Blog Network is another successful example of fostering online communities on hosting corporate blogs. From the observation there was no apparent indication of virtual communities cultivated in the four Taiwan's TV weblogs. It will be beneficial for them to develop in this area, which hopefully will result in a viral effect of dispersing positive messages from the companies.

## **Conclusion**

Focusing on the management of corporate blogs within the TV context, this research found the four cases positioned their corporate blogs as subsidiary web services, with limited or scarce resources allocated. The interviews reflected that top management were dubious about whether operating corporate blogs could result in tangible returns in terms of increased ratings and commercials, business opportunities, or partnerships. The findings showed that blog content and management strategies of Taiwan's TV corporate blogs were still in their infancy. It was a pity that their corporate blogging, with great marketing, PR, and business potential, were used primarily for programming and artists' publicity and partially enhanced customer relationships. Finally, differing from Cho and Huh's (2007) relational maintenance results of corporate blogs, this study showed Taiwan's TV corporate blogs required improvement in blog policy setting (assurance), accessibility to corporate representatives and decision making processes (access), and frequently updating content (sharing task).

There is no previous study specifically investigating why TV stations adopt weblogs, how they manage them, and what kinds of characteristics TV weblogs have. The preliminary findings of this multiple-case study contribute to the understanding of corporate blog management in TV contexts, the features and characteristics of TV weblogs, as well as their relationship to blogging relationship maintenance strategies. Cho and Huh's (2007) relational maintenance strategies are found as a useful framework to examine corporate blogs – including TV weblogs – in both quantitative and qualitative content analysis studies.

Although this study conducted in four TV stations in Taiwan cannot be generalized to other contexts, it provides rich insights, contributes to theory generation, and leads the way for further corporate blog research. As weblogs open an additional channel for the currently one-way broadcasting TV to interact with its audience directly, its impact on content creation will be an interesting topic for future studies. Also, it will be meaningful to investigate the relationships among factors affecting TV weblog management strategies and blog representations (features and types).

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**Appendix 1: Interview name list**

<b>TV station</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
TVBS	Chen, Shi-Ming	Manager, Multimedia and IT Department
ETTV	Yen, Huong-Chia	Deputy Director, Value-Added Development Center
FTV	Eric Wang	Manager, IT department (Current Vice General Manager)
FTV	Julia Du	Director, Programming Publicity Department
FTV	Sherry Hou	Chief Planner, Programming Publicity Department
FTV	Cathy Yang	Specialist, Planning Department
TTV	Lo, Cheng-Chien	Director, IT Department

**Appendix2: List of blogs in the study**

<b>TV Station</b>	<b>Blog Name</b>	<b>URL</b>
TVBS	TVBS Pop Blog	<a href="http://popblog.tvbs.com.tw/blog/index/">http://popblog.tvbs.com.tw/blog/index/</a>
ETTV	Blog.nownews.com (previous Bloguide)	<a href="http://bloguide.ettoday.com/">http://bloguide.ettoday.com/</a>
TTV	TTV Blog	<a href="http://blog.ttv.com.tw/">http://blog.ttv.com.tw/</a>
FTV	Artist Wharf-Star Lounge Artist Blogging	<a href="http://blog.yam.com/ftv">http://blog.yam.com/ftv</a> <a href="http://www.ftv.com.tw/">http://www.ftv.com.tw/</a>

# 台灣電視台經營部落格之多重個案研究

林翠絹

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## 摘要

本多重個案研究探討台灣電視台管理部落格之策略，透過訪問資訊與網路部經理及企宣人員，以及分析部落格內容與特色，結果發現台灣電視台定位部落格為附屬網路服務，其管理策略與內容仍未臻成熟。研究亦顯示電視部落格主要運用於節目與藝人宣傳，其次為強化閱聽人關係，最受歡迎的藝人部落格傳達明星心情故事並提供粉絲互動管道；至於宣傳與節目部落格須加強互動性及對話式筆觸 (conversational human voice)。此外電視台可採取強制採用、鼓勵或競爭等策略招攬部落客及強化內容。本研究以“關係維繫架構 (relational maintenance framework)” (Cho and Huh, 2007) 檢視四部落格，發現其“政策制定 (assurance)”、“接近公司代表與決策過程(access)”、以及“內容更新 (sharing tasks)”三方面仍須改進。

**關鍵字：**電視部落格、企業部落格、組織部落格、關係維繫架構、部落格內容管理