

# Quantity not quality:

# Online prolificacy begets online popularity

## Executive Summary

Seventy five participants joined a closed online blogging community. Initial impressions of community members were measured one week into the community. The number and length of interactions were positively related to the attraction ratings that the participants received from other community members. Content of the posts (as measured by the emotional tone of the information posted) was not related. Mined data showed that the size of the participants' personal social network was related to the amount of activity on their blog.

## Background

Research suggests that individuals can be as emotionally intimate online as offline (e.g. Hian, Chaun, Trevor & Detenber, 2004) and that frequent online interaction reinforces the desire to have face to face interaction (Hu, Fowler Wood, Smith and Westbrook, 2004; Danteback, Mansson and Ross, 2007).

The data referred to here is taken from a larger study which concerned the development of affect through online interactions. The purpose here is to explore the elements involved in the formation of initial impressions of others online. Whereas offline first impressions are often based upon appearance (Hassin & Trope, 2000), first impressions of others based upon their internet profile or persona can be judged not just upon the attractiveness of their appearance, but the style and level of their online interaction and disclosures (Weisbuch, Ivcevic & Ambady, 2009).

## First Impressions and Popularity

Participants provided their initial impressions of each other 1 week after joining the community. Attraction was rated on a scale of 1-5, 1 being very unattractive, 5 being very attractive. The number, content and word count of their interactions within the community were measured. Tone of the content was measured using LIWC (Pennebaker *et al*, 2007), which analysed the text for positive and negative words, scores ranged from -1 to +1 with zero as a neutral point (mean score = .23, *SD* = .47).

Mean Attraction Score = 3.04 (*SD* = 7.07)  
Mean number of comments = 32.19 (*SD* = 40.91)  
Median word count = 184 (range 0 - 1212)

A regression analysis showed that 34% of the variance in attraction scores was accounted for by community activity. An individual 20% of variance was accounted for by word count alone. Tone of content did not significantly predict, or indeed improve the model.

Analysis of the participants' personal social network showed that the magnitude of activity within their personal blog (content was not analysed) in terms of number of personal posts and comments made accounted for 30% of the variance in personal network size.

## Implications of the study

Swipple's rule of order "he who shouts loudest has the floor" aptly applies to online interaction. Whilst offline those individuals with relatively economical communication styles can still employ non verbal communication methods, online interaction via blogs is almost exclusively verbal. Therefore those who are increasingly prolific with their communication may provide significantly more information for other to form first impressions.

## References

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