Corporate Blogs of 40 Fortune 500 Companies: Distribution, Categorization and Characteristics

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies corporate blogs as virtual communities, focusing on the distribution, categorization and characteristics of 40 Fortune 500 Companies' blogs. Firstly, the 40 corporate blogs were classified by industries to see which industries are active advocates of corporate blogs. Secondly, the 40 corporate blogs were first grouped in direct competitor clusters and then categorized into four types of virtual communities: 1) Community of interest, 2) Goal-oriented community of interest, 3) Learner's community, and 4) Community of practice. Thirdly, eight common elements were identified and compared for each of the 40 corporate blogs to find out their major characteristics. Finally, the implications of this study and future research directions were outlined in the conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

There are millions of people blogging on the Internet nowadays, expressing their thoughts and sharing their experiences, and providing information in an effective manner. In recent years, more and more companies have built up corporate blogs for the purpose of creating an intimate, immediate, two-way relationship between them and the rest of the world. As a frequent and chronological publication on the Internet, a corporate blog provides a platform for a company to help existing clients and potential customers make better business decisions. There is little doubt that corporate blogs are an effective means of marketing and communication for promoting companies' brands, products, and services (Byron & Broback, 2006; Dwyer, 2007; Scoble & Israel, 2006; Weil, 2006; Wright, 2005). However, the percentage of corporate blogs in companies is not very high. For example, Jeremy Wright has compiled a list of 40 known Fortune 500 companies that blog, and he also suspects that at least 10% and as much as 20% of Fortune 500 companies are using blogs in some way although he could not confirm it (http://www.ensight.org/archives/2005/03/07/how-many-fortune-500s-blogging). This paper studies corporate blogs as virtual communities, focusing on the distribution, categorization and characteristics of 40 Fortune 500 Companies' blogs. Firstly, a literature review will focus on defining blogs and main features, corporate blogging and its value brought up by tens of millions of bloggers communicating about companies, products, trends, and many other issues. Also, corporate blogs as virtual communities will be discussed to answer the question of why study corporate blogs as virtual communities. Secondly, the data collection and analysis methodology employed by this study will be outlined in details for 40 Fortune 500 Companies' blogs chosen for this study. Thirdly, the results will be discussed and analyzed to find out the distribution, categorization and characteristics of these 40 Fortune 500 Companies' blogs. Finally, the implications of this study and future research directions will be outlined in the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Blogs and Main Features

A blog, which is derived from "Weblog", is published on the web as a frequently updated personal website that maintains an ongoing chronicle of information and reflects the interests, thoughts, insights, opinions, and experiences of a person, sometimes persons, who published the blog. Unlike some inter-organizational systems

which share information with partners (Fedorowicz, Gogan, & Ray, 2004), a weblog shares information with almost everybody. The following definition given by Clyde (2004) provides detailed descriptions of a blog and its main features: "A Weblog can take the form of a diary, a news service (or summaries of and links to current news items on a topic), a collection of links to other Web sites, a series of book reviews, reports of activity on a project, a journal or diary, a photographic record of an event or activity, or any number of other forms. Most Weblogs display materials for the current month or the current week, with older material being archived on the site for browsing and/or searching" (p. 184). Blogs are characterized by frequent updates, diary-type commentary and many links to other blogs and websites. Blogs range from the personal to the political to the commercial, and can focus on one particular topic or a whole range of topics. A typical and well designed blog not only combines textual contents with audio-visual materials, but also provides links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic (Hill, 2004; Huffaker & Calvert 2005; Herring et al., 2004; Keller & Miller, 2006).

With the development of Internet technologies, blogs also come in various formats, such as blogs with texts, photoblogs with photographs, vlogs with videos, or moblogs with content captured from a mobile phone (Byron & Broback, 2006; Dwyer, 2007; Rosenbloom, 2004; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Blogs support online communications in a variety of communities, such as workgroups, classes, and various special interest groups. Blogs also allow users to express personal opinions, explore different issues, exchange information, protest, shout, and even grief (Nardi et al., 2004). In recent years, the number of blogs has been growing bigger and bigger. According to the report "State of the Blogosphere" by Technorati, a Weblog-tracking company, that in October 2006 there were more than 57 million blogs worldwide (http://technorati.com/weblog/2006/11/161.html), and it's a tremendous increase from 19.6 million blogs that were tracked by Technorati one year before in October 2005 (http://technorati.com/weblog/2005/10/53.html). Besides the rapidly increasing number of blogs, blogs as a cultural phenomenon have covered a wider range of professional areas, such as journalism, politics, economics and business. More and more companies and organizations have realized the important role a corporate blog could play and become part of a larger corporate communications effort to fulfill different business objectives.

Corporate Blog: Definitions and Values

Corporate blogs, also known as business blogs, have been playing a more and more important role and is fast becoming the hot marketing tool on the Internet (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006). For a Fortune 500 company, having a corporate blog has multiple benefits ranging from promoting the company's brand to building strong customer and employee relationships, from generating the company's publicity to driving new business for the company via organic search rankings.

Fredrik Wackå (2004) has given a concise and accurate definition as follows: "A corporate blog is a blog published by or with the support of an organization to reach that organization's goals. In external communications the potential benefits include strengthened relationships with important target groups and the positioning of the publishing organization (or individuals within it) as industry experts. Internally blogs are generally referred to as tools for collaboration and knowledge management." Another similar useful definition could be found in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: "A corporate weblog is published and used by an organization to reach its organizational goals. The advantage of blogs is that posts and comments are easy to reach and follow due to centralized hosting and generally structured conversation threads. All current browsers (including Firefox, Opera, Safari and IE7) support RSS technology, which enables readers to easily read recent posts without actually visiting the blog, which is very useful for low-volume blogs. Although there are many different types of corporate blogs, most can be categorized as either external or internal." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_blog). In his blog "John Case's Blog: PR Communications", John Case (2004) identified two principal ways in which a corporate blog can add value to a company. The first is that a corporate blog could be a learning tool for product development and customer feedback, For example, Macromedia's product development team uses blogs in this way, there development staff members maintain a number of blogs in which they gain a lot of ideas from the interactions with customers. The second is that a corporate blog could be a marketing and PR tool for building community with the customers and audience. A corporate blog allows a blogger to combine good content with highly ranked pages on a particular subject matter. A regularly updated blog gives a blogger the chance to get lots of new relevant content to the readers throughout the week, thus having a communication tool for creating viral word of mouth campaigns, from customers who read the blog on a regular basis and new visitors coming to the blog from search engines (http://www.typepad.com/t/trackback/784365). In his book *Blog Marketing*, leading blogging consultant Jeremy Wright (2005) has identified the following advantages of blogging for companies such as Microsoft, Sun

Microsystems, Google, Disney, General Motors, and others: 1) Extending company branding; 2) Creating positive experiences with your customers; 3) Providing real feedback on your company and its products; 4) Transforming the way your company does business; 5) Simplifying a variety of project management tasks; and 6) Putting impact to the bottom line.

Corporate Blogs as Virtual Communities

Although virtual communities have a solid foundation of theory and research (Ellis, Oldridge, & Vasconcelos, 2004; Henri & Pudelko, 2003; Wu et al., 2003), there are a few studies on blogs as virtual communities, along with foundational virtual community research. (Stephens, 2005). For example, Blanchard (2004) conducted a case study of a blog of American cooks, namely Julie/Julia Project, and found a sense of online virtual community in group blogging. The study by Van House (2004) on blogging communities found out that a high degree of self-disclosure could be promoted within the blogging communities since it should provide a medium of publishing-in-progress for all the bloggers. Also, an internal evaluation mechanism could be developed by bloggers in the process of making decision on choosing whom to link to and what to say about the link. Some scholars studied weblogs as virtual communities in the field of library and information science (LIS), focusing on such characteristics as practical types and content features. For example, Clyde (2004) conducted a content analysis on 55 LIS weblogs and identified 29 unique content features with corresponding percentiles of frequency. Stephens (2004) conducted another content analysis on 100 LIS weblogs with application of Henri and Pudelko's typology of four virtual communities. Stephens found out that most LIS weblogs would be categorized into 1) the community of interest because they are more likely to be created by libraries to share information with library users, and 2) community of practice because the majority of weblog authors are librarians who carry knowledge development from their weblogs to the real world and then back to the weblogs.

Coming from her personal interests and perspectives, the following suggestions made by Lawley (2004) on how to study blogs have provided us with insightful research directions: 1) Study of the blog itself with either definitional or descriptive approaches; 2) Study of interactions between blogs and blog authors in the context of clusters or communities; 3) Ethnographic studies of blog clusters and communities; 4) Analysis of the content and style used in blogs; and 5) Study of the use of blogs as tools in specific organizational contexts. In addition, based on the findings from the studies on blogs as virtual communities, Blanchard (2004) pointed out that future research on blogs as virtual communities should continue to assess not only members' sense of community, but also how members adapt to and modify the CMC technology to meet their needs in developing a vibrant virtual community.

There were other scholars that studied corporate blogs as virtual communities in the domain of business enterprise. Enabled by the advance of Internet technologies, virtual communities have become of great interests for companies because they offer unique opportunities to provide customer with effective communication channels that allow interaction focusing on the interchange of information and transformation of knowledge among the users of corporate blogs. Therefore, corporate blogs are perceived as means for companies to provide opportunities to build up virtual communities (Byron & Broback, 2006; Scoble & Israel, 2006; Weil, 2006; Wright, 2005). There were also some interesting findings on the content features of corporate blogs in the context of virtual communities. For instance, some research observed that blogrolls could allow blogs that share similar interests in the same community to build up each other's traffic, so that any reference to other blogs would connect the particular corporate blog to a blog community with similar interests (Wright 2006, p.33). Another study found out the correlation between the direct traffic to the corporate blog and the formation of a blogging community: the more visits paid to the blog and more comments posted on the blog, the easier and more successful a blogging community would be built up for a particular company or brand or product. When blog users comment, post or trackback to that particular blogging community, such activities could have a viral effect on its visibility in the blogosphere. Blogging communication about a company's offering of a new product or service would stimulate direct traffic and links back to the corporate blog and to the company's website, thus resulting in higher search engine rankings and more traffic (Cass et al., 2005). In addition, Jackson, Yates, & Orlikowski (2007) recently carried out an exploratory study of a large global IT corporation's internal blogging system. In this study, statistics of blog usage and interviews of bloggers were analyzed with the results of an anonymous web-based survey. They found that benefits to users were social as well as informational, and that connecting with their community was an important value sought by all types of blog users. Frequent users also constituted the core of an online community that provided important benefits to other less frequent users as well.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine distribution (by industry), categorization (by function) and characteristics (by blogging elements used) of sample fortune 500 companies. Specifically, the study tried to answer the following three questions:

1. Which industries were more likely to use corporate blogs?
2. What goals did corporate blogs try to accomplish?
3. Which web blogging elements or features did corporate blogs use more often?

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

In this study, 40 corporate blogs were examined (see Appendix A). According to *Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki* (http://www.socialtext.net/bizblogs/index.cgi), a directory that tracks corporate blogs for the Fortune 500 companies, only about 8% of the Fortune 500 companies had blogs. The directory had listed 42 companies with sample corporate blogs as of October 5, 2006. The 40 samples were from this list.

Data Analysis

The 40 corporate blogs were first classified into their industries to see which industries are active advocates of corporate blogs. Secondly, the 40 corporate blogs were categorized into the four types of virtual communities framed by Henri & Pudelko (2003, p.485): 1) Community of interest: Information exchange; 2) Goal-oriented community of interest: Sharing of diverse perspectives and production of objects commissioned by the mandate; 3) Learner's community: Participation to the realization of a collective project; 4) Community of practice: Professional practice development through sharing knowledge among members. Thirdly, the 40 corporate blogs were first grouped into competitor clusters and then categorized into each of the four types of virtual communities to find out more about their positions in competition. Fourthly, eight common elements derived from the list suggested by Glaser (2006) were identified and compared for each of the 40 corporate blogs: comments, trackbacks, syndication, up to date, archives, blogrolls, specials features, and site search in order to see what blogging elements corporate blogs tend to use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 1, we can see that there are 17 corporate blogs belong to companies ranked within the top 100, 8 ranked within 100-200, 6 ranked within 200-300, 6 ranked within 300-400, and only 3 are within 400-500. This shows that the higher ranked Fortune 500 companies tend to more likely to have their corporate blogs.

Table 1: 40 Ranked Blogging Fortune 500 Companies with Sample Blogs.

Blogging F-500 Company	2006 Rank	Sample Blog
Wal-Mart Stores	2	Wal-Mart Facts
General Motors Corporation	3	FastLane Blog
Ford Motor Company	5	Bold Moves
General Electric Company	7	GE Global Research blog
IBM	10	Guide to IBM Blogs
Hewlett-Packard Company	11	HP Blogs
Verizon Communications	18	PoliBlog
Dell	25	Direct2Dell
Boeing	26	Randy's Journal

Time Warner	40	Jason Calacanis' Blog
Wells Fargo & Company	46	Guided by History
Microsoft Corporation	48	MSDN's Microsoft Blogs
Intel Corporation	49	Intel Geek Blogger
Motorola	54	Snowboarding Team blogs
Sprint	59	Things That Make You Go Wireless
Honeywell International	71	HoneywellBlogs
Cisco Systems	83	Cisco High Tech Policy Blog
Electronic Data Systems	108	EDS' Next Big Thing Blog
McDonald's Corporation	109	Open For Discussion
Computer Sciences	141	Team CSC
Xerox Corporation	142	Palo Alto Research Center
Eastman Kodak Company	155	A Thousand Words
Nike	163	Nike Basketball Blog
Texas Instruments	167	Video 360 Blog
Oracle Corporation	196	OraBlogs
Marriott International	203	Marriott on the move
General Mills	206	Real Baking with Rose Levy Beranbaum
Sun Microsystems	211	Jonathan Schwartz
Viacom International	241	MTV News Correspondents
Amazon.com	272	Amazon Web Services Blog
Southwest Airlines	300	Nuts about Southwest
Cox Communications	316	Digital Straight Talk
Google	353	Google Blog
McGraw-Hill Companies	359	Blogspotting
Starwood Hotels & Resorts	360	The Lobby
AMD	367	AMD Notebook Tester
Tribune Company	388	The Swamp
Yahoo!	412	Yahoo! Search Blog
Whole Foods Market	449	The CEO's Blog - John Mackey
eBay	458	eBay Developers Program Blog

(Source: Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki http://www.socialtext.net/bizblogs/index.cgi)

According to Table 2, the 40 sample corporate blogs are distributed in 21 industries. Only four industries have more than three companies that have corporate blogs: 1) Computers, Office Equipment, 2) Internet Services and Retailing, 3) Semiconductors and Other Electronic Components, and 4) Telecommunications. Eight industries each has two companies that have a corporate blog. Nine industries each has only one company with a corporate blog. It is also interesting to note that the companies in these industries have more corporate blogs than those in other industries. The companies that have only one corporate blog are in industries that are not directly related to computers and Internet and telecommunications, such as general merchandisers, diversified financials, commercial banks, food services, apparel and airlines. Such a distribution of corporate blogs in industries shows that the computers and

Internet and telecommunications technologies have stronger impact on corporate blogging among Fortune 500 companies.

Table 2: Blogging Fortune 500 Companies Grouped by Industries with Sample Blogs.

Industry	Blogging Fortune 500 Company	Sample Blog
Computers, Office Equipment	IBM (10)	Guide to IBM Blogs
	HP (11)	HP Blogs
	Dell (25)	Linux Engineering
	Xerox Corporation (142)	Palo Alto Research Center
	Sun Microsystems (211)	Jonathan Schwartz
Internet Services and Retailing	Amazon. (272)	Amazon Web Services Blog
	Google (353)	Google Blog
	Yahoo! (412)	Yahoo! Search Blog
	eBay (458)	eBay Developers Program Blog
Semiconductors and Other Electronic Components	Intel Corporation (49)	Intel Geek Blogger
	Texas Instruments (167)	TI Blogs
	AMD (367)	AMD Notebook Tester
Telecommunications	Verizon Communications (18)	PoliBlog
	Sprint (59)	Things That Make You Go Wireless
	Cox Communications (316)	Digital Straight Talk
Aerospace and Defense	Boeing (26)	Randy's Journal
	Honeywell International (71)	HoneywellBlogs
Computer Software	Microsoft Corporation (48)	MSDN's Microsoft Blogs
	Oracle Corporation (196)	OraBlogs
Entertainment	Time Warner (40)	Jason Calacanis' Blog
	Viacom International (241)	Real World/Road Rules Blog
Hotels, Casinos, Resorts	Marriott International(203)	Marriott on the move
	Starwood Hotels & Resorts (360)	The Lobby
Information Technology Services	Electronic Data Systems (108)	EDS' Next Big Thing Blog
	Computer Sciences (141)	Team CSC
Motor Vehicles & Parts	General Motors Corporation (3)	FastLane Blog
	Ford Motor Company (5)	2005 Mustang Blog
Network and Other Communications Equipment	Motorola (54)	Motorola Snowboarding Team blogs
	Cisco Systems (83)	Cisco High Tech Policy Blog
Publishing, Printing	McGraw-Hill Companies (359)	Blogspotting
	Tribune Company (388)	The Swamp
General Merchandisers	Wal-Mart (2)	Wal-Mart Facts
Diversified Financials	GE (7)	GE Global Research blog
Commercial Banks	Wells Fargo (46)	Guided by History

Food Services	McDonald's (109)	Open For Discussion
Photo, Control Equipment	Kodak (155)	A Thousand Words
Apparel	Nike (163)	Nike Basketball Blog
Food Consumer Products	General Mills (206)	Real Baking with Rose Levy Beranbaum
Airlines	Southwest Airlines (300)	Nuts about Southwest
Food & Drug Stores	Whole Foods Market (449)	The CEO's Blog - John Mackey

Now, let's look at the categorization of corporate blogs as virtual communities. Based on the four types of virtual communities proposed by Henri & Pudelko (2003, p.485), the 40 corporate blogs were categorized into the following categories:

1. Community of interest that focuses on information exchange;
2. Goal-oriented community of interest that shares diverse perspectives and production of objects commissioned by the mandate;
3. Learner's community that emphasizes the participation to the realization of a collective project; and
4. Community of practice that encourages professional practice development through sharing knowledge among members.

From Table 3, we can see that all of the 40 blogs are categorized as a community of interest, 34 (85%) blogs are goal-oriented community of interest, 14 (35%) blogs are learner's communities, and 22 (55%) blogs are community of practice. Also, all of the 40 blogs are categorized as at least two types of virtual communities, only six (15%) blogs are categorized into three types of virtual communities, and twelve (30%) blogs are categorized as four types of virtual communities, and the companies that have those twelve blogs fall in the industries of *computers, office equipment* and *Internet services and retailing* and *entertainment*. Such an interesting categorization shows that corporate blogs as virtual communities are designed and maintained mainly for the purposes of exchanging information and sharing diverse perspectives and production of objects commissioned by the mandate.

Table 3: Fortune 500 Company Blogs and Type of Virtual Community.

Blogging Fortune 500 Company	Community of Interest	Goal-oriented Community of Interest	Learner's Community	Community of Practice
Computers, Office Equipment				
Dell (10)	X	X	X	X
HP (11)	X	X	X	X
IBM (25)	X	X	X	X
Xerox (142)	X	X	X	X
Sun (211)	X	X	X	X
Internet Services and Retailing				
Amazon. (272)	X	X	X	X
Google (353)	X	X	X	X
Yahoo! (412)	X	X	X	X
eBay (458)	X	X	X	X
Semiconductors and Other Electronic Components				
Intel (49)	X	X		
Texas Instruments (167)	X	X		

AMD (367)	X	X		
Telecommunications				
Verizon (18)	X			X
Sprint (59)	X			X
Cox (316)	X			X
Aerospace and Defense				
Boeing (26)	X		X	
Honeywell (71)	X	X		
Computer Software				
Microsoft Corporation (48)	X	X		X
Oracle Corporation (196)	X	X		X
Entertainment				
Time Warner (40)	X	X	X	X
Viacom (241)	X	X	X	X
Hotels, Casinos, Resorts				
Marriott International(203)	X	X		
Starwood Hotels / Resorts (360)	X		X	
Information Technology Services				
EDS (108)	X	X		X
CSC (141)	X	X		X
Motor Vehicles & Parts				
GM (3)	X	X		X
Ford (5)	X	X		X
Network and Other Communications Equipment				
Motorola (54)	X			X
Cisco (83)	X	X	X	X
Publishing, Printing				
McGraw-Hill Companies (359)	X	X		
Tribune Company (388)	X	X		
General Merchandisers				
Wal-Mart (2)	X	X		
Diversified Financials				
GE (7)	X	X		
Commercial Banks				
Wells Fargo & Company (46)	X	X		
Food Services				
McDonald's (109)	X	X		
Photo, Control Equipment				
Kodak (155)	X	X		
Apparel				
Nike (163)	X	X		

Food Consumer Products				
General Mills (206)	X	X		
Airlines				
Southwest Airlines (300)	X	X		
Food & Drug Stores				
Whole Foods Market (449)	X	X		

Table 4, shows a range of diversified characteristics of the corporate blogs as virtual communities. First, the majority of the blogs have laid emphasis on the interactive communication between the blogger(s) of and the visitor(s) to the blog (s). For example, 38 (95%) blogs have provided blogrolls in the sidebar that are a list of links to other blogs or websites; and 34 (85%) blogs have enabled comments to be made on the blog. To the contrary, only 10 (25%) blogs have trackbacks which is a way to show other blogs that have linked to a particular blog post. Another interesting finding of the corporate blogs as virtual communities is the common use of syndication in those blogs. There are 29 (73%) blogs have adopted syndication that is in RSS-based or XML-based or Atom-based format for distributing and aggregating web content, such as news links, headlines, and summaries. Among the 29 blogs, 23 have RSS-based syndication, 4 have XML-based syndication, and 2 have Atom-based syndication. 31 (78%) blogs have search capability for searching information either within the blogs or outside the blogs. 26 (65%) have archives of old posts in the blog, some could be traced back to the beginning of the blog posting. Finally, all but 4 blogs (90%) are up to date in terms of the currency of the blog content. It's surprising to see that the blog of Ford has not been updated since August 30, 2004.

Table 4: Fortune 500 Company Blogs and Common Features.

F500 Blog	Comments	TrackBacks	Synd	Up to Date	Archives	Blogrolls	Specials	Search
Computers, Office Equipment								
Dell (10)	X			X	X	X	Digg/ Videos/ ML	X
HP (11)	X	X	RSS	X		X	Podcast	X
IBM (25)	X		RSS	X	X	X	Group	
Xerox	X	X		No 3/12/07	X	X		X
Sun	X			X		X	CEO/ ML	X
Internet Services and Retailing								
Amazon. (272)	X	X		X	X	X		
Google (353)	By email			X	X	X	ML	X
Yahoo! (412)	X			X	X	X		X
eBay (458)	X			X	X	X	Videos	
Semiconductors and Other Electronic Components								
Intel (49)	X		RSS	X	X	X	ML	
Texas Instru. (167)	X		XML	X	X	X		X
AMD (367)	X		RSS	No 3/7/07	X	X	Photos	X
Telecommunications								
Verizon (18)	X		RSS	X	X	X		X
Sprint (59)	X		RSS	X	X	X	Podcast	
Cox (316)	X	X	RSS	X		X	Podcast	X
Aerospace and Defense								
Boeing (26)			RSS	X	X	X	VP/	X

							Photos	
Honeywell (71)	X			X		X	Group	X
Computer Software								
Microsoft (48)	X		RSS	X		X		X
Oracle (196)			XML	X		X		
Entertainment								
Time Warner (41)	X		RSS	X		X	Email	X
Viacom (241)	X			X	X	X		X
Hotels, Casinos, Resorts								
Marriott (203)	X		RSS	X	X	X	CEO/Podcast	X
Starwood (360)	X		RSS	X	X	X		
Information Technology Services								
EDS (108)	X		Atom	X			Email	X
CSC (141)	X	X	RSS	X	X	X	Videos	X
Motor Vehicles & Parts								
GM (3)	X	X	Atom	X	X	X		X
Ford (5)	No	No	No	No 8/30/04	No	No	No	No
Network and Other Communications Equipment								
Motorola (54)	X		RSS	No 3/23/07		X	Photos	
Cisco (83)	X	X	XML	X	X	X	Email	X
Publishing, Printing								
McGraw-Hill (359)	X	X	RSS	X	X	X	Podcast	X
Tribune Company (388)	X		RSS	X	X	X	Videos	
General Merchandisers								
Wal-Mart (2)			RSS		X	X		X
Diversified Finanicals								
GE (7)	X			X		X	Videos	X
Commercial Banks								
Wells Fargo (46)	X		RSS	X	X	X	Photos	X
Food Services								
McDonald's (109)	X		RSS	X		X	CEO/Digg/Videos	X
Photo, Control Equipment								
Kodak (155)	X		RSS	X		X	Photos	X
Apparel								
Nike (163)			RSS	X		X		X
Food Consumer Products								
General Mills (206)	X	X	RSS	X	X	X	Photos	X
Airlines								
Southwest Airlines (300)	X		RSS	X	X	X	Photos	X
Food & Drug Stores								
Whole Foods Market (449)	X	X	XML	X	X	X	CEO	X

Besides the above findings about the 40 corporate blogs, it is interesting to point out that some blogs have shown special characteristics. For example, podcast, a collection of audio and video files that could be syndicated and

downloaded automatically for playback on the blog website, are available on the blogs of HP, Sprint, Cox, Marriott and McGraw-Hill. Also, videos are used by five companies' blogs: Dell, eBay, CSC, Tribune Company, and MacDonald's, while photos being used by the blogs of such companies as AMD, Boeing, Motorola, Wells Fargo, Kodak, General Mills and Southwest Airlines. The blogs of Dell and MacDonald's have subscribed to Digg, a community-based popularity website with articles on a variety of subjects, for submitting articles to or getting articles from the user driven news website. The blogs of Time Warner, EDS and Cisco allow users to email the blog content to other users. Finally, two more interesting characteristics of the blogs are worth mentioning: one is the multilinguality of some blogs and the other the authorship of some blogs. The following companies' blogs are multilingual:

Company	Languages Available in the Blog
Dell	English, Chinese, Spanish
Sun	English, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic
Google	English, Chinese, French, Spanish, Italian, Korean, Portuguese
Intel	English, Chinese, French, Spanish

The details of the special authorship of five companies' blogs are as follows:

Company	Authorship of the Blog
Sun	Jonathan Schwartz, CEO
Boeing	Randy Tinseth, VP
Marriott	Bill Marriott, CEO
McDonald's	Bob Langert, VP
Whole Foods Market	John Mackey, CEO

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided some first hand findings on the distribution, categorization and characteristics of 40 corporate blogs of Fortune 500 companies, which would lay some research foundation for further exploration and analysis of corporate blogs as virtual communities. Since the majority of the 40 corporate blogs are either categorized as communities of interest, or goal-oriented communities of interest, a company should recognize that developing a (goal-oriented) virtual community of interest to share information with the customers may increase their knowledge base and presence in the business community. Also, maintaining a corporate blog for a company can raise the company's visibility, and create a powerful channel of communication between the company and its customers. have laid The emphasis laid by the majority of the corporate blogs on the interactive communication between the blogger(s) of and the visitor(s) to the blog(s) has shown that corporate blogs can also provide an instantaneous feedback loop on the company's organizations, products, ideas and the competitive market. In addition, this paper has revealed two more interesting findings about the corporate blogs: 1) some corporate blogs are multilingual with major languages, such as English, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic; and 2) some corporate blogs are authored by either the CEOs or VPs of some companies, such as the CEOs of Sun, Marriott and Whole Foods Market, and the VPs of Boeing and McDonald's. Such findings also give implications to the future development of corporate blogs as multilingual virtual communities with higher administrative authorship. Our future research will be a content analysis of the competitor clusters of the 40 corporate blogs to find out more about their positions in competition: 1) popularity - how many visitors and how many in-links to them; 2) functionality - how they interact with readers and reach out to other blogs or websites; and 3) ethnographic features of the blog clusters and communities. Furthermore, we can investigate the impact of privacy policy and sensitivity on customers' participation of corporate blogs (Lippert & Swiercz, 2007; Ryker & Bhutta, 2005).

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